

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: A PORTRAIT OF A FIRST GRADE
TEACHER COMMITTED TO THE
LITERACY CLASSROOM AS A
COMMUNITY: A TEACHER EDUCATOR'S
ACTION RESEARCH COLLABORATION

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In this study I examined the vision and practices of a beginning first grade literacy teacher in an urban school district. I used action research methods to collaborate with the teacher in her classroom based on her needs and take action with her in response to themes we generated together. As the teacher used and reflected upon literacy instruction while I worked within her classroom, we both explored how the lessons from her work and our collaboration might inform literacy pedagogy as well as teacher education. My first research question examined how my participant conceptualized and acted upon her conceptualizations of sociocultural models of literacy. My second question explored the action implications of this collaborative inquiry, as it applied to both her classroom and my teacher education work. My research also drew from the tradition of participatory action research (PAR), which involved the teacher's "praxis" (Freire, 1970), reflection and action to affect change. In PAR tradition, together the teacher and I used the data we collected to address issues of relevance to her, through the action components of

classroom teaching as well as professional co-presentations for preservice teachers on literacy instruction in urban schools. The overall emerging construct was the concept of literacy teaching as the facilitation of classroom community. The following categories arose beneath this overall construct: community as teacher vision, community as teacher strategy, community as love, and community as challenge. Finally, I used these emerging themes to theorize tentatively on implications for teacher education; I suggested that teacher education should prioritize promoting love and vision as the backbone to support teachers' development strategies and challenges. Overall, my analysis suggested the constructs of literacy pedagogy as "community" and teacher education as "professional accountability."

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	ii
Table of Contents.....	iii
Chapter 1: Opening the Study.....	1
Rationale for Grassroots Study of Teachers Committed to Literacy Community.....	2
Research Questions.....	4
Constructs (Conceptual Framework).....	4
Literacy.....	5
Community.....	6
Teacher Education.....	8
Who am I?.....	9
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	16
Critical Perspectives on Schooling and Teacher Education.....	16
Critical Theory Views and Teacher Education.....	17
Schools as Systems of Social Reproduction.....	17
Critical Historical Perspectives.....	19
Racism and Teacher Education.....	20
A Cultural Analysis Perspective.....	23
Other Culturally-Focused Analyses.....	25
Differing Cultural Logic and Social Reproduction.....	27
Critical, yet Hopeful.....	30
Teaching and Power.....	32
Critical and Culturally Relevant.....	34
A Hopeful Study of Teacher Education.....	36
A Critical Approach to Teacher Education.....	37
Exploring “Whiteness”.....	38
Social Justice Literacies.....	39
Critical Complex Teacher Education.....	40
Critical Views and My Study.....	42
The Challenges and Possibilities of Literacy.....	43
The Idea of Multiple Paradigms.....	45
Three Incomplete Metaphors.....	45
Behavioral and Constructivist Theories of Learning.....	47
Early Ethnographies of Literacy.....	50
Autonomous verses Ideological Views of Literacy.....	52
Sociocultural Traditions.....	53
Gee’s Discourse Theory.....	54
New Sociocultural Models of Literacy.....	56
Critical Literacy.....	58
Critical Sociological Models.....	60
Functional Literacy verses Critical Literacy.....	62
Literacy as Opening Spaces.....	64
New Literacy Research and Youth Activist Literacy Research.....	65
A Literacy of Access and Dissent.....	66
Literacy Education and Teacher Practice.....	69

What Now?.....	69
Chapter 3: Research Methodology.....	71
Overview.....	71
Action Research and Participatory Action Research.....	71
My Former Study as a Blueprint.....	73
Other Participatory Paradigms.....	76
Traditional Qualitative Methods.....	78
Participant.....	78
Participant and Setting Description.....	79
Methodology: Data Collection and Analysis.....	81
The Overall Plan.....	81
Data Collection and Initial Analysis in the Classroom.....	82
Interviews.....	82
Observations.....	85
Artifacts and Documents.....	85
Analysis.....	86
Data Analysis and State Standards.....	87
Vignette on my Classroom Work.....	88
Methodology: The Action Level.....	92
Instructional Action Steps in the Classroom.....	92
Presentations by the Early Developing Teacher.....	94
Vignette on the Action Stage.....	95
Presentation I.....	95
Presentation II.....	99
Final Analysis to Build Theory.....	101
Feedback From Rachel.....	103
Validity.....	103
Chapter 4: Narrative of the Collaboration: How it Unfolded.....	108
Our Developing Relationship.....	108
Building Rapport in the Classroom.....	109
Highlights From Our Classroom.....	109
Opening Discussions.....	110
Working Together.....	110
Poetry, Music, and Learning Hidden Talents.....	111
Using Music.....	112
Rachel's Violin.....	113
Planning the unit.....	115
The Unit.....	116
Stations.....	117
Developing Songs.....	119
The Final Performance.....	120
Chapter 5: Data Analysis: Curriculum Goals and Literacy Theory.....	124
Addressing Maryland State Writing Framework.....	124
Addressing Maryland Language Framework.....	126
Addressing Maryland Reading Literature Framework.....	127
Addressing Reading Foundational Skills: Fluency and Informational Texts.....	128
Addressing Speaking and Listening Framework.....	130
Reflecting Rachel's Commitment to Literacy as Community.....	132

Chapter 6: Data Analysis: Literacy as Community	133
Community as Teacher Vision.....	133
A Vision of Community Underscored Her Basic Beliefs and Values.....	134
Her Vision Emphasized Freedom in Context of Personal Responsibility.....	135
Freedom.....	135
Social Responsibility.....	137
The Vision was Continually Open to Revision.....	140
Recognized and Welcomed Challenges to Personal Vision.....	140
Valued Discomfort.....	141
Pushed Herself to Expand Idea of Literacy.....	142
Learned to Value Process, Not Just Product.....	144
The Vision Materializes Through Teacher Confidence.....	146
A Growing Confidence Despite Newness.....	147
Confident Enough for Self-Assessment and Critique.....	147
Confident in Ownership Over Her Teaching.....	149
Professional Opportunities as Possible Source of Confidence.....	150
Community as Teaching Strategy.....	153
Strategies for Encouraging Student Interaction and Connection.....	153
Strategies for Encouraging Student Self-Reliance.....	157
Expressed a Deliberation to Relent Power.....	158
Replaced Direct Control with the Power of Literacy.....	159
Promoted Student Ownership.....	161
Provided Opportunities for Students to Drive the Curriculum.....	163
Promoted Stamina and Focus on Literacy Events.....	165
Strategies for Making Literacy “Real”.....	168
Connected to Students’ Life Experiences.....	169
Unique Possibilities and Challenges of “Realness”.....	170
Realness in Expansion of Future Expectations.....	171
Realness as Integrative Teaching.....	172
Realness as Risk-Taking and Creativity.....	173
Community as “Love”.....	175
Teacher-Student.....	176
Student-Student.....	177
Student-Teacher.....	178
Love for Learning: Student and Teacher.....	179
Community as Challenge.....	182
A Need for Structure.....	182
A Need for Personally-Useful Assessment Tools.....	184
A Need for Navigating Student Emotions.....	185
A Need for Dealing with an Array of Student Emotions.....	185
A Need for Dealing with Neighborhood Stresses.....	186
A Need for Fully Including “Troubled” Students.....	186
Responding to Negative School Environment Outside Teacher Control.....	188
Challenging Behaviorism.....	189

Management Techniques.....	189
Classwork and Rachel’s Challenge.....	191
Dichotomies: Working Through Dichotomous Assumptions about Students.....	192
Family and Home Community as Either “Good” or “Bad”.....	194
Involving Student Home Communities.....	198
Professional Accountability.....	201
Chapter 7: Interpretations: Teacher Education Implications.....	206
Cultivating Community as Teacher Vision.....	207
Cultivating Vision as Belief.....	207
Literacy Learning Within the Dialectic of Freedom.....	208
Cultivating Visions Under Revision.....	210
Confidence-Building.....	212
Teacher Education and Strategies of Literacy as Community.....	214
The Promotion of Self-Reliance.....	215
Helping Teachers Make Literacy “Real”.....	217
Teacher Education for Nurturing Love in the Literacy Community.....	219
Nurturing Love Between Students and Teachers.....	219
Nurturing Love Between and Among Students.....	223
Nurturing Student Love for Learning.....	224
Teachers who Love their Work.....	225
Navigating Needs and Challenges.....	227
Responding to Needs for Structure.....	227
Responding to Environmental Challenges.....	230
Responding to Challenges of Behaviorism.....	232
Challenging Problematic Assumptions.....	234
Chapter 8: What then?.....	241
Envisioning Professional Accountability.....	241
Professional Accountability and State Standards.....	242
Envisioning Literacy as Community.....	243
Limitations.....	246
Participatory Methods and Researcher Position.....	246
Intangibles.....	247
Critical Theory/ Critical Views.....	248
Education as Reflection of Overall Society.....	249
Other Accountability Contexts.....	249
Generalizability.....	250
Suggestions for Future Research.....	251
Final Thoughts.....	253
Appendix A-D:Protocols.....	255
Appendix E: Timeline.....	263
Appendix F: Demographics.....	265
Appendix G: Data Analysis Graphic.....	266
Appendix H: Chart of Teacher Vision.....	267

Appendix I: Outline of Teaching Strategies.....	268
Appendix J: Four Directions of Love.....	269
Appendix K: Implications for Teacher Education.....	270
References.....	272

Chapter One: Opening the Study

As a result of recent accountability initiatives, teachers across the country are experiencing the pressure of literacy reform. Yet teachers experience many of these reforms as top-down mandates with minimal connection to their everyday concerns and needs (Finnigan & Gross, 2007; Meir & Wood, 2004). Teachers often feel pressured to “improve” their literacy teaching through following pre-packaged literacy curricula, strict teaching prescriptions, and by narrowing the curriculum in ways they find problematic (Berliner, 2011; Crocco & Costigan, 2007; Valli & Chambliss, 2007). Literacy theory, teacher education, or democratic principles may be overlooked in these myopically data-focused models of accountability (Apple, 2007; Gutiérrez, 2007; Shannon, 1987). Teacher education may be downgraded into a mechanistic process, and teachers may lament its distance from the day-to-day realities in the classroom (McNeil, 2000; Watanabe, 2007). Rich, sociocultural models of literacy may be lost as teachers instead focus on increasing test scores through a literacy of test preparation, an impoverished model of literacy (Amrein & Berliner, 2007; Garcia & Pearson, 1994; Shepard, 1991).

These accountability models present challenges for those concerned with rich models of literacy as well as for those concerned with quality and critical teacher education in an equitable, democratic society (Giroux, 2009; Lipman, 2011). When teacher education operates without a deep understanding of the teacher as a learner, of how teachers conceive of and develop pedagogy, reform prescriptions may impact teachers’ self-efficacy and positive, creative energy. When reform models operate out of unchecked models of literacy, teachers may not be supported to facilitate students’ holistic literacy learning. Opportunities for developing a classroom community and promoting sociocultural visions of literacy could be lost when teachers do not receive the support they need for envisioning and enacting rich models of literacy. Instead of building upon

and harnessing teachers' intrinsic motivation to teach, disconnected and overly prescribed teacher education and accountability models may negatively impact teachers' self-determination. A steadily accumulating body of studies documents similar problems in some popular top-driven accountability models (Baker, Barton, & Darling-Hammond, 2010; Crocco & Costigan, 2007; Nichols & Berliner, 2007).

Rather than beginning a quest toward improving literacy teaching with top-down accountability mandates and research overly focusing on standardized test scores, I argue for more grassroots work with teachers from the bottom-up. I propose that teacher educators might learn from detailed, nuanced portraits of the lives of beginning teachers, from taking part in action research directed at teachers' daily concerns. We know that we need to begin our teaching of young students with cultural responsiveness, by learning about and connecting to where our students are, so should not we begin our support of young teachers by learning about and connecting to where they are? In this study I place myself within a beginning teacher's classroom and, with the teacher's input and direction, create a portrait of her literacy instruction while working to support her at the ground level.

Rationale for Grassroots Study of Teachers Committed to Literacy Community

A body of literature spells out implications of sociocultural models of literacy. This literature emphasizes the creation and maintenance of learning communities as central to the work of teaching (Cobb, 1996; Dyson, 2005; Fosnot, 1996; Gee, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978). Yet many teacher education and accountability models may de-emphasize such work towards classroom community and instead emphasize classrooms focused on individual achievement and test performance (Finnigan & Gross, 2007; McNeil, 2000). And, influenced by widely-touted research on literacy that focuses on practices that increase test scores (NICHHD, 2000) rather than elements that impact the sociocultural

environment of the classroom, such as teacher vision and the classroom community, teacher education may miss out on literacy possibilities.

Yet visionary teachers continue to teach based on their interpretations of rich models of literacy, and I argue that there is much we can learn from studying their teaching through working alongside them, on concerns important to them. Literature spells out the theoretical implications of approaches to literacy based on community, but not enough illustrates how these theories may play out in specific classroom situations. Particularly, there is a place for action-oriented research by teacher educators designed to support teachers in developing sociocultural models of literacy in their classrooms, models of literacy learning as apprenticeship into a community of learners (Heath, 1983; Gee, 1996; Luke & Freebody, 1997). Through research conducted at the ground level, with teachers as reflective decision-makers (Schon, 1987), not technicians, we might illustrate the practices and challenges of teachers committed to models of literacy that emphasize community. We might also construct and enact alternative models of teacher education and accountability. We might work toward a model of accountability that holds districts/society accountable for providing teachers with the support (Ravitch, 2010) needed to deal with the complexities of literacy learning, and for implementing more democratic visions of schooling (Apple, 2007).

The purpose of this study was to enact such action research: To work together with a beginning teacher explicitly committed to a model of literacy founded upon community and to interpret possible implications for teacher education. As I worked alongside my participant as a co-learner, I documented her perceptions and experiences in literacy teaching. We used this experience to illuminate a portrait of her teaching and to propose what teacher education might need to be to support teachers like her enacting sociocultural models of literacy. We theorized about the support system that may be

essential for an alternative model of accountability to support literacy as community, and we used this knowledge to take action through co-presentations for preservice teachers.

In the following section I will present my research questions. Then, as my conceptual framework, I will present the constructs informing this inquiry followed by a narration of my identity and experiential background, to illustrate how who I am influences what I study. After that my review of the literature explains the scholarship behind my critical framework of teacher education and literacy instruction.

Research Questions

The following questions framed my research. In the tradition of open-ended qualitative research, they served as a guide rather than a rigid plan, and they remained malleable in accordance to the needs of my participant and the terrain of her particular experiences. For example, although I had earlier hoped to place a larger focus on assessment, my participant directed my focus more toward instruction, so literacy instruction became the major area of inquiry.

1. What are some of the ways in which one beginning first grade teacher in an urban district conceptualizes and acts upon her conceptualizations of sociocultural models of literacy?

Subquestion: What are some of the possibilities and challenges inherent in these perceptions and conceptualizations?

2. How might the teacher and I as co-learners use this knowledge to take action to promote positive change in her first grade classroom and my teacher education work?

Constructs (Conceptual Framework)

In the following section, I provide definitions for the following major constructs undergirding my study: sociocultural models of literacy, community, and teacher

education. I believe such theoretical clarity is essential for well-grounded research. I also recognize the dynamic nature of these constructs, and I open the constructs for further exploration.

Literacy. My conceptualization of literacy is influenced by sociocultural models of literacy, which envision literacy learning as the construction of a social practice learned through participation in a learning community (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Lois, Enisco, & Moje, 2007; Wertch, 1991). My work also reflects new strands in this literacy research tradition as explored in New Literacy Studies (NLS: Gee, 1991; Morrell, 2007; Street, 1984), which examine multiple forms of literacies in diverse communities through multiple forms of literacy research, such as “film” literacy explored through youth action research.

These sociocultural orientations toward literacy imply that to be literate is to be able to read, write, speak, and listen to construct, interact with, critique, and take action in response to texts in a wide array of forms. They emphasize that learning is a social event. These views of literacy recognize literacy learning as shifts in identity (Lewis, Enciso, and Moje, 2007) and participation in Discourse communities (Gee, 1996), and they recognize the centrality of multiple contextual influences and environments in literacy learning (Dyson, 2005). The NLS strand of this view of literacy recognizes the ideological and political nature of literacy, the way in which what it means to be literate is strongly shaped by one’s situational framework (Street, 1984). Importantly, this view of literacy recognizes the diversity and complexity of elements that comprise a literate person, and it recognizes the diversity of instruction and assessment needed to facilitate such literacy learning. I will further expand this conceptualization of literacy in the literature review that follows this conceptual framework, but I will first present a definition below for analytic purposes (Afflerbach, Cho, Kim & Clark, 2011). Then I

argue that this definition may benefit from further interrogation based on the literature I review and the inquiry I pursue in this study:

Literacy is the social practice of communication. Students are literate and further develop their literacy as they learn to use language to seek, identify and solve problems, to construct meaning from texts, to communicate with the self and others in manners that can inform, persuade, entertain, critique or challenge. (p. 5)

The first section of my literature review both works within and opens up this definition. Then my inquiry will explore it more fully as it is applied in a first grade teacher's practices. I use this research to spell out what this social model of literacy might look like at the grassroots level, as enacted by a teacher committed to it.

Community. My analysis of my participants' teaching hinges upon the concept of "community" that is central to sociocultural theories of literacy. When I use the term "community" I refer to a social and cultural group of learners that work and grow together under an explicit commitment to one another. It is a group of learners that are carefully nurtured to support one another as they learn together. I also sometimes use the term "community" as a verb, as I imply that it is something one does; it requires work, and it is always under construction. My participant's teaching as "community" implies that this community is constantly "happening": it is built, maintained, and nurtured by members of the community.

This vision of community works off of tenets set forth by sociocultural theorists who point to the importance of addressing the community of learners. It addresses Cobb's (1996) explanation of the sociocultural theorist's "unit of analysis" as "the individual-in-social-action" rather than the individual alone (p. 36). Such a sociocultural model stands on the shoulders of theorists such as Vygotsky (1978), who used the term "zone of proximal development" to discuss the process of learning that occurs in community with

the guidance of more knowledgeable others. It reflects Lave and Wenger's social model of learning as "legitimate peripheral participation" (1991), to capture the model of learning in which a learner is apprenticed into a social practice. Fosnot's model of constructivism (1996), that one might label as "social constructivism," emphasizes this social dimension of learning: "We cannot understand an individual's cognitive structure without observing it interacting in a context, within a culture" (p. 24). Fosnot explained that the classroom in her model is a "community of discourse engaged in activity, reflection, and conversation" (Fosnot, 1989, quoted in Fosnot, 1996, p. 30).

I argue, as do other critical scholars (Apple, 2007; Ayers, 2010; Collins, 2010; hooks, 2003) that this construct of community is central to the project of education for democracy. The construction of a participatory democracy requires relations within communities that apply values of collaboration and care for other members of the community. Ayers defines democracy as "a form of associate living in which people must assume and fight to achieve political and social equality; acknowledge a common spark of humanity in each soul; and embrace a level of uncertainty, incompleteness, and the inevitability of change" (p.6).

The classroom can be a central site in which these values and dispositions are nurtured, in which people learn how to think for themselves in socially responsible ways. It can be a mini-democracy. It can be a context in which citizens learn through experience that "the fullest development of each is necessary for the full development of all. This is a key democratic injunction and principle" (Ayers, 2010, p. 7-8). Collins (2010) explains this importance of envisioning the classroom in this way: "education constitutes a crucial site in negotiating democratic possibilities" (p. 12).

This concept of learning as participation in a community was central to my approach in this study. Some educators have spelled out what they believe are the various aspects

of community in the classroom, such “security, open communication, mutual liking, shared goals or objectives, and connectedness and trust (Sapon-Shevin, 1999, p, 16-17). Yet I argue that community is contextual, and I suggest that teachers may benefit from developing his/her own conceptualizations of democratic community. As Martin (2001) explained, critical education only makes sense within context, within which educators construct unique personal meanings.

I argue that more research is needed to explore what community might mean in specific contexts; uncovering dimensions of one teacher’s “community” is a major aim of this research. By illuminating the practices of a teacher who is committed to it, I hope to further illustrate what literacy teaching as “community” might be, open up an understanding of how it might facilitate democracy, and explore how teacher education may facilitate teacher’s development of communities of literacy.

Teacher education. I am guided in this study by my belief in the agency of teachers. Teachers, as learners, are not empty vessels to be filled or simply programmed to follow the orders of others. Rather, they are creative individuals with great power; they can be artists and powerful agents whose work depends on their ability to forge connections with the students they teach and upon their opportunities to find sources of strength and energy. My conceptualization of the teacher originates in the theories of Freire (1970), who critiqued the banking model of education, the imperialistic view of the learner as a passive object to be manipulated. Freire argued that instead education should aim at consciousness-raising, and what he called “praxis,” reflection and action of the learners in order to transform their worlds. Both my model of teacher learning and my model of Participatory Action Research originate in Freire’s philosophy.

I work within the tradition of Freire’s later writings (1998) which extend his model of learning to the teacher as learner. Freire’s later writings have great potential for

impacting the ways in which we understand the learning processes of teachers in today's education context. As new teachers explore literacy pedagogy, Freire's model offers an interesting alternative to accountability reform that ignores the learning needs of teachers; Freire offers a model based on empowerment rather than control and manipulation. Yet I also acknowledge that some of Freire's writings have been critiqued for dichotomizing, contradictory to his central tenets as it is, as if the "haves nots" were powerless and in requirement of literacy programs, that happened to be controlled by those in power (Martin, 2001). It is important to check for such dichotomizing tendencies in practice, to acknowledge the poststructuralist (Martin, 2001) understanding that reality consists of more of systems of overlapping webs than logical "either-ors."

I recognize the argument for reconstructing some of Freire's ideas to fit the complex power positions of teachers, and this guided my work as I used his model of learning as praxis, reflection and action, to conceptualize *with a teacher* what teacher education might be. I used a research model influenced by Freire's conceptualization of learning and power to further expand a theoretical understanding of the construct "teacher education" through this study

Who am I?

My critical sociocultural view of literacy reflects my view of the world and my part in it. My philosophical approach is rooted in my experiences. I do not believe that one can ever separate the self from one's scholarship (Kincheloe, 2004); everything we do or say is always deeply rooted in who we are and where we come from. We cannot remove ourselves from what we study. Instead what we can do is make explicit who we are and how we see that influence on our work. We can take seriously Kincheloe's urge for deeper contextual understanding of the self: "A thicker, more complex, more textured, self-conscious form of empirical knowledge takes into account the situatedness of the

researcher and the researched.” (p. 53). In this section I begin this self-exploration by narrating my story of myself as a teacher, and I trace my “knowing of” (Goldberger, Tarule, Clinchy, & Belenky, 1996) where I am today, asking the questions I care about in this study.

My life as a teacher has been a quest for answers to questions that began during my tumultuous first year of teaching, when I found myself as a young teacher in an environment completely foreign to my upbringing. I completed my teacher preparation program thirteen years ago in a suburban, White, middle class community, and I emerged unprepared to work in diverse environments, unaware of how my privileges would mask my ability to understand my students. In fact my first job in a troubled public school had not been my expected course, but it was the job I accepted after following my husband to the isolated, impoverished, rural Mississippi Delta.

I walked into my first classroom of sixth grade African American students with a “myth of meritocracy” framework (Oakes & Lipton, 2007) to explain student behaviors and academic performance. In other words, in line with popular societal thinking, I naively believed that students and their families received benefits or hardships due to personal efforts. When my students struggled to achieve, I chided them for lack of effort and laziness. I was not able to recognize my own role in my classroom struggles: my lack of pedagogical knowledge and skills, my underdeveloped idea of literacy, my ignorance of my students’ outside communities, my inability to apply pre-adolescent development knowledge, and my underdeveloped ability to connect with my students. But most of all I suffered from a lack of understanding of power. As Delpit (1988) illustrates, I was unaware of my own power positioning and the role of power in my students’ school experiences. I knew nothing of the systemic racism that infected my students’ worlds; I understood little about the poverty they experienced, and had limited openness to the

richness and beauty of their culture. But I thought I was a progressive and civic-minded educator.

It was my own shortcomings that caused my major challenges in this classroom, not those of my students, but it took years for me to recognize this fully. As classroom management and student literacy failure plagued me, I began to recognize that I needed help. Yet the support systems in my school did not provide what I needed. Looking back, although these systems and personnel were not excellent, my own blindness stymied me the most. But my passion for finding answers and my commitment to teaching and learning were to lead me down a path of enlightenment, and I would never be the same again.

I began to ask more and more questions. I wanted to learn to more effectively teach and understand the classroom. I wanted to know how my students could have made it to the sixth grade with reading scores in the early primary levels. I watched my students take standardized tests, and I marveled at how difficult they found the process; I wanted to know how to help them achieve more fully.

I also wanted to know why they seemed to have so much anger towards “White people.” I wanted to learn why the retired African American woman who taught my students the previous semester had such great rapport with the students while I clearly did not. I wanted to motivate my students to care about reading and writing, to care about the classroom. And as I continued to struggle, I experienced small miracles as I began to open my mind. I bonded with many of my students and enjoyed learning more about their worlds through freewriting, open-ended discussions, singing, and poetry slam sessions. They began to teach me about their worlds, and I became a humbled learner.

Seeking support in this learning process, I enrolled in graduate school. Because I desperately sought answers, I devoured everything I could find to improve my teaching.

Yet, even more important than pursuing this burgeoning pedagogy, I began to open my mind. Looking back, I attribute the impetus of this mind-opening to a professor I had who challenged us to think divergently—to question everything we had taken for granted and to engage in the practice of “flow”: of allowing one’s mind to try out previously uncomfortable possibilities. We did this through creative journaling, artwork, lesson planning, meditation, reading and discussing novels, and other personal constructions. Although much of this activity may seem tangential to teaching, I now see that it affected me deeply, and little by little, totally transformed my teaching as well as my life. It changed my habits of thinking; I became courageous enough to ask questions about structures that previously had been off limits due to my education and stifling internalized ideologies. First this opening up was scary and alienating; questioning power ostracized me from my previous community. I needed support and examples from others. And I began to seek more answers through books and articles. I devoured the writings of Kozol (1991), Kohl (1995), and Routman (2000), and left their books transformed. And I realized I needed to teach in a nurturing environment with support from more knowledgeable others.

My husband and I moved to Atlanta, where I was able to continue this journey in urban schools with resources and support personnel to help me develop my evolving pedagogy. In my new first grade classroom serving a student body from over 40 countries, in an urban school district, I evolved by leaps and bounds. My students taught me about the beauty of their cultures, languages, and learning styles. My literacy coach helped me, by basing her work on my pinpointed needs, through a positive relationship, to try out new strategies that reflected exciting sociocultural models of literacy. I learned to promote students’ holistic reading development, to base my teaching upon assessments that addressed students’ needs, and to connect my classroom to students’ interests and

cultures. Alive with passion for learning and seeking professional empowerment, I enrolled in yet another graduate school program, where I continued my questioning.

Through my graduate work and local support, I was able to find myself in front of a re-worked classroom. I replaced my tightly wound systems of rewards and consequences with literacy workshops that operated through intrinsically-motivated students who wrote and read because they cared to, not because I forced them. I devoted myself to better serving underperforming students from troubled backgrounds, and ingested anything I could find to better understand their experiences and needs. I rejoiced in my development, but I found myself on a larger quest. This quest led me to critical scholars; I began with Freire (1970) and resonated with Giroux (1985), McLaren (1998), and Greene (1982). These critical and postmodern interpretations of society and education named things I previously had struggled to understand, and slowly transformed my understanding of myself, my students, and the nature of our unequal society.

With a newfound fascination for culture and interest in the Islamic societies of my students, I next found myself in Morocco as a Peace Corps volunteer. I wanted to better understand the world and my relationship to it, to view it bigger and from an outsider's perspective. And, as I taught English to rural Moroccan students, I found my worldview increasingly challenged and enlarged. I became more aware of the invisible forces governing religion and gender, and I began to understand more of the relationship between the inequities I discovered in Mississippi and worldwide inequities and power distributions. I taught Moroccan and American teachers and found I enjoyed helping others through this teacher learning process. Intoxicated with learning and impassioned to spread this learning to others, I enrolled in a doctoral program to become a teacher educator.

Throughout the five years of my doctoral program I have been able to teach teachers and develop courses to facilitate the kind of learning as mind-opening that I have grown to value. But it has not been easy; at times I have found great challenges in working with middle-class White women, like I was, largely unaware of their privileges and worldviews. Yet my own journey continues to motivate me, and, in my passion for promoting social justice, I recognize that this is the place where my struggle will continue.

During this doctoral work as a graduate student and teacher educator, I have felt a conflict at the separation between theory and practice. I have been able to bridge some of this in my work through participatory action research in an alternative school for students excluded from public schools. Yet, as I have taught about elementary literacy education I have longed to work more fully in elementary literacy classrooms again. And I have wanted to follow in the footsteps of the powerful literacy coach who meant so much to me. And so, despite pressures to produce more traditionally accepted research, I found myself drawn to action research models that bridge theory and practice, research that would place me as teacher and learner in the classroom of a young teacher, as supporter, researcher, and co-learner. And this is where I centered my research efforts for this study, as I breathed in the daily realities in a struggling urban school alongside a young teacher.

My teaching life has been a process of opening, of becoming more aligned with the self that was always there, but was waiting for discovery. It has been an awakening. I fully recognize that everything about this study, from methodology and design to choice of data analysis and theoretical interpretation, directly reflects my own identity and experiences. I value community and find it in Rachel's teaching because I am able to see it in my own. I do not see this as a shortcoming in my research, but as an essential bank

of knowledge contributing to my burgeoning answers to questions that began thirteen years ago in that Mississippi classroom.

So in a way this research is a form of self-study. The more I study another teacher and another classroom, the more I see myself and my own classroom. The more I interpret the vision and teaching of another person, the more I understand my own vision and teaching. I recognize the “messiness” of this open-ended, qualitative, participatory form of action research, and I embrace my inability to separate myself from my work. It is yet another step in the continuing transformation.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

My study will illuminate the work of a young teacher as she envisions and enacts models of literacy, particularly as she enacts a vision of a literacy community. I base this focus upon “community” on my own knowledge of critical scholarship and literacy scholarship, and I draw particularly on sociocultural theories of literacy. My analysis of my participant’s work stands on the shoulders of these others who have examined aspects of the challenges and possibilities of teacher education and literacy that this literature review addresses.

I deliberately place a heavy focus on theoretical work here rather than empirical studies because I believe that too much educational research is conducted without enough consideration of theory, when it is this very theory that shapes and determines empirical research at its core (Foucault, 1966; Gee, 2005). We need to more deeply interrogate what “is worth looking at” rather than resting our empirical studies of “what works” on conceptualizations that are under-interrogated. My study explores and expands conceptualizations of literacy as practiced by a teacher and consider the implications for teacher education.

Critical Perspectives on Schooling and Teacher Education

I argue that teacher educators should support teachers as learners while also recognizing the restraints they face in a productive way. The work of educational critics may provide a backdrop for a grassroots understanding of how and why sociocultural models of literacy instruction might play out in beginning teachers’ classroom. I present these critical views as a framework for the alternative model of teacher support that I propose in my interpretations. I first present theories of scholars who critique mainstream thinking about what education is and what it means to be a teacher. Then I balance these critical perspectives with works that illustrate hope in education within a

critical framework. I show how a balanced understanding of these elements may influence how we think about teachers and teacher education. This section leads the way to my next section, in which I explore how we can move on from and with these critical perspectives to consider what literacy might be.

Critical theory views and teacher education. A community of scholars has analyzed schools with an eye toward power, which distinguishes a critical theory or critical pedagogy tradition. Both perspectives argue that the inequalities in schools are not simply bi-products of a faulty system but inherent in the overall purpose of schooling. Critical-theory oriented scholars often present schools as forces of social stratification, inherently biased toward groups of people who hold power in a given society. I argue that these critiques offer helpful illustrations of the root issues of inequity, and they help us describe the context in which sociocultural models of literacy may be enacted. They provide reasons to critique the popular ideology that assumes models of competition will provide equal opportunity to all based on merit; these critical views pinpoint factors such as privilege, racism, classism, teacher assumptions, schooling structure, and other contextual elements in schooling that interfere with merit. They provide a more detailed picture of the complexity of factors influencing teaching and student literacy learning. I also suggest that they should be handled carefully, so that our thinking does not fall into determinism without room for the realizing the possibilities that still do exist within a flawed system. These perspectives may offer tools for enabling teachers to view education more critically, if, I argue, they are balanced with crucial views of hope.

Schools as systems of social reproduction. Critical scholars have argued that schools and teacher education work as tools in upholding existing systems of social stratification. Bowles and Gintis's analyses of schooling (1970) presented economic, sociological, and historical data to bolster their theory that schooling has always been inextricably tied up

with economics. Their examples of schooling in early childhood through adulthood illustrated how the design and implementation of the American public school from its inception maintained the hierarchies inherent in the makeup of the capitalist system. Among their most famous data sets was their correlational portrayal of the relationship between socioeconomic status and educational level. They illuminated the strong correlation between years of schooling and parental socioeconomic level; they presented the idea that students who succeeded in schools tended to be those with parents who succeeded in schools and/or society. They concluded that schools perpetuate existing power structures despite our beliefs that schools challenge them. Their critical theory analysis presented schools as systems of social reproduction, despite the egalitarian intentions of educational reform.

Bowles and Gintis's analysis of schools as engines of social reproduction was important in its portrayal of the relationship between schools and society, the presentation of schools as reflective of overall society. They challenged the belief that schools can save society, as if schools worked in a vacuum outside of other social forces. Instead schools are refractors of larger economic systems. Yet Bowles and Gintis's social determinism denied students, teachers, schools, families, citizens, and workers a sense of personal agency. It contextualized human beings as simple products of their economic system, destined to either exploit or be exploited. Their final analysis reflected a lack of faith in the power of schools or even human beings to make a difference in the education system.

At the same time, Bowles and Gintis's analysis contained elements helpful for a critical teacher education. They exposed a piece of the picture of inequality missing from popular sociological studies that blamed the families of lower-class students. They argued that schools reward those who buy into the capitalist values of consumption and

production, and schools tend to reproduce and operate out of a structure designed to keep students of specific social classes in their places. They showed how schools tend to encourage students to adapt to the ideology that keeps those in power in their places, and are therefore inherently biased toward the values of the leading classes. I argue that understanding these social forces behind schooling may aid teachers in constructing more nuanced analyses of the sources of educational challenges. Teacher educators may find this analysis helpful for encouraging pre and in-service teachers to examine popular “unexamined” ideologies, for understanding the broad context of the challenges faced in the classroom, and for challenging dominant individualistic classroom models.

Critical historical perspectives. Other scholars have used other kinds of critical analysis to explore the relationships between power and schooling, with implications for teacher education. Spring (2007) has highlighted how race, language and culture have worked as factors of discrimination in public schooling as social reproduction. His historical analyses illuminated the ways in which American schools have served to devalue and destroy the culture of dominated peoples in the United States. His history of the experiences of Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latino Americans revealed how, over and over, education has been a tool of indoctrination and deculturalization for students in subordinate social groups. He distinguished between the experiences of dominated and immigrant groups in America, and, through his historical analysis, called education a force of “cultural genocide” for dominated groups such as Native Americans and African Americans. Spring’s history of American education is a largely a history of racism and exploitation, portraying schools as “civilizing” or “deculturalizing” groups in order to gain power over them. Teacher education that has failed to question status quo practices has continued these trends. Literacy education that does not acknowledge “whose” literacy counts likewise fails to counter these trends.

Similar to Spring, Tyack's historical analyses (1974) exposed many of the racial and class-based biases of the historical leaders of American schools. His work illustrated ways in which schools throughout American history have operated as tools of social control, but also at the same time tools of social hope. Nonetheless, his portrayal of the dominant values in school reform was clear. Writing about the educational reformers of the early twentieth century, he stated:

Their response was not to try to use the school to expose and correct the racism of American society but rather to 'adjust' the black child to the white middle-class norms educators accepted unquestionably. (p. 220)

Through multiple historical accounts, Tyack illustrated how, over and over again, modern schools have been used to promote dominant ideologies and bureaucratic order. These efforts have tended to harm students from lower-status backgrounds, and they continue to do so today.

Tyack's critical perspective historicizes many of the inequities that teachers observe in schools today serving low-income students. As teachers struggle to enact sociocultural visions of literacy that honor individual students' literacies, understanding this history can provide teachers with a conceptualization of how today's bureaucratic accountability models stem from a tradition of models with documented problematic consequences. They also provide us with evidence of the consequences of accountability models that disempowered students and teachers who questioned technocratic models of learning. I argue that exploring Tyack's analyses might give teachers a sense of their work within a long tradition of struggle in public education, and therefore offer a sense of hope within a deepened understanding of the systemic nature of the challenges we face.

Racism and teacher education. Critical race scholars, such as Lynn (2006) have worked in this critical tradition and focused on racism rather than the critical theory focus on

classism. Lynn's critical race theory critiqued the structures of teacher education and pointed to the role of institutional or even cultural racism in the exclusion of minority students from success in schools. He explained how racism underlies schooling foundations in the United States:

Schooling extended the arm of the slave master in the sense that it was a vehicle through which whites could continue to transmit Eurocentric values and morals to the oppressed, namely African Americans and Native Americans. More important, education and schooling in America continued the de-Africanization or acculturation because it forced Africans and others who were not of European descent to ignore their history and their culture and to accept Euro-American culture as their own". (p. 107)

Lynn's analyses of the failures of White teachers to justly teach African American students points to racism as the underlying factor behind this failure, often even unconscious, as teachers reflect and are impacted by overall societal racism, as they are moved by a system they may not even see, and are influenced by institutional traditions they take for granted.

Bell (1992) explains the racism behind educational actors another way. He presents that people tend to act out of the "interest convergence factor": the chilling argument that people make decisions in the end based on what benefits them most, and often these benefits justify racism. Bell argued that white people benefit from systems and structures such as schooling that continue to privilege and exclude based on race. Such models should prompt literacy educators to more deeply examine unchecked assumptions as well as teaching practices that contribute to racism.

I argue that these models might also challenge teachers to envision how they might rethink the ways in which they set up and nurture their classrooms. Teachers might

design and maintain classrooms as places that challenge historical racist legacies through developing supportive classroom communities. I propose that, perhaps, models of the classroom community that support all members might counter historical models of classrooms that benefit some while excluding others.

In a similar vein, Sheurich and Young (1997) claimed that much of the racism impacting students in schools rests deeper than in popularly understood overt manifestations of racism as discrimination based on skin color; they explained that covert racism reaches into the structures, or architecture of thinking that people use to understand their worlds. Covert racism refers to hidden cultural and value assumptions of who or what knowledge and culture has worth; often it denotes even unconscious, unquestioned assumptions that are made about people of color by individuals as well as institutions, society, and civilization.

Racism can also be understood as hidden systems of privilege based on race. Teacher education, if left unquestioned, may continue to perpetuate covert racism by not naming it for what it is. By choosing to ignore it, or to not take action, one perpetuates it. Racism is a systemic reality that we are all impacted by, as if being carried on a moving walkway (Tatum, 1997). To simply ignore it, or to undertake teacher education as if it didn't exist, is to perpetuate it. I point out that these unconscious views have shaped the invisible norms on which much of American schooling has been built; as we question these foundations we might also question the ways in which we design and facilitate literacy classrooms. We might ask: Are our classroom designs perpetuating racism? Are we continuing historical systems of privilege through our teaching? Who is benefiting from the models of literacy we use?

These critical views of education point to the significant roles of race and class in teacher and student experiences. These perspectives help us to consider how what occurs

in schools cannot be simply narrowed down into processes and behaviors. Literacy learning or failure may rest much deeper in systems, societal models, curriculum, teacher assumptions, or views about how the classroom or school should operate, that work to the advantage or disadvantage of students based on race and class-biased values and assumptions. Research examining the work of teachers serving students from class or race backgrounds different from their own needs careful consideration of these forces. Especially because much of the teaching force consists of white, middle class teachers serving students from backgrounds different than their own, teacher education requires a critical understanding of race and class. Finally, this critical understanding of race and class might challenge beliefs that individualistic and competition-centric models of teaching or reform operate justly. I suggest that their highlighting of systemic privilege and exclusion contribute to an argument for re-envisioning how literacy might instead be envisioned as a community in which everyone succeeds.

A cultural analysis perspective. McDermott's (2008) critical perspective provided examples of the "unconscious" racism that Sheurich and Young (1997) began to outline, although he used very different language in his analysis, and called his analysis "cultural" rather than racial critique. He argued that we need to understand educational issues through a cultural lens, to undertake "cultural analysis." This deeper form of analysis is distinguishable from the two levels of analysis he argues are typically used by educators and traditionally used in teacher education: psychological and social analyses. The psychological lens focuses on the actions of individuals, blames the individual for problems, and looks to the individual for solutions. The social lens focuses on social interactions and blames people and the ways in which they work together for problems. The cultural lens interprets problems through a wider focus, and questions the cultural

framework that set up the ways of thinking and interacting that a particular group of individuals follow.

Like the critical theory and critical race perspective, the cultural analysis perspective emphasizes ways in which the cultural frameworks people use to understand situations lead to inequity. McDermott's analysis called into question hidden assumptions in much of American education, particularly highlighting those that lead us to accept the idea that it is justifiable and normal for some students to succeed at the expense of other students' failures.

When looking at teacher education through a cultural analysis, McDermott suggests that we would ask how we might prepare teachers to question the hidden assumptions they hold about students, communities, and education in general. We would ask teachers to look more deeply at the problematic cultural thinking patterns that could lead them to perpetuating the status quo, perpetuating inequity. Teacher educators would then facilitate teacher thinking beyond dichotomies in order to consider how situations for dichotomies have been constructed. We would help teachers to see how we as a society have set up situations in which certain problems arise, and that if we collectively changed our ways of viewing we might be able to confront such problems.

Yet McDermott presents that this is not what has tended to happen in teacher education. Instead, teacher education (among other cultural institutions) has in many ways perpetuated many problematic ways of viewing by not calling them into question. McDermott offers the example of how institutions such as teacher education tend to focus on teaching teachers psychological or social learning theories. These theories explain learning either as an individual, hierarchical process, or as a social, environmental-dependent process. But both views on their own miss the cultural forces behind these processes, the cultural architecture that created the theories in the first place.

This architecture includes forces such as hidden assumptions in our minds about reality: e.g.: that some will succeed and others will fail; or that assessments created to sort and stratify are necessary or inevitable. Popular psychological and social views fail to call into question how theories are used in our culture to perpetuate structural inequities, how we use our ideas about what it means to learn in order to shut some out and let others in.

A cultural analysis would step back and acknowledge that above understanding the process of learning is understanding how our cultural usages of what we believe learning to be restrict and constrict. Teacher education from a cultural analysis would question foundations to ask why we think about things the way we do, rather than blaming individuals or communities. In this study I attempt to present a nuanced examination of what learning might be. I theorize with a teacher about literacy as community, as we work within a system that tends to instead cling to an unexamined model of literacy for individual competition and social stratification. Our model of literacy as community reaches into the vault of assumptions and presents an alternative assumption about what teaching might encompass. It presents an alternative cultural model of the literacy classroom and of what teacher education might be.

Other culturally-focused analyses. Other scholars have used similar cultural analysis tools to point out critical issues for teacher educators. Heath's ethnographic work (1983) called into question major patterns of thought that had organized mainstream thinking about the educational performance of African American students and students living in poverty. She changed the dominant paradigm for many teacher educators by revealing the role cultural and linguistic differences play in educational achievement. She provided ethnographic evidence of the value of the alternative cultural forms of literacy that non-mainstream students, such as the rural Appalachian African American students in her

study, practiced. This analysis named the cultures of students outside mainstream society as different and valuable rather than deficit.

Others have questioned dominant cultural values as expressed as politics, in policy and political values. Labaree (1997) argued that modern American education has been distinctly marked by a societal belief that education should be a commodity rather than a right. This results in a core assumption, beneath our rhetoric of equality, that it is acceptable for some children to fail while others succeed, and this assumption is reflected in our political decisions. He presented three distinct goals that have shaped American education: democratic equality, social efficiency, and social mobility, and he documented how social mobility has overshadowed the other two historical goals. As in Bell's interest convergence factor (1992) we as a people have come to value our own mobility above democratic principles that serve others. Politically, we have come to accept philosophical and political approaches to schooling that are not be designed to benefit others outside our own children and communities. This is evident in the increasing lean toward neoliberal views of education that do not conceptualize education as a public good (Sleeter, 2008; Lipman, 2011). In teacher education, if we view our work as teacher educators as simply preparing teachers to fit into the way things are, rather than preparing them to question values and politics, we continue to erode the possibilities for democracy.

This may be evident in the many problematic assumptions that White, middle class teachers may have concerning minority students or students living in poverty. Many scholars have explored these teacher assumptions (Haberman, 1992, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Sleeter 2008a). As Lynn (2006) and Sheurich and Young (1997) addressed, these assumptions reach deeper than simple views of racism as discrimination based on color, and reach into hidden societal assumptions about others. As a society,

children are raised with assumptions about such things as meritocracy (Oakes & Lipton, 2007), the idea that we receive what we deserve, and concepts of what it means to be of value that may exclude those who do not fit a White, middle-class mold. In turn, many privileged children, who tend to be successful in school because they adhere to and originate from the expected mold, become teachers who, despite their good intentions, uphold problematic assumptions. Oftentimes, their work with students from different backgrounds perpetuates legacies of racism and classism, despite teachers' overt beliefs otherwise. And many teachers' application of classroom models based on unfettered competition tend to perpetuate these legacies of privilege, masking it as "merit". In turn children are socialized into accepting class and race-based privileges as if they were "earned rights".

Differing cultural logic and social reproduction

The work of Lareau (1999) offers a more complex picture of these forces of social reproduction than the often dualistic interpretations of some critical theorists. Her work challenged similar mainstream assumptions by uncovering how society and schools' responses to class-related parental practices results in inequitable outcomes for students outside the middle-class norm. Lareau's ethnographic study illuminated childrearing practices as they differed in the work of working and middle class families and found class to more clearly delineate differences than race. Her analysis introduced several concepts that constitute the two main approaches to childrearing that distinguished each class-based group and the cultural logic underlying them.

Lareau's examination of middle-class parenting pointed to the construct: "concerted cultivation", the manner in which middle class parents tended to approach childrearing. The middle-class families devoted their time and energy to scheduling and organizing activities specifically designed for their children's growth and enrichment. This kind of

behavior aligned with mainstream and school expectations of parents, and thus it resulted in access to school and mainstream arenas. It developed within the children a “sense of entitlement”, as they came to expect privileges and services reflecting these childhood experiences.

In contrast, the working-class parents she studied operated out of a different logic. Their approach to childrearing consisted of “the accomplishment of natural growth”. These parents emphasized taking care of their children’s basic needs, and they tended to leave children freedom to control and pursue their own leisure activities, instead of orchestrating elaborate development itineraries for them. This practice stemmed from the constraints of parental work schedules as well as from specific values systems that emphasized such things as extended family, among other things. This value system contained many strengths, but its mismatch in relation to middle-class values resulted in what Larreau called “the transmission of differential advantages.” As working class children grew, they developed a “sense of constraint”.

When the working-class children interacted with societal members such as teachers, who did not understand or value their families’ cultural logic, teachers and others responded with criticism of working class family practices. As a result, working class children gained a “sense of distance, distrust, and constraint in their relation to such institutions to which their upbringing ‘mismatched’ “(p.3). Combined with differences in language, vocabulary, and lack of knowledge of institutional culture, working class children emerged into society without the powerful hidden privileges their middle-class peers had developed.

Larreau’s depiction complicates an understanding of social stratification and reveals hidden forces contributing to inequality. Her work uncovers the importance of more fully examining how hidden, unchecked class-based thinking patterns and values systems

affect schooling. Her work especially provides important implications for teacher education, as it pinpoints ways in which teacher education that condemns working class childrearing practices and uplifts middle class practices contributes to inequality. These often unconscious views are perpetuated through teacher education programs when teachers do not learn to critically view class and societal structures. And they are further compounded when teachers set up their classrooms using competitive models that reward students for class-based privileges and punish students for class-based restraints.

Teacher education scholars continue to explore the roots and consequences of teachers' unconscious views of students (Milner, 2001; Lynn et al, 2010; Sleeter, 2008a.). Many trace the roots of these views in systems larger than teachers themselves, such as institutional habitus (Cornbleth, 2010), the taken-for-granted assumptions and rhetoric of a school body. Other scholars have proposed various suggestions for helping teachers to explore and eradicate these deep cultural undertones, through such steps as exploring white privilege (McIntosh, 1989) and honoring the perspectives of marginalized students (Brown, Clark, & Bridges, 2011), but there is still much work to be done in this area. I argue that the model of the classroom as a community, in both the literacy classroom and the teacher education classroom, might offer an alternative space for exploring these issues and countering historical exclusions.

All of these critical perspectives present problems in models of schooling that assume competition and individual striving will achieve equal opportunities for the academic success of all. If we take seriously Labaree's point that the overriding goal of education should be the participation in and promotion of democracy, not the promotion of neoliberal agendas, the concept of learning literacy as "community" may provide a useful construct. Promoting "community" in the classroom presents an alternative to popular models of competition and individualism; the critical views addressed above point to

reasons to critique assumptions that competition and individualism are always virtues. Sociocultural models of literacy learning in community may offer an alternative, a model of teaching that might help students construct and envision a more democratic society, through experience in classrooms built on democratic principles such as “community.”

Critical, yet hopeful. How can we balance a critical understanding of culture, society, and racism with the concerns of teachers in the trenches? While some scholars devote their energies to explaining what is wrong with education and society, others start with a similar critical perspective yet end up with practical and hopeful suggestions for both challenging problematic cultural assumptions and facilitating teacher education for teacher empowerment.

Oakes’s major work (1985) is an example of scholarship that offers a critical, yet hopeful perspective. Her research documented and compared the experiences of students in multiple tracked classes to examine the relationship between socioeconomic status, race and track. She found that tracking produced and reproduced inequalities. Her analysis highlighted major discrepancies between tracks as they correlated to learning, opportunities, climate, and attitudes of students.

Like critical scholars, Oakes found that lower-tracked students tended to face huge, often insurmountable barriers to success. Schools served as tools of social reproduction; they reproduced the existing societal inequities. She, like other social and cultural reproduction theorists, argued that the fight for equity must occur on many fronts, not just within schools, but in many segments of society. Yet, unlike some critical scholars, she argued that school reform is still a necessary component of the struggle; we must focus our efforts on making schools more equitable places. She stated that two things must be done:

First, schools must relinquish their role as agents in reproducing inequities in the larger society. Schools must cease to sort and select students for future roles in society. Second, schools must concentrate on equalizing the day-to-day educational experiences for all students. This implies altering the structure and contents of schools that seem to accord greater benefits to some groups of students than to others. (p.205)

Oakes directly pointed to the need to re-structure schools for equity. Much of the legacy of Oakes' work has been her ability to influence certain policy changes that have led to the detracking and reorganization of high schools to provide more educational access to students from all classes and backgrounds. Her work has also been used to help teachers critically question the social justice effects of schooling practices. Oakes also reminded us that working within schools is not enough to fight societal inequity that is pervasive within our many institutions. Nonetheless the power of her findings has driven her to dedicate her life to doing what can be done to change schools to make them more democratic and just places.

For those interested in sociocultural models of literacy, Oakes's findings demand that all students have access to rich learning models, not just those from privileged backgrounds, who have traditionally benefitted from tracking. It should cause us to question a perhaps more insidious form of tracking in which students in poorer schools may experience teaching based on impoverished literacy models while those in more affluent schools experience rich models, reflecting and perpetuating a stratified social order (Anyon, 1980, 2005; Haberman, 1991). It also might point us toward re-envisioning a model of the classroom as a community that promotes equity for all rather than only the success of some. I argue for examining as well the work of teachers who challenge these models and deliver rich literacy instruction in contexts historically marked by the inequity of tracking or exclusion.

Teaching and power. Delpit's work (2006) presented another perspective on power and the education of minority students. Delpit maintained that, while it is important to view education from a critical perspective, it is essential to remain committed to the grassroots, pragmatic, individual day-to-day struggles of students in classrooms, to use literacy education to provide "access to power" for students.

Delpit (2006) explored conflicts between White teachers and African American students and ways in which African American students have been underserved by progressive education, process writing approaches, or cultural discussions that fail to recognize equity issues in access to power. She directed public attention to the importance of teaching skills and "the culture of power" to students who do not otherwise have access to mainstream tools of achievement. Most poignantly, Delpit illuminated ways in which perspectives of African Americans, people living in poverty, and other minorities have been left out of the discussion of "their" education.

Her early work (1988) addressed this topic explicitly in its implications for teacher education. She explained how four components of power are critical for interpreting educational issues:

"Issues of power are enacted in classrooms.

There are rules for participating in power, that is, there is a "culture of power."

The rules of the culture of power are a reflection of the rules of those who have power.

If you are not already in the culture of power, being told explicitly the rules of that culture makes acquiring power easier.

Those with power are frequently less aware of—or at least willing to acknowledge—its existence. Those with less power are often most aware of its existence." (p. 282)

Delpit continued to explore how the last two principles of power play out in the beliefs and actions of many White, middle-class teachers who mean well but misunderstand the

power distribution of society. She presented teacher comments such as the following and problematizes them: “I want the same thing for everyone else’s children as I want from mine.”

Delpit countered:

To provide schooling for everyone’s children that reflects liberal middle-class values and aspirations is to ensure the maintenance of the status quo, to ensure that power, the culture of power, remains in the hands of those who already have it. (p. 285)

She explained, not that students outside the culture of power should not receive an education that emphasizes freedom and autonomy (some have misunderstood her as saying this), but that education should provide students with more: particularly with the (often implicit) tools and codes needed for success in society. The problem arises when mainstream educators fail to recognize how power works, and how their role in the power hierarchy affords them advantages that their students may not have. For example, learning “Standard” English from one’s parents as a young child provides hidden privileges when one is expected to communicate and perform in this “power” dialect at school or work. To not teach non-mainstream students this power code would be to deny them opportunities for success.

But teaching the culture of power should not be a replacement of students’ home culture. Delpit calls this “cultural genocide”. Teachers should recognize, value, and build upon student culture, rather than viewing it as a “deficit”, as lacking. Students outside mainstream culture come to school with strong cultural knowledge, language skills, etc.; yet these skills and strengths are many times not those that provide students access to power. Among these strengths may be different interactional styles and expectations for teachers’ displays of authority, such as the use of direct commands and the communication of high expectations.

Delpit also had much to offer in opposition to the many defeatist versions of critical theory. Delpit recognized the same power inequities as the critical theorist, but she called for social justice by listening and taking seriously the perspectives of Black and minority students and families, by acknowledging their desires for instruction that explicitly teaches their children power codes, respects their cultures, and earns their respect.

Delpit concluded with a statement that captures what she believes ought to be a goal in preparing teachers from mainstream culture to serve students from minority groups:

Finally, we must be vulnerable enough to allow our world to turn upside down in order to allow the realities of others to edge themselves into our consciousness. In other words, we must become ethnographers in the true sense. (p. 297)

Delpit's work was both critically aware and at the same time hopeful. Delpit's major contribution to education scholarship is more than a resolution of the skills vs. process debate; it is an advocacy of teacher education for critical consciousness. Such critical awareness may be a necessity in literacy education for students who have been miss-served in schools by unacknowledged power systems. It also might add a critical edge to a sociocultural model of literacy by emphasizing that there is an important place for explicit teaching and learning "codes of power." As we consider what a literacy community might be, this emphasis on power should remind us that, as we construct alternative models of community, we still have to prepare students with the tools needed for success in larger society.

Critical and culturally relevant. Ladson-Billings's (1995) qualitative study of eight highly acclaimed teachers of African American students provided insights into the possibilities in teacher education. Unlike much of earlier research on cultural differences in education, her work fell within the tradition of Irvine (1990) and others who have examined what teachers could and did do to work successfully with African American

students rather than looking at the factors that inhibited this success. Her intensive study of the practices and perspectives of successful teachers led to the generation of a theory of “culturally relevant pedagogy”.

Ladson-Billings’s grounded theory explicated the characteristics the teachers in her study shared. First, the teachers all had positive views of themselves, the community they worked in, and their ability to hold students to a high standard. Next, the teachers all developed and maintained positive relationships with students and developed community among students. Her examples of classroom interactions and student comments reveal the teachers’ treatment of all the students as smart and important members of the community. Finally, Ladson-Billings addressed the conceptions of knowledge held by the teachers. The teachers honored students’ constructions of knowledge and encouraged students to be critical. They taught them to question authoritative perspectives, and to “code-switch.” Pointedly, they did not overly emphasize standardized tests, but helped their students instead to see assessments within a much broader perspective.

Ladson-Billings’ work, like Delpit’s (2006) is an example of critical yet hopeful scholarship. Ladson-Billings recognized inherently unjust power systems that sit at the core of educational institutions, yet she highlighted specific steps that can be and are being done in real classrooms by talented teachers and committed researchers. Her work helps us remain committed to the understanding the everyday realities in schools, and remain hopeful of possibilities as we recognize the systemic nature of the problems we face. Her work also points to the need for more research like hers that illuminates what exemplary teachers do, rather than more research that uses culture to “essentialize” or “exoticize” African American students as “others” or as having “cultural” deficits. When this early work is coupled with her later work emphasizing the application of critical race theory rather than multiculturalism (Ladson-Billings, 2008; Ladson-Billings & Tate,

2009), the importance of future studies that examine schooling and race from a critical perspective takes central stage.

A hopeful study of teacher education. Other scholars operating in a critical tradition have illuminated teacher education programs that counter inequitable traditions and provide models of communities that downplay competition. Zeichner (2000) studied a teacher education program with a reputation for graduating outstanding teacher candidates. His case study of Alverno College, a private liberal arts college in Wisconsin, detailed the program's approach to teacher education, including the perspectives of faculty, students, and cooperating teachers, and the approach to curriculum and instruction. He illustrated the program's emphasis on subduing competition and uplifting relationship building.

The teacher education program at Alverno College operated out of a unique "ability-based" approach to learning and assessment; these "abilities" refer to college-wide learning goals spelled out as practices or dispositions students were expected to develop through their studies. . Students did not receive any grades at this college; instead students were evaluated through narrative description of their development and application of these abilities. Zeichner stated, "I doubt there is a teacher education program anywhere that gives such careful attention to assessment of its students" (p. 24).

Students and professors described Alverno as having "a special culture and a special vision" (p. 28). It was a noncompetitive environment, and the faculty focused upon teaching according to a strong sense of shared vision of a child-centered philosophy. Faculty stressed relationships and modeling. They valued using assessment to enrich learning rather than to rank or sort, and they involved students in the process of self-assessment. The faculty created specific goals in relation to the five teacher education

“abilities” they wanted to facilitate, and these goals tend to emphasize critical interrogation of societal structures as well as the integration between theory and practice.

The model of Alverno is a portrait of a teacher education program that models for its students a culture diverging from the widespread popular teacher education model of competition. Students are not motivated to become excellent teachers through grading or highly consequential peer comparisons, but through descriptive and democratic assessment. Zeichner stated, “A number of students told us that the non-competitive environment in the program was a key factor in the growth as teachers that they were able to achieve” (p. 28).

This alternative approach to teacher education illustrates that it is possible to diverge from neoliberal models of competition. The program’s method of preparing teachers to downplay competition occurs through experiencing a program that downplays competition. It is an example of teacher education that does not merely “instruct” teachers about practices based on certain democratic values, but it seeks to immerse its students in a learning environment upheld by such values. I suggest that there is a need for additional exploration of possible non-competitive teacher education models in other environments, including the public university and the public school.

A critical approach to teacher education. Other scholars have embraced a critical perspective on education and considered its practical application to teacher education, in order to develop theories of teacher support. These scholars illustrate possibilities for teacher education, and I argue that more work may need to be done in similar areas, to understand the processes of learning of beginning teachers, especially in such ways that help us to consider how we can better support teachers in literacy teaching that does more than simply promoting the status quo.

Exploring “Whiteness.” Howard’s (1999) work on White identity development explores the deep racist foundations of our society, yet emerges with a visionary call for the construction of a better world. The author, a White male, presents the narrative of his own personal development from racial unawareness into critical awareness, infused with critical history and racial identity theory. He emphasizes the importance of teaching other White people to learn to question and view the world more critically, to acknowledge their own roles in the perpetuation of racism. Yet he frames this understanding within overall concepts of domination and identity development.

Howard shows how the wheels of racism turn both through hidden societal forces and personal psychological forces. Building off the work of others who have presented theories of White identity development, he elaborates three categories of White thought: fundamentalist, integrationist, and transformationist. He argues that through experiences, alliances, and intentional personal reflection and action, White people can change their orientations and move from the problematic categories as fundamentalist and integrationist into a transformationist state of being. Howard emphasizes the complexity of Whiteness as a cultural and racial identity of tension and multidimensionality.

Howard proposes that, as White people come to know themselves and achieve the more critical levels of awareness, in the community of others they can pave the way for a more just world. Howard’s model contains useful tools for teacher educators working with White teachers as they move through the stages of identity development that he illuminates. His critical examination of race from the perspective of a White male who has undergone his own evolution of identity provides a needed model for understanding what other White teachers may experience when they encounter racism and struggle to make sense of it. His work falls within a body of other critical scholars who interrogate their own whiteness in an effort to confront societal racism (Conley, 2000; McIntosh,

2008a; Paley, 1979; Sleeter, 1989). Critical teacher education demands such a critical interrogation and exploration of Whiteness. As we work with majority White preservice teachers we need tools such as this to aid us in understanding and responding to the depth of evolution White teachers may need to experience to work equitably with students of color.

Social justice literacies. Johnson's (2010) critical ethnography of teacher candidates in a high-needs urban district outlined specific attributes teachers exhibit that make up what she calls a "a social justice pedagogy." In the tradition of New Literacy Studies, she labeled these attributes as "literacy practices". In her 2010 study she built off her earlier trajectory of social justice literacy practices (2007). Her previous work outlined how teachers committed to social justice demonstrate systems literacies, or understanding the complexities of the systems and structures influencing situations and actions (such as racism, classism, inequity, etc.). They also exhibit strategic literacies, using strategies of activism toward injustice, which include coalition-building literacies and oppositional literacies. In this work Johnson added a new category to the list: her analysis of the two teachers suggested a third form of strategic literacy: "testimonial literacies".

Johnson illustrated that her two teacher candidates tended to have developed some systems literacies, but not strategic literacies. They seemed to have some understanding of the depth of the structural nature of the intense schooling challenges they experienced, but they did not have adequate skills in knowing what to do about it strategically. However she revealed that the teacher candidates did exhibit the beginning ability to listen to their students' stories and empathize with their perspectives. Their development of these testimonial literacies was conflicted and in process. In many ways their teacher education program did not adequately prepare them for this work. For example, the teachers were shocked at the emotional strain of teaching in a high-needs district and they

did not enter the schools prepared to approach the depth of the relationship work that teaching there would entail. The two teacher candidates felt ill prepared to know how to build these relationships and apply the skills of counseling, almost of therapy, that testimonial literacy would entail. Johnson argues that teacher education should explicitly teach these testimonial literacies.

Johnson's testimonial literacy contains two main elements: "bearing witness to students' experiences and resisting deficit models of students" (p.172). This is a literacy that involves building and maintaining relationships with students from very different backgrounds, and responding appropriately and lovingly to their experiences. Johnson advocates that more attention in teacher education must be given to this important work, and to the reality of the teacher-as-therapist in many such environments. This teacher education for social justice literacies must bridge the gap between theory and practice, and engage the student in critical interrogation about structures while also facilitating on-the-grounds experiences with both pedagogy and relationships.

Johnson's labeling of teaching practices as literacy practices offers important implications for teacher education, as it built off of the premise that these practices are not innate, but can be taught. It outlined components of what teacher education for social justice might look like. I argue that such lists of teacher practices for social justice might be enhanced through also attending more closely to pedagogy, and I argue that sociocultural models of literacy might provide guidance for such consideration of socially-just pedagogy. Particularly, a sociocultural model of literacy as "community" might add additional dimensions to a teacher's testimonial literacies.

Critical complex teacher education. Kincheloe's model of "critical complex teacher education" (2004) will be helpful to consider alongside of Johnson's list of social justice pedagogies. His critical pedagogy orientation explicitly outlined several types of

knowledge that he argued should shape teacher education. He presented the following types of knowledge as essential to the teacher education process: empirical, normative, critical, experiential, and reflective-synthetic.

Kincheloe's *empirical knowledge*, unlike popular definitions of empirical knowledge as knowing "research-based practices" refers to a model of teacher education that fosters an understanding of the ideological and situational nature of all research knowledge alongside a broad knowledge of empirical data on teaching. Kincheloe's *normative knowledge* refers to the moral dimension of schooling and the ways in which teacher education can help teachers sift through the norms and values that shape their practices. *Critical knowledge* refers to teachers' interrogation of the historical and social forces that shape the way things are, the disposition to ask who has benefitted and who has been exploited through schooling and societal structures. Such critical understanding should underscore teachers' view of diversity, Kincheloe argues. This critical perspective shapes a teacher as activist with deep purpose, in contrast to technicist teacher education in which teachers simply do as they are told or expected.

The next form of knowledge, *ontological knowledge*, refers to teachers' knowledge of themselves, of their own identities, their historicity, and their development. Kincheloe's *experiential knowledge* included teachers' practical knowledge of classroom work but also included other forms of practice such as teacher education, curriculum development, and policymaking. Teacher education must capitalize on this essential knowledge by learning within the real contexts of schools, through experience, rather than through being "told" what to do.

Finally, Kincheloe's *reflective/synthetic knowledge* tied these other forms of knowledge together. It referred to teachers' ability to reflect on these different forms of knowledge in relation to one another and to make decisions based on such synthesis.

Teacher education should prepare teachers for complex decision-making, rather than setting them up to look for “one right answer”. They should learn to generate this kind of knowledge with their students and their communities, and use the knowledge to challenge injustice and empower themselves and their students.

Kincheloe’s multiple forms of teacher knowledge constitute a critical complex teacher education. I argue that there is a great need for more research that explores what this may look like in a grassroots setting as enacted by a beginning teacher. I also argue that there is a need to relate these forms of knowledge more closely to literacy teaching. In my study I present a portrait of a developing teacher under the influence of this conceptualization of teacher education. My study highlights her everyday vision and practice, her multiple forms of knowledge. I infuse my embrace of a critically complex teacher education with a sociocultural model of literacy, and I present my own interpretations for teacher education building off these foundations.

Critical views and my study. I frame my study with these models of critique of teacher education for three major reasons. First, these critical views of education and society ground an argument for re-envisioning the classroom as a community rather than an arena of individual competition. They provide examples of the forces that impede fair competition and point to the need for more equitable models of education; these ground my rationale for the application of sociocultural models of literacy in teacher education. Second, in my analysis of my teacher participant’s teaching, I pinpoint aspects of literacy pedagogy illuminated by these critical views. In my data analysis chart in Appendix K, I consider the implications of some of these theories in my participant’s classroom. Third, in my later theorizing on how my collaboration offers an alternative model of teacher support, I consider how these theories impact and historicize my proposed, tentative theory and model of teacher education. In this next section I illuminate models of literacy

that I argue present the second pillar of support for my analysis of my participant's sociocultural literacy teaching practices. I find the work of sociocultural theorists and new literacy scholars hopeful in my quest for viewing education as a positive rather than restrictive force, and I lay out their models for application to teacher education. I present them before I present my own study as they provide the backbone of my own thinking about what we can do in education, and they provide the models on which I place my own work in the classroom.

The Challenges and Possibilities of Literacy.

. Literacy is not an uncontroversial or uni-definitional concept. Because educators, scholars, and other members of society have held a variety of conceptualizations of the nature and purposes of literacy, scholars in recent years have offered varying schema to organize these conceptualizations. It is the purpose of this literature review to explore a number of the models developed by literacy scholars that help us to more robustly consider what literacy looks like from a sociocultural perspective.

Through this examination I present an argument for more research on the application of these newer theories in school practice. I argue that these theories on literacy may hold promise as well in challenging our views of teacher education. They may offer theoretical clarity about the possibilities and challenges in an education concerned with social justice. Such theoretical clarity may be a necessary prerequisite for work in literacy reform, particularly reform that is concerned with equity in the literacy experiences of marginalized students in underperforming schools.

The theoretical clarity and complexity I advocate demands a move beyond mere pragmatism. An influential article on literacy research traditions (Dillon, O'Brien, & Heilman, 2000) argued for pragmatism, an epistemological approach that attempts to distinguish between useful and non-useful approaches to literacy and literacy research

based upon “what works.” This pragmatic approach, well intentioned as it is, may blind itself to the ideological nature of literacy; “what works” depends, first, upon what one sees as “what counts”, and “what counts” depends, foremost, on one’s conceptualizations of the purposes and nature of literacy itself. We would be blind-sighted to assume we can examine what works without seriously considering the actual construct that is “working” in the first place. Too often missing in the recent discussions of literacy reform is the question of what exactly we are trying to reform.

In this review, I will outline variations in recent conceptualizations emerging out of the psychological perspective of constructivism, the ethnographic traditions of sociology and anthropology, sociocultural and linguistic traditions, critical literacy traditions and postmodern traditions, and finally, New Literacy Studies. I will argue that, rather than assuming a false “atheoretical stance” that tends to privilege routine practices and thus oftentimes perpetuate covert inequities, we seek “theoretical clarity” in our pursuits of literacy research and reform, that we know why we do what we do, and that we use such knowledge to interrogate leftover theories that may impede social justice. This theoretical clarity is essential grounding for a deeper interrogation of literacy instruction.

In my work, rather than pretending “neutrality,” I begin with an explicit lens toward equity, a conviction that literacy education and assessment should promote full participation in democracy for all people. Before asking what works, I ask, what should it mean for literacy that “works.” I am concerned with education for holistic development, with equitable holistic development of **all** students. I refuse to blindly focus only on methods that are shown to produce the highest achievement scores on standardized tests. Instead, my notion of “full development” must rely on the work of recent theory that explains the extent and complexity of what this fullness might mean in literacy education.

This section of my literature review frames my later analysis by spelling out literacy theory and research that guided the analysis.

The idea of multiple paradigms. In this section I present literature that explicates multiple paradigms for viewing what literacy might be. These scholars and researchers provide the teacher educator and literacy teacher with multiple paths for understanding literacy pedagogy in response to the multiple ways that literacy occurs.

Three incomplete metaphors for literacy. At a time when the word literacy was often commonly assumed to represent a one-dimensional concept, psychologists such as Sylvia Scribner (1984) arose to challenge this one-dimensionality, and to reveal the complexities and contradictions of literacy. Scribner promoted a conceptualization of literacy as a social practice at a time when it was commonly explained to be a psychological process. Scribner's three metaphors for literacy (1984) reflected her own thinking as a psychologist whose anthropologically-oriented research raised important challenges to prominent psychological views, and called into question overly simplistic, "culturally-free" models of literacy.

In order to explain the social nature of literacy, Scribner presented three distinct metaphors for how literacy has been viewed throughout history. Her first metaphor captured an ever-popular way of thinking about literacy, "literacy as adaptation." In this view, literacy represents the "functional" skills and competencies, as emphasized by behaviorists, that will ensure that a citizen is prepared to operate in society. Although this "newer" view of literacy may appear progressive in its practical emphasis and the challenge it poses toward elite canons of knowledge, it ignores critical questions such as the changing forms of literacy needed for a technologically advancing society and a culturally diverse world. It also ignores the idea that "what is useful" depends upon one's values. Its pragmatic approach ignores the problem of "whose knowledge" becomes

valued and whose becomes ignored as schools prescribe specific competencies that someone deems as important. The value-free assumptions behind this model make it internally flawed.

Scribner's second metaphor for literacy, "literacy as power," is equally as limited as the first. This metaphor captures the perspective of those who view literacy as having purpose inasmuch as it provides access to power. She cites Paulo Freire as an example of a proponent of this form of literacy and explains that from this viewpoint, literacy education should create critical consciousness. Scribner then cites the failure of governmental international literacy development schemes as evidence for why this conceptualization may reflect a naïve faith in the power of literacy. She argues for the shortsightedness of the idea that literacy consists of access to those skills and forms of knowledge that hold the promise of power. While she sees such empowerment as a worthy goal, she questions its practical application.

The third metaphor that Scribner presents is the idea of "literacy as a state of grace." In this metaphor the literate person is the one who has "enlightenment" as defined by canonical or revered knowledge. The idea of a "liberal education" aligns with this model of literacy, as does the idea of the master of religious dogma in many traditional societies. The literate one is the "cultured" or "learned" one, and the purpose of literacy is to promote such "culture" or religion. Some proponents of this view, such as UNESCO in the 1970s (p. 14), have argued that literacy represents a higher form of human development. Scribner finds multiple problems inherent in this familiar conceptualization of literacy. She questions the class biases behind such views of literacy and its negative implications for oral societies. She argues that this position's assumption, that such oral cultures' non-dominant forms of language do not represent literacy, is problematic. Her own research the Vai people of West Africa calls these assumptions into question.

Scribner does not use her own psychological research to argue that any of the three metaphors she presents are better than the others; instead, she argues that all three are limited, yet all three, considered together, can open up our conceptualizations of literacy. Scribner's three metaphors provided an innovative approach for helping people think about the multiple facets of literacy at a time when unquestioned beliefs about the nature of literacy were popular. However, other scholars have further opened the discussion in additional important ways. It is the purpose of the rest of this chapter, in the tradition of Scribner's work, to extend this discussion by looking at some of the other ways in which scholars have attempted to map out different purposes and dichotomies of literacy conceptualizations. How do these three models and Scribner's critique of them hold up in light of other work on literacy conceptualizations, especially sociocultural views? First we will consider educational psychologists who have expanded views of literacy by highlighting the contrast between behaviorism and constructivism.

Behavioral and constructivist theories of learning. The “new” science of educational psychology became popularized in the early 20th century at a time when factory models of organization and economics led to a highly routinized form of educational efficiency. With it the “science” of behaviorism left its mark on schools and on conceptualizations of literacy. Literacy, once seen as serving elite or religious purposes for privileged classes, became viewed as having the economic purpose of training skilled workers for an industrialized society, of teaching the “behaviors” and “basics” for citizens and workers. Yet this science of behaviorism, as popular as it was, was to become sharply critiqued by cognitive psychologists and shown to work out of limited assumptions about learning. Through the lens of educational psychology, I will now present two ways of organizing the different schools of thought on literacy that have resulted from these schisms and the impact of history on theories of literacy. In order to explore the differences in these two

major psychological camps, I will use a study of models of learning held by psychometricians (Shepard, 1991) that concisely presents the challenges that constructivist theories presents in the face of behaviorist theories.

While numerous people have outlined the differences between behaviorism and constructivism, a useful and concise juxtaposition of the two can be found in Shepard's study on the perspectives of psychometricians. Shepard analyzed the thinking of prominent testmakers, and presented the differences between behaviorism, a prevailing perspective, and cognitive psychology, or constructivism, reflected by newer scholarship but too rarely reflected in the thinking of psychometricians.

Behaviorism, the psychological approach to learning that assumed that human behavior can be explained and controlled through simple stimulus and response models, was found to be highly present in the responses of the psychometricians in Shepard's study. The interviewees in her study tended to present learning as a series of specific, hierarchical "basic skills" that had to be spelled out, taught explicitly, and mastered before moving on to the next skill. These psychometricians said these skills were "building blocks" of learning; the skills needed to be demonstrated by tests first and their application would come later. Lessons would be determined by very specific test-based objectives, and as often as possible, tests should be given to determine whether or not the student could appropriately demonstrate the objective. This highly prescriptive and programmatic mode of teaching depended on having students demonstrate desired behaviors, and then move on to demonstrate each new set of behaviors as the earlier set is mastered.

Shepard critiqued these behavioral principles, and explained how the testmakers who held these views, adherents to "the criterion-referenced testing learning theory," failed to acknowledge that tests instead are in fact only samples from which we can create

“inferences” about learning rather than exact measurements of student learning. They also ignored much of recent research that calls these behavioral principles into question. Nonetheless, their prominent positions are instructive. The behavioral principles the psychometricians adhere to play out in their beliefs and practices concerning tests and test-driven instruction. A generation of students have been educated in a system that is motivated and measured by products that reflect the behaviorism of an earlier era.

Shepard presented the theories of cognitive and constructivist psychology as an alternative to the behavioral views held by the psychometricians in her study. She explained how these “new” theories, rather than presenting learning as a simple sequential set of discrete facts and skills, present learning as a highly active process in which a learner makes connections and continually structures and re-structures concepts as they relate to previous knowledge. Whereas the behavioral model of learning resembled a lockstep outline, the constructivist model more clearly resembled a semantic web of interrelated concepts and experiences. Schema theory (Glaser, 1984) explained that every learner goes about this process differently, according to the varying schema that he/she has already created based on a variety of past and present factors.

If knowledge is indeed constructed in these complex and varying ways, and if one’s construction of knowledge really depends on social experiences and the ensuing unique constructions, then, as Shepard explains, “tests ought not to ask for demonstration of small, discrete skill practices in isolation” (p. 9). The implications for psychometricians may be profound. The nature of the ways in which people think about instruction should greatly change.

The behavioral and constructivist models of learning that Shepard presents here both stem from two distinct bodies of research that make assumptions that can be extended to our discourse about learners and the nature and acquisition of literacy. The behavioral

model implies that literacy can be prescribed and acquired if the teacher simply follows the requisite steps in the proper order and tests for mastery. In contrast, the constructivist model implies that literacy cannot be so easily prescribed, and it cannot so easily be narrowed down into a set of thin basic “skills”; rather, to the constructivist, literacy learning occurs in more complex and idiosyncratic ways as the student applies strategies that he/she learns from wide-ranging experiences with texts. Literacy teaching and assessment must therefore consist of a diverse array of rich, personally-engaging and connected experiences with texts.

These constructivist principles have influenced theory-making (Fosnot, 1996) and research on literacy, but, as Shepard presents, a large percentage of educational psychologists still embrace behaviorism. Yet in disciplines outside of psychology, an emphasis on learning as a social practice, as in the tradition of Scribner, has been highly influential for scholars, and some educational psychologists have re-worked theories of constructivism as a result (Oldfather & Dahl, 1996). The conceptualizations offered by key scholars in these other traditions have directly challenged behaviorism and even contain potential to transform the nature of literacy research beyond a simple cognitive model of constructivism.

Early ethnographies of literacy. While constructivist challenges to behaviorism at first tended to focus on mental and psychological growth, the work of other researchers challenged the strictly cognitive emphasis of earlier researchers. The cultural variation of literacies was deeply explored by the ethnographic work published by Shirley Brice Heath (1983). Heath’s study compared a white working class community, a Black working class community, and a middle class community in a small town in North Carolina. Heath documented how the different kinds of “literacy events” that were a part people’s lives manifested themselves and conflicted or intersected with school literacy

practices. Each community group socialized its members into particular literacy events. While the working class families socialized their children into practices that were relevant for their particular lifestyles, the middle class families socialized their children into school literacies, such as reading books to their children, using school language, etc. Heath thus presents literacy as a cultural act, rather than merely a mental process.

These literacy events taught the children particular literacy behaviors unique to their social groups. For the middle-class children, these behaviors tended to match the expectations of schools. For the working class children, the differences between home and school literacies oftentimes erected barriers to their school success. All of the parents valued literacy and supported their children's development; rather only the middle class values and behaviors were most congruent with the literacy interactions used at schools. For example, the different groups of children learned different styles of presenting/constructing stories, one that followed the logic of schools and one that followed a different logic. While the middle class children learned a more individualistic form of literacy at home (mirroring the schools), the other children learned a more communal form of literacy at home (contrasting with the schools).

Heath's ethnographic account of the three different forms of literacy in the Piedmont region has impacted subsequent literacy scholarship. Her work provided evidence that multiple forms of literacy do exist. It also contributed to the understanding that acquiring literacy is a social practice that begins in the home and community, not the school. It provided evidence for scholars with social theories that diverged from a singular emphasis on literacy as a "cognitive" or culturally-free practice. Heath presented literacy as a social practice in a community. A generation of scholars have followed in Heath's lead and continued to analyze the ways in which communities socialize their members into specific "literacy events."

Autonomous vs. ideological literacy. Street (1984) challenged behaviorist notions of literacy within the international development field rather than psychology. Drawing from work in linguistics, sociology, and anthropology, he critiqued the “autonomous” model of literacy, which he argued had pervaded much of development work for a great deal of time. This “autonomous” model assumed that literacy is a neutral set of competencies that can be neatly spelled out, prescribed, and delivered. It held that literacy is simply a technological skill that does not change from culture to culture. “Autonomous” literacy assumptions tie literacy development to moral development, the development of critical thinking, and the development of rational thinking. Proponents of the autonomous model assume that learning to read and write will result in modernization and progress.

Street critiqued the “autonomous model” of literacy, as it has been found in the work of development workers, historians, and anthropologists who have attempted to prove that *their* versions of literacy are *the* version of literacy. Street explains that such a position is blind to the ideological basis behind the lenses through which each of these researchers examine the world and the cultural practices they document. These authors ignore the role of literacy in upholding power and hegemony, and the idea that the literacy practices favored by a particular society depends upon whose and what groups of people’s practices are used by those in power.

Street’s “ideological model” of literacy, in contrast, argued that literacy practices vary greatly from one cultural setting to the next. In fact, literacy practices are never neutral, but they always reflect the ideology and purposes of the culture in which they are found. Street also argued that literacy practices are inextricably tied to power relations and the purposes of those who use those practices. They are not simply technical tools; they are cultural and social practices.

In this way Street's model, while similar to a constructivist model, actually reaches further than original constructivist theory in its implications for the social and political foundations of literacy. Not only is literacy a complex construction by a particular group of people for particular purposes, but these "literacies" (Street proposes using "literacies" rather than "literacy" in order to capture the social construction of the term) are constructed within power relations for the purpose of specific groups in power. People practice multiple "literacies" based on different cultural and social practices valued in a society rather than a general process of literacy acquisition that can be boiled down into *one* generalizable "constructivist" theory. This "ideological" definition became a central assumption in the thinking of later key sociocultural theorists in literacy

Sociocultural traditions. In this section I present literacy theory that emerges from a sociocultural framework. Some of these theorists also emphasize critical literacy elements. These scholars provide theory useful for application in teacher education for sociocultural literacy visions.

Gee's discourse theory. While Heath made important contributions to the argument for solid anthropological research to ground our claims that literacy is a cultural act, Gee (1996) added linguistic theory and historical interpretation to enrich this understanding. Gee argued that literacy is always ideological and that the multiple forms of literacy are as varied as the social communities in which they arise. With this argument, Gee situated himself within "New Literacy Studies" (though he prefers to call them socioliteracy studies), an interdisciplinary group of scholars emerging from the late 1970s and 1980s that have used a variety of social science research methodologies such as ethnography to argue that literacy is a social practice. These theorists provided a direct challenge to popular notions of "functional literacy," of literacy as a basic set of skills or commodities "that can be measured and thence bought and sold" (Gee, p. 122).

To Gee and his group in New Literacy Studies, literacy does not only include language use; the ways in which we use language are inextricably tied to social communities and values. These background experiences and identities determine how one "reads" or creates texts. How we read is a part of how we identify with particular social communities. Thus, argues Gee, like the other New Literacy Studies Scholars, there can be no universal literacy, but rather multiple literacies. According to Gee's theory, these literacies involve "saying (writing)-doing-being-valuing-believing combinations," or what Gee calls "Discourses" (p.127).

To Gee, "Discourses," or "ways of being in the world" are what we are actually teaching when we are teaching literacy. They are "identity kits" (127) that people use to participate in different communities, kits that include language but also all the other ways of showing membership within a particular community (ways of acting, interacting, speaking, using tools, etc.). When we move from one Discourse community to the next (for example: moving from lounging at a working class bar to going to a job interview

the next morning, to law school that evening), we use our knowledge of multiple Discourses to navigate these communities.

Developing proficiency in a new Discourse community would imply a change in identity; learning therefore consists of a change in identity. These identities include primary and secondary Discourses; the primary Discourses are those we learn in our home and use as a base for additional Discourse learning, the acquisition of “secondary Discourses” later in life. Gee explains his definition of literacy:

Thus I define literacy as *mastery of a secondary Discourse*... Therefore literacy is always plural: *literacies* (there are many of them, since there are many secondary Discourses, and we all have some or fail to have others). (p. 143)

In this view, literacy can never be seen as a simple functional skill or a universal set of competencies. Rather they are varied and they are only acquired through social apprenticeship:

That is, Discourses are not mastered by overt instruction, but by enculturation (apprenticeship) into social practices through scaffolded and supported interaction with people who have already mastered the Discourse... If you have no access to the social practice, you don't get in the Discourse—you don't have it. (p. 139)

But this does not mean that students of literacy should be left to acquire literacy without teacher direction; rather he argues that literacy learning should include both instruction in how to have a meta-knowledge of Discourses as well as apprenticeship into the particular Discourse models. He also advocates a literacy that aims toward a political act of challenging the status quo, of resisting and interrogating dominant Discourses that uphold injustice.

Gee could be interpreted as using Discourse theory to argue the importance of literacy conceptualizations that stress both social participation as well as critical literacy.

He revealed that literacy teaching must engage students in identity formation; Literacy teaching should help students develop multiple “identity kits” for navigating different communities. Emerging scholars continue to build upon the discourse model that Gee theorized.

New sociocultural models of literacy. Some scholars hold Gee responsible for theorizing a sociocultural conceptualization of literacy learning with his model of the multiple Discourses, or sociocultural contexts in which literacy occurs. A sociocultural model implies that learning to read, learning literacy, regardless of the methodology in practice, requires that the student make connections and find relationships among the multiple social and cultural elements in his/her world. A sociocultural model acknowledges that the social and the cultural can never be separated; they are both sides to the same coin. Gee explains, “in this sense, there *is no other* approach to texts, technology, and literacy than a sociocultural one” (Gee, in Lankshear, 1997, xvi).

Many scholars have used this sociocultural framework for their research (Rogoff, 1990; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wertsch, 1991). These scholars argue that learning is a social event that occurs within a community of practice, involving the learner in the active construction and reconstruction of the multiple experiences within those communities.

Dyson’s sociocultural account of literacy learning/development (2005) diverges from both earlier behavioristic and cognitive theories of literacy. Her model instead pulls from a sociological orientation without ignoring cognitive development. She argues, and shows through her own research, how literacy development, always a process involving mind, culture, and identity, cannot be adequately captured through a series of uniform stages or categories. Rather, Dyson’s qualitative account of children learning to write presents literacy learning in the early grades as a complex process of making sense out

of, pulling from, and reconstructing various experiences with multiple forms of Discourse (in the broad, Gee-esque sense of the term) present in a child's cultural world. The learner is an active "constructor" who builds his/her own constructions using both in-school and out-of-school literacies, always using his/her interactions with pop culture, family culture, school culture, and every other form of culture he/she has encountered, in order to re-create his/her own meaning, or, as in this book, his/her own writing.

Dyson calls these multiple Discourse forms "textual toys" in order to capture the active "play" that children engage in to build their own literacy. She shows how, as children participate in a practice over time, they continually contextualize and re-contextualize their work and the meaning of their work based on their experiences. Dyson likens this process to the "sampling" of a hip hop DJ. She traces the literacy learning of the first graders in her study, and illustrates, like sampling, how children take from their knowledge of such things as pop music, film, cartoons, sports, etc., in order to learn textual practices.

Dyson's theorizing is important in its complication of earlier sociocultural conceptualizations of literacy. Not only is literacy ideological, social, and cultural, but it is a complex act in which the learner always uses the multiple experiences of his/her world in order to make something new out of each literacy event. The learner's out-of-school life will always be an integral component in the learning process, regardless of what the teacher may want. In this way Dyson's theories complement a "strengths view" (Delpit, 2006) of students' "funds of knowledge" (Gonzales, Moll, & Amante, 1993). Literacy educators must learn to view students' out-of-school resources, no matter how disconnected they may appear from official school knowledge, as integral components in the literacy construction process. They need to learn to understand that the ways in which each student constructs his/her own literacy is unique and will always be unique because

each person represents a vastly different repertoire of official and unofficial literacy experiences. This sociocultural view bridges the social and psychological process and illustrates how both processes are always at work and are always interrelated.

Critical literacy. At the same time that researchers in cognitive psychology, linguistics, and anthropology in the United States and Britain were producing new theories about literacy, literacy scholars, teachers, and activists around the world were doing work that was impacting the thinking of literacy theorists. The literacy teacher and scholar Paulo Freire (1970) is known for literacy campaigns aimed at rural peasants in Brazil in the 1960s and 70s. Freire's methodology was based on teaching literacy through a political empowerment model of consciousness-raising in response to "generative themes" suggested by the students themselves. Yet more important than his methodology was the educational philosophy behind it and the radical societal critique it engendered.

Central to Freire's major educational philosophy is the dichotomous relationship between "the banking model of education" and "education as the practice of freedom." "The banking model of education," a prominent view of literacy and learning, assumes that the student is a passive object to be filled with deposits. These deposits are merely stored in the minds of the "learner" as he/she is educated within this system to adapt to society the way it is and accept his/her role as an object. The teacher is the all-knowing authority and the student knows nothing. Freire argues that this model produces a "culture of silence" as it indoctrinates the student into consuming ideas passively and accepting the way things are.

In contrast to this process of what Freire calls "dehumanization," Freire offers his model of education as the awakening of the consciousness, what Freire calls "consciencizacao," of learning to see injustice in the world and in the life of the learner. It is a process of, first, learning to be critical about the way things are and then working in

solidarity with others to take action to transform the world. It repositions the student as a subject and not an object, and it occurs through critical and open dialogue that places both teacher and student as learner. It is not a passive process of digesting knowledge, but of creating and contesting knowledge, and using it to take social action. This connection between reflection and action, or praxis, must be integrated. Learning to read “the word” had to simultaneously involve learning to read “the world”. Freire (1998) explained:

Literacy makes sense only in these terms, as the consequence of men beginning to reflect about their own capacity for reflection, about the world, about their position in the world, about their work, about their power to transform the world, about the encounter of consciousness-about the literacy itself. Which thereby ceases to be something external and becomes a part of them, comes as a creation from within them.

I can see validity only within a literacy program in which men understand words in their true significance: as a force to transform the world. (p. 106)

Although Freire did not distinctly call his theories “critical literacy” at the time of publication of his major works, his ideas have shaped conceptualizations of critical literacy. His critique of hegemony as it is found inherently in the internal structures of dominant schooling parallels the arguments of the critical literacy scholars who followed in his footsteps. Freire’s model reminds us of the political nature of our work and the ways in which literacy should be transformative, rather than transmissive of current power structures. Freire’s model challenges early literacy educators to question dominant paradigms that stress order, control, and conformity, and to develop alternatives that give students and their communities power and emphasize freedom, the development of critical consciousness, and social action. His model also provides implications for teacher

education and research that challenges power hierarchies, and I base my research design on a Freirian model of “Praxis”

Critical sociological models. Luke and Freebody (1997) like Freire and Street, move us beyond a behaviorism/constructivism debate, and present an argument for a sociological model of reading that aims at critical literacy. In their chapter, “The Social Practices of Reading” they argue that it is not only the behavioral or autonomous model of literacy that are problematic, but the entire psychological model. They trace the development of conceptualizations of the purpose of literacy from earlier times. They show how, until the early 20th century, reading served the purpose of upholding a stratified society by a curriculum of “basic skills” vs. “classics” until psychological models began to replace these conceptualizations. This new psychology of behaviorism of the early 20th century emphasized programmatic curriculum, and what the authors emphasize as most important to their argument, a false sense of literacy as being a uniform set of skills that were the same from person to person.

Luke and Freebody also critiqued the “progressivist” models of learning that began replacing these mechanistic models. These progressivist models still viewed learning to read as an individualistic process; cognitive psychology remained concerned with a “culturally-isolated” individual being prepared as a “self-interested” economic participant. Literacy entailed a uniform set of practices, not a culturally varying set of practices:

Both [conceptualizations] view the key processes for acquisition to be portable and to be associated with individual ownership. Both isolate the individual, and can be viewed as an articulation of the rise of a self-interested individual as the central platform for effective action in late capitalist society. (p. 191)

Luke and Freebody argue that, instead of using psychological models to explain reading, we would benefit from using sociological models to explain reading. The psychological models that fail to situate literacy (like Street argues) as an ideological act, have served as tools for colonization and indoctrination (like Freire argues), even progressive meaning-oriented models. Luke and Freebody insist instead that a sociological model of literacy re-defines what it means to read. In a sociological model, reading is a cultural act. One's proficiency in this cultural and social act is determined by one's previous experiences in communities that practice such acts. One learns to read by being enculturated into the practices of a community. One struggles with reading not due to individual deficits or individual differences, but due to different experiences with communities that practice literacies and/or literate identities that do not align with the literacies of school. As in a situated cognition model (Lave & Wenger, 1991), the act of learning depends fully upon the context in which it is learned, and critical sociological models demand attention to nuances in these contexts and the student identities they engender.

Luke and Freebody conclude with an argument that reading educators, instead of concerning themselves with the "right way" (as if there ever could be such a thing regarding an ideological, contextually varying act) to deliver reading skills, should concern themselves with finding out how to fit literacy education into the everyday lives of the students they teach. Teachers need to make connections between critical readings of texts in school to a critical reading of texts (print and nonprint) in students' everyday lives. Students need to become a part of a community in which available cultural resources are used to interrogate the subtexts of everyday life. The work of Luke and Freebody can be situated within the work of scholars that have begun to explore the

meaning of critical literacy, a literacy that moves beyond a purely functional view of textual practice.

Functional literacy verses critical literacy. Despite this rich theoretical work in literacy, old practices still hold fast. The public continues to be swayed by calls to functional or other traditional and/or elite notions of literacy. Among recent proponents of such conservative ideological approaches to literacy has been the ever-popular books of Hirsch (1988).

E.D Hirsch's books (1988, 2007, etc.) propose a model of education for what he calls, "cultural literacy" by means of digesting a list of facts and information Hirsch and his committee deems as important to the Western tradition. Hirsch's canon of knowledge is a collection of examples from the liberal arts and sciences that represent who and what he sees as important to the American cultural identity. He proposes using the lists as a prescription for curriculum in all U.S. schools.

The majority of Hirsch's "core" knowledge comes from the work of White, middle-class males, even though he has tried to appease conservative minority groups by including token pieces from "multicultural" works that reflect similar cultural values. His "core knowledge" represents a small collection of texts. Yet rather than acknowledging this collection of knowledge as Hirsch's ideological presentation of what he (and his committee) view as cultural capital, he presents it as neutral, objective, and superior knowledge in comparison to the other forms of knowledge that exist. He proposes that this knowledge is the key to success and upward mobility, that it is the answer, literally (he claims this explicitly), to educational inequality. Hirsch argues that the problems of much of the United States stem from morality issues and cultural illiteracy. Hirsch assumes the following, as do those adhering to in the perennial "literacy myth:" By acquiring the cultural literacy he advocates, poor and minority students will gain the

morals and literacy that will enable them to pull themselves out of poverty and immorality.

Eugene Provenzo's *Critical Literacy* (2005) offers a critique of these ideas that will be instructive to include here. Provenzo, in the tradition of the other critical scholars throughout the decades, problematizes E.D. Hirsch's conceptualization of literacy. He explains that Hirsch's notion of literacy was constructed without regard to issues of power. Hirsch's model ignores Hirsch's own privileged power position and the structures of privilege and domination in which his own Anglo-centric worldview was built upon. Instead Hirsch, in almost religious fervor, demands that his own elite knowledge is the knowledge that all students in the United States should receive.

Provenzo argues that Hirsch does not acknowledge the resistance many students outside of the White middle class may demonstrate as they are spoonfed this kind of curriculum. Hirsch ignores the "banking model" inherent in his prescriptions and their implications for students. He does not account for the ways in which his cultural literacy resembles cultural imperialism, as in colonist educational systems, and cultural hegemony, the process in which the ruling class uses tools such as myths to gain the consent of the ruled. Hirsch's model does not acknowledge the legitimate cultural resources of students outside of the defined culture he celebrates in his books. In doing so, Hirsch's core curriculum ranks elite Western culture as superior to other cultures and socializes students and teachers to uphold this elitism and its potential "deficit" orientation to students from other backgrounds.

In place of such "cultural literacy," Provenzo presents his own ideas for what a curriculum of "critical literacy" might look like. He explains the importance of dialogue, debate, and education as a form of empowerment, and suggests a list for topics that might be a part of this critical literacy curriculum. I argue that we would benefit from a

combination of the ideas of scholars such as Provenzo alongside the work of sociocultural theorists and scholars of postmodern literacy, critical literacy education, and youth empowerment that I will next introduce.

Literacy as opening spaces. Another sociocultural conceptualization of literacy can be found in the writings of the educational philosophy of Greene (1982), whose theorizing on what literacy should be and what it should not be has much in common with the arguments of critical literacy proponents. In her article, “Literacy for What?” she decried the factory-model version of literacy that had become ever popular in the 1980’s, the “basic competencies model” that assumes the teacher as technician and the student as an object to be manipulated or forced through mind-numbing routines. She explained this kind of teaching in a manner that evokes images of popular practices:

When the reward system of a school is geared toward guaranteeing certain predefined performances or the mastery of discrete skills, teachers too often become trainers—drilling, imposing, inserting, testing, and controlling. They are too distanced from their students to talk with them or to them. Instead, they talk *at* them, work *on* them very often, but not *with* them. (p. 327)

Greene calls this approach a literacy of “inertness,” of “dead” material that means nothing to the learner; it achieves in the learner a certainty that there is no more to discover and no more to care about. It is based on the assumption that knowledge can be passively inserted into the minds of learners and then accurately measured. In contrast, Greene proposes what she labels a literacy of “wide-awakedness” (p. 329) that requires a teacher who is also “wide awake” to the newness and wonder in the world. She calls it a literacy “of process, of restlessness, of quest” (p. 328). It “ought to be conceived as an opening, a becoming, never a fixed end” (p. 326). It is a literacy that teaches students to

teach themselves. To promote this literacy, teachers need passion and students need freedom to explore things they care deeply about.

Greene's model of literacy is intertwined with "aesthetic literacy"; to Greene, the arts must be used to provoke thinking and questioning and doing. Such activity surrounding art forms is at the heart of literacy; as students think about the bigger ideas behind art such as literature or painting, as they read and write and talk about what aesthetic experiences do for them they become more aware of possibilities and openings. She explains that thinking involves literacy as a "leap" (p. 328) into the unknown; a process of becoming and learning to learn.

Greene's literacy conceptualization contains unique implications about the process and purpose of literacy. It emphasizes the importance of student engagement, teacher passion, and literacy as a quest for something far greater than just communication. It proposes a direction for literacy learning that verges from both functional and impersonal notions of literacy. It is designed to help students explore the possibilities within their own freedom.

New literacy studies and youth activist literacy research. How can theories of literacy as a complex and empowering force, a critical literacy, and a literacy of "learning to learn" be applied to schooling without approaching simple prescriptions that perpetuate the "technical," "impoverished" model of literacy learning? What are some of the ways in which these alternative models of literacy are applied to classroom context?

I begin to address these questions by highlighting the work of a new group of relatively young scholars, scholars who are emerging from the influence of critical literacy, and what, in the tradition of James Paul Gee, has been labeled as "New Literacy Studies" (Gee, 1996; Morrell, 2007). These scholars advocate both new ways of thinking about "multiple literacies" as well as new ways of thinking about what should count as

literacy research. Working out of Street's ideological model of literacy (1984), they argue that what literacy is depends upon context, and therefore literacy research should not be separated from the context in which it is found. In this viewpoint, what literacy is has everything to do with power structures and whose knowledge counts. A major aim in "New Literacy Studies" is to widen the realm of possibilities for empowerment of historically marginalized groups, including expanding definitions of whose voices should have legitimacy. Rather than clinging to the definitions and body of knowledge created by mostly elite White men, this new group of scholars seeks to give voice to previously excluded groups, not only of minorities, women, and members of disenfranchised groups, but also, importantly, the voices of students, particularly students who have been historically silenced by schools. Widening this conceptualization of "whose knowledge counts" calls for a re-consideration of what counts as literacy research and "whose literacy counts."

A literacy of "access and dissent". Morrell (2007) proposes a model of literacy explored through his own work in youth activism. He presents "Critical English education," in the tradition of "New Literacy Studies". Instead of outlining two different conceptualizations of literacy as opposing and mutually exclusive dichotomies, he presents them as representing two equally valid but different purposes for literacy education, one of "access" and one of "dissent". Like other scholars of color such as Delpit (2006), Morrell argues that both purposes are necessary. For educators concerned with education as liberation, literacy instruction must involve both the tools to succeed in today's society as well as the tools to critique and challenge injustice in today's society.

Morrell described the literacy of "access" using the term "Academic literacy". Academic literacy involves "those forms of engaging, producing, and talking about texts that have currency in primary, secondary, and postsecondary education" (p. 241). These

are the forms of reading, writing, and speaking that will enable students to achieve academic success; they are the literacy practices that will provide students with the tools to “speak to power” in the language of power. These are equivalent to what Delpit describes as “codes of power,” the tools that will provide students with the cultural capital to work with legitimacy in society.

But Morrell also goes to great lengths to explain that this form of literacy, alone, is insufficient in a vision of literacy for social justice. It must be complemented with critical literacy, or what Morrell chooses to call “critical literacies.” In another article Morrell explains what these literacies or literacy must involve,

By critical literacies I mean literacies involving the consumption, production, and distribution of print and new media texts by, with, and on behalf of marginalized populations in the interests of naming, exposing, and destabilizing power relations; and promoting individual freedom and expression. (2005, p. 314)

In this chapter he explains that such critical literacy must involve examining and assessing the power dynamics inherent in texts, both written texts and texts in the everyday worlds of marginalized people. This critical literacy is different from academic literacy because it provides the student with the tools of dissent, the tools to interrogate unjust structures, and the tools for social action, to combat such structures.

Being both a researcher and a practitioner of secondary English education, Morrell presents many suggestions for how this form of critical literacy can be taught in the secondary urban classroom, based on his own experiences enacting Action Research pedagogies. He argues that teachers and students must both become students of student popular cultures and out-of-school literacies. Like Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti (2005) and their portrayal of “funds of knowledge, teachers need to be ethnographers who understand how to connect to student cultures.

But Morrell goes beyond this role of the teacher and also argues that the students can be such researchers as well, and by doing so, the students can become engaged in a highly motivating form of critical literacy. Morrell's own projects with youth have involved students in studying their own communities, critiquing the issues in those communities while also using the academic literacies gained at school. Through these student action research projects, political goals of dissent and social change are approached. Morrell argues that such personal and community empowerment, which arise from a pedagogy of access and dissent, a pedagogy that requires both academic and critical literacy, are at the heart of the purpose of literacy.

Recent scholars have taken this literacy of access and dissent seriously and enacted their own critical action research projects to involve young people in the interrogation and re-creation of texts in response to issues in their everyday lives. Among the leaders of this group of scholars who identify themselves with New Literacy Studies and education as empowerment include Duncan-Andrade (2007), Mahiri (2005), Gutierrez (2007), and Brown, Clark, and Bridges (2011). These authors are also teachers and leaders of youth researchers. As in the Freirian idea of "praxis", the dialectic of reflection and action, they promote participatory action research as a form of critical literacy that aims to provide students with the tools and the social community to take action in their lives. A community of scholars has taken their lead and promoted and aimed at both global and local political action (Blackburn & Clark, 2007).

This new area of research is ripe with opportunities for exploring the intersections between theories of literacy as discussed in this paper and practices of literacy as found in schools. I argue that it also presents a model of student empowerment that could also be used for teacher empowerment. The model may also offer a useful form of inquiry for

teacher education: with PAR-infused research alongside teachers, we might learn more about how teachers are conceptualizing and experiencing literacy education.

Literacy education and teacher practice. As we theorize on teaching for social justice, we need to develop more investigations of how teachers' literacy teaching practices align with robust models of literacy. The literature in this review pinpoints what literacy could be and presents components of a rich model of literacy.

We should look at literacy education, and examine how teachers, as Greene (1982) argued, use these models of literacy to open up spaces for possibility. What does a sociocultural model of literacy look like in different kinds of teachers' classrooms? The forms of literacy teachers use should expand opportunities for students' holistic and critical literacy development, if sociocultural and critical models of literacy development are making their way into schools. How do teachers counter the stereotypes and assumptions of testmakers, behaviorists, or bureaucrats, who view students instead as empty glasses to be filled, objects to be manipulated, weeds to be discarded, or future service workers to learn their pre-made places in society? How might research on literacy instead apply implications of diverse, critical, or sociocultural models of literacy?

What now? If the form of literacy we should be teaching in schools extends beyond a simple functional literacy, an elite literacy, or literacy of obedience and passivity; if literacy is truly learned through social interactions, enculturation, and social action; if students must learn to see themselves as readers, writers, and thinkers who know how to use their literacies to take action in their worlds, then we need to examine what these processes may look like in school settings. We need to work with teachers to explore the intricacies of these models in the classroom, and learn with such teachers how we might better support them in development of sociocultural visions.

It may also be instructive to consider how the models the aforementioned scholars present as problematic: behaviorism, the “autonomous” model, the psychological model, etc., of literacy still pervade the literacy practices and assessments in public schools, as evident in teacher conceptualizations and experiences. It may be instructive to examine the models of literacy inherent in the literacy instruction that comprises teachers’ everyday classroom worlds.

A great deal of NLS-influenced inquiry has focused on political empowerment for urban adolescents. These studies have explored the multiple literacies of marginalized students and have sought to promote political action. Yet there is also a need to examine how literacy theory may inform teaching and learning for early elementary students and teachers as well. Many participatory studies have worked with youth to illuminate their voices and work toward their concerns; I argue for similar participatory studies that work with teachers as learners to illuminate their voices and work toward their concerns.

I argue that we need participatory research that enables teachers and teacher educators to come together to examine models of literacy instruction. With classroom teachers repositioned as knowledgeable professionals and co-researchers, we might illuminate what might be involved when teachers’ literacy instruction practices align with robust literacy theories. We might pinpoint teaching practices and conceptualizations that promote students’ access to critical, sociocultural, or emancipatory models of literacy instruction. Working with beginning teachers in urban schools, we might experiment with alternative models of teacher education to support these robust literacy theories as social justice teaching. I aimed to take such action and produce such knowledge in this study, which I will detail below.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Overview

In this study I employed action research methods (Caro-Bruce & Klehr, 2007) infused with participatory action research (Brown, 2010; Fine, 2005) to examine and illuminate the experiences and perceptions of an “early developing” teacher as I worked with her in her classroom to explore what a sociocultural model of literacy teaching might look like. Action research refers to research undertaken by practitioners in order to study their work and affect change. Participatory action research (PAR) takes this model and repositions research participants as co-researchers. In the manner of action research, I worked alongside the teacher to affect change (Freire, 1970), and, in the manner of participatory action research, together we took action in response to our work. We theorized together as we collaborated, and I later examined themes in our work to propose a tentative theory of literacy pedagogy and teacher education. The study included action steps (Brown, 2010) by the teacher to begin to address issues that arose as a result of the investigation. In this section I outline the research paradigm, the participant, setting, data collection, and data analysis strategies used in this exploration.

Action Research and Participatory Action Research

The basic methodology of this study followed the tradition of action research (Caro-Bruce, et al., 2007; Cochran-Smith & Little, 1999; Zeichner & Noffke, 2001). Action research is a form of research methodology in which practitioners study their own work; as they work they collect and analyze data for the purpose of taking action rather than merely creating knowledge. Overall I followed the teacher action research strand of these traditions (Cochran-Smith & Little, 1999), a methodology designed to empower the teacher as not only practitioner but knowledge producer. In some ways here I turned this on its head by acting as researcher-turned-practitioner. I embarked on this form of

research motivated by the conviction that knowledge and theory outside of experience and practice runs the risk of becoming irrelevant. I went back into the elementary classroom alongside an urban elementary teacher to work with her while also documenting her experiences. I didn't just observe; I participated and supported the teacher. I sought to understand her experiences better so that I could better understand my teacher education students and improve my own work as a teacher educator. So in many ways this study is a form of *teacher educator* action research. I deliberately placed myself in a different role than my usual role in the college classroom of developing teachers. Instead of simply observing Rachel teach, I worked with Rachel in her classroom and sought her active help in teaching my college students. I also embarked on this study motivated by a Freirian mission to take action, or praxis (1970), rather than simply report.

Action research borrows from many research traditions. In my work here it most closely drew from case study methodology, ethnography, and participatory action research. Bruce et al explained this merging of traditions in action research:

The action research process can take many forms, and there is no single recipe that will work for all teachers or all contexts....There is no one correct way for generating data... Researchers work to collect various forms of data that represent multiple perspectives at more than one point in time. Teachers typically analyze their data in standard qualitative ways, such as triangulating information, sorting and coding by themes, looking for patterns in the data, and being alert to the unexpected. Ultimately, data analysis should help classroom practitioners to take productive actions on behalf of their students and to identify the next steps in the inquiry process.(Bruce et al, 2007, p. 21)

As a teacher educator, my early data collection and analysis helped drive the actions I took with Rachel in the classroom. My final data analysis and interpretations, as provided in later sections of this paper, are aimed to help me to develop in my work as a teacher educator and provide insight that I hope may help other teacher educators as well.

My study also pulled heavily from the tradition of participatory action research (PAR). Like PAR, the study verged from a basic action research model because it involved my participant more closely in collaboration than a typical action research process. It worked within Freire's (1970) conceptual framework of the participant as co-learner, as co-researcher, as subject rather than object. In the following section I outline aspects of a former PAR study (Brown, Clark, & Bridges, 2011) that provides a model through which I based much of my work in this study upon. I detail this earlier model because it served as the blueprint for my study.

My former study as blueprint. This methodology employed in this study is based upon the research methods I have used in my former research (Brown, Clark, & Bridges, 2011; Brown, 2010). I detail this study here because it provides the basic template upon which I based my own study. This template is key in justifying my methods. This "blueprint" study was a PAR inquiry based on the model of youth activist research (Fine, et al. 2005; Morrell, 2004), both in methods and philosophical assumptions. It employed many of the same methods as traditional qualitative studies, but it differed in research roles, goals, and overall structure. The role of both researcher and researched overlapped as each took part in one another's work. It also differed from traditional research in its goal of not only producing knowledge, but affecting change with the participants as we went along. Finally, the entire study was structured upon direct work with the participants; we as researchers took part in the participants' lives both as their teachers

and researchers. The study progressed organically as we worked with them rather than simply “studying” them, and we taught them to be co-researchers in the process.

The past PAR study was structured around a seminar course on PAR that we as researchers co-taught at an alternative school (Brown, Clark, & Bridges, 2011). While teaching the course, we slowly began working with our students to use our research methods for purposes relevant to their lives. Little by little, we taught the students how to use various research tools such as interviews and surveys to illuminate their experiences as students excluded from regular schools. We co-created and delivered workshops for preservice teachers and teachers in various forums, with the students taking the lead as active agents rather than passive participants (Brown, Clark, & Bridges, 2011).

I took several key elements from this past work and applied it to my research. Rather than working with students during a co-taught course, I worked with a teacher in her classroom as a visiting volunteer teacher educator. I helped her with various instructional needs as she deemed relevant and at the same time included her in the data collection process as she deemed relevant. In the former PAR study the research question centered upon better understanding the students’ experiences and perceptions; this study centered upon understanding the teacher’s experiences. Like the former study this study included co-presentations for preservice teachers.

My previous study consisted of the following stages, which served as a model for this study: Building rapport with participants; Teaching/working with the participants in their contexts (school), Teaching the participants PAR research methods; using PAR methods with the participants to investigate themes of their choosing; Working with the participants to take action based on the research experience/results. I applied these stages to a certain degree to my study as we progressed through two major levels: 1) Working together in the classroom with the early developing teacher and engaging in initial data

collection and analysis together. 2) Using the data we collected to take action together with the teacher as co-researcher to take action steps, including both instructional plans and presentations for preservice teachers.

My previous study also rested heavily on Freirian assumptions about the nature of research and the role of the researcher/researched (Freire, 1970). This PAR methodology emphasizes “researching with” rather than “researching on” as I worked with my participant. Instead of viewing her as the empty vessel to be filled with my teacher education “expertise”, I re-envisioned her as teaching and learning with me, as we as researchers taught and learned along with our student researchers in the Brown, Clark, and Bridges study (2011).

As I applied these PAR methods and philosophy in my work with a teacher, I recognized that there were differences than in this previous work with students. The power position of the teacher differed from that of the students, and I explored the implication of this difference as the study ensued. As we built a theory on social justice and literacy education, we also considered the application of Freire’s participatory research philosophy as it applies to teachers in complex power positions that fluctuate between oppressor and oppressed.

Also, due to the time constraints and heavy teaching load of my participant, her role in my study was not fully participatory. Her focus was on daily classroom initiatives, and therefore teaching her research methods did not fit into our time frame. For this reason, my study overall is an action research project with components of PAR methods, but not fully a PAR study. The teacher’s role in collecting and analyzing data was not as fully participatory as in traditional PAR work, and this decision was made to respect the time and energy of the teacher, to assist in her needs more fully. Yet overall an attempt was

made to include her participation as much as possible; for this reason I am calling the study a PAR-infused action research model.

Other participatory paradigms. Other researchers have explored similar participatory research forms (Maxwell, 2005; Merriam, 1998; Oldfather, 2002; Morrell, 2004), and they explain key aspects of a participatory framework that have influenced my research framework. Merriam (1998) explains that all qualitative research is somewhat participatory in nature. She notes that while traditional quantitative research assumed that the researcher would take a “detached” stance, the qualitative researcher understands that one can never fully remove oneself from the context of research, as the qualitative researcher is the research instrument. So in some ways my research followed in the same steps as much of qualitative research in its participatory roles. Yet my involvement with the teacher participant was a distinct choice intended to promote ownership and political empowerment, without overburdening the teacher.

Oldfather (2002) involved her participants, her students, actively in her research process. She articulated that giving them this heavily participatory in her research project was necessary for promoting students’ intrinsic motivation for learning. She explained how she designed her research to promote her participants’ motivation:

In presenting myself primarily as a learner, interested in understanding their ideas, I communicated that we were ‘all in this together, trying to figure things out’. I also hoped that the students’ participation in the research process would be personally valuable for them.(p. 238)

She later showed how students’ comments suggested that these hopes became a reality as a result of the collaboration. Students felt a sense of ownership and self-actualization from their roles as co-researchers. This sense of ownership is similar to the ownership we observed in the Brown, Clark, and Bridges study (2011), and it was a goal I had for the

teacher in my study. As I worked alongside my teacher participant, I tried to help her gain a sense of ownership that enabled her to learn and continue learning. I hoped that the participatory nature of the study influenced her to continue to care deeply about the action steps she took to improve her literacy and inform preservice teachers.

Not only did I choose a participatory-infused framework for my study so that my teacher would feel ownership, but so that she would feel a sense of political empowerment. My choice of a participatory methodology also reflects my own critical theory worldview. Morrell (2004), who labeled his participatory research a “critical ethnography”, describes the lines of my thinking here:

Critical theorists believe that research is an ethical and political act...Inquiry that aspires to be critical must be connected to an attempt to confront the injustice of a particular society or sphere within a society. Research thus becomes a transformative endeavor unembarrassed by the label ‘political’ and unafraid to consummate a relationship with an emancipator consciousness. (p. 42)

I hoped that this research relationship would empower the teacher politically, and to motivate her to care more deeply about using education and research to combat injustice.

Merriam (1998) also discussed a new understanding of the researcher as not just a participant in traditional participant observation such as ethnography, but as a “collaborative participant” in which the researcher and the research work together during each stage of the research process as co-workers. This describes the nature of my research to a certain extent. I employed the teacher in my study as a co-researcher, and I did my best to empower her knowledge as equal in value as mine. However, I did not attempt to involve her in the research equally in research work. She already had enough to worry about as a teacher and graduate student; I involved her during aspects of the

research as she deemed relevant, and she used the knowledge she gained to teach others during our presentations, but I still assumed the bulk of the research work in this study.

Traditional qualitative methods. While my study involved action and participatory methods as explained above, the bulk of the methods still followed traditional qualitative traditions. At the same time that we taught the students about PAR in the former study (Brown, Clark, & Bridges, 2011) we continued to collect data using a variety of traditional qualitative research methods. These included field notes typed up as soon as possible after each interaction with our participants, formal interviews with participants, focus group interviews, and document analysis. It also included both occasional videotaping and audiotaping of our interactions with the participants. In my study these data collection techniques also framed the work that I did, and I will explain them in the following sections of this paper, along with the other qualitative influences that shaped my study (Merriam, 1998; Maxwell, 2005; Oldfather, 2002; Morrell, 2004).

Participant

I will label the participant an “early developing” teacher. I have deliberately used the term “early developing” here rather than “novice.” While mainstream educational research would call the teacher in my study “novice,” I have chosen not to adopt the term due to my participant’s personal negative feelings about the term and my own desire to empower rather than to put the teacher in a “less than” space, when she, despite her one and a half years of teaching experience (during our study), already has rich contextual knowledge of the students she teaches, among other kinds of expertise. Also, I used this term because it emphasizes the “in process” nature of teacher education. “Early developing” is also an appropriate term because it underscores a major phenomenon under study in this inquiry: teacher development.

I chose this one case using, first, criterion sampling (Merriam, 1998): She met the criteria I was interested in examining. Oldfather (2002) would call this “purposive” sampling, while Maxwell (2005) would call it “purposeful” sampling. Both of these conceptualizations of sampling emphasize the choice of participant based on the need for a participant whose case will provide an answer to my research question. Maxwell discusses this form of purposeful sampling as a “test” of the theory that undergirds the inquiry. In this study I first looked for an “early developing” teacher committed to social justice that is currently experiencing the challenges of literacy teaching in an urban early elementary setting. My participant fit the description. Her commitment to social justice as “community” provided a case for my focus on sociocultural literacy practices that promoted community.

I also chose the teacher because she explicitly expressed a desire to take part in a participatory study of this nature. I believe this intrinsic motivation to participate was key to her successful role as learner and co-researcher in the process of the social construction of knowledge (Oldfather, 2002). She was in the “early developing” stage of teacher development, and she was working within a struggling urban school. I had already established rapport and positive relationships with her, which I saw as essential to positive work.

Participant and setting description. The “early developing” teacher was a second year teacher in a struggling urban school in a major metropolitan area. At the time I worked with her, she was pursuing her master’s degree through a Teach For America program. This program placed her in this school. She explicitly requested to work within this particular urban environment due to her passion for assisting in underserved communities and her knowledge of resources for support in this geographical area. This teacher was a student in one of my courses over three years ago. I continued to work with

her as her faculty advisor on a research project she pursued to document student-centered teaching practices at a local alternative school. Since then, we have continued to stay in touch. I helped her prepare for the interview process for Teach For America, and I celebrated with her as she received her letter of acceptance. Before the study, I visited her school several times and established a working relationship with her, and I planned to help her with various teaching needs she expressed. She participated in intensive training and was now teaching her second group of first graders in an urban school.

Her pseudonym in this work is “Rachel” Rachel is a White woman in her early twenties with a suburban upbringing. She was a high-achieving student in her teacher education program and continues to enjoy her studies. She describes herself as organized, energetic, and ambitious. She expressed a deep passion for teaching and learning, and she explains that she has the tendency to pour herself entirely into her work. She has been nominated for several teaching awards since serving in this school, and in fact at the closing of this study she received the prestigious “*Teacher of the Year*” award for her district. Her reputation as an outstanding teacher also made her case relevant to my study’s emphasis on teaching that opens up possibilities for students.

During the study, Rachel taught a self-contained classroom of fifteen first graders in a small urban school in segment of a major metropolitan area that is experiencing the economic stresses of post-industrial blight. The majority of her students’ families were experiencing poverty, and they lived in the public housing complex adjacent to the school. Most of Rachel’s students were African American, and two were Latino (a) (Appendix K). The school serves a majority of African American students with a minority of working class White and Latino students. It is a school district plagued by problematic and depressing statistics. Rachel explained to me that 90% of the students enrolled in the school tend to drop out by high school graduation. Rachel explained that these bleak

statistics unfortunately refracted negative set of expectations in many of the teachers at the school, a negativity Rachel was determined to fight. She believed deeply in her students' abilities to resiliently rise up, she was passionate about her role in promoting social justice through opening up educational opportunities, and she believed that setting up her classroom as a community was central in this work. During the study the school had achieved adequate yearly progress (AYP). During this time Rachel was working within the support system of Teach For America. Rachel's case will be more fully explored in the chapter I present on the logistics of my work within the classroom.

Methodology: Data Collection and Analysis

In this section I detail my methods of data collection and analysis. I draw justification for my approach from my past study (Brown, Clark, & Bridges, 2011) and from various authors of works on qualitative research methods. I follow my description of data collection and analysis with vignettes to illustrate how my approach appeared explicitly.

The overall plan. This study progressed on two levels. The components of each level, in the tradition of qualitative research, served as a tentative, but not rigid guide for my inquiry (Maxwell, 2005). I began with a plan but also remained prepared to adapt and revise as needed. On the first level, I collected and initially analyzed data on the early developing teacher to capture understandings and experiences of teaching and assessing literacy in socially-just ways. Later I changed the way I described this as I realized that what I was getting at more accurately, was sociocultural literacy teaching pedagogy. As possible, I sought the input of the early developing teacher on the saliency of these codes. Together we theorized about how these findings contribute to an understanding of the struggles involved in conceptualizing and enacting social justice teaching in early elementary literacy classrooms by early developing teachers. On the second level, these data were used in an embedded way by the early developing teacher and me to devise

action plans to address needs in promoting sociocultural models of literacy. I worked together with the early developing teacher to implement this action plan. An important component of the action stage of the research project involved the early developing teacher sharing what she learned, theoretically and/or practically, with preservice teachers in a university setting.

Below I detail the first level of the research plan; I illustrate the forms of data collection and analysis I used to understand the experiences and perceptions of the early developing teacher.

Data collection and initial analysis in the classroom. The early developing teacher contributed as both participant and from time to time, co-researcher in this study. I documented her experiences and worked with her in her classroom. I also periodically elicited her assistance in interpreting and analyzing the data collected after I coded for initial themes (Oldfather, 2002), mostly through informal discussion formats. I used several forms of traditional qualitative methods to do collect and analyze this data, which I will detail here.

Interviews. I used three different forms of interviews to get at three kinds of knowledge that my early developing teacher constructed: informal collaborative interviews, formal interviews, and informal follow-up discussions. These interviews helped me to access Rachel's conceptualizations and views on her practice.

While I laid out a tentative plan for the formal interviews, I also left much of the interview process open to revision based on my observations as well as the nature of the interactions with the teacher during the interview. Various researchers have explored the tentative and adaptable nature of qualitative interviews. Oldfather (2001) and Merriam (1998) explained that interviews may evolve and develop as the result of previous

interviews and observations, and they may change based on what the participants deem as relevant.

My flexible approach to interviewing, though, was in no way unguided by a thoughtful plan, or interview guide (Merriam, 1998). In the following section I roughly outline the three interviews, which are more thoroughly outlined in the appendices as provided.

First, after building rapport in the early developing teacher's classroom, I met with her to establish the plan for our work together. I conducted the first informal collaborative interview with her (Appendix A) and analyzed for themes and areas of focus for classroom work. I conducted one additional follow-up informal interview with her during the middle of the research process, as well as at least one final informal interview near the end of the project. The purpose of these three informal interviews was to shape our work together and to collect her thoughts on how we should proceed. They each took approximately 30 minutes or less and were done in an informal setting, with me taking notes rather than transcriptions. I followed Rachel's lead with these; although the protocol served as a guide, the conversation veered from the protocol when she highlighted areas not listed that were important to her.

Second, I conducted three formal interviews with the teacher during the course of our work together to elucidate her conceptualizations on literacy instruction, assessment and social justice as our work progressed together, which I later labeled differently, as sociocultural models of literacy. These interviews (Appendix B) each lasted at least 30 minutes to one hour or more, and were transcribed for analysis in light of social justice themes and literacy instruction/assessment. They provided a major data source in my data analysis. Again, I used the protocol as only a rough guide for these interviews.

During the three formal interviews, first, I elicited from the teacher thoughts on what it means to teach in ways that are socially just, where these ideas came from, and how she saw her beliefs about social justice should play out in her literacy teaching. I started by trying to capture her current feelings and experiences, and what she saw as “social justice issues” surrounding literacy instruction and assessment in her classroom, from writing and reading instruction to uses of assessment. I found that Rachel wanted to talk more about instruction than assessment, so I followed her accordingly and chose to highlight instruction. And I found that she highlighted teaching for community, so I began to explore what that meant more fully in my interviews. I asked questions to access her thinking about what literacy could be and how she enacted literacy in her classroom.

Then I elicited from her thoughts on the challenges of such teaching in their current contexts. I asked for specific examples of areas of her literacy pedagogy in which she saw needs for growth or assistance. I asked about challenges as well as successes she has experienced in the classroom and how she makes sense of these challenges. Overall, my interviews originally aimed to uncover her perceptions of what it means to teach literacy in ways that are socially just and the challenges of applying this pedagogy. Later I realized that this model of social justice fit into sociocultural models of literacy aimed at constructing a literacy community in the classroom. Finally I encouraged her to talk through areas could be possible areas for our action stage. All formal interviews were audio recorded and transcribed, verbatim, as word-processed documents.

Also, after each observation, as possible, I conducted at least one informal follow-up discussion (Appendix C) to triangulate and gain a better understanding of the teacher’s perceptions and experiences during the observation. I captured these insights through memos and notes I took either during or directly after the informal discussions. These

informal follow-up discussions helped me observe how the teacher was constructing understandings of the issues she faced.

Observations. Participant observation using in-depth field notes comprised a large component of my data collection strategies. I began the study by observing once a week in the classroom of the early developing teacher to establish rapport and to gain a greater understanding of the issues surrounding the teacher's development of literacy pedagogy. First I established rapport in the classroom for a few months, then I attended Rachel's classroom regularly for a period of four months, from March to June, and for the last five weeks I participated in Rachel's classroom regularly. In the tradition of participatory/practitioner action research (Merriam, 1998), my role in the classrooms was as a participant and not merely an observer.

I began with the observational protocol included in Appendix B. This provided the focus of my interviews so that they directly addressed the research questions and reflected my conceptual framework. I also adapted and revised this protocol as I went along, based on the codes that arose from my interviews, and some aspects of my focus changed as we progressed (Merriam, 1998). After I revised the protocol themes from my interview data, I also considered how they related to major concepts arising from my original focus on literacy education for social justice, and I realized that my definition of social justice in literacy aligned with the points made by sociocultural theorists of literacy, so, as I analyzed, elements of a sociocultural model of literacy became my overall topic. Fieldnotes relating to the protocols were written up as a word processing document within twenty-four hours after each observation.

Artifacts and documents. I also examined classroom artifacts and documents that helped to address question number one. Merriam (1998) calls artifacts "the tools, implements, utensils, and instruments of everyday living" (p. 117). Taken together with

the other data sources, these documents illuminated unique aspects of classroom literacy learning and elements related to sociocultural models of literacy in a concrete way.

For example, after my teacher participant discussed the writing progress of certain students, I examined those students' writing samples. I also able talked informally with the students about their writing progress. In addition, I collected work samples from projects such as artwork and songwriting. These documents, artifacts, and conversations were analyzed in light of the literature on sociocultural literacy education and my developing categories.

Analysis. As Merriam suggests (1998), I tried to initially conduct a tentative, rough analysis of my data as the study progressed, and I revisited this analysis several times over after the formal collaboration ended. Initially, I tried to create substantive and theoretical categories by continually checking back and forth from the data and my theoretical framework. I did struggle at times due to the open-endedness of my research focus. I sat for many days wondering what to do with pages full of notes, even though I had categorized them, considering if my interpretations made sense.

I began some data analysis as I collected my data, and created tentative themes with the input of the participant. However, later I found that more of this early analysis would have sped the later data analysis along. Merriam (p. 162) describes the process I followed for creating these substantive and theoretical categories, the process I started while collecting and conducted more thoroughly much later.

These categories were first created by notetaking in the margins of my data, reorganizing the data in various patterns using a word processor, and color or sometimes number coding on my transcripts. Then they were further analyzed by cutting up pieces of my word processed documents and sorting into the three different kinds of categories. I resorted the data segments several times using this process in order to check and re-

think my original assumptions. My categories changed a great deal over during this process, and I re-printed and re-sorted the data an additional time after I allowed the ideas to marinate in my mind for several weeks. A scanned example of what my notes looked like during this process can be found in Appendix N.

The theories and interpretive lenses that guided this analysis came from the literature shaping my study as well as themes relevant to the participants. For example: Delpit (2006) discussed the importance of balancing teaching the processes of literacy with teaching skills and “codes of power” that will open up students’ access to power. At the same time, scholars such as Gee (1996) illustrated the importance of new literacies and students’ home literacies. These sources from my literature review guided my analyses of the interviews in ascertaining the extent that social justice issues played out in the scenarios described. I began to organize the rest of the data, including fieldnotes and analysis of work samples, as I collected it, as it related to this literature as well. Later I elicited feedback from the early developing teacher on some of the codes I developed for suggestions about the kinds of codes she would use to organize her perceptions and experiences. Her input also guided our ensuing action plans. My inter-rater reliability measures include mainly the usage of critical questions, talking through themes with the participant, showing her categories, and asking for her input on them. For example, as we talked through some events we experienced together, such as student behavior during songwriting sessions, I told her how I understood students’ behavior. Then she would follow-up by telling me how she understood it, and explain elements I may have missed, such as the events surrounding students’ lives I may have not known about, such as community tensions, and together we would talk through a new understanding.

Data analysis and state standards. Much later I added an additional section to my data analysis as I recognized my need to illustrate ways in which my participant’s

teaching addressed state curricular standards and fit into literacy theory and critical views of education. To do this, I read through the Maryland Core Curriculum standards for language arts, sifted through the data I had already collected and organized examples from it according to these standards and essential skills and knowledge. Then I looked back at my literature review and illustrated how Rachel's students' demonstration of these standards fit into theory that I had reviewed. I also created a new section of data analysis in which I presented data from the collaboration that exemplified student growth in literacy learning. These data sets can be found in Appendix L.

Vignette on my classroom work. To illustrate how my study evolved concretely, and to provide a sense of how the multiple data collection strategies converged in the early developing teacher's classroom, I will present a vignette of a "typical day" of my work in her room.

It 10:00 A.M., and Rachel's language arts block has just started. I walk to the office, sign-in, and enter Rachel's classroom. As I arrive, several students greet me at the door. I say "hello" to Rachel as she sits and explains a test prep worksheet to a student. I wander to the back table, sit down, and pull out my notebook. I begin to take notes on what I observe. I describe the worksheet and the tone of the class. I write how several students are busy focusing on the work while two are staring into space and one is sitting at the desk with his head down.

Within a few minutes, Rachel walks over to me and explains that she does not "love" the test prep worksheet but feels it is important to do it. She tells me about some strategies she has used to try and make it more "Fun. Then she tells me that she is "so excited" about our plan for centers today, and that she can't wait to get started. While the students are working, she explains to me her thoughts for several of the centers, and I

tell her that they sound great. I add a couple of suggestions, and she goes to the back to finish preparing the materials.

I use the observational protocol to capture this activity in light of my research question. I also look back at my initial coding of my notes on the last three interviews, formal, informal, and follow-up, to shape this observation. Both sources guide me to the elements of focus. They are stored in three separate sections of my work. One section contains the observational notes and follow-up interviews. The other two contain the coding for the other two kinds of interviews . I note that this activity on grammar falls into the category of a teacher made lesson that does not necessarily relate to students or to any other activity during the school day, and I note the follow-up discussion with Rachel in which she shared that she felt she “had to do it” because of school pressures.

Then Rachel begins the centers activities she has planned. As she presented expectations for centers, I take notes on her comments, behaviors, and the students’ responses. I note that students’ attention became focused as soon as she introduced the centers. Rachel sets up the centers and has the students begin. I note the smiles on faces and the ways in which students instantly focus on the tasks at hand in each center. I describe the centers and the students’ responses to them. I describe my own feelings in the corner of my notes: my own amazement at the positive energy that centers create. I also note how Rachel’s tone changes and her stress level lowers once the students begin the centers and are observed writing, creating, and reading. I also note that all of the students, including those who previously were not participating, are taking part in the activities fully.

I go back to the observational protocol and note that this is an example of a creative, teacher-made activity designed to connect to the everyday experiences of the students. I take notes on the ways in which students are working together as a community, and

writing about their lives as a community. In the margins I mark that “community” may be a possible umbrella theme in future data analysis.

Eventually I look at a piece of paper that summarizes the initial themes I already analyzed in the last follow-up interview. During that last follow-up interview, Rachel shared with me that she wanted to push herself to become more bold in trying new, more open-ended activities. These centers certainly meet that description! On a separate sheet of paper, I jot down that I can see she has worked to address this personal goal through designing centers that engage students actively. This lesson did not involve cookie-cutter products, but rather various creative centers with open ended products. I write in my margins: “open-endedness” as a consideration for future data analysis.

On another piece of paper, I look at another data set, the initial codes in my last conceptual interview with Rachel. I read that she commented that she valued developing a community of writers. I note that, while the day’s first activity may not have fit this description, the students’ work together in centers exemplified it. I write down examples of things that happened during each activity that exemplify community.

I look back on the coding of Rachel’s discussion of what she wanted me to help her develop in her teaching. I see that she has asked me for help in using music to encourage students to write their own songs. I note a question for me to consider later: How can I help her think through better ways to do this without having her depend on me? I think carefully about how to approach this, and I decide that I will simply show her my notes for the day and ask her what she thinks she’d like me to help her with now.

I stop taking notes for about 25 minutes, and I participate in the facilitation of the centers, as Rachel has asked me to do. I chat with students about their work, and help some students complete their projects. Then I go back to my back corner and take notes

on what I did, what students said, and what I observed, and I look back at the observational protocol for categorization.

The rest of my time with Rachel during language arts follow this pattern of sitting and taking notes briefly broken up with hands-on participation in classroom life. Finally language arts block ends and Rachel takes the first graders to lunch. Then she comes back to the room with me for our brief informal follow-up discussion. While we both eat lunch she shares with me her feelings about the lesson. She discussed her feelings of elation and accomplishment that the centers went so well. As I documented in my observations, she explains how she is proud that she was bold enough to take on such an open-ended teaching method. Then she talks to me about her struggle with one of the students. I look at my notes and realize I did not recognize this dynamic. I jot down that I will pay more attention to it in the future. Then she explains several feelings and responses that she has to the day's events, and she tells me what she wants me to do the following day. She gives me a copy of several students' work today, which I collect for document analysis. We talk for about 15 minutes. Then I leave, and she continues her day.

Later I begin my preliminary analysis of the day's notes and interview. I start with descriptive analysis of each type of data on its own. I take notes in the margins and later color code with highlighters using these descriptors. I write more notes in the margins and I try to think through elements of an outline that might help me make sense of the themes I find.

During the study I shared many of these codes to Rachel for her thoughts and analysis, so that she could help me create new themes based on our collaboration. These themes related to our presentation on social justice teaching for preservice teachers, and became part of a new file for future presentations. Later I revised these codes as I

compared and contrast them in light of the other data sources and as we applied some of our findings to additional action in the classroom, including songwriting.

I revisit the data later, and I add more comments and color coding. Then I cut up each descriptive theme and paste them under preliminary interpretive categories, which are the result of the culmination of previous data collection. I create tentative categories based on these cut-up pieces. I let these tentative categories marinate in my mind for a few weeks. Later, to question my initial analysis, I cut up the data again and reorganize. After looking at these cut-up notes, I note major categories from this data set, which include: “literacy as communication vs. literacy as test preparation”; “community”; literacy as realness”; and “struggles involving all students”. Throughout this analysis I tried to keep in mind the central guiding questions and look for themes that illuminate specific challenges and possibilities for sociocultural models of literacy instruction. I tried to especially pay attention to areas that may be especially difficult or promising as a new teacher regarding these areas, and attempt to categorize and interpret these various elements.

Methodology: The Action Level

The second level of my research refers to the action my participant and I took during and after data collection. The action consisted of, first, the continual action that I took with the early developing teacher in the classroom as a result of our work together (Mills, 2000). Second, the culminating action was designed as an attempt to empower the teacher as an expert to share her knowledge and become a leader to others (Freire, 1970). Below I outline these two action components, and I remind the reader that these action steps are an important part of my research method.

Instructional action steps in the classroom. As I worked with the teacher in the classroom, I continually took action steps with her in her classroom to address areas of

social justice. This embedded action step is an essential element of action research (Mills, 2000). And it was more than mere action research because it involved the participant as co-researcher when possible, and this was the PAR (participatory action research) element. My decision to use action research infused with PAR was based largely on my conviction that more researchers should take part in more grassroots action, and this is why these action steps were so important to me. They also highlight the political nature of my research.

These action steps reflected the participatory nature of the research. In the Brown, Clark, and Bridges study (2011), we as researchers were active participants in our students' lives and we regularly took action in our work with them in response to issues that arose. For example, as we discovered that some of our students had trouble with math, we integrated math lessons into our teaching of research skills and data collection strategies. We taught the students about interpreting statistical data so that they could better examine statistics with us in our study.

Again, I present to the reader my former study as a blueprint and defense of the methods in this study. In my study I followed the same basic action format as the other study, based on the desires of the early developing teacher. My participant wanted to learn strategies to better motivate her students to care about and connect to writing instruction. This teacher need became the largest focus in our work. I helped my participant learn multiple literacy teaching strategies such as using music, poetry, dramatic read-alouds, and many other strategies as depicted in my description of our collaboration. She and I took action together to create these lessons.

Another theme that emerged was Rachel's reluctance, yet desire, to facilitate student-led literacy activities. She explained to me over and over again that she greatly valued this kind of work but wasn't confident in her ability to make it happen. So we made it

another goal we pursued together. We sat down and detailed, together, the procedures for student-centered stations work. As we enacted these plans, I documented the results and reflected on how we would develop them in the future.

These action steps in the classroom as part of my methods made my work action research (Mills, 2000), and because they were designed to empower the teacher to use her knowledge to inform others, it contains participatory action research (Brown, Clark, & Bridges, 2011) elements. The second step of the action component of the research involved the participant taking a more political form of action, turning the power dynamic on its head by having her teach me, having her take her own knowledge to teach my students.

Presentations by the early developing teacher. The presentation stage was patterned after my work in the Brown, Clark, and Bridges study (2011). In the former study, the work in the seminar course led to presentations co-created and led by the students and researcher-teachers. The research team delivered several different versions of these presentations to several different audiences. The first presentation took place in a course of undergraduate preservice teachers at the university setting. Two later presentations took place in other courses, including one of my own. Additional presentations occurred at professional research forums.

In this study the early developing teacher led two presentations to inform preservice teachers about the findings of our research based on her own objectives. Like the students in the previous action stage, she created and presented both the information in the manner of her choosing and the format in the manner of her choosing. While the former study presented the experiences and perceptions of students in alternative schools, this study presented the experiences and perceptions of an early developing teacher exploring sociocultural literacy practices.

We scheduled one presentation during the middle of our collaboration, at the university for my university students, and one later in our collaboration, at the teacher's school. The focus, objectives, and format of the presentations were mostly determined by the teacher, and they were informed by my understanding of my university students' needs. Some of the objectives were constructed based on the patterns in our collaboration dealing with literacy education for social justice.

During these presentations I strove to re-position the early developing teacher as an expert as she communicated aspects of learning about literacy education to groups of preservice teachers. She used examples from our collaboration to prepare and present information that she thought would connect to preservice teacher needs.

During these presentations I took detailed fieldnotes for later analysis. In addition, I had the preservice teacher audience write reflections on the presentations to elicit their perceptions of the learning (Brown, Clark, & Bridges, 2011). Then I looked over the presentations for codes, patterns, and categories that arise. Later I shared some of these categories with the early developing teacher and elicited her input on possible themes related to literacy and teacher development.

Vignette on presentations as action stage. In the following section I provide a vignette that describes the two presentations by the early developing teacher. I outline the process and the product of this action stage through a description of what occurred.

***Presentation I.** As I shared with Rachel my codes from both her data and the preservice teacher data, I sought her input and her assistance as a co-researcher in determining codes that captured both elements of struggle and elements of possibility in learning to teach based on sociocultural models of literacy. Together we determined areas of learning from our work together in order to address the learning needs of teachers.*

One of the major topics in Rachel's classroom data that developed was the impact of writing workshop on students' identities as writers, and the ways in which this approach motivated previously demotivated students. As the time for the presentations arrived, Rachel and I discussed and sifted through examples of how this has happened in her teaching. I told Rachel that my college students specifically needed her to provide examples of things that teachers might do to help struggling students, and that they needed examples of how she worked to build upon students' backgrounds. I explained to her that my students needed real stories of the importance of thinking about sociocultural models of literacy in the classroom.

So Rachel went home and designed a presentation for my students. She created a multimedia powerpoint that presented before and after examples of her students, illustrations of her teaching philosophy, and examples of how this philosophy played out in practice. She sent me this powerpoint for input and we corresponded via email and phone on the plans for the presentation I let her know how excited I was about her contributions, and then the day came.

During the second half of my children's literature course, Rachel came in and set up her equipment. She began her presentation, and my students' attention focused on her. She presented examples from her classroom, photos of her work, and ideas she had developed about literacy and social justice using a professional and relaxed tone of voice. For most of the presentation, I sat in the audience and observed as she voiced the issues she deemed important and also addressed some issues I had asked her about. My students asked questions and wrote a written response following the one hour presentation. Then, when my students left, Rachel and I sat together and conducted a follow-up interview to document her thoughts on the experience and where to go from there.

Rachel's presentation consisted of a detailed powerpoint full of pictures of her teaching and examples of student writing. The following key points framed the major ideas in her presentation:

"What my Students and I Have Learned:"

- 1) It is possible to balance the curriculum with creativity.*
- 2) A teacher should never underestimate the importance of engagement.*
- 3) Heartfelt writing is the foundation for building a classroom community.*
- 4) Two writers are better than one. (A family of writers is even better!)*
- 5) Writing is reading and writers can never read enough.*

To illustrate these points, she presented examples of student writing progress, comparing key students' work at the beginning of the year with later in the year. One example she presented was a sample of the writing of reluctant student at the beginning of the year, which looked like this: MiFMLKLtMIRT

And she compared it with his writing later in the year, after our collaboration had begun:

I love you when you give us parties.

I love you when you eat lunch.

I love you when we read.

I love you when we write.

I love you when we learn

I love you when we learn math

I love you when we is on the computer.

I love you when we go outside.

I love you when we go to recess.

I love you when we are at our decx

I love you when we go home.

I love you when we are at the garpit!

As she shared multiple examples from her teaching, she repeated points such as, “Again, this is showing how he felt more free,” which I thought illustrated the value she placed on education as a tool of freedom rather than control. Later, I triangulated this with my other notes on “freedom,” and named “freedom” as a major theme in my data analysis.

During the entire presentation I documented how Rachel’s discussion fit into various other categories on my observational protocol. For example, I wrote that Rachel’s discussion of her teaching philosophy stressed “real” literacy events in the classroom. I cross-referenced these comments to fieldnotes and earlier interview data during which this same theme was evident, and I noted the need to categorize these under the heading I had created, “When its real, it’s real.” I discussed this point briefly with Rachel, and made a note to look back on it during later data analysis.

During the presentation Rachel kept reiterating her love for her students and the value she placed on their ownership of writing and reading with phrases such as the following: “It’s totally cool how they just keep writing and writing and writing...”; “I told my students, ‘I want you to open up your journal and see yourself’”; “A lot of times I feel like my students are the ones teaching writing”.

After she presented, one of my college students asked, “What is it that makes them [the students] learn so much?” Rachel replied by first discussing technical details she taught such as periods and finger spaces. Then she stopped herself, looked at the audience, and explained the progress of a key student: “Really it is because he writes about things he loves”. Rachel’s emphasis on students’ personal engagement in literacy was clear.

I elicited feedback from my college students after the presentation. Most expressed how her work caused them to think about literacy differently. The following student response was especially telling:

“We were told to expect to be inspired by Rachel, and I know I am, 100%. She made me much more excited to be a teacher. I’m in a place right now where I didn’t want to finish school because I feel too tired and overwhelmed. I wanted to be a better mom rather than a good student, or, later, a good teacher. This presentation, which feels like such a small thing, gave me the inspiration, as well as the excitement, to keep going.”

Another college student followed with:

“I really liked the presentation because I learned how important creative writing can be as an outlet for children’s emotions. I was also astounded at the personal progress the children had made in their writing skills and spelling skills. It really shows how when children feel encouraged and free to learn in their own way, they will make amazing strides.”

Rachel made many positive comments to me on her feelings about the experience afterwards. I tentatively wrote something in my journal about a developing concept this offered in my data analysis: professional accountability, and later developed the interpretation more fully.

Presentation II. After the first presentation, Rachel invited my college students to her school for a second presentation, to watch her class for a demonstration lesson. This was the second part of the action component of the research model. Even though it required a 45 minute drive, the college students, planning to be future teachers, expressed that they very much desired the opportunity to see a teacher in action and visit an urban school. I

describe this experience in this section and I present student responses to it, in order to explicate my methods in detail.

Rachel began by demonstrating a read-aloud, which dealt with the theme of mothers, as we all observed. Then Rachel demonstrated writing a personal poem she entitled, "Just Like Mom" to describe someone important in her life, her sister. She prompted the students to respond by writing on the topic she modeled.

Rachel involved the college students actively. She had her first graders sit in desks in small groups with the college students. Each of her students teamed up with the college students to plan ideas for their writing, and then wrote together with them.

I observed that the first graders were very attentive to their college student readers, and there was a hum of talk and energy. I noted smiles and laughter. I jotted these details in my notes. The college students talked with the first graders as they wrote to develop ideas. Rachel remarked to me that she was impressed at how much work was being done despite the low hum of voices. She noted that some students were far more productive than usual, apparently motivated by the college students.

Finally the students shared what they had written in the author's chair. Some students read their work aloud, and others asked me to "sing" them. We sang some of their poems as a group. Time was limited, so only some students were able to share, and those who did not share were disappointed. My college students responded to the experience with remarks such as the following:

"Seeing Rachel's classroom was very beneficial to becoming a teacher because I was able to see firsthand how she interacts with her students, how she uses different techniques such as read-alouds, and how she incorporates writing into her classroom curriculum."

Another student commented on how much she learned from Rachel's students' enthusiasm for their writing product: "I think the most rewarding part of the time we spent at --Elementary was getting to see the kids eagerly perform their poems or freewrites. I loved seeing the kids be so proud of their work and their thoughts."

Another student commented both on Rachel's teaching and her own opportunity to engage with one of Rachel's students, whose writing development had been illustrated in Rachel's previous talk with my students.

"Rachel's classroom showed me that you could teach children that anyone can write, no matter what age, ethnicity, or gender you are. I was working with a new student in the classroom who is new to writing down stories or poems. It amazed me at how much progress he made within the short amount of time he's been in the classroom."

Finally, I wrote notes on how Rachel explained to me that the experience was exciting, motivating, and validating for her in her work as a teacher and professional. I present here Rachel's response to the experience: "I just wanted to let YOU know that I can't stop thinking about Tuesday! I had SUCH a fun time sharing my classroom family with your students. I really felt as though everyone was happy to be there and I can't wait to read what they say!"

These two action components that involved the participant as teacher to others on what she had learned produced important notes and themes that led to my theory-building on the concept of professional accountability, theory-building that I describe in the next section.

Final Data Analysis to Build Theory

Finally, the overall themes from the early developing teacher, the action step fieldnotes, and the presentation data were analyzed to develop an emerging theory on the possibilities and challenges of facilitating sociocultural literacy pedagogy the early

elementary grades. (Merriam, 1998). I organized my earlier codes into interpretive themes or categories (Maxwell, 2005). The major categories I created were 1) teacher vision, 2) teacher strategies, 3) love, and 4) challenges. I considered ways in which these themes related to the theories in existing literature, and I pinpointed areas for additional research and exploration. As I sifted through the data I constructed and reconstructed hypotheses to capture the theory that emerged as a result of the themes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). I considered how these findings refined my portrait of Rachel's literacy instruction, the hypotheses that remain unchallenged remained as guideposts for the final write up of the data analysis. I applied my interpretations to the themes and related them to literature on teacher education.

I used the following definition of theory-building to describe my work at this point: "the cognitive process of discovering or manipulating abstract categories and the relationships among these categories (LeCompte, Preissle, & Tesch, 1993, p. 239, quoted in Merriam, 1998, p. 188). As I fit more and more of my data into specific categories, I created hypotheses to explain these categories. I then looked for more and more data to either contradict or support these hypotheses. The hypotheses that remain became part of my eventual tentative theory (Glaser Strauss, 1967). For example, I created the category of "teacher vision", and created a hypothesis that "community" underscored Rachel's vision of her classroom. I attempted to look at how her multiple comments and actions revealed/did not reveal this, and I used data sources such as interviews, observations, and student documents. I looked at student behavior to see if it contradicted what I interpreted from Rachel's comments and actions. Finally, I examined how my developing theories do/do not fit into the existing literature on sociocultural literacy models and teacher education, and I explored that relationship in the data analysis.

Feedback from Rachel

Throughout the study I bounced ideas off Rachel and proposed to her my in-process theory-building about literacy in her classroom. I revised and reworked some of my ideas based on her responses to them. I sent her a copy of my list of themes and elicited feedback. I talked with her via phone to discuss my interpretations and hear her responses, and address any concerns she had, or additional revisions she suggested. Finally, I sent her a late draft of my manuscript, and had her write comments in the margins on points for me to attend to, and to enhance the accuracy of my portrayal of her teaching and thoughts. This helped me think critically through some issues, and she raised some questions I still have not answered fully, questions that may be worth pursuing in future research. For example, she shared that although she was passionate about the model of professional accountability, she did not know if all teachers shared the same kind of passion. I thought a great deal through this point, and theorized that two major elements behind my model of professional accountability were “relationships” and “meeting teachers where they are”. True, many teachers might not share Rachel’s enthusiasm. But I proposed that positive, engaging relationships as proposed in professional accountability models might help bolster enthusiasm. And I realized I had to emphasize that this model did not imply top-down prescriptions, but worked from teachers’ self-assessments and personal goals, and integrated these into other goals such as state standards and things outside professionals might deem as important. This is an example of how Rachel’s input and theorizing influenced my own theorizing.

Validity

Below I use literature on postmodern qualitative research methods to justify my approach to validity in this open-ended, situated, and interpretive study. Because this is a nontraditional and participatory qualitative study of individual cases, it is important to

note that the study has limited generalizability, and instead has tentative theory-building purposes (Yin, 2003). But this does not mean that validity is not an important issue to explore, as long as it is clear that validity has a different meaning in these traditions.

There are many well-developed alternative conceptualizations and checklists for validity in qualitative research (Merriam, 1998). Below I explore the concepts and argue that the alternative validity conceptualizations and checks developed by qualitative researchers who denounce positivism offer much strength to my research. I will use Merriam's list of validity checks (1998) that prove valuable in postmodern research such as mine in order to show how I attended to validity.

First, Merriam (1998, p. 204) explains that for such qualitative research, triangulation is still important, and the ways in which data is triangulated contributes greatly to the value of the study. I triangulated my data by using multiple data collection strategies and ensuring that I look across the data sources before making a theoretical claim. For example, when my teacher participant described her teaching as "student-centered," I worked with her to do the following to check this claim: Does the rest of what she says verify this claim? Do the practices I observe of her verify this claim? Does her practice align with literature on student-centered teaching? Do the artifacts and documents from her classroom verify these claims? This triangulation ensured a disciplined approach to data collection.

Second, the participatory nature of this study entailed member checks (Merriam, 1998). I showed some of the copies of my transcripts, diagrams, or theories, to the teacher, and asked her for input or guidance. I asked for her assistance as I analyzed the data, in a participatory nature, when she deemed it necessary. These forms of member checks should enhance the validity of my claims, as they empower the voice of the participant in the study (Oldfather, 2002).

Also long-term observation (Merriam, 1998) was important to my study. I continually revisited my classroom and re-interviewed my participant during a period of at least four months in order to access variation and change in the data as time may produce. For the final month I attended literacy instruction in the class from three to four times a week.

Equally important to the validity of my study was the clarity to which I identified my own biases and my own theoretical framework undergirding my interpretations (Merriam, 1998). Because my interpretations directly arose from the intersection between my subjectivity, my experience in the classroom, and the data set, it remained important for me to illuminate this subjectivity in the context of my attempts at disciplined inquiry. The literature review here begins this, and the robustness of my notes will extend and continue it. The biographical section I include in my study is important for this, and the manner in which I explicitly reference my own experiences from time to time is another way in which I make myself apparent.

In the constructivist theoretical framework, I understand that all knowledge is created contextually and is a direct product of a person's unique experiences and perspectives (Oldfather, 2002). Thus I made my conceptual framework explicit, and I continued to examine and question my conceptual framework as I continue to collect and analyze the data. Merriam (1998) asserts that this kind of thick description of the role and influence of the researcher and participants upon the findings is what distinguishes careful participatory qualitative research and actually sets it apart from other forms of research.

I also attempted to be clear about the evidentiary trail supporting my analysis and interpretations of data (Yin, 2003). I did my best to back up each claim I made with evidence to support that claim; I struggled with this at times perhaps due to a personal habit of theorizing and editorializing. But I tried to go back over elements in which I over-editorialized or did not provide sufficient examples and rethink those sections of the

analysis. For example, when I claimed that Rachel was “happy” or “excited”, I tried to take my adjectives out and instead look for examples of things she did or said that demonstrated “happiness,” I looked for multiple forms of evidence that are triangulated, from comments to journals to behaviors, to back these claims. This practice was a key support to promote the validity of my work.

Finally I remind the reader that I have pursued this research out of a critical understanding of the situatedness of empirical research. I take seriously Kincheloe’s assertion (2004):

A critical complex empiricism understands that there may be many interpretations of the observations made and the data collected, that different researchers, depending on their relative situatedness may see very different phenomena in a study of the same classroom. (p. 53)

I recognize that the data I collected, the actions I took within the classroom, and the conclusions I drew based on these forms of knowledge all directly resulted from my positionality. My research is interpretive and subject to the influence of my own experiences and perceptions, as is all research, whether acknowledged or not. In order to promote ethics in my approach I attempted to make this situation explicit, and I attempted to make explicit my role in the process. In this way validity is approached as a pursual of ethics.

I began this study convinced that there is much we need to learn about early developing teachers’ development of literacy instruction in urban elementary schools. I was determined to work side by side with a teacher as she explored literacy possibilities. So I embarked on a study to paint a picture of life in an urban classroom useful for teacher education that prepares teachers for the nuances in urban schools. I included an action stage for empowerment within this model, positioning Rachel as expert, and not

just co-teacher. With Rachel's input I explored and documented her instruction as it related to robust literacy models. I tried to analyze her practices and perceptions as they inform our understanding of how new teachers may need support working in today's school settings. In the following section I detail highlights of our grassroots work together through narrative documentation, and then, in the next section, I outline analysis of our data.

Chapter 4: Narration of the Collaboration: How it Unfolded

Our Developing Relationship

I first met Rachel when she was a student in a course I taught several years ago, Principles and Methods of Teaching in Elementary Schools. She was a very motivated, high-achieving student. At the end of the semester Rachel asked me if I could serve as her faculty advisor for a summer undergraduate research fellowship. I agreed, she won the fellowship, and I helped her piece together a qualitative research design for studying the model of a local urban charter school. Together we visited the school, which based much of its teaching on Calkins (1994) and Charney (1992). The school operated on many of the teaching principles from my course that had been difficult to explain without models. In particular, the school emphasized community building and the literacy workshop model, two major themes from my course. As Rachel visited the school and wrote about it, I assisted her in the production of the final paper and presentation. It is difficult to trace how much these two background experiences under my guidance, Rachel's coursework and independent research, influenced the teacher Rachel has become today, but they remain important elements in her development worth considering. Importantly, they reveal roots of my relationship with Rachel and the areas that brought us together.

I remained in touch with Rachel as she completed our university's teacher education program, mostly through email and occasional conversations. One day she called me and told me she had decided to enroll in Teach For America and serve in an underprivileged area in her home city. She communicated to me a passion for social justice and a desire to work with students to promote equity in urban education. I assisted her as she prepared for the interview process, and celebrated with her as she became admitted into the program.

I kept in contact with Rachel as she began her first year of teaching. As I considered a research participant for my dissertation, I suddenly realized that Rachel could be a perfect case for study. She met the criteria of an early developing literacy teacher committed to community, serving in a struggling urban school. She had also been recognized at her school as an outstanding teacher. I presented to her the idea of participatory research, and she told me she was thrilled at the prospect, desiring the support and inspiration from being a part of such a project.

Building Rapport in the Classroom

I began building rapport with Rachel in her classroom through a few visits to her school during her first year of teaching (the year before the formal study). I opened discussions with Rachel about areas in which she desired assistance. Rachel demonstrated enthusiasm for her work. Yet she was a new teacher this year, and she displayed many of the hallmarks of a new teacher; I observed the use of pre-made commercial worksheets and continual loud reprimands as classroom management. When I returned the following year I noted that she had successfully grown past this early struggling stage; she had learned to use a soft voice and she was experimenting with more student-centered and open-ended teaching methods.

I returned the following year before actually launching my study, to build rapport with Rachel's new group of students. Rachel and I learned to approach certain classroom tasks as a team, and the students became accustomed to my presence in the classroom.

Highlights from our Classroom

In this section I detail descriptions of major elements of our classroom work together. After I explain the collaboration, I provide sample lessons that show how our focus on music and songwriting in the literacy community originated. Then I present details of the culminating unit that Rachel and I collaborated on in her classroom. I present this

information in order to provide a nuanced portrait of the source of my data collection, to illustrate the model of collaboration I used as a possible template for future work, research, or teacher education.

Opening discussions. The study commenced during Rachel's second year of teaching. I met with Rachel and asked her to pinpoint areas in which she wanted help. We talked about the study, how she could participate, and how she could teach my university students and me in our work. We envisioned the professional opportunities this collaboration could create, and I let her know my excitement about the knowledge we would produce as a result of the collaboration.

My weekly visits to Rachel's classroom during literacy instruction occurred for a four month time period, and I increased them to three to four days a week during the last month of our collaboration. Our schedule together consisted of: 1) Several months of early building of rapport in the classroom 2) Three months of weekly formal visits 4) 1.5 months of regular (3-4 times a week) work in the classroom.

I spent the first few days of our collaboration mostly observing and trying to provide positive feedback on Rachel's new strategies and approaches. I began to collaborate with Rachel in lesson planning; we corresponded via email, phone, and text messages. The following weekend text message Rachel sent me exemplifies the energy Rachel showed for these lessons: "I have a great idea for Monday! Could you bring an instrument?" These kinds of texts were common. They usually consisted of an enthusiastic comment and sometimes a brief description of how she wanted me to help her.

Working together. On a typical day in Rachel's classroom, I began by observing Rachel's teaching during reader's workshop, and usually collaborating during writer's workshop. Before we taught, we would often discuss the lessons she was teaching, the

objective she was working on, how she wanted me to participate, and we would also conduct small talk and personal talk, and even use the time to develop our friendship.

Rachel and I often taught writer's workshop mini-lessons together. After the mini-lessons the students nearly always began independent writing. Independent writing usually lasted from 20 minutes to 45 minutes. By the time I came to the classroom regularly, the students had built up stamina for independent writing, and they were normally able to immediately focus and begin writing without delay. After this Rachel would take the students to lunch, and we would usually sit together while I conducted my informal interviews about the day's events, to gain her perspective more clearly.

As the year progressed, Rachel used herself more as a model to her students for writing and reading. She began bringing her own writing into the classroom and demonstrating her own writing process for the students. She also incorporated music and songwriting into the writing curriculum. A typical routine we used consisted of the following two steps: Rachel introduced the lesson and modeled her own writing; after that I would take the students through an additional example of what she had just modeled. I had to keep reminding myself to let Rachel take the lead while I sat on the sidelines.

In the following section I provide samples of our work together. First I describe three lessons that reveal ways in which our focus on using songwriting and music developed. These three lessons show how I tried to support Rachel in her desires, and how I gradually handed the leadership of these kinds of lessons to Rachel. Then I describe the culminating unit that served as the focus for our work for the final 5 weeks of our collaboration.

Poetry, music and learning hidden talents. Early in the collaboration, Rachel asked me to demonstrate short lessons on the theme of "love", in an effort to involve students

more personally in writing about their feelings. I informed her that I enjoyed teaching poetry, and she asked me to lead a writing workshop lesson on poetry. So I demonstrated a favorite lesson from my former classroom teaching experiences. I brought in a book, *Honey, I Love*, by Eloise Greenfield (1978), and taught the students to “sing” the poems from the book and use them as models for their own writing. The students began their writing with the first few phrases in the poem and then wrote their own extensions to poems. Students created personal work that Rachel displayed in her classroom. This lesson addressed the first grade writing standard that requires students to know how to literature and the language patterns of texts as springboards for writing. It provided a pattern of teaching that emphasized the use of models and music as inspiration for writing, and this model influenced the later direction of our collaboration. The following excerpt from a students’ writing resulted from this lesson and emulated patterns in the text:

When I’m by myself/ And I close my eyes

I dream and dream that I see peacemakers all over the world...

We could fly. We could float in the sky.

We can go through things/But nothing stings.

We can fly through the air /And we can scare a stair/ but we don’t care...

-Adam

Using music. This prompted a focus on music to draw together the classroom community. As I had enjoyed in my past teaching, I continued demonstrating to the students the “musicality” of poetry, and Rachel began using music more through the use of her own classroom instruments in writing mini-lessons. Rachel asked me to bring more instruments to the class to inspire writing. For my next demonstration lesson, I brought in my flute and used it to present musical interpretations of literature. I also

offered to “sing” some of the students’ poems, to turn them into songs (This was a regular practice I enjoyed using to inspire literacy in my former classrooms). I took some of the students’ writing and, in an impromptu manner, applied them to melodies and “sang” them to the class. The students wanted to hear their writing in song form and asked for more.

Rachel overcame her reluctance, followed my example and also “sang” a students’ poem. I encouraged her to feel comfortable with this kind of musical interpretation of poetry. We both said we felt a little crazy, but we felt that the “craziness” drove our own enthusiasm as well as the students’ desire for literacy production. As we “sang” the students’ writing, we watched the students smile. Our singing renditions of students’ work prompted the students to start thinking about not only writing poems, but also writing songs.

The following student song exemplifies the open-ended creative musical expression these lessons produced, and it was designed “to be sung”:

I get down/ In the way I go/ All day so/ I’m in the road (1)

With a car or a loaf/ on my Grand Toast

[She divided this song in separate stanzas herself, like the poems and songs we read]

I feel like bread/With a star on my head/ When I think/ I think (2)

A raccoon on my bed

I feel like food/ And play at noon/When I go home/I play in my room

I like to rhyme/ It’s fine/It’s fine/It’s fine with me/It’s fine with you.

-Amy

Rachel’s violin. After she watched me use my flute to accompany read-alouds, Rachel confessed to me that she played the violin. We laughed as we learned we shared common hidden musical talents. She also explained that although she previously performed and

taught violin lessons, she had never before considered bringing her violin into the classroom. Rachel asked me, “Do you think I could bring my violin to play for the students?” I told her it was important to bring what she loved into her classroom to share with the students. So, the following day, I walked into the classroom and spotted a violin case on the table. Rachel initially asked me to play flute with her while she softly accompanied me. Then she played more forcefully, and played a solo perfectly. For her mini-lesson to inspire writing that day, she and I took turns playing interpretations of parts of the story we read. She was obviously a well-versed musician.

As Rachel took out some of her music and started playing, the students and I listened attentively and asked for more. She later remarked to me about how happy it made her to share this important aspects of her identity with the class.

After we played for the mini-lesson, the students began independent writing. When it was time for students to share, Rachel and I used our instruments to play call-and-response themes as interpretations of the students’ writing. A student would read a piece from their journals, and one of us would take our instrument and play how we “felt” the writing piece. Then the other would play a response to it using the other instrument. Rachel and I reflected after the lesson that this method brought us more intensely in touch with students’ writing and with each other. Students listened as their words became our music, and we listened more deeply to each other and worked off each other. We remarked that we felt closer as a classroom community.

Incorporating instruments like this during writing workshop became a regular part of Rachel’s routines. It prompted Rachel and I to bring in other instruments for the students to play themselves, such as drums, rattles, homemade percussion instruments, and a set of classroom instruments that Rachel later bought. Students gradually became comfortable setting their own writing to music using these instruments after we set the

example. Using music to interpret student writing added another new literacy element to the publication stage of writing, as now students were writing to inspire music, and thinking about tone and sensory words.

Rachel followed by creating many more lessons featuring music and songwriting, and students began writing songs nearly daily. Students used writing workshop to plan, develop ideas, expand language, explore emotions and sensory language, and share with the writing community. Several students were writing pieces that were three or more times as long as those they wrote at the beginning of the year.

Writing workshop took off with a new buzz as students enacted this new purpose for writing: for producing songs to sing, not just papers to read. Students sat down and told us they were writing songs, not papers. Gradually Rachel began using musical demonstrations without my participation, and teaching songwriting practices without my assistance. Her students began producing pages of songs when I was not in the classroom, and I enjoyed hearing these songs during my visits.

The independent writing session of writing workshop became a songwriter session. Author's chair became a time for singing and sharing music. By producing their writing musically, students demonstrated a new understanding of the state standard of writing publication. The genre of song drew on students' home knowledge of music and engaged students in a form of literacy often seen as an out-of-school literacy (Mahari, 2005). It provided a purpose and product that represented a real life practice that many adults find enriches their lives or even, sometimes, provides their incomes. And it drew the classroom community together in a unified purpose.

Planning the unit. I had designed the study so that my work with Rachel would begin with weekly visits, and then lead up to more regular work in the classroom, about three or four times a week, during a month-long unit we co-created. After Rachel conducted her

presentations for preservice teachers, my collaboration with Rachel focused on the development of this unit. Rachel's needs and desires drove this unit, and it related and built upon our early collaborations on literacy motivation. She wanted it to involve music and production, as well as student authorship. Although I had been initially interested in focusing on literacy assessment, she requested more of my help in literacy instruction, in design and implementation of a thematic unit.

We brainstormed together possible foci for the unit, and decided to pursue a unit on careers. The theme of careers provided a blank canvas and an open-ended direction that we could be creative with and that students could use to write about things that mattered to them and connected to their experiences. Through the career unit, students could use writing workshop to create their own unique performances, songs, that built off the musical energy and writing we had been facilitating. And Rachel as the teacher could use her creative energies to design a unit uniquely her own.

So Rachel went home and created a template for the unit to start with: a calendar with times and days organized into different career topics. Career themes included: Nature and Science Jobs; Creative Jobs, Food Jobs, and Animal Jobs. Rachel explained that she had a strong overall social justice aim behind the unit: to broaden students' horizons of the possibilities for their future. She also aimed to use the unit to try out new, more active, holistic, sociocultural teaching strategies that facilitated her vision of classroom community.

The unit. Here I detail the main focus of the culminating unit. The unit began after standardized testing ended and I became a regular participant in Rachel's classroom.

Rachel opened the unit by collecting information that students already had about careers. During this pre-unit assessment, we learned that most students envisioned future careers that either someone they knew had or that they had seen on television.

Some examples of these careers were a shop assistant, car dealer, Wal-Mart employee, trash man, babysitter, home builder, fireman, nail stylist, zoo worker, “perfume seller”, nurse, coach, “lunch lady”, police officer, doctor, teacher, lawyer, librarian, singer, football player, and mechanic. Rachel and I considered the jobs they mentioned and made plans to expose them to a wider variety of jobs, and we aimed especially for teaching them about more professional jobs. For example, instead of shop assistant and zoo worker, Rachel wanted to show them they could be a business owner, a zoo director, or an animal researcher.

Each day in the unit followed a similar format: a mini-lesson on the topic of certain careers, followed by student writing, reading or other activity in response to the career topic. At first this took place through more traditional writing workshop routines, with which the students were now well-accustomed. For example, Rachel started teaching about “nature” careers through a very structured group of short video clips she had collected online. After viewing the clips, students went to their desks and wrote about the careers that appealed to them and why. Then the students shared what they had written.

After a few days of this pattern of direct teaching followed by independent writing, Rachel designed hands-on “stations” to incorporate various kinds of literacy: arts, music, technology, sports, food, reading, math, science, and writing. Rachel invited another teacher into the classroom because she was worried that she would need help, as this was a new method for her. But she did not end up requiring much help.

Stations. On the first day of stations, Rachel only had the help of one other teacher and me. She spent at least 20 minutes explaining expectations for all of the stations. Then she organized the students and let them go take part in various station activities designed to engage students in emulating real-life career tasks in a social context.

The health and food stations included stations on the following careers: nutritionist, chef, personal trainer, cake decorator, food researcher, and restaurant owner. These represented Rachel's efforts to interest students in new health and nutrition-related topics while developing language skills and strategies at the same time. In the chef station, students made salads out of a variety of vegetables that most had never tried before. Students asked many questions about the vegetables, which included radishes, turnips, beets, peppers, and more. Most kept asking for more after they tried each vegetable. These activities engaged students oral language, provided experiences to write about, integrated the subjects, and brought students together to accomplish project goals in a community of learners.

Other health and food stations required students to use other intelligences or literacies. The personal trainer station involved making up special exercises, trying them out, and writing about them. The cake decorator station involved artistic projects. The other stations involved reading, writing, math, and science skills. They also required students to work together as collaborative community members.

The animal career day was another highlight. It included the following stations: zoo director, animal researcher, animal trainer, animal groomer, veterinarian, and marine biologist. These stations involved planning, math, art, and research skills. The creative jobs stations were another example of Rachel's detailed planning. These stations included the following: architect; 3d animator; poet; fashion designer; poet, and musician, and they engaged students in trying out the work of each profession in each station.

Each day of stations went so smoothly, without negative incidents, and students and teacher concentrated, smiled and laughed, and produced large amounts of writing, artwork, songs, other products, and read a variety of books on these topics. When we

reflected each day after stations, Rachel talked a great deal about how excited she was and how happy she felt with her work.

The career stations culminated in a field trip to the zoo that illustrated more possibilities for animal careers. During the field trip students were able to see the jobs they were learning about in action. They were also able to bond as a community in a new place.

After the weeks of stations, students continued to write about what they had learned, and they used these writing pieces to develop their understanding of the writing process. Often these writing pieces were songs that the students sang or asked us to sing. The students used this daily writing routine to explore and narrow down career possibilities as they focused on writing about one or two favorite careers. At this time some composed songs, some composed stories, and some composed informational pieces.

Developing songs. After students had written multiple songs about possible career choices, Rachel asked them to choose favorite career choices to use for the final musical performance. For some, this involved revisiting and revising a song that had been drafted earlier, and for some this involved the development of a new song. She modeled a process for using familiar tunes from the following songs as templates for their own songs: I'm a Little Teapot; You are My Sunshine; Row, Row, Row Your Boat, and Mary Had a Little Lamb.

Rachel and I observed that, after a few days of teaching students processes for publishing songs (developing them into something they could present to an audience) all of the students were able to compose songs independently. Some also composed group songs. Some of their songs fit their tunes better than others, and we helped those with the sections that aligned less with the originals. We tried to keep students in the lead; we helped them by modeling different ways for the words to fit the tune, and letting them

choose one. Rachel had each student create an illustration to go with each song; we used these illustrations as backdrops when each student presented during the final presentations.

Although songwriting units like these are not typically included in early elementary literacy classrooms, in our writing classroom they met a variety of curricular goals through a unique genre that builds off multiple literacies. As our students went through the process of writing and revising their songs, they followed steps of the writing process as expected in the state curriculum. They worked together to make decisions about this process, and they worked together to create final presentations or publications of their writing.

All of these steps are major components of the state curriculum. They originate in a model of literacy learning that honors students' constructions and builds nontraditional forms of literacy relevant to students' experiences. They help students to connect to schooling (Luke & Freebody, 1997; Dyson, 2005) and they give students a social and "real-world" purpose (Gee, 1996), as the goal in this writing is to produce original songs to present and perform for others, not just to complete an "assignment." And they are constructed within a community for a purpose important to the community.

The final performance. Rachel and I originally planned for the final performance to involve elaborate stage and costumes. Yet scheduling and end-of-the-year school realities complicated our plans. First, we kept postponing the dates for the performance because we felt the students needed more time. Second, due to hot weather, the school kept changing full days to half days during the last two weeks of school, which conflicted with many of our practice plans and my ability to make the one hour drive to the school. Finally, by the last week of school when we were ready to perform, some of the students' parents had already pulled the students out of school for summer vacation.

For these reasons, on the day I arrived prepared to perform with the students, barely more than half of the class was present, and half of the room was already packed up for the summer. Rachel and I decided to facilitate the performance instead as a laid-back, informal show for the students of neighboring classes and anyone else who happened to walk by.

After final practicing, each student and groups of students came forward to explain their careers and perform their songs. The principal and a few other teachers were able to attend, as well as the some students from other classes.

The performance routine unfolded this way: Each student or groups of students came forward to present his/her songs. On the wall behind each performer we used a document camera to present each child's artwork for each career, and then we presented the song lyrics so that everyone could see them. Each performer sang at least one time through, and then to include the audience, as a shared reading, in an additional singing.

I sat in the front and helped lead the singing with my guitar. I sang quietly with the students who behaved more apprehensively. For the most part, students were poised as they came to the front and began singing, and audience members sang loudly as well when reading the words on the screen. We sang each song multiple times, and students portrayed much emotion.

The principal watched and commented repeatedly at how much she appreciated the performance. She sat and videotaped the performance on her personal phone, and delivered multiple compliments to everyone involved.

As demonstrated by the students' choices of song topics, final career choices had changed into, for the most part, more professional options. In addition to many of the new careers we introduced in the unit, the careers of "singer" and "teacher" were popular. Rachel and I wondered if this could have been due to our own modeling of these careers.

Students wrote about Rachel adoringly many times during the unit, which seemed an expression of their appreciation. She and I both did a great deal of singing and teaching along the way.

The following are examples of final songs from the students:

“I’m a Veterinarian” by Amy

I’m a veterinarian/ Helping Animals.

Here is my needle/ To make them better.

When the dogs and cats are healthy

Give them back and get them out.

“When I’m Grown up” by Addie

I will teach when I grow up.

I love math, so I’ll teach that.

The students will learn to add.

I will take them out to play.

When I grow up, I’ll teach kids.

I will have fun all the time.

“I’m a Teacher” by Wallie:

I am a teacher, a really good teacher.

I teach people. They love playing.

I love to teach math/ Subtract and adding.

I will go to college someday.

This description of our collaboration and the culminating unit details the context in which I worked and analyzed to produce tentative theories on enacting sociocultural

models of literacy education and teacher education support models. It also provided the context in which students addressed state standards. In the first section of data analysis I illustrate how Rachel's teaching facilitated these curricular goals and literacy progress. Then, in the second section of data analysis I provide more of my interpretive analysis of Rachel's teaching.

Chapter 5: Data Analysis: Curriculum Goals and Literacy Theory

This first section of my data analysis attends to state curricular goals. Rachel's teaching not only aligned with sociocultural models of literacy, but also produced behaviors addressed in state standards (Appendix L). This description only highlights the standards that were the most prevalently observed. Here I describe how Rachel's literacy instruction addressed aspects of each of the Maryland language arts frameworks (Maryland State Department of Education, 2011): Writing, Reading Foundational Skills, Reading Literature, and Speaking/Discussion. While her teaching produced student behavior as described in the frameworks, it often exceeded these requirements by embodying at the same time aspects of robust literacy and educational theories.

Addressing Maryland State Writing Framework

First, Rachel's approach to writing exemplified most of the methods of writing instruction described in the Maryland state standards. Rachel's students demonstrated many of the behaviors and produced many of the products described in the standards on a daily basis. The standards present a model of process writing, in which students learn to write by writing, by taking one's thoughts and developing them through stages of planning, revising, and publishing. Rachel's classroom writing community, which could be described as a writer's workshop (Calkins, 1994), operated on the daily routines of teacher-led mini-lessons, read-alouds, and/or discussion, followed by independent writing, during which students work on self-selected writing topics, planning or revising earlier work. It always culminated in some form of publishing, whether this was sharing writing with the class in the author's chair, producing a song, or publishing on the computer, wall, or other format. This basic routine remained in place when Rachel launched innovative strategies such as songwriting and her thematic unit. Every day students worked through one of the stages described in the state standards.

As students took part daily in the mandated process writing approach, they also demonstrated characteristics of literacy learning as described by literacy theories. Rachel conceived of her writing classroom as a community in which students and teacher both regularly shared their writing with one another. They learned to write by writing, by experiencing this community of writers through daily routines in the social practice of writing (Gee, 1996; Luke & Freebody, 1997). This was evidenced by the fact that Rachel's students wrote together *everyday*, spoke of writing as something they looked forward to, and progressed rapidly as writers. Finally, Rachel's students' daily writing allowed them a space to deal with individual experiences, connecting to students' worlds and countering a history of alienating and culturally-depriving urban education models (Haberman, 1992; Spring, 2009; Tyack, 1974). In my interpretive data analysis, I label this final point as "real teaching", and describe it more fully. The following description from our collaboration reveals a sample of Rachel's students' experiences in a process model of writing, with a community of writers (including the teacher), writing on topics connected to personally-relevant, or "real" experiences:

After a writing workshop session in which students used writing to explore the topic of 'love', one of Rachel's students, Amy, raised her hand and told us, 'I have a hole in my heart'. She sat and cried, and Rachel and I wondered what to do. After Amy kept repeating that her mother didn't love her, Rachel and I felt distraught and disturbed. An action step we developed impromptu was to tell Amy to look around and see all the classmates who loved her.

As Amy followed our suggestion and looked around the room, the students at her table heard our words, looked up at Amy, and told her they loved her. Another student drew a picture and gave it to Amy, with the message: "I love you" on it. Kace, who often struggled with getting along with others, said, "I'll work with you." Amy's face

slowly brightened with each of these interactions and reassurances from the classroom community. By the end of the hour she was smiling as she worked together with Kace. Meanwhile all the students produced 1- 2 page narratives on people in their lives that they loved, and they all clamored to share their writing in the author's chair.

The following two excerpts from writing samples illustrate how students wrote about different kinds of feelings and worked through some of them through writing. These writings capture students' "real" emotions and show how students brought aspects of their lives into the classroom:

Playing in my room. Special./ Living with my dad. Special.

Helping my sister. Special./ Rhyming with my brother. Special.

Jumping over my bed. Special....Fishing with my dad. Special.

Packing for vacation. Special./ Sleeping in my bed. Special.”

-Mia

“Sad Song and Feeling Better”

Sitting in a chair, Sad./ Eating cookies makes me feel better.

Laying down on the ground, Sad. /Looking up below the sky makes me feel better.

Falling down my knee is hurting. How sad./Putting a badge makes me feel better.

Leaving me by myself in the house, Sad./Coming to school makes me feel better.

Going to the store, Sad. Can you guess what makes me feel better?

My teacher of course.”-Addie

Addressing Maryland Language Framework

Although writing tended to be the major focus of our collaboration, Rachel's students also met many other Maryland language arts frameworks during our collaboration. Under the framework of language (Appendix L), the students applied conventions of Standard English through writing daily: they problem-solved as they wrote, edited and revised

their language, and used knowledge of phonics to spell unknown words. When students used these processes and strategies, they actively constructed knowledge in an authentic setting rather than through decontextualized skills work, which adheres to Luke and Freebody's (1997) point on connecting teaching to students' worlds, and challenges elements of a banking model of education (Freire, 1970), and applies teaching the standard codes of power as set forth by Delpit (1991).

The following example revealed how Rachel's students demonstrated patterns of applying their knowledge of spelling and editing strategies to their writing:

As I sat and took notes, I saw that students were not raising their hands asking continually, "How do you spell?", as I had seen in many classes before. Nor were they avoiding using words in their writing they did not know how to spell. I observed several students looking up at the word wall and mouthing the word they struggled to spell; Others mouthed their words and wrote down the letters they heard. I walked around and noticed many large words students used that were phonetically, if not technically, correct.

Here are a few examples of invented spelling from three different student writing samples. These students were not afraid to try to spell above-grade level words, and they used phonics knowledge and common spelling patterns to try the words in the midst of pages of other text:

"I'll be amazing at acting. Everybody would want my ohtogragh";

"I'm embared"; "Dancing is exerzising"

Addressing Maryland Reading Literature Framework

I observed Rachel's students to meet two major areas under the Maryland Reading Literature framework for the first grade. As stated in the frameworks, they identified sensory language and read poems, and they used illustrations to convey and explore

details (Appendix L). I observed many lessons in which Rachel demonstrated sensory language to her students and had them follow by using this language in their writing and speaking. The writing samples below illustrate two students' writings that used such sensory language. The students also explored sensory and other details through illustrations. Appendix N reveals examples of such illustrations. These samples not only show state curricular goals met; they also show how students' experienced the arts (Greene, 1982) through multiple literacies, learned about poetry by taking on the identity of poets (Gee, 1996) and used poetry, songwriting, and artwork to explore and legitimize non-canonical and diverse authors (Provenzo, 2006; Lynn, 2005). The following examples reveal student experimentation with sensory language and other elements of poetry such as repetition and rhyme. The second example reveals Rachel's encouragement of home literacies and invented spelling as well:

I feel sweaty in the summer cause its hot and I run a lot. I feel splashy in the summer because when I jump in the pool I always splash. I go to three feet and I always feel wet because I because I dump my head in it. I keep swimming but I say I'm never leaving and I'm always dreaming. I go like a roller coaster... I jump like a frog and I hop in the pool"-Aaron

I feel hot like stake in the pot. I will, I will, I will eat ice cream, eat ice cream, so I will cool down...Oh baby!...De que sentis qando peso en te ona y orta ves ista es la uneka ves que yo te voy mera in la Kavesa!-Addie

Addressing Reading Foundational skills: Fluency and informational texts

Rachel's students demonstrated foundational reading skills as Rachel integrated writing throughout the subject areas. Particularly, they demonstrated reading fluency and experience of informational texts. The state curriculum (as described in Appendix N)

requires students to experience daily read-alouds and to emulate the language, book knowledge, and fluency in these read-alouds during their own reading. These read-alouds and following independent reading sessions are to involve both diverse narrative and informational texts. Read-alouds were a daily part of Rachel's routine, and they often occurred during or before each day's writing mini-lesson. She also read-aloud during reading workshop, when students followed with their own independent reading. In accordance to literacy theory, her read-alouds not only involved diverse texts but also diverse usages of language and dialect, as in the Black Vernacular English of the poetry book *Honey I love* (Greenfield, 1978). The read-alouds connected to writing and other subjects, and they often apprenticed the students into writing in the manner or under the influence of the author. By helping students see connections between subject areas and giving reading a personal purpose, Rachel's teaching countered "pedagogy of poverty" traditions of mechanistic, disconnected teaching. The following texts exemplify student writing as a direct response to such read-alouds. The first is a student response to Greenfield's poem, "When I'm By Myself", and the second is response to an informational text on meteorologists during the career unit:

When I'm by Myself and I Close My Eyes

I see people sharing with toys

I see people being kind with each other

I see people helping people stuff that they cannot do a lot

I see people helping with they kids

I see people helping with everything for the earth because the earth is where everybody lives

I see people sharing because they want more friends

I see people sharing with me because I was helping with everything I do with them"

-Adrian

If I be a meteorologist. First, I would go to school and study weater, Also I would want a jo as one. Next, I would go to college and study hard. Also I would write and write until I become a weater-man. Then I would go to the computer and write all the numbers. Also, I would get my make-up done. After that I would go to the camera and have my pointer. And I would tell people the weather...-Aaron

Addressing Speaking and Listening Framework

Finally, Rachel's students demonstrated state standards in listening and speaking. State standards require students to participate in a variety of discussion formats and to use details and appropriate descriptive language. Rachel helped her students to meet these standards by, first, inviting student talk into her classroom. She found several times a day to do this, but students were especially able to use speaking and listening skills amongst one another during station work. The example from my notes below reveals Rachel's efforts to allow more talk:

One day late in the year I sit with Rachel and help her plan for our thematic unit, while students work quietly in the background. Many of them are talking quietly while we chat. Rachel tells me that, at one point, she would have been bothered by their talk, but that she was learning to allow it and let it work as natural as possible.

By inviting student talk into the classroom, and by helping students to develop skills of speaking and listening, Rachel encouraged connections to students' experiences and desires (Dyson, 2005), home literacies (Mahari, 2005), freedom of expression (Greene, 1982), open-ended divergent thinking (Haberman, 1996), and usage of language skills such as details for the purpose of authentic communication within a social group (Gee, 1996; Street, 1984).

The example below demonstrated another way Rachel sometimes approached this language standard playfully. In this example she taught the students to use descriptive language and speak in a group by inspiring silliness and risk-taking:

She sang the book to the students (put the words in the book to music, as we made a regular pattern of reading aloud in our collaboration) and asked for connections. Then she spontaneously told the students, “Ok, when we go back to our seats, we should all write silly songs”.

The students returned to their seats and wrote independently on topics of their own choosing for over twenty minutes. Students clamored for the opportunity to present the products of their work to the class, and some announced their disappointment that they could not all read their newly authored works aloud. An example of one of these silly songs is the following, which reveals experimentation with figurative and descriptive language:

My dog’s tail is tiny like a carrot. My dog’s nose is wet like a pot of soup. My dog is fast, fast like me. My dog is scared, scared like a fish. My dog is a sniffer, a sniffer, like a mouse. My dog is jumpy, jumpy, like a bunny...-Adrian

The next example revealed a unique opportunity the students received to use language with a special classroom guest:

“One day I brought my one year old son, Paul, to Rachel’s class. During independent writing, Paul walked amongst the student and drew their attention away from their writing. Paul threw a ball to a young boy, Wally, who often disrupted the class. The boy laughed. Rachel and I told him to watch Paul and make sure he didn’t get into trouble. Wally enthusiastically accepted the job opportunity and followed Paul around the room, using descriptive language to explain things to him. He eventually went back to his seat and others took turns watching and talking with Paul. They later continued their writing,

and produced descriptive paragraphs or songs in response to the verbal community experience. Wally, who often struggled to focus, produced a piece three times longer than usual.

Reflecting Rachel's Commitment to Literacy as Community

All of these examples of Rachel's teaching show how Rachel applied theory and state curricular expectations. I will note that, although Rachel's teaching illustrated these elements, the elements were not always the result of direct intention or initial attention to state curriculum; they sometimes resulted from impromptu teaching. I suggest that a possible reason they tended to remain aligned with curriculum and theory might be due to Rachel's overall commitment to literacy as community. This commitment to literacy as community, as found in Rachel's teaching vision, teaching strategies, classroom love, laden with challenges, is outlined in the next section of data analysis.

Chapter 6: Data Analysis: Literacy as Community

In the following section I present my thematic data analysis of this project, and I illuminate I illustrate how the concept of “community” underscored Rachel’s sociocultural approach to literacy. Beneath the umbrella of community, I expose how Rachel’s vision, strategies, and the foundational element of love constitute this literacy pedagogy. Then I consider challenges she experienced in her classroom

In Appendix G I illustrate the relationship between these areas, and I show how love provided the foundation for vision, which provided the foundation for strategies, which enabled Rachel to remain strong when challenges impacted these strategies. I suggest that this illustration of a literacy pedagogy of “community” might provide pointers for teacher educators preparing and supporting early developing teachers in similar school settings. Particularly, I describe how I interpret our collaboration as an example of “professional accountability”.

My analysis unfolds many of the ways in which “community” fueled Rachel’s vision, spurred on her teaching strategies, and was powered by love. Then I describe some of the needs or challenges that I documented in Rachel’s teaching through this analysis. I paint a portrait of what literacy might be in urban schools and I also pinpoint areas of need that warrant more attention. The following categories of a literacy community emerged: 1) Community as teacher vision 2) Community as teacher strategy 2) Community as love 4) Needs/Challenges to community.

Community as Teacher Vision

Rachel’s teaching was powered by an articulated vision of the classroom as a learning community (Appendix H). This was central to her teaching philosophy. “Community” underscored her overall vision, and encompassed her sociocultural approach to literacy. This vision operated within a classroom model that addressed state literacy standards. I

analyzed “community as vision” in my collected data in the following ways: A vision of “community” underscored her basic beliefs and values about teaching; Her vision of community emphasized freedom in the context of social and personal responsibility; This vision was continually under revision; This vision materialized through teacher confidence.

A vision of “community” underscored her basic beliefs and values. Rachel’s description of what she saw as literacy instruction, her depiction of her classroom, was, over and over again, that of a community. The concept of community continually arose in her discourse and encompassed her vision of literacy education. It fit a sociological model (Luke & Freebody, 1997; Gee, 1996) that places at the center of learning the communal construction of meaning and the importance of learning in a group for real-life purposes important to group identity. Over and over again, Rachel used terms such as “community-building” and “like a family” to describe her classroom.

For example, during the mid-semester interview, when I asked Rachel how she had seen her teaching develop during our collaboration, she replied: “They developed more like a mini-community.” She explained how the students had come to see each other as sisters and brothers, to work together to help one another learn and cope with life’s challenges. She saw this development of community as the major underlying feature of her work. Later, at the end-of-the-year, she summed up the essence of our unit: “It was really good community-building.”

Over and over again, she talked with me about how she wanted to strengthen her students’ bonds as a community, and explained the ways in which her classroom model fit that of a community under construction. She shared this value later in her statement: “The more group unity, the better.” After she presented to my college students, she

reiterated the idea of her classroom as a family in her email to me: “I had such a fun time sharing my classroom family with your students!”

Rachel’s vision exemplified a personal, intrinsic commitment to teaching literacy for community. This vision aligned with and reaches above and beyond Maryland state literacy curriculum standards such as the following “essential skills and knowledge” component, repeated in various segments of the curriculum framework, that vaguely set forth the expectations that literacy should occur in a classroom envisioned as community: [Students will] “Contribute to a learning community” (CCSC PK-1 W6, W7, Maryland State Department of Education, 2011). Rachel did not merely agree to this expected model; she articulated a personal and visionary commitment to the construct of community. The examples of her vision in this section further reflect such community values.

Her vision of community emphasized freedom in the context of social and personal responsibility. Maxine Greene (1988) explored the centrality of freedom in education and the dialectic between freedom and responsibility. To Greene, the purpose of education is to instill in students an awareness of their own freedom and an understanding that along with this freedom comes the responsibility for social action based on this awareness. True education should lead to free people with a sense of responsibility to one another. Rachel understands this as central in her teaching, as the following examples reveal. I first illustrate examples of freedom, and then I illustrate examples of responsibility.

Freedom. The cultivation of students’ views of their own “freedom” was a continual theme in Rachel’s vision of her classroom community. She viewed literacy as helping students comprehend their freedom and act upon it. She regularly used the concept of “becoming more free” to refer to literacy development. During her presentation for my

class, I noted the repetition of the phrase “felt more free” over and over again when referring to student literacy growth. When she discussed a particular students’ growth, and showed before and after examples, she kept repeating, “Again, this is showing how he felt more free.” I noted that she could have said it showed how he “became more skilled”, “learned more”, etc., but instead chose to focus on the students’ developing perception of his own freedom.

She reiterated this vision of the connection between awareness of freedom and literacy progress later. When she presented her views on writing instruction, she stated, “Writing can never be wrong, and I think that is why some of my lowest writers grew so much.” I noted once again how this contrasts with many traditional views of writing as strictly following a format, and I thought about the limitations that follow with such stipulations and “boxing in”. I observed that Rachel wanted students to branch out rather than cave in and she wanted them to take pride in their unique thoughts and expressions. Her vision of community emphasized providing a safe place for such branching to sprout.

During another writing workshop mini-lesson, my notes captured an instance in which Rachel showed the students how she valued their creativity and freedom of expression. I wrote the following:

Rachel opened her writing workshop by eliciting students’ open-ended brainstorming. Students came up with the following examples: “My father pulled my tooth and he dropped it on the floor and it moved along”; “I ate a bumblebee and it stung my lungs”; “My head got stuck in the toilet”; “I flushed the toilet and it came up and spilled on the floor.” Rachel adds to their imaginary scenarios to help them keep going: “You could say then that it turned into a pool and you started charging admission!” Then she ends her mini-lesson with the following statement: “I don’t care if you have the silliest sentences in the world, as long as they make sense!”

Rachel continually communicated her value of their “free” thinking and creating. Later, when Rachel talked with my undergraduate class, she reiterated this belief: “It is important that they feel free to talk or write about anything!”

Another example of the students’ enthusiastic responses to freedom of expression was evident in the architect station that Rachel created during the end-of-the year unit. I observed the students’ focused engagement as they put together straws to create objects that were each constructed in individual ways rather than through copying a basic model. I wrote: “The architects create very unique structures. Each one is different from the others”. Rachel had learned to show students that she wanted each of them to freely express themselves rather than follow strict guidelines, and this was obvious in the products her students created. Rachel explained that she had to explicitly encourage herself to remain open to this kind of free-form despite internal urges to contain it. She illustrated this student freedom:

Cause one thing, you [a student] take ownership. You [the teacher] almost feel it would be detrimental to give them more how-tos and more direction, you know? So sometimes letting them explore on their own is more important. . . Like, sometimes, when we were doing poems, I thought I should tell them to change something, but I thought I should resist, because, you know, that would be a tiny bit less ownership [for the student] of that song.

Over and over again, she reiterated that she believed freedom is worth it. She very deliberately tried to build a classroom community centered upon the value of “freedom”.

Social responsibility. While Rachel’s community vision emphasized freedom, it also emphasized responsibility within freedom. As in Greene’s dialectic of freedom (1988), true freedom entails responsibility. Rachel’s teaching emphasized this responsibility in her continual demand of high expectations of both student behavior and performance.

She regularly communicated to the students that she believed in them and expected them to work hard, focus, and to contribute positively to the community. She balanced this expectation of responsibility with her facilitation of freedom that encouraged student ownership and intrinsic motivation. She encouraged this responsibility in the present as well as the future.

Rachel expected that students behaved positively in order to keep the community a positive place. She continually demanded that students perform, cooperate, and contribute to class literacy constructions. In most cases, she did not take “no” or an answer and when she thought it needed, chided students when she felt they were not working hard enough. She communicated constant expectations that students’ behaviors and work adhere to her high standards. On several days I documented how her way of speaking to the class conveyed an emphasis on discipline:” I hear much talk from Rachel about ‘making good choices’ in a direct, authoritative way”. Later I record: “Her voice is calm and quiet yet stern”. I followed this comment with recording the students’ response to her discipline: “Kids were perfectly in order, all quiet, hands/bodies calm”. Rachel’s value of freedom did not negate her expectations of student self-discipline.

She expected students to work hard, yet she provided them the freedom to own their work within these high expectations. Her demand for student focus and diligence during writing, reading workshop, and stations exemplified her exercise of high teacher expectations within a model of instruction that simultaneously allowed much student freedom. Students were given ownership over the writing process through choosing their own topics, genres, and directions. But within this freedom Rachel communicated the expectation of their best work. She wanted them to use literacy to communicate and express in the delight of the freedom they experienced in it, yet her demands for high standards kept them in check when attention wandered and distractions invaded. This

example of her communication before stations showed her communication of the expectation of responsibility:

“So why is it important to focus? If---is busy playing with paper, he might create a song without words. You have to be very focused...Now we are going to go over what you are to do for each station...” She reviews the routines and she continues to give explicit instructions on what to do in each station.

Rachel explained her decision to pursue a thematic unit as deeply tied to social responsibility. She expressed her expectations of responsibility as social justice aims related to both her students’ present as well as their futures. She wanted the real-life career themes she taught to resonate with the students today, and she also wanted them to change the way students thought about possibilities for the future. She explained at the end of the unit:

But I think this project fit in with social justice really well in terms of, like, raising those expectations for not just what’s going on in the classroom, but for life. And, like, I always had expectations for writing and for reading, but this was, like, high expectations for years to come. Like, these are my high expectations for you. Like, I don’t want you to feel you have to settle for, you know, bus driver, or things like that. But I want them to continue these expectations. But I think it’s really interesting how, in the urban school setting, somehow the expectations are lowered in the next few years of their life.

Rachel demanded her students’ connections to learning both today and in the future. In the following discussion, Rachel presents the elements she sees as most central to the community she has constructed, a description that summates her embrace of the dialectic between freedom and responsibility:

I think, like, the only things you need are, like, high expectations, like really, really, super high expectations. Not just: ‘I expect you to act like this.’ I think you need them to be extremely open and extremely comfortable. And I think you just need them to want to be there, those three things.

Rachel articulated this balance between helping students feel free and having high expectations for the present and future as central to her overall vision of community.

This vision was continually open to revision. Rachel’s vision of community was unique in her continual willingness to open it to revision. She did not view her teaching or community as static but regularly challenged herself to rethink her practices and beliefs. She portrayed a receptivity to learning and an enthusiasm for professional development, qualities that reading research continues to attribute to effective teachers (Pressley, et al, 2007), Over and over again, I documented ways in which she welcomed constructive feedback and deliberately pushed herself outside of her comfort zone. She recognized and welcomed challenges to personal vision, valued discomfort, pushed herself to expand idea of literacy, opened herself to considering multiple literacies, and learned to value process, not just product.

Recognized and welcomed challenges to personal vision. Rachel recognized her own growth, and envisioned more growth in the same direction. She spoke of the past as learning experiences that she moved on from, into the direction of a more community-centered teaching approach. In the following quote, she discussed how much of her days were once “stolen” by behavior management, and she reveled in the progress she has made since then. She related how she had changed from spending time “correcting” to time growing as a family-like community:

My first plan, like, last year...I would have this whole thing all planned out and I would never do everything I planned because it would fall apart. Like I would spend

every afternoon teaching about how to get along every single day for the first four months. And then slowly they started getting along and I was like, ‘Oh my gosh, I have time to do the lesson I thought I would.’ The lesson would be more involved about, like, being so surprised that we’re getting along, I would let them decide what to do. And then, this year, like, I just really feel like we’re a family.

She enjoyed noticing how she had grown as a teacher, and she looked forward to more growth. The following examples will elaborate on ways in which Rachel’s openness to personal evolution set up her vision of community.

Valued discomfort. Because Rachel viewed growth as the cultivation of community, she made a point to stretch herself to embrace even the classroom characteristics of a natural community. At times these characteristics pulled her out of her comfort zone, and she recognized her own discomfort and yet stretched herself still. The following notes in my journal capture one of such moments:

On day late in the year I sit with Rachel and help her plan for our thematic unit, while students work quietly in the background. Many of them are talking quietly while we chat. Rachel tells me that, at one point, she would have been bothered by their talk, but that she was learning to allow it and let it work as natural as possible.

By allowing such talk, students were able have more opportunity for language development and discussion, as spelled out in state curricular standards, and they became more comfortable expressing their own thoughts verbally. Rachel came to understand the value of this kind of language use as the year progressed.

The following comment exemplifies Rachel’s willingness, even joy, in expanding her vision and stretching herself to embrace things she formerly did not embrace. As she addressed my class, she exclaimed “I really love allowing them [the students] to control the writing!”

Rachel's basic discourse with me as a classroom participant/co-teacher revealed this willingness to welcome discomfort. She invited being stretched in new ways. During an early interview with her, we had the following interaction:

S: What would you like me to help you with in your language arts teaching, and why?

R: Um, encouraging me to like, branch out. You know how you did some singing?

I've never done singing before. And then I think, like, teaching techniques that make teachers sort of scared or nervous to try.

Rachel understood that growth comes from approaching those things that may cause discomfort, and she challenged herself with the idea.

Rachel's reflective talk with me illustrates her challenges to her own personal vision.

One day I recorded the following in my fieldnotes:

As I come in, Rachel pulls me aside and explains how the new stations she has tried are going so well that she's now decided to use something similar in the beginning of next year, rather than waiting until the end as she had done this year. I thought this was interesting because yesterday she had said to me, "Oh, you couldn't do centers at the beginning of the year because they wouldn't be ready for them." But here she is telling me she wants to use them then. She's describing how she'd organize them."

After trying stations, Rachel explained her realization that she could put more trust in students' ability to work independently. She altered her feelings about what she was capable of facilitating, even just after one day of seeing it work. She allowed herself the discomfort that came from learning to give students more control. This trust in students contributed to a community of trust.

Pushed herself to expand idea of literacy. Rachel's philosophy of literacy developed a great deal during our collaboration. She stretched her original conceptualizations of literacy and allowed her teaching practices to follow suit. She explained how she began

to see literacy as more of a human practice, a social practice, serving real life purposes, rather than a school skill:

S-How would you describe what it means to learn literacy?

R-I guess it means, it means more than reading or writing. It can also be a lot about building relationships and just understanding your students more through expression. I think, before, I thought of literacy as, like, you know, this is what I'm teaching for reading today...this is what I'm teaching for writing today. I never thought of it as, like, how am I using reading and writing to teach this, you know? Like, um, for example, I would [in the past] say for reading, I'm teaching, like, how to make predictions, and for writing today I'm teaching, you know, how to incorporate feeling into your stories. Whereas, I think now I think, like, I want to teach them about, like, what it means to, like, get a job or something, and this time I'll use reading and writing...Now I always plan writing thinking, like, I'm teaching how to express yourself.

Rachel also allowed herself to be stretched to consider literacy as more than simply reading and writing traditional texts; she began to consider the role of multiple literacies in the classroom. In many cases, her students and others, such as I, pushed her to open up in this way:

I also think it's good to try new kinds of writing. I, I don't really think they were comfortable writing songs or poems or anything like it before. We had not written any songs or poems before you started working with us....I was perfectly comfortable with, like, just writing stories. Like, so, cause they were really good at it. I was comfortable with it and they were comfortable with it, so it was like, let's just go write stories. So, like, I think it was really cool when they started asking me when I would give, like, the instructions for the day and they would ask, like, "Can we write a

poem?”; “Can we write a song?” And I started saying, “Today you can write a poem instead of a story.’ Like, that was our thing, you know. Like, beyond giving them an option about what they could write about, they also got to choose *what kind* of writing.”

Later she discussed how she had learned the power of inductive teaching through our songwriting and poetry teaching. She explained how she learned to let go from the kinds of lessons we taught together: “And it was cool because you never had to tell them how to write a poem, how to write a song.” She shared how this stretched her as a teacher and changed her process: “That’s interesting because that’s not really the way I teach at all. I always have a process chart about something. And I think the fact that we didn’t really know where we were going made it even more exciting. That’s how it is for me.”

By embracing change in her own views of literacy as a teacher, Rachel set an example of “openness” for her literacy community.

Learned to value process, not just product. Through the collaboration Rachel allowed her views of the purpose of writing to evolve. She learned to become comfortable with allowing open-ended writing, without requiring the students to write in order to produce a certain kind of thing. She became more comfortable letting go of her impulse to give the students writing topics. She came to understand the value in handing over the ownership of writing to students, and allowing them to take charge of the overall purpose. She described the changed nature of the writing she came to embrace:

But I guess the other thing is, like, about the math journals. I guess I thought that, like, solving addition problems, like, there was an ending point. But the thing is now, like, I would have never let them write about whatever they wanted. I would have thought that would have resulted in chaos. But now it works so well. And they just love writing and open-ended stuff.

In our last interview, she illustrated her growing comfort with process-writing:

Like, this was the first unit I didn't have, like, this is what... Ok, you're supposed to end with a song that looks like this... I think it was a fun way to teach. Because usually I begin writing a unit with an end product in mind, you know? But there was no end product in mind. We just kind of kept going and this kind of occurred. I think it's hard to do this as a new teacher because I think it's really nerve-racking not knowing where it's going.

She often reiterated this growth into giving up control over writing products, and described how it grew out of our collaboration. Rachel explained to me that she wanted to learn to be “more comfortable with students doing their own thing”. She continued:

I think working with you has definitely taught me to have this. Before, I was just, kind of like, freaked out when I told everyone to write about being happy and one person writes about being sad. I was like, oh, start over. This is not what you are supposed to write about. But now, you know, sometimes I embrace that and it ends up being the person that gets to share that day.

Again she explained the conflict she felt in being stretched in such ways, and her embrace of it:

And um, like, for example, when Sue wrote that song about, where you had to write every sentence with an -ing verb: singing in the shower; talking... and she broke all the rules and she wrote, “What makes me so happy...”, everyone started breaking the rule. You know, and it was just like... And I knew that was gonna happen because I made such a big deal out of it. It was really cool she stirred up the rules. And, but I feel like, I would have, a month ago, I would have been like, Oh, that was good, but you broke a few rules in the end.

She described the changes she had made:

I feel like I'm the complete opposite now. Because I feel like breaking the rules in writing is the way to go. You know? After you've established some of that standard. I wouldn't say on the first day of school, like break all the rules... I feel like, after you've set the standard and they're almost, like, scared to break the rules...you can take a step back and say, ok, like, who's gonna break the rules today?

Later she reflected on these changing expectations of student independence:

It was like, real exciting. And I, like, geared it more towards writing today. That was...it was hard because I wanted it to be fun, but I thought, "They're not going to be able to do it by themselves." But then I realized after yesterday that it can be fun and they can do it by themselves! But with yesterday, I was going to have teachers at every station, and I didn't have any, and it actually ended up probably being more fun! Cause no one was like, over their shoulders saying, "do it this way."

Rachel's willingness to open up and change her teaching to embrace more open-endedness was a continual element in my data analysis, as her comments and actions revealed such openness. She viewed her vision as always "under revision" and welcomed challenges. She valued and stressed her own learning process, a trait attributed to effective teachers (Pressley, et al) . Yet my analysis of Rachel's vision under revision suggests that this trait may entail more than just a willingness to learn, but an openness to ambiguity and discomfort. Scholars have also identified such willingness to stretch and grow as key in racial identity development and the development of a socially-conscious worldview (Howard, 1999; Sleeter, 2008a).

This vision materializes through teacher confidence. Finally, throughout my work with Rachel, I noted she exhibited markers of self-confidence. She tried new things on her own and came to rely on me less and less. But she was not afraid to admit her own

needs. Finally, this confidence was nurtured and encouraged through the nature of our collaboration and the opportunities she gained for leadership and professionalism.

A growing confidence despite newness. Our collaboration culminated in a thematic unit in which Rachel tried out multiple new teaching strategies, and literacy workshop stations exemplified these new strategies. When Rachel first discussed her developing ideas for stations, she kept explaining that she wanted to lean on me for significant support organizing stations; she had never tried them before so she felt apprehensive on her own. For this reason, when we finally made it to the stations unit, I expected her to ask me for more help than she did. On the first day of stations I did help a great deal, and the stations went extremely well. I expected her to give me a list of things to do to help her prepare for the second day of stations, as on the first. After a smooth first day of stations, Rachel and I talked about the following day. Her calm voice and steady stream of ideas showed me that she had things under control; she barely even asked me to do anything for the next day! I was surprised she didn't tell me she needed my help with anything after we planned the basic station ideas. I expected her to text me an extra message for help but she didn't. She had it under control. Although these literacy strategies and creative antics were new and previously unknown to Rachel, she had the confidence to try them, and the students tended to receive them enthusiastically.

Confident enough for self-assessment and self-critique. Rachel's confidence was strong enough that I did not find her to exhibit a palpable fear of constructive criticism. She had developed a habit of looking at her teaching and pinpointing areas in which she could use more growth, and she was not uncomfortable admitting these areas. She was also able to pinpoint areas in which she felt successful, at least in a broad sense. She told me, "In writing, I feel really confident in teaching the skills. However, I think, as we

are doing now, I could definitely improve in terms of incorporating more student interest.”

Rachel specified areas in which she felt she needed extra help, and she had a strong motivation to learn and stretch herself in those specified areas. When we were working on our unit together, she stated:

S: What can I do to better help you?

R: When we get to, like, writing songs and performing, like practicing...like those things I may not know how to do...like teaching them, like, how to present and, um, how to be on stage... you know what I mean...like how to...writing songs and performing...like practicing and rehearsing. I may not know how to do that, so, like, teaching them how to present and how to be on stage. You know, how to be a good presenter. It's really important to think about.

Her confidence in self-assessment may have also developed as a result of the positive ways in which we both looked at events in the classroom that would turn out differently than we expected. The following is an example of the give-and-take we exchanged and both of our recognition of the plusses and minuses of the classroom work we tried. It also shows how Rachel worked to understand classroom events from new perspectives, to see what one might take as a “challenge” and reframe it as an indication of strengths:

We both note how they [the students] didn't end up writing in the structure we had modeled. But then Rachel and I both discuss how it is a good thing. Usually teachers have the opposite—usually kids have difficulty not following the script. So—I tell her and I note that they are actually doing very well even though their poems do not look like her model. This positive approach to self-assessment was key to our collaboration.

Our discussions tended to center around need Rachel pinpointed, and she led me to think about areas of relevance to her. In my notes I recorded many of these instances. For example, “We discussed how to make Mondays more bearable”; “She showed me her lesson idea”; “Rachel showed me her plan for the unit, nice and neat.” Then I recorded in my notes our discussion and revision of her ideas, and her willingness to change course and takes things in unforeseen directions. She told me what she did not like about her teaching, and told me what she thought she did well. Then she worked toward these changes in her own teaching.

Confident in ownership over her teaching. Rachel articulated a sense that she had made teaching “her own.” She recognized the mark that her personal touch gives to her work and saw that it could not be directly emulated. She believed that other teachers need to give their teaching such personal touches in order to have such power:

When other teachers come into the room and ask how I teach writing and how I teach math...and to be honest, I tell them, “I teach it from my own perspective and, like, what I believe about writing. And, like, I’ll tell them. ‘And, yes, you can teach it this way, but, I feel like, you should take these ideas and make them your own.’ And at that point I usually get the faces and, oh, like, ‘Its not working: I’ll have to teach it your way.’ But if everyone teaches my way, it’s gonna fail, and it does. They take it back to the classroom and they teach it, like bring it... Like the other teacher brought it back to her classroom and, like, it’s wrong. I feel like, you don’t...you’re not me. I feel like others have to make it their own.

Rachel understood that it was her own flair and personal touch that made her lessons succeed, and, as this quote reveals, she felt a sense of pride in this personal touch. She was confident in her unique approach.

She later explained to me, upon my reflections with her on my interpretations of her confidence, that she felt that much of her confidence originated from the ownership she has taken over her teaching philosophy centered upon “community”. She shared:

I think that my confidence has grown in terms of how I take more risks with the materials and teaching structure that I use in the classroom. For example, I like to think through my lessons in terms of how they will contribute to the classroom community. Instead of teaching the “suggested” curriculum and strategies, I take those skills and teach them within the context of community building.

Because she held such a strong belief system, this belief system, or vision provided Rachel with confidence. It helped her feel justified in her actions, as they were not arbitrary or forced by others. She could articulate how her work sprouted from and contributed to her vision of community, and she boldly offered this purpose of “community-building” as justified and important, based on her solid conviction that the classroom should be a community.

Professional opportunities as possible source of confidence. Through my participatory work with Rachel as well as through multiple leadership opportunities she pursued on her own, Rachel had several outlets for public demonstration of her professionalism. When Rachel described these opportunities, she often used the word “excited”. In my notes here I described some of the professional opportunities she pursued:

As I sat and talked with Rachel while she prepared for her students to arrive, she told me how she had been told she would be giving a speech for a graduation at the university. Then she explained that she had also applied for a job teaching teachers at a local community college. Her eyes sparkled with excitement at both prospects, and she told me she was excited. I was impressed! I wondered about how much of her

motivation came from such opportunities, or how much of the opportunities caused the motivation.

On other days, before and after class, Rachel excitedly told me about professional opportunities she was pursuing on her own:

Before class, Rachel discussed how she was excited about how she was able to give a speech for ---. Wow! I tell her I'm impressed. She also tells me she's applied to teach education classes at a community college. She tells me she really loves helping other teachers. I tell her she's great at it.

Much of our conversation together before, during, and after class related to these professional opportunities as well as the opportunities that arose from our collaboration. I told her how I looked forward to the possibility of writing an article with her. Together we would discuss how what we were experiencing provided material for writing. We discussed possible article titles. We discussed topics for presentations and venues for presentations. After each of these discussions, Rachel became more willing to smile and recognize the positive things happening in her classroom. She continually told me after these discussions, "I wish we had more time together." She kept trying to convince me to stay in the city rather than move in the summer as planned. I have to admit I felt tempted by her enthusiasm! After she visited my class to give a talk, she kept reiterating lines such as the following: "I was so excited to come today!"

I regularly discussed with Rachel how she thought what we were doing together offered lessons for my teaching or teacher education in general. This created a backdrop of larger meaning behind our work. I theorize that it also may have helped her to reconceptualize difficulties as powerful learning experiences. An example of the entry point to one of such talks is given below:

S: What do you suggest that I incorporate into the university—what could you think of, like in a future situation ---how could we make something out of it to teach people about it?

R: Um, maybe the benefits of cooperative learning...so maybe just like the benefits of working in a small group to get ideas and thinking of activities that are writing but not really writing, you know.

Rachel explained that these professional opportunities were a source of motivation. She summed this up in later email:” Working with you and realizing how inspiring it is to share my own learning and experiences with new teachers has been such an amazing experience.”

Later Rachel’s email, entitled, “Best Teaching Moment EVER” captured the joy she experienced as a result of our collaboration:

I just wanted to thank you again for guest teaching our writer’s workshop. My students were actually so excited to write about love that we have continued to spend our writing time on this topic throughout the week. I even wrote a love poem about how much I love my students and read it to them today... It was such a peaceful event that it reminded me more than ever of why our students need us. Who knew that one little Valentine’s Day lesson could have such a profound impact on our class unity? I feel as though my students have taught me more about love this week than I could ever teach them. Some of these students have never been hugged before and yet they were expressing their love right in our classroom. In a school and community filled with fighting and mean words seen and heard each day, this small moment meant so much to me. All because of one writing lesson. And you.

Rachel’s embrace of self-confidence reflects the findings of self-efficacy theory: (Bandura, 1979; Tschanne-Moran & McFarane, 2011), which is defined as “the belief in

one's abilities to accomplish desired outcomes" (Tschanne-Moran & McFarane, 2001, p 218-213). Teachers who feel a strong sense of self-efficacy tend to experience self-fulfilling prophecies: "In addition to improved instruction, the results are likely to be teachers with greater commitment to teaching, who expend greater effort and persistence, and who remain in the field even in challenging circumstances" (p.222). My analysis of Rachel's confidence falls into the work examining teacher self-efficacy.

Overall, Rachel's teaching vision held the idea of a learning community, an essential Maryland state objective, as the driving force, the glue, behind everything she did. This vision led to specific actions, actions that could provide a portrait of literacy teaching for community that I will outline as teaching strategies below.

Community as Teaching Strategy

Community underscored Rachel's vision, and it manifested itself through certain teaching strategies she employed (Appendix I). By "strategy" I refer to specific patterns of actions Rachel took as a teacher. These strategies reflect ways in which Rachel applied her vision of a literacy community. They illustrate her application of aspects of sociocultural theories of literacy, and they represent her approach to methods that align with state literacy teaching standards, such as writing process teaching models (MD CCSC, P-K, W) and oral language teaching models (MD CCSC, P-K, SL). These teaching strategies included: Strategies for encouraging student interaction and connection, Strategies for promoting students' self-reliance, Strategies for allowing students to drive the curriculum, Strategies for making literacy "real", and Strategies for promoting risk-taking and creativity.

Strategies for encouraging student interaction and connection. Rachel experimented with different teaching strategies that encouraged students to interact and become active with one another in the learning community. These included class

meetings and community “mixer” activities, writing for the purpose of sharing in the community, writing and reading workshop methods, facilitating hands-on work such as stations, and celebrating student success. These strategies, or teacher actions represent a model of learning within a social context, and they occurred within a context that helped students to meet standards and apply essential skills of writing, reading, speaking, and listening.

Rachel emphasized strategies and activities designed explicitly for building community, such as class meetings and “mixer” activities akin to “icebreakers”. She continually relayed to me the time the class had spent in “morning or afternoon meetings”, in which students shared their concerns with each other and Rachel taught them greetings and songs. Rachel explained to me that a great deal of her time was spent on this early in the semester, and she emphasized that even though it could be critiqued as taking away from instructional time, it was worth it. Oftentimes these kinds of meetings involved children’s literature. Rachel explained to my college students: “I can’t count the number of afternoons we read books to learn to get along, rather than books about school.” Rachel described these explicit community-building moments as central to her teaching.

The sharing of writing in a community was a mainstay in Rachel’s literacy teaching process. “Author’s Chair” became an essential component of writing workshop late in the year. Students regularly discussed their worlds in their writing, and told us how they wanted to share these worlds with the rest of the class. Students listened to one another’s writings and responded to one another’s writings, and this communal sharing became a key motivating factor in their writing achievement.

Rachel also explained her “workshop model” included specific strategies to help students feel bonds with one another. She explained the following methods she used within these workshops to promote community:

I really enjoy building community through group work and allowing students to choose their “best” learning environment. Sometimes, I let students sit on, under or around their desks. I want them to be comfortable with each other and their writing. Some students actually build relationships with each other by just sitting next to each other and writing in silence. It is like they can feel the investment while they both express their ideas onto paper. I know this sounds silly, but they are actually creating a strong bond when it is perfectly silent because they all know that everyone is deeply engaged in writing.

Hands-on work facilitated additional student interaction. Rachel’s decision to experiment with stations in our end of the year unit aimed to promote more student-student collaboration through work in groups. These stations harnessed student energy and focused them on group collaboration, letting out their energy. The extent of the active participation of students that required students’ energies was most extreme after two days in a row of career stations. I documented in my notes: “Rachel told me that, after the second day of centers, many students fell asleep in the afternoon. “That’s never happened before!” she shared. “I don’t know if its because they did so much activity in the morning. It was so much more than they EVER DO. But I think they are tired from so much activity”.

Rachel also learned to employ specific strategies that helped students learn to celebrate one another and the joy they shared in the learning community. Toward the end of the year Rachel devised other creative strategies for celebrating each child’s unique contributions. During author’s chair, Rachel regularly demonstrated ways of showing

specific appreciation for each child's work. This often occurred through phrases she used and taught students to use with each other, such as, "I like how...". Little by little the class observed her displays of appreciation and emulated them. During the last few weeks of school, students fell into the routine of raising their hands after each child shared and pinpointing things they like about each child's writing. Rachel also demonstrated her appreciation of each child's uniqueness through such phrases as the following personal, yet specific response, aimed toward a specific student: "She is always well-known for her unforgettable endings! I like that." She taught the students to interact with one another's writing. Writing was not individual but communal, as sociocultural theorists and writing theorists promote (Calkins, 1994; Routman, 2000).

She explained some of her creative plans, what she called "celebrations", based on what the students talked about, and tied these celebrations to literacy to promote active participation:

And, like, a lot of the celebrations we have in our class, we, like, talk a lot about. I try to, like, make up different things. But they, like, originate out of things we do. For example, we just had a cereal party, and they were talking about how they never eat breakfast at home. And I said, wow, you tell me why it's important to have a good breakfast. That was one of the things I showed you. And they wrote, like, all this amazing writing about how it's important to have breakfast and how they had a cereal party. It's something I thought of, you know, and it was, it ended up being super cool to do that. And then, like, then this week, I just thought of this day I'm gonna do a royal wedding. And on Friday I'm gonna have them write about what they could do if they could change the world, change one thing in the world; if they were a prince or princess... If you were a prince or princess, what would you change about, maybe, your community, to make it a little bit closer to home.

Rachel's interactive literacy strategies promoted community by encouraging students to actively participate and collaborate, and show their appreciation for one another. Students constructed and reconstructed knowledge within a community and authored pieces that were reflective of the community as well as of the self. Martin (2001) explained, "The expression we create in process writing is an expression of ourselves but also expression of the community that had constructed this writing with us (Martin, p. 80). As students wrote together and collaborated in other ways, they built upon one another's home knowledge and "funds of knowledge", and built connections within and among themselves. Rachel's strategies for community also provided students with a space to develop oral language and apply this language through descriptive writing and reading diverse texts with one another.

Strategies for encouraging student self-reliance. Rachel adopted teaching strategies to facilitate student self-reliance and ownership over the learning process. These examples of giving students power represent aspects of Rachel teaching that approaches Freire's notions of student as subject, not object (Freire, 1970), and they represent Rachel's attempts to attempt certain aspects of teaching for critical literacy. They also reveal Rachel's application of student self-regulation in literacy activities as presented as by reading researchers as a quality of effective teachers (Pressley, 2007). She learned to try to allow students more ownership over the learning process in a number of ways. She expressed a sincere deliberation to relent power, replaced direct control with demonstrating the power of literacy, promoted student ownership, provided opportunities for students to drive the curriculum, and inspired student stamina and focus in classroom literacy events.

Expressed a sincere deliberation to relent power. Rachel expressed a deliberate, growing willingness to open up her approaches so that students can participate more actively. She learned to use some teaching strategies that were less teacher-centered:

I'm learning that you can teach things without directly teaching. Like, without teaching them. Like, I would be so nervous to do this in the beginning of the year...and I'm like, oh, I can't, like, let you do fun things like this. But actually I feel like they are benefitting just as much from me doing a writing mini-lesson and, like, having them go back to their seats and writing about it.

She deliberately challenged herself to change some of her former behaviorist control techniques. She describes how she countered her former reliance on "prizes":

Yeah, and I think it's really cool because I kind of pose writing as the one thing...I always wanted to motivate them with writing. We go to lunch early, get this for writing. But now writing is, like, the only thing: No treats, no snack, no prize box...it's just really interesting how that has completely done a 180 this year. It was the one subject I needed some incentive for...

The following example demonstrates Rachel's willingness to embrace students' lead in directions she did not plan. She deliberately tried to change her teacher-driven impulses by allowing new directions. For example, one day we tried to model a certain type of poetry for the students. We thought we clearly expressed expectations that students follow this model. Yet as we walked around and watched the students writing we saw nearly all of them were not using this model. Rachel and I discussed this, and noted together that it was actually a good thing because we felt that, in other classes, often students seem unable to work outside of patterns. So we decided that the fact that their poems didn't look like ours represented a theory of learning that valued freedom and

individual expression, which we both felt was important, and which fit a theory of literacy as possibility as developed by Greene (1996).

Replaced direct control with the power of literacy. Throughout the semester Rachel followed through with this belief in giving up control and allowing the power of writing in her own life to “teach”. Little by little, Rachel explained how she was able to change her concept of what “modeling” means; she learned to see it as modeling the vitality of literacy in her personal life, rather than as presenting recipes. I wrote in my notes:

Rachel learned to harness the power of writing in her own life for her classroom. By the end of our collaboration, Rachel learned a different way of thinking about “modeling”. She began to see modeling not as “this is the recipe you must follow” but instead as “this is the way writing works in my life.

In a late interview, she described how the students learned about poetry and songwriting:

Like, I never had to give them, like, ‘This is how you write a poem’ or ‘This is how you write a song’. Right, so one day, I was like, so, what is the difference? If you were going to write a song, what’s going to be different? Because I never taught them that, and they were saying, you know, like, ‘It has to have rhythm; you know the way it looks; it starts differently; you know. And it was like, ‘If I wanted to write a song, how would that be different?’ you know? And they tell me, you know, “it has to have a beat; you have to be able to, like, change your voice to it. And you know, it was just cool because you never had to, like, try to tell them how to write a poem, how to write a song.

Rachel explained how she thought students learned these kinds of literacies:

Like, I think, just modeling exactly how you want, not necessarily the finished project, but how you want them to approach the project. I think it’s really important.

You know, modeling, you know, assessment and writing. And modeling writing, I think, it's more important than modeling, like, OK, this is what your finished project should be.

I documented more of her personal demonstrations of literacy's power. These illustrate the important connections she made to her own life in the classroom:

As she listens to the students' writing, Rachel shares her own experiences in first grade inventing things. She brings her life into the classroom regularly. She offers herself as an example of a literate person.

This holistic modeling came to replace a formulaic idea of modeling as so prevalent in much of education today.

The following lesson demonstrates my fieldnotes on one Rachel's many lessons in which she shared her own writing process as a model for the students and also welcomed their unique responses to it (I'll note that it also shows how I brought my life and my music into the classroom):

Rachel stands at the front of the rug and leads the students through a poetry mini-lesson. She demonstrated a "feelings" web as a prewriting strategy, and as in the state curricular standards, and talked through different feelings she had that she might write about. Next she took the web and wrote a poem in front of the students using the examples, talking through her thinking process aloud as she wrote. Each line of the poem followed the structure of the following two lines:

"Going to the park. Excited.

Seeing my friends. Excited."

After she finished sharing, I pulled out my guitar, and in a typical "impromptu" manner, played my guitar to the poem to show the students the musicality of it. Some students said they wanted their poems sung as songs when they finished. They sat down

and wrote. Interestingly, few of them used the webbing we demonstrated as brainstorming, but most still created poems with a similar structure as Rachel's, and the poems fit with music well they shared during author's chair. They followed our later steps, the musical demonstrations, but not the first few, but still produced poems that met our expectations. All students composed poems, and some composed very long poems. Here is a student poem following this lesson:

“HAPPY”:

Singing in my room. Happy./ Dancing around. Happy.

Writing songs to my friends. Happy/ Knowing more people. Happy.

Being surprised. Happy./ Looking at my teacher. Happy.

Playing with my friends. Happy./ Looking around my house. Happy.”

-Addie

Other poems in this style followed for the next few days of writing workshop. Some were lighthearted and others were passionate and warm. Others were serious and dealt with negative or problematic emotions, such as the following first lines from several different poem/songs from Angela: “Sitting on a plane. Nervous”; “Waiting in line. Grumpy” ”Looking at my mom and dad leave. Sad”.

Promoted student ownership. Rachel explained her growing awareness of the intrinsic motivation that fueled students' work. She regularly attempted strategies to help students feel more ownership, and much of this strategizing involved intangibles, showing emotions such as care and excited energy. I recognize that this care and energy is “felt” and difficult to document, so I acknowledge its tentative nature, but I also note that it can be situated within mainstream literature that has illustrated the centrality of student self-regulation and personal engagement in the learning process (Pressley, Mohan, Raphael, & Fingeret, 2007) . I illustrate it as Rachel and I perceived it. Rachel

explained how she felt this sense of “ownership” fueled students’ drive to excel, rather than her directives:

You know, I think it really comes down to teaching them to care. You know, the importance of learning to read and write... You know, I think when this is established, I don’t think you have to do as much instruction in terms of, like, how to’s. Because I think you’re much more involved in the process that you don’t necessarily need as much direction. And I found that they needed less and less direction the more excited they became, you know, singing and completing songs. You know, after I kind of taught them the tunes, they were more excited about it, and I felt myself finding it, like, a lot less needed, to say, like, this is what you are supposed to be doing right now. I don’t remember saying that at all.

She later summed up the essence of this student ownership. She stated: “Just like, taking ownership of the writing this year, just like they did the reading. I think it’s really important. Cause one thing, you take ownership, you feel almost like it would be detrimental to give them more how to’s and more direction.”

Rachel tried to give the students ownership in the daily independent work such as independent reading and writing sessions that students told us they looked forward to, and in which we both continually observed the students express their desires to read books of their own choosing and write stories of their own choosing. Rachel explained how she learned to give the students this freedom to choose:

So, sometimes letting them explore on their own is more important. Like, as much, like sometimes when we were doing poems, I thought I should tell them to change something, but I think I should resist because, you know, then it would be that tiny less ownership of that song.

Rachel made a deliberate effort to create an environment in which students felt the learning was “theirs”, in which students created writings and pursued ideas that they took ownership over. This included Rachel’s work in trying to create in the classroom a climate that encouraged student ownership.

Provided opportunities for students to drive curriculum. Little by little Rachel allowed students to drive some of her lesson’s directions and objectives. She learned to reshape and change her direction as students revealed their interests, wishes, and talents. Rachel explained that this was a possibility in her school due to her principal’s knowledge of her students’ achievement. I will note here that in tightly-controlled classrooms these opportunities for student-direction may be stifled, so I present this section acknowledging the role of Rachel’s open school context in providing Rachel freedom to make decisions as a professional. I also acknowledge the role of Rachel’s vision in facilitating this student freedom. Rachel believed strongly that such student-centered teaching was possible to balance with curricular goals, and she balanced the two by carefully considering how students’ interests and desires fit into mandated goals. She described to me that she felt that the more students led the lessons, the more involved they became in learning, and the more motivated they became to work on other goals as well. She shared in her presentation:

Aligning curriculum goals with student interest and backgrounds may require research and/or enlisting the help of others. However, it is well worth the time and effort to see this kind of growth.

For example, one day Rachel’s writing mini-lesson focused on strategies for writing songs, but many students wrote stories instead. She told the students, “Some of you wrote stories instead of songs, which is totally fine!” Because she allowed them to follow their own topics, they focused and, after the lesson, Rachel shared with me that the students

had written more than they ever had before. And we both looked at the lengthy writing that reluctant writers had managed to produce. Another day, after Rachel planned out an exact amount of time for the creative centers to rotate, I recorded in my notes:

The students are so engaged with each center that things take longer than expected, in fact twice as long as expected. After considering telling centers to rotate, Rachel observes the tone of the class and decides to allow them to stay in the centers, and to instead continue centers after lunch.

Because Rachel allowed students to change the planned direction of the classroom, they completed station tasks and each student produced several writing samples in the writing stations; these products would not have occurred otherwise. Rachel's approach slowly incorporated more student-driven rather than teacher-driven work. She learned to make space daily for students to discuss and explore topics related to their outside life in the classroom. Students "control" opportunities included:

They [the students] know that if they come in and tell me that, like, they really want to tell me about this awesome thing they did over spring break, like, they know, I'm gonna say, 'Oh, let's write about it.' Like, 'I'm really in the mood to paint today'...little things... I love when they think of what we are gonna do for the day. It's so fun.

Sometimes this relenting of control occurred spontaneously. Rachel described that she found our spontaneous/improvised work inspiring. She explained that she gained positive energy from embracing surprises. The following example illustrates her spontaneity:

I was going to give an example of what was supposed to be done at each station, and I decided last minute not to do that, just to see what would happen. And I'm glad I didn't, because just as soon as I made a single 'wedding cake' I ruined the cake-

making station. So I'm glad I didn't. I was going to do, like, a sample and a sample exercise, and I didn't, and it was great.

As Rachel became more and more open to student leadership in her curriculum, in both planned and spontaneous ways, students worked independently without requiring teacher support. The literacy community became more and more marked by students' ownership, not just the teacher's. It was a jointly-created and owned community.

Promoted student stamina and focus in literacy events. Students' self-reliance was also evidenced by their stamina and ability to focus on literacy tasks. I documented ways in which I or others who entered the classroom described a felt "energy" of engagement. Students deeply valued literacy events in the classroom, especially reading, writing, and stations. I recognize the difficulty in proving this "felt" energy, but because I believe it is an important perception in a classroom, I explicate it more thoroughly below.

The students demonstrated a high endurance for reading. During reading workshop, I continually noted how the students worked independently. They read daily without breaks for 20-30 minute segments of time. I noted how focused they were during these reading sessions, and I was continually jotted down my observations of how little teacher guidance they required to stay focused. And not only were they able to focus on reading for long periods; many of them expressed a strong love for it, as demonstrated in G's remark, "I want to be reading all day!" One day, when a visitor came into the room to observe Rachel's teaching during reading workshop. I documented:

Rachel moves over to the side of the room to talk to the woman for about 15 minutes. Even though Rachel's attention is clearly focused upon the woman, the students still remain highly engaged and focused on their work. They remain on task even when Rachel is not paying attention to their behavior.

Students were able to write independently for long, focused periods of time as well. Their eagerness to write for one another came through in the many documentations I made of student comments such as, “When will we begin writing?” I also documented:

They write long pieces, and they do it every day. On one typical day of writing workshop, I went to observe the students about 5 minutes after they had left the mini-lesson area and begun writing. In my fieldnotes, I remarked, ‘I looked down and saw several students had written nearly one whole page after just a few short minutes.’ I thought about how such progress was sometimes even considered unusual for older students. But for these first graders, it was a typical routine that they enjoyed, that they expected of themselves.

By the end of our work together, students had become more self-directed in their learning and required the teacher less and less, especially in reading and writing. Their leadership produced a high level of independent achievement and self-reliance. On a day of career stations, I recorded:

As the centers get started, I walk around to help and observe. I walk to the poetry/writing center, thinking I will need to help students get ideas and also because I think it will be fun to share my Pablo Neruda book with the students as a poetry example. But the students already have ideas. They don’t need mine. Most have already started writing a great deal, and they still have plenty more to say---without any prompting or any help from the teacher. I watch Wally, who sometimes struggles. He hasn’t started writing, but he says he has ideas he just hasn’t written down yet. I stand there, and he jots down his title. Amy is briefly interested in the book I show, but then looks back at something else. She says, ‘I have an idea’. And it has no relation to my book.

I wrote a great deal about this element of focus during stations especially. I observed. I documented the intellectual “energy” I felt. I recognize that this energy could be argued as a subjective experience, and I recognize the problems in “proving” it to a logical positivist. Yet, because I personally felt the power of this “intangible”, I am determined I must include it and at least try to provide some examples for it:

During food stations, I observe them in the ‘research station.’ Each student sits there reading his/her individual trade books on food themes. Each student’s eyes are focused on the page, and they do not look up to see me as I linger behind them. They remain engaged in their task of reading.

I documented what I felt personally as motivating energy when I participated in these highly focused literacy sessions such as literacy stations and creative writing sessions. I insert my own musings as on how I believed these moments capture the beauty of possibility in a classroom community and I felt it important to try and capture evidence of energy in the excitement of learning. These were common emotions I experienced as I took part in Rachel’s classroom, so I believe they are important to include here:

I think about how all this group brainstorming and creative energy, with everyone adding wild ideas and building upon one another’s ideas is what a community of writers is all about. All students’ eyes are on the front and brains are buzzing as hands are raised and ideas are sprouting. This is what excites me about teaching: this creative energy that makes a person excited to be alive, that reminds you how fulfilling it is to be a productive, expressive human being.

And another day I wrote my observations of the students’ energy:

Busy-the room is busy. Engaged-Brains are focused. Doing-Everyone is working hard. Working-Everyone is working. Hard at work; work is play. I look around and think about a book I just read on self-directed learning. This is it!

I wrote these observations on the day that students were taking part in creative arts career stations. The following described student actions: “There was a steady buzz of activity on this day as students created structures, designed objects, and composed songs. Behavior issues were minimal, nearly absent, during these centers.”

I recognize that this description of energy represents my efforts to claim something intangible as tangible, something I perceived and felt as real, but I nonetheless believe in is important to include here, withstanding the recognition that major extent of my evidence for it is found in my perceptions and observations. I found the feeling of “intellectual energy” in Rachel’s classroom energizing for me as a teacher, and this is the energy I chose to document here despite the limitations in capturing it.

Strategies for making literacy “real”. Sociocultural theorists and New Literacy scholars explain that literacy is deeply communal and at the same time deeply tied to students’ individual identities (Lewis, Enicso, & Moje, 2007; Wertsch, 1991). The individual and the community are two sides to the same coin. Rachel understood that the sense of love for literacy in her classroom is constructed and cultivated socially, as a group, but in a way that impacted students personally, as individuals. Students experienced Rachel’s application of a sociological model (Luke & Freebody, 1997) of literacy. Rachel wanted to show students that this classroom is a place where writing is fun, “cool”, and most of all, “real”. I recognize the messiness of the construct “real”, and I define it as teaching that is experientially responsive. I will explain what I mean by real by spelling out various attributes I see as “real” below. I documented this experientially responsive teaching, this “realness” to have the following attributes: Connected to students’ life experiences; Containing unique challenges and possibilities posed by “real” literacy, “Realness” in expansion of future expectations.

Connected to students' life experiences. Rachel believed strongly in adapting her lessons based on the students' experiences, and letting their needs and desires drive her instruction. Rachel explained that she felt her students were strongly motivated to succeed because she connected the learning tasks with things the students cared about.

Rachel explained how she saw her literacy teaching in connection with students' life experiences when she was presenting to my class of undergraduates. She presented examples of student writing before and after her teaching, including one in which a student who could not write a word early on learned to write pages of personal narratives. An undergraduate responded to Rachel's examples by asking Rachel, "What is it that makes them [your first graders] learn so much?" Rachel first responded to this question by explaining lessons she gave on periods, finger spaces, etc..... Then she gave the illustration of a particular struggling student's progress, and she suddenly stopped, looked at the class, and exclaimed, "But really it is because he writes about things he loves."

Rachel recognized the importance of teaching technical elements of literacy, but stopped herself as she recognized in her own account that it was the underlying "realness" of writing in her classroom, its connection to students' worlds, that made it such an area of growth for the students. She recognized that it was something less tangible, and something more tied to sociocultural theory, that facilitated student growth.

During each day's writing workshop, Rachel tried to approach the students as not just able, but compelled, to connect literacy to their lives. As in Dyson's accounts of the validity in the multiple texts students bring into the classroom (2005), Rachel deeply valued bringing students' lives into the classroom, and she viewed such connections as major components in her students' literacy motivation, despite the unique challenges such "realness" created.

Rachel described this “realness” as key to her literacy approach. During her talk to my undergraduate class, she explained the power of her students’ real literacy: *“It’s as if they are not capable anymore of writing without feelings. While it is hard for me to read, I think it is important for them to get those feelings out.”*

Unique challenges and possibilities of “realness”. “Realness” also posed unique challenges, challenges that changed the nature of the classroom but eventually deeply enriched the sense of community among students. I documented the students’ behaviors in my notes:

They continued to write not only about happy and pleasant experiences but also negative, disturbing, confusing, or sad experiences. In fact, Rachel struggled with how to respond to their writings about negative emotions, and sometimes felt it was important to persuade the students to write instead about positive emotions.

One day during a class discussion about feelings, Adrian raised her hand to share the feeling she wanted to write about: “Miserable.” Rachel, upon remembering the nearly inconsolable writing that followed such a writing session last time, told her instead to write about another, more positive feeling. Rachel pulled me aside at this moment to ask my opinion, and we deliberated about what to do with the challenge this brought to the classroom. Adrian was clearly the most prolific writer in the classroom, and she used writing to express her deep feelings of both good and bad, of challenging intensity for us as teachers. She felt writing as deeply personal and meaningful, almost as a therapy or outlet. Rachel and I just were not always sure of the best way to respond to her sometimes troubling emotions.

A very similar situation happened on another day. This time another student, Adam, wrote: “I am sad. I am always sad.” Rachel and I tried to respond to this communication in a positive way, to help him channel his emotions positively. Upon reading his

message, I sat with Adam and tried to help him think of how he could start to feel better. His eyes teared and his lips quivered. I asked him why he was so sad, and he explained it was because he missed his sister. “Then why don’t you write about your sister?” I suggested. “I want to talk to her!” he cried. “Why don’t you write a letter?” I responded. His face lit up and he began composing a letter to his sister. He directed his attention toward this work and his eyes and body language conveyed a focus different from his usual behavior. He was no longer crying.

The following week, with a smile on his face, Adam told me that he had given the letter to his sister. I had forgotten about the situation, but as he told me this I realized he certainly had not, and that it was monumental for him. I wrote that it was real literacy and it was important. Rachel and I chatted together that afternoon about how exciting we felt it was to see such a challenge turn into a possibility, as the “realness” of literacy in this case entailed helping a student take positive action to improve his life.

Realness in expansion of future expectations. I found Rachel’s “real” teaching to emphasize students’ connections to thinking about future possibilities and the promotion of lifelong dispositions. She sought not only to teach them skills for the present, but wanted them to emerge from her classroom equipped with an orientation toward the future; this included a passion for learning and high career aspirations. Rachel’s explained her work to emphasize purposes for learning to be “real” beyond only the present classroom, and into students’ future lives. Rachel’s teaching, in certain ways, also communicated expectations in ways that challenged prominent deficit perspectives of urban students (Delpit, 2006). Later in our collaboration Rachel explained this progress:

I think overall something that’s really changed is their [students’] expectations right now. You know, I think their expectations are not just to go to second grade anymore. It’s very different. It’s like, you know, I think their expectations are like, “I’m going to

be a graphic designer”...Like, I remember last year, every day I would be, like, ‘Do you want to go to second grade?’ Like that was our goal. But now...

Rachel went on to explain the more expanded dreams and visions of future identities that students were now beginning to express.

“Realness” as integrative teaching. Rachel designed thematic teaching to create new “connective” purposes for literacy. Through the year Rachel slowly learned to integrate the subjects more and communicate greater purposes for student work, practices illuminated by reading researchers as enacted by effective teachers (Pressley, et al, 2007) I observed her usage of literacy to accomplish other purposes in the classroom, such as meeting math and science state standards. She tried to show her students that the subject areas have a greater purpose than grades or performances on tests. She illustrated that literacy could be a means to other ends rather than merely an end in and of itself.

The thematic unit we created together on careers showcased Rachel’s newfound talent in subject integration as well as hands-on learning. During this unit Rachel was able to help students experience mini-versions of careers such as animal researcher, nutritionist, graphic designer, physical trainer, and other careers that connected literacy to a variety of subject areas.

Rachel encouraged “real life” connections in other ways as well. Rachel regularly connected literature to life. One of Rachel’s favorite ways of doing this was through cooking with her students. She explained in her talk with my class: “In class we cook a lot, we do a lot of crafts, and it all relates to the children’s literature I use.” Connecting literature to music was a regular theme of our collaboration. First we connected music to reading. Early on in our work, we taught students to “hear the music” in poetry such as in the book *Honey, I Love*, by Eloise Greenfield (1978). Later we connected music to writing, and we taught the students to write songs. These multiple forms of connections

among subject areas and experiences reflect an attempt to approach learning to read and write as intimately intertwined with other areas of study.

Realness as risk-taking and creativity. Finally, I describe as key in Rachel's strategies for "realness" a willingness to take risks and allow crazy or spontaneous actions. Her strategies allowed spontaneity and invited personal, creative expression.

Some of Rachel's most enthusiastic lessons were those that were actually improvised, devised on the spot. She explained:

Like, I've had days where I planned my whole day and someone will say one thing during morning meeting and all the sudden we spend a whole day doing our writing, reading, illustrating, painting, crafting a project...and at the end of the day we have beautiful work to show for it I think of this thing at 7:00 in the morning.

Another example of such "silliness" and spontaneity occurred one day, during writing workshop, when Rachel decided to pick up a book of one of her favorite songs. She sang the book to the students (put the words in the book to music, as we made a regular pattern of reading aloud in our collaboration) and asked for connections. Then she spontaneously told the students, "Ok, when we go back to our seats, we should all write silly songs".

The students returned to their seats and wrote independently on topics of their own choosing for over twenty minutes, and clamored for the opportunity to present the products of their work to the class, and some were disappointed that they could not all read their newly authored works aloud. I learned was a spontaneous, improvised lesson, but Rachel described her pride in its success in motivating intense focus and creative writing. We both discussed how we thought that this was a tremendous example of the power of spontaneity to inspire literacy to come alive. Many other creative literacy moments were improvised. I documented in my journal:

When I brought an instrument into the classroom, Rachel decided she would find impromptu instruments around the room for students to use. Together we thought and searched, and we came up with boxes to hit, math counting boards to pluck, and a can to shake.

Later I documented another example of Rachel's willingness to try what seemed to be wild and adventurous teaching strategies, strategies that connected to who Rachel was and what she cared about:

I was inspired one day after I observed what Rachel did after I played flute for the class. She took out her violin and said, 'I'm going to try to sing and play at the same time. I've never done that before!' Then she played a tune from her sheet music and sang the tune with it. The students responded with loud enthusiasm and applause.

This bold and personally-meaningful integration of creative and "fun" actions in the teaching process made Rachel's teaching "real" to her in relation to her own life, as well as in relation to students' real interests and motivation.

Under Rachel's strongly articulated vision, as described above and summarized in Appendix H, were these literacy teaching strategies that she learned to use to open her classroom to the rich possibilities of literacy, as presented in Appendix I. I argue that a closer study of such strategies that teachers like Rachel use may help teacher educators illustrate a pedagogy founded on sociocultural principles of literacy. Rachel's developing pedagogy encouraged social interaction and connection while also promoting self-reliance. It was "real" to the students and teacher, and creative. This emphasis on group-wholeness, individual identity, and risk-taking created a literacy community with potential to both honor unique individual voices and construct a unique communal voice.

Community as Love

This next section captures a construct that I recognize as messy and difficult to “prove”, but it is a construct that I believe is very important. In fact I propose that, perhaps, the most important elements of a classroom may be those such as love, elements that are the least measurable.”. Some scholars have labeled such behaviors as “care” (Noddings, 2003; Pressley, et al, 2007; Valenzuela, 2007). Both love and care emphasize the relational nature of teaching, a concept explored by others (Ayers, 2010; Nieto, 2009) Yet my conceptualization of the construct of love contains an emotional element that not all notions “care” may necessarily imply.

. Love is a construct that continues to be explored and advocated by other education scholars. hooks (2003) defines love as “a combination of care, commitment, respect, and trust. All three factors work interdependently” (p. 131). She explains that “it is the foundation upon which every learning community can be created. “ (p. 132). She distinguishes her view of love from definitions of love that entail unhealthy relationships that lack boundaries. Rather, to hooks, love is a force that combats domination and uplifts teachers and students through healthy emotional understanding. Ayers (2010) builds on this construct. He explains that love and caring frame the teaching act. This love between teacher and students is the driving force behind learning: “I insist that my students learn algebra because of my love of them, not of it” (p.36).

To demonstrate “love” in Rachel’s teaching, I will include examples of behaviors and recorded comments that evidenced various ways in which Rachel and her students may have “felt” a sense of community, or “love”. This feeling of love was evidenced in both words and behaviors. I argue that “love” is a central component in Rachel’s literacy teaching; it was the bedrock behind her vision, strategies, and teaching of state curriculum, thus essential to examine in implications for socially-just teaching.

In my graphic in Appendix I, I show how love is the connecting circle behind Rachel's vision, strategies, and challenges. I interpret this "love" as expressed in the following directions: Teacher-student, student-teacher, student-student, and love for learning: student and teacher.

Teacher-student. Love threaded throughout Rachel's discourse on her students. Rachel discussed her love for her students in many ways. In an interview she explained her own personal growth and the inspiration she found within her students: "I really think it was my students that inspired me to be this way." Later she shared with me how this love for them came out in her own model writing: "I even wrote a love poem about how much I love my students and read it to them today."

This love grew and awakened as Rachel came to know her students better and came to open up to new ways of showcasing literacies. After the career unit culminated in a final presentation during which each student presented his/her self-written song, art, and sometimes choreography, Rachel discussed some changes that had occurred in herself:

I think it's really interesting to see them, like...to learn to appreciate your students' skills a little bit more. Like, ---'s a really good singer. I didn't know that! I probably should, but you know, like, you can see different people's strengths...I think it's neat to see how they've grown in presentation, especially L. she really didn't talk this year until January. So it's really nice to see her singing.

Rachel learned through the year, to love her students more and more. Throughout the year, as we incorporated multiple literacies and multiple curricular approaches, Rachel came to see her students in new ways. As we introduced songwriting and music into the curriculum, students revealed hidden skills and talents that Rachel hadn't known before. As we incorporated multimodal centers using even more intelligences, such as bodily/kinesthetic, tactile, visual, and social, we continued to learn more about the

students and to appreciate them in new ways. I argue that this love is central to a classroom community that promotes powerful literacy, and it presents an underexplored quality of exceptional teaching.

Student-student. Another important direction in which love characterized Rachel's classroom was in the expressions of love between and among students. During the mid-study interview, Rachel explained how her classroom had developed more clearly into what she called a "mini-community". She explained how students' respect for one another developed and how it continued to grow throughout the year. She relayed how her expectations for group work emphasized responsibility for one's group and helping each other accomplish things as a group rather than valuing individual success above all. She felt that this "love" between students motivated them to care about school:

I think, I really thought they got as respectful as they could get, but really, in the last few days, I've seen a lot of them show a lot of respect for each other. And I think that's really important. Like, I think they always showed a lot of respect for me, but now I felt...like, A was helping K. As was helping Mi. And, its...they weren't even doing it to, like, make a good impression on me. They were doing it just because. And I think that was really cool. I felt like they...they felt responsible for their group. And that was really interesting because, like, they didn't just feel responsible for "themselves" anymore, because that was their group and they really wanted their group to move on to the next station.

I recorded the love between students expressed in a number of interactions. The following scenario during writing workshop exemplifies this family-like love:

Another student, John, regularly brought sadness and angst to the classroom. He often put his head on his desk and sulked. On one particular day, during writing workshop, his sadness was particularly displayed in his facial expressions. On this day I walked

to his desk to see what he had written. On his page were the following words, “I feel lonely. I am always lonely.” He reads this writing to Rachel and me. We look at each other and wonder: “Should we encourage them to write like this?” We do not discourage it, but we try to lift John’s spirits by reminding him of the friends he has in the classroom. Another student offers to sit with John and “be his friend” upon hearing this talk. John’s spirits lift as the other student talks and shares with him. Rachel discusses how pleased she is that they are helping one another as a family.

This situation exemplified how the challenges of “realness” provided opportunities for students’ love for one another to grow and to further motivate literacy learning.

Rachel’s later email captured the beauty of this love (as well as her love for the students):

I even wrote a love poem about how much I love my students and read it to them today. (I was actually really nervous to share such a personal poem with our class family and almost teared up while reading it, but they absolutely adored it). I the end of today, I experienced something that really reminded me of why I love to teach. As we dismissed I saw all my students giving out more love than I could teach. They each gave genuine hugs before leaving. L hugged T and thanked him for being her friend, A hugged, Ad, etc. It was such a peaceful event that it reminded me more than ever of why our students need us. Who knew that one little Valentine’s Day lesson could have such a profound impact on our class unity? I feel as though my students have taught me more about love this week than I could ever teach them.

Student-teacher. I also documented many expressions of love directed from students to teacher. One day as I watched students happily participating in centers, I recorded:

I hear a chorus of resounding triangles. ‘I love Ms. W’ is playing in the background by a chorus of wide-eyed children. The joy in their voices and the gratefulness to be a part of such a teacher’s handiwork is all over their faces and reflected in their happy

voices Rachel and I both know that the centers are a hit when most of the students are choosing to write songs about how much they love her. “I love Ms. W! She’s the best!’ is the popular tune of the day.

My fieldnotes continually documented how students wrote about how much they loved their teacher and wanted to follow in her footsteps. The following examples from students’ journals expressed this love:

My teacher is the best because my teacher lets us do whatever we want to do. She’s the most fantastic teacher I ever seen...Also, I love my teacher very much. She is so great. I want to be a teacher. And if she was little I would do the best to be HER BEST TEACHER [student emphasis] EVER and I would love her so much...I love my teacher as hard as I can love her and more -Mary

My teacher is the best because she is really funny. I love Ms.—because she is pretty and kind. I know Mrs—is the best teacher in the world. We write a lot of poems too. I love first grade so much! -Amy

Love for learning: student and teacher. Rachel and I felt that the love for learning that students expressed in the community impacted the rest of the student community. We observed students’ attitudes about writing change as the year progressed, and Rachel credited this to social influences. We thought the class’s love for literacy was infectious among classroom members. In a late interview, Rachel discussed a student named Abram:

He hated writing when he came in. Like, the first weeks of school, he was like, “I can’t write. I don’t write. I won’t write. And now he writes a lot!”...I’m glad he’s in our class. I think it’s a good class for him. They set a good example.

Although Rachel acknowledged the power of her own influence, she also recognized the power of the influence of the other students upon one another.

Another major driving force of power in Rachel's classroom was her own love for learning and love for growing and stretching as a teacher. Rachel explained this personal enthusiasm for learning in the conversation I described below:

She told me, 'I've lost weight since we started this unit.' She explained that earlier in the year, she had gained weight. She explained that she'd been eating and using food in the classroom to offset the boredom she'd been feeling when teaching uninspired lessons. In a later interview she mused, "But now, I haven't done snacks in a long time. This unit has given me so much to be excited about that I'm not snacking like that anymore. Instead of being bored while they are doing a worksheet and eating because I'm bored, I've been excited about what we're doing and not wanted to eat".

This personal passion for real literacy was evident in some of Rachel's summative words in our last interview:

S: What do you think this means for helping teachers learn?

R: I think, um, valuing the emphasis on really getting involved with your writing and not just teaching writing.

Later Rachel expressed her involvement in the energy of her students' love of literacy: "I love how my students are just writing and writing and writing... It's totally cool how they just keep writing and writing and writing!!!"

Evidence of Rachel's deep personal involvement in her teaching was also reflected in the time she devoted to planning, the relationships she held with her students, the energy in her lessons, and the pride and joy she expressed when she discussed teaching. In the final interview she gave a strong example of this pride and joy. She related how teaching fit into her life passions (She also conveyed a deep confidence in her teaching):

They say if you have a job...like, the best job is something that you love, and I love teaching. Like, there's probably not one thing I'd rather...Like, if I weren't teaching,

I'd still be, like, wanting to teach. Like, I'd do arts and crafts. I love to write. I love to read. I love to teach. Reading's my favorite. School's my favorite. I like being a student. You know? And I think, being in an environment that's, you know, kind of my passion, you know, how can you not love it? You know, and I think... I get so excited about going to school every week...and to come to work and do fun things, like sing songs and draw pictures and write about your own life. And, I don't know, I just truly think this job is very fun in first grade. I really don't think it gets any funner, just, like, in terms of so... I think that's what makes me, kind of, like, great. I guess. I really love it. I really don't think I could be great at things I don't love...And I think if I'm having fun, it's kind of, like, impossible not to be good at things you're just having fun at, you know?

This love for her work contributed greatly to the teacher she was becoming. She cared deeply about what she did, and this motivated her to care about learning and growing within the profession.

Without love, I argue that Rachel's vision and strategies would lack foundational bedrock. Rachel believed in community, tried to enact community through literacy strategies that honored student and the group identity, but most of all, I argue that she cultivated love in her classroom. It may be that Rachel's love for her students and for her work refracted into her students love for her, for one another, and for learning. It may be, as hooks (2003) explained, that "love in the classroom prepared teachers and students to open their minds and hearts" (p.132). This emotional element of teaching offers what I argue may be an important element in literacy for community, and Rachel's teaching illustrates characteristics of a literacy community that promoted sociocultural models of literacy through love

Community as Challenge

In my documentation of Rachel's literacy community I noted many challenges as well as possibilities. Rachel explicitly noted some of these challenges and expressed them as needs. This list is not exhaustive but is a description of the elements noted through our collaboration. I argue that this description may offer helpful portraits of the kinds of things teachers may experience when striving for literacy community within struggling urban schools. I present the following categories: structure, assessment skills, support, navigating student emotions, negative school environmental factors, challenging behaviorism, and professional accountability.

A need for structure. Rachel explicitly conveyed to me some of her major needs as an "early developing" teacher. Despite her willingness to be creative and open-ended, she also expressed a strong need for structure, particularly for planning blueprints. In an early interview, we had the following interaction:

S: What are some of the areas that you find difficult about language arts teaching?

R: Sometimes, it's like, not having something to follow, like an outline. That's why I'm really excited about planning the [career] unit because I feel like I learn more about how to follow a... Yeah, like right now I don't really have a curriculum and I kind of create my own. But, being such a new teacher, I'm like, oh, this didn't really work and I didn't really have anyone to tell me and I have no... but, just like, seeing how to plan more. Cause, though I love that my kids really drive my instruction this year, I think, eventually, I would love to have a plan."

This paralleled with the positive way she discussed her student teaching experiences in a very structured and well-planned teacher's classroom. She explained that the structure of planning and clear objectives made her feel more confident that she was accomplishing what she needed to accomplish. This confidence seemed to allow her to

feel more comfortable about trying other things. She was able to assess that the rest of her time was well spent and therefore allowed for extra creative activities:

When I did student teaching, I followed the Scott Foresman, and it was so nice because the teacher made me a list of the skills I had to cover each week. As long as I fit them all in nicely she had me do whatever I wanted. It was really cool because a lot of mentors didn't let their student teachers do that. I thought it was really neat because...as long as I covered skills---and that's where I just kinda learned how to go outside the box. I would usually go outside it, it, um, and I learned during student teaching, those were times my lessons got really more...and she's like, "that's really cool. I want to do that."

Her philosophy here balanced expectations and objectives with creativity and personal direction. She valued openness yet still needed more structure than she felt she had.

Yet as my work with her ensued it became clear that, as her confidence grew, she needed less of these "blueprints, although she would have appreciated more of them":

And I think, going into this school, I expected the same thing. I was like, "I have a kind of a structure and I'll be able to, like, go with it. Now it's not. I truly feel I'm teaching everything. All the time. Like I don't really have....I have my own plan, but I feel like, since it's my own plan, then no one really knows what my plan is."

I interpret this as an expression of her need for structured planning as well as assessment skills so that she can more clearly see her accomplishments. She later agreed with this interpretation.

This highlights what could be a major need of preservice and early developing teachers. Perhaps new teachers' needs for structure and the resistance to spontaneity comes more from a place of not being able to assess accomplishments and find confidence in them, than from an unhealthy dependence upon recipes.

A need for personally useful assessment tools. Rachel explained how she gained positive energy from being able to see what students had learned. She stated, “Seeing them progress motivates me! Seeing them in the centers yesterday, I thought to myself, I just can’t wait to do that again!” Other conversations revealed that she also expressed a need to gain more tools for seeing such growth. With limited tools and skills at pinpointing students’ needs, she did not always know what the most helpful teaching steps might be. Increased assessment skills would have benefitted her greatly as a teacher, and she recognized it:

My students have grown so much this year that the fact that I’ve really changed everything...it’s really hard for me to reflect on what I did. I have no plan...I have my plan but I feel like it would be so often for me to plan and really reflect. Like, oh, I did this, this, and this. But I did see, like, for example, through H’s work, how I’m gonna change as a teacher. Like, what he wrote when I told him what to write and when I said, “OK, write”.

I propose that she may have felt more confident about her student-driven objectives if she had more skills for pinpointing and documenting the purposes and objectives they meet, assessment tools that she found personally meaningful. In fact, through my later collaborations and reflections with Rachel after the duration of the study ended, I shared this point of my analysis with her, and she shared how, by learning more assessments the following year, she grew as a teacher:

This year, I have done just this! I have made it a point to specifically look for strategies and skills that will be most useful to expanding my students’ writing skills. For example, I have been working on utilizing the word wall and did a specific lesson where I pre-tested their knowledge of word wall words, taught the mini-lesson and

post-tested their word wall accuracy. As I learn the value of assessment, I have truly seen how my objectives can be much more explicit and purposeful each day.

This stated need for self-assessment relates to the findings of self-efficacy theory, which proposes that the more teachers are able to construct or make use of encouraging feedback, the more they can empower themselves (Tschanne-Morane & McFarlane, 2011). The more Rachel developed an ability to self-assess, the more she was able to feel purposeful in her work.

Need for navigating student emotions. Many of Rachel's other challenges were related to the troubling experiences that influenced her students' classroom work. In the students' writing and talk we found evidence of the difficult emotions they struggled with, and through community talk and news we learned of the challenges they faced in their home communities. Rachel continually expressed a strong need for responding appropriately with these emotions

Need for dealing with array of student emotions. An assortment of difficult feelings became apparent in writing workshop, where many times Rachel was able to harness them for writing motivation. Yet she explained to me that she struggled with how much to invite such emotions into the classroom:

During her presentation to my undergraduates, Rachel stated, 'When we write about feelings, it seems everyone picks 'nervous, lonely, sad' ... Rachel explained how she felt conflicted about what to do with such feelings, whether to cultivate them or steer them in another direction.

These examples suggest the weight she and the students may have felt when student emotions were brought into the classroom. Rachel felt that this weight seemed to influence student behavior and trigger emotional responses that were not always positive, but were strong and heartfelt.

Need for dealing with neighborhood stresses. The neighborhood Rachel taught within faced many challenges, and these seemed to impact the students' schooling. Rachel explained to me that stories of crime and violence were commonplace. One day I came into the classroom and Rachel pulled me aside to explain a recent shooting on the apartment grounds of many of the students. She explained it later in an interview:

Like I said, I think about how there was a shooting right there, at 1:30, on Friday, while we were at school, and it's like, I didn't even know about it because I went the other way home. Normally I go that way but I went the other way home. You know, like the one day I went on that road instead. I think it's really interesting, you know, because they have to come to school and forget about how, you know, that someone was shot. But I think that's what I try to teach, you know, and I think that's important.

Rachel explained that she felt her teacher education program did not prepare her for knowing the appropriate responses to such student experiences. She understood that students were greatly affected by such events. But she did not know what might be the best way to promote social justice within such an environment.

Need for fully including "troubled" students. Challenges in the struggles in students' home lives appeared to deeply impact many of the student's behaviors. Rachel struggled to keep these behaviors under control so that the rest of the class could function as planned. Many times, this meant that a certain student or two was isolated from the learning community. During my visits to Rachel's classroom, I observed the same students regularly reprimanded and put in time out for negative behavior. Knowing how to keep the more troubled students from disturbing the rest of the class is a difficult skill. Yet learning how to facilitate the learning experience for all so that the more emotionally troubled students do not miss out on rich opportunities such as hands-on learning, instruction, and community participation is another important and very difficult skill. In

my fieldnotes I regularly noted that the same boy, Kace, sat in time out during multiple exciting lessons, a non-participant. I documented how, while the others were engaging in a variety of activities, including writing, reading, music-making and art, he sat there and stared at the wall, or put his head down. Learning how to redirect the negative emotions of students such as Kace so that they could participate fully rather than sit out was a challenge Rachel faced throughout the year.

At several points in my notes I wrote sentences such as the following that captured this difficulty in fully involving certain students in all of the classroom activities: “Kace sat at his desk, with his head down, while others sit eagerly at the rug for the mini-lesson”. Another day I wrote, similarly:

Kace is in time out, sitting quietly, so I tell Rachel. I feel sad that he sitting out on this day that is filled with such engaging and meaningful activity. She eventually tells him to go back and participate. Unfortunately he ends up back in time out shortly, and stays there for the rest of the period, barely participating in centers at all. His facial expression conveys anger, but also I detect a degree of comfort in time out, where he may be accustomed to being. I wonder if he is so used to being in time out that he has come to accept it as “his place”, where he’d rather be, where he can be ‘passive’?

And yet another day I write: “The class begins writing, and moods seems to lift (except for W and I, who look miserable, and sit at their desks with scowls on their faces, doing nothing).” And another note followed this pattern: “The hands of all students except the two who were sleeping raise as they are asked who would like to share.”

This struggle in fully engaging the students who are dealing with the most difficult emotions is a major challenge that I argue it is important to continue to explore. It is something that Rachel explained as difficult and troubling, and it may pose a major concern of many teachers, without easy answers.

Responding to negative school environment outside teacher control. There were many other contextual and environmental factors that provided challenges for Rachel. Some of these included: regular disruptions, temperature/climate issues, and unpredictable school schedules. Rachel's teaching was often interrupted by the blaring of the intercom (usually with messages unrelated to her classroom), uninvited visitors, soaring heat, a leaky roof, and the possibility of canceled school days or school-wide events that she saw to, without warning, disturb her plans for the day. But perhaps the most troubling disruption was the negative energy that was often felt through the noises heard through the walls from the halls or the class next door as other teachers yelled at students and students responded.

There were multiple instances during which we sat quietly in the classroom, trying not to hear the upset yelling voices of other teachers. In my fieldnotes I recorded instances of the young, new teacher, an outsider to the community screaming at her students, quite literally, in an unusual and biting tone, nearly everyday, at intervals throughout the day. In my notes I recorded some of the things I heard this teacher scream to her students. In my notes I sat in Rachel's classroom, when the quiet was interrupted by the following from the teacher next door:

I hear lots of yelling next door. I hear the following screamed out in angry, irritated tones: "I'm sure half of you don't know how to do that... It makes you look stupid... but you're not. You just don't know how to look up here!...I already told you!!!" More disturbing yelling next door.

Later I documented: "The contrast between the positive feelings in the room and the negative talk next door was startling."

Rachel's students were accustomed to hearing these screams and yells, although they certainly stood out in Rachel's classroom each time they occurred. Rachel recognized the

challenge of this environment but struggled with how to approach it. Learning how to best approach negative school environment factors and their force as disruption to the classroom routine and climate may be important to explore in urban education.

Challenging behaviorism. In Rachel's classroom, as in many classrooms, the legacy of behaviorism still lingered in some areas despite efforts to challenge it. The behaviorist tendencies I refer to here are management techniques based on controlling students through stimulus and response mechanisms, and instructional techniques based on input/output systems of production and behavior manipulation. Behaviorism was present in some of the management techniques Rachel has felt compelled to keep. It was also present in some of the independent classwork Rachel used regularly.

Management techniques. Although Rachel made genuine strides toward community-oriented management techniques, other techniques she used still reflected mainstream behaviorist models that teachers and students tend to be socialized into, particularly the model of managing the classroom through direct control and manipulation of student behavior. One challenge I observed as a regular visitor and participant in Rachel's classroom life was the time that behavior management occupied daily. She spent much time per day, at least on certain days, to reprimands and behavior consequences.

As she experienced the stress of an urban teacher she sometimes responded by tightening her grip of control, and increasing consequences and rewards systems, despite her simultaneous efforts to relent control in other ways, as I documented in previous sections. For example, one day I wrote in my fieldnotes: "I wonder how much stress she has been experiencing lately, as I hear her spend a lot of time saying things such as, 'When I give a direction, you need to follow it.' I also think about the number of times she tells them to behave" Another day I documented, "lots of talk about making 'right choices'. To me it seems they may have been sitting still too long." Of course, these

notes record my perception, but they do record the fact that a large amount of Rachel's talk is spent on reprimands.

Another day I recorded how Rachel learned to reprimand and manage calmly yet effectively through the use of schoolwide mandated consequences: "Her voice is calm and quiet, yet stern, when she states the possibility of moving cards to yellow." This "card" approach is clearly a consequence-focused system of control. Rachel later confessed to me that she did not prefer the method, but felt pressured to use it by the school authorities.

I documented the usage of the "color" consequences another day:

The children were perfectly in order, all quiet, all hands/bodies calm. I was struck by how quiet they were as they entered the classroom. Then I saw that she [Rachel] was doing something with the consequences of dyeing/not dyeing eggs/ having a party/not having a party/ changing students' cards to yellow." I recognized here that the consequences related to cards were a major form of classroom management that Rachel employed.

At other times Rachel's usage of consequences fell more in line with the concept of logical or natural consequences, an effort to reflect real-world actions. This could be interpreted as a challenge to the disconnected behaviorist consequences, yet it does reflect strong attempts toward teacher control over student behaviors. Under pressure to keep the class calm, she sometimes emphasized consequences in her speeches to the class. While we were studying careers, Rachel instructed the class: "So, what happens if you don't do your job [in the classroom station]? You get fired..."

On other days Rachel used external rewards, and she explained that she felt these rewards often motivated students toward better behavior. Rachel drew upon these rewards less and less as the year progressed and the students became more actively

engaged in such activities as writing workshop and career centers, which kept them busy and active. A major reward she did use commonly was food, although she often gave the food rewards to everyone in the class, which she saw promoted her idea of community rather than competition. One day I recorded in my notes: “Earlier in the day Rachel commented on how she buys snacks for the class and she sees how it helps them feel better and perform better”.

Later she described how that she had began to use food less and less. She discussed how overall her usage of rewards lessened as she used more active teaching strategies and found her students more fully engaged in literacy learning. She discussed this specifically when she observed her writing workshop and stations lessons and the ways in which students engaged in these activities with no rewards or grade consequences.

Classwork and Rachel’s Challenge. Another example of behaviorism was the occasional usage of test preparation exercises and worksheets. Although I witnessed and documented many examples of what I earlier labeled as “real” literacy, particularly during writing and reading workshop, I did observe these kinds of activities, usually during other parts of the day. I observed more worksheets and test preparation lessons earlier in the year, and less as time went by, and even less during our thematic unit after standardized testing ended.

Rachel commented that she was aware of the problematic effects of much of this kind of drill-related literacy work. I also recorded Rachel’s efforts to make test preparation more bearable for her and the students. One day, after the students sat down and did an independent test preparation package, she stopped them and said, “I know test prep can be boring so I made something for you to make it more fun.” She gathered the students on the rug and pulled up her computer projector and presented multiple choice questions with a cute, colorful background and eye-catching computer graphics to motivate the

students. Although it was still a direct presentation of multiple-choice items, the students showed a high level of attention, and Rachel exhibited a tendency to try to work outside the box.

Later in the year Rachel expressed a strong sense of accomplishment in reflecting on how many behavioristic tendencies she has already overcome. I recorded her comment on her move away from rewards in writing, as she stated, “No treats, no food, no snack box. It’s just interesting how that has done a 180 this year”. Although behaviorism is difficult to counter, she made strides toward changing some behaviorist practices.

Rachel’s dance with behaviorism also suggests that perhaps we should not think in strict dichotomies when considering what practices are and are not behavioristic. The usage of worksheets does not necessarily imply behaviorism, as a sociocultural view implies that the purpose and consequences of literacy result in authentic communication, interaction, construction, or critique, and sometimes explicit skills teaching is necessary to those aims. A balanced approach to teaching skills and fostering engagement (Taylor, Pressley, and Pearson, 2000; Pressley, 1998) may situate our thinking as we teach codes of power within a teaching model as the one described in this study.

Dichotomies: Working through dichotomous assumptions about students and families

This next area of challenge was the most difficult area for me to address as a teacher educator in my support of Rachel, but it may be the most important area, especially if we are committed to racial and cultural equity. It was difficult because it involved my critique of a belief system, not just a practice. I struggled with how to sensitively include it in this analysis, as I want to honor Rachel through my portrayal of her. Critiquing another person’s practice may be a relatively straightforward activity in comparison to critiquing another person’s hidden belief systems. Out of a positive relationship based

upon love, one struggles to maintain positive, trusting relationships. This area of analysis reflects a topic of great importance nonetheless, to anyone committed to envisioning a more just education for students from backgrounds different from their teachers. It demands attention here.

In my literature review, I explained how critical scholars present the hidden forces behind societal members that shape and inform their viewpoints on students. I conveyed how scholars have illuminated such forces as the hidden effects of societal racism (Scherich & Young, 1997), cultural misunderstandings, or differences in and misunderstandings of the cultural logic of childrearing (Lareau, 1999). McDermott (2011) addressed the tendency to dichotomize and the ways in which dichotomizing can result in stifled thinking, restrained action, and inequity. Howard (1999) addresses it as characteristics of a certain phase of White identity development. My analysis of certain examples of Rachel's discussion of student home experiences reflects what these scholars pinpoint, and warrants future exploration.

In my analysis of Rachel's work, I interpreted several illustrations of dualisms in her assumptions about students and their families or home communities that fall into either-or thinking patterns, with potentially problematic consequences. I theorize that humans use and hold on to dichotomies in order to explain and simplify difficult situations, as well as in response to overall societal scripts and the box of western, restraining forms of logic and rationality. In many areas of her teaching Rachel communicated a richly developed awareness of the complexity of situations, but her viewpoint of the background of students and their families offered an area of conflict. I suggest that understanding such tendencies may present insight for teacher educators in knowing and working with young teachers as learners.

Family and community as either “good” or “bad”. Because her students’ community backgrounds contrasted greatly from her own and because she perceived certain negative community behaviors, Rachel’s discussions with me reflected a pattern of expression of a belief that her students’ outside communities are negative forces in at least some of her students’ lives. This view of family and home may present a challenge to developing a holistic classroom community, and it represents an area of teacher development in Rachel’s work in need of deeper examination and reconceptualization.

I have observed similar tendencies in the thinking of many of the preservice teachers I have worked with in the past. Many teachers often came to the classroom with very different home backgrounds and systems of cultural logic (Lareau, 1999) in relation to their students and their students’ families. As a result, teachers often struggled with negative assumptions about the homes of their students. As a young teacher I can attest that I also struggled with overcoming such “deficit” perspectives, and it took broadening my understanding of interpretations of community, family, and society to challenge it, as I welcomed uncomfortable change, as I underwent processes similar to the identity development Howard (1999) and Sleeter (2008a) document.

In the following remarks, Rachel reveals conflicts in her own similar development of awareness. She explained to me her perspective on teaching for social justice. She illustrated her conceptualization of the challenge of the background experiences her students brought to school, her deep level of concern for students, and argued for high expectations of students. Yet she also revealed a challenge in learning to view student culture when one is an outsider to the community. She highlighted the difficulty of overcoming “deficit” perspectives of students while also trying hard to be aware and responsive based on her assumptions about poverty and perhaps race or culture. I argue

that the societal scripts she adopted constructed a dichotomy in thinking, a perspective that sometimes led her to paint home as bad and school as good:

It [Social Justice] means, to me, teaching the kids the way I want to teach despite their backgrounds. And I, I feel like, I need to go in tomorrow teaching them exactly how I would go in teaching at the school I grew up in. You know, privileged parents and brand new Easter clothes. And, you know, I...my students may be coming in tomorrow, maybe, not having eaten in a long time. You know, tomorrow's their first day back. You know, possibly, like, maybe, having slept outside. Like, who knows? But I need to go in tomorrow when first they get back from spring break: 'How do you get them to learn?' To not, not thinking about how that gulf is going to affect them tomorrow. Like, write about what you did for spring break. But for me not to do that. To like, write about...compare how you felt at home during the day as opposed to how you feel at school. You know, how you felt at home for a week, and now talk about how you felt at school for a week...

At another point Rachel's comments, deeply caring as they were, echoed similar assumptions about students and their home experiences of love, contrasted to school experiences of love, She asserted an assumption that some students do not experience love in their homes:

Some of these students have never been hugged before and yet they were expressing their love right in our classroom. In a school and community filled with fighting and mean words seen and heard each day, this small moment meant so much to me.

These examples from Rachel's discourse reveal both exemplary high expectations for her students as well as potentially problematic assumptions. She viewed her students' home lives and some of their outside school life in direct contrast to her classroom. The phrase "despite their backgrounds," connotes negative views of their backgrounds. Is this

negative view of their home lives accurate, and where does it originate? Is the positive contrast of school accurate? And even if it is based on knowledge of legitimately negative experiences of some students, is it fair to discuss all of the students in this way if it may actually refer to special cases or even only certain moments during special cases? I argue that this kind of assumption-making may be based on a mixture of a middle-class cultural logic (Lareau, 1999) as well as other societal scripts and thinking patterns or institutional habitus (Cornbleth, 2010).

Teachers who are outsiders to the communities of their students may incorrectly interpret the difficult experiences their students go through. Teachers sometimes explain student family life as deficient or as neglected, instead of recognizing their lack of knowledge of different parenting styles, cultural norms, financial and other stresses, or the complexity in struggling with poverty or backbreaking work schedules. Others tend to see the example of one student who may truly experience aspects of neglect and abuse, and generalize from there about all, when most may actually come from very loving homes. Lareau's (1999) explanations of differences between middle class families "concerted cultivation" parenting approach compared to working class families "achievement of natural growth" may explain some of middle class teachers' interpretations. It may provide a place to start in helping teachers recognize the potential danger of such assumptions, and it provides a starting place for working with teachers to uncover them.

Later, Rachel's comments revealed similar underlying, assumptions about student poverty, but here she called these assumptions something to "forget," which I argue may reflect an early push in her thinking toward critical examination of her viewpoint, as Howard (1999) illustrated may occur in early phases of White identity development:

And [we could teach people about] just learning to let go of the environment that you work in and pretend that you do have, you know, obviously, some families aren't going to have money to go out and buy an orange pepper, like it may be the amount of money they make in a day. You know, that kind of thing. And just kind of forgetting about that and still teaching them about things that are really important. Yeah, you know, they are going to go home, and be like, I want to make salad...No, but I think it's really super important to make sure you are exposing them.

Later, her discussion revealed increased continual thinking about the complexity of this issue, and may reflect beginning to move past a simple dichotomy:

I also think, just being more flexible in terms of their backgrounds. Like, oh, we're gonna learn to be graphic designers and everyone's like, "Oh, I can't do that because I don't have a computer"; thinking about how to ignore it but how to take it into account at the same time. It's kind of weird..I'm still ignoring it, but I'm still considering it. Say, like, it's a strange feeling...Like, knowing you're teaching all these jobs that you have to go to college for. Like knowing that none of them can afford orange peppers, but showing them orange peppers can be really good with a meal. You know, like I said, they are going to be at the store and see orange peppers, and see that they are three dollars...you know, just things like that I think are going to be important... considering it, but not letting it change your plans so much.

I argue that this may illustrate how Rachel is questioning her dualisms, and veering toward confront her assumptions. I propose that this may be a productive starting place for bringing up the topic of dualisms with her.

Later she explained how she felt a strong sense of moral obligation and responsibility to demand high expectations and diverge from the mainstream response to students. Yet her words highlighted this dichotomy based on white middle class as norm, as

comparison, as benchmark, while continuing the pattern of assumptions about what students “aren’t going to be exposed to.” It revealed her genuine efforts to confront her own privileges, but not to recognize that her privileges may distort her perceptions of students.

I think, like, a lot of teachers in the city are just going to ignore them [exposing them to things they’ve never heard of], because they know that they, you know, aren’t going to be exposed to them. I think it is really teaching toward our community and allowing them to have kind of, like, the same feelings of success as, you know, students in the community where I grew up. I think that allowing them to feel that they are just as successful even if they are not. It’s what’s more important.

These examples present ways in which Rachel teeters within problematic assumptions and sometimes reaches forward by recognizing how her assumptions don’t match her expectations. I propose that it is normal for teachers to compare their students and classroom to the worlds in which they grew up, and oftentimes to build dichotomies based on the two. They may assume that their privileged educational background represents “good” while their less privileged students’ experiences represent “bad,” when in actuality it is different, and perhaps little understood. Critical scholars document how many such assumptions arise out of the complex history and present reality of race and class in our society (Lynn, 2008; McDermott, 2008 McLaren, 1998).

Involving students’ home communities. Within the challenge of assumptions about students and their home communities is the challenge of involving students’ home communities within the classroom community. I observed very little of such home/community involvement, although Rachel did discuss how much she valued it and presented several illustrations of how she encouraged it. I offer two examples here to reveal evidence of her efforts in these areas. First, Rachel stated:

I think it's really important involving the [outside] community, constantly making the connection.

Second, the following description in my fieldnotes illustrates a moment in my observation of the presentation Rachel gave to my preservice teachers:

Rachel described to my preservice teachers an author's party in which she invited students' parents and families to come to her classroom and listen to the students read their writings to them. She described how hard it was for many of the parents to come to the school due to their work schedules, and she conveyed her excitement that so many were able to attend during this particular event. She described her students' emotional response to this involvement: "You saw the students smile like they never smiled before."

These examples show how Rachel understood the deep importance of involving parents and she recognized some of the legitimate barriers to their involvement.

However, as her final sentence here conveyed, she still appeared to portray potential problematic assumptions about students. The phrase "they never smiled before," requires further interrogation, which I plan to pursue in my future work with Rachel. Is she implying that the students never appeared so happy before in her classroom, or is she implying assumptions of pity regarding the students and the level of parental involvement in their lives? This may be an additional example of the dichotomy between her perception of students' home versus school life, and it is an area that I intend to unpack with her in future collaborations. Delpit's charge (2006) may prove instructive in this case: "We must find ways for professionals to understand the different ways in which parents can show their concern for their children" (p. 176).

Although these examples portray community outreach, I observed only minimal evidence of Rachel involving outside community members in the class while I was

within her classroom, and I did not witness significant examples of Rachel's participation in students' home communities outside the classroom. For example, although we discussed the idea of inviting multiple community members into the classroom to present presentations on careers, this potential for community empowerment was never facilitated. Therefore, I note Rachel's challenge (and mine, as a collaborative member of the classroom) in inviting students' home communities into the classroom community. The importance of the teacher in facilitating this integration should not be understated. The role of teacher assumptions in this challenge is an important factor, an area that scholars also suggest may contribute to parental discomfort with the classroom (Rodriguez-Brown, 2010; Delgado-Gaitan, 2000).

I will add that this section reflects one area of my analysis that I have not yet presented to Rachel for illumination because I want to do it gingerly and respectfully, and I want to acknowledge my own shortcomings in the process as well. Due to my long-distance communication with her, I am planning to explore it with her in the future when I have the opportunity, in person, to discuss it while communicating a strong portrayal of the feelings of caring, trust, love, and belief in her, as well as criticism of myself, that I feel must undergird any attempt at deeper criticism. I believe attending to such factors are key if we are truly committed to professional accountability and respectful relationships with teachers as learners.

Finally, I suggest that the difficulties I faced in addressing this issue with Rachel, instead of a topic to be avoided in this kind of inquiry, point to a very important conflict teacher educators face, and an area in need of future interrogation: How do we challenge teacher's problematic worldviews without alienating and disempowering them? I plan to further investigate this topic in my future work, and to approach it with the assistance of literature that explores White identity and assumptions (Howard, 1999; McIntosh, 1989;

Sleeter, 2008). However I recognize that I must approach it out of love and humility (hooks, 2003), and this love and self-questioning is a great challenge for a teacher educator.

I acknowledge here my own complicity in not prioritizing or pushing Rachel to uncover assumptions and facilitate more home community involvement during my collaboration. As I reflect upon this collaboration I regret that I did not push Rachel more strongly to welcome and pull home community members into the classroom, especially during the final unit, which was originally conceived as a theme in which parents and home communities could take on strong roles in teaching students about careers. This reflection has helped me to see, that in my role as a supporter of teachers like Rachel, I need to learn how to become bold and sensitive at the same time in addressing such areas of challenge.

Professional accountability. In this section I present “professional accountability” as both a need Rachel portrayed and a tentative theory I propose on an alternative model of teacher support. I suggest it may represent a basic need of teachers. It may help teachers meet self-efficacy needs (Bandura, 1979) and contain the potential to bolster them as transformative intellectuals (Giroux, 1985). I define professional accountability as a form of teacher support built on professional relationships that reach upward and downward: relationships as learner with a trusted support person as well as relationships as teacher educator with other, less experienced, teacher-learners. Professional accountability places the “teacher as accountable” for doing his/her best based on respectful relationships with mentors/support person and at the same time based on accountability to teach and share expertise with less knowledgeable or experienced teachers. It motivates the teacher as professional learner and professional teacher, in two ways, that highlight the teacher’s view of self as capable, intellectual, and leader.

Professional accountability contrasts from accountability measures that deride the teacher's professionalism through such techniques as motivation based on fear, threat, or extrinsic incentive. Instead, the "professionally accountable" teacher performs highly based on feelings of self-respect and respect for the relationships above and below that breed both forms of respect. This is my theory behind the following examples, and it was bolstered with Rachel's support and ideas.

I argue that professional accountability may be one of Rachel's basic needs, and she agreed that it was. It was a need that our collaboration addressed in many ways. However, I argue that more professional accountability in her teaching environment from directions outside of our collaboration might have been ideal. In the following examples I highlight how our collaboration promoted professionally accountable motivation through the two forms of relationships: with teacher educator and with less experienced teachers as students.

My model of professional accountability works off of the excitement coming from the professional relationship between teacher and teacher educator/support person. Rachel showed her excitement in many ways. The excitement was reiterated in the series of texts Rachel regularly sent me before and after our classroom collaboration. The following message was an example of this enthusiasm: "I'm so excited! I can't wait!"; Another time I receive the text: "Best day ever"! One of the most memorable emails she ever sent me had the following title: "BEST TEACHING MOMENT EVER" and ended with the following statement: "And all because of one writing lesson. And you." Over and over again she repeated the following statement, as in an early email, "I am extremely excited to work with you." Rachel conveyed her need for a support person she felt safe with, someone who she related with and felt respected her decisions. She explained how our

collaboration bred much-needed motivation, confidence, and security, which I argue fall under professional accountability:

I think, like, working with you... I think it made me be more confident that everything would work, like, you know. And I think it goes to show, like, just how working with another person, like another teacher, who is, like, really invested in your students, can really help with your confidence as a teacher. Just having you, like... I'm really not used to going into a day, like, thinking, ooh, what should I do?" but, like, "Ok, Summer's here so it will, like, work out today. You know? And it did.

Over and over again, Rachel expressed how our collaboration made her excited to work harder in her teaching. I argue that this kind of motivation may come from a rich relationship with a teacher support person/teacher educator committed to promoting professional accountability along with additional professional opportunities for teacher as leader. The following example of our discussion after Rachel led the students to lunch was typical:

Rachel returns to the room and we discuss how well the day went. Then we sit there and talk about 'what could be', about where our collaboration could lead.

Performances? Student books? Co-authorship? Centers? Artwork? We discuss what we could do together. She tells me she really wishes we had more time to work together. I do too!

Professional accountability requires motivating upward and downward relationships, relationships of teacher as learner and teacher as professional teacher of peers/less experienced teachers. Rachel explained this sort of motivation when she delivered presentations for my class of preservice teachers. After I invited her to visit my classroom she sent an email that highlights what may be the effects of both upward and downward relationships and professional opportunities:

I just wanted to let you know I can't stop thinking about what a wonderful experience I had in your class today. While my intention was to inspire your students, I think they inspired me more with their heartfelt notes and messages. I really cannot stop thinking about how wonderful it felt to reflect and share my experiences with future teachers-to-be. I am so excited to invite them to my class next week. I am thinking about a lot of ideas and I will email you tomorrow! I can't wait to get together again!

After she visited my classroom the following week, she sent an email with a similar tone:

I just wanted to let YOU [emphasis hers] know that I can't stop thinking about Tuesday. I had SUCH a fun time sharing my class family with your students. I really felt like everyone was happy to be there and I can't wait to read what they have to say. Also, do you mind copying their reflections after the guest lecture if you get the chance? I was thinking it would be fun to read them together, too.

Another day she discussed these leadership opportunities and summated her value of both elements of professional accountability: motivating relationships above and below:

Working with you and realizing how inspiring it is to share my own experiences with new teachers has been such an amazing experience...I am beyond excited to get more involved.

Finally, Rachel's input on this model of professional accountability highlighted its emphasis on allowing freedom within responsibility, and varying the approach based on the different needs of different teachers. I argue that this is important to note in its difference from many more tightly controlled accountability models. She shared with me in a later reflection:

... I do enjoy my freedom in the classroom. I feel like my students are making more progress than they would if I had to follow a specific curriculum. However, I do

feel that not all new teachers have the confidence or background knowledge to create such a strong classroom community so early in their teaching years.

These points by Rachel led me to propose that the balance between freedom and responsibility in specific models of professional accountability with different teachers should differ based on individual needs. This points, again, to the importance of real relationships between teachers and teacher support personnel, relationships that start by meeting teachers where they actually are and move on from there.

Professional accountability is based on relationships that move out of love. Other scholars that explore similar excitement and teacher empowerment (Ayers, 1998; hooks, 2003) pinpoint the importance of the emotional aspects of the teacher-learning relationship. They reveal areas in which research on effective teaching that pinpoint the importance of leadership (e.g., Taylor, Pressley, & Pearson, 2000) may underexplore emotion, the nature of relationships, principles of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1979), or the multidimensionality of care (Noddings, 2003) that may bolster the leadership or learner positionality. It is through these relationships that the heart of professional accountability lies; without such emotional-laden relationships models of accountability become once again forms of technocratic control rather than human interaction.

Rachel's opportunities to relate in respectful, enthusiastic ways with a teacher support person as learner as well as with future teachers as teacher-leader in areas important to her appeared to boost her feelings of motivation and professionalism. I argue that such professional accountability may be a basic need of teachers, and I argue that exploring it more fully may provide a solid base for working through some of the other needs I addressed in this section. While I was only able to help Rachel with some of her needs through the time frame of our collaboration, I argue that continued professional accountability as modeled here might support additional development.

Chapter 7: Interpretations: Teacher Education Implications

The overall theme I explored in my work with Rachel was the idea of “Literacy as Community.” This model implies “community” as both a noun and a verb, something one experiences as well as something one does. It reflects sociocultural theorizing on the contexts of and components of learning as interdependently social, contextual, and personal (Vygotsky, 1979; Gee, 1996; Luke & Freebody, 2007), and it reflects democratic possibilities within a classroom model of collaboration (Ayers, 2010; Giroux, 1985). I argue that it contains implications for teacher education, and in this section I present my interpretations of how teacher education might teach and facilitate this sociocultural model of literacy.

The idea of literacy education as the construction and maintenance of community held fast in my interpretation of Rachel’s work as a literacy teacher. Rachel first embraced the idea of a literacy community as foremost in her vision of the kind of teaching she wanted to pursue, and she followed through with this vision through multiple strategies that reflected a sociocultural, sociological approach to literacy. Love bolstered her vision, which bolstered her development of these strategies (Appendix G).

I propose that teacher education for community should start with cultivating love. Then it should focus on preparing teachers to envision and act upon a vision of the classroom as a community based on this love. I give some suggestions for how teacher education might do that. Then I use Rachel’s template to illustrate show teacher educators might facilitate specific literacy teaching strategies that may help balance theory and introspection (the development of vision) with teaching methods (the development of practice). I outline this model in Appendix I. Branching from a model of “literacy as community” is the concept I propose of “professional accountability.” This construct is built upon both my data analysis of Rachel’s needs and my overall learning

from the model of our collaboration. As I present my suggestions of teacher education for literacy as community, I weave my thoughts on implications for professional accountability throughout, and I describe it more fully in the next chapter.

Cultivating Community as Teacher Vision

My work with Rachel focused largely on her perspective and beliefs as a teacher, and central to this perspective was the conviction that literacy teaching is the construction of community. This strong sense of vision reflects Kincheloe's proposal for teachers' development of ontological knowledge (2000). Rachel took tremendous ownership over this vision and articulated it as her personal philosophy. Everything she did as a teacher (conflicted as it may be) refracted from this vision. I propose that teacher educators should find ways to encourage preservice and inservice teachers to develop similar strong articulations of visions of the classroom as community. Because education is not the filling up of empty vessels but the drawing out of unique constructions of knowledge, I understand that each teacher's vision of community may be unique and individually constructed. Yet among educators concerned for social justice, the communal construction of teacher vision within a community of teachers may be constructed by similar values. I present these values as elements in a sociological version of literacy, and I draw from my data specific areas of Rachel's literacy teaching as examples to help other teachers explore important areas of vision to consider.

Cultivating vision as belief. Rachel's vision is foremost explicit, personal, and driven from Rachel's intrinsic beliefs system. She *believes* in community. Community-building is not a simple textbook concept. It is a personal conviction. I argue that a major component of teacher education for social justice should be the development of such visions.

I argue that teacher educators need to provide safe and inspiring spaces for teachers to come together to seed and grow *personally meaningful* visions of community. Before and behind the teaching of instructional strategies should be the cultivation of personal vision. Before and beyond, yes, teaching mandated standards, should be the cultivation of vision, authentic, heartfelt vision. Teachers need to believe in what they do.

The concept of a community provides a counternarrative to problematic educational constructs that silence and marginalize; its focus on upholding the humanity of all students in a family-like atmosphere may counters the harsh individualism of popular business models. I suggest that the process of facilitating the safe construction of these communal beliefs should be central to our work as teacher educators. This can be done through a number of approaches. Teacher education workshops or courses could lead teachers through deep personal reflection using freewrites, student-led discussions, artistic expression, personal inquiry, and other forms of introspection and group sharing in a safe space.

Literacy learning within the dialectic of freedom. Rachel's vision of community emphasized freedom in the context of social responsibility. Like Greene (1982) she envisioned her classroom as a space where students can experience the joy of "learning to be free." She provided opportunities for students to express themselves and build wildly creative ideas. Yet similar to a family unit, she also expected students to exhibit responsibility within this freedom. She communicated and followed through with high expectations for their current literacy work as well as future life endeavors.

Teacher education may be enriched with this concept of "the dialectic of freedom." This counters dehumanizing models of teacher education that contribute to even more dehumanizing experiences of literacy students. In a world where many teachers are "trained" to follow recipes and condition students to fill in the blanks and parrot "correct"

answers, this refreshing alternative may encourage teachers to liberate by being liberated themselves. I argue that teacher education should provide arenas for teachers to explore their own creativity, to expand their own views of the world through formats encouraging free and risky expressions of wild ideas, such as through the writing workshop model applied to adult education (Calkins, 1994). As teachers experience the power of this freedom, they may come to value its importance in their classrooms, and re-envision freedom in literacy education. They may come to understand the feelings of self-awareness, empowerment, and elation that come from learning to be free, and want nothing less for their students.

Rachel's model of freedom also embraced social responsibility. Rather than approaching discipline and order as isolated classroom management techniques, I argue that that the two aims could be approached as two sides to the same coin, the dialectic of freedom. They could be approached as the social responsibility that comes from having freedom. Teachers could construct literacy communities in which students feel a strong sense of responsibility for themselves and the others within the community. The construction of group norms and rules could be devised not on the mandates of authoritarian teachers or outside authorities but through the entire community that shares a sense of ownership and value in the freedom they find there that inspires their work. I propose that teacher educators should help teachers to envision the characteristics they see as part of a free and socially responsible community, and then to envision management techniques that embody this vision. This vision-oriented approach to classroom management may model the reconstruction of a more just, meaningful, and democratic society within the literacy classroom.

A teacher education model that often facilitates this kind of workshop model is that of The National Writing Project (2006). Teachers enrolled in the Project tend to take part in

the following activities: They write and share open-ended expressions daily, they often experiment with writing and teaching techniques in a community of writers who value risk-taking, and they are given the professional responsibility to design and facilitate their own workshops for the teaching community that highlights their own areas of expertise. They, ideally, experience the freedom of expression and exploration while also experiencing the accountability of responsibility to the others in their learning groups.

Cultivating visions under revision. As teacher educators help teachers to build these personal visions, I argue that we find ways to help teachers value the idea of vision under continual revision. As Freire (1998) articulated, we should be continually aware of our “unfinishedness” and help teachers learn to be comfortable with the idea of “becoming.” We need to show teachers that we are all always learning and growing and stretching (Sleeter, 2008a). Through our own modeling, we might show our students that we are all works under revision. I suggest that one of the most dangerous things we could do would be to remain static and unwilling to admit our own mistakes or rethink our own philosophies. I envision this as the cultivation of “open-mindedness.” If we are truly concerned with helping teachers re-think problematic assumptions about students from backgrounds different from their own, we must start with helping teachers open their minds to the possibility that other viewpoints beside their own have credibility. We would help teachers to become comfortable with questioning everything. I am proposing a teacher education for critical literacy, and it is founded upon encouraging teachers to see themselves as always “becoming”.

Encouraging teachers to become more open-minded is a great challenge, and one that is a topic of concern in teacher education programs concerned with social justice. Many of us have written about the difficulties teaching university “diversity” courses, usually designed to facilitate such critical thinking (North, Clark, & Gibson, forthcoming;

Brown, Clark, & Bridges, 2001). Yet my experiences with teaching such courses have suggested potential flaws in the ways in which these courses are approached, even in the fact that they are approached as a separate course rather than an integrated program-wide initiative. Rather than relegating critical literacy to one course, many of us continue to argue instead for infusing the critical interrogation of power and inequity throughout the teacher education experience.

Importantly, such critical interrogation should be infused with practice. In my work with Rachel, over and over again, we experienced hands-on situations that caused us to turn our worlds upside down and question taken-for-granted assumptions. Coursework alone does not provide this kind of power. Reflection and action must go hand in hand, as praxis.

And, as Rachel's embrace of "becoming" illustrates, this critical reflection needs to take place within a supportive learning community that embraces the idea of "unfinishedness." The learning community of teachers could come together with a deep acceptance that we are all works-in-progress and that making mistakes and revising one's assumptions, beliefs, and practices are what learning is all about. I am afraid that, instead, too often students in these courses might feel the social pressure to stand staunchly behind potentially problematic beliefs they did not own originally. And then the pressure to create a defense of these beliefs in front of a critical audience could further solidify the beliefs rather than create a space for them to change or evolve. A learning space instead characterized by the idea of everyone being under revision may have the potential to change such tendencies. I continue to argue that the facilitation of critical literacy must take place in a space characterized by a community that envisions every member as in-process, and that embraces the value of admitting what one does not yet have.

Confidence-building. Throughout my data analysis, I documented Rachel exhibiting confidence in herself and her own teaching. How do we cultivate confidence as teacher educators? First, I argue that Rachel's embrace of her own "unfinishedness" may offer an important key to confidence. Perhaps we need to communicate to teachers that it is always okay to not know, okay to make mistakes, okay to be a learner rather than an expert. What if we could learn to be comfortable and own that one's mistakes and one's evolving constructions will be taken as beautiful steps toward growth, and thus something to put out in the open rather than to hide and allow to denigrate one's self image? As we help teachers in our classrooms see that we are all learners, they might gain more of the confidence to present themselves as learners and to present in-process ideas as having great merit rather than as tentative, amateur musings to be ashamed of. This may take a supportive, strongly bonded community of trust in which teachers feel free and confident, in contrast to common teacher education classrooms in which teachers feel pressure to "look good," perform superficially, often to compete and out-perform others, or be humiliated or ostracized.

Confidence may stem from being in an environment where "mistakes" are not seen as mistakes but evidence of learning, yet it also may come from having the tools to bolster one's learning. Assessment might provide such tools when envisioned in a humanistic sense. Assessment for learning (Gardner, 2006), not for condemning and sorting or rewarding, might be envisioned as learning to more clearly see one's classroom. Assessment could be learning to see one's learning: a counternarrative to being ashamed of one's mistakes. Assessment tools could pinpoint areas in which we all need to grow, but only if we can re-envision revision as beautiful growth rather than as "fixing" mistakes. It may require an entire paradigm shift.

I argue that we ought to find ways for helping teachers make such paradigm shifts. Clay (2002) helped re-envision reading mistakes as “miscues” and constructivist theorists present mistakes as central to the learning process. Yet I take the paradigm shift a step further and reconceptualize “mistakes” not as mistakes but as learning steps. So assessment does not document mistakes but highlights areas for learning. I argue that, if teachers can learn to see the empowerment that comes from learning to use more of these assessment tools, they may gain a newfound confidence in their teaching abilities, as they may lose the fear of failure and gain the awareness of their own power.

To facilitate such paradigm shifts, we could first model them as teacher educators. In our teacher education classrooms, we could set up environments where assessment serves this purpose and “mistakes” are reenvisioned in these ways. We may have to work hard to instill this value system into our teacher education classroom communities. We could tell and show students that we embrace the learning process and understand that it is always in process. We could show students that we greatly value unfinishedness, and that we value our own self-assessments as not critique but self-understanding.

Finally we could make the learning of many useful assessment tools and procedures follow this communication and facilitation of value and vision. We could demonstrate and teach patterns of assessing and learning about oneself as a teacher as well as assessing and learning about one’s students. But I suggest this may require a paradigm shift about assessment’s purpose as for learning rather than critique. A new form of teacher confidence as empowered and informed learners may follow.

A model of teacher education aimed to develop teacher visions of community may require re-thinking many foundational teacher education practices. I present these suggestions as potential starting points. I argue that future explorations of these practices

through action-oriented research with teachers to address their concerns might develop these interpretations more fully.

Teacher Education and Strategies of Literacy Community

Throughout my data analysis I documented specific literacy teaching strategies Rachel used to promote literacy as community, to facilitate a sociological, sociocultural model of literacy learning. These strategies provided spaces for students to more fully experience rich models of literacy learning as set forth by sociocultural theories. In this next section I summarize how I use my data to suggest these interpretations, and then I suggest possible ways to stimulate this kind of learning in the teacher education setting. I am guided by several points I learned from my collaboration with Rachel: I am convicted that theory and practice must develop hand in hand. Teachers-as-learners may need experiences observing models and experimenting with these models in a risk-free environment among peers as well as more-knowledgeable others. Underlying all of these suggestions is my following conviction: Learning about literacy as community should include rich experiences in a literacy community, *in the teacher education course as well as the elementary school*. Now I will detail some of the strategies for community that teacher educators might use to help teachers learn, and I provide suggestions for teaching them in ways that fit these points of conviction.

Rachel's literacy teaching featured strategies of community to promote student interaction and connection. She used specific tactics to help students share with one another, work hands-on together with one another, and celebrate one another's success and many of these strategies fit state mandated curriculum. These strategies included the writing workshop model, using stations with numerous artistic expression and other group construction outlets, and directly teaching techniques for showing students how to show each other their appreciation. Teacher educators might use Rachel's work as a

model of some of the possibilities in building a literacy community. First teacher educators could help teachers to articulate visions of community, and then strategies such as these and others may follow.

Teacher educators might help teachers learn to use these “community” literacy strategies by modeling certain teaching processes that promote these communal practices of student interaction, connection, hands-on learning, and celebration. A writer’s workshop model might facilitate such communal learning, as the classroom becomes built upon the model of a woodshop or artist’s workshop with the carpenters and artisans developing their practices together. Literacy stations might constitute reader’s workshop, and other subjects could be integrated through devising creative connections to areas such as science, social studies, and math. Teachers could learn how to teach their students to recognize one another’s strengths and develop routines for noting one’s another’s work. In the teacher education classroom, teacher educators might model these techniques by emulating them in their classrooms. They then could be followed by individual and group reflection on the experience.

And I argue that it should be followed, if not initiated, by actual experience in real elementary classrooms, such as Rachel’s classrooms. I argue that teachers need to experience the strategies as a student, reflect on the strategies in their purposes and theoretical value, and see the strategies in an authentic elementary classroom setting. Finally, as discussed in the previous section, I argue that reflection upon vision, purpose, and value should occur hand-in-hand with such practical learning of strategies. Teachers should not develop practices without exploring the “whys” behind them, without understanding how they fit into the big picture of community.

The promotion of self-reliance. A major theme I found under Rachel’s strategies for literacy as community was the promotion of self-reliance. Rachel used many different

strategies designed to facilitate in students their own sense of self-reliance. I argue that self-reliance may be an important theme in the model of community. If students are to develop a healthy sense of their responsibility to the community, they may first need a healthy sense of the self, without the baggage of unmet needs for esteem that cause unhealthy relations. If students feel self-reliant learners, they may be more likely to have the motivation to give to the community and care for one another.

Rachel's literacy teaching contained several elements that I found to contribute to the development of self-reliance. Importantly, first of all she expressed a willingness to relent power. Then she created situations in which students had opportunities for control, ownership, authorship of curriculum, as well as literacy achievement. In teacher education, such thinking about teacher power in relation to students may stand in direct contrast with many prevalent scripts on the teacher-student relationship. Thus, in order to teach literacy as communities in which students have power, teachers may first need to question and explore views on educational purpose and the role of teachers in the learning processes. Then they can explore techniques for giving students power while also promoting high levels of achievement.

I argue that teachers need opportunities to explore critical views of the purposes and consequences of education and the ways in which classroom models reflect models of human self-worth and dignity. Teachers need to read and discuss, again in safe environments, multiple perspectives on what education should achieve in light of what literacy might mean. Then they can explore models of literacy teaching and assessing that contribute to student authorship, leadership, and ownership. They may read about, observe, emulate, and experiment with situations such as those that arose in Rachel's classroom in which classroom topics and direction became dictated by student needs and interests rather than outside mandates. Along with experiences observing and trying out

these models, I argue that teachers need a place to both critically reflect upon them and creatively explore new ways of teaching.

Again I look to the “workshop” model as a blueprint for this kind of teacher education. Instead of the products teachers create in the workshop being “writing” or “reading,” in this case teachers will be producing pedagogy: understanding and practices that could make their teaching come alive. As they brainstorm and “try out” new ideas within a safe and nurturing community, they may find more and more ways to facilitate self-reliance in their classrooms, and they may become motivated by communal support to make this happen. Such an environment that encourages teachers to be self-reliant might model the self-reliance we want in students, and teachers could more greatly understand its value as well as construct more ideas for how it may be done.

Helping teachers make literacy “real”. I found Rachel’s literacy strategies to promote “realness” in the lives of her students. This means she opened up her classroom to students’ life experiences and slowly embraced some possibilities and challenges within these kinds of connections. Sociocultural literacy scholars (Luke & Freebody, 2007) and others committed to equity (Delpit, 2006; Schultz) emphasize the importance of such connections. Students found the community of literacy to be so “real” that Rachel’s teaching appeared to impact their future expectations of themselves. Rachel seemed to feel the “realness,” as well, in her own connection to the classroom, as the classroom became a place where she modeled the power of literacy in her own life and brought in her own life experiences. She envisioned the community as an integrated learning space, and created it to be a place where wild, innovative ideas were embraced and encouraged.

Along the same lines as the aforementioned theme, I argue that “realness” should first find itself in the teacher education model for teachers to experience its power and become

convinced of its importance in the elementary classroom. For teacher education to be real, I argue that it should follow the same models again as “real” elementary literacy communities. Teachers could find the teacher education classroom a place where their everyday outside experiences matter and are intimately tied to learning. Then their identities as “teachers of community” may develop. Teacher education could create spaces for teachers to discuss things that matter deeply to them, not just to come into the classroom and discuss what their teacher educators or curriculum deems as important. Effort could be made to connect to teachers’ worlds, and to the rest of teacher learning, such as other coursework. Teacher educators could view the teachers not as objects to be manipulated but as professional community-builders; teachers could be viewed this way by their mentors in order to develop such views of the self. And teacher educators might make the teacher education space a place where wild creativity is accepted and seen as key to the learning process.

One way that I have done this as a teacher educator has been to re-envision my teacher education course as a space for reflection and re-construction of understandings of teacher experiences in light of theory and research. In my course, “Studying Student Learning in Diverse Settings,” I devoted approximately one third of each class session to coming together as a community. We used this community space to talk through current teaching experiences individually, in small and large groups, and as a classroom community. I did this in order to create the learning space “real”, and to connect our course material to the realities of students’ worlds. This was done through peer counseling models, multiple forms of group discussion, freewriting models, and a wide variety of artistic, musical, dramatic, and other forms of open-ended creative expression. Everything else we did then related back to the realities “unpacked” and worked through during the beginning of class, which also related to the theme of the class: studying one’s

teaching. For example, we discussed Freire's theory of the banking model of education in light of the classroom models the students were currently experiencing as teacher interns. Then students had not just a theoretical, but experiential understanding of the theory. It became critical and more seriously re-constructed through community reflection and rethinking, as individual experiences were shared communally and re-imagined and theorized among peers as well as teacher education mentors.

While traditional educators might be inclined to critique this large amount of time given to student discussion and reflection on experiences outside of class, my students explained it, in their feedback on the course, to be the deepest part of their learning, the "realness" that made concepts come alive, helped them care about the classroom, and helped them come to find the teacher education classroom tied to their communities. In their feedback on the course, students commented over and over again the value of this time spent on "real" matters. I suggest that more teacher education courses adopt such a humanistic model of learning, a model that is built on the experiences of the students and the community they create together.

Teacher Education for Nurturing Love in the Literacy Community

Nurturing love between students and teachers. In my data analysis I illustrated how Rachel's sincere love for her students fueled her work. She worked hard to teach well not just because she had strong ambition and work ethic, but because she loved her students. She explained that she found inspiration in them, and looked forward to seeing them each day. This love for her students grew deeper through the year as she invited their lives more and more into the classroom, and as she opened up her classroom to provide more opportunities for students to reveal multiple strengths and ways of learning. Students expressed a strong love for their teacher in response to her love for them.

I argue that this element of love may be what makes the difference between mediocre and great teaching. But can it be taught? And can it really be proven? I remain committed to it as an underlying construct behind teaching, despite its elusive nature. Many scholars have addressed love as central to the teaching process (Ayers, 2010; hooks, 2003; Freire, 1970), and other more traditional studies have alluded to aspects of love as found within the caring relationships that distinguish high-achieving schools (Pressley, et al, 2007) or the models of caring exhibited by teachers who justly serve students from immigrant families (Valenzuela, 1999).

What might teacher educators do to promote love? One may argue for recruiting teachers who are loving, or one may argue for recruiting teachers who are from the communities in which they teach, and already have love and understanding for the students they teach. Yet Rachel was not from the exact community in which she taught. At times her distance from the realities of their struggling families may have been a barrier. Yet I also documented how Rachel's love for her students grew throughout the year as she came to know them more and employed techniques that brought more aspects of their worlds into the classroom.

For these reasons I suggest three things. First, teacher recruits, ideally, ought to be the kinds of people who exhibit the potential to love their students. This is difficult to assess or and predict, but there are attributes that may signal this possibility. They could be people who enter teaching for humanitarian reasons, who care deeply about others and at least express the willingness to see the beauty in others, not the kinds of people who enter teaching due to subject matter or even to the power they might think will come from being at the head of the class. They could also be the kinds of people who express a willingness to allow their views of others to grow and develop, and articulate a

willingness to take the time and effort to learn about their students and to approach teaching as a relationship, not just a process.

Program recruiters might look for these kinds of “caring” qualities in potential teachers rather than overly emphasizing such things as teacher test scores, writing ability, or grade point average. Teacher recruits ought to be the kinds of people who exhibit Noddings (2003) notion of care, which includes the interconnected directions of care: care for students, care for society, care for the earth, care for subjects, and care for the self. High achievement in the latter might sometimes actually prove a detrimental quality for teachers who work with struggling students, as it might impede their ability to empathize with students who did not experience the (perhaps even hidden) privileges they did growing up. Some high-achiever teachers might believe strongly in the myth of meritocracy without understanding the social and cultural capital that enabled their successes. In effect they may not respond appropriately to students who did not grow up with the same resources in social and cultural capital. So this point could have radical implications for teacher recruiting, as it changes the criteria we most highly value from that which helps a program to top the charts based on test scores, to that which actually creates more support for marginalized students. If we truly care about social justice we might rethink those qualities we value most highly in teachers. We might revisit Kincheloes’ suggestions for a critical complex literacy (2004) or Johnson’s social justice literacies (2010), and apply them through classroom communities that operate as workshops.

Secondly, teacher education could focus on enabling teachers to build relationships with their students and to more closely “listen” to their students. Rachel’s love for her students grew as she learned more about them through the year. Finding their strengths was an especially important task for her, particularly because she was an outsider to their

community. This kind of approach to teaching first may stem from reflection on the purpose of education as well as from experience observing and working with teachers who demonstrate this importance, as in the teacher education model examples I have listed in previous sections. I argue that it also may come from re-envisioning the purposes of assessment as “listening” and “kidwatching” (Owocki & Goodman, 2002): developing tools for learning as much about students as possible. Teachers as “listeners” (Schultz, 2003) open their minds to students’ funds of knowledge that may be different from their own, and they work creatively to reconstruct classroom events to create spaces for student diversity of experiences, ways of learning, talents, identities, languages, skills, knowledge, and more. We might apply Ayers ‘s (2010) concept of kidwatching:

Kidwatching is a learnable skill that begins with a disposition of mind, an attitude, and unshakable belief, that every child is a full human being, complex and dynamic, a three-dimensional creature with a heart, a spirit, an active, meaning-making mind, with hopes and aspirations that somehow must be taken into account (p. 154).

Teachers, when learning assessments, could view assessments not as sorting machines that weed out those without the same cultural and social capital as the power culture, but as tools and methods for opening up literacy to more fully include diversity. There are models of highly notable teacher education programs that exemplify how such a blatantly non-competitive but concerted focus on assessment might look like (Zeichner, 2000), and we would be wise to study their examples more fully.

Teachers might learn a reformulated concept of assessment through the critical reflective teacher educator model described above, and through experiences, models, and experiments with teachers who use it. For example, teachers could observe other teachers who use journaling, checklists on multiple intelligences and reading interests, and the kinds of participatory assessment techniques employed by cultural integration program

(Peace Corps, for example) such as community mapping, student photo-journaling, and meetings with community members, to learn with their students more authentically about their students' worlds. Such inquiry could be formulated as at the heart of teaching; while it makes powerful action research projects for master's students, might it be detrimental for it to be seen as something overly academic rather than a part of a teacher's informal regular practice? For this to happen, teachers would probably need daily time, space, and support for such work. If resources could be allotted to it, it may have potential to be reformulated as a basic practice for all teachers.

Third, I argue that teachers' "love" for students and their work might be nurtured given supportive environments. In this study I show ways in which my collaboration influenced Rachel's positive feelings about her classroom and her work, so I propose that other kinds of positive interactions and support systems might help teachers develop more of a love for what they do. I describe this more fully in the concept of professional accountability that I propose.

Ayers (2010) explains how love should initiate the teacher act as well as continue to be nurtured as teachers continue their work. It is "the moral heart of teaching: Teaching requires thoughtful, caring people to carry it forward successfully, and we need, then, to commit to becoming more caring and more thoughtful as we grow into our work" (p. 155). Hargreaves (2008) labels this an "atmosphere of trust" (p.143). As in Johnson's testimonial literacies (2010), love transforms the teaching act into an emotional act and an act of learning to see another in a more holistic way.

Nurturing love between and among students. Students in Rachel's classroom also exhibited a sense of love for one another. I documented instances in which they helped one another and instances in which they elevated each other's feelings. They appeared to care deeply for one another and want to make each other happy. These characteristics of

a “caring” classroom stand in contrast with much of the cutthroat competitive classroom in popular society that positions students to succeed at the expense of others’ failure. These characteristics are not accidental but the result of deliberate efforts on Rachel’s part to create and maintain a caring community. Rachel explicitly created an environment in which helping was not seen as cheating, caring communicating was not seen as “talking out of turn” and listening and responding to students’ real concerns was modeled by the teacher and followed through with by the students. Rachel’s classroom was a tightly bonded family unit due to the efforts she made to build strong bonds throughout the year.

Teachers might learn to create such a loving community first by envisioning the classroom as community and understanding the kinds of work it takes to make such a community. Teachers could critically consider the effects of the models upon which they build their pedagogy, and consider whether it teaches students to care about others or to focus tightly on the self. They could work within learning communities to experience the power of a community first as teacher-students themselves, then envision how they might facilitate such power in their own classroom through similar actions. And, as mentioned before, they may need to see such a community in action in real schools. Teacher education programs could find teachers in classrooms as models, not of clockwork discipline and order or of competitive and high-achieving test-takers, but models of caring, loving communities. Then they may emerge from teacher education programs not as skeptics but believers in the possibilities of literacy as community with students who love one another.

Nurturing student love for learning. Rachel’s students exhibited an unusual love for learning, especially for learning literacy. Through my analysis I found that this love was typically found in the learning instances in which Rachel’s students seemed to feel

empowered as capable readers and writers who used reading and writing for purposes important to them. This is a sociocultural model of literacy built on facilitating intrinsic, rather than extrinsic motivation for literacy learning (Oldfather & Dahl, 1995). I argue that this may point to the centrality of making exploration of intrinsic motivation central to the teacher education curriculum.

Teacher educators might do this by setting up situations in their own classrooms that work off principles that researchers have found central to intrinsic motivation, such as sociocultural models of literacy that connect to students' interests and concerns. They teacher educators might help the teachers to see how those principles facilitated their own motivation through teacher reflection and discussion. The teachers could explore tactics and techniques that other teachers use, and watch them in action in order to see that it may actually be possible to create literacy communities in which students participate in literacy events because they are important to them, not because they have to or because they will be given awards or grades if they do so. I find the motivation theory of Oldfather (2002) to provide guidance for creating such situations for intrinsic motivation, and I also find many of the aspects of the community-centric literacy classroom in this study to exemplify the environment that facilitates such motivation. These models stand in contrast to the extrinsic motivation models so popular in factory-model education, and they provide examples that another model is possible.

Teachers who love their work. Finally, Rachel expressed a strong love for her work. I argue that teacher recruiters must find people with such a love for teaching, not people who see it simply as a "job" or struggle to get through the day. But this ought not stop at teacher recruiting. Such love may need cultivating and nurturing, especially as challenges present themselves throughout the year. Teachers who begin loving teaching might burn out if not provided support to stay motivated and inspired. I argue that everyone in the

helping professions may need the communal support of others who care about the same things. They need opportunities to productively and positively reflect and dream, to keep their passions ignited.

For this reason I argue that in-service teacher education could be re-envisioned as nurturing and re-igniting that flame, rather than the mechanistic, credential-oriented professional development model it tends to become. This “teacher education as inspiration” could, as in my aforementioned model, place teachers’ experiences and concerns right in the center of the curriculum, and it could be characterized by reflection and group construction and reconstruction of experiences. Teachers could look to each other as peer counselors, and as inspiration for possibilities for trying new things. Teacher education could arise in peer support group meetings, and learning and stretching and re-envisioning may occur as teachers become motivated through a community of others who also deeply care about their work.

Teacher education for love may contain tremendous potential for re-invigorating classrooms and motivating teachers and students who work in challenging environments. This fits into a body of literature that explores the centrality of the emotional self in teaching and the problems with assuming that teaching is simply a mind/body act (Boler, 1999). I argue that teaching for love stands in the face of de-humanizing accountability measures.

Ravitch (2010) has become recently known for arguing against these de-humanizing measures, with remarks such as (quoted in Strauss, 2010) “It’s difficult to win a war when you’re firing on the troops.” I follow up on Ravitch’s suggestions for teacher support by instead arguing, as she does, for building up the “troops” by providing the support needed to transform them and kindle their passions more fully. Then teachers

may experience the drive and motivation to do outstanding work, and to create loving classrooms in which all students experience rich and loving models of literacy.

I suggest that focusing on the internal structures of teacher education, love and vision, by initiating change that from the inside-out, may challenge much educational reform, which instead tends to prescribe, mandate, or apply from the outside-in (Valli & Chambliss, 2007; Lipman, 2011). Through studies like these that take place on a small scale from up close instead of painting broad strokes from afar, a more nuanced understanding of the importance of internal structures such as love arises. We ought not examine the practices of successful schools without examining the nature of relationships, culture, and the role of emotional aspects of love and the personal aspects of vision.

Navigating Needs and Challenges to Community

Responding to needs for structure. Rachel communicated several explicit challenges to community that she felt teachers like her experienced as needs. She explained to me that she struggled with a need for more structure, for “roadmaps,” for a more clear understanding of her work as it fit into a “big picture.” She valued spontaneity and open-endedness, yet craved more organization. She also revealed that she needed better assessment tools for pinpointing student needs and helping struggling students. Our collaboration also illustrated the power of a support person with whom she trusted and shared a positive relationship.

These first few challenges present important implications for teacher education. At times, at least in my experiences as a teacher educator, I have observed some teacher educators who value creativity take teachers’ desires for structure or so-called recipes as a sign of possible problems rather than as natural developmental needs. I understand instead that Rachel’s continual desire for structure is a normal developmental need. I

also understand that as much as freedom and creativity is important, structure is also important; it helps us to see the big picture behind what we do, and it promotes confidence. At times Rachel's desire for structure could be labeled as a desire for models. All teachers might gain strength from seeing others, especially more knowledgeable others, teach, and all teachers might gain a clearer sense of the value of their work by seeing a road map revealing how it fits into larger objectives, turns, and directions. The need for structure may also vary from one personality to the next; some people need it more than others and struggle more than others when it is taken away. Teacher educators without such personalities need to take into account the value of structure for such personalities, and understand it as a strength rather than as a weakness (I speculate that more often the trend is the opposite, but those of us who encourage open-ended thinking and discussion tend to run into this cry for structure more often, and may need to understand it more constructively).

I interpret Rachel's need for the development of better assessment tools to be related to her need for structure. Assessment knowledge and skill provides an internal structure that guides teachers to see the big picture, and to gain more strongly lit pathways for where to go next and how, as teacher self-efficacy literature reveals (Tschanne-Moran & McFarlane, 2011). In its ideal sense, assessment may provide guidance to instill more confidence and a clearer sense of mission and objectives. That is, when assessments are meaningful and important to teachers, not just outsiders or authorities. I argue therefore that teacher education ought to help teachers develop competence with assessments that *the teachers themselves* care about and want to master because they see them as useful. For this to happen, a social constructivist model of learning would uphold teacher education, a model with teachers' needs, experiences, and interests at its core, rather than a fixed outside curriculum. As presented in aforementioned sections, teacher education

could start with unpacking and learning from teachers' direct experiences and personal questions. Teachers as learners themselves might be placed in the driver's seat to find or at least request assessment tools that are meaningful for them. Teacher educators of literacy assessment as well need knowledge of a variety of assessments, and they could set up workshop environments wherein teachers could explore different assessment options, and learn from one another in different possibilities for their use. Importantly, the desire to use the assessments could have more power if it comes from teachers' intrinsic motivation. This is the key that makes the difference between the kinds of superficial and sometimes nearly meaningless charts and graphs and grading systems prevalent on teachers' walls as outside observers come in to document them, and the real and powerful methods of assessment that teachers actually use and care about.

Finally I argue that the model of support that I used in my collaboration with Rachel may present a teacher educator support role that stands in direct contrast from the intimidating outsider teacher supervisor who comes into a classroom as a foreboding authoritarian figure rather than as a supportive friend with high expectations and trust. In my work with Rachel, I always tried to remain positive, encouraging, and friendly. Although Rachel understood that I was documenting everything I observed, she knew I cared about promoting the best for her at all times; my documentation was not critical in the sense of an examination. She knew that I admired and trusted her as a knowledgeable and talented professional, despite our differences in status and societal hoops jumped through. This set up a different feeling about documentation, a feeling that I argue may have the potential to transform teacher assessment as well as teacher support.

Like the model of literacy I argue that elementary classrooms should be based upon, teacher support in the classroom should first stem from a sense of community, of a positive, supportive, trusting, loving relationship between the support person and the

teacher. I argue that Sapon-Shevin's (1999) explanation that "community is important not just as a place where we feel comfortable and supported, but as a solid base from which we move out into the world" (p. 17) applies as equally to the teacher education context as to the elementary education context. A community based on love rather than domination changes the teacher educator-teacher dyad. hooks explains that the empowering and transforming nature of this dyad based on love and community: "Love will always move us away from domination in all its forms. Love will always challenge and change us." (p.20)

Effort and resources would be needed so that support people might develop such a base to their relationship. It does take extra time and potentially money, but money that does exist: it is a matter of prioritizing such relationships above other items. It will be important to note here that some other school priorities, such as technocratic reform models, ever popular as they are, may make this kind of vision of teacher education very difficult, so there will be much work to do in considering how to best work within a flawed system. Yet I refuse to allow such challenges to destroy my vision and search for openings for such possibilities.

Responding to environmental challenges. Other challenges Rachel communicated to me included challenges related to urban environments. At many points her communication revealed a need to better navigate her students' experiences, such as learning to appropriately respond to students' discussions of troubled home lives. She also found a challenge in dealing productively with students' baggage from neighborhood stresses such as shootings and drug activity. The other environmental stress came from the school environment itself, such as the stress caused by a background of angry screaming heard regularly from the walls of the classroom beside hers.

Preparing teachers to deal with these issues presents major teacher education endeavors. A major issue here may be the tendency to under-utilize community members and community resources. Instead we as outsiders run the risk of greatly misunderstanding, judging, and/or ignoring important aspects of student life that greatly impact the classroom. In the situation I described involving difficult writing topics, discussing the issue with people such as school janitors, cafeteria workers, teachers' assistants, family members, and others who actually live within the community might have shed authentic light on the situation. Of course this communication should be done gingerly, with care and grace, diplomatically and generously. Teacher education could provide teachers with more communication and experiences within the communities in which they teach. Teacher education could provide teachers with experiences to help them to consider to value community resources and school personnel resources that represent the community, such as janitors, police officers, teacher volunteers, cafeteria workers, and others. Teachers ought to participate in the communities in which they teach and learn to value the knowledge of community members, and to value "street education" that others may have to offer them. A teacher education for funds of knowledge and critical community inquiry is one place to start with this.

Preparing teachers to respond appropriately to negative school environmental factors beyond their control may be another difficult challenge to approach without easy answers. Rachel found the negative influence of certain other teachers, especially regular instances of teacher screaming, particularly troublesome. She also found regular interruptions and elements such as temperature, poor building quality, and unpredictable school schedules difficult to navigate. I argue that one way of helping teachers with these issues could be through discussion and exploration of these realities before entering their classrooms, so they do not come as a shock. They might also brainstorm with other more

experienced teachers in a community workshop setting to gain possible strategies for dealing with these stresses.

Finally, I argue that we could make teacher education a place where the world is not seen as black and white, but a place of ambiguity and open-endedness. Kincheloe's presentation of "critical knowledge" (2004) stresses this kind of knowing. Problems could be viewed as complex, without simple answers, and as a natural part of a flawed system. Teacher education could help teachers think through philosophy in such a way that they may learn to be comfortable with the idea that they and the world is unfinished, that all environments contain great challenges, and that we ought not be distraught over these challenges, but approach them to best we can, however limited that may be. To me, a critical theory understanding of reality presents all institutions as imperfect, grossly imperfect, and that actually helps me to deal with them without feeling overwhelmed rather than responding with frustration. Things are the way that, of course, they would be. Critically exploring the ways in which education fits into a flawed system might prepare teachers to put challenges into perspective and understand that they will be a part of our experiences as long as the entire system is flawed. Then teachers might deal with the situation without being shocked or discouraged when there are no easy answers—or even any answers at all in some cases. Freire (1998) continually illustrates the importance of becoming comfortable with such open-endedness and unfinishedness, and remaining fixed on hope, with one eye up and the other on the here and now.

Responding to challenges of behaviorism. Behaviorism strongly shaped educational systems worldwide, as it presented efficient methods for managing large factory-style classes, as became especially prevalent in urban schools in the early 1900's, and continues today (Tyack, 1974). Although behaviorism's systems of tightly controlled inputs and outputs, rewards, and consequences have great appeal in "enticing" children to

obey orders and demonstrate the behaviors teachers want to see, they produce consequences that sociocultural scholars question. Scholars reveal how this extrinsic motivation can prevent students' development of intrinsic motivation (Oldfather & Dahl, 1995) as students come to view reasons for behaving, or performing in order to "get" something from it. Intrinsically-motivated students, in contrast, act out of a sense of care, a care either for the community, the task, the self, or the learning process.

Rachel tried to develop a community in which students wrote and read because they wanted to, and she facilitated intrinsic motivation through cultivating the various aspects of literacy as described above. She also tried to create and maintain the classroom with community values, in which students behave out of a sense of responsibility to the community as well as self-dignity due to personal, communal, and teacher expectations.

Yet behaviorism tends to influence teachers, and Rachel is no exception. I found Rachel dealt with behaviorism in two main areas: behavior management, especially of troubled students, and in her moderate usage of mechanistic classwork, such as test prep worksheets.

I argue that there are no easy answers for challenging pressures toward behaviorism. When students are accustomed to receiving rewards for good behavior if complying with teacher expectations and experiencing specific consequences if not complying, teachers may likely struggle initially when attempting to create classroom communities in which students are not so motivated by these factors. Systems of rewards and consequences may not simply be taken away without being replaced by internalized values systems that students deeply feel through powerful literacy communities.

For example, to create writing workshop situations in which students "want to" write takes time. Rachel's work is a powerful example of overcoming behaviorism in this way. Rachel shared how many of her students did not like writing or reading when they

entered her classroom, but they learned to love it as the year progressed and they experienced it as personally and communally relevant, as described in many of the examples above. Most of the time, student motivation to perform and “behave” may have occurred because Rachel’s literacy vision, facilitation of community, and love made it so. Yet, despite Rachel’s work at fighting behaviorism in her classroom, it still characterized her work at times, such as her occasional application of the schoolwide behavior modification system and the usage of traditional spelling tests.

I argue that teacher education should provide spaces for teachers to question behaviorism by examining the root views of human nature and learning in a Skinnerian worldview. Teachers should critically consider how outside control might disrupt a student’s sense of internal control, and they could learn from examples of teachers such as Rachel that prove that students can be internally motivated through a sense of self-discipline. And as teachers observe contradictions in practices such as Rachel’s, I argue that the observations will help the teachers as learners as they recognize that learning is always an unfinished process.

A sense of “unfinishedness” (Freire, 1970) in confronting behaviorism may be important so that new teachers do not become overly frustrated as they recognize their own difficulties in creating humanistic literacy communities as described in this paper. This sense of “unfinishedness” may prove healthy if it comes hand-in-hand with teachers’ desires to continue learning, growing, and changing. By recognizing and thinking through difficult cases of student behavior and test preparation, teachers may learn to develop alternative approaches to these pressures, even if none will be perfect, because behaviorist values characterize schools in general.

Challenging problematic assumptions. Finally, critical literature points to the importance of critical interrogation of the lenses through which teachers view students

and their families (Howard, 1999; Lareau, 2011; McDermott, 2008; Rodriguez-Brown, 2010; Sleeter, 2008a; Valenzuela, 2003). Although Rachel demonstrated a powerful ability to think “outside the box” and challenge her own views, I still observed times in which I argue that dichotomous thinking and societal myths may have impeded the ability to envision alternative possibilities. I argue that such “either-or” thinking plagues most of us at times as we find ourselves caught in our own limited visions. As we subconsciously imagine that things are either “black” or “white,” “good” or “bad,” “successful” or “unsuccessful,” according to many widely held societal through patterns, we blind ourselves to the complexities of reality and to the multiple paths inherent in divergent thinking.

Rachel demonstrated a tendency to discuss and envision students’ families as either good and bad, and as in the tradition of a White-dominated society, she tended to weigh what she assumed her students family experiences to be against her own White, middle-class upbringing. Scholars such as Delpit (2006) and Ladson-Billings (2006) have explored the tendencies for White, middle class teachers to hold problematic understandings of students of color and their families. Other literature (Brown, Clark, & Bridges, 2011; North, Clark, & Gibson, 2009; Howard, 1999; Sleeter, 2008a) has explored the challenges in facilitating White, middle class teachers to understand the strengths of students from other cultures, classes, races, or sexual orientations. Teachers often exhibit an explicit resistance to changing their thinking in these ways.

For teachers to rethink these problematic views, Delpit (1988) emphasized that teachers must critically examine power and their own positions in power hierarchies, including their positions as members of a cultural group with power. In my own work I continue to explore different ways to do this, and this has included the inviting of

marginalized students teachers of teachers and creating strong classroom communities in the diversity course.

Yet this aspect of work with Rachel offers another suggestion. I suggest that our work in preparing teachers to work in diverse classrooms is more than just teaching about diversity; it is teaching an open-mindedness. It is critical literacy, learning to question power and inequity, but it is also helping teachers learn to frame issues not as either/or questions, to break out of dualistic thinking, to come to see that there are always multiple sides to a problem and multiple understandings. Perhaps exploring sociological works that highlight the strengths and intelligences of non-mainstream groups alongside an exploration of critical theory that interprets the power systems that de-legitimizes such valid knowledge may help.

But first of all it takes an approach to learning as opening up rather than as defending our underdeveloped theories. Perhaps exercises, activities, and experiences that encourage divergent thinking may be a good first step, along with establishing a classroom community with open-mindedness at the center of its basic agreements and core values.

Some additional ways that I argue that teacher educators can attack the tendency toward dichotomous thinking is through providing more arts experiences for teachers, and providing more opportunities for teachers to explore philosophy and practice of cultures outside of boxed-in western version of rationality or logical positivism. Such explorations also offer powerful possibilities for helping teachers improve their views of students with such alternative knowledge bases. It comes down to developing a questioning stance, and a creative open-mindedness rather than a view of the world as simple and understood. It is a wide-awakeness, in Greene's (1988) sense of the term, learning to become more conscious, *conscienzação*, in a Freirian sense (1970). It is

critical literacy (Luke & Freebody, 1997; Morrell, 2007), and it is education for transformation and liberation. Teacher education can follow Ayers's model of classrooms (2010), that "can be extraordinary sites of exploration and searching, wondering and questioning, upending all orthodoxy and re-thinking all accepted truths" (p. 11).

And I cannot understate the importance of helping teachers to unpack problematic assumptions about students and families from backgrounds that differ from their own, through not only experiences in and with multiple class and cultural groups, but through models of learning that position these students and families as teachers of teachers. Delpit (2006) explains,

Teacher education usually focuses on research that links failure and socioeconomic status, failure and cultural difference, and failure and single-parent households. It is hard to believe that these children can possibly be successful after their teachers have been so thoroughly exposed to so much negative indoctrination. When teachers receive that kind of education, there is a tendency to assume deficits in students rather than to locate and teach to strengths.

To counter this tendency, educators must have knowledge of children's lives outside of schools so as to recognize their strengths (172).

Delpit points here to the importance of learning more fully about our students, as we work out from within a conceptual framework that is critical of mainstream, uncritical ways of viewing difference. Within such a critical teacher education classroom culture of open-mindedness, we need to facilitate experiences that position teachers to learn from community members and students to see their strengths. My former PAR study involved bringing in high school students at an alternative school to instruct preservice teachers on their worlds and needs, and we produced evidence of challenging many preservice

teachers' assumptions (Brown, Clark, and Bridges, 2011). There are many other ways to facilitate similar teacher education by families and students.

Other community members can contribute to the teacher education experience. In my past work as a teacher educator, I have used tactics such as inviting community members to the teacher education classroom to share lived experiences, reading and reflecting on multiple narratives representing different experiences, watching and listening to others describe and illustrate their experiences, interviewing different kinds of people to gain their perspectives, and engaging students in other "perspective-taking" exercises. I suggest that using narratives might be a better starting point to thinking about difference than using expository writing, and I have applied this in my own work by beginning my diversity courses with books such as *The Circuit*, (Jimenez, 1999) and *Honky* (Conroy, 2000). I have also incorporated films to open such coursework, and found that students tended to develop empathy in response to real stories and voices, in contrast to sometimes negative reactions to more analytical and challenging films. But these works must be chosen wisely so that they open up understandings and the complexity of identity rather than reinforcing stereotypes and prior assumptions.

We can also model and explore ways in which teachers can involve parents and help them to feel more welcomed in the classroom. This sense of welcome must be reflected in both our action and our deeper orientations. We must find ways to show parents and home community members that we value them, their work, their perspectives, and their knowledge, and we must be sincere in this valuing. I believe the opposite often happens in the classrooms characterized by class or cultural barriers between parents and their children's teachers. Delgado-Gaitan (2001) and Rodriguez-Brown (2010) assert that, contrary to what many teachers assume, oftentimes parent reluctance to participate in classrooms stems from feelings that the teacher does not or might not view them

positively due to cultural, linguistic, or class differences. This barrier has to be broken by teachers who take extra and special effort to prove to parents that teachers view them highly and value their perspectives.

In my personal development, I have struggled through problematic assumptions as well, strove to re-formulated my own views, and learned to develop my own strategies to improved community involvement in my K-12 classrooms. I also recognize that I am a work-in progress, and I must commit to continual evolution. Through this evolution in my former elementary teaching I learned to include outside community members and parents in my classroom regularly, and devised special activities for parental classroom participation. I enjoyed inviting parents and others to come and share their work or culture with my class. I tried to open space to position them, not me, as expert. For example, I invited parents to come and lead lessons in my classroom: teaching how to spell and write students' names in Arabic, teaching country-specific folk dances, presenting careers as mini-lessons, and reading books or discussing personal writing with the students. I have also invited janitors and policemen to present poetry and give talks to my classes. During these instances, I have tried to lavish praise and appreciation upon those who contributed, and to make them feel comfortable and honored in their work and unique knowledge.

There are some ways to re-position parents, to challenge power differentials that may contribute to their reluctance to enter classrooms. We need to educate teachers to develop examples of more such examples by observing or experiencing them in the teacher education experience, so that they may emulate them in their own practice. As teachers continue to grow in their vision and love for the classroom community that reaches out and integrates into vision and love for students' home communities, teachers can continue to develop more of their own strategies for facing these challenges.

Creating spaces of hope within flawed systems is central to our work, and recognizing that we must not be discouraged, but actively recognize our shortcomings and rise up when we see ourselves contradicting our values, may help us to continually struggle. Continuing to explicitly critique the models of community lurking beneath our practice is essential for this work. Envisioning and enacting sociocultural models of literacy requires such vision and hope, a belief in the power of community.

Chapter 8: What, Then

Envisioning Professional Accountability

I propose that more small scale studies be done to explore or test out some of these suggestions on teacher support for literacy community that I propose here. I argue that my portrait of Rachel presents an exploratory, introductory consideration of what I propose as “Professional Accountability”. Professional Accountability provides an alternative to systems that hold teachers accountable to commercial standardized tests, and instead holds teachers accountable as professionals through upward and downward respectful, professional relationships. As in Giroux’s model (1985) it re-envision the teacher as a transformative intellectual. It re-professionalizes teachers and motivates them through intrinsic factors: through holistic, dignified support of trusted mentors, and through critical reflection and action as leaders. I argue that a strong literacy community might struggle in the face of tension and pressure from high-stakes testing or the threat of loss of funding or position, but it may be established through humane and thoughtful teacher support models that operate out of principles such as those presented in this study.

I argue that preservice teachers and, especially, in-service teachers, need ample opportunities to develop the two kinds of relationships I define as central to professional accountability: with respectful, motivating, more experienced mentors and as respected, motivated mentor to less experienced others. This may not be likely to happen when in-service teachers are not provided the time to develop such relationships and pursue such leadership opportunities. Time and pressure that focuses on high-stakes testing and other forms of surveillance may detract from this possibility, and has been shown in cases to harm motivation, feelings of professionalism, and depth of relationships with support staff (Watanabe, 2003; Finnigan & Gross, 2007). Paradoxically, much of what is

happening in the name of high stakes accountability might actually decay opportunities for “professional accountability” in the sense addressed here (Apple, 2007; Lipman, 2011). I argue instead that professional accountability demands policy transformation. It demands policy supporting relationships and leadership opportunities for teachers rather than data-driven threats, bribes, or atmospheres of fear, intimidation, and de-professionalized, mechanistic, lifeless, scripted teaching.

Unlike popular technocratic accountability models, professional accountability is founded upon a faith in the professionalism of the teacher. Rather than placing the responsibility to learn on an outside administrator, it places the responsibility on the teacher as someone expected to rise to the occasion because she is understood as a true and respectable professional. It does not rely on behavioristic rewards and punishments, as if the teacher were a trained dog or an automaton. Instead it aims to build motivation off of the pride and integrity of the professional. Teachers become motivated to build powerful literacy communities that uphold the dignity of their students because they find their own dignity upheld and celebrated through their own powerful literacy communities.

Professional Accountability and State Standards

In my collaboration with Rachel, students met or exceeded many state standards (Appendix N), even though these standards were often not addressed explicitly and often not viewed as an a priori guide to our work. Sometimes we did not recognize which standard had been met until after the lesson was over. At other times Rachel even delivered impromptu lessons that better addressed standards than lessons she designed specifically to address them. I do not offer this point to suggest that standards are not important; they are. But I do offer it as a consideration: Might the push for teachers to design their teaching by first following standards rather than by first developing rich

visions of literacy community actually sometimes deter from students meeting standards? Might the reason Rachel's teaching tended to meet standards inductively arise from her commitment to a model of literacy learning as community, involving the vision, strategies, and love described above, rather than based on a standards guidebook? I suggest that this foundational commitment led to students' demonstration of standards, rather than Rachel's adherence to the standards guidebook. My informal discussions with Rachel affirmed that she agreed with this speculation as well; she articulated, again and again, that her commitment to a specific kind of community provided the impetus for much of what she did. This commitment happened to align with state learning goals. Importantly, Rachel agreed that she did what she did because, foremost, it applied her vision, not because she was told to do it or because she read it first in the state standards.

With the teacher re-envisioned as professional and the teacher supporter re-envisioned through the paradigm of a nurturing relationship, the teacher may pursue a commitment to such visions of literacy. As the teacher is shown the value of her insights through professional accountability, teacher educators can work toward helping teachers develop literacy pedagogy, including adherence to standards, as Rachel and I explored in this study.

Envisioning Literacy as Community

I argue that my work with Rachel illustrates the power of envisioning literacy teaching as community. I contest that before the teaching of strategies and technique is the establishment of a strong vision of community, which may firmly ground a teacher's development of strategies and techniques. This literacy community, at its core, is characterized by love, and love motivates teacher and student to contribute to the community and to perform and achieve. There may always be challenges along the way to developing community, such as challenges related to environment or behaviorism,

questioning dominant deficit assumptions, among other things. But teachers can face these challenges with self-efficacy, especially as teachers are supported to reconceptualize challenges as natural characteristics of an unfinished society and as natural in teachers' continual "becoming" processes (Freire, 1970).

My work within Rachel's classroom provides an example of a classroom in which literacy instruction may align with sociocultural models in urban schools. It offers a model for teachers in urban schools to create spaces in which nurturing literacy communities might take shape, where students may learn to see literacy as deeply connected to their lives. Despite the legacy of less-than quality education in urban schools, new teachers such as Rachel can inspire and uplift. Nonetheless behaviorism may continue to interfere, as it always does. There will inevitably be challenges, as teachers are oftentimes working against "institutional habitus" (Cornbleth, 2010), problematic assumptions, and preconceived notions about culture, learning, and assessment. And they work within specific environments driven by varying degrees of high-stakes accountability pressures. Confronting these challenges may be an ongoing process.

Yet, as Rachel's comments and behaviors suggest, growth is always happening. Teachers are always in a state of "becoming," and some may be more open to evolution than others. Perhaps one of the most important qualities in teaching is the desire to change and grow and challenge oneself, the awareness of oneself as a continual learner and the desire to learn. I argue that a re-considered model of accountability should begin with a conceptualization of the teacher as learner.

I add that implementing this kind of teacher education more broadly would require a societal rethinking of the role of a teacher; it would require a "reprofessionalization" of the teaching profession, not only within schools but within the public arena. But such a

professional model of the teacher is not an unattainable dream. The country of Finland offers an example of a society that affords teachers high professional status, and the success of their educational system supports the efficacy of the professionalized teacher. It is a model in which the general public adheres to “raising standards by lifting the many rather than pushing a privileged few” (Hargreaves, 2008, p.141). Hargreaves presents the example of Finland, Canada, and England as instructive for countering the turn toward neoliberalism in the United States:

But high-performing countries elsewhere do not create and keep high-quality teachers by using the market to manipulate the calculus of teacher pay. Rather, good and smart people are called to teaching and kept in the profession by an inspiring and inclusive vision to which the society subscribes and for which it accords high status. (p. 142)

Although comparing the United States to Finland is, in certain aspects, akin to comparing apples to oranges, Finland still sets an example of a society with shared vision that deeply impacts policy. It offers a counterexample to the brand of competitive individuals held by many Americans (Apple, 2007; Labaree, 1997). Teachers and schools are a reflection of overall society values. If teacher education on a broad scale in this country is to reflect more democratic ideals, the general public must come to embrace democratic ideals. Large scale change requires a rethinking of what it means to be a democratic society. But that does not mean that change in individual schools cannot happen on a small scale within a flawed society. Documentation of small pockets of hope in teacher education provides evidence that hope abounds (Nieto, 2009; Oakes & Lipton, 2007; Zeichner, 2000).

On a large scale, we need education, policymaking, and activism to promote a values shift into social responsibility toward all people’s children. On the everyday teacher education scale, we need to professionalize the teachers in our own practices as learners

who are active agents, not passive objects to be manipulated (Freire, 1970). We need to address the kinds of support, guidance, and leadership opportunities that teachers, especially early developing teachers, require as empowered learners. To promote professional accountability in literacy teachers, we should provide the professional preparation, support, and, as this study suggests, *community*, so that teachers can envision and enact sociocultural models of literacy.

Limitations

This study is a single case, exploratory, participatory, and marked by action implementations. My interpretations and suggestions are speculative, and in need of testing in new cases. The study is not a form of traditional research that deals intensely with statistical notions of validity and reliability, such as attempting to isolate variables from context and attempting to remove researcher bias from data analysis. I recognize that context and my research position will always impact my work, and I have chosen to embrace rather than try to avoid these influences in this study.

Participatory Methods and Researcher Position

This study, as action research, focuses on practice through my own involvement in practice. It is action-oriented. My emphasis on action places my findings outside of research traditions that attempt to isolate practice from reflection. In the tradition of Freire (1970), I made a deliberate decision to promote action and change while collecting data, out of personal convictions. I recognize this limitation, and I present it transparently. I offer my data analysis as my interpretations, my personal theory-building based on my personal experiences. I am a large part of this study; in some ways this is a study of myself. Take this study as praxis: reflection and action to promote positive change. My hope is that it will encourage dialogue and additional exploration of possibilities for social justice toward construction of a more democratic society.

I recognize that my life experiences heavily impact the choice and directions of constructs that I have highlighted. This influence is important to note as a limitation of the study, although I also argue that my positionality as a former teacher, teacher educator, and participant in Rachel's classroom provide authenticity and perspective. But they do highlight the limitation of operating as an insider rather than an outsider to my research context. I recognize that my influence impacted Rachel's decision-making, and I realize her work would have looked differently without me there. I explored this to some degree in my data analysis when I illustrated the power of my relationship with Rachel as a support factor in her learning; she herself discussed this reality and I embrace it as a central element in this study.

The question that cannot be answered here is how deeply my influence or even my previous work with Rachel caused her to emphasize various elements in her teaching. It is important to note that much of what I examine here is *our collaboration*, not Rachel's isolated teaching. As long as my data analysis is understood as my interpretations of our participatory work, the results can be taken for what they are. My study is a portrait of what Rachel did and said while I worked in her classroom, as an example of what teaching might be. I recognize that my participation in the study impeded me from accurately analyzing precisely why and what forces impacted these actions and conceptions, . Rather I offer a narrative of our collaboration and my interpretation of what the example might offer for teacher educators. The study is exploratory, participatory, and reflective of a particular context. ,

Intangibles

I also recognize that another limitation in my study lies in the sections of my data analysis in which I attempt to describe what could be viewed as intangible constructs. These intangibles included the "energy" I felt in the classroom, "realness" and the "love"

I felt and I interpreted the students and teacher to feel. I acknowledge the limitations in providing perceptions as evidence, at times, for these constructs. But I include them in this study nonetheless because I believe they are important.. I also include them because I operate out of a belief system that some of the most important things in life, and in teaching, are those that cannot be directly measured, and that the more we attempt to measure them, the less they appropriate the “real thing,” I am convinced that this problem of measurement or documentation sometimes keeps academics from discussing or even examining the things that matter most. This is why I chose to include them and chose to write tentatively about them rather than not at all.

Critical Theory/ Critical Views

The frameworks described by critical scholars in the first section of my literature deeply guide the way I look at the classroom, and they especially guide my view of teacher education, which shaped my process of collaboration and my interpretations. They guided my interpretation of my participant’s viewpoints, my interpretations of the forces impacting our work. They undergird my teacher education model. They provide foundational justification for a democratic, egalitarian model of the classroom as a community. However, in future analysis of this data or data like this, I may examine teacher and student perspectives, assumptions, and identities from a critical race perspective. I might look at what critical theory might imply for more specific elements of student learning. I would like to more specifically explore additional implications of critical theory in the early elementary classroom. While this study drew on students’ unique literacies, personal expression, freedom, and a critique of teacher assumptions, it did not explore what “destabilizing” power structures (Morrell, 2007) might mean for students in the early grades. This offers an area ripe for additional research.

Education as Reflection of Larger Society

I realize that one could take my work and instead highlight the barriers Rachel and I faced in this urban education context. It is my belief in hope (Ayers, 2010; Freire, 1998) and my personal refusal to give in to determinism that drives my optimistic portrait; I recognize that one may call me an idealist. I add that it will be important that readers do not misinterpret my idealism as minimizing the struggles teachers face or the struggles we faced in this study. I do not want readers to assume that my hope in teacher education perpetuates the misconception that education is *the answer* to inequity or that teachers are *the answer* to educational challenges. Education is but one player as well as one symptom of overall society ills (Anyon, 2005). Teachers are but one small part of this system, and they are significantly impacted by both clear and hidden powerful forces. We cannot place the burden of change upon teachers alone; we must recognize their limited power and limited positions. Inequity must be fought on every front: policies, politics, social norms, unexamined assumptions, structures...everywhere... Societal inequalities *cannot* be changed by education alone. I cannot reiterate the importance of this enough. Nonetheless, despite the limitations, I still believe in the power of teachers as one essential in the struggle for democracy.

Other Accountability Contexts

I understand that the school environment in which Rachel worked allowed her freedoms that many teachers are not experiencing in many of today's tightly controlled accountability reform models. Because Rachel's school met AYP requirements the year before our collaboration, Rachel's administration did not adopt a restrictive, authoritative strain on teachers, and did not emphasize test preparation to the point that teachers such as Rachel felt they had little time for creativity, student-led, or teacher-devised lessoning schools experiencing such strains, a collaboration like this may face significant barriers. I

propose that there is a great need for future research that examines these barriers, and I plan to examine them in my follow-up research.

Yet teachers are never powerless. I refuse to allow this view of overall systems to obscure the beauty that can be created in classrooms. Teachers can create small wonders in their classrooms; Literacy can be envisioned as the creation of community. I hope that my work here will open up a conversation on hope and beauty, and I would like to see it inspire teacher educators to go back into classrooms to experience more of the kinds of joy, love, and intangible energy Rachel and I found in our work.

Generalizability

The study also focuses on one single case: Rachel and her classroom. It focuses on Rachel's perspective and my observations and interpretations of it. It does not triangulate this perspective with that of other stakeholders in the classroom; such triangulation could prove useful for a future examination like this. It also does not investigate where many of these perspectives originate. It also only presents limited student data, and I argue that such focus on students would be important in a follow-up study. Yet the purpose of the study was to focus on Rachel's perspective, not that of others, for the purpose of depth and quality. I do not claim universal generalizability with this case. Additionally, I conducted my study within a limited time frame. I spent a little over four months as a regular participant in Rachel's classroom; A longer-term ethnographic approach could provide a useful future deeper examination into the themes explored in this study.

For these reasons the major contribution of this study is to propose two tentative theoretical concepts: literacy as community and professional accountability. This study can also be viewed as a portrait of a teacher as artist. Kincheloe's (2004) quote explains how popular technicist notions of "positivist" research ignored this art, and Kincheloe highlights its importance:

The concept of great teachers as virtuosos who produce brilliant pieces of pedagogical performance/knowledge was alien to the positivist conception of empirical knowledge about education. (p. 53)

I recognize that my research verges from popular empirical traditions that construct teaching as science and not art. I present this study as a situated interpretation of the components of literacy teaching as the art of community-building. It is a portrait of the virtuoso that Rachel delivers in her classroom each day.

Suggestions for Future Research

Potential exploration possibilities are wide-ranging for a future study using this methodology or tentative theory as a template. Because the study hinged upon the needs and desires of the participating teacher, it culminated in a thematic unit and focused on what the teacher believed and enacted to promote sociocultural models of literacy through community. It began to suggest elements of literacy pedagogy for community. Further focus on community could more deeply examine student, family, neighborhood, or schoolwide perspectives on classroom community. Further study could employ more measures to weigh teacher actions against conventionally recognized forms of student progress, such as literacy assessments. I also add that one might study the impacts of assessments upon the development of literacy community, and one might possibly explore or develop different assessment techniques that verge from the individualistic assessments that are the norm in our individual-oriented society. One may use some of the concepts explored here to develop a new assessment system and test it in a future study. The concept of professional accountability also offers might offer a paradigm shift to explore further for developing new approaches to teacher assessment.

I offer the narrative of my work with Rachel as a template for my future work. I envision myself emulating the process here in another teacher's classroom and using the

new case as a comparison to this case. In the future, exploring the similarities and differences another teacher faces within a similar or different context may prove useful in “testing” out these tentative theoretical constructs. In the future it may be instructive to compare and contrast such experiences in classrooms with teachers experiencing different levels of accountability pressure, exhibiting different levels of confidence in assessment skills, or sharing different kinds of relationships to the neighborhoods in which they teach. One could also conduct quantitative research, through such techniques as surveys, to examine how teachers think or experience these concepts on a wider scale.

I also suggest that a future study in this format should more fully involve students in the classroom in addition to the teacher focus I produced here. Deeper analysis of student thoughts, beliefs, and literacy progress may enhance a future study. In the future I may add pre and post assessments, reputable literacy measures as well as those of my own devising.. A mixed method study incorporating such pre and post assessments such as writing analyses or questionnaires on attitudes toward literacy might provide helpful triangulation methods to strengthen other forms of data such as those employed in this study.

I envision myself conducting a future study that focuses more heavily on teacher interns’ development of these kinds of literacy pedagogy. It could be useful to more fully examine preservice teachers’ perspectives and practices as they take part in collaborations like this one. It may be helpful to examine ways in which the preservice teachers’ development blossoms as teachers move into the classroom.

And although critical literacy deeply impacted my framework and the concept of community, it would be interesting to examine more the intricacies of critical literacies of teachers such as Rachel in the future. Examining teacher development of critical literacies might richly enhance the model of literacy pedagogy as community, as critical

literacy may be important in a literacy vision. It is a complicated subject for discussion with teachers, and it might be fruitful as well to explore why this may be. There are many other elements of social justice pedagogy that could be explored as well, including activism and the teaching of activism, and my lack of emphasis on those issues should not downplay their importance. There are myriad possibilities for future exploration.

Final Thoughts

I bolster my conviction that we must nurture these rich models of literacy education through teacher support with Ravitch's (2010) rallying cry:

Our educational problems are a function of our lack of educational vision, not management problems that require the enlistment of an army of business consultants.

The most durable way to improve schools is to improve curriculum and instruction and to improve the conditions in which teachers work and children learn... (p. 13).

I hope that this study and the continued research resulting from it may contribute to inspiring vision, enriching possibilities for teaching and learning, and improving classroom climates and conditions through clarity on the support teachers need. And I add to Ravitch's call Apple's (2007) call for critical democratic education as the promotion of a more egalitarian society. I hope that as teachers develop visions of community as the one addressed in this study, we might open up possibilities for a more liberatory model of schooling, such as Giroux describes (1992):

that public schools need to become places that provide the opportunity for literacy occasions, that is, opportunities for students to share their experiences, work in social relations that emphasize care and concern for others, and be introduced to forms of knowledge that provide them with the opportunity to take risks and fight for a quality of life in which all human beings benefit (p. 20).

I hope that my work here inspires teachers and teacher educators to collaborate in classrooms, to develop rich and motivating relationships, to work on the important “intangibles” in teaching such as energy and love, to bring pieces of themselves into urban classrooms, and to work as teams to make education a richer experience for marginalized students. I hope that my portrayal of vision, strategy, and love helps teachers and teacher educators consider that heart and vision should not be isolated from practice. I hope that other teachers can read about the energy Rachel, her students, and I found through literacy community, and can work to create such energy within their own classrooms. I hope that teachers can read this and feel the reverberations. The development of a literacy pedagogy for community can be a celebration of possibility, love, and hope as we work together through relationships marked by professional accountability.

Appendix A

I. Early Developing Teacher Informal Collaboration Interview #1

1. What would you most like help with in your language arts teaching, and why?
2. What are some of the major areas you find difficult about language arts teaching?
3. How would you envision your progression as a language arts instructor this year?
4. How would you describe your writing instruction/writing assessment skills? How exactly would you like for me to help in these areas?
5. How would you describe your current views on teaching literacy? How would you describe your views on assessment? How do you describe teaching for social justice, and how do you see literacy and assessment relate to this?
6. How would you like to contribute to the knowledge base of my university language arts course?

II. Mid-Study Teacher Informal Collaboration Interview

1. How do you feel about the way our work in language arts is progressing? What would you like to change and do differently in the future?
2. How would you describe your learning? What are some of the most important things you have learned/learned how to do? How would you describe some of your successes this semester?
3. How have your views on literacy education and assessment changed during the past few months, if at all?
4. What are some things that you have found challenging about this collaboration? What suggestions do you have for better addressing those challenges?

5. What can I do to better help you? What are some areas of your instruction that you are concerned about?

6. What suggestions do you have for me as I incorporate what I have learned here into my university teaching? How would you like to become better involved, if so desired?

III. Late Study Teacher Informal Collaboration Interview:

1. What are some specific areas of growth for you since last semester? What are you most proud of?
2. What are some specific literacy teaching areas that you have found challenging?
3. How might I better help you work through these challenges?
4. How has your thinking about literacy and assessment changed since last semester, if at all? Tell me some specific classroom events that have impacted your views.
5. What are some things that you have found challenging about this collaboration? What suggestions do you have for better addressing those challenges?
6. What can I do to better help you? What are some areas of your instruction that you are concerned about?

Appendix B

Observation Protocol:

Observe language arts period at least once a week.

1) What literacy instruction or assessment is used during the observational period?

What evidence is there of other literacy instruction at other times?

What literacy models does this seem to correlate with?

2) What is the social and psychological context surrounding this instruction?

What literacy or learning models do these instruction models or assessments align with?

What evidence is there of other instruction or assessments used at other times?

Teacher-made? Standardized? Commercial? High-stakes? Informal? Formal? Tests?

Summative? Formative? Both?

Non-traditional (ways of collecting funds of knowledge?)

3) How is the instruction/assessment used?

How does the teacher approach different students through assessment or instruction?

Which assessments/instruction is used for which situations, and why?

When/how are assessments or instruction used?

4) Why is the instruction or assessment used?

What are the purposes behind the assessment or instruction used,?

Are these purposes apparent?

Do students understand these purposes?

Where do these purposes originate?

5) What is the social and/or psychological context surrounding the instruction or assessment?

What does the teacher's attitude/tone appear to be concerning the instruction or assessment used? Evidence?

What do the students' attitudes/tone appear to be concerning the instruction or assessment used? Evidence?

6) What are the effects of the instruction or assessments?

How do the students respond to the instruction/assessments?

What are differences among these and where might these differences come from?

How do the instruction/assessments promote/not promote equity?

7) What are the inside and outside forces influencing these usages of instruction/assessment?

8) Note differences between this and the last observation.

Appendix C

Teacher Perceptions/Conceptualizations Interview**Protocol I**

First stage: Interview before observation:

A. Questions about teacher viewpoints

- 1) How would you describe what literacy is and what it means to teach literacy in ways that are socially just? What are ways in which you find this happening, and what are ways in which this challenges you?
- 2) What is your philosophy on literacy assessment? Where would you say that these ideas come from?
- 3) How would you articulate what teaching for social justice is? Where would you say that these ideas come from?
- 4) How do you see the two connect?
- 5) How would you describe your approach to literacy? Where does this come from?
How would you describe literacy assessment?
- 6) What do you feel that you still need to learn about literacy and/or assessment?
Why?

B. Questions about teacher practices:

- 7) Tell me about the kinds of literacy instruction you use. Why do you use these?
How do you feel about them?
- 8) Do you feel you are promoting social justice through these practices? In what ways? Why/why not?
- 9) Tell me about the kinds of literacy assessments you use.

- 10) Why do you use these particular assessments? Who/what forces have influenced this?
- 11) How do you feel about these assessments?
- 12) Do you feel that you are promoting social justice through these assessments? How?
- 13) Do you feel that these assessments capture what you see literacy to be? How so or why not? In what ways?
- 14) What do you think could help you use instruction or assessments in ways that align with your philosophy?
- 15) What barriers or what supports do you experience in aligning your instruction or assessments with your philosophy?
- 16) What kinds of work would you like me to collaborate with you on this year?

Early Developing Teacher's Perceptions/ Conceptualizations Interview

Protocol II

A. Questions about teacher viewpoints:

- 1) How would you now describe your philosophy on literacy or literacy assessment? Where would you say that these ideas come from?
- 2) How would you now articulate what teaching for social justice is? Where would you say that these ideas come from?
- 3) How do you see the two connect?
- a) How would you describe your approach to literacy now? Where does this come from? How would you describe literacy assessment?
- b) What do you feel that you still need to learn about literacy and/or assessment? Why?

4) What has influenced your thinking on these things since the last interview, and why?

B. Questions about teacher practices:

1) Tell me about the kinds of literacy instruction or assessments you have been using recently?

1) Why do you use these particular methods? Who/what forces have influenced this?

2) How do you feel about these methods?

3) Do you feel that you are promoting social justice through your instruction and assessment? How?

4) Do you feel that this instruction or assessments capture what you see literacy to be? How so or why not? In what ways?

5) What do you think could help you use instruction or assessments in ways that align with your philosophy?

6) What barriers or what supports do you experience in aligning your instruction or assessments with your philosophy?

7) How have your practices changed since the last interviews? Why?

Appendix D

Follow-up Discussion, following each early developing teacher observation

- 1) How would you describe what I observed today?
- 2) How did you feel about today's teaching/assessment? Do you feel it represents your philosophy approach to literacy? Assessment? Social Justice? Why or why not?
- 3) What are you proud of from today's observation and what would you like to improve? Why do you feel this way, and where do you think it comes from?
- 4) How does the instruction or assessment observed today fit into your overall approach to assessments? How are they similar to/different from what often do? How often do you use instruction/assessments like these?
- 5) What else would you like to add about today's observation?

Fall, 2010	Late Jan, 2011	Feb	March	April	May	June	July. 2011-2012
Build rapport with Rachel/classroom	Begin work in Rachel's Classroom	Continue work in classroom	Continue work in classroom	Work in classroom and plan presentation	Final unit work in classroom;	Complete work in classroom on final unit	Data analysis and interpretation

Appendix E Timeline

	Initially analyze, mostly descriptive	Analyze, mostly descriptive	Begin cross- analysis and plan for presentation	More analysis with Rachel and presentations	Analyze for theory and implications		Continued Analysis
	Informal Interview I Interview I		Informal Interview II Interview II	Informal Interview III Interview II	Analyze Interviews		Continued analysis
	Observations and documents	Observations	Observations	Observations	Analyze Observations		Continued analysis

Appendix F

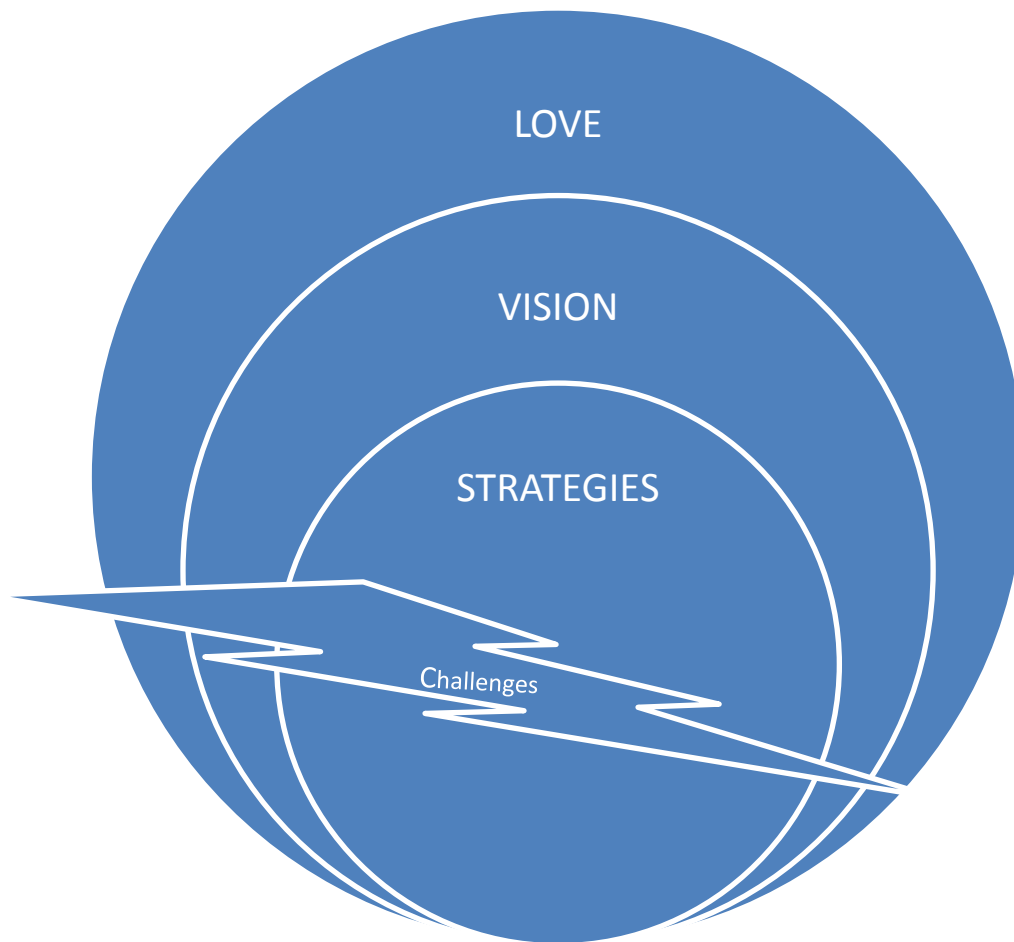
Student Demographics in Rachel's Classroom During Collaboration

	Male	Female
African American	6	5
Latino(a)	1	1
Other		1

Appendix G

Data Analysis Graphic

This graphic illustrates the interconnected relationship of vision, strategy, love, and challenges in literacy pedagogy as community.



Appendix H:

Chart of Teacher Vision as Community

Vision underscored Belief and Values	Vision emphasizes freedom in the context of social responsibility	This vision is continually open to revision	This vision materializes through teacher confidence.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rachel explicitly stated vision• This vision upheld her teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• She encouraged Freedom• She encouraged social responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• She recognized and valued personal challenges to vision• She valued discomfort• She pushed herself to expand the idea of literacy• She learned to value process, not just product	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A growing confidence despite newness• Confident enough for self-assessment and critique• Confident in ownership over her own teaching• Professional opportunities as possible source of confidence

Appendix I

Outline of Rachel's Teaching Strategies for Community

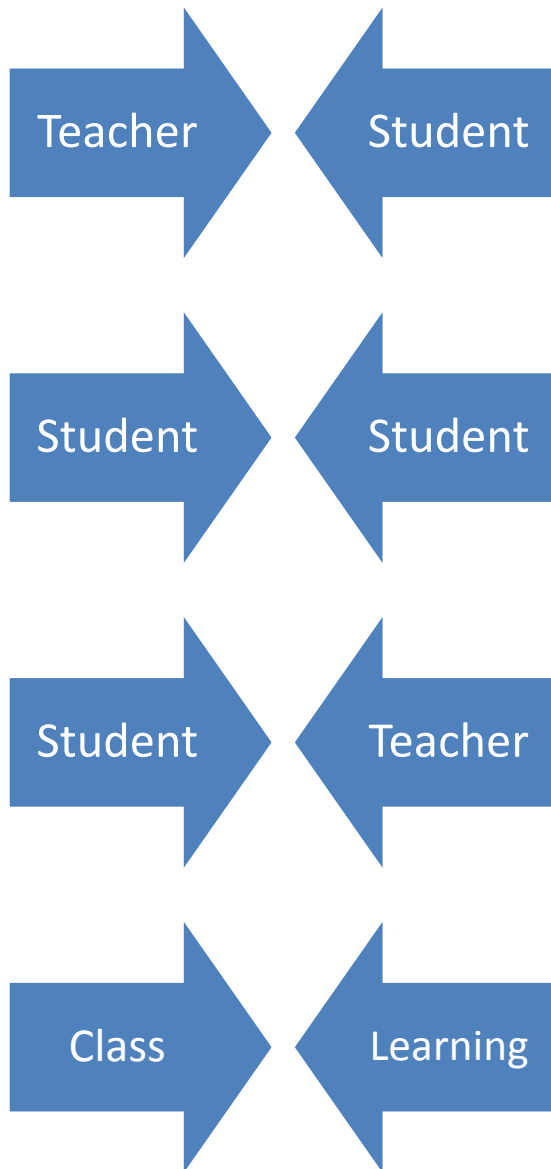
- I. Strategies for encouraging student interaction and connection

- II. Strategies for encouraging student self-reliance
 - A. She expressed a sincere deliberation to relent power
 - B. She replaced direct control with the power of literacy
 - C. She promoted student ownership.
 - D. She provided opportunities for students to drive the curriculum
 - E. She promoted student stamina and focus in literacy events

- III. Strategies for making literacy “real”
 - A. Connected to students' life experiences
 - B. Experienced unique possibilities and challenges of “realness”
 - C. Realness in expansion of future expectations
 - D. Realness as connections to teacher's life
 - E. Realness as integrative teaching
 - F. Realness as risk-taking and creativity

Appendix J

Four Directions of Love in Rachel's Literacy Community



Appendix K: Facilitating Literacy Teaching for Community

Facilitating Vision:

-Teacher educators could cultivate vision as belief by re-envisioning teacher education as opportunity to grow visions in community of others who believe in social justice.

-Teachers as learners could be allowed freedom to explore and grow as individuals, while also being given responsibilities as respected professionals in a teacher education community.

-Teacher educators could model and expect the concept of “visions under revision” or of “becoming”; they could cultivate the development of “open-mindedness”; they could promote critical views of society and education.

-Teacher educators could cultivate teacher confidence through trust, the embrace of “unfinishedness,” and personally relevant assessments.

Facilitating the Learning of Strategies:

-Teacher educators could help teachers learn how to develop and maintain community in the literacy classroom through modeling in the teacher education classroom and experimenting in authentic classroom settings.

-Teacher education could model a classroom in which students have power; Through models such as “workshops” teachers might experience the motivation of self-reliance.

-Teacher education could show teachers the importance of making literacy “real” by making the learning in the teacher education classroom connect directly to teacher’s lives and present concerns.

Facilitating Love

-Teacher recruits should exhibit “love” for students, commit to envisioning teaching as relationship-building, and learn informal assessments to “listen” to and “love” students more.

-Teachers could learn to nurture a “caring” classroom by emphasizing community rather than competition by experiencing it in the teacher education classroom.

-Through sociocultural models of learning, teachers could experience intrinsic motivation and in turn want their students to experience such motivation and love for learning.

-Teacher education could be re-envisioned as “teacher inspiration”, a place where teachers refuel through invigorating personal explorations and communities.

Responding to Challenges

-Teacher educators could more closely “listen” to teachers to understand their needs and address them out of a relationship of trust.

- Teacher educators could facilitate a teacher education for funds of knowledge, critical community inquiry, and a critical view of the nature of challenges.

- Showing teachers, through personal experiences, that challenging behaviorism, as well as other challenges related to assumptions, implies paradigm shifts and an sense of unfinishedness

Finally:

-Teachers could be supported through a “professional accountability” model characterized by positive relationships upward, with teacher educators/support personnel, and positive relationships downward, through opportunities to lead and demonstrate knowledge and professionalism to less experienced peers.

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