

# Literacy Teacher Educators

## Preparing Teachers for a Changing World

Edited by;  
Clare Kosnik, Jennifer Rowsell,  
Peter Williamson, Rob Simon  
and Clive Beck

*SensePublishers*

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SENSE PUBLISHERS  
ROTTERDAM/BOSTON/TAIPEI

A C.I.P. record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

ISBN: 978-94-6209-198-6 (paperback)

ISBN: 978-94-6209-199-3 (hardback)

ISBN: 978-94-6209-200-6 (e-book)

Published by: Sense Publishers,  
P.O. Box 21858,  
3001 AW Rotterdam,  
The Netherlands  
<https://www.sensepublishers.com/>

*Printed on acid-free paper*

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## **DEDICATION**

To literacy teacher educators around the world, whose creative, skillful, and dedicated work is of such value to beginning literacy teachers.



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We wish to thank Michel Lokhorst from Sense Publishing for his support from the initial steps of this very innovative project through all of the stages of development and production. Thank you for helping us share the voices of literacy teacher educators from around the world.



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SUSAN L. LYTLE

## FOREWORD

### *The Critical Literacies of Teaching*

In 2012, when we talk about literacy teacher education, we speak while we are witnessing, in many (but not all) locations:

- the dismantling of public education
- the de-professionalization of teachers and teaching
- the prevalence of deficit views of students, teachers, schools and communities
- the scripting of teaching and the hegemony of high stakes tests in teacher and student assessment
- the degrading/diminishing of the role of universities in the preparation of teachers

These phenomena are most prominent and problematic in urban and under-resourced communities. They constitute the ground on which crucial issues of the education of literacy teachers must ultimately be addressed.

After decades of provocative, potentially field-transforming theory and research into literacy by differently situated educators, we still struggle with *what it means to do literacy education and literacy teacher education well*. We also have to deal with why there is, in some quarters, certainty about what *well* means and what to do about that.

Perhaps it helps to think of literacy teaching as a site of productive struggle, a location. There are politics of locations.

The struggle is the practice. The practice is the struggle.

\* \* \* \*

Since retiring in June, after almost 50 years as a literacy teacher and teacher educator, I am now officially detached from any formal institution of education. Maybe this new floating space accounts for my own struggle in writing this Foreword. So at the suggestion of a very close friend, I spent a day reading Adrienne Rich, as a way to “re-mind” myself as a writer. With a great and long-standing debt to Rich who passed away last March, I offer these reflections as a kind of meditation on this collection of essays.

Adrienne Rich wrote: we need to articulate “the truths of outrage and the truths of possibility.” What does this mean to literacy teachers and teacher educators?

*Some Propositions*

From my perspective, theory and research into literacy teacher education includes the frameworks and inquiries conducted by teachers and teacher educators. Literacy teacher education should not be understood as moving theory into practice or even primarily about insuring that practice is research-based.

It's about the reciprocal relationships of—the soup of—theory and practice, and centrally about how these two terms are constructed and for what purpose?

It's about who makes theory? (Rich asks: only certain kinds of people?)

It's about practitioners'—university and school-based—*theories of practice*.

It's about how we understand and each day construct and reconstruct—in local contexts—the relationships of knowledge and practice, from what we think we know and what we do.

It's about theorizing from the classroom.

It's about who we think our students (pre-service teachers) are, and about how they, in turn, come to learn who their students are.

So it's about learning from, with, and about students, from and about practice, in differently configured communities, each day and over the professional life span.

It's about questions and questioning, about what Rich calls “the absolute necessity to raise. . . questions in the world.”

It's about the question: What visions do you attach your teaching to?

And it's about how differently positioned educators understand the ‘work’ of being a literacy teacher/teacher educator, and for whom that matters.

Literacy, teaching, and literacy teacher education are critical social practices.

They are not transmittable.

Learning from and with students occurs in social, cultural, and highly political spaces.

This entails working against the myths of teacher ‘training’ and the pervasive (and still growing) deficit views of the profession.

It matters what we call this: it matters whether we think of teacher education as *training* or *learning*. Teaching is complex; it is not composed of a set of discrete strategies or routines or even practices, no matter how studied and complicated the description.

Teaching is first and foremost an adaptive, deliberative, agentive process, not a technical one.

Teaching involves the intentional forming and reforming of frameworks for understanding and enacting practice.

Teaching is not a solitary process. It is about co-laboring and learning across contexts. It happens in communities of inquiry, communities that are inescapably cross-generational, cross-school/university, cross-families and teachers. Teaching is a form of leadership, from within and beyond the classroom.

Literacy teachers do not oppose standards, assessments, or policies that seek to rectify long-standing inequities in the system. What they resist is the gross oversimplification of the task at hand.

Teaching and learning to teach (at all levels) are on-going explorations that involve attention to and wrestling with issues of identity, language, race, culture, institutional histories, community, expectations, and engagement.

Literacy teacher education is about de-centering the university while teaching in and on behalf of it.

To be literate as a teacher—pre-service, new and experienced—is to engage in an ongoing, searching, and sometimes profoundly unsettling dialogue with students and families and administrators and colleagues, who talk and read and write from very different locations and experiences.

For university-based literacy teacher educators, it's about understanding activism and advocacy as not inimical to their work. This means regarding teaching, research, and service as deeply interconnected, in the efforts of both university-based literacy teacher educators and K-12 literacy teachers.

It involves engaging in a productive dialogue with colleagues and administrators regarding the nature and significance of teacher education in the contested environment pre-service and more experienced teachers are encountering in their fieldwork and in local, state, and national policies.

It's about commitment and democratic values, about working within and against. Rich reminds us also to think about humility and wonder.

We need to talk about what the work of literacy educators and teacher educators is *for*, **and** what it *resists*. Rich suggests we need to ask questions that have been defined (by others) as nonquestions. Rich says that art can never be legislated by any system.

Do we believe that to be true of literacy teaching as well?

Literacy teaching and teacher education are fundamentally about equity, access and justice. They are about learning and teaching as political acts. Rich asks: What is

possible in this life? How do we create “the sheer power of a collective imagery of change and a sense of collective hope”?

The struggles of practice, these prepositions, this book. All these invite an inquiry stance, a kind of certainty about uncertainty.

\* \* \* \*

That said, I have never read anything quite like this book:

It contains explicit representations of the conceptual frames and work of distinguished literacy teacher educators at various stages in their careers, accounts that provide a strong counter-narrative to the mainstream discourse in policy and education, that fully embrace the uncertainties and complexities of practice. Pulling together a series of essays, the editors and authors build a line of argument from their experience and knowledge, their ‘reading of the world’ of literacy teacher education, their sense of what would be useful to others, with attention to their own complex dilemmas and challenges.

I understand that the chapter authors were invited by the editors to explore explicitly how their autobiographies are expressed in their daily work in the field of literacy education. Thus, the essays provide a range of searching accounts of how the authors came to think as they do. Their ‘theories of practice’ reveal not just their interesting and interested readings of the literacy field writ large, but how these readings play in the specifics of their practice as literacy educators in different institutional contexts, in and out of the university. Importantly, the essays are respectful of their readers, not presuming that we are simply looking for replicable formulas to improve our practice.

Practice is made public and accessible, manifested in particular programs, courses and syllabae, in stories of rich and sometimes problematic interactions with pre-service teachers, in things that don’t work, and inevitably in their own research agendas related to literacy and teaching. Many chapters speak directly to the ways these literacy teacher educators deal with system priorities and expectations that may run counter to their own perspectives. These rare insider accounts thus make visible and accessible the legacies, locations, and positionalities of literacy teacher educators as they transact with the complicated and ever-evolving notion of literacy as critical social practice, the framework of multi-literacies and the new and always changing affordances of multimodalities.

The resulting inquiries into pedagogies seem to me especially useful because they reveal and explore the authors’ vulnerabilities and courage in wrestling with the inevitable quandaries of their practice. They accomplish this in ways that are highly attuned to and engaged with the life experiences, cultural and linguistic resources of both their students (the pre-service teachers) and the children and youth these teachers are preparing to teach. In doing so, they respond tacitly to Rich’s queries: “With any personal history, what is to be done? What do we know when we know your story? With whom do you believe your lot is cast?”

That most of these chapters are co-authored reflects the intent of the book as a whole: to be read as a conversation, inviting a dialogic response, a search for

symmetries and dissonances. The images of agentive teachers and teacher educators make palpable what it means to purposefully and systematically inquire into and learn from day-to-day practice in light of different policies/politics and local contexts. The chapters' authors sketch compelling visions of university-based literacy education while pushing back against the so-called reality that there are mitigating conditions—now “reforms”—that depend upon the de-professionalization of teaching and teachers and the demonizing/denigrating of university-based teacher education. Their frameworks and pedagogies clearly animate their own university-based teacher education programs, in part, because they keep at the forefront *the certainty that we are all educating students for an unknown future*.

The authors also reveal possible pathways for dealing with system priorities and dominant discourses while maintaining *and trusting* their own ever-evolving critical stance, including probing critiques of and challenges to their own work as literacy teacher educators across the professional life span. The collection of essays, taken together, helps us understand what it means for the experiences of pre-service teacher education to be conceptualized in ways that parallel the meanings of literacy and criticality in student teachers' K-12 school contexts, with all the uncertainty and intentional fluidity that implies.

This book comes at a time when I believe literacy teacher educators are looking for powerful accounts that talk back loudly to the central issues, struggles, and conditions of their work, especially through the invention of new and unique collaborative spaces for doing pre-service teacher education that break the mold of typical university courses and fieldwork placements. It cuts into a discourse rife with hidden and explicit claims about deficits, of both students and teachers, and makes us think deeply and imaginatively about what is possible under these conditions and what it will mean to change them.

\*\*\*\*\*

Like the underlying themes in much of the poetry and essays of Adrienne Rich, our work in the world of literacy is unlikely to improve without thoughtfully and intentionally engaging the wider socio-cultural and political struggles that drive current educational controversies. Every day, we need to bring, insistently if necessary, issues of literacy and language, access and equity, into the local discourse and practices of our schools and universities and communities. In that way, the work at hand can build from and connect to the lived experiences and diverse knowledges of the many who have a serious stake in how powerfully literacy is taught and learned, the children and youth and adults for whom this *really matters*.

Susan L. Lytle  
Professor Emerita of Education, University of Pennsylvania



PETER WILLIAMSON

## INTRODUCTION

From the table behind the one where Marissa is working with Naeem, I can easily listen to their conversation without interrupting it. Marissa, a student teacher finishing her second semester in this 10<sup>th</sup> grade English class, is working with Naeem on a writing assignment that he has started but has apparently decided not to finish. Naeem's notebook is covered with intricate drawings and text that seem connected like a storyboard or a graphic novel, and the pockets are filled with half sheets of paper steeped in lyrics that he has composed during this and other classes. His backpack is unzipped enough to expose the laptop I saw him using during lunch to post a response to a comment someone left on his election-themed blog. As Marissa asks him about his work, the phone next to his notebook gives off a little buzz, and Naeem glances at it and smiles before texting a response while simultaneously explaining to Marissa that he just can't write any more; he has nothing left to say.

As a teacher educator who is supporting Marissa and also teaching her methods courses at the university, I am struck by the puzzle that Naeem presents. While students' motivation to write and their literacy identities have long been a part of our professional conversation about how to help all learners develop as readers and writers, Naeem highlights the myriad ways that students' rich abilities and interests can seem disconnected from the very school environments upon which we rely to honor and strengthen them. He has nothing left to say? In a "flat" world filled with multimedia and multimodal ways of expressing and creating information, Naeem's art, lyrics, and blog can be relegated to what Kylene Beers has called the "underground literacies" that appear to be undervalued in schools (2007). In this particular moment, I am left wondering how to help Marissa draw upon the rich data around her- in Naeem's notebook, in his blog, in his quick ability to multitask with conversations supported both by technology and oral language skills- to help him make connections across his in-school and out-of-school literacies. How can Marissa leverage Naeem's literacy strengths to help him achieve in school?

But the answers to these questions provide pieces for only a fraction of the puzzle that literacy teacher educators must grapple with in working to prepare educators for our future schools. The world is changing, and literacy is increasingly defined as a set of skills that is much broader than our historical focus on proficiency in reading, writing, and speaking. As scholars and policy makers have recently

charged, new literacies include skills that provide students with the capacity to represent information and communicate effectively using many forms of text and for many audiences. In a knowledge-based economy, students must now be able to produce ideas rather than just consume them. A particular challenge is the pace of change itself- the abundance of new knowledge and the lightening speed of how new technologies are shaping the world in which we live. As Linda Darling-Hammond argues in *The Flat World and Education*, “the new mission of schools is to prepare students for products and problems that have not yet been identified, using technologies that have not yet been invented” (2010). For teacher educators, this new mission charges us to create opportunities for teacher candidates like Marissa to understand that her role as a literacy teacher is ever changing and evolving. To be effective, she needs to see herself as a student of the many ways that communication and the production of information are shaping what her students will need to know and be able to do to have equitable access to the world around them.

But is teacher education up to the challenge of preparing educators who can adapt to current literacy demands in order to support students who must learn skills that can ensure their success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond? Many would argue that it is not. Recent reports charge that much of what has come to be called traditional teacher education is overly theoretical and highly disconnected from the realities of the clinical settings where teachers actually teach. Student teachers report seeing little connection between what they are studying in their coursework and what they see enacted in schools. The knowledge base for teaching is still a contested territory, a fact that is particularly salient in literacy education given the plastic and rapidly evolving terrain of the field. Scholars in teacher education are increasingly called to defend our work.

A paradox of teacher education is that we must prepare teachers for the schools we have while at the same time we must prepare them for the schools we want. Though we must help our students become teachers who can understand the complexities of schools- who can enact the required curricula and meet professional standards- we also want them to see themselves as change agents who can make a difference in how school happens. This means that our courses must invite students to take stock of how their literacy instruction provides kids with access to learning opportunities- to understand the resources and the practices that are available- and then to envision how these can be adapted and enhanced to achieve the rich, rigorous literacy goals that we set for our youth.

A vision for substantive, relevant literacy teacher preparation is at the core of *Literacy Teacher Educators: Preparing Teachers for a Changing World*. This book explores the many central tensions in literacy education, as well as various instructional approaches for preparing teachers to be successful with a range of learners and in different national contexts. It also explores the identities and pedagogical thinking of teacher educators themselves in order to highlight the experiences and scholarship that inform the literacy practices that we enact in our teacher preparation classes.

In order to make the broad topic of literacy teacher education both accessible and practical, we have organized the book into three sections. The first section addresses current issues that are facing literacy teacher educators as well as scholarship that is shaping the field across national contexts. The chapters in this section explore notions of critical literacy and practices that strive for equity and social justice in literacy instruction, as well as the ways that literacy identities can be shaped by social constructs such as gender. The first section also attends to scholarship on the broadening definitions of literacy and our increasing attention to multiliteracies as a way of framing students' literacy assets within and across the contexts of schools and communities.

The second section of the book offers a rich description of literacy teacher preparation practices from a range of educators across national contexts in England, Australia, Canada, and the United States. These chapters home in on the particular approaches to engaging new teachers in key aspects of literacy instruction to highlight overarching themes in preparing teachers for a changing world. They also provide details regarding specific methods for the teaching of literacy practices, including the integration of coursework, scholarship, and fieldwork in various teacher education models. The second section is special in that the chapters offer a glimpse into the professional backgrounds of the literacy teacher educators who wrote them, making it possible to consider how their practice is shaped by both their experiences in schools and their research. Though hardly exhaustive, these diverse examples make it possible for readers to consider how various approaches to literacy instruction can facilitate different learning goals for particular contexts and students.

The book concludes with a discussion of a study that explores the identities, experiences, and dispositions of the literacy teacher educators themselves. The scholarship on who becomes literacy teacher educators and how they are prepared is scant, and we know little about the backgrounds and understandings of the faculty who are engaged in this incredibly complex work. This chapter reports findings from in depth interviews with 25 literacy teacher educators in order to feature common themes in how literacy teacher educators are made, as well as their view of the promises and pitfalls of their work.

This book, which combines both scholarship and practical information regarding the teaching and learning of literacy practice, will be useful to teacher educators from across disciplines as well as school and university administrators, policy makers, and literacy teachers in the field. Though it does not pretend to address each of the many challenges that literacy educators face in this rapidly evolving field, it unearths many of the central issues that underpin these challenges as well as tools that people can use to build stronger, purposeful practice in the preparation of new teachers. Naeem and the puzzles he poses can serve as a familiar touchstone for teachers who strive to understand the literacy challenges of our changing world. This book helps us look ahead to identify the problems and the solutions that can make a difference for our teachers and students in schools.

P. WILLIAMSON

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## **SECTION 1**

# **CURRENT ISSUES FACING LITERACY TEACHER EDUCATION**



REBECCA ROGERS

## **CULTIVATING DIVERSITY THROUGH CRITICAL LITERACY IN TEACHER EDUCATION**

### HISTORY AND KEY ISSUES

Those of us who have the privilege and responsibility of teaching literacy teachers are charged with designing learning experiences that support their development of the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed to work confidently with culturally and linguistically diverse children and families, especially those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. This charge has never been more pressing. Indeed, the United States is becoming increasingly diverse yet teachers continue to be white, middle class females. Over 80% of ethnically and linguistically diverse students live in poverty yet most of their teachers are mono-lingual, middle-class and have been raised in suburban and rural communities (Children's Defense Fund, 2005).

Professional organizations such as the National Council of Teachers of English, the International Reading Association and the National Association for the Education of Young Children have adopted position statements that respond to the challenges of preparing teachers for diverse school settings and stress the importance of valuing language and cultures. NAEYC's position, for example, is as follows:

For the optimal development and learning of all children educators must accept the legitimacy of children's home language, respect (hold in high regard) and value (esteem, appreciate) the home culture, and promote and encourage the active involvement and support of all families, including extended and nontraditional family units (1995, p. 2)

Likewise, the professional organizations are very clear about the damaging effects of not valuing cultural and linguistic diversity. On the effects of losing a home language, NAEYC (1995) writes, "may result in the disruption of family communication patterns, which may lead to the loss of intergenerational wisdom; damage to individual and community esteem; and children's potential nonmastery of their home language or English" (p. 2).

Further, scholarship has demonstrated the way in which concerns over second language learners and cultural minorities' literacy development gets turned into a disability through ideologies of achievement and ability encoded in the special education referral and testing process (Dudley-Marling & Gurn, 2010; Gebhard, 2004; Rogers & Mancini, 2010). The over-representation of black and Latino in special education has been roundly criticized (e.g., Harry & Klingner, 2005;

Losen & Orfield, 2002). Many children placed in special education have difficulties from a lack of experience with literacy materials that could be remediated with effective literacy instruction (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 1995). There are many consequences of the over-representation of minority children in special education, including inequity in teachers, curriculum and expectations for students in lower tracks (Collins, 2009; Oakes, 1985) and a high correlation between school failure, dropout, and imprisonment (Losen & Orfield, 2002). Indeed, Meier, Stewart & England (1989) have argued that special education continues racial and linguistic segregation in schools achieving what is referred to as second-generation discrimination. Thus, difference continues to function as a “discursive tool for exercising white privilege and racism” (Blanchett, 2006, p. 24).

And, educators around the world—in North America, the UK, Australia, New Zealand and China have recommended that literacy instruction be linked to the cultural and linguistic practices that exist in children’s home communities (e.g., Heath, 1983; Clay, 1991; Pahl & Rowsell, 2010; Shi-xu, 2007). Literacy teacher educators have responded by developing “culturally responsive,” “multicultural,” “anti-racist” and “critical literacy” practices.

By critical literacy I refer to those approaches to literacy instruction whose emphasis is on helping people develop agency so that they can accomplish goals they deem important and resist the coercive effects of literacy (Dozier, Johnston, & Rogers, 2006; Freire, 1973; Luke, 2012; Rogers, Mosley, & Kramer, 2009). My commitment to fostering critical literacy education and teacher agency can be found both in the teacher education classroom and in the community. In 2000, I co-founded (with Mary Ann Kramer) a grassroots teacher group called the Literacy for Social Justice Group. This teacher-led group includes educators across the lifespan who are committed to realizing social justice education in schools and communities (see the website for examples of workshops and events [www.literacyforsocialjustice.com](http://www.literacyforsocialjustice.com)). This group provides a support network for educators to advocate for best practices, especially in the face of tightening educational reforms characteristic of neoliberal educational reforms (Rogers, Mosley & Folkes, 2009). Also in the spirit of public intellectualism and engaged scholarship, I serve as an elected school board member for a large urban school district and speak up on behalf of public education and educators (Rogers, 2012). In this chapter, I focus on fostering critical literacy education in the teacher education classroom but I join with others who advocate for the importance of crossing the boundaries between the university and community (Janks, 2009; Kinloch, 2012; Lipman, 2003; Morrell, 2007).

While critical literacy has been slow to find its way into teacher education in the US, it has been taken up for some time in Australia. The federally funded “Christie Report” (Christie et al., 1991) advocated for the inclusion of critical literacy as a core component of teacher education programs. While the proposal was not formally adopted, many teacher education programs in Australia feature components of critical literacy (Luke, 2000). There are reports of critical literacy in teacher education (e.g., Clarence-Fishman, 2001; Comber, Thomson, & Wells, 2001; Dozier et al., 2006;

Johnston, 2012; Leland, Harste, Jackson, & Youssef, 2001; Mosley, 2010; Rogers, in press; Souto-Manning, 2010; Wallace, 2001), but it is still very much in development and we know little about how teachers gain the pedagogical knowledge for critical literacy. In this chapter, I demonstrate the potential of critical literacy education to deepen awareness of power and language, cultivate the valuing of diversity, which in turn, supports teachers, as they develop culturally and linguistically diverse literacy pedagogies.

### THE POWER OF LANGUAGE

Literacy teachers are the primary brokers of language in the classroom. Verbal and non-verbal modes of meaning are the tools through which meanings are made, communicated, understood and transformed. All of these tools create the contexts of the classroom, many of which are invisible to teachers and students. Howard (2006) likens the invisibility of white privilege to white people, to water to fish. The same is true for language, especially for the majority of the teaching force who are mono-lingual and raised in societies that privilege a dominant language. Imagine asking a teacher education student “What is your theory of language?” They might look at you in puzzlement. “Theory of language? Why would I need a theory of language?” But their actions in the classroom are governed by deeply wired ideas about language: it is neutral, autonomous, develops incrementally and should be accurate. We see this theory of language translated into practice when they focus on spelling instead of ideas, or the hyper-correction of miscues or pronunciations as a child is reading or talking, or when a child is referred for special education testing because of differences in their language development.

Cambourne (2002) points out that we seem to forget what we know about the “conditions of learning” when our focus shifts from language acquisition to print literacy development. When a young child says “go mommy store,” the mother doesn’t say “you didn’t say that the right way.” Rather, she accepts the approximation, understands the message and continues to immerse the child in communicative contexts. The shift away from focusing on communication, to correctness occurs at just about the time a child enters school. The problem with this is when a teacher describes Aleshea, a second language learner as “not knowing sight words in English,” this language not only represents Aleshea but constructs her as a particular kind of learner, one who is deficient. If the teacher alters her description to focus on what Aleshea is proficient at we get a much different picture of who she is as a learner. “Aleshea can read and understand second grade level texts in Spanish. With support, she can identify a number of sight words in English.” It is quite a different task to plan a lesson for a child who understands stories in Spanish than one who knows just a few sight words.

What we say about our students’ learning has a great deal to do with the conditions that we set up for them as learners (Johnston, 2012). If we want students in our classes to learn, we must represent them as learners. This shift in emphasis changes the way we view students and our subsequent instructional actions. This is the view

of language that Michael Halliday espouses in his functional theory of language, embedded in systemic functional linguistics (SFL). SFL is oriented toward choice and privileges language users as agents making decisions about the social functions of their language use. This social semiotic theory operates on the understanding that meanings are always being invented and people have choices among representational systems from which to make meanings. Every utterance operates on three levels: textual (mode), interpersonal (tenor) and ideational (field). This theory of language is the foundation of critical literacy education.

Gee (2011) captures this relation between the form and function of language as “discourses” and “Discourses.” “discourses” are the language bits that comprise communicative events. This includes the hard and soft structures of language—grammar, morphology, intonation and so on. But these structures do not exist independent of the social function of language (large D Discourse). Discourses include the ways of using, being, and representing language. Discourses draw on and construct larger meta-narratives—narratives about gender, race, and class, for instance. Discourses play many roles in the classroom. They sustain, build, resist or transform existing narratives and ideologies. The goal of critical literacy teaching is to draw students’ attention to the ways in which discourses circulate, are constructed, and how they might design culturally and linguistically diverse pedagogies. On the role of building this critical language awareness, Janks (2000) writes:

Critical language awareness emphasizes the fact that texts are constructed. Anything that has been constructed can be de-constructed. This unmaking or unpacking of the text increases our awareness of the choices that the writer or speaker has made. Every choice foregrounds what was selected and hides, silences or backgrounds what was not selected (p. 176).

One of the responsibilities of literacy teacher educators is to set up the conditions where teachers can become confident and competent with critical literacy education, their own and the students with whom they work.

APPROACHES TO CRITICAL LITERACY EDUCATION AND ASSOCIATED  
TOOLS THAT FOSTER CRITICAL LANGUAGE AWARENESS AND,  
IN TURN, CULTURALLY DIVERSE LITERACY TEACHING

The Conference on English Education (CEE), one of the professional organizations that have written position statements on the importance of valuing linguistic and cultural diversity, takes the commitment one step farther. CEE belief #6 focuses on “Critical Users of Language” and states, “all students need to be taught mainstream power codes and become critical users of language while also having their home and street codes honored.” The focus is on reconciling the tension of recognizing and valuing primary language and culture and, at the same time, building knowledge and skills of the “code of power” which as the committee writes, “all language users have the right to be informed about and practiced in the dialect of the dominant

culture, also mythologized as ‘Standard English’ ... teachers need to foster critical examinations with their students of how particular codes came into power...” (p. 7). This inquiry into language and power is the foundation of critical literacy education.

When I set the stage for critical literacy in my teacher education classroom, I introduce three different approaches to critical literacy education: genre approaches, multiple literacy approaches and social justice approaches (Rogers, in press). This underscores the point that there is no one approach to critical literacy. Along the way, I have also found the dimensions of critical literacy set forth by Lewison, Leland & Harste (2007) very useful as well: disrupting the commonplace, focusing on the sociopolitical, examining multiple perspectives and taking action.

First, a genre approach to critical literacy focuses on the importance of students acquiring competence in the linguistic structures of dominant discourses through the analysis of the patterns of texts and the ways these structures carry out social functions. This tradition is influenced by the systemic linguistic theory of Halliday (1994) who points out that the grammatical aspects of texts can be traced to social and ideological functions in the world. Advocates of this approach argue for explicit instruction and direct access to genres of power (Cope, 1993; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Delpit & Kilgour Dowdy, 2002; Fairclough, 1992; Schaenen, 2010). Examples of this approach in practice include: the analysis of different advertisements for one product or different websites focused on a topic; reading and analyzing a biography of a person written by different authors; viewing and reading fractured fairytales represented in books or movies.

Another approach to critical literacy education is grounded in the concept of multiliteracies that sprang from the work of the New London Group (1996). The New London group called for a widening of the field of literacy studies to include those new forms of literacy made possible by digital technologies and globalized communication networks. They pointed out that new literacies should be used, critiqued, and studied. Teachers who embrace a multiple literacies approach to critical literacy education begin by inquiring into the literacies that exist in a learner’s life and find ways to integrate these literacies into the curriculum (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; New London Group, 1996). Tools for learning about students’ family and community resources might include: inquiring into family stories through interviews, documenting local literacies through community mapping or inviting parents and community members to be share their expertise (e.g., Marshall & Toohey, 2010; Pahl & Rowsell, 2010). Teachers using this approach also find ways to critique the production and interpretation of such texts. This is important because as Luke, O’Brien and Comber (1994) remind us, “left uninterrupted, everyday texts play major parts in building and reproducing social structures” (p. 113).

Third, a social justice approach to critical literacy is characterized by a “problem-posing, problem-solving” model of education that is rooted in dialogue between the teacher and learners. This approach seeks to move from critical analysis to social action and there is an explicit emphasis on working toward social justice (Comber et al., 2001; Silvers, Shorey & Crafton, 2010). Teachers who use this approach

ask: What issues genuinely motivate and energize my students? Using student issues to drive the curriculum is often a starting point with this approach. Comber, Thompson & Wells' (2001) developed a set of questions as the basis of this approach "What worries you?" "What do you like about your community?" "What do you want to change?" These questions provoke rich discussion around the issues that are interesting and motivating to students. From here, we can develop text sets that explicitly address social issues.

#### CRITICAL LITERACY AS A TOOL FOR FOSTERING DIVERSE PEDAGOGIES: A CASE EXAMPLE

This case example is drawn from a year-long teacher research project in our preservice literacy teacher education classroom (Rogers & Mosley, in press; Rogers & Mosley, 2010; Mosley & Rogers, 2011). The teacher education program was located at a university in St. Louis, MO, USA and followed a cohort model in which the students took courses together. The literacy courses were located at an urban elementary school in an African American community and included a practice teaching where the student teachers taught literacy to first and second grade students. The school was located in a district close to losing state accreditation and had adopted a scripted reading program that had all but eliminated culturally responsive education. Our class included fifteen students, fourteen of whom were European American. There was one African American woman enrolled in the class. Thirteen of the students were women. The students were diverse in terms of their geographic, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds. Melissa Mosley and myself were the teacher educators in the course. Like many of our students, we are white, speak English as our first language, and come from suburban communities. We have both participated in extensive anti-racism work.

In our teaching and research we pivoted between theories and practices of multicultural teaching (e.g., Banks, 1997), culturally relevant/responsive teaching (e.g., Ladson-Billings, 1994), and critical race/anti-racist teaching (e.g., Dei, 1996; Taylor, Gilborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2009). We integrated different approaches to critical literacy education throughout the course ((Rogers, in press; Rogers & Mosley, under contract).

We encouraged our students to elicit family stories and funds of knowledge from their students and use these as the basis for literacy instruction (Edwards, 1999; Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). This happened through the use of photographs and narratives told during the instructional time. Several of the teachers gave their students a disposable camera to take pictures of their family and community (Allen et al., 2002). The pictures were used as the basis for reading and writing. Other teachers used the "Comber prompts" (Comber et al., 2001) to generate dialogue, meaningful writing, and associated actions. We also asked our students to write their literacy autobiography. When we recognized that their autobiographies generally did not include an analysis of culture, power, and race we asked them to choose

three pieces of children's literature where they could locate themselves culturally and linguistically and revise their narratives.

We centralized inquiry into matters of language, identity, and power to cultivate critical literacy education. At times, this inquiry arose from a question or issue that surfaced in class. For instance, at one point we noticed many of our students were using the term "slang" to refer to African American Vernacular English (AAVE). This signaled to us the importance of spending time teaching about the history, culture, and linguistic background of AAVE. We accomplished this through mini-lectures in class, readings (Perry & Delpit, 1998; Wheeler & Swords, 2004) and student-led inquiry into language variety. And while we wanted our students to learn more about African American language and culture, we realized that this became a barrier to more deeply exploring their own racial and cultural positionings. Therefore, we launched an exploration into whiteness, white privilege, and anti-racism through readings, lectures, read-alouds, book clubs, group discussions and reflective essays. At other times, inquiry into language, power, and identity was built into the design of the course, as was the case with the book club that included themes of linguistic and cultural diversity such as *Noa's Ark: One Child's Voyage into Multiliteracy* (Schwartzter, 2001) and *Of Borders and Dreams* (Carger, 1996).

### *Inquiring Into Linguistic Diversity*

Throughout the year, our intention was to link language to historical contexts, to situate language issues alongside concerns such as domination and conflict and to foreground how these matters are the concern of literacy teachers. Here, I focus on just one student-led inquiry into linguistic diversity that culminated in the formation of a language committee and writing a letter to Dr. Mary Clay, a researcher who developed the reading intervention *Reading Recovery* (Clay, 1994). For a complete description and analysis of this inquiry project, see Rogers & Mosley Wetzel (in press).

It is essential for literacy teachers to understand the difference between reading difficulties and linguistic differences. Too often, linguistic differences are translated into deficits (Artiles, Rueda, Salazar, & Higareda, 2005). One way we sensitized our students' attention to this issue was through our practice of taking, scoring and interpreting running records, an assessment technique in which the teacher documents a student's miscues and strategies while they are reading orally (Clay, 1993). During practice running records, one of us would simulate the reading behaviors of a student, as they had been recorded in a running record. The preservice teachers would take a running record of our oral reading, then analyze the miscues and determine an accuracy rate, self-correction rate, and plan for instruction. We emphasized the importance of referring to students' reading behaviors as miscues rather than errors, the former which values approximations. We modeled miscue analysis for the group, thinking aloud about the linguistic resources the student used

when they made a miscue. We would ask: Because children always strive to make meaning, what does this miscue tell us about how the child is making meaning?

One practice running record included examples of African American Vernacular English, the term we used to describe the syntactical structures and pronunciation patterns used by many of the African American students at the urban elementary school (Baugh, 1999; Rickford, 1999). During the miscue analysis, one of the teacher education students asked, “should linguistic variation be counted as an error in a running record?” Students argued they needed to know what resources students used when reading a book written in Standard English, to bridge AAVE to Standard English grammar and phonology. However, the question came up, if AAVE is a rule-governed language, is the use of that language ever an error? Further, if they did not record the linguistic resources their student did call on in their reading, were they ignoring their students’ cultural and linguistic identities? Their discussion was energized. They had been reading about linguistic and cultural diversity in the literacy curriculum and we were pleased to see how they were wrestling with theory and practice. Rather than simply provide an answer to their question, we wanted them to think about the various perspectives on this issue and what this meant for representing children’s literacy learning. In essence, we saw this as an opportunity to widen the space for critical literacy in our teacher education classroom.

We asked our students to sort through these questions in the context of the whole running record with colleagues at their tables. One group looked through a copy of Clay’s (1993) *An Observation Survey* trying to find a passage that addressed linguistic diversity in assessments. As I listened to them grapple with the complexities of recording and analyzing linguistic diversity, I noted that this was an issue that we could ask Dr. Clay about. Lisa immediately responded, “We should write her a letter!”

Melissa and I encouraged their initiative and they invited their colleagues to join a “language committee” that would be charged with writing a letter to Marie Clay. We ended class by giving the students a question to respond to in writing for the following class. “What are your thoughts about recording and interpreting linguistic variations when you are taking a running record? Outline what you see as the major issues and how you would resolve this in our recording of oral reading...” Between classes, the language committee consulted with me about their work and did some additional reading in Clay’s (1991) *Becoming Literate* where she discusses language diversity.

The committee gathered the responses from their colleagues, analyzed the documents for patterns and shared their analysis with the rest of the class. The class agreed that because the miscue was based on a student’s primary language and did not obstruct meaning, then it should not be counted as an error. It should, however, be taken note of, so a teacher could learn more about their student’s linguistic resources. And, use this knowledge to help students gain access to book language, or what Delpit (1995) refers to as the “codes of power” (p. 40). They also raised a number of

issues about the politics of representation, labeling students, code-switching and the importance of culture and language and identity.

When the language committee began working on the letter project outside of class time, it was clear to us that our students' interest in analyzing language and power was sparked. We could see how they were critically analyzing language—both how students' language should be represented and how teachers might represent language diversity in their assessments. The language committee wrote a letter to Dr. Marie Clay outlining their beliefs about language diversity and literacy learning and asking her how to account for language diversity in the running record.

Dr. Clay responded to our students. In her letter, she emphasized that a running record is not a test but a record of a child's reading behaviors. She pointed out that the child's reading may not match the written text for a number of reasons. For instance, the student may be learning English at the same time she is learning to read or because, drawing upon her oral language, her home dialect tells her to expect different words in the text from what is written. Dr. Clay cleverly concluded the letter by asking the students to decide what to do with her spelling 'errors' of the words 'behaviours' and 'judgement.'

We were pleased by how the preservice teachers claimed the space we made for critical literacy in our classroom. They generated many ideas cultivating diverse pedagogies, including: using literature, music and poetry that included language diversity; clearly establishing contexts for language use so that students could learn how to code-switch; engaging in contrastive analysis of languages; encouraging exploration and a love of language. As they inquired into linguistic diversity, they did so using critical literacy frameworks which, in turn, deepened their understanding and value of diversity. To return to the dimensions of critical literacy outlined by Lewison, Leland, and Harste (2007), they *disrupted the commonplace* by positioning themselves as inquirers and constructors of knowledge. They considered *multiple perspectives*, drawing on their classmates' thoughts to write a letter that was multi-vocal. They focused on the *sociopolitical issue* of language diversity and access to the codes of power. Finally, they *took action* by extending the conversation beyond their classroom space and writing to a leading expert in the field.

## DISCUSSION

Many of us charged with teaching teachers have been faced with the nagging question, how will we prepare critical literacy teachers? And, what will these educational practices look like? In this chapter, I discussed the core tenets of critical literacy education: attention to language, power and inquiry. Throughout, I have argued that critical literacy education holds the potential to deepen our awareness of language and power and cultivate the valuing of diversity which, in turn, supports the development of culturally and linguistically diverse pedagogies. And because language is never neutral, teachers and teacher educators can work

to examine the material and discursive structures of social practices so that we might be more responsive and responsible to our students, their families and our communities.

Where will we find the time? Teacher educators, like pre-kindergarten-12 teachers, find constraints on their time and content of their teaching. It is important to reiterate that critical literacy is a stance toward texts, discourses, and social practices, not a new approach. In the example I provided, when students in this teacher education class posed a genuine question that we knew would be the basis for inquiry and action, we invited them to go deeply in their inquiry around linguistic diversity. The goal was to provide a model that they would, in turn, use with their students. Indeed, it has been well established that it may be teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward language diversity that is the most detrimental in learning to read (Compton-Lilly, 2005; Solorzano & Yossi, 2001). The intention was to provide the preservice teachers with multiple opportunities to reflect on their assumptions about language diversity and build new knowledge. Along the way, we built powerful literacies with the students with whom they were responsible for teaching.

As teacher educators, we have to actively seek out the diversity that exists within seemingly homogenous groups of students. Bringing these cultural and linguistic resources into the learning space provides a powerful model of practices. The teacher education students came to this classroom with histories as discourse analysts—they just don't know that is what they are doing. Drawing their attention to these practices is useful. For example, how they read Internet texts looking for the fine print or to compare information across sites. They know when they are being duped by and with language. The role of critical literacy teacher educators is to put this inclination to critically analyze discourses to work in literacy education. Creating space for them to do this kind of intellectual work may be just the kind of intellectual nudge they need to do the same in their own classrooms.

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## LITERACY EDUCATION AND GENDER: WHICH BOYS? WHICH GIRLS?

### INTRODUCTION

When I began researching material in literacy and gender several years ago (Booth, 2002), I was intrigued with the dozens of books and research articles documenting issues in male culture and in raising and schooling boys. Government reports, education journals, and books by authors with differing viewpoints have continued to appear on page and online; some emphasize biological differences in males and females; others take a socio-constructivist approach; others want to create boy-friendly environments; still others struggle to promote the literary canon (Elliott-Johns & Booth, 2009). As teacher educators, we will need to consider these concerns, and to develop programs and resources for teachers who will be helping boys and girls take control of their literacy lives.

We will want to help student teachers uncover many of the assumptions and stereotypes about how boys and girls cope. If we believe that all students should have access to literacy proficiency, we need to ensure that both boys and girls see themselves as readers and writers who can handle the requirements with the variety of literacy texts, on page and on screen of interpreting and constructing a variety of text forms and modes.

As teacher educators responding to new studies and initiatives promoting programs for supporting boys' literacy proficiency, we don't want to generate or fuel new problems for girls. The education of boys is closely connected to the education of girls, and education philosophies and policies on gender will directly influence both (Elliott-Johns & Booth, 2009). As well, there are diverse opinions about the origin and even the nature of the problems that we find inside such a discussion. We will need to move our student teachers forward into understanding the dynamics of how boys and girls construct their gendered literacy lives so that educational change benefits all students.

We know that no single category includes all boys or all girls. We don't want to compress all boys' literacy behaviors, tastes and attitudes into one single frame, but rather recognize the diversity among groups of boys. But as we look at studies and reports that examine boys and girls and their learning styles and special interests, their growth patterns and their stages of intellectual development, we do notice differences, not in all boys or in all girls, but enough of them to cause us to reflect about our demands on their young lives (Brozo, 2010).

There are definite issues with the ways in which many boys view themselves as literate beings, with how they approach the acts of reading and writing, and with how they respond to assessments of their skills (Rowe & Rowe, 2006). Teachers who work in classrooms with many more boys than girls, or who teach single-gender classes, often express their concerns about differences in interests, abilities and learning styles, and the faltering boys' test scores internationally have opened useful discussions on these issues of literacy and gender that can inform our professional interactions.

#### RESEARCH IN GENDER AND LITERACY ATTAINMENT

Formal assessment results are most often used as the reason for implementing strategic changes in classroom pedagogy, as schools, districts, provinces, and states attempt to create initiatives for increasing achievement results. Previously, research conducted on gender and education focused on the issues of females (Weaver-Hightower, 2003). Studies had shown that females were disadvantaged relative to males as part of the hidden curriculum implicitly taught to students, and often overlooked by educators (Benevides, 2010). Traditionally, males have outperformed females in science and mathematics but this gap is gradually narrowing, and more women than men are attending university.

During the past ten years, there has been a great deal of assessment, research, and critical examination of the issue of boys' literacy attainment in Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand, and there is growing awareness in the United States. Much documentation has been carried out by government departments/ministries, universities, researchers, educators and authors specializing in the field of gender and literacy (Booth, Elliot-Johns & Bruce, 2010). In actuality, this concern with the boys' lagging literacy attainment has been going on for over thirty-five years (National Assessment of Literacy Progress NAEP, 2012), also revealing that the literacy gap grows as boys continue through school.

Today, educators are faced with the challenge of teaching an extremely complex curriculum and preparing students to be life-long learners who will become engaged, literate, members of society. As in other jurisdictions, the Ministry of Education for Ontario has implemented a system of standards-based education and province-wide testing in an effort to increase student achievement, and differences in literacy scores between boys and girls from these standardized tests have caused school districts to focus on ways to implement change.

The international research agency, PISA (PISA, 2009) confirmed a significant gender gap in reading and writing in all participating countries, with girls performing significantly better than boys on reading and writing tests (*PISA Executive Summary*). The 2010 *State of Learning in Canada: No Time for Complacency* report found that for 2000, 2003 and 2006, girls score on average 32 points higher than boys in reading, and that boys have more difficulties in language and learning, and 11% more female students than males met the expected level in writing. In Ontario over the last

decade, the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO 2011) Literacy Test Scores for grade 3 revealed that boys scored lower (for reading and writing respectively) than girls. For grade 6, scores were better, but boys still scored lower.

### *Interpreting the Assessment Data*

Schools are implementing different strategies to improve the literacy performance of students, and while scores have improved for both girls and boys, girls continue to outperform boys on standardized assessment procedures. The gender gap remains but is stabilizing after widening for a short period. However, many boys achieve extremely well in all areas of literacy, while some girls underachieve, and in many schools. Teachers will need to interpret the data and explore reasons for differences in gender and achievement (Martino, 2008). For example, poverty still appears to be the biggest obstacle to literacy achievement (National Literacy Trust, 2011).

Fortunately, we can benefit from the educational reforms that grew from the changes associated with girls: we can apply those principles of gender equity to the educational needs of boys, even though in many ways, that very system of schooling may have formerly marginalized girls and privileged some boys. Teachers will need to recognize gender differences and know how to respond appropriately to diversities. Not all boys are failing reading tests, doing less well than girls, or ‘hate’ to read. “It is important to ask which boys in order to avoid a ‘one-size fits all’ approach to instruction” (Booth, Elliott-Johns, & Bruce, 2010, p. 7).

### WHICH BOYS, WHICH GIRLS?

How do individuals acquire gender? Very young children notice and respond to visible differences in boys and girls, and these gender differences will be fundamental to their lives and how they will interact in society (Dietze & Kasin, 2012). Nature and nurture have become catch words, but how the brain thinks, genes, hormones, how the unconscious works, the affective and emotional factors, linguistics, the social, economic and cultural structures surrounding the child—all of these factors will contribute to the child’s perception of identity and gender. Authors such as Michael Gurian (2006), Michael Reist (2011), Steve Biddulph (2004) and Leonard Sax (2009) have written widely on boy-girl differences, and are advocates for supporting school success for boys by creating *boy-friendly* environments. However, in the nature versus nurture debate, William Saletan (2011) comments that:

the word *hardwired* is a misleading metaphor for explaining the brain. Brains, unlike computers, are constantly altered by experience. So while scans may show differences between men’s and women’s brains, that doesn’t prove the differences are innate. So, yes, hormones influence how we think. But we, in turn, can influence our hormones. ([http://www.slate.com/articles/health\\_and\\_science/human\\_nature/2011/11/](http://www.slate.com/articles/health_and_science/human_nature/2011/11/))

Susan Gilbert (2000) says, “Biological differences may endow boys and girls with different strengths and weaknesses to start with, but experience shows they don’t close doors. Boys and girls achieve the same overall scores on several different intelligence tests. It is estimated that a child’s general IQ is 30 percent to 40 percent inherited genetics. “The remainder is shaped by the quality of life experiences” (p. 112). And Eliot (2010) claims that there is plenty of plasticity in every child’s brain to nudge them in either the empathetic or assertive direction” (p. 294).

At school entry, most girls are ahead of boys in their verbal skills, and in phonological development, so their transition to reading and writing, supported by the development of their fine motor skills, gives them an advantage over many boys. Boys appear more frequently in special education classes, or drop out more often, and are less likely to become university students. Males are more likely to have a reading disability, and are twice as likely to have a learning disability (Bainbridge & Heydon, 2013). Eighty percent of autistic children are male; there are two boys diagnosed as dyslexic for each girl; boys are twice as likely to be diagnosed with ADHD as girls, and 5 to 1 are prescribed Ritalin. Boys are more likely than girls to attend special schools, and boys are four times as likely as girls to be identified as having a behavioral, emotional, or social difficulty (Rutter et al., 2004). Interestingly, females are often asked fewer complex questions, and may receive less constructive feedback. Girls may be better at writing tests, or at understanding how tests work. More girls are selected for enrichment programs in elementary schools, but fewer remain in those programs in secondary schools. There are problems for boys related to motivation, lack of engagement, or frustration with extended reading or rewriting. Enjoyment of reading tends to have lessened, especially among boys, signaling the challenge for schools to engage students in reading activities that they find relevant and interesting (OECD, PISA 2011). On average across the participating countries, the percentage of students who said they read for enjoyment every day fell from 69% in 2000 to 64% in 2009. However, the term “reading” may centre mainly on fictional narratives, omitting the variety of other texts that many boys are actually reading.

To help us consider students’ behaviors and attitudes, Smith and Wilhelm (2002) have summarized the differences educators have noted concerning boys and girls:

- Boys take longer to learn to read than girls;
- Boys read less than girls, and the larger the gap in reading time, the larger the gap on reading test-scores in high school;
- Girls tend to comprehend narrative texts and most expository texts significantly better than boys do;
- Boys tend to be better at information retrieval and work-related literacy task than many girls;
- Boys generally provide lower estimations of their reading abilities than girls do;
- Boys value reading as an activity less than girls;
- Boys have much less interest in leisure reading and are far more likely to read for utilitarian purposes than girls;

- Boys spend less time reading and express less enthusiasm for reading than girls, defining reading as solitary, nonsocial behaviour;
- Boys increasingly consider themselves to be ‘non-readers’ as they get older; very few designate themselves as such early in their schooling, but nearly 50 percent make that designation by high school.

(p.10–11)

Most likely, boys start out with slightly less mature circuits for processing words, and language experience widens this gap as boys and girls start paying attention to different features of their environment. This is all the more reason to talk, read and sing a lot to them, to perhaps lengthen those dendrites and stimulate their left hemispheres in a way that girls’ brains may seek out more on their own (Eliot, 2010, p. 189).

There also may be stereotypical expectations held by many parents, teachers, and society at large, that boys are stronger in mathematics and sciences and girls in the arts and humanities. However, in *Pink Brain, Blue Brain*, neuroscientist Lise Eliot (2010) argues against stereotypes, claiming that boys are not better at math, but excel at certain types of spatial reasoning, and that girls, rather than being normally empathetic, are allowed to express their feelings more than boys.

#### SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL STRUCTURES

What it means to be a boy or a girl in school can depend to a large degree upon the school’s culture or the classroom’s subculture. Schools can and do influence gender differences in academic achievement. The literacy curriculum may more closely align with the reading attitudes and interests of girls than boys, and many boys feel their reading preferences are not valued in the school-defined literacy environment (Tompkins et al., 2011). Even though programs incorporate masculine texts that may reinforce traditional gender patterns, many boys become alienated from these resources, and see literacy endeavours as valuing female knowledge and behaviors over their interests (Elliott-Johns & Booth, 2009).

If schools encourage a narrow understanding of what masculine behavior should resemble, then that will have an impact on how boys see themselves and how they are seen by others of both sexes. So much of what boys read, how they respond in public, how they capture their thoughts and feelings in writing, is determined by the unwritten but real expectations of school life (Newkirk, 2002).

Many boys and girls have different types of school experiences, such as teachers requiring and rewarding different kinds of behavior from girls and from boys, and, of course, from different boys. For example, some boys may receive more teacher attention than girls, much of it negative, and boys are often disciplined more harshly for the same misbehaviors.

Some researchers feel that the present focus on the boys’ agenda is short term and essentialist (Martino & Kehler, 2007), perpetuating conventional masculine

stereotypes rather than working toward a diversity and multiplicity of gender constructions' (Younger, 2007). They want schools to lead a movement to alter the dominant versions of masculinity in our society, to open up different and multiple forms of behaviors for boys to consider.

However, in the research report *Raising Boys' Achievements* (Younger & Warrington, 2005), the authors point out that

there are typical patterns of behaviour to which many boys conform, and that although boys are not an undifferentiated group, there are broad similarities within subgroups which allow valid generalizations to be made, and if similar groups of boys are compared with similar groups of girls, there is evidence of lower levels of attainment by boys (p. 19).

The boys and girls student teachers will meet in their classrooms come with different life experiences, knowledge, and sets of skills. They may also be at different developmental stages. We do note, however, patterns common to many boys' and girls' behaviors. Not surprising, the students themselves share clear definitions of what a boy or a girl is at very early ages. As well, many girls and boys have grown to prefer different subject areas and different learning strategies. In literacy teaching, these factors may cause us to re-evaluate our programs so that more boys will view language arts activities as useful or worthwhile. We will need to develop literacy programs that provide for different interests and include strategies that appeal to a variety of learners.

What are the factors that appear to influence literacy achievement in boys and how will classroom teachers address them? As educators, we do want teachers to work toward equity in our classrooms: acquire resources that are bias-free, use inclusive or gender-neutral language, and organize activities that welcome the strengths of different individuals (Hammett and Sanford, 2008). Boys and girls need to develop literacy behaviors and skills, but they also need to understand the relationship between gender and how they will read, write and respond. We will need to help teachers to identify the diversity within groups of girls and boys, to highlight multiple forms of literacy and literate practice, and to value different gendered behaviors.

#### READING INSTRUCTION AND GENDER

The noted educator James Moffett (1975) said nearly forty years ago that we need to make the solitary acts of reading and writing socially constructed events if we want to promote literacy development in young people, and I now add, especially for boys. The "peer group imperative" demonstrated every day may be our greatest classroom asset. While many boys prefer to read information books and girls read more fiction, classroom programs can alter these behaviors when teachers incorporate literature circles and inquiry projects using different themes and resources, on page and online, that can support appropriate choices by girls and boys.

*Redefining Literacy*

Today, as educators, we have come to understand that there are multiple literacies: we recognize the variety of ways to make shared meaning in our lives- language, of course, (both oral and written), music, art, dance, and all the symbol systems (Baker, 2010). For young people today, learning will require opportunities to explore meaning-making with many of these forms, and in new combinations of them, such as the visual text literacies found in their electronic, computer-filled worlds. There is not one definition of *literacy* since literacy practices are multiple and shift, based on the context, speaker, text, and the function of the literacy event. (e.g., doing a Google search).

Even our definition of the term *text* has gone beyond the traditional acts of reading and writing using an alphabetic code or symbol system, to include digital technology, images, sounds, and oral discourse. Now we refer to a text as a medium with which we make meaning (an audio book, a speech, a magazine, a painting, a film, a computer screen, narratives, information, lists, opinions, persuasive editorials, poetry, songs, scripts, instructions and procedures, graphic texts, etc.).

Our definitions of reading and reading instruction are changing rapidly. A multitude of literacy forms and formats fill the lives of our students. Now we have youngsters at all levels working with word processors, chat lines, blogs, emails, text messages, web searches, Photoshop, and so on. And all of these activities are literacy events. Boys and girls are reading, and especially writing, more than ever. But we need to consider the quality of the literacy events they are engaging in, the kinds of learning processes they are exploring, and what language options they may be minimizing, or even missing. We can be plugged-in at times, and still gather together and sit in a circle, to listen to a tale 2,000 years old.

Martino (2001) suggests that boys may be engaging in literate practices outside school that are not reflected in their poor literacy test results, and that “the boys may be advantaged with electronic forms of literate practice useful in the changing post-industrial labour market” (p. 23). Tapscott, in *Grown up Digital* (2009), strengthens this argument.

Current research supporting the use of computers in the classroom has been overwhelmingly optimistic. Many students find that the computer and hand-held devices offer support for reading, writing and researching, and boys often develop a more positive approach to literacy activities. One of technology’s great appeals is that it is intrinsically motivating, and students have a great deal of autonomy in their investigations. We need to be aware that computer use may affect development in areas that boys should and need to cultivate, such as collaborative learning and creating a meta-awareness of texts they read.

It is important to note that girls and boys may come to technology in different ways. Although girls have narrowed the gender gaps in math and science, technology remains largely dominated by boys. Girls consistently rate themselves lower than boys on computer ability, while boys exhibit higher self-confidence and a more positive attitude about computers than girls do. Boys use computers outside of

school more often than girls (Hammett & Sanford, 2008). Just as many boys prefer resources (e.g., books, magazines, websites, and so on.) that favor facts over fiction, they respond to the factual and multimodal (written, image, sound, animation) nature of the Internet.

It is evident that boys can read, but are selective in what they read; they use reading strategies that they have adopted in school and have morphed them to help make sense of new literacies that appeal to them. (Sanford, 2002 p. 25)

Schools need to recognize and value the types of reading that many boys are engaged in and provide links between school and ‘socially oriented’ reading, such as including graphic novels and technologically-based texts in their literacy programs. Conversely, teachers need to include more technical and factual reading for girls to prepare them for their future lives. If educators incorporate popular and contemporary texts that interest young people through the content and style, and if they develop their literacy strategies, students may approach and participate in the reading of a wider variety and complexity of texts, online and on screen.

#### GENDER AND WRITING PROFICIENCY

Understanding the gendered nature of some writing behaviors offers new hope for more effective teaching and learning, but only if we better understand what literacy looks like for many boys and girls and how our classroom practices relate to what they are (or are not) learning. Spence (2008) wants preservice and in-service teachers to learn about creating classroom environments for writing, with effective instructional frameworks and authentic pedagogy with diversity as a focus.

In a special issue of the *Journal of Writing Research* (Stagg Peterson and Parr, 2012) devoted to gender and writing, several issues were synthesized from decades of research on gender patterns in what and how students write. While the impetus for much of the research was generated by gender disparities in large-scale assessments of writing, the researchers focused on the multiple ways that gender can be negotiated in the writing classroom. The insights from the articles can help us understand the issues affecting the writing behaviors of girls and boys, and support changes in our practice. The authors explore the socio-cultural factors that can influence gender differences in student writing, the degree of anxiety associated with the process of writing, the relationship between self-worth and writing, how girls are learning at an earlier stage than boys to develop their transcription skills, and how boys tended to adopt a *report talk* style while girls tended to adopt a *rappor talk* style, speaking at length of human actions, intentions and feelings.

As well, we will need to recognize that the writing content for many boys and girls often differs, as Elliot and Woloshyn (2013) report:

In general, boys prefer to write about adventures and events beyond their immediate experiences. They tend to produce action-based compositions

(with or without violence) with main characters who often act alone. Their writings usually contain few female characters ... who assume passive roles (Anderson, 2003, Newkirk, 2000). Girls prefer writing about events within their experiences, including interactions with friends and family. Their work is more likely to be social in nature, with characters who work collaboratively (Anderson 2003 p. 260).

Since many boys need help and motivation in planning, revising, and editing their written work, we can employ other types of texts besides personal narrative for them to explore, opening up their familiarity with the whole world of written forms (Jones, 2012). We will need to help them to develop writing topics that matter, and to find authentic reasons for having boys engage in written activities. We can include technological support, such as composing on computers, using voice-recognition software, as well as visual templates- diagrams such as story boards, graphic organizers and mind mapping tools for organizing, drafting and revision.

We can also make better connections between writing and the curriculum we teach: science and social studies offer opportunities for representing students' knowledge and questions about the issues they are exploring. Many boys can derive respect as writers from their peers as they work with forms and formats often ignored in the traditional writers' workshop.

#### SUPPORTING DIFFERENTIATED LITERACY INSTRUCTION AS TEACHER EDUCATORS

As teacher educators, we can establish a set of criteria drawn from research and practice that promotes equity in classrooms, recognizes diversities among boys and among girls, and works toward an awareness of the implications of gender in literacy education.

##### *Encourage the Development of School Communities*

With our student teachers, we can promote the importance of establishing a learning community, where both boys and girls can participate in the on-going literacy life of the classroom, where they come to value reading and writing in all its forms and formats, where they begin to support one another in developing the attitudes and strategies required as lifelong learners, and where teachers model and demonstrate significant types of literacy activities.

Many school districts are implementing pilot projects in organizing single-gender schools, classrooms or subjects, and many teachers, parents, and students support this attempt at structuring these environments for increasing achievement (Demaske, 2010). Some critics call these attempts *band-aid* solutions (Eliot, 2010), but for some boys and girls, and their parents and teachers, this approach appears to support learning: "Boys and girls may benefit by engaging, but not exclusively,

in some single-sex learning and recreational activities” (Demers and Bennett, 2007, p. 7). However, as Eliot states, “co-ed schools need to remove their neutral blinders and accept that gender is an important basis of children’s individual needs” (2010, p. 213). Therefore we will want to discover with our new teachers ways of ensuring that boys have male literacy models in their lives, so that they will associate reading and writing activities with other boys and male adults (Spence, 2008).

### *Recognize that Every Child Matters as a Learner*

We will want to promote an understanding of and an appreciation for the developing characteristics and behaviors of individual boys and girls in a variety of literacy situations, and assist student teachers in how to recognize the effect of gender and social issues on literacy lives of their students. Each child’s response to a text will be unique for a variety of reasons: social experience, gender, cultural connections, peer group, and teacher expectations, personal interpretations of words and expressions, knowledge of strategies, relationships with others, and a critical understanding of the author’s message. ELL students will require continual support, building on and incorporating their first-language literacy backgrounds (Reichert, Hawley & Tyre, 2011).

We can feature and promote strategies that will help our student teachers provide organizational support for boys in difficulty with their schoolwork, such as daily planners or electronic organizers, and share methods for helping them in breaking down large tasks and projects into smaller components with micro deadlines, as well as offering opportunities for supportive feedback during conferences.

### *Provide an Enriched Environment*

We will need to discuss and offer resources for helping student teachers in creating classroom climates that support both boys and girls. Smith and Wilhelm (2002) suggest we look carefully at the “...individual differences, variety, and plurality that make diversity a strength of our classrooms” (p. 184), rather than identifying achievements and needs only through test scores and statistical averages in which those differences quickly become lost. We can help student teachers locate resources, both in print and online, for all types of readers, from beginning readers to gifted, mature readers, and for readers with different language and cultural backgrounds and interests. For example, the support document *Me Read? And How!* (Ontario Ministry of Education 2009) draws from the broad range of learning on boys’ literacy development, and promotes user-friendly specific strategies.

### *Include a Repertoire of Reading Strategies*

Student teachers will need to understand how a reader is constructed, what factors affect literacy development, and especially how boys could see themselves as

literate members of society (Cleveland, 2012). We will need to provide methods and strategies for literacy instruction that can help boys and girls who are non-readers or limited readers enter the literacy world as proficient readers and writers (Schwartz & Pollishuke, 2013, Parr & Campbell, 2012).

*Recognize Speaking and Listening as Integral to Literacy Development*

We will need to include speaking and listening as significant components of literacy, and explore strategies with student teachers that promote authentic language experiences where students engage in authentic conversations, formulate their own questions about the topics and issues being investigated, helping them to “own” the discussion, to find their “voices,” and to act as agents of their own learning. Where boys are most successful as learners and in literacy, they have had consistent opportunities for different kinds of talk from very early in their schooling (Elliott-Johns, Booth, Rowsell, Puig & Paterson, 2012).

*Incorporate a Variety of Flexible Groupings*

We will need to explore with the student teachers the many reasons and strategies for having students work in different types of groups, from partners to literature circles to whole class meetings, in order to achieve different goals and outcomes. Student teachers can acquire methods for creating fluid groupings and regroupings of students for different reading and writing events, sometimes by student choice, by need or ability, and by gender, so that students can experience a variety of teaching/learning situations.

*Integrate Reading and Writing across the Curriculum Through Inquiries*

We can assist student teachers in discovering opportunities for boys and girls to engage in active inquiries on themes and issues that interest them, sometimes curriculum connected, and incorporating multimodalities (Internet, books, articles, interviews, and so on). The students can see themselves as the experts in their classrooms through their personal choices for research, and the subsequent reading, writing and discussion events can lead to presentations, demonstrations and sharing of their inquiries.

*Include the Arts as Literacy*

Student teachers can discover the power that the arts can bring to students' literacy learning as they develop activities that encourage students to express and communicate their ideas and feelings, both in constructing and creative processes, and in interpretive responses to texts (Booth & Masayuki, 2004). By teacher educators highlighting for student teachers how incorporating the arts in

the classroom literacy program can open up new possibilities for meaning-making in a variety of modes and forms, they may in their own classrooms motivate their students into representing and interpreting their thoughts and emotions. As well, technology can inform different types of literacy activities, and can engage many boys in responding to and composing a variety of text forms.

*Incorporate Ongoing Assessment for Teaching and Learning*

We need to offer new teachers strategies for monitoring, tracking, assessing, and reflecting upon each student's literacy progress, to enable both boys and girls to recognize their strengths and uncover their problems. They will then be able to design effective instruction for supporting each student's literacy growth.

SUMMARY

We will want to provide our student teachers with research-based strategies and methods that will support both boys and girls in their literacy development.

While boys' achievement is improving, the problems of gender difference are connected to a range of factors situated in the society and culture in which boys and girls live, the complex interactions of the variables in their lives, the nature of the individual, the family, the culture of the peer group, the relationship of home and school, the philosophy of the school, the availability of resources, the strategies the teacher incorporates in the classroom program, and the changing nature of literacy. (Elliott-Johns & Booth, 2010 p. 61)

The current and future research and practice in gender behaviors have the potential to inform curriculum development for teacher education programs in literacy instruction. Understanding the relationship among societal factors, literacy achievement and gender can benefit those involved in curriculum design. We would hope that all educators would support best literacy practices for all classrooms while recognizing and appreciating the range of gender diversity (Watson, Kehler & Martino, 2012). Our goals should be to expand the teaching repertoires of our student teachers so that they do not prioritize the learning of one gender over the other. By building and maintaining a classroom culture of literacy that accepts the range and interests of each of the students, both girls and boys, yet expands and enriches their experiences, future teachers will offer their students an equitable and fair learning environment, filled with possibilities.

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## LITERACY EDUCATION AND GENDER: WHICH BOYS? WHICH GIRLS?

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## WALKING THE TALK

### *Towards a Notion of Multiliteracies in Literacy Teacher Education*

The roots of multiliteracies rely on a message of hope about what education can be. Grounded on principles of inclusion and equity, the New London Group (1996) sought to create a vision of schooling that is contemporary and that is harnessed to present-day realities and demands. As Mary Kalantzis and Bill Cope contend, hopefully: “Education is something that modernizing people almost unequivocally want” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, p. 121). There may not be agreement about what contemporary education needs or demands, but there should be a common desire to modernize education given different, pressing changes in communication and new technologies as well as globalizing shifts in local contexts. In the spirit of and with fidelity to a multiliteracies pedagogy, we set out to write this chapter by revisiting a literacy teacher education course that we both taught that was developed, planned, taught, and now studied/analyzed based on the multiliteracies framework established by the New London Group. The chapter begins with a look at multiliteracies, then we present our data and analysis, and from there identify broader findings on the future of literacy teacher education.

### A MULTILITERACIES PEDAGOGY

Technological advancements in our rapidly evolving and increasingly globalized world have changed the nature of what it means to communicate. Children, adolescents, adults and seniors today engage daily in new communicative practices, with new tools, using diverse and multiple modes, and across global landscapes. Being “literate” in contemporary society means much more mastery of the mechanics of reading and writing composition; communicative competencies with digital technology are a social and economic necessity. Because today’s world calls for tech-savvy citizens, education is answering the call for inclusion of technology in the classroom.

The pitfall of “implementing technology for technology’s sake” (Borsheim, Merritt, & Reed, 2008, p. 87) awaits the educator and/or institution who in their rush to incorporate technology-based instruction do not give enough thoughtful consideration to the pedagogy of technology-based instruction.

One model for thinking about meaning-making is the multiliteracies framework (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). The New London Group (1996) created the term “multiliteracies” to refer to the new and multiple literacies emerging due to the

proliferation of technologies and cultural and linguistic diversity that are characteristics of contemporary communicative practices. Multiliteracies pedagogy builds on Street's (1985, 1995) discussion of literacy as a social practice and the work of scholars in the New Literacy Studies. Street conceived of an ideological model of literacy to take account of the social practices and frameworks of society. Another field that was key to the evolution of multiliteracies is critical literacy as a field of theory, research and practice that investigated issues of power and interrogated positioning in texts. Critical literacy is a field in its own right that strongly informs multiliteracies.

In the age of increased global connectedness and cultural, linguistic, and societal diversity, often referred to as "the shift" (Richardson, 2006), the conception of literacy as a social practice and twenty-first century multiliteracies-based pedagogy becomes complex and varied. Twenty-first century multiliteracies pedagogy involves pedagogical consideration of skills that are associated with the consumption, production, evaluation and distribution of digital texts (Borsheim et al., 2008), conventional texts, and global texts as expressions of meaning and communication in order to prepare students for full and equal participation in contemporary society. Anstey and Bull (2006) define a multiliterate person as:

flexible and strategic and can understand and use literacy and literate practices with a range of texts and technologies; in socially responsible ways; in a socially, culturally and linguistically diverse world and to fully participate in life as an active and informed citizen. (p. 55)

Accordingly, educators who embrace multiliteracies pedagogy will provide:

... ample opportunities to access, evaluate, search, sort, gather, and read information from a variety of multimedia and multimodal sources and invite students to collaborate in real and virtual spaces to produce and publish multimedia and multimodal texts for a variety of audiences and purposes. (Borsheim, et al. 2008, p. 87)

The New London Group's model for a multiliteracies pedagogy consists of a cycle of four stages: situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing, and transformed practice. Pahl and Rowsell (2006) assert that when students are immersed in learning through situated practices, they will use their previous experiences to build on literacy learning, thus enabling learning from first-hand experience of meaning-making in context-specific ways. Overt instruction complements the situated learning that students engage in. Overt instruction, as a support for students' situated learning, is operationalized through teachers' scaffolding of instruction (The New London Group, 1996; Unsworth, 2008). Caution is warranted as overt instruction can be misunderstood as drill and practice. Overt instruction is directed teaching that aims to help students realize "how" they are learning. This understanding is crucial to supporting students' critical thinking skills through critical framing.

It is often easier to critique and question one's knowledge when removing it from context. Pahl and Rowsell (2006) suggest teachers have students interpret or

question why something works the way it does. Harste (2003) believes it is essential to provide “opportunities for students to explore their own inquiry questions using reading, writing and other sign systems as tools and toys for learning ... to reposition themselves, gather information, change perspectives, re-theorize issues, and take thoughtful new social action” (p. 11). This critical questioning by students leads to transformative practice (Unsworth, 2008) and to an understanding of how context and background play a role in their comprehension.

As students realize the impact of context as influencing their learning the “theory becomes reflective practice” (The New London Group, 1996, p. 87). Students are able to reflect on their learning, and the previous three stages, and use this learning in new contexts, either collaboratively or individually (Unsworth, 2008). Awareness of the role of context on learning provides a framework which students can consider when they face new learning situations.

## RESEARCH METHODS

We began our research and thinking for the chapter by exploring three existing syllabi for EDUC 4P05 course, Critical Literacy across the Social Sciences and Humanities, which we have taught in the undergraduate (concurrent) teacher education program at Brock University in Canada. We also collected and examined lecture notes and in-class activities. Through observations and discussions, we theorized how a multiliteracies perspective was incorporated into such pedagogic artifacts as syllabi, lecture notes, readings, and activities, both assessed and non-assessed. A research question that guided our work together was: How do we enact and operationalize multiliteracies in higher education for 21<sup>st</sup> century learning, in a teacher education course?

### *Our Work Together*

We began working together in September 2010—Mary Gene Saudelli as a doctoral student finishing her PhD dissertation on constructivist curriculum design and blended learning in an international higher education program in the United Arab Emirates, and Jennifer as a researcher in the fields of New Literacy Studies, multiliteracies and multimodality. From our first meeting to the present, we have worked together with a common commitment to diversity and to broadening the notion of literacy and language education and meaning-making more generally. Although we have not co-taught courses, we have certainly co-written and we taught the same teacher education methods course, but in interesting, contrastive, and parallel ways.

### *Jennifer's Story*

I have been teaching at different levels (in school as an ESL teacher and in higher education) for some time now. Before teaching, I studied English literature at the undergraduate and graduate levels, I trained as an English as a Foreign Language

teacher, and then I worked with young learners and adult learners on their English language skills before entering educational publishing and then pursuing a PhD in literacy education. Taking this eclectic career path, I found my way into literacy teacher education as a contract instructor in literacy education for large cohorts of elementary preservice students at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto (OISE/UT), with a focus on New Literacy Studies, multiliteracies, and multimodality. Working with Brian Street during my PhD and then collaborating significantly with Kate Pahl, I embraced literacy as a social practice, multimodal approach to the teaching and learning of literacy education. This approach informed my literacy teacher education work over my five years at OISE/UT. Then, I worked as a tenure-track professor in literacy and English education at Rutgers Graduate School of Education where I worked with secondary school student teachers and, once again, undergird my teacher education work with New Literacy Studies and multimodal principles and epistemologies. During this time, I returned to English and the study of English literature, shaping my research program around adolescent and secondary school learners as multimodal meaning-makers. It was during this time that I worked and taught alongside secondary teachers, developing lessons, units, assignments, and assessments premised on New Literacy Studies, multimodality, and multiliteracies. So it is that I find myself now in a research position with a focus on multiliteracies and multimodality.

### *Mary's Story*

I have been teaching various elements of literacy in many classroom environments for two decades in Canada and in international contexts. However, I have had limited experience as a researcher of literacy except for my work in relation to my graduate studies research and my work with Jennifer. I began my career as an adolescent and adult literacy specialist in a secondary school in Ontario. After several years, I moved to Europe and China and became an English as a Subsequent Language (ESL) educator in governmental secondary schools that functioned to prepare students for academic study in English, the medium of instruction in university. Later, I moved to Dubai, United Arab Emirates, to teach higher education students in the Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Education programs. In this position, I worked across departments, was a lead curriculum designer, literacy specialist, and English educator for both programs. A few years ago, I returned to Canada and focused my teaching practice, curriculum design, and research in the area of multiliteracies. Most of my research has focused on curriculum design, interdisciplinary studies, and new literacies across curriculum and instruction.

### OUR RESEARCH IN LITERACY TEACHER EDUCATION

We have had the experience of planning, teaching, and assessing the same concurrent education critical literacy education course at Brock University's Faculty

of Education and we are using this mutual, shared journey to inform our analysis of a multiliteracies approach to teacher education. The chapter analyzes how we have slowly moved toward what we regard as a multiliteracies epistemology for teacher education. The focal course is, EDU4P05, Critical Literacies in the Humanities and Social Sciences, which is a concurrent education course offered to undergraduate students at Brock University. The course aims include: “learning to engage the interpretative possibilities of texts. Critical strategies including semiotic, feminist and reader-response used in the analysis of picture books, poetry, traditional texts and contemporary fiction.” Over the past five years, there have been three instructors who have taught the course, unwittingly and wittingly, using multiliteracies to inform course content.

To contextualize the course, Mary Gene’s class had 160 students and Jennifer’s had 120 students; each class gathers in an auditorium for three hours a week to take this course. Clearly, this format is not ideal to implement a multiliteracies pedagogy. That is, to situate practice within student lifeworlds, you ideally need an interactive teaching format with smaller groups and one-on-one, interactive time. It was a challenge, to say the least, for the two of us to devise ways of situating practice, teaching overtly, and critically framing texts with such a large group of students spread across a large space. As a result, we decided to infuse a multiliteracies approach in lecture resources, discussion, and through the use of Sakai, a digital learning management system. Mary Gene separated the 160 students into sections with 20 students each and incorporated a digital presentation into the class syllabus: students in groups were required to deconstruct a text and upload a digital presentation for comment and response from other students in their section.

### *Evolving Multiliteracies Syllabi*

As a gradual movement toward multiliteracies, we analyzed the first of the three syllabi for EDU4P05 Critical Literacies in the Humanities and Social Sciences, which was developed by Dr. Lissa Paul, whose research interests fall in the areas of: children’s literature; literary theories; post-colonial discourses; cultural studies; and, eighteenth century studies. This line of research and her heuristic informed her shaping of content for the course. In her course description, she summarized the mission of the course as follows:

In this course you will learn that understanding texts is not magic: it is the art and science of looking, listening, and making sense of what you see and hear. It is learning to read both words and images. It is recognizing that history matters if there is any hope of figuring out where we’ve been in order to figure out where we’re going. The books required for this course will be of use to you when you are a teacher with a class of your own. The primary texts have broad appeal across a wide age, grade, and gender range. Included are a picture book, a novel, graphic novels, and a work of biographical fiction. All of them have

been chosen to sensitize you to aspects of difference related to culture, gender and ability. (Paul, 2009)

The description illustrates Paul's emphasis on text interpretation, meta-understandings of texts and texts' ideological, historical layers. Students who took the course honed their reader response and critical reading skills. Without a stated aim of embedding multiliteracies into the syllabus, the syllabus fulfills strands of the multiliteracies pedagogy by situating teaching literacy education to undergraduate (concurrent) teacher education students (who range in age from their early twenties to thirties) within student lifeworlds. The students in the course are comfortable with graphic texts and with animated texts. They have grown up with digital environments and with moving images and Paul situated her text analyses within these kinds of texts and their multimodality. By incorporating contemporary texts such as graphic stories like *Maus I and II*; an animated film, *Coraline*; and, the novel, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night*, she thereby spoke to the multimodal sensibilities and epistemologies of her students.

The major assignment for Paul's course is a term-length, group project that included individual components. The assignment asked students to create their own graphic representation in the fashion or style of their chosen author. Each group of five focused on the work of a particular artist, poet, or author, and developed a graphic way of representing what it is that students want to communicate about that person. The assignment had oral, written, and visual components. The point of the assignment was to enable each group to become familiar with the entire landscape of an individual author, poet, or illustrator. Without being specifically aligned with a multiliteracies pedagogy, Paul prioritized situated practice with preservice teacher education students' overt textual understandings by analyzing discursive and multimodal techniques for understanding texts. She then asked students to critically frame their interpretations of an author's work, and finally, to remix their own texts so that they apply all of these principles as an instance of transformed practice. That is, students actually designed their own interpretations of an authorial style and aesthetic.

In light of Paul's syllabus, we move to analyzing Jennifer's syllabus. As the second syllabus for the course, it was clear that there was more of a stated aim to embed multiliteracies into the curriculum. The course was constructed on a journey metaphor, moving from the early days of a critical and contested perspective on literacy education with a look at critical literacies, ending with a look at studies on digital literacies (which, in theory, led concurrent education students to the present day). To establish a critical literacy approach, Jennifer discussed Paolo Freire's work on literacy and power and Michael Halliday's work in linguistics and ended with an account of Luke and Freebody's Four Resources Model. After these first two classes, she worked through New Literacy Studies with the works of Shirley Brice Heath, Brian Street, James Paul Gee, David Barton and Mary Hamilton. Then, she spent two classes devoted to examining the work of Bill Cope, Mary Kalantzis, and The New London Group. This theory spanned the course with some practical applications. For every class,

Jennifer presented a visual to analyze in light of theory and attendant frameworks. Then, students engaged in discussions and activities around theories. Key strands in the course dealt with accounting for culture, social class, race, and how these forces manifest themselves in new communication systems, new media, policy, and ways of teaching students to have meta-awareness of these ideologies and technologies. There were activities to align with each theoretical perspective. Another layer in the course was the notion of “artifactual literacy” as a way of thinking about literacy education in relation to artifactual dimensions of literacy in schools, homes, and communities.

The two major assignments for Jennifer’s course reflected such multiliteracies strands as fostering an understanding of and critically framing cultural and linguistic diversity with an assignment that asked students to reflect on a literacy practice that they engaged in at home when they were children and to pull out strands that they can build on in their own teaching. Locating their literacy learning within home cultures, different linguistic systems, and tying literacy practices to the identity of the meaning-maker helped push students to think about how their identity impacts their literacy practices now and in the past. Some students wrote about playing videogames; some talked about reading picture books with grandparents; while others talked about learning how to sew and its connections with early reading. The second assignment asked students to apply the multiliteracies framework of available design, design and redesign to a visual in the form of photograph, an advertisement, artwork, or moving-image media. Students wrote a paper analyzing available design features, the nature of the design, and how they would redesign the visual.

Mary Gene’s syllabus followed the same structure as Jennifer’s except for the assignments. After consultation with Jennifer, Mary Gene wanted to add a stronger pedagogical focus for students to make connections between theory into practice. Thus, throughout her lectures, Mary Gene emphasized the same key strands as Jennifer, but highlighted the role of pedagogical approaches. The first assignment required students to choose a specific expectation in any social sciences or humanities in Ontario Curriculum document, devise a lesson plan to teach that expectation together with infusing a critical literacy component. The second assignment required students to investigate a specific context within the community, locate the literacies present, the potential learning within home communities and cultures (i.e., different linguistic systems), and ultimately tying literacy practices to the community. For the third assignment, students were separated into sections consisting of twenty students. In groups, they were required to create a digital presentation of a deconstruction of a text, using one of the theories of critical literacy presented in class. The presentation was uploaded to an online learning site and students were required to view and respond to the digital presentations.

### *Vignettes*

Although we did not take field notes while teaching our respective courses, we did write post-reflections, almost like post-mortems on the course. To extrapolate how

teacher education students responded to a multiliteracies pedagogy and our own reflections attempting to harness multiliteracies to teacher education, we wrote retrospective narratives about two lessons—one we regard as successful and one that was not successful—to illustrate or operationalize multiliteracies pedagogy in teacher education. The vignettes presented involve visual texts as springboards to larger discussions about modern education, new epistemologies, and shifted pedagogy.

*i. Jennifer's reflections on adopting a multiliteracies framework.* During the fourth week of the course, Jennifer presented Hilary Janks' approach to analyzing text through four strands: domination that accounts for dominant modes of reproduction in texts; access that accounts for dominant modes of language; diversity that accounts for different literacy practices; and, design that accounts for the production and assembling of semiotic resources to make meaning. Janks argues that "we need to find ways of holding all of these elements in productive tension to achieve what is a shared goal of all critical literacy work: equity and social justice" (Janks, 2010, p. 27). Janks (2010) claims that critical literacy needs to be a part of a much broader framework that is flexible and attuned to both the playfulness and seriousness of literacy education. To illustrate Janks's textual analysis, Jennifer examined two visuals. One visual is Figure 1 below.



*Figure 1. Top Photographs for 2010—creative commons. [www.creativecommons.com](http://www.creativecommons.com)*

The photograph is so vivid and depicts strongly another culture, a very different world that students responded to. The vibrant colors, the expression on the young boy's face, the moment in time, probably a festival of some sort in a different part of the world. Students spent half an hour applying Janks' textual framework to unpack issues of power and to lift out ties to literacy education. The whole-class activity

worked well, partially due to the clarity of Janks' framework and partially due to the explicit, vivid nature of the photograph. Students could think about practical ways of implementing Janks' framework. Students were allowed the appropriate time and space to apply a framework to critically frame text. Also, students could use visual texts complemented by a given framework (i.e., they seldom actually use visual texts during their teacher education work). Mary Gene also used this photograph for the same purpose in her class and experienced the same successful effect.

By the sixth week of the course, students were in the thick of the semester with several assignments due and they were less inclined and less receptive to text analyses. Jennifer framed this particular session around the notion of community literacies and ecological approaches to literacy. Part of the course asked students to think about the notion of artifactual literacies. What the notions of ecological approaches and artifactual literacies contributed was a way of connecting a multiliteracies approach to the local. That is, compelling students to think about how they can teach literacy through communities and artifacts that students value. For the first hour, Jennifer talked through the concept of artifactual literacies. That is, literacy as understood as a situated social practice involving print and communication that is linked to everyday life (Street, 1984; Barton & Hamilton, 1998). Artifactual literacies is a way of connecting literacy to everyday life and a way of crossing contexts. Acknowledging, appreciating, and understanding the visual and tactile properties of artifacts is fundamental to using artifactual literacy as a method for teaching and learning. While multimodality applies well to texts, an artifactual approach takes in situated, ethnographic and ecological accounts of lived experiences. Artifactual literacy as an approach to literacy teaching and learning builds on the work of multimodality and situates it within communities and people's lives.

The trouble with this class was that students found it difficult to think about tangible links between community and teaching literacy. Also, students could not imagine the kinds of artifacts that students whom they will teach will value. The failed logic of the class is that Jennifer did not contextualize the session, and, the concurrent education students did not have the experience in classrooms to be able to conceptualize what young children or middle school children actually value. It is tough to think in relation to communities, emic approaches, and personal artifacts from a contextless perspective. The lecture and activities were unsuccessful and Jennifer would certainly make necessary changes to its structure in future sessions.

*ii. Mary Gene's reflections on adopting a multiliteracies framework.* During the fifth week of the course, Mary Gene designed a lesson to explore Janks (2010) dimension of deconstruction of texts through the intersectionality of multimodality (Jewitt, & Kress, 2003; Jewitt, 2009; Kress, 2003, 2009; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001), artifactual literacy (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010), and the semiotic turn (Gee, 2003, 2009). Students had already explored each aspect independently in previous lectures, but the goal of this class was to explore this intersectionality as contributing to the meaning-making process and the possibility of creating of pedagogically relevant instruction. Students were about to begin their digital presentations of a deconstruction of text.

In addition, students were also about to begin their ecological papers. Students first discussed concepts: crafting talk, talking craft, the use of semiotics; evoking and use of artifacts in narrative; talk, artifacts, modes of communication and felt emotions and meaning; and artifacts as a tool for listening, deconstructing, retelling in a new manner. Then, a series of digital photographs of inner-city schools and the surrounding areas were presented and deconstructed by the class. Themes such as playgrounds that were vacant, photos of a local drug dealer, gender representation, and a photo of students playing soccer were articulated.

After the deconstruction, Mary Gene informed the class the photos were taken by grade eight students in Toronto as part of a social studies class as an assignment exploring lived experiences. As part of this discussion the class explored potential options to redesign the photos both multimodally and from a social justice perspective. Subsequently, the lesson moved from deconstruction as a form of pedagogy to the role of deconstruction in self narratives to explore power relations as an aspect of self-exploration. Mary Gene provided her own narrative of one of her experiences teaching in Dubai to Emirati (indigenous people of the United Arab Emirates) female students. As part of the narrative Mary Gene used a multimodal presentation, presented artifacts such as an abayah (Emirati cloak) and shaylah (black veil), and objects such as a painting given to her by an Emirati family. Students deconstructed the story and explored issues such as globalization, national migration, colonialism, gender roles, social change, bias and assumptions, and religion and culture. The class finished with the request for students to consider one of their own lived experiences and to deconstruct it exploring the intersectionality of multimodality, artifactual literacy, and the semiotic turn in the design of their narratives. This particular session was lively with discussion, differing opinions, and critical discourse. Many students responded afterward that their thinking had changed, particularly in relation to generating opportunities for critical literacy through exploration and deconstruction of artifacts used in narratives of lived experiences as a form of pedagogy.

By the eleventh week of the course, students were busy finishing assignments and preparing for exams. They were also immersed in uploading and responding to digital presentations of group deconstructions of texts assignment, which was ultimately challenging, but well received and very well done by students. However, during a class framed on the notion of idealized representations of gender in text, as an exploration of Foucault's regimes of truth, Mary Gene noticed that during the last half of the session, students were notably disruptive and uninterested. This class focused on representations in texts in typical everyday lives of students that form representations, regimes of truth, and the role of deconstruction and redesign of these texts as critical literacy pedagogy.

Mary Gene framed the session using Janks redesign element of her four dimensions of critical literacy and exploring "rubbing" (Morgan, 1994) texts together "to denaturalise them" (Janks, 2010, p. 185). In an effort to use humor and multimodally, she showed an Old Spice commercial, "The man your man could smell like."

The commercial demonstrates several obvious connections to notions typically perceived as women's idealized male in contemporary society: attractive, physically fit, social and economically secure indicated by the presence of a sailboat, and riding a horse in the final frame. Students enjoyed deconstructing the commercial for all of the obvious references. Mary Gene then presented a YouTube parody of this commercial called "The woman you'd love your woman to be like." This parody is an exact replication of the same Old Spice commercial, but demonstrates obvious connections to notions typically perceived as men's idealized female in contemporary society: attractive, scantily clad, physically fit, on a beach, and riding on the top of a red Ferrari in the final frame. Further, another YouTube parody called "The chaser—the man your man can't marry" was presented to students. Again, this parody is an exact replication of the same Old Spice commercial, but depicts representations of typical stereotypes of gay men in contemporary society and contains a strong political message of inequity. This was intended to elicit connections and explore both the "Politics," larger social cultural issues, governmental, capitalism, globalization, environment, and "politics," the micropolitics of everyday life, choices and decisions, desire and fear, haves and have nots (Janks, 2010, p. 188).

The trouble with this activity was that students found it extremely difficult to make a tangible link between this notion of deconstruction and design of texts, societal issues of gender representation and inequity, use of humour, and critical literacy. Thus, students could not make the connection between the session and their future teaching practices. Mary Gene did not highlight meaningfully or contextualize the technique for these concurrent education students to demonstrate how this technique can be adapted, and content changed to meet suitability needs for students they will eventually teach. Considering that content of the session explored controversial elements and societal issues, it was challenging for students to explore these concepts for themselves, much less to see the relevance in their teaching aspirations.

#### IMPLICATIONS FOR 21ST CENTURY EDUCATORS

Ferdinand de Saussure (as quoted in Hodge & Kress, 1988) defined semiotics as "the science of the life of signs in society." Certainly, many scholars study the design process and how texts become more or less powerful as they move across contexts (Janks, 2010; Hodge & Kress, 1988). Jennifer and Mary Gene facilitated this teacher education course on critical literacy with an approach that emphasized the notion of meaning-making related to cultural and linguistic diversity (i.e., exploring the social turn in literacy) and conflated with a semiotic account. Through reflection, both authors emphasized the salience of this approach. The approach had the ring of authenticity and relevance for students. Students in these large lecture classes not only were able to use the theoretical framework required in the deconstruction task, they also were able to make meaning from the activity in terms of their own lived experiences and their future pedagogy. Conflating the social turn in literacy with a semiotic account provided a space for students to explore critical literacy in

their own lives and allowed them to consider their future pedagogy. Using both the principles of critical literacy and New Literacy Studies were effective segues into adopting multiliteracies as a pedagogy.

Upon reflection, both authors recognized the crucial role of contextualizing in the meaning-making process. The session that Jennifer felt dissatisfied with centred on the difficulty students encountered in attempting to envision the kinds of artifacts their future students will value and the kinds of communities they will teach in their futures. The session that Mary Gene was dissatisfied with centred on the difficulty students encountered in linking “rubbing” (Morgan, 1994) texts against each other to explore societal regimes of truth in relation to controversial social justice issues to their future pedagogy. Thus, both authors argue that 21st century educators must acknowledge the crucial role of contextualizing their instruction as connections are not automatic—dialogue and discussion are valuable in this endeavour. While it is particularly challenging to ensure in large lecture-oriented classrooms, it is possible as both authors had successfully done so in other sessions.

#### CONCLUSION

This chapter does not intend to present a utopian situation of teaching Critical Literacy across the Social Sciences and Humanities. This chapter explores both successes and less satisfactory sessions as two educators walk the talk of twenty-first century educational practices in practice. In large lecture classes, they lectured and incorporated a pedagogy of multiliteracies in both sessional classes and assessment. Both educators found success when they highlighted the social turn in literacy with a semiotic account, and contextualized both students’ lived experiences and relevance to their future pedagogy. Both educators experienced dissatisfaction when they felt their sessions were not contextualized appropriately for students’ lives or future practice. What this discovery means is that it is one thing to present, talk through, and operationalize multiliteracies for teacher education students, but of course you have to emulate these very same principles in your own teacher education teaching. This was highlighted as these literacy educators reflected, compared, and contrasted their experiences of teaching this course as 21<sup>st</sup> century teachers who desired to walk the talk. Both Mary Gene and Jennifer believe that a pedagogy of multiliteracies provides a mechanism to ground teaching practices to a realities of students. Reflecting on the trials and tribulations of realizing that belief has certainly reinforced this belief.

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