BOOTH ONE AT THE BISTRO: AN EXPERIENCE OF LITERARY TRANSACTION

by

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(Under the Direction of Betty Bisplinghoff)

ABSTRACT

This is the story of a small group of teachers who came together as a book club to talk about writing, reading and living stories. It is, essentially, a re-storied dissertation. Grounded in the traditions of qualitative narrative research and expressed through multigenre writing supported by poetry as analysis, this dissertation is as much about the researcher as it is about the researched. As in most stories, our group faced both the expected and the unexpected; we rose and rested as we chose the words and expressions to represent our experience. There were only seven of us, but we were a dependable seven. We stayed together as a group exploring the intersections between our lives and the text worlds we entered, living our literacies from month to month, from September 2006 through September 2007.

Using Rosenblatt's (1994, 1995) work with transactional theory and aesthetic and efferent reading, I began building a theoretical foundation for my interests in studying teachers as readers and teacher reading groups. While Rosenblatt wrote of the transaction that takes place between a reader, a text, and a cultural time and place, I found myself using these same basic concepts as I created a study that might allow me to examine and participate in a transactional experience with multiple readers and multiple texts.

INDEX WORDS: Arts-Based Research, Book Groups, Dewey, Literacy, Narrative Analysis, Rosenblatt, Teachers as Readers, Transaction

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my amazing family. They are a consistent source of strength, support, encouragement, laughs, and faith. I am blessed.

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I would like to thank my Major Professor, Dr. Betty Bisplinghoff, for the seemingly endless moments of encouragement and optimism, the organizational strategies, the deadlines, and her passion for teaching and reading. Without her guidance, this dissertation would not exist.

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To each of my study participants, I thank you for your time, your enthusiasm, and your warmth as we read and learned together. I miss our meetings, talks and meals!

To my parents, my brother, and my sister, there is nothing I can say to express my gratitude for your unconditional love and support. So I won't even try.

Finally, I thank my extraordinary friends who have lived through these last four years by my side. With these amazing women encouraging me, dragging me kicking and screaming,

threatening me, yelling at me, singing to me, making me exercise, providing food and drink, diagnosing me with ADD, (and then trying multiple strategies to address it, some worked and others did not), I have faith that we can conquer any challenge that comes our way. Without their strength, honesty, courage, and compassion, my path would have taken me in a very different direction. For this support, there are no words.

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PROLOGUE

This is the story of a small group of teachers who came together as a book club to talk about writing, reading and living stories. It is, essentially, a re-storied dissertation. Grounded in the traditions of qualitative narrative research and expressed through multigenre writing supported by poetry as analysis, this dissertation is as much about the researcher as it is about the researched. As in most stories, our group faced both the expected and the unexpected; we rose and rested as we chose the words and expressions to represent our experience. There were only seven of us, but we were a dependable seven. We stayed together as a group exploring the intersections between our lives and the text worlds we entered, living our literacies from month to month, from September 2006 through September 2007.

This dissertation uses multiple genres in the forms of creative nonfiction, personal reflection, poetry, description, autobiography, and essay to share two intertwining experiences: my participation with six teachers in a reading group and my experience of conducting my first research study. It is my goal that the following text weave back and forth for the reader, explaining and describing the collisions of group and self, and in the end, representing the whole as an experience of transaction. In creating this work, I allowed the creative process to lead the way as often as I could force my brain to let go of preconceived ideas of "right" and "wrong" ways to present academic research.

As I wrote, I became more conscientious of the readers I envisioned as my audience. While my first audience included my committee members, my study participants, and my friends and family who were willing to provide editing and feedback, I soon felt the desire to write for a

broader audience. In my mind, I expanded this group to include other graduate students or teachers who were beginning the research process feeling the same bewilderment that enveloped me from the first day of this journey. With this new imaginary audience in mind, my ultimate hope was that this text could one day provide an example of a nontraditional approach for sharing qualitative research, while contributing a unique perspective about transactional theory and teachers as readers.

Challenging me further, Clandinin, Pushor, and Orr (2007) write that as researchers we should ask ourselves "so what?" (p. 25). What power does this research hold for the greater good of others? I wrote about this struggle in my journal:

I have passion for these ideas and feel intuitively that there is power in this research, but how do I put this intuition into words that can communicate to skeptics that there is great purpose in my work? What is the greater purpose, the far-reaching implication, the reason this holds meaning for people other than me? How do I communicate that the importance and power in learning is not about the facts and figures that are learned, but the application of knowledge on a personal level? (Researcher's journal, April 13, 2008)

Rosenblatt (1994, 1995) wrote of this power, and the importance of critical reading, application, and personalizing meaning in creating a more just democracy. Her words echo my thoughts and my passions in promoting a literacy that moves beyond memorization, recall, and comprehension. In my mind, this aesthetic experience or *living literacy* creates a chemical change or "transaction" with the reader and "under the guidance of the text, out of his own thoughts and feelings and sensibilities, the reader makes a new ordering, the formed substance that is for him the literary work of art" (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 266).

Through my sharing of this research, I hope to provide an opportunity for others to see and experience an example of a "living literacy" while simultaneously creating a text that could provide a possibility for a reader's own transaction with this new text, thus continuing the live circuit in the reading experience.

Along my way, I discovered the poem, *The House Was Quiet and the World Was Calm* by Wallace Stevens (Kennedy, 2005). The poem served as a symbolic compass as I wrote, rewrote, trashed, wailed, scowled, and wound my way through my writing. Phrases of this poem stood out to me, and pushed my mind to open and explore new possibilities and ideas. I am including the poem here, and have borrowed phrases (noted in bold font) from its stanzas as the chapter titles in this dissertation.

The House Was Quiet and the World Was Calm

By Wallace Stevens

The house was quiet and the world was calm.

The reader became the book; and summer night

Was like the conscious being of the book.

The house was quiet and the world was calm.

The words were spoken as if there was no book,

Except that **the reader leaned above the page**,

Wanted to learn, wanted much most to be

The Scholar to whom his book is true, to whom

The summer night is like a perfection of thought.

The house was quiet because it had to be.

The quiet was **part of the meaning, part of the mind**:

The access of perfection to the page.

And the world was calm. The truth in a calm world,

In which there is no other meaning, itself

Is calm, itself is summer and night, itself

Is **the reader leaning late and reading there**

CHAPTER ONE:

THE SCHOLAR TO WHOM HER BOOK IS TRUE

As a new doctoral student, I remember sitting in my research classes, notebooks opened, braced and ready to take on and learn about this intriguing and fairly uncharted territory in my mind: philosophy. I came to the program thinking like a positivist: I wanted to be taught the ideas and perspectives that had been discovered and were true. I was seeking The Truth, and looked forward to adding these new concepts to the intellectual world within my mind. Then, like a slow motion scene in an action movie, the fast-moving, efficient, determined, and powerful train that carried and informed my worldview screeched and plowed off its tracks as the train pummeled off into a different dimension. In this new dimension, the world didn't follow the scientifically determined facts and truths of the old world. This new world was determined and created by the social beings that inhabited it. These beings created the language, the belief systems, the knowledge, and the truths that served as the foundation for the new world. And in this state, I realized that my previously held truths were simply that: *my* previously held truths, determined by my culture, the time period in which I lived, and my experiences. Later I learned that my philosophical crisis had led me to find a new perspective with which to read the world: social constructionism.

As a social constructionist I believe that research should be read critically, with attempts made to understand the individual who claims the roles of researcher and writer. My research choices, ideas, and conclusions are all informed by the experiences, ideas and belief systems in which I operate. These ideas and belief systems change and grow with every new experience, so while it is completely possible that my worldview could shift drastically between the time I write

these words and the time a reader transacts with them, this work becomes a static snapshot of a fluid existence, and attempts to represent who I am at this point in my life. Some writers might call this a discussion of "subjectivities." Others might use the term "biases" or "researcher rationale." Within all of these terms lies the challenge to reveal whom I am as a researcher and an individual, along with the central influencing writers and theorists who have contributed to my conceptual framework throughout the creation of this work.

In revealing **the scholar to whom her work is true** I identify and reflect upon three areas, which in the traditional dissertation research model include researcher subjectivities, epistemological stance and theoretical framework. However, instead of using this traditional format, I discuss these concepts through the following series of essays entitled: *Who Am I?*; *Constructing Epistemology: From a Sneeze to a Worldview; Aesthetic Transactions with Louise Rosenblatt*; and *Narrative Inquiry: Living, Telling, Retelling, and Reliving Stories.* In each of these essays, I share the thinking and philosophies that drove my decision-making as I conducted this study.

Who Am I?

"I write about what moves me, what fascinates me, what confuses me, what I haven't yet even named. I write about what can't be statistically counted or scientifically verified except through simile and metaphor" (Kusserow, 2008, p. 74).

I have always been in awe of those who have the gift of creating a new world through words. L.M. Montgomery created one of my earliest literary worlds in her creation of Anne of Green Gables. After becoming lost in the language of Anne's world, I remember sitting down with determination, pen and paper in hand, preparing to write an awe-inspiring tale that might arouse in others what Montgomery had aroused in me. While my amazing novel has yet to come

into existence, reading continues to enchant me. One of my favorite things to do, both as a child and today, is to become so lost in a book that I cease to notice the outside world. Sounds, feelings, the space around me, all fade as the lives and experiences in the book become my world. For a short time I live in a different land, I am another character, or at the very least I am able to know another character as if we were one, and I feel the excitement, the pain, the happiness, and doubt of another. Through books I can almost experience living a life completely unlike my own. When reading, I know I have found a gem when I have to step away from the book to live my own life for a while and find myself thinking of the book, pondering the dilemmas, snickering at the mishaps, and feeling that if I do not return to my reading, the poor characters will remain trapped in limbo where I left them when I last stopped reading. It is often during these times that I find myself talking to my friends and family, discussing the most recent amazing book discovery I've made and how they *must* read this book.

My love for reading plays an integral role in my life as a teacher and a student. As a doctoral student, in the stages of conducting my own research, I realize that the seed for this research project was planted long before I ever recognized it as a possible dissertation topic. In fact, at its beginning, I didn't know that I would one day return to graduate school in pursuit of my doctoral degree. At the time, I was an elementary school teacher. I spent my days with third and fourth graders with occasional and highly cherished moments of transition in which I would grab my adult friends by the shoulders and exclaim, "I must have adult conversation!" I would then, of course, rush back to my students or head off to an after-school duty. While I dearly loved my students and looked forward to our interactions as a class, as a classroom teacher in 2003, I often felt that I suffered from adult interaction withdrawal. I discovered that I was not

alone. A few of my colleagues and I decided to address this need by meeting together to discuss something we all loved: books.

In preparation for that first book club experience, we settled on a few logistics. We agreed to meet approximately once a month, and we rotated the responsibility for choosing the book and the location of the meeting, and leading the discussion. We began meeting together, sometimes at a little coffee shop, and often in each other's homes. I feel that it is important to note that while we never placed any limitations on the selection of the reading material, we mostly chose novels as our medium, and never read any books together that explicitly related to teaching or our professional goals. This is important because I believe it emphasizes our need for reading for personal endeavor and development. While there were tremendous numbers of resource books written specifically for elementary school teachers, we never discussed the possibility of including them in our group. Our goals were personal and were, I thought, separate from our professional lives. However, something unexpected happened for me in my day-to-day interactions in teaching. Not only were my relationships with these colleagues now based on something much greater than quick side conversations on the way to the bathroom, but I also found myself attempting to duplicate the experience I was having in my own reading group for my students. I began collecting multiple copies of juvenile novels and designed small reading groups in my class. The reading experience that then ensued was different from any reading instruction I had thus far experienced. The emphasis turned from learning *how* to read to enjoying reading and relating to characters and other people through the medium of books. While I didn't have the language to express this experience at the time, I now recognize these as moments of shaping and molding of my ideas, or transaction. And as this project continued to grow and change, transaction became a central theme woven throughout this dissertation.

As an elementary teacher I witnessed a wide expanse of reading interests and talents. I taught my students phonics, reading strategies and spelling, I read aloud to large groups and small groups, and tried to make stories come to life in a way that left the students always wanting more. One of my favorite guilty pleasures as a teacher was to read an exciting story to the students, get to a climactic part in the story, and stop reading suddenly, stretch, yawn and inform the students that we now needed to go to lunch, or break for recess, or stop for math. The boos and cries of dismay and disappointment always brought a smile to my face and the promise that we would return to the story tomorrow. On occasion I gave in, allowing the students "five more minutes" and read until a conclusion was reached and the students were happy. It was my love of reading that fed my passion to bring exciting reading experiences to my students. I often wondered if students wanted to read, the learning process would be better supported and perhaps easier than if reading was presented as sets of learning tasks and students felt forced to learn to read simply because the daily schedule required it.

Four years later, while working on my doctorate and researching teacher literacy experiences and instruction, I realized that it was my own passion and love for reading that drove my interactions with my students and the choices I made as I taught reading. What might I have done as a teacher if I had disliked reading? How would my instruction have changed if I had been forced to present reading to students as sets of scripts or rules to follow? In what ways would my reading aloud have differed, and how would my students' learning have differed? How would my teaching have been different if I had read more and was more aware of different types of literature? These questions drive my current work with preservice teachers and my research today.

Constructing Epistemology: From a Sneeze to a Worldview

When I initially heard the word *epistemology,* I was sitting in my first qualitative research course. At the time, I remembered feeling compelled to respond quickly with a "God bless you" as if reacting to a loud sneeze. Upon learning that this new word simply represented the philosophies concerning the nature and limits of knowledge, I leaped from the previously described positivist train into the world of constructionism. Constructionist philosophy holds that meaning exists because of the human beings who live and interpret the world (Burr, 2003; Crotty, 2003). Human beings construct meanings as they engage with the world they are interpreting. Therefore, all meaning in reality is based upon human practices and interactions and is then offered to others through a social context (Burr, 2003; Crotty 2003).

More specifically, my research is guided by questions founded in social constructionism. Patton (2002) relates the following questions guiding social constructionist research:

1. How have the people in this setting constructed reality?

2. What are their reported perceptions, "truths," explanations, beliefs, and worldview?

3. What are the consequences of their constructions for their behaviors and for those with whom they interact?

Within social constructionist thought is the idea that individuals with distinctive personalities and backgrounds understand and experience the world differently and uniquely, and therefore each person constructs his or her own meaning and reality (Burr, 2003). Another important concept within the social constructionist paradigm is the emphasis on an individual's active participation in creating knowledge. Burr (2003) provides four beliefs guiding social constructionist thought. First, we should question and be suspicious of knowledge and views of

the world that are assumed to be true. Second, categories and ideas are specific to our history and culture. Third, our understanding of the world is maintained through social practices. And fourth, there are innumerable possible social constructions of the world.

Stemming from this social constructionist epistemology is a theoretical perspective expanded through interpretivism. One goal of interpretive research is to provide a description and an interpretation of a phenomenon and move toward shared meanings. While it may provide some possible generalizations, interpretive research does not offer absolutes nor certainties, but broader perspectives and insights into the phenomenon (Bassey, 1999; Crotty, 2003).

Interpretivism supports the belief that a single reality and truth are not entities waiting to be discovered. Instead, reality exists within the "construct of the human mind" (Bassey, 1999, p. 43). Two individuals may witness the same event, yet interpret and explain the event in different ways, based upon each person's unique perspective. Even the language with which the people communicate about the event is socially constructed and fluid. Because of these differences in perception and understanding of language, "reality" is subjective.

Aesthetic Transactions With Louise Rosenblatt

"…a text, once it leaves its author's hands, is simply paper and ink until a reader evokes from it a literary work—and sometimes, even, a literary work of art" (Rosenblatt, 1994, p. ix).

While I don't remember the exact day or moment that my literary world collided with that of Louise Rosenblatt (1994, 1995), I do remember feeling tremendous admiration for her ideas and writing. As Rosenblatt described different reading experiences and ways that readers change and grow as they move through new literary worlds, I began to see my own literacy as an entity that was alive, ever changing and ever growing.

Through her writing about reader response theory and transactional theory, Rosenblatt recognized the importance of the reader in the reading experience. The author, the text and the reader transact together creating a unique experience or a "live circuit" (Rosenblatt, 1994, p. 14) built upon the reader's experiences and position within a socially constructed society (Rosenblatt, 1994, 1995; Clifford, 1991). This perspective emphasizes the quality of language such that it is "essentially social yet always individually internalized" leading to experiences that are both "shared and uniquely personal" (Rosenblatt, 1994, p. 53). Transactional theory places an emphasis on the reader's personal experience with the text. "A specific reader and a specific text at a specific time and place: change any of these and there occurs a different circuit, a different event—a different poem" (Rosenblatt, 1994, p. 14).

Furthermore, Rosenblatt (1994) distinguished between two types of reading experiences: efferent and aesthetic reading. Efferent reading, Rosenblatt (1994) explained, directs the reader's attention "toward concepts to be retained, ideas to be tested, actions to be performed" (p. 24). Efferent reading has the direct purpose of attaining information and is often the type of reading most relied upon in schools. At the other end of this reading experience continuum, Rosenblatt (1994) described aesthetic reading where "the reader's attention is centered directly on what he is living through during his relationship with that particular text" (p. 25). During aesthetic reading the reader is most concerned with the experience that takes place during the reading event, noticing the feelings and attitudes that are evoked by the text.

Using Rosenblatt's (1994, 1995) work with transactional theory and aesthetic and efferent reading, I began building a theoretical foundation for my interests in studying teachers as readers and teacher reading groups. While Rosenblatt wrote of the transaction that takes place between a reader, a text, and a cultural time and place, I found myself using these same basic

concepts as I created a study that might allow me to examine and participate in a transactional experience with multiple readers and multiple texts.

Narrative Inquiry: Living, Telling, Retelling, and Reliving Stories

As I sit in my living room, I look about the room at the books and articles strewn around me. Some are precariously hanging off the couch while others lie over the arms of the loveseat or are spread on the coffee table and clutter the floor. The mixture ranges from personal reading, academic reading, poetry, fiction, children's picture books, notes I've written, a grocery list and a phone number or two, with old receipts from shopping excursions or a night on the town thrown into the mess. While staring at these pages of written words, some bound in hard covers looking worn and aged, others stapled together and highlighted, with words sprawled in margins, and the unlucky pieces crumpled in their final moments before heading to the trashcan, I think about stories. What stories do these papers of all shapes and sizes tell? What histories do they contain?

Stories have been told, written, and passed on since the beginning of time. We live our lives through stories: telling, retelling, and reliving them time and time again. Yet it isn't so much the story and the written words themselves that hold power, but the meaning that is taken and internalized through the living and telling. As I look at the receipt from the movie theater, it represents a moment in time, built upon a lifetime of moments and meanings. I think of the friend whom I met, of the laughter we shared catching up over chocolate covered peanuts, and the loud teenagers who sat behind us unwrapping Starburst candy ONE BY ONE until I finally moved to a new seat. Stories are alive and allow others to join in on our lives, "already in progress." Similar to Rosenblatt's (1994, 1995) transactional theory, as people join in on our lives, they change our stories, as they become characters in those very same stories, and we in

theirs. Connelly and Clandinin (1990), qualitative researchers who often write about narrative analysis, refer to these moments as "collaborative stories." They note, "…in our story telling, the stories of our participants merged with our own to create new stories… The thing finally written on paper…the research paper or book, is a collaborative document; a mutually constructed story created out of the lives of both researcher and participant" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 12).

As a research tool, stories provide a rich and fertile ground to till in examining experiences and forming new stories or "restorying" and reconstructing old stories. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) define the study of narrative as "the study of the ways humans experience the world" and "a way of characterizing the phenomena of human experience" (p. 2). This way of characterizing the phenomena of human experience, narrative inquiry, can be used as a way to interpret and gain access to an experience that is situated within a larger and constantly changing social and cultural context (Cortazzi, 1993, Kramp, 2004). And like Rosenblatt's (1994, 1995) transaction, this changing social and cultural context is critical for our understanding of the phenomenon of interest.

Using storytelling to understand a phenomenon requires openness and "wakefulness" (Clandinin, Pushor & Orr, 2007, p. 21) to the ways in which individuals live in and construct their worlds. "People live storied lives and telling and retelling one's story is a fundamental way that an individual makes sense of her experiences" (Paulus, Woodside & Ziegler, 2007, p. 299).

Reismann (1993) speaks to the learning and growth that takes place as we live new stories in our lives, and then build upon this fresh knowledge through a new interpretation of old experiences and stories.

Personal narratives—the stories we tell to ourselves, to each other, and to researchers— offer a unique window into these formations and reformations: we continually restory our

pasts, shifting the relative significance of different events for whom we have become, discovering connections we had previously been unaware of, repositioning ourselves and others in our networks of relationships (p. 705).

As new information is revealed, old ideas, understandings, and connections we once made shift and change requiring us to reposition ourselves in light of new meaning. This repositioning continues the live circuit detailed in Rosenblatt's (1994, 1995) work. I experienced this "repositioning" often throughout this research journey and found that I made sense of these shifts and changes through writing, questioning and narrating these moments of transaction. In Chapter Two I continued this questioning and narrating as I created, transacted and repositioned myself within this study.

CHAPTER TWO:

LEANING ABOVE THE PAGE

While simultaneously sorting out the foundational and philosophical perspectives driving my research, I also began the process of determining some of the more technical dimensions of my research study. Many details had to be considered and organized. As I continued to read, write, and **lean above the pages** where other writers and thinkers explored philosophies and methods for qualitative research, the following questions bounded about in my mind. Each contributes to the repositioning and shaping of this transactional experience. First, what research has already been completed examining teachers as readers? Second, what question(s) do I want to explore in this study? And third, how will I ensure a high level of trust and standard in my work? I write through each of these issues in the following essays: *Teachers as Readers: What do others say?; Do you know what this means?!: When research questions go bad;* and *Maintaining high standards: "Getting it" differently.*

Teachers as readers: What do others say?

As I began to narrow my research interests related to teachers as readers, I became interested in exploring the use of literature circles or reading groups with elementary school students. I was especially focused on whether literature circles could help inspire students to develop a love for the experience of reading. Much of this interest was driven by my own personal literacy experiences and memories of my second, third, and fourth grade students. However, as I read other research studies and taught and supervised preservice teachers, I found that my focus began to shift to the teachers themselves. I became very curious about the effects that the reading experience had on teachers' attitudes about reading and on their teaching

practice. With these questions and interests, I dove into published studies and articles concerning teachers as readers and compiled and wrote my way through findings and discussions.

I completed a review of research that was conducted between 1990 and 2007 on teachers as readers using the following key terms and phrases: (a) "teachers as readers," (b) teachers' reading habits, (c) reading as professional development, (d) reading lives of teachers, and (e) independent reading and teachers. Through this review, I found gaps in current research findings and further narrowed and situated my own evolving ideas. Below I provide an abbreviated version of published research findings on teachers as readers that were most influential in my thinking about my work with teachers as readers. A full literature review is included in Appendix A.

Context of the Literature

In their study about reading habits and attitudes of preservice teachers, Applegate and Applegate (2004) found that 51.5% of the respondents in their study were unenthusiastic readers and that these attitudes were often obvious to their students. Similarly, Sulentic-Dowell, Beal and Capraro (2006) found that many of the teachers in their study were not active readers while Lassonde, Steams and Dengler (2005) found that many of their participants were alliterate or functional readers who used reading as a means to accomplish a task, but gleaned little pleasure from the reading experience. Because teachers are role models for their students, these negative attitudes can affect the teachers' ability to engage the students and show enthusiasm for reading (George, 2001; Lassonde, Steams & Dengler, 2005; Morrison, Jacobs & Swinyard, 1999; VanLeirsburg & Johns, 1994).

Additionally, there is evidence that a teacher's personal attitudes and reading habits not only affect her/his enthusiasm for teaching reading, but affect her/his choice of teaching

methods, strategies, and instruction in the classroom as well (Donahue, 2003; Flood et al., 1994; George, 2001; Morrison, Jacobs & Swinyard, 1999; Tribbe-Socol, 2006). Since research shows that many teachers lack enthusiasm for reading, and that a teacher's personal literacy affects her/his teaching, I continue to wonder about opportunities that teachers have to engage with experiences in reading.

One method for increasing teacher involvement with personal reading is through the use of book groups. Teacher book groups have been shown to have a positive impact on participating teachers, and provide an opportunity for teachers to develop their identities (Kooy, 2006; VanLeisburg & Johns, 1994), form friendships and provide social outlets (Smith, 1996), and make available the opportunity for intellectual pursuits (Donahue, 2003; Flood et al., 1994; Kooy, 2006; Lassonde, 2005; Smith, 1996; VanLeisburg & Johns, 1994) as they have positive experiences with reading. Unfortunately, Commeyras and Degroff (1997) found that 89% of the elementary teachers surveyed never or seldom participated in book clubs with other adults.

With research findings showing encouraging outcomes from teacher involvement in book groups, along with my own experiences and personal questions about this power, I continue to consider the impact of conversations about books as an impetus to support teachers' affinity for reading. I conclude with ongoing challenges and questions that open infrequently explored areas of research.

Do You Know What This Means?!: When Research Questions Go Bad

"The idea of experience (so key in Dewey's notions of education) has been lost in the study of educational research" (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000, p. xxiii).

In the movie, *Back to the Future*, Dr. Emmett Brown swings open the door to his workshop, straps on his mind-reading helmet and begins to make claims about who Marty

McFly, the young, lost time traveler, is and where he is from. As he makes his guesses, supposedly assisted by his new invention, McFly negates all of Brown's ideas, disappointing and frustrating Dr. Brown and prompting one of my favorite lines in the movie:

"Do you know what this means?" Brown exclaims after learning his predictions are incorrect. "It means that this damn thing doesn't work at all!" In a huff he turns around, pulls the invention from his head, and drops it to the floor.

As a doctoral student and new researcher in the midst of my analysis and writing, I came to the same conclusions as Dr. Brown. Only instead of spending enormous amounts of time and energy creating a mind-reading invention, my flawed idea was actually the research question guiding my dissertation study.

The process of deciding upon a research question was not an easy task. After completing my literature review on teachers as readers, I struggled to narrow all of my queries and interests to one researchable question. My driving interests surrounded the examination of the effects of a teacher's reading practices on her or his teaching practices. I was also interested in how a participant's perceptions of and motivations to read might change as a result of participating in a book group. However, as I considered each of these questions, read about Rosenblatt's (1994, 1995) transactional theory, and completed the literature review, I became more interested in examining the reading group phenomenon itself. What happens in a reading group that helps to create a context for interactions with others and with literature? Could this reading group experience provide a specific example or model of Rosenblatt's transactional theory?

In an effort to remain "wakeful" (Clandinin, Pushor & Orr, 2007) to the research process and create a question that was broad enough to allow flexibility and openness, yet narrow enough to remain "researchable," I decided to begin examining the idea of experience.

As a researcher and educator, the study of experience is central to my work. Some questions I ask myself on an almost daily basis include: What educational experiences do my students bring with them to school each day? What types of teaching experiences are my preservice teachers having in the field? How do these experiences affect my students? What is my experience in the classroom that affects my current educational decisions? The word "experience" offers a rich space for inquiry and has been examined and written about with much impact by John Dewey.

Dewey (1916) contemplates the active and passive nature of experience as a *trying* and an *undergoing* (p. 163). He wrote:

> When we experience something we act upon it, we do something with it; then we suffer or undergo the consequences. We do something to the thing and then it does something to us in return…Mere activity does not constitute experience (p. 163).

With *trying* the individual is actively taking part in a moment. In acting upon this moment, the individual then provokes a response and *undergoes* an action or reaction. It is these moments together that constitute an experience. Dewey demonstrated this idea with a story of a young child who reaches out to touch a flame. The reaching out to the fire is the moment of *trying* on the part of the child. The burn and pain that then results from this action demonstrates the *undergoing*. Upon taking in this moment in which the consequence to the action is noted, the child has had an experience. Meaning, understanding, and learning stemmed from the *trying* and the *undergoing* together. In this definition of experience lies an element of change, movement and learning.

Rosenblatt also connected with Dewey's philosophies, and noted his influence on her

work in an interview conducted by her fellow scholars at the University of Miami in Spring,

1999. Rosenblatt noted:

John Dewey and Arthur F. Bentley said that the notion of "interaction" was perfectly

good, and still is good, for particular purposes, but we need a new term, "transaction," for

the relationship that exists between the human organism and the world. When I read

Dewey and Bentley's *Knowing and the Known* in 1949, in which they suggested

"transaction," I said: "That's the perfect term for the relationship between the reader and

the text that I've been describing all along." We don't want to start out thinking of the

reader as a static entity and the text as something that already has the fully-formed

meaning in it. Reading is "transaction," during which each is continuously affecting the

other. I suppose ecology is the field in which people understand this best—that human

beings are affected by the environment, but they are also affecting it all the time, so that

there is a transaction going on (Department of Teaching and Learning, 1999).

With Rosenblatt and Dewey's work on my mind, I began to see connections between

Dewey's explanations of experience and Rosenblatt's thoughts concerning Dewey's word,

transaction. Both emphasize a reciprocal relationship in which a "chemical" change takes place

within the individual as the individual interacts and transacts with an outside force. While Dewey

wrote of experience in a general sense, Rosenblatt (1994, 1995) wrote of specific experiences

with reading.

At this point I developed the research question that guided me throughout my planning,

data collection, and into my analysis: What is the experience of teachers participating in a

teacher reading group? I remained happy with this question throughout much of the research

process. I appreciated its open and broad nature, which I felt allowed me to look for qualities in the experience that might otherwise go unnoticed. However, as I began my writing and analysis and studied Richardson and St. Pierre's (2005) work with writing as a form of inquiry, I faced a new and unexpected realization: My research question had "gone bad."

Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) note "…writing is thinking, writing is analysis, writing is indeed a seductive and tangled method of discovery" (p. 967). On April, 29, 2008, while reflecting on my writing, I wrote:

> As I struggle to decide what and how to share my experiences in a teacher-reading group, I recognize the learning that is taking place through the process of writing. And as I go back and read my work, I feel that the most interesting and well-written and communicated portions are the pieces that describe this learning. (Researcher's Journal).

Looking back at this moment, I realize that it is through my writing as thinking, analysis, and method of discovery that it became clear to me that I could not answer my research question as I originally phrased it. My original question stated: What is the experience of these teachers participating in a teacher reading group? The reasons I felt I could not adequately and ethically answer this question were not because of faulty or insufficient planning; nor was it because my data was incomplete or unusable. This question itself had become problematic in my current understanding of the world and underlying philosophy. I realized that I could not even capture and relay my *own* experience in this reading group and share it with others in such a way that recreated the experience. I wrote:

> The closest I can come to relaying this experience is to write, explore, piece together powerful or transactional moments, and restory them through writing. While I can attempt to do that, the transaction that then takes place within the reader and the reader's

cultural context will still fall short of relaying the experience. At best, my writing can only be an approximation of my experience, which morphs together with a variation of understanding on the part of the reader, based upon a common understanding of the language and experiences of both myself as the writer and those of my readers. Add to this the challenge of relaying the experience of other participants, and my philosophical dilemma becomes too much. I accept my own limitations to understand and express the experience of self and other. (Researcher Journal, 3-20-08)

So, in an effort to address this philosophical disequilibrium, I moved to the following questions using my data and my research study as my source for expression. First, how can arts-based research and multigenre narrative writing assist me in sharing descriptions and transactional elements of the experience of participating in a teacher reading group? And second, how can I contribute to the academic discussions concerning transactions with texts and teachers as readers?

Maintaining High Standards: "Getting It" Differently

In their discussion about writing as a method of inquiry, Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) remark, "There is no such thing as 'getting it right' only 'getting it' differently contoured and nuanced" (p. 962). Embracing this idea, my hope is to "get it" "differently contoured and nuanced" while still maintaining an admirable level of academic standard. Because previously published criteria that address trustworthiness and rigor in qualitative research do not coincide philosophically with more artistic renditions in research, Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) describe four criteria for maintaining high standards for social scientific research. First, Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) expect the work to provide a "substantive contribution" and ask,

Does this piece contribute to our understanding of social life? Does the writer demonstrate a deeply grounded (if embedded) social scientific perspective? Does this piece seem 'true'—a credible account of a cultural, social, individual, or communal sense of the 'real'?

Second, the work should provide "aesthetic merit."

Rather than reducing standards, another stand is added. Does this piece succeed aesthetically? Does the use of creative analytical practices open up the text and invite interpretive responses? Is the text artistically shaped, satisfying, complex, and not boring?

Third, social science research that is arts-based should be reflexive, asking,

How has the author's subjectivity been both a producer and a product of this text? Is there adequate self-awareness and self-exposure for the reader to make judgments about the point of view? Does the author hold himself or herself accountable to the standards of knowing and telling of the people he or she has studied?

And fourth, Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) address the importance of impact.

Does this piece affect me emotionally or intellectually? Does it generate new questions or move me to write? Does it move me to try new research practices or move me to action? (p. 964)

In reading these four suggestions for considering the trustworthiness of arts-based research, I again became excited in finding this arena for my work. These were the standards by which I wanted my work to be viewed.

CHAPTER THREE:

PART OF THE MEANING, PART OF THE MIND

Upon completing a review of the literature on teachers as readers, and exploring

questions that I could examine in this study that might contribute to this growing knowledge

base, I began the process of planning, collecting, organizing, and interpreting my data. As I

reflected on this particular process my mind returned again to Dewey (1916) as I recognized

moments of my experience as "trying" and "undergoing." I went through or "tried" the actions

necessary for recording meetings, conducting interviews, and collecting documents from my

participants. As the "trying" progressed, I began "undergoing" moments of meaning or

transaction within my mind as I processed and considered the living literary experiences taking

place through the books we read together. Below, I discuss the data collection and analysis

processes that helped lead me to **part of the meaning** and then became **part of the mind** as I

became immersed in the world of data. These issues are detailed in the following essays entitled:

Data Collection: Reflections on "Trying"; Arts-Based Research: Opening Ways to Analyze and

Represent Experience; Moving Beyond the Efferent: Aesthetic Transactions with Poetry and

Writing; Data Analysis: Reflections on "Undergoing;" and *Yes! That's It!: From Analysis to*

Expression.

Data Collection: Reflections on "Trying"

I collected data over a period of 15 months between September 2006 and December

2007. Below I discuss the data collection and participant recruitment choices I made as I

completed the collection stage of this research. Data collection sources included the following:

informational surveys, reading group meetings, field notes and observations, reflective writing, individual interviews, and documents.

In order to recruit participants for my study I first determined two criteria for participant selection that I believed were integral for the goals I held for this study. First, because of my interest in the teacher's role in a child's early literary experiences, I decided that it was important for each participant to hold a teaching position during the time of data collection. Second, I limited participant selection to those who currently taught any grade in an elementary school ranging from pre-kindergarten to fifth grade. Because teachers in elementary schools carry responsibilities for teaching children to read, I wanted my participants to be in the midst of experiencing the joys and challenges of this process. I then worked with my major professor, Betty Bisplinghoff, and identified a purposive sample list of approximately eight recent graduates of the Early Childhood Master's program who were teaching in elementary schools in counties surrounding the University of Georgia. After extending an email invitation to the list of eight selected practicing teachers, five teachers agreed to participate and decided to join Dr. Bisplinghoff and me as participants in the reading group and research study. I have included a copy of the consent form in Appendix B.

In an effort to gain basic information about each participant's background with education and reading groups, I asked each volunteer to complete an informational survey (Appendix C). This survey provided fuzzy and incomplete snapshots of Lynn, Jill, John, Eliza, Hannah, Betty, and myself. However, through this fuzzy snapshot, I learned, that as a group, our years of experience teaching elementary school ranged from four to twenty-one years as classroom teachers and included teaching students from toddler ages to adults, with an overall concentration on teaching in elementary grades. Prior degrees held included Bachelors Degrees in English,

psychology, health promotions, history and political science, along with early childhood and elementary education, language education and educational leadership. All participants held a Master's degree in Early Childhood or Elementary Education. Experiences participating in reading groups also varied from no experience to participation in five groups. Appendix D provides a table containing this information organized by participant. All participants, except for Betty and me, selected pseudonyms.

In addition to this informational survey, I attended, participated in, and audio-recorded each group meeting. Throughout and following these meetings, I noted my observations and thoughts through field notes. Notes included information about setting, participants attending or not attending the meetings, along with observations and inquiries that were beginning to form in my mind. During this time of reflection and writing, I sought to remain cognizant of Clandinin, Pushor and Orr's (2007) admonition to remain open and awake to the unexpected.

At different points in the year each participant completed reflective writing about the books we were reading together. These reflections focused on personal connections each reader was making with the texts we were reading and discussing, along with applications of the ideas presented in the text to personal and work lives. I have included a copy of the reflection prompts below.

1. *What do I want to remember in this book?*

2. *What questions has this text raised for me?*

3. *What do I think the author intended for me to take from this text?*

4. *What are the implications of this text for my life and work?*

In September 2007, I began interviewing each participant individually. Prior to these interviews I emailed a copy of the Photograph/Artifact and Book Elicitation Protocol to each participant. This protocol contained these instructions:

Please bring these items with you to the interview session.

1. *Choose four artifacts or take a picture of four different objects/ideas that represent your literary identity. You get to decide what is meant by the phrase literary identity. So feel free to include anything that you see as relevant or important aspects of your identity as a literate person.*

2. *Choose five books that have been most influential in your literary life. During your interview we will talk about ways in which these books have influenced you or why you feel they are important.*

During the individual interviews, participants then shared these artifacts and books with me, beginning and guiding the conversation. Through using these artifacts, photographs and books, I was able to gain information about each participant as a reader that might have otherwise remained hidden due to my own limitations and understanding about each individual's particular life experiences. Additionally, I asked probing questions to inquire further into each participant's experiences with reading and with book groups. I photographed and wrote descriptions of each participant's artifacts and book selections. These documents provided an additional source of data for this study. Audio recordings from these individual interviews, along with the audio recordings of reading group meetings provided two of the largest sources of data in this study.

Arts-Based Research: Opening Ways to Analyze and Represent Experience

Richardson (1994) asks, "How do we create texts that are vital? That are attended to? That make a difference?" (p. 517). As a lover of texts that engage my mind, incite my imagination and inspire my body to action, this question jumped from the page and persisted in my mind throughout the writing process. The answers to Richardson's questions seemed to hold the key to the next step I was struggling to take. How do I use my data to re-present the vitality of the book club experience in a way that might make a difference and assist in continuing the live circuit of the living experience? I reached again for Richardson:

> One way to create those texts is to turn our attention to writing as a method of inquiry. I write because I want to find something out. I write in order to learn something that I didn't know before I wrote it. I was taught however, as perhaps you were, too, not to write until I knew what I wanted to say, until my points were organized and outlined (Richardson, 1994, p. 517).

Through this process, I began to watch my own learning and growth as I moved from *trying* to *undergoing*. In *trying*, I was searching for a method with distinct steps that served my research needs. However, each list of steps only served to frustrate me further and seemed to limit my own creativity. In my frustration I began to write. In my writing I complained, ranted, thought, analyzed, considered, changed, reworded, and moved forward in my work, through the *process* of writing. I stopped waiting to have the truth, the answers, that I felt I needed in order to write, in order to create a product, and began to write *toward* a deeper understanding of my experiences and thoughts. As I wrote, I read other scholars who wrote of their own experiences with similar struggles. I found in these writers the words that described my experiences.

Elliot Eisner (2008) expresses that "[arts-based research] suggests an emphasis on inquiry, a tolerance for ambiguity, a preference for what is open-ended, a desire for what is fluid rather than what is rigid" (p. 22). Eisner further helped me think about the differences between arts-based research and other qualitative and quantitative methods of inquiry.

For me, the distinguishing feature of arts-based research is that it uses aesthetic qualities to shed light on the educational situations we care about. Arts-based research is not simply the application of a variety of loose methods; it is the result of artistically crafting the description of the situation so that it can be seen from another angle (p. 22).

Eisner's (2008) description of "artistically crafting the description of the situation" also complements my interest in examining experiences through research. While Dewey partially *defines* experience as a trying and an undergoing, Clandinin and Connelly (1994) build upon and expand this conceptual framework through their discussion of then *examining* experience. They emphasize the importance of analyzing experience in four directions: inward, outward, backward, and forward. Similar to Rosenblatt's descriptions of aesthetic reading experiences, Clandinin and Connelly (1994) suggest that examining an experience looking inward would include the aesthetic and internal feeling and reactions of the individual. Looking outward allows the researcher to note the existential or environmental conditions that exist, or as Rosenblatt might suggest, looking at the context, time and place. Forward and backward induce the researcher to look to the past, present and future for meanings crucial to the experience. "To experience an experience is to experience it simultaneously in these four ways and to ask questions pointing each way (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p. 417).

Moving Beyond the Efferent: Aesthetic Transactions With Poetry and Writing

During this research process Betty and I met weekly to talk about my progress, analysis, and writing. At one particularly compelling meeting, after thinking, reading, wrestling with ideas, and talking, Betty introduced me to Paul Fleischman's (1988) *Joyful Noise: Poems for Two Voices.* The conversation went something like this:

Betty: "Do you read poetry?"

Me (Almost scoffing and immediately feeling defensive): "No. I don't really like poetry."

Betty: Silence and an expectant look.

Me: "I was taught to read poetry efferently and I didn't like it. I didn't agree with my teachers. These poets were dead! How did my teachers know the 'right' interpretation?"

Knowing this excuse did not offer a satisfactory explanation for this incredible gap in my literary life, I watched as Betty pulled out a file containing a copy of Fleischmans' (1988) multi-voice poem entitled, *Honeybees.* Sitting at her table we read the poem together, she taking one voice, I taking the other. At the end of the poem I responded with a very intelligent and inspiringly profound, "Hmmm…" I began thinking, "I am a reader, why don't I like or read poetry?"

Betty then took the liberty provided by her role as "Major Professor" and assigned me the task of finding and reading poetry, starting with Paul Fleischman. That evening found me sitting, legs crossed, on the floor of the children's section in Borders bookstore immersed in poetry. I left the store that evening with two books: Caroline Kennedy's (2005) *A Family of Poems*, and Paul Fleischman's (1988) *Joyful Noise: Poems for Two Voices.* Thus began the first of two new aesthetic literary experiences: poetry.

The next day I returned again to Fleischman. To my surprise, as I read his poems I *felt* the scenes he was depicting. I heard the noises, saw the colors, *lived* the poems. I experienced Rosenblatt's transaction while simultaneously being cognizant of the intricacies of this process I was living and attempting to undertake through my research. What would happen if I used this method to help analyze my data and represent how my participants and I experienced this reading group?

Simultaneously, I continued my battle with writing. I stomped and sulked because I felt like I was creating "boring" writing and finally came to the point where I stubbornly refused to write at all if I could not find a way to be mentally and emotionally engaged in the process. I read about what Clandinin and Connelly (1994) call "voice" and a "research signature" (p. 424).

When a veil of silence is lifted and the writer knows he or she has something to say and feels the power of voice, that person still must find a way of saying what he or she wishes to speak…In gaining a voice and a signature for it, the researcher puts his or her own stamp on the work (p. 424).

This quote struck me when I first read it because I felt that it put into words my struggle. I wrote:

A veil of silence! How often do I feel that? How often do I struggle to write? As I am analyzing my data and working through multi-voice poetry, I feel that I am beginning to experience the power of voice, and that these poems are giving me a way to say what I "wish to speak" (Researcher's journal, April 13, 2008).

This struggle of voice did not leave me on that day, but announced its presence very loudly days later. On this particular day of dissertation writing and thinking and talking I became overwhelmed. I had read my work over and over and I had uncovered writing that I had

temporarily forgotten. While discovering forgotten writing might seem like a positive event to some, at this point in the process it caused me to throw my hands up in disgust, sigh loudly, and leave the office in a huff.

The further I got from the cold and off-white concrete walls of my building, the more I expected my mind to return to the important things in life, like what I would eat for dinner and what I should buy at Kroger. This transition from writing to living had always been simple for me because writing never felt like a natural state of existence. It always felt forced and tedious, and often very irritating. Surprisingly, at this moment, my writing mind stayed active and charged. Within seconds I began to realize an important detail that distinguished this moment from others: I was still writing. While my body had left the computer and "quit" for the evening, my brain had not. Words, sentences, phrases, thoughts poured through my mind unheeded. Immediately, I wished for an audio recorder. As I made this wish I remember thinking, "No, the sound of my own voice will stop the words. It is the silence that is allowing this to continue." Later I wrote, "…it is the silence and calm that creates this music that can only be captured moments after, but not at the exact point of experience" (Researchers journal, April 16, 2008).

By the time this instance began to unfold, I was driving my car. I frantically began to shuffle through my bag searching for paper and a pen. At each traffic light, I tried to position myself in such a way that I could write. On this day, however, the traffic-light gods saw fit to bring green lights, unlike the days where I forcefully tried to make my way through traffic and was stopped at every turn by red. As I drove down the street in a writing haze I marveled at this change. I pulled into the parking lot of Kroger, whipped into a spot, and wrote:

How have I moved from going to Kroger to *avoid* writing to having to sit in the parking lot, unable to go in to shop before I *must* write? I have found my voice…How do I now

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do something as commonplace as going into a Kroger to buy groceries? (Researcher's journal, April 16, 2008)

Thinking back to that moment and rereading the words that demanded my immediate attention, I am less taken by the words themselves than by the experience I had expressing those words. As I wrote I realized:

It occurs to me that perhaps—as I "experience" reading, I am now "experiencing" writing. I am not just doing it, I am living it. I am not having an efferent experience with writing, but an aesthetic. It [this experience] isn't so much about the words I put down on paper, but the feelings evoked through the experience of *putting* the words on the paper. I am having an aesthetic experience with writing in a way I haven't lived before (Researcher's journal, April 16, 2008).

Now, as I think back over this day and reread the poem, "The House Was Quiet and the World Was Calm" I see parallels that I did not recognize at the time. Somehow in that moment I was living Stevens' phrase, "the words were spoken as if there was no book" and I poignantly understood that "the quiet was part of the meaning, part of the mind, the access of perfection to the page."

<div align="center">Data Analysis: Reflections on "Undergoing"</div>

As I began to understand my data collection process as an example of Dewey's "trying" in his definition of experience, I began to see my analysis process as an "undergoing." Through this "undergoing" the data began to transform into its own story and meaning. In the following paragraphs I detail the analysis process that developed through my writing, reading, and creating. I write about this process as one that happened in three stages: 1) Organizing and writing through the data; 2) Transactions and poems; and 3) Identifying transactional elements and story types. I

then share a poem that creates in me a "Yes! That's it!" response as I continued to search for ways to re-present the story that sprang from this analysis.

Organizing and Writing Through the Data

During the first stage of analysis, I began by organizing my data. I transcribed the book group meetings and individual interviews, color-coded, and organized all of my data chronologically. Next, I read the transcripts making note of pivotal moments, or moments that shifted the discussion or momentum of the meeting discussion and experience. Additionally, I highlighted important quotes and recurring ideas. Following Rosenblatt's (1994) description of meaning making through reading, I tried to remain true to her admonition that one cannot "fully read the first line until he had read the last and interrelated them" (p. 10) while simultaneously "shuttling back and forth as one or another synthesizing element—a context, a persona, a level of meaning—suggested itself" (p. 10). As I read my data, I considered how Rosenblatt's efferent and aesthetic reading, and Connelly and Clandinin's (1990) inward, outward, backward, and forward movement might inform my analysis and the creation of a storyline that could allow me to share this experience with others. I then wrote through each thought, idea, and happening in my data as the moments became meaningful. In "writing through" these moments, I allowed my mind to explore memories, ideas and connections, and noted these ideas and queries in a journal.

Transactions and Poems

As my data analysis process progressed, I began expressing the "chemical change" or "undergoing" that was taking place within my own mind as I read, reread, and found meaning in my data with the support of multi-voiced poetry. Having read examples of "found" poems (Commeyras & Kelly, 2002) and Cahnmann's (2003) work concerning a poetic approach to inquiry in arts-based research, I continued the interpretive process by restorying our reading

group meetings using both actual words and phrases expressed by participants, and taking liberties to attempt to capture my aesthetic essence of the experience through my own creation of multi-voiced poetry.

In this second stage, I continued rereading the meeting transcripts and began identifying phrases and concepts that were emphasized in the group discussion, were pivotal in moving the discussion from one idea to another, or were echoed by all participants. I then went back through the transcripts looking for common words or ideas that were emphasized across the sections of the transcript. Next, I began arranging these words, phrases, and ideas in columns assigned to each of the participants. During moments where all participants expressed similar ideas, or times where I felt there needed to be greater emphasis, I wrote words and phrases to be read by all voices simultaneously and noted moments in each transcript and poem that described both of Rosenblatt's efferent and aesthetic reading experiences. After organizing these ideas, words, and descriptions in columns, I then created an electronic version of the poem, reading each poem for 1) aesthetic reaction (Does this poem evoke similar feelings to those I felt at the actual meeting?) and 2) efferent reaction (Does this poem portray the actual observable events of the meeting?). I completed poems for each meeting using this process.

Identifying Elements and Story Types

Upon creating each poem, I entered what I now identify as stage three of my analysis process in which I used my collected data, as well as the created poems of each meeting to established larger categories. First, I reread each poem noting moments in the poem where all readers were to read the lines together. Examining each of these moments as themes, I began to theorize and interpret ways these words and phrases that were uttered by all participants might contribute to a more complete understanding of the overall experience. Second, I then reread the

poem and divided it into scenes (Riessman, 1993). I divided each poem into sections or scenes based upon natural movements where the conversation began to shift to different topics or moments. I then examined the themes I developed through this step with the same goal of understanding transactional elements of the experience of participating in a teacher reading group. As I began to see larger categories, I wrote about these elements for each meeting. While completing this poem analysis I continued reading transcripts and reflections noting additional trends I noticed. Throughout this process I organized my data in a variety of structures in which I attempted to share elements of the book group experience through a fresh perspective. Ultimately, I began to notice that the stories being told within the reading group, as well as the narratives I was writing about the group had varying purposes. In her work, Esterberg (2002) notes that story structures can often be divided into "types" (p. 188) that distinguish between the varying purposes used in telling particular stories. In the following chapter I share descriptions and analysis of the individual meetings, along with a cross analysis of the meetings and story types which stemmed from this analysis process.

<div align="center">Yes! That's It!: From Analysis to Expression</div>

I love to experience that moment. That moment of spark, epiphany, lightening bolt and ah-ha. In that moment, time doesn't exist. In that moment, sometimes experienced in only seconds, my brain stops being aware as my world, my home, the temperature, the smells and sounds all disappear. And I escape. It was a poem written by Tom Romano about multigenre works that stole me away from reality this time. Romano, a professor of English methods and writing and former high school teacher, shares the definition below, which helped to refine my thinking about the ways arts-based research would continue to offer possibilities and variety as I analyzed and expressed my ideas. Romano notes:

A multigenre paper arises from research, experience, and imagination. It is not an uninterrupted, expository monolog nor a seamless narrative nor a collection of poems. A multigenre paper is composed of many genres and subgenres, each piece self-contained, making a point of its own, yet connected by theme or topic and sometimes by language, images and content. In addition to many genres, a multigenre paper may also contain many voices, not just the author's. The trick is to make such a paper hang together (Romano, 2000, x-xi).

While this definition clarified this idea in my mind efferently, the poem below offered the aesthetic experience I so enjoy.

Definitions of Multigenre in the Spirit of Multigenre (Romano, 2006)

Multigenre pushes convention,

Challenges "This is the way writing is done,"

and "Hey, wait a minute, you can't do that

in a piece of writing."

Multigenre speaks, "How come I read imaginative

literature but I have to write about it in an essay

that is thesis driven, argumentative, and exactly

five you-know-whats (each you-know-what, of course,

of the 3.8 variety), an essay in which the writer

overpowers readers, beats them

into submission, and concludes

with a summative you-know-what that restates the thesis?"

Not that there's anything wrong with that.

But writing that way is not what multigenre is about.

Multigenre removes the lid of Pandora's Rhetorical Box.

Multigenre twirls you and spins you and you hope the steps

the writer asks you to follow lead to fulfillment.

Multigenre knows that *feeling* is first.

Multigenre grooves on pulse, has flushed cheeks,

hair on the back of the neck that stands on end.

Multigenre makes readers sit up in their chairs.

Multigenre is not roast beef: it is ciappino.

It is less like mashed potatoes,

and more like red beans and rice.

With these definitions and descriptions, along with the voices of Dewey, Rosenblatt, and other arts-based scholars, I applauded that there was a space and audience for arts-based, multigenre research. My attraction to this format provided an opportunity for me to stop trying to squeeze an aesthetic and transactional reading experience into an efferent and dispassionate format. Reminding myself of Eisner's (2008) challenge of "artistically crafting the description of the situation so it can be seen from another angle" (p. 22), and using all of these theories and ideas as my foundation, I then turned to my data.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE READERS LEANING LATE AND READING THERE

At this point I have detailed my personal background with reading, teaching, and
research; the philosophical and theoretical frameworks guiding my work; and the research
experiences and decisions I made throughout this project. In this chapter I return again to my
research questions: How can arts-based research and multigenre narrative writing assist me in
sharing descriptions and transactional elements of an experience of participating in a teacher
reading group? And, how can I contribute to the academic discussions concerning transactions
with texts and teachers as readers?

In the following chapter, I continue to use Rosenblatt's ideas of transaction, and Dewey's
explanation of experience as a trying and an undergoing as I analyze and report patterns and
themes in my data. Building upon this theoretical work, I continue to use narrative, through both
the creation of narratives and the analysis of narratives, to describe transactional elements of the
experience of **the readers leaning late and reading there**, the texts, and our experiences
learning together.

For my purposes in this work, I am defining *transactional elements* as pivotal parts or
pieces of the experience that contribute to or push toward transaction. Returning to Rosenblatt's
ideas, to transact is to interact with text and culture in such a way that the interaction itself alters
conceptual understanding and brings about learning, growth and intellectual, social, or emotional
movement within the mind of the participating individual. In this study, this transaction seemed
to be driven or prompted by specific issues, which I have titled elements. Each transactional
element contributed to the overall experience and showcased important qualities of the group

members' interactions that seemed integral in pushing participants toward learning, growth, and "chemical change." Realizing that there was no way that I could quantify these results, showing "scientific" evidence of change within the mind or brain, I decided I *could* examine 1) the issues and elements that were brought forward to or within the group, and 2) the behaviors of the members as they discussed, questioned, and continued the process of seeking understanding.

In sharing this analysis, I continued my efforts to reveal this story while simultaneously remembering Rosenblatt's emphasis on the impact of "a specific time and place" in the transactional experience. Additionally, I sought to remain cognizant of Clandinin and Connelly's (1994) emphasis on analysis that moves backward and forward, revealing the larger cultural context, which envelopes the interactions and living experiences of this book group.

To better understand the stories told by and through these seven teachers, one must first have some concept of the contextual climate in which we lived from September 2006 until September 2007. I recognize that selecting and interpreting events through my writing, carries with it a silencing of other events that I chose not to include. Rosenblatt (1994, 1995) emphasized in her work the unavoidable and interdependent relationship of the individual's cultural time and place and the living experience that then comes to life through transaction with literature while reading through a specific cultural lens. Issues and events from our cultural time and place drove our decision-making, book selections, and conversations. In the following description, I provide examples of world events that were clearly evident in our discussions during this time. Additionally, the contextual issues described helped me recognize the role of extremes on much of the disequilibrium that became evident in my analysis.

Following this brief discussion, I move toward the re-creation of the experience itself. Relying upon the analytical process described in Chapter Three, I have organized these

descriptions and interpretations into a framework that includes 1) a description of the meeting in the form of essay and/or creative non-fiction; 2) a snapshot of each meeting shared in the form of multi-voiced poetry; and 3) a discussion of transactional elements present in the meetings. A preview of these elements is found in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Transactional Elements Derived From Poems

Meeting and Book	Themes/Voices Together	Element
1-Introductions and Reunion	Reunion	Individual Purpose
	Known	
	(Personal Goals, Connections/Interactions)	
	Who are we?	
	(Personal Goals)	
	Find the time	
	To Become	
	(Personal Goals)	
2-*The Shame of a Nation* by Jonathon Kozol	Cheers	Inquiry
	(Questioning disparity, personal role)	
	Where is the line?	
	(Questioning how to find the line between extremes)	
	Teachers/Children need	
	Support	
	To Pause	
	(How to find balance)	
	Our students	
	To ourselves	

Meeting and Book	Themes/Voices Together	Element
3- The Bookseller of Kabul by Asne Seierstad	Powerful Women (Relating stories of women in Afghanistan to self) Voice (Comparing individual lifestyle/customs/laws to book; feeling powerless) Yet… (power and fulfillment; relationships/building knowledge of students) I want to make a difference because… (taking in descriptions and information; desire to help)	Application of new information
4-The Audacity of Hope by Barack Obama	Crossing over (change of social status, remembering those from past group) Gracefully? To vote And then our conversation… (movement to teacher needs, experiences, personal life experiences)	Interaction with others

Meeting and Book	Themes/Voices Together	Element
5- The Red Tent by Anita Diamant	Haphazard and Jumbled (variety of interactions, needs, discussions) Of this book (differences in opinions, and amount read due to personal needs in life such as children, significant others, illness) (Talking erupts Multiple conversations driven by various personal needs.) Shift to politics (Need to discuss outside world and country issues) Progress (Female and Black Presidential race) Our experiences (variety of needs in group)	Recognition of Needs and Seeking Support
6-7-All Aunt Hagar's Children by Edward P. Jones	The coin reached its apex and then it fell. (Discussion of meaning of various ideas in book) Thinking… (Trying to decipher a phrases meaning by connecting to other stories in the book and	Engagement in Reading

Meeting and Book	Themes/Voices Together	Element
	looking for patterns)	
	Laughter	
	(Enjoyment and excitement about text)	
	Animation/Excitement	
	(Engaged discussion of text, not personal	
	issues)	
	It unravels	
	(Theme from short stories from book selection)	
	Such a part of our memories	
	(Small scenes/memories that could be written as	
	short stories)	
	Booth One at the Bistro	
	(Title of book the group could write as a	
	compilation of smaller scenes.)	
8-Walk Two Moons by Sharon Creech	Writing (Movement from reading to writing)	Engagement in Writing
	Walk Two Moons	
	(Book selection written in small scenes)	
	The awkwardness of growing up	
	(discussion of book and author's style)	
	Connecting through stories	

Meeting and Book	Themes/Voices Together	Element
	(Making personal connections and connections with others)	
	Reading and Writing	
	(Expression of difficulty of writing, getting the scene right, depicting what is in the mind)	
	Almost impossible	
	(Revising and continuing process of writing toward a goal)	

Following this presentation of each meeting, I concluded this chapter with a discussion of a cross-analysis of all of the meetings, which provided a more complete picture of the ways that each transactional element came together during the book group experience. Similar to Dewey's (1916) trying and undergoing relationship in creating an experience, and using the selected books as the impetus, I found that the book group stories of Lynn, John, Eliza, Hannah, Jill, Betty, and I could be categorized into two story types (Esterberg, 2002); stories of expression, and stories of learning. These stories of expression and learning served as opposing forces, which ultimately sought balance or equilibrium through transaction.

Contained within these stories and analyses are multi-voiced poems patterned after Fleischman's (1988) *Poems for Two Voices.* For me, Fleischman's (1988) poems provided a venue to demonstrate the pushing or trying and the understanding or undergoing that moved group members toward transaction. This transaction took place as the group's stories of expression came together with stories of learning to resituate group members within their own living literacies. I included these poems and folded them within the restorying and retelling. For readers unfamiliar with Fleishmann's work, please note the instructions below, which he detailed before his book began. As you read each poem found throughout this chapter, return to these instructions, as participants' voices converge and diverge as the experience unfolds.

The following poems were written to be read aloud by two [multiple] readers at once, one taking the left-hand part, the other taking the right-hand part. The poems should be read from top to bottom, the two parts meshing as in a musical duet. When both readers have lines at the same horizontal level, those lines are to be spoken simultaneously (Fleishmann, 1988).

With this background and instruction I now move into my description and analysis of this time and experience.

Our Cultural Time and Place: World Events that Shaped Our Discussions and Queries

At the time of our first and subsequent meetings, we had all felt the impact of major events and controversies during the years preceding this study: the terrorist attacks on 9/11; the devastation in New Orleans after hurricane Katrina; environmental issues such as global warming; and the war in Iraq. Media coverage had called attention not only to the events themselves, but to the complex issues involved in each and to deep political division in public opinions about the issues. Hurricane Katrina's devastation in New Orleans, where 20,000 people sought shelter in the city's Astrodome with no working plumbing, no air conditioning, insufficient food and water, and unmanaged violence and looting (Pearson Education, 2007)--- was displayed live on televisions and the internet. The media presented us with pictures of extremes: poverty and violence followed by stories of celebrities, extreme wealth and celebration. Pictures and experiences of these extremes pointed out the disparity that existed in our society. As teachers, this disparity became a source of conflict and mental and emotional discomfort as we negotiated our own spaces in the midst of these tragedies.

There were also positive events that indicated a movement toward equity and the suggestion that success was possible for everyone in our society. It was during this time that we witnessed the first political race between a white woman and a multiracial man for the democratic nomination for President, the appointment of the first female Speaker of the House, and a Black, female Secretary of State.

These extremes, which were so obvious to all of us through media coverage of events, were also present in our communities and schools. Likewise, within individual classrooms,

student readiness varied drastically, just as student socio-economic status and access to resources varied drastically. In our nation, 3.8 million or 11% of the entire student population, were English Language Learners (ELL) and received special services. Within Georgia classrooms, 86,000 students received ELL services (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). While these differences contributed to a society rich in diversity and culture, they also brought challenges for each of us in the classroom.

Moreover, in 2001, the government attempted to address this academic disparity and passed the No Child Left Behind Act. This legislation, which was still impacting our decisions in the classroom in the 2006, 2007 school year, sought to bring each student to the same academic level through the use of a standardized curriculum and standardized tests. These tests typically began for students at the age of five or six and continued throughout the students' entire school careers. Schools were designated as "failing" or "exemplary" with consequences for teachers and districts failing to make "adequate yearly progress."

This sampling of political, social, and economic circumstances contributed to the climate within education and our lives as we met each month. It also drove many of our discussions, book choices, and foci as we met together to discuss the texts and the ways these readings related to our lives, and impacted our thinking and actions. Below, I have included a table containing the titles of each book we chose. These book selections were both influenced by these cultural issues, and influenced our thinking and understanding of these issues. With this larger cultural context in mind, I now share eight meetings from our group.

Table 2

Book Selections

Meeting	Book Selection
1	Introductions and Reunions (We chose our first book selection for next month.)
2	*The Shame of a Nation* by Jonathon Kozol
3	*The Bookseller of Kabul* by Asne Seierstand
4	*The Audacity of Hope* by Barack Obama
5	*The Red Tent* by Anita Diamant
6-7	*All Aunt Hagar's Children* by Edward P. Jones
8	*Walk Two Moons* by Sharon Creech

Meeting One: Introductions and Reunions

I turned right at the stop sign as the sun began to set. As I turned down the road, I looked up at the newly built houses with excitement and apprehension. Where was I? Was I even on the right road? Let's see, Betty's house was supposed to be the fifth on the right…how many houses have I already passed? Crap! In typical Diana fashion I wandered slowly down the road realizing that there was no hope for house counting unless I turned around and started over. Eager to avoid this option I realized that I was left with house numbers as my only available guide. Now where are the numbers? Why don't they put the numbers in consistent spots? Finally, I gave up. I pulled into the nearest driveway and called Betty. After asking her to look out her window and tell me if I was sitting in her driveway, I was pleased to discover that in my clumsiness, I had accidentally landed at the correct house. I collected my bag of "research stuff" and a bag with food and headed to the door. It was the first meeting of our new book group and the first meeting of data collection.

Betty and I arranged the food on the counter as one-by-one participants arrived. The entrances of Lynn, Jill, Eliza and John mirrored that of a reunion of sorts. These teachers had once been education Master's students together with Betty as their guide. As the "outsider" in this group, and one with constant thoughts of my research, I began by watching and listening. Who were these people? What brought them to participate in this group? What would they teach each other and me? What would we all learn through this research? All of these thoughts ran through my mind as I began situating myself within this group and within these moments.

As would become our pattern for meeting together at future gatherings, we began with food and talk. Each person shared about personal and professional events, along with challenges and goals that led each of us to choose to participate in this group. We discussed details of the

reading group such as: How often would we meet? Where would we meet? How will we choose books? We also discussed the role research might play in our interactions. With ease, we decided to meet once a month on Wednesday evenings. Agreeing that we should all search for possible book choices, we decided that each person would bring possible titles to the meetings and that we would vote each time on the book for the following month.

   We then began sorting through various books that Betty and I brought as possible reads for our next meeting. After some discussion, the group decided to read Jonathon Kozol's (2005), *The Shame of a Nation.* Group members chose this book partially because of their interests in increasing their knowledge and understanding of the ways poverty affects the students in our nation and in our classrooms. After decisions were made, group members wrote about their goals for participation in this group on a reflection sheet and everyone said goodbye. The poem below, entitled *Known, Unknown*, attempts to capture these moments.

Table 3

Multi-Voiced Poem: Known, Unknown

Lynn	Jill	Eliza	Betty	John	Diana
Reunion	Reunion	Reunion	Reunion	Reunion	
Known	Known	Known	Known	Known	
					Unknown
					Watching
		Hugging			
Catching up					
			Remembering		
				Laughing	
	Smiling				
					Listening
Who are we?	Who are we?	Who are we?	Who are we?	Who are we?	Who are we?
		Teachers	Teachers		
	Parents			Parents	
Learners					Learners
					I want to study teacher reading groups

I want to

provide

support to my

graduates

        I want to

        continue my

        learning in a

        group I know

I want to

find social

support

I want to

discuss

books that

are important

to me

I want to find

commonalities

and

connections

with others

through books.

		Open	Open		
And excited	And excited			And excited	And excited
		About	About		
		possibilities	possibilities		
We face					
challenges as					
teachers					
	With co –				
	workers				
		And students			
			And		
			administrators		
				And parents	
					And life
		We need to	We need to		
		continue to	continue to		
		grow	grow		
And learn	And learn			And learn	And learn
Find the time	Find the time	Find the	Find the	Find the time	Find the time
		time	time		
					To read
				To reflect	
			To remember		

To meet

To talk

To learn

from each

other

To Become   To Become   To Become   To Become   To Become   To Become

Better

students

Better

readers

Better teachers

Better

friends

Better

citizens

Better

thinkers

To support

each other in

our struggles

And

challenge

each other to

be open

And

thoughtful

SO…   SO…   SO…   SO…   SO…   SO…

We will

commit

To read

And reflect

And meet

And eat

AND

THINK

And be

Known

Transactional Element #1—Individual Purpose

Through my analysis of this meeting, I began to see an underlying element that was present even before the group began reading and discussing texts together: personal purpose. These motivating factors came up through normal conversation and ranged from having the desire to better oneself to seeking social support. Furthermore, while each participant came from differing circumstances and were in various stages in life, these individual personal goals all seemed attainable through the book group model. For example, all of the group members seemed excited by the opportunity to continue their own personal learning with others and stay informed about current literature. Betty hoped to offer continued support and opportunities for learning for graduates of the early childhood education program while also expecting reading "to enrich our lives" (9-13-06). I was interested in exploring the experiences participating teachers could have in a reading group by creating a group that could both encourage elementary teachers to read but could also provide data that could contribute to the larger base of research examining teachers as readers and teacher reading groups. Jill was looking for a social support network while simultaneously anticipating that the experience might also have implications for her work as a teacher.

On August 13, 2006, Jill noted, "I like the idea of doing something not related to just work, but [that] also can affect work positively through personal growth." Jill also expressed that part of her purpose in participating in the group was that she felt the need to "make time to read."

Like Jill, Eliza wrote about her interest in how her participation might impact her work. In her reflection, Eliza wrote, "How is this meeting time, discussing life and literature going to reflect in my teaching? I ask my children to meet and discuss literature in book clubs, but I have not been involved in one for quite some time." (9-13-06)

Eliza also expressed a desire for learning, discussion, and connection with other teachers.

I could fill my day with school related work. This will be a wonderful outlet for learning and discussing with people I respect, outside of my school's walls… I love hearing stories about where everyone is in their professional and personal lives. I can't wait to connect with some and reconnect with others." (9-13-06)

Similarly, both John and Lynn exhibited a desire to seek intellectual challenge and continue relationships previously formed in their Master's program. John wrote,

I think a lot of learning comes from talking about everything. I like to hear different views on different topics. It's good to see people I don't always get a chance to see…[I'm] looking for books that satisfy my mind." (9-13-06)

Almost echoing John's hope to "satisfy" his mind, Lynn wrote, "What can I do to keep my mind active?" and "I want to do this as much as possible!"

Additionally, all participants were teachers and the group seemed to quickly unite over this commonality as members openly and frankly discussed the joys and challenges related to their daily work.

Through my analysis of this multi-voiced poem, transcriptions, written reflections, and field notes, I understood this first meeting to be one that offered initial evidence of the role of individual purpose. This motivation and trying pushed each participant forward in her or his interactions with each other, demonstrating participants' desires to learn, interact, and grow. This motivating sense of purpose set the stage for opportunities for transaction.

Meeting Two: The Shame of a Nation by Jonathan Kozol

After we left our first meeting, we spent the following month reading, teaching, and living our own lives. When the date of our October meeting arrived, Eliza, John, Betty, and I

made our way back to Betty's house on a cool Wednesday evening. It was our first official meeting that focused on a book and discussion. Since the hot and steamy Georgia heat was finally beginning to retreat, we took the opportunity to try out Betty's front porch. Relaxing outside sipping beverages and eating snacks, the conversation again began with us and with stories of what we were doing in our lives at the moment. In a natural progression, our personal chatting took on a theme or idea that eased us into the world presented in our chosen book, *The Shame of a Nation* by Jonathan Kozol.

Kozol's (2005) experiences with education addressed common interests for this particular group. We all had students we worried about. Sometimes we worried about whether the children in our classes had enough food; other times we were concerned about our students' support systems and access to necessary clothing and shelter. Recognizing the extensive number of needs many students brought to school each day, our interest in this book choice became very personal as each teacher related a student, family, or story that could have been included along with other stories of poverty in Kozol's text.

The author's writing provided the impetus for discussion about differences in privilege that we all saw in our classrooms and schools, and experienced first-hand as individuals holding varying levels of cultural capital and privilege in our nation and world. Conversations frequented about the harsh realities of social injustices, which were then reflected and sometimes compounded within public schools. As teachers we all felt the challenge in balancing a desire to teach and support our young students while respecting and valuing all cultures and perspectives. We marveled together over the complexity of integration, and how inequalities often felt impossible to address.

The stark differences between our lives, even our current time spent lounging on Betty's front porch, and those of the families described in Kozol's text, were disheartening and disorienting. The meeting became filled with questions concerning our world, disparity, social issues, and our places as individuals of privilege, faced with our communities and students' needs.

Table 4

Multi-Voiced Poem: Weaving in Lives

Eliza	John	Diana	Betty
Late summer night			
	Resting		
		And relaxing	
			On my front porch
			A toast:
		To us	
	For coming		
And reading			
Cheers	Cheers	Cheers	Cheers
Sigh…			
		This book…	
So sad!			
	Such differences in schools		
			Our privileges so clear
"How do I feel about that?"			
	And yet we still struggle		

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			There was so much instruction time spent lining up!
		What does it mean to be 'behaved'?	
	Military?		
"Kids aren't circus animals."			
Where is the line?	Where is the line?	Where is the line?	Where is the line?
	Between structure	Between structure	
And openness?			And openness?
"Be a good role model!"			
	We tell our kids		
		Maybe they are being good role models…	
			Maybe they're being kids.
Teachers need Support	Teachers need Support	Children need Support	Children need Support Time
To Pause	To Pause	To Pause	To Pause To delight

Be excited

                          Share

Have fun

To "weave their lives"

into the day

                                                            To find balance

                                            Between teaching

                          And living my life

I find I am…

Appreciating the kids

more

                          As each year goes by.

                                                            Finding humor

                                            And dedication

Not just to

Our students   Our students   Our students   Our students

BUT…

To ourselves   To ourselves   To ourselves   To ourselves

Transactional Element #2—Inquiry

In my examination of this poem and other data from meeting two, I noted that one reoccurring element pushing the participants toward transaction particularly evident during this meeting centered around inquiry. Issues and topics that Kozol described through his research and experience with urban school poverty clearly impacted the types of questions that the participants discussed as well as the connections and analysis that took place following these inquiries. As we talked with one another, sharing examples and connections to the text, the conversation evidenced emotions that left us unsettled and placed us in a state of disequilibrium. We could clearly see the unfairness and tragedy of the circumstances Kozol described, but felt unsure of how to improve these circumstances, yet felt some responsibility to do so.

> Eliza (Sighing and groaning): I have such a sad feeling about the school…I think how
> good I have it and the kids I teach have it…we're a privileged school. How do I feel
> about that? Everything's dirty and broken. Worse conditions [at school] than they're
> leaving.

Here, Eliza confronted her reaction to both the poverty of the schools and situations Kozol described, and her recognition of the wealth and privilege lived within her own school. Facing this moment of disequilibrium, Eliza questioned, "How do I feel about that?"

Within this environment of inquiry and questioning, the group began to relate how their own perceptions were changing through transaction with the text.

> Diana: [These] descriptions have given me a standard…the worst I've seen didn't
> compare to what he's describing. [I'm] realizing the poverty that really is in our nation.

Eliza: The separation that exists! The south is always targeted as a racial divide and I was surprised to see so much written about New York…bus stops miles and miles away. One school just gets nothing.

John: …the differences in schools—and good teachers go to better schools.

Betty: Harvard and Cornell teachers left at the end of the year. They couldn't be teachers. They were managers.

In noting this new perspective and broader understanding, this discussion then led the group members to consider examples within the text that displayed strict structure within the schools. This prompted a discussion and inquiry into the balancing structure and freedom or openness for students in our schools.

Eliza (Expressive with hand motions): …one school where they all lined up for lunch at the same time.

Betty: Yes, the time spent lining up and fighting!

Diana: they had a rubric for lining up…

Eliza: …there's so much time where the kids have to be doing something for the curriculum or sitting. Kids aren't circus animals! [We tell students] to be a good role model to younger kids. They are being good role models… they're being people. They're just younger people or smaller people.

John: …they're not yelling or disrupting class… [It's] like military.

During this meeting, most of these queries related to social inequalities. How do I feel about economic disparities in our nation and world? How do I make sense of the differences? How can our society allow such "miseducation" in American schools? What can I do? How can we stop what is happening? Can this be reversed? With each question came evidence that

participants were considering the impact of poverty as well as their sense of responsibility in bringing about positive change.

John noted, "If I had not read this book, I would have never known how bad some people have it. I never really thought of school as being a bad place to learn." (10-11-06). Eliza related feeling strong emotions as she read the book and thought about the circumstances of disparity. "The passion and sadness and outrage that I felt at each page turn makes me want to make a difference in the lives of these children who are suffering these injustices. I want to remember the children's voices!" As I read the data from this meeting, I noted, "There is recognition of power and privilege and also human limitation to be able to know or enact appropriate changes." (Researcher's Journal, May 5, 2008)

While no absolute solutions or conclusions were found, the participant's interactions during this meeting displayed a potentially powerful component of the book group model. In learning about the challenges described in Kozol's book, each participant seemed challenged and inspired to push for greater awareness and equality. As participants faced new and upsetting information, the emotions stemming from this new information pushed each member toward moments of questioning and attempts to make sense of these realities. In doing so, this stance of inquiry, along with each participant's individual purpose continued to create moments rich for further transactions with texts.

Meeting Three: The Bookseller of Kabul by Asne Seierstad

Expanding upon our discussions of inequality and society from last month, our book selection for the month of November was *The Bookseller of Kabul* by Asne Seierstad. As we contemplated choosing this title, we decided to satisfy our curiosity and read about similar themes we found in Kozol's work, only applied to a national culture different than our own. The

context of our own time involved repeated media attention to conflicts in and over political, social, and economic issues taking place in Middle Eastern countries. This author's experiences living in Kabul prompted discussions surrounding oppressive cultural traditions in our own country and world.

Meeting again at Betty's home, we continued our tradition of eating and catching up until the conversation naturally progressed into discussion of the text as one or more participants related a connection from life to Seierstad's story. This meeting was well attended, as John, Eliza, Lynn, Hannah, Betty, and I gathered around Betty's table.

With our female dominated group came much discussion of the struggles specific to women. As prompted within the reading and discussion of Kozol's (2005) book, Seierstad's (2003) stories provoked expressions of gratitude over our positions within our society in the United States. The women of the group acknowledged ways in which we still felt overshadowed or undervalued, while simultaneously recognizing the respect and power we do receive in comparison to women in many other cultures.

Building upon our earlier discussions prompted from our first meeting we revisited our desire to see changes take place within the larger systems that would create freedoms and equalities for women and minorities. Talk frequently returned to our teaching, with an emphatic and reoccurring question: How can we help? Thus continued our discussions of the complexities of cultures.

Table 5

Multi-Voiced Poem: Powerful Women

Eliza	John	Diana	Betty	Lynn	Hannah
Powerful Women		Powerful Women	Powerful Women	Powerful Women	Powerful Women
	Across the ocean				
			"Who live this one life"		
Loving					
		Crying			
				Living	
					Dying
	Women and Men				
					Decisions made by culture
			By birth order		
And covered by a burka					

and a shroud.

Voice   Voice   Voice   Voice   Voice   Voice

How do we

bring about

change?

How would

my baby

daughter

survive?

How is love

manifested in

this culture?

How can I

really

comprehend

these

differences?

How do we

learn that

there are

other

options?

	How do we teach our children about these issues?				
How?	How?	How?	How?	How?	How?
					Sometimes I feel
				Hopeless	
			Powerless		
		Depressed			
	Sad				
Trapped					
	Unsafe				
		Vulnerable			
			Scared		
				Unsure	
					Unaware
YET…	YET…	YET…	YET…	YET…	YET…
		We learn	We learn		
	We live			We live	
We love					We love
We teach	We teach	We teach	We teach	We teach	We teach
			"Nothing		

ever happens

in the books

that you

love." My 6th

grade male

student said.

Then there

are books like

Harry Potter.

The place I

imagined was

more

wonderful

than anything

a movie could

ever produce.

My students

don't know

they have

options for

their lives.

And they are

tested…

Cultures in

standardized

tests are so

different than

my students'

cultures.

But we can

teach our

students to

read.

I want to make a difference because…

I want to make a difference because…

I want to make a difference because…

I want to make a difference because…

I want to make a difference because…

I want to make a difference because…

I see

Homelessness

Privilege

Poverty

Inequality

Hope

Transactional Element #3— Application of New Information

Building upon individual purpose and in the spirit of inquiry, another transactional element that was evident in this reading group was the role of individual application of new information or learning. This particular book choice showcased ways in which group members were expanding their understanding and knowledge by applying new awareness and experience to their current knowledge base.

One way this element was exemplified was through individual motivation to research and add information to the chosen group book. Multiple readers discussed examples of additional reading materials as they examined information about Afghanistan and the Middle East in order to better understand the contextual influences of the book. For several group members, *The Bookseller of Kabul* prompted research and focused readers' attention toward the violence and political struggles in Afghanistan. Lynn addressed this issue as she noted the difference between reading and comprehending. "You want to understand it and comprehend what's going on. You can read anything but to really get it…" In an effort to understand the context and author better, Lynn researched about the author.

> As I was researching the author, to get a sense of what was going on, I came across a website of the real man in the book. I think he got upset about how they were portrayed and there might be a lawsuit (*10-11-06*).

In this way, the books prompted questioning and learning that went beyond the usual reading and discussion.

Tying closely to the previous months' discussions of inequality and providing further evidence of application of learning came discussions concerning power. The gender makeup of this group meeting consisted of five females and one male. With this gender emphasis and the

selection of Seierstad's (2003) book*, which presented issues specific to male and female roles in cultures, many conversations allowed participants to explore their ideas surrounding matters of gender.

John: It was interesting as far as a cultural stance. Where they are in Afghanistan, and where we are in America. How they treat the women, and how boys go to school. The mom pretty much takes care of the parents and kids.

Betty: [Hannah's baby daughter] wouldn't have a voice, she'd just have to wait for a man to come long, no matter how old she was or the man was.

Lynn: …[and] marriage for woman in the book! …not meeting her husband [before wedding], [physical exam] making sure she's a virgin…

Betty: …and so many examples of men who also couldn't be what they wanted to be because of their birth order.

Eliza: The last book we read, there really is a connection between being in a situation where there really is no hope of getting out. In *Shame of the Nation* it was more that the models weren't there and education was so poor. This is like you're born into it, so depressed, you feel these possibilities.

Betty: When you're in a particular place you're not even aware of the options. That was similar to the *Bookseller of Kabul*. People don't get out anywhere. Travel is risky and dangerous.

Eliza: Just to be out and to drink Cokes. It really makes me think about how blessed we are.

John: They weren't allowed to go anywhere past a certain time or by themselves.

Diana: And that burka. Lifting it up to look at things.

Betty: It's designed by a man, and the man has the right every time to know where the woman's gaze is. You had to turn your whole body to see so the man would know where you're looking.

Eliza: [It's a] connection to reading *Lolita in Tehran*. These books make me so sad.

At times some conversations exemplified gender conversations as central and explicit, "[Your baby daughter] wouldn't have a voice, she'd just have to wait for a man to come long, no matter how old she was or the man was." At other times gender crept into the conversation through comments such as, "What man is out just for money?" Furthermore, the gender of the author became significant as well. I noted,

I tried to read this book. The first time I tried to read it I thought the author was a man and I couldn't get into it thinking it was from a man's perspective. As soon as I realized she was a woman writer, I got into it immediately. I think there is a difference between a woman living with the family and living their daily life than a man would be able to experience (11-15-06).

Eliza agreed and connected the book and conversation to another book group in which she participated. "I'm reading in another book club…[where we} talk about difference between male and female readers and writers. They're just different."

As typically happened in such conversations, the discussion then moved to ways we could take this recognition of our own preferences and apply it to our work with our students.

Betty remembered teaching a male student in 6th grade who complained, "Nothing ever happens in the books that you love." This idea was also clear through John's relation of early negative experiences with reading as a child. As one who "hated reading" he finally began enjoying reading through the encouragement of another male teacher who was also his coach.

John felt that this male role model was significant in helping to develop his outlook on reading and his choice of reading materials.

With these discussions it became apparent that not only did the gender of the participants impact the experience of the book club members, but also the route of conversation. The group became another avenue for questioning and learning about ways that gender affected the lives of those in our society while challenging us to recognize needs or interests our students might have. It also allowed us to learn from each other and writers about issues in other cultures and situations and apply this information to our previous experiences and our current lives.

Meeting Four: The Audacity of Hope by Barack Obama

At this point in our reading, we brought our study back to the United States with a political text: *The Audacity of Hope* by Barack Obama (2006). Through our previous discussions concerning the challenges we witnessed and read about in our world, we decided to shift our focus toward one area where we did exercise some power: our political process.

Lynn hosted this December meeting, as she welcomed us into her home with lasagna, salad, and wine. Lynn, Jill, and I were the only group members who attended this meeting during the busy Christmas season. The book choice fell in a time of political preparation and negotiation as Democrats and Republicans began the fight for the election of our new President. Very interested in this upcoming change in leadership, we continued the discussion using the knowledge and ideas that we developed through reading and discussing previous titles. The themes of equality, power, and oppression, along with the desire to somehow help and bring about change for those individuals in our world who struggled, remained evident and a consistent source of motivation and inquiry.

This author's words led to a discussion of our own need to continue our learning and be educated and aware of the events taking place in our world. Building upon our knowledge of the limitations faced by the women in Kabul, we expressed our recognition at how easy it was to take our right to vote for granted. Issues concerning ethnicity, gender, and social challenges in the classroom continued to surface.

Table 6

Multi-Voiced Poem: Crossing Over

Lynn	Jill	Diana
Crossing Over	Crossing Over	Crossing Over
	From "normal"	
		To prestigious
Missing real people		
		Hard not to get lost
	Caught up	
Forgetting about people in the		
"real world"		
	How do we	
		Maneuver this world
Gracefully?	Gracefully?	Gracefully?
		War
Politics		
	People have their own beliefs	
	and parties	
		Changing minds
	And switching sides	
Yesterday, I was tired and		
wanted to go home		
	But I thought and decided	

To vote	To vote	To vote
To show my support		
I'm glad I did		
	If I don't vote, I can't	
	complain	
Waiting for four hours		
		Extreme beliefs
	Make balance hard	
And then our conversation…	And then our conversation…	And then our conversation…
In just a		
Flash	Flash	Flash
Crosses		
		Over
	To teacher talk.	

Transactional Element #4—Interaction With Others

As I reviewed the transcripts of our meetings, I could see Rosenblatt's transactional theory evidenced in the building discussions of each book and interactions of participants through these conversations. While our selected book for this meeting was Barack Obama's, *The Audacity of Hope*, the ideas and stories shared in this meeting tied back to and built upon ideas and learning that took place in previous meetings. In this way, I began to re-see each meeting as a continuation of the meetings before. Each conversation built upon earlier ideas and each person who contributed new ideas or observations contributed to the dialog of the forming story. Depending on the participating members during each meeting, the interactions and discussions were different and took differing routes toward transaction.

During this meeting, Lynn and Jill were particularly engaged in discussing the role that politics played in their thinking about social issues and world interactions. Moving from a discussion of the challenges Obama must have faced as he moved from a more private personal sphere of existence into one that was public and higher in status, the discussion moved to our responsibilities as citizens.

> Lynn: I was thinking yesterday, all I want to do is go home and relax and then I thought, oh, I should go and vote. I should show my support. And I'm glad I did. It was a close race and I was gratified.
>
> Diana: I feel guilty when I don't vote. Especially now in Afghanistan. And places where women aren't allowed to vote, and here I am where I can vote and I don't. It's just about where you are.
>
> Jill: If I don't vote I can't complain about the results.

Lynn: I remember the last Presidential election. In Pennsylvania, where I was living it was such a tight race. I was working at a private school and during the lunch hour I went and stood for 45 minutes and still didn't get to vote. I knew I had to go after school and I stood for 4 hours. And my person won, so I felt like it was worth it.

Similar to each meeting I detailed so far, the conversation moved from discussions of the book to individually related issues. As the conversation moved from the text, to personal plans for tomorrow, to a discussion of having elementary students wait in an auditorium for a presentation, the topics and conversations that created this story demonstrated the role of interaction in moving participants toward opportunities for transaction.

From here, I talked about how much I missed teaching, and Jill expressed a plight that many teachers have experienced: exhaustion.

Jill: [The] weekend isn't enough. People in an office don't understand. I don't think that's fair. Banner Herald says teachers aren't working hard enough. I work 12 hours a day and bring stuff home. My daughter complains that I buy too much for [my students]. I have so many kids and they're not ready to come to school.

Diana: I just don't think people have any clue. I think they think, "Oh you get done at 3:30."

After Jill and I expressed our frustration, the conversation moved to desserts, allergies, and health.

Intrigued by the way that the participants' interactions seemed to both propel and lead them into a variety of seemingly disconnected topics, I explored my thoughts in my journal.

The book and author provide opportunities for discussion but do not demand where that discussion goes. Group members determine that. There is a lot of movement during this

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time. Movement between people; between book and person; between book, person, and another book; movement between what is happening in the book to what is happening in the individuals classroom; movement between what is happening in the book and the individual's life. Conversation moves much like a ping-pong ball being bounced about, picked up by another person and sent flying in a different direction. Yet all of the conversation is linked by the initial impetus for the discussion. As discussion bounces around to all of these areas, it comes back to the book, which served to spring the conversation in yet another direction. During this time the discussion provided the opportunity for meaning-making for individuals through interaction and taking in the perspectives of the other group members. In the discussion, individuals challenged their own stereotypes, as what they held in their minds contradicted what they read and what others said. (Researcher's Journal, May 5, 2008)

As I read the data for meeting four, my mind filled with all of the stories of my past and present, and of the stories I am re-experiencing and recreating as I move through this data. As I examined the transcripts and poem for this meeting I wondered about the ways that the meetings differed according the combinations of present group members.

I continued to theorize the group action of interacting and discussing ideas as a transactional element of this book group experience. In this meeting alone, the discussion moved through ideas such as movement from one social class to another, life circumstances where definitions of "normal" change, managing relationships through major life changes, attempting to maintain a sense of self or reality, politics, presidential elections, war, political parties, voting, teaching stories, and health. In this way, these discussions of ideas and the unique perspectives

and experiences of those present for the discussions, guided the experience of participating in a reading group and the transactions in thinking that took place as a result.

Meeting Five: The Red Tent by Anita Diamant

Our discussion of inequality, oppression and culture continued but shifted slightly with the selection of *The Red Tent* by Anita Diamant. This author, detailing the lives of women situated within a cultural time noted within the Bible, related a possible version of lives lived by women as they negotiated their world as it was driven and decided by men. This text also built upon previous discussions and provided a new perspective and timeline of oppression.

For this January meeting, Lynn again hosted our gathering, which was attended by Hannah, Jill, Betty, Lynn and me. In this meeting, the discussions and interactions of the participants was largely driven by the individual needs and circumstances that participants were currently facing in their lives. While the goals of the group members continued to remain similarly focused, there were multiple and varying ways in which this focus was lived during this meeting. As a group, during this time period we suffered and celebrated: a birth, a rapidly growing toddler, two divorces, one break-up, a spouse with cancer, two home relocations, two job changes, an engagement, and a child moving out of the nest and off to college. The conversations during this meeting reflected these needs and life changes in the multiple conversations that broke out between pairs and small groups within the larger group. I entitled the following poem, *Haphazard and Jumbled,* because as I listened to tapes of the meeting and read the transcripts and notes, I was struck by the sporadic, but significant, nature of the conversations.

Table 7

Multi-Voiced Poem: Haphazard and Jumbled

Lynn	Jill	Eliza	Diana	Betty	Hannah
Haphazard and jumbled	Haphazard and jumbled	Haphazard and jumbled	Haphazard and jumbled	Haphazard and jumbled	Haphazard and jumbled
					Our lives
				Our days	
			Our thoughts		
		Our readings			
	Our experiences				
Our discussions					
Of this book	Of this book	Of this book	Of this book	Of this book	Of this book
					I started this book but got distracted with Abigail and her stomach virus and never finished it.

I finished it
last night at 1
a.m. It was so
powerful I
don't know if
I'm going to
be able to
discuss it.

That one line,

that tragedy,

was more

powerful

than any

movie

moment I've

ever seen.

I started reading
this book Star
Girl to my class.
Rick and I are
reading it. He'll
read a chapter,
I'll read a

chapter.

I wonder
how John
would react
to this book?

It wasn't like
that for me. I
was too stuck
in truths.

I went back
and read
Genesis
when I was
done.

| Talking | Talking | Talking | Talking | Talking | Talking |
| erupts | erupts | erupts | erupts | erupts | erupts |

Abigail…

Bob…

This book

How is he?

I liked it very

much. I

ordered it

online and it

didn't come

so I checked

out another

book by the

same author.

He's

fighting.

How was that

book?

I don't read it

as true.

I couldn't get

into their

world. I have

questions

about what

people tell us

in the Bible.

That's

exactly why I

could do it,

because

there's

already so

much fiction.

Then Abigail

laughs and

talks.

She has

grown so

much!

Jill, were you

hear last

month?

Yes. I told

my son to

read

Obama's

book.

Shift   Shift   Shift

To politics   To politics   To politics

"We need a

person to

change

things."

Hillary or

Barack.

A woman or

black

president…

Exciting

Progress   Progress   Progress   Progress   Progress   Progress

"What would

the women of

Kabul say?"

Is Shame of a

Nation worth

reading?

Yes, and I

just heard

about a new

book…

I just got a new

student whose

language skills

are so

varied…English,

Mandarin

I have one

too, it's so

hard to know

what to do.

How must

people have

learned in

this book?

It's so hard to

imagine how

that love

relationship

could have

worked at all.

Growing,

making

clothes,

sharing work,

doing

everything

there.

It wasn't

			their choice. I		
			wonder about		
			polygamy		
			now.		
			Shifting	Shifting	Shifting
			again	again	again
to next	to next	to next			
month's book	month's book	month's book			
Haphazard					
					And jumbled
Our	Our	Our	Our	Our	Our
experiences	experiences	experiences	experiences	experiences	experiences

Transactional Element #5—Recognition of Needs and Seeking Support

Researchers (Donahue, 2003; Flood et al., 1994; Kooy, 2006; Lassonde, Steams & Dengler, 2005; Smith, 1996; VanLeisburg & Johns, 1994) write about ways that reading groups can provide personal and professional support for teachers. Corroborating this idea, I saw evidence of this finding from the beginning of our first meeting together. This fifth meeting, in particular, showed ways the group members were processing and understanding their personal and professional life situations by talking about their circumstances with the group and seeking feedback, understanding, and stories of similar experiences. This idea of needing a trusted group, with similar goals and foci, with which to process seemed particularly important when examining this issue through a transactional lens. As emphasized throughout transactional theory, the chemical change process continued as each individual examined and received feedback from others about the issues facing them.

Listening to the simultaneous conversations, I noted multiple needs discussed: a need to process this book; a need to describe the fear and pain associated with supporting and loving a spouse suffering from cancer; a need to discuss the challenge of balancing life with a very busy toddler who had been sick; a need to process the role of a new significant other; and the need to consider the political changes taking place at this time: all of these needs intersected in this meeting making conversations somewhat sporadic, often creating mini conversations with one or two people in the group.

Diana: I finished the book last night at 1 a.m. I thought, "I just don't think I'm going to be able to talk about this book. It was just that powerful." [And]… the tragedy that she suffers through!

Lynn: That one line about a tragic moment was better than any movie moment that I've ever, ever…

Eliza: I started reading this book Star Girl to my class. Rick and I are reading it. He'll read a chapter, and I read a chapter. He's hesitant…He's never read to anyone before. I get nervous too, but I'm used to reading to my kids. I was so into it…I've been doing a little of both books.

Diana: I was curious what John's reaction would have been to this book. It really is a female perspective.

Betty: It wasn't that kind of reaction for me when I read that book. I was too stuck in truths.

At this point in the discussion, smaller pairs and groups broke off as multiple conversations erupted. Hannah talked about her daughter and a recent illness, Betty shared about her experiences with Bob's illness, Jill, Lynn, and I continued a discussion of the book.

Jill: I liked it very much. I ordered it online, it didn't come and I thought, "Oh, I've got to read it." I found a book by the same author.

Betty: I got Oprah's magazine the other day…

As the conversation merged and moved with each new perspective, it then shifted to a discussion of politics and last month's book choice.

Hannah: We need a person to change things.

Betty: What would the women in the Bookseller of Kabul say?

This short excerpt of dialogue demonstrates the influence of each individual's current life experience on the route and movement of the conversations that took place.

Providing a different perspective, Eliza detailed an interesting viewpoint concerning the role of this group in helping participants meet personal needs. During Eliza's individual interview she explained that at times she would not have to vocalize her needs or challenges to find relief from them. Simply interacting with the group over various ideas helped relieve the stress and concern she felt about issues that troubled her as she arrived at the meetings. Eliza explained,

It seems like I don't even have to talk about things that are bothering me at school, [because] somehow I feel better about them when I leave the group. And I don't know how that is, I really don't know the connection… I think it's…doing something good for yourself with people that you know are there with you. And it's a bonding thing every time you go. It's like you are better friends because…we are all reading it. You know that's a common thread that's bringing us together. (11-1-07).

So while discussion of topics seemed to help the group members move forward in their thinking and learning, just being together talking also seemed to have benefits even when the discussions were not about the issues that were necessarily pressing at that moment in time.

This particular transactional element carried with it a less emphatic push toward transaction, but to the contrary, seemed to allow for relaxation and holding back. In the relaxing and refraining, it seemed to create a moment where the mind could move away from a narrow and intense focus to allow other ideas and experiences to move to the forefront. In doing so, the situation became open to new thoughts, new experiences, new transactions.

Meetings Six and Seven: All Aunt Hagar's Children by Edward P. Jones

As I look back on the year Lynn, Betty, John, Eliza, Jill, Hannah, and I met together, I see the discussions surrounding our reading of *All Aunt Hagar's Children* by Edward P. Jones as

the climax in our tale. By this point, relationships had grown, and trust and predictability provided a sense of safety. We moved our meeting place to East/West Bistro, a quaint and cozy location on Broad Street. We were seated in the first booth, and following our usual patterns, caught up, and transitioned from the teacher role we enacted throughout the day.

This meeting brought about a different mood in the conversations, and was one that brought an important shift to the themes that drove our discussions. We decided to choose Jones' (2006) book of short stories because of the flexibility the shorter stories would provide in our busy lives. We each chose to read specific stories based upon our interests, and did not read the text in a linear manner that required a thorough reading from the front of the book to the back. The result was a dynamic discussion in which we shared storylines and looked for overlapping themes that Jones might be creating within the collection of stories. During this discussion the group shifted the focus from the theme of oppression and helping others, to reflection and growth of self. Discussion revolved around writing, and the possibilities that we held individually as writers. It was through Jones' writing of short stories that we began to see possibilities that we too could write short stories or "scenarios." Through this transaction, we began experimenting with writing scenes from our lives.

Table 8

Multi-Voiced Poem: Apex and Flipping a Coin

Lynn	Jill	Diana	John	Eliza	Betty
The coin reached its apex and then it fell.	The coin reached its apex and then it fell.	The coin reached its apex and then it fell.	The coin reached its apex and then it fell.	The coin reached its apex and then it fell.	The coin reached its apex and then it fell. "I have no clue what that closing meant."
Is it a metaphor?					
Thinking…	Thinking…	Thinking…	Thinking…	Thinking… Did you find a connection between the stories?	Thinking…
			Is there a connection? There's not a connection is there?		

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What about themes?

Religion and education

Trying to get away; pattern of sickness

I wonder why she wanted to go back?

I don't know

This one wasn't simple.

Laughter   Laughter   Laughter   Laughter   Laughter   Laughter

Excitement for the challenge

A baby in a tree?! I'm lost! I don't know if I can read this one.

I was like,

whoa!

Surprise and

shock at the

storylines

It would start

to go one

way, and

then, nope,

that's not it.

Unpredictable

Events

Did you read

that one?

One-eyed

Willie

romancing

the ladies…

Excitement   Excitement   Excitement

Animation   Animation   Animation

Uncertainty

Of meanings

And

		outcomes	Enthusiastic discussions	Enthusiastic discussions	Enthusiastic discussions
			Good grief		
			Aubrey had issues!		
	At the beginning they were so in love!				
					Those things startle the reader
Were they real?					
					The character says the problem with happiness
	Is that it turns to unhappiness				
It unravels	It unravels	It unravels	It unravels	It unravels	It unravels
				And what	

about in the

second story?

What is that

about?

These stories

just don't end

for me.

"They caught

him after he

killed the

second man."

It catches you

from the

beginning.

It would be a

powerful thing

to read to your

students.

I marked page

187 because it

reminded me

of my

grandmother.

					Write that scene
Scenes are…					
Such a part of our memories	Such a part of our memories	Such a part of our memories	Such a part of our memories	Such a part of our memories	Such a part of our memories
				We could write our own scenes.	
		We could put them together in a book.			
We're going public!					
	Possible titles?				
How about…	How about…	How about…	How about…	How about…	How about…
See what happens when you read?					
			Holiday Present: For my mom		

				Notes from a book club	
Booth One at the Bistro	Booth One at the Bistro	Booth One at the Bistro	Booth One at the Bistro	Booth One at the Bistro Let's write!	Booth One at the Bistro Apex—A new adventure is born.

Because the book selection for meetings six and seven remained the same, I chose to combine the discussion of these two meetings as a means of organization. I discuss these meetings below using two formats. First, I detail ways the dialogue from the first meeting evidenced a dynamic engagement in reading. Second, I describe our second meeting through narrative. The second meeting discussions concerning All Aunt Hagar's Children by Edward P. Jones set the stage for a shift of focus from engagement in reading to engagement in writing.

All Aunt Hagar's Children—Meeting One

The transcription of this meeting was filled with a different kind of excitement and engagement than in other meetings. This excitement focused directly on the text from the book itself. Instead of eliciting strong emotions prompted by the text but concerning issues that participants related to directly, the strong emotions elicited in this reading were related directly to the style and storyline of the text itself.

On May 5, 2008 I wrote about the data from this meeting:

> This meeting is very energetic and exciting. The conversation is centered on the book and while it still makes movements between personal lives, teaching, and other issues, it is much more centered on and driven by the book. (Researcher's Journal).

> Below I share a portion of the transcripts from the beginning of this book discussion, which demonstrate the dynamic nature and energy of the conversation.

> Eliza (beginning the book discussion): Did you find a connection between his stories?

> John (with enthusiasm): Is there a connection? There's not a connection is there?

> Eliza: I read two and they both had religion and education… a religious school was part of it. A lot about men who weren't very good. One was a drunk and one…

John: I read the Washington one, like most people were trying to get away.

Eliza: So my question is, they're black, right? But the mother, she's Spanish?

John: She's trying to speak Spanish so she can keep the language alive.

Betty: I thought she was taunted and this was something she could do.

John (somewhat perplexed): They were trying to teach the kids to believe in Jesus. And there was a pattern of sickness in her family.

Eliza: I wonder why she wanted to go back?

John: I don't know.

Betty: This one wasn't simple.

John laughs about the first story and asks about a scene in the book where the writer described a baby hanging in a tree.

John: I'm lost! I don't know if I can read this one. I was like, WHOA! (Putting hands up for emphasis.)

Diana: It would start to go one way, and then, nope, that's not it.

John: Did you read that one? (Several participants shake their heads to indicate they had not read the story.) I thought you did!

John begins to explain a scene from the short story since some participants did not choose that particular story to read.

John: See, One-eyed Willie, he lived with the couple who moved from DC to Virginia. One -eyed Willie went around when he could see, romancing the ladies. No, he was Blind Willie, I'm sorry, but he was only half blind. When he was going blind he decided to make peace with the ladies.

Diana: Which didn't make any sense!

With excitement and laughter John comments about another character in the story.

John: Good grief, Aubrey had issues!

Diana: At the beginning they were so in love!

Betty: Those things startle the reader, but I think they were real.

At this point in the discussion, the group attempted to decide if the events described in the story were real, or if they were created in order to create depth and intrigue in the characters.

As this transcript shows, the participants became very caught up in the conversation about the details in the stories. Looking to each other for ideas, each participant in this discussion expressed interest and some bewilderment at the plot and scenes the author shared in the stories. This engagement exemplified the need for interest, connection, and challenge in this movement toward transaction. Through this interest and engagement in the writer's style and stories, the group members moved from seeing themselves solely in the role of the reader. Through this discussion, the readers began to see themselves as potential writers as well.

All Aunt Hagar's Children—Meeting Two

The sun was shining as I walked up Broad Street. The streets downtown were teaming with the usual Athens' crowds: students sporting all manner of boots with and without fur, some with stiletto heals and others contrasting this look with high chunky platforms, various lengths of skirts, rhinestone flip-flops, pants of all fits, colors and styles, all representing an eclectic mix of name-brand and thrift-store fashions; parents with young children, some with young adults, wandering across streets and stopping to take photographs on painted statue bulldogs or standing together in front of the University of Georgia's famous arch. A street musician sat on the corner of College and Broad practicing his craft for passersby, and thanks to the workers of Starbucks, the smell of coffee filled the air. As I approached our meeting place, East-West Bistro, I saw

John and Lynn lounging in the sun in front of the restaurant. One by one, members of our reading group arrived, so we moved inside and were escorted to a large booth toward the front of the restaurant. Thus began our transition from working and teaching, to eating, chatting, and discussing ideas prompted by the second discussion of our book selection: *All Aunt Hagar's Children* by Edward P. Jones.

Eliza, in her usual enthusiasm and passion, began by reading a passage aloud taken from the book that prompted vivid memories of her grandmother.

"I marked a place on page 187 because it reminded me of my grandmother. The last paragraph…"

Reading aloud had become natural and expected in this particular group, and while this practice started in a somewhat timid fashion at the group's induction, it had since grown into a behavior that was confident and enthusiastic.

Smiling, Eliza began reading, "'Just before two, Glynnis suggested that she fix lunch, and Dr. Imogene said that was the best idea of the day. As Glynnis stood at the kitchen counter, preparing the sandwiches, the root worker came up beside her and touched the young woman's shoulder and Glynnis decided right then to cut the sandwiches into fours rather than halves.'" Lowering the book, Eliza shared, "I remember I would go over to my grandmother's and I would cut my sandwich in fours."

"What a wonderful theme to write about!" Betty responded. "It always overwhelms me to think about writing a book, but to write a scene…and then think oh, I might have something to put before it and after it. I used to ask my students to write scenes. I would tell them to write a scene about dinner and pay attention to dialogue. What I learned about families, about the dog, the way they talked! You got to be a fly on the wall in that scenario."

Eliza replied, "These scenes are such a part of my memories."

"What about giving the memory a title like 'Fours and not halves?'" Betty asked.

"It would be interesting if we made ourselves write scenes." John responded.

"I could write about my grandmother's hands in church. Her hands were so dry, just stripped of oil, and I would reach over and push up the skin on her knuckles and it would stay up." Eliza laughs as she demonstrates on her own fingers her talent of shaping the flesh of her knuckles, recreating the church scene in our minds.

Amidst the laughter and comedy, Eliza suggests, "Maybe we could send each other a scene via email and then we could read each others stories and reply to everyone."

"Hold on, everyone! We're going public!" Lynn announces. "And we could talk about the scenes at the next meeting."

I took this moment to look at these teachers seated around me. Here we were, sitting in a cozy setting as the sun set outside. All day long each teacher answered questions, fixed wounds, dried tears, controlled tempers, reassured parents, principals, and themselves, taught students academic skills and life skills, broke up fights, cleaned up spills, monitored hallways and bathrooms and playgrounds, with hardly a moment to stop and breathe. After sending students out the door to their buses and waiting parents, and sitting through and leading faculty and parent meetings, these teachers then drove across town to meet together and talk about a book. While their own children, significant others, and families waited for their arrivals home, each sat, relaxed, comfortable, laughing, happy, and excited about reading and discussing the short stories in our book selection. And through a spirited discussion about the text, they themselves became inspired to write their own short stories.

"What if we put the stories together in a book?" Jill suggested.

"And we could give each scene a title. We could find that little tidbit…" Betty thought aloud.

Smiling, Eliza looked at her finger, naming the scene as it unfolded in her mind, "The Divine Ridge."

For a moment, the group paused and brainstormed the scenes each person could write. Scenes about our childhoods, those we love, moments in time that stayed in our minds like photographs.

"We shouldn't worry about the titles," Betty noted. "We shouldn't limit ourselves."

"Maybe that's what we should call the book," Lynn exclaimed. "Don't worry about the title!"

"Or what about naming it, 'Notes from a book club,'" Eliza thought aloud. "We could go to conferences and say, 'We started out as a book club. See what happens when you read?!'"

Through the group's laughter and some contemplation of possible publishers, John decided that our book could be published in similar formats to those we elementary teachers use with our own students' writing.

"In that case," John laughs, "We could call it 'Holiday Presents: For My Mom.'"

This comment successfully cracks everyone up. "We could send a copy to Oprah." Lynn adds. "Then we could go to Oprah's show…you know she loves teachers."

"We could call it 'The Bistro,'" Betty suggests.

"Or 'Booth number one,'" Eliza adds. Among the laughter, Eliza picked up the audio recorder, taking advantage of this technology that so often fades into the background, and repeats, talking directly into the recorder, "'Booth One at the Bistro.' Did you get that?" As she sets the recorder back on the table she suggests, "You know, we could write our ideas and scenes

on this paper tablecloth! It's just like at school when you spread butcher paper out for the kids. Then we could roll it up and take it with us!"

As the evening came to a close, as we collected our things and parted on the sidewalk outside of the Bistro, heading for our cars, I noted to myself that while we did not write, illustrate, and leave with a rolled up table cloth story that night, we did leave with ideas and excitement over our own potentials. Through our time spent together, and the words and stories of Edward P. Jones, we found ideas for a book, for a scene. We found moments that ached to be expressed outside of the context of our minds and memories. We left with the inspiration to try our hands at doing for others what these authors had been doing for us: inspiring us to think, to connect, to contemplate and to change our minds, even if only slightly, to take in a new perspective.

Later that same evening, each participant received an almost immediate response from John who shared the first scenario of the group. Surprising us all with his prompt creation, we were impressed and motivated by the scene he shared from his childhood. Later, as I wrote and analyzed my data, I came to see John's story as yet another example of transaction. Except in this case, the transaction was demonstrated on another scale. John's story detailed a transactional moment in his life as a child, which moved his innocent mind into a new understanding and reality.

In the continued spirit of poetry, I created a "found" poem from his scene (Commeyras & Kelly, 2002, p. 100). I entitled the poem, *Transactions In and Through Text* as I considered the variety of ways that the experience of transaction is evidenced. I included this poem below and John's story in Appendix E.

Transactions In and Through Text

A child, allowed to explore;

Freedom.

The creek, a magical place;

Another land

Our biggest secret?

Fear that people would come and take over.

Walk on water

And not get wet.

The creek seemed to go on forever…

We never made it to the end.

I explored the creek for years-

Noticed something different.

A man, Sleeping.

Later, the ambulance.

The man died: Hypothermia

The creek was transformed: Destroyed

Never explored again.

As an adult, I realize

The creek was actually the place the sewer system drained.

I used to wonder where my ball went

That fell in the sewer.

Today, I know where the ball goes.

The balls explore the creek

And search for the end.

Meeting Eight: Walk Two Moons by Sharon Creech

We shifted the meeting location for our May meeting to Aromas, a small wine bar in Five Points. I walked in to find Betty, John, and Eliza relaxing over wine and a plate of hummus and bread. This month's book selection, *Walk Two Moons* by Sharon Creech (1994), continued the discussion that began the month before, as we moved from seeing ourselves as teachers who read to seeing ourselves as teachers who write. Creech's method for writing this book catered to our ideas about writing small scenes from our lives. In the book, Creech alternated chapters, with one chapter addressing one story line and the next chapter detailing a different story, until the two finally came together in the end. Continuing in the spirit of analyzing writing style along with analyzing writing content, we applied Creech's writing to the personal writing we decided to create and share with one another via email before meeting again.

The discussion throughout this meeting moved back and forth between the challenges we were facing in our own personal attempts with writing to the writing advice and expectations we have as teachers for our students. Experiencing the challenges associated with communicating an

experience or idea through the use of words provided us with a reminder of our student's struggles as they write in our classes.

Additionally, John shared his experience of reading this book aloud to his students instead of reading it alone to himself. His sharing of this book with his 5th graders added another unexpected turn: our reading and discussion as a group now extended beyond our seven readers to a new group of students.

Table 9

Multi-Voiced Poem: Writing Until It's Right

Diana	John	Eliza	Betty
Writing	Writing	Writing	Writing
		I want "so badly" to write a scenario about my grandmother.	
But?	But?		But?
		It has to be right. I'll read it and stop and say "no."	
			Finding "hot spots" and start writing scenes.
And soon			
	You have		
Walk Two Moons	Walk Two Moons	Walk Two Moons	Walk Two Moons
This book reminds me of my classroom.			
		I read it at the same time as a student. We talked about it.	

	Shows complexity of life		
Several scenes			
		Were emotional	
			The images the story provokes
I like the way the author flips			
		Back	Back
And forth	And forth		
			Painting
		A picture	
	Of her		
Life			
The awkwardness of growing up	The awkwardness of growing up	The awkwardness of growing up "funny in a nervous kind of way."	The awkwardness of growing up
			Letting imagination run wild
Did she leave?			
	Is she dead?		
			Kids in our classes go

			through similar stuff.
		I remember I loved The Taste of Blackberries	
Connecting through stories	Connecting through stories	Connecting through stories	Connecting through stories
	Thinking…		
		Wow, that happened to me too.	
	Is anyone reading anything great?		
Reading and Writing	Reading and Writing	Reading and Writing	Reading and Writing
Writing is hard!			
		I have so many stories of my grandmother	
			That's what every writer faces—Where do you start?
I tried and I stopped, tried and stopped			
		I have one started. It's like "visiting a memory." I want to	

get it right.

Almost impossible   Almost impossible   Almost impossible   Almost impossible

                                                                    Until

                      You write

                                            And rewrite

Until you get it

                                            Right.

Transactional Element #7—Engagement in Writing

During this meeting I recognized engagement in writing as an element that encouraged movement toward transaction. As participants attempted to express experiences through words, and share these with one another, individual style became evident. Also evident was the challenge we faced to make that leap from reader, to writer of stories that held personal importance. Eliza, in particular, struggled to represent her memories of a cherished relationship with her grandmother, in such a way that honored the memory, instead of narrowing the memory to typed words on paper.

> Eliza: I want so badly to write a scenario about my grandmother, but it has to be right…I'll read it and I'll stop and say, 'no.'
>
> Betty: Sometimes you have to go back to it and finding those hot spots that aren't right or can be developed further. And before you know it you have *Walk Two Moons*.
>
> Diana: I agree. This was fun…but it was hard when I couldn't get my thoughts out…I started trying to express a weekend where I went to a wedding and a funeral on the same weekend. I tried and I stopped and I tried and I stopped, but it's too overwhelming.
>
> Eliza: I have so many stories of my grandmother.
>
> Betty: That's what every writer faces… where do you start?
>
> Eliza: I have one started. This is strange, I probably won't do it. But how strange would it be to write scenarios around fruit. The way my grandmother cuts bananas. Fruit basket turnover. A cornucopia. There's a picture…My other grandmother, she had a hat on, and two huge strawberries in her hand.

Talk moves to John's immediate response after our last meeting as he shared his scenario of exploring the creek. As the group joked about John winning the speed writing competition, we moved our focus back to Eliza's writing quandary.

Eliza: I just couldn't write it.

Diana: I think it's fairly significant that you were so excited about writing that scene, but that it can't come out.

Eliza: It's like visiting a memory. She's the one person I felt so connected to…intertwined. Nobody will ever be like that. I live in the same house she lived in. I can be walking in and just stop and there she is. I go back to that place, and I really want to get that right.

Diana: Well and trying to put all of that into words and on paper is almost an impossible task.

At this point in the conversation, Betty stopped jotting on her paper and turned to Eliza.

Betty: Here's what you just said…

Betty reads aloud the words Eliza shared.

"She's the one person I felt so connected to, intertwined. I live in the same house she lived in. Sometimes I walk in the door and just stop."

Diana: Sometimes when you're even telling a story to someone, there are some things that are so close to your heart that in telling the story, somehow you lose something. It takes on a different significance or a different life when you vocalize that story. It might be similar in the writing. It is so meaningful, how do you communicate that in a way that gives it justice?"

As the conversation continued, the discussion shifted to titles.

Diana: I do like titles where you have to figure out where the author came up with that title.

Betty: I don't think I'd write chapter titles if I were writing a book.

Eliza: I love short chapters instead of long drawn out ones. A title might give it away if it was a short chapter. When we talk about it, I get so excited. It's good to get out with y'all. It just wants to come out so bad.

Diana: I'm excited about the scenarios. I didn't expect it.

Eliza: Books are totally a catalyst for what I'm thinking about writing. I bet the scenarios would connect somehow.

As demonstrated in meetings six and seven, the conversations that took place around the chosen books reflected an engagement that worked toward self-growth, personal reflection, and challenge. Eliza's challenge, in particular, modeled the ways in which her "trying" remained a source of feelings of disequilibrium until the experience of transaction could be completed with an experience of undergoing.

<div align="center">Story Types: Cross Analysis of Meetings</div>

Through my description and analysis of these book group meetings, I identified seven transactional elements present in our group meetings that contributed to the overall book group experience and learning. These seven elements: individual purpose, inquiry, application of new learning, interaction, recognizing need and seeking support, engaged reading, and engaged writing, while separated into distinct categories for the purpose of analysis and discussion, in reality were interrelated. While I examined each as they were exemplified in individual meetings, these elements were not limited to one meeting, but were present in all. By pulling them out according to meeting, my hope was to examine and understand these elements as if

shining a light on a large area and noting the details brought forward by the light, thus learning about the intricacies held within the larger picture.

After examining each of these categories as separate and distinct, my next step brought them back together through an analysis across the categories, with a focus on commonalities and larger unifying themes. In this analysis I recognized two overarching purposes that seemed to place each theme into a particular story type: expression and learning. In Table 10 below, I included detail of this analysis as I moved from themes in the multi-voiced poems from each meeting and themes from other data sources, to the transactional elements within these experiences, and finally to the story type most closely related to each element.

Table 10

Analysis: Themes-Element-Story Type

Meeting Number	Themes from MV Poems	Themes from Data	Element	Story Types
1	Reunion Known (Personal Goals, Connections/Interactions) Who are we? (Personal Goals) Find the time To Become (Personal Goals)	Reunion, being an insider/outsider, being known Identity, Self-Family-Others Personal Goals Anticipation Challenges Self attention, Making/Finding time Bettering oneself through continued learning and support.	Individual Purpose	Expression: Throughout this meeting participants stories revolved around expressions of the happenings in their lives and the reasons they were choosing to participate in the group.
2	Cheers (Questioning disparity,	Beginning/transit ion from work to	Inquiry	Expression: Participants

	personal role)	the group		took on a
	Where is the line?	Understanding		stance of
	(Questioning how to find the	differences-		inquiry and
	line between extremes)	privilege and		asking
	Teachers/Children need	poverty		questions.
	Support	Structure versus		They
	To Pause	Openness		expressed
	(How to find balance)	How to meet		emotions over
	Our students	needs of students		recognized
	To ourselves	and self		dichotomies:
		Excitement in		privilege vs.
		learning process		poverty,
		How to find		structure vs.
		balance		openness
3	Powerful Women	Asserting and	Application	Learning:
	(Relating stories of women in	recognizing	of New	While
	Afghanistan to self)	power;	Information	participants
	Voice	Being limited by		are always
	(Comparing individual	cultural		expressing
	lifestyle/customs/laws to	constructions;		their emotions
	book; feeling powerless)	Recognizing		and thinking,
	Yet…	voice;		this meeting
	(power and fulfillment;	Applying text to		evidenced an

	relationships/building knowledge of students) I want to make a difference because… (taking in descriptions and information; desire to help)	self; Emotions related to powerlessness; Perseverance/living teaching and making a difference through help from books; Hope in spite of problems		application of this information to current situations. With this application comes stories of learning.
4	Crossing over (change of social status) Gracefully? To vote And then our conversation… (movement to teacher needs, experiences)	Continued discussion of power and inequality; Movement from low status to status of power and prestige; Separation from "real world" and "normal";	Interaction with others	Expression: Participants demonstrated many topics of conversation through their interactions with others. This interaction allows for

		Questioning ways to make decisions; Civic responsibilities; "Teacher talk"	expression.
5	Haphazard and Jumbled (variety of interactions, needs, discussions) Of this book (differences in opinions, and amount read due to personal needs in life such as children, significant others, illness) (Talking erupts Multiple conversations driven by various personal needs.) Shift to politics (Need to discuss outside world and country issues) Progress (Female and Black Presidential race)	Diverse experiences and needs intersecting Mini conversations Shifting from topic to topic	Recognition of Needs and Seeking Support	Expression: Participants noted and were driven by many personal issues that were evident during this meeting. These issues were expressed through conversation.

	Our experiences			
	(variety of needs in group)			
6-7	The coin reached its apex and then it fell. (Discussion of meaning of various ideas in book) Thinking… (Trying to decipher a phrases meaning by connecting to other stories in the book and looking for patterns) Laughter (Enjoyment and excitement about text) Animation/Excitement (Engaged discussion of text, not personal issues) It unravels (Theme from short stories from book selection) Such a part of our memories (Small scenes/memories that could be written as short	Engagement and questioning in reading Connections/themes/patterns Excitement in challenges Shifts from book to personal life Writing memories/book together	Engagement in Reading	Learning: This meeting provides an example of engaged and thoughtful discussion and analysis of a text. In this way, participants are learning and applying this experience to their own writing.

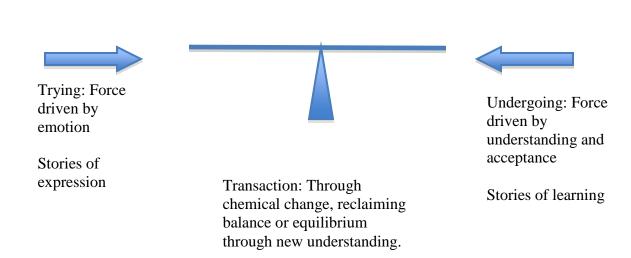|				
	stories)			
	Booth One at the Bistro (Title of book the group could write as a compilation of smaller scenes.)			
8	Writing (Movement from reading to writing) Walk Two Moons (Book selection written in small scenes) The awkwardness of growing up (discussion of book and author's style) Connecting through stories (Making personal connections and connections with others) Reading and Writing (Expression of difficulty of writing, getting the scene right, depicting what is in the	Personal challenges in writing Professional-connecting book to classroom Books evoking emotion Connecting through books and to others Sharing other reading Right versus wrong ways to write	Engagement in Writing	Learning: After writing and sharing this with other group members, the conversations frequent around challenges to the writing and connections to the book as a model.

mind)

Almost impossible

(Revising and continuing

process of writing toward a

goal)

Within the idea of expression I envisioned an effort on the part of the individual to move personal and internal thoughts, experiences, ideas, and emotions prompted by the experience of reading, outward, toward the other group members. In moving with the force of these stories of expression, the participants often asked difficult questions, shared quandaries, and expressed emotion. Similar to Dewey's (1916) trying, through this expression, these stories allowed participants to move forward. I also saw these moments similar to interaction, which Rosenblatt differentiates from transaction. Like billiard balls colliding, their interaction moves about and allows for many players to be involved. However, the entirety of the experience isn't complete without the learning or "undergoing" that then takes place through this process of expression.

Balancing this story type are stories of learning. These stories evidence moments where, through participants' expressions and their interactions with each other and the presented ideas, they come to a point of learning and movement from one point of understanding to a sometimes drastic and sometimes only slightly different perspective. It is during this process that I saw Rosenblatt's transaction evidenced and note that through this chemical process, living literacy was exemplified. Within the stories of learning, the individual moved back from expression to a mode in which the force moved inward, helping the individual reclaim balance, equilibrium, and calm. This process of achieving a new state of balance symbolized the moment of transaction.

While separately defined, these elements contain characteristics and possibilities for each story-type. The back and forth movement of expression and learning happened constantly as participants took in the world around them, related it to their cultural context and past experiences, and expressed it to others, in turn receiving feedback, finding understanding and balance yet again. This process continued repeatedly with new information, as transaction continued to rebalance these two opposing forces (See Figure 1).

Figure 1: Model of Transaction

Trying: Force
driven by
emotion

Stories of
expression

Transaction: Through
chemical change, reclaiming
balance or equilibrium
through new understanding.

Undergoing: Force
driven by
understanding and
acceptance

Stories of learning

CHAPTER FIVE

THE HOUSE WAS QUIET AND THE WORLD WAS CALM

In this final chapter I seek to bring calm and resolution to this four-year process of repositioning, learning and growth, of swimming in data, of talking, planning, writing, and thinking. As this work draws to a close I return again to my research questions and to the goals I set for maintaining high standards in my work. Additionally, I offer final thoughts concerning this examination of the experience of participating in a teacher reading group that was "essentially social yet always individually internalized" and led to experiences that were both "shared and uniquely personal" (Rosenblatt, 1994, p. 53). I write through these issues in the following essays: *Could you repeat the question, please?; Revisiting trustworthiness;* and *Reading the first line in light of the last.*

Could You Repeat the Question, Please?

I feel compelled, like a contestant on a game show reaching the final stage in her million dollar quest, to bend down to the microphone and announce as a hush falls over the crowd, sweat beads on her brow, and tension mounts, "Um, could you repeat the question, please?" As I summarize and conclude my work on this "collaborative" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 12).re-storying, I turn again to the research questions that brought me to this point. Below I discuss considerations concerning each question.

Question One: Discussion

My first research question stated: How can arts-based research and multigenre narrative writing assist me in sharing descriptions and elements of the experience of participating in a teacher reading group? I discuss this question in two pieces. First, I summarize the arts-based

and multigenre research process, which provided a foundation for this study. Second, I address the descriptions and transactional elements of the reading group experience itself.

As I remember the struggle I had finding my own voice and signature (Clandinin and Connelly, 1994, p. 424) and developing a way to represent my work, I recognize that this is likely a struggle that every writer shares. I was finally able to push myself forward, through this stationary mental block, into movement and progress by reading, thinking, and writing about arts-based research. When I opened my mind to the possibility of expressing my thoughts and experiences in *any* written format and stopped limiting my expression to my very narrow definition of academic writing, I began to feel that it might actually be possible to create a representation of the experience with words. Throughout this work I used reflective writing, essay, poetry, creative nonfiction, description, autobiographical text, and poetry to communicate the experience.

I also return to my writing and review the elements that were present in this reading group that seemed instrumental in propelling us toward transaction. Individual purpose, inquiry, application of new information, discussing ideas with others, recognizing needs and seeking support, engaged reading, and engaged writing all seemed to provide a spark, which then continued Rosenblatt's live circuit. I in no way believe that transaction is limited to these elements. Undoubtedly, there is as much variation in the ways human beings process, learn, and grow, as there is variation in human beings themselves. However, these seven elements do offer readers and educators an opportunity to pause and consider ways to be *planful* as they seek to remain awake (Clandinin, Pushor & Orr, 2007) to possibilities for transactional experiences for students, teachers and themselves.

Question 2: Discussion

My research question stated: How can I contribute to the academic discussions concerning transactions with texts and teachers as readers? As I re-consider this living literary experience, (both the experience of reading with others and the experience of researching and writing), I recognize the importance of flexibility and openness. The very nature of the experience of transaction is living. And with any living organism, there lies an element of unpredictability. Because transactions in literary experiences are individual experiences, and are experiences of movement and change within the mind, it is important to note that as researchers and teachers we must make room for transaction. In making room, we maintain order while living in chaos. We throw away the rules while staying within the boundaries. We step out of the box while keeping the box within sight. We do this to push, to create, to discover and explore while maintaining a connection, a type of order, a way of being, so that we can then go back and express this transaction to others. In the expression, we must negotiate, and return to some method of predictability, to order, to rules in order to communicate.

While many researchers (Applegate & Applegate, 2004; Block & Mangieri, 2002; Donahue, 2003; Draper, 2000; Flood et al., 1994; George, 2001; Kooy, 2006; Lassonde, Steams & Dengler, 2005; Morrison, Jacobs & Swinyard, 1999; Smith, 1996; Tribbe-Socol, 2006; Zancanella, 1991) tout the benefits of encouraging teachers to read, I would add to that conversation the encouragement to open up the reading experience to include the experience of transaction. Reading is simply an act, or as Dewey explained, a *trying* when it is separate from transactional elements such as purpose, inquiry, application, discussion, and engagement. However, it becomes a transactional experience when the participant begins Dewey's

undergoing. And at this moment, reading becomes something different. And I would argue that it is this experience that we should be asking teachers, students and ourselves to seek.

We might also recognize that efferent reading experiences, thoughtfulness and planning are often necessary elements of the transactional experience. The act of seeking transaction can be hard and exhausting, and not altogether pleasant. It can require thought and work. However, this planning and seeking prepares our minds to move forward. And it is this experience that we should be attempting to create for our students, because this is the moment where literacy comes to life and pushes, shoves, drags, throws the reader into a new place.

In acknowledging transactional experiences as an ultimate goal, we might have to relinquish some of our efforts to direct and control the literary experiences of our students and ourselves. As we release control, changing our emphasis from creating *reading* experiences for teachers and students to creating *transactional* experiences *through* reading, we seek an element of trust.

> We must honor what they [students] bring to the text and interact. We may not always agree with them…but we must engage them. And that profound faith in what the reader brings—what the reader has the right to bring—continues to be radical and startling… (Christenbury, 2005, p. 23).

The transactional experience cannot be designed, implemented, and assessed. It is personal and uniquely individual. At most, teachers can find elements that help create a space and moment for a reader to engage. But actually creating engagement and transaction is beyond the reach of everyone except for the reader herself.

Revisiting Trustworthiness

"But the intrinsic value of a literary work of art resides in the reader's living through the

transaction with the text" (Rosenblatt, 1994, p. 132).

As I returned to my research questions, I now return to the recommendations for high

quality research as explained by Richardson and St. Pierre (2005). Their four recommendations

include measuring the work by whether it contributes to the knowledge base on the topic,

whether the work is aesthetically engaging, if the writer is reflexive evidencing self-awareness

and exposure, and whether the work is impactful (p. 964). Considering these characteristics, and

following Rosenblatt's (1994) suggestion, I took this moment to return to the beginning, writing

and rereading my first lines in light of the last, carrying thoughts of "intrinsic value" (p. 132). I

noted at the beginning of this work:

> This dissertation uses multiple genres in the forms of creative nonfiction, personal
>
> reflection, poetry, description, autobiography, and essay to share two intertwining
>
> experiences: my participation with six elementary school teachers in a reading group and
>
> my experience of conducting my first research study. It is my goal that the following text
>
> would weave back and forth for the reader, explaining and describing the collisions of
>
> these two experiences and somehow, in the end, representing the whole…Through my
>
> sharing of this research, I hope to provide an opportunity for others to see and experience
>
> an example of a "living literacy" while simultaneously creating a text that could provide a
>
> possibility for a reader's own transaction with this new text, thus continuing the live
>
> circuit in the reading experience (Durbin, 2008, p. xi).

While there is no way for me to know the experiences of my readers as they read this

text: their transactions; their understandings or constructions of "living literacy" or even my

success at representing the "whole" experience of this reading group and research process, I do feel that I have maintained the high standards I hoped to achieve as I began this work. Regardless of my powerlessness to ensure transaction for my readers, I know that my own transactions through the writing and creating process make this work worthwhile and meaningful.

Reading the First Line in Light of the Last

A moment of surprise took place as I revised this dissertation prior to my defense. Having carelessly used a quote by Rosenblatt without including the reference information, I found myself searching through books and articles, on my own version of "Where's Waldo?" While this pesky and profound quote remained hidden to me, highlighted portions of text, some paragraphs circled, others sitting calmly on the page with exclamation points in orange marker dotting the margins, were prevalent and easily noticed. These pieces of Rosenblatt's texts, which excited and moved me early in this process, found their way back into my present world. As I reread these texts, I began highlighting new phrases that now held different meaning for me after transacting with these ideas and readings for the past two years.

Nestled between pages of marked and highlighted sections was a clean page. This clean page was not a page without words: Rosenblatt's ideas filled this page. But it was a page without any of my reactions, colored marks, or notes. My eyes scanned the page quickly and noted something familiar. There, comfortably sandwiched in the middle of Rosenblatt's theory was part of a poem (Rosenblatt, 1994, p. 13).

> The house was quiet and the world was calm.
>
> The reader became the book; and summer night
>
> Was like the conscious being of the book.
>
> The house was quiet and the world was calm.

The words were spoken as if there was no book,

Except that the reader leaned above the page.

I could not believe that I had not noticed Steven's poem in my frequent earlier reads. As my surprise wore off from discovering this unknown parallel, I remembered back to the beginning of this process.

When I first started reading Rosenblatt, I skipped the poems she shared. My eyes searched the narratives for meaning, but I had no faith in meaning and aesthetics in poetry. Now, however, as I transacted again with *the same text* with which I began, reading the first line in light of the last (Rosenblatt, 1994) brought new transaction, meaning, and experience. Now I read the poem and wondered: Did my mind see this poem and recognize it unconsciously when I first picked up Kennedy's (2005) book and found Steven's poem? How did I skip over this part of Rosenblatt's discussion, saving my markers and comments for some of Rosenblatt's other thoughts? Then, finding this poem elsewhere, through my own transactional experience with poetry, I used its phrases as the structure for my dissertation. Coming full circle, as I finished this writing, I found it again, right where I started, with Rosenblatt's texts. As I read her ideas again, following my data collection, book group experience, analysis and writing, I noted:

> While I have returned, "where I started," it isn't where I started at all. In reading some of the first texts with which I began, I am interpreting them differently, based on the experiences I've had over the past two years. So in my return to the beginning, I am making meaning in a new place, based on new experiences, forming "a new order," (Rosenblatt, 1994, p. 12) a new poem (Researcher's Journal, 9-17-08).

I then became quite interested in reading all of the *un*-highlighted portions of Rosenblatt's texts and found yet another poem written by Wallace Stevens. Surprised and

amused I read his poem (his composition of thoughts in words and phrases) on the poem (transactional) experience.

Poetry is the subject of the poem,

From this the poem issues and

To this returns. Between the two,

Between issue and return, there is

An absence in reality,

Things as they are. Or so we say.

But are these separate? Is it

An absence for the poem, which acquires

Its true appearances there, sun's green,

Cloud's red, earth feeling, sky that thinks?

From these it takes, Perhaps it gives,

In the universal intercourse.

Text is the subject of transaction. From the text the transaction begins and extends. Between this beginning and extension is an escape for the reader from reality and the way things are. But is it an escape for the reader? Or is it an escape for the transaction, which finds it's true essence from interaction with readers, where anything could happen; where transaction takes from and gives to the reader, trying and undergoing. Living.

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APPENDIX A

LITERATURE REVIEW

Background

Congress passed the National Literacy Act in 1991, which defined literacy as *"an* individual's ability to read, write, and speak in English, and compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job and in society, to achieve one's goals, and develop one's knowledge and potential" (National Institute for Literacy, 2004, p. 11). Sadly, approximately 90 million American adults are categorized at the lowest levels of literacy (National Institute for Literacy, 2004). Approximately 44 million out of 191 million Americans are unable to complete daily skills necessary for everyday life (National Institute for Literacy, 2004). Additionally, low levels of literacy are positively correlated with social problems such as poverty, crime, and unemployment (National Institute for Literacy, 2007).

In an attempt to promote literacy, Congress passed several measures that directly affect literacy education. The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) are two examples of legislation that endorse a greater emphasis on the promotion of literacy among adults and children. Through this legislation, great importance is placed upon standardized testing and student achievement in the nation's public schools. With this emphasis, it is hoped that no child will be left behind.

An important and sometimes overlooked element in improving literacy is the literature knowledge and literary experience and levels of those teaching reading and other literacy skills. In their research on teachers as readers, Commeyras, Bisplinghoff, and Olson (2003) state, "Educators have overlooked the potential significance of the teacher as reader" (p. 2). Furthermore, researchers have found that a teacher's level of literacy is more influential in

affecting student achievement than years of teaching experience, hours devoted to professional development, or certification level (Wayne and Youngs, 2003). These research perspectives point to a gap in our understanding of the implications of a teacher's personal literacy on teaching practice, and on how to engage teachers in personal reading. What research has been conducted concerning teacher literacy and the impact of this literacy on teaching practice? Are teachers also readers or are they simply teachers of reading?

Purpose of Review

This purpose of this review of literature is to explore and integrate the findings of empirical research on the professional and personal implications of teachers as readers. The organization of this paper is modeled after Fitzgerald's (1995) review, published in *Review of Educational Research.* A full citation for Fitzgerald's review is included in the references at the end of this paper.

In this review, the term *teachers* includes all individuals who teach in public, private, or international schools at any grade level, pre-kindergarten through college. The term *educator* refers to the broader education community and includes teachers, as well as other personnel such as college professors, administrators, teaching assistants, specialists and librarians. The term *book group* is used to describe instances in which groups of teachers, other school personnel, and/or college professors meet together to discuss a common text. Other terms, often used synonymously with *book group* are book clubs, reading clubs, reading groups, and teacher book clubs. Unless using one of these terms in a direct quotation, I will use *book group* throughout this paper. *Lifelong reader* refers to an individual who has developed habits of reading that extend beyond required reading in school into adulthood.

Need for Review

In my exploration of research I was unable to find any substantial published reviews of literature on teachers as readers. Most of the articles I found were practitioner pieces, narrative writings, or commentaries about teachers' reading practices. Additionally, many of the research studies found were limited in rigor and methodology. In completing this review I hope to contribute a synthesis and overview of important research studies conducted between the years 1990 to 2007 concerning teachers as readers. Furthermore, I will discuss ideas about instructional implications and future directions for further research on this topic.

I will explore research concerning various facets of teacher beliefs and knowledge about literacy and will then examine the impact these beliefs and knowledge have on teaching practice. While increased achievement and higher literacy levels are the ultimate goal, this review will not focus on the impact of practice on student achievement or the impact of certain teaching strategies or methodologies on learning outcomes. Some of the studies reviewed in this paper discuss findings related to using book groups to develop greater understanding of multicultural issues in schools, as well as using book groups to develop writing skills and ability. I recognize the potential importance and power of using book groups to develop deeper cultural understanding and writing abilities. While I will touch on these issues, deep exploration of these topics is outside of the scope of this current review.

Methodology

To begin my search I used GALILEO and the ERIC database with the following qualifiers: (a) "teachers as readers," (b) teachers as readers, (c) teachers and reading practices, (d) teachers' reading habits, (e) professional development and reading groups, (f) solitary reading and teachers, and (g) independent reading and teachers. I then conducted a search of documents

in the Education Fulltext database using the qualifiers (a) "teachers as readers," (b) teachers'

reading habits, (c) reading as professional development, (d) reading lives of teachers, and (e)

independent reading and teachers. Moreover, I conducted an exploration of authors through the

Web of Science on Commeyras, Flood, Smith, VanLeirsburg, and Zancanella. I then scanned the

reference lists of collected research, identified additional relevant research and attempted to

collect these articles as well.

This literature review is restricted to data-based research articles, descriptive studies, and

peer-reviewed conference papers written between the years 1990 and 2007. I also read teacher

resources, practitioner articles, books, and narratives to explore others' experiences and thoughts

about topics pertaining to teachers as readers (Cardarelli, 1992; Commeyras, Bisplinghoff &

Olson, 2003; Daniels, 2003; Dillingofski, 1993; Dreher, 2002; Farr, 2005; Flood & Lapp, 1994;

Hall, 2003; Long, 2003; Rooney, 2005; Rummel & Quintero, 1997; Smith, 1994; Zaleski, Duvall

& Weil, 1999). These sources helped to inform my thinking about teachers as readers and book

groups, but are not included in the analysis of the research due to their lack of rigorous peer

review or emphasis on research.

During the analysis of the literature I began by reading and highlighting the theoretical

frameworks, research methodologies and findings, and limitations for each study. I used Figure 1

as a tool to begin organizing key terms that were defined in the reviewed studies. As I examined

each piece of literature I created a chart, which includes the following categories: article type,

research tradition/design, research questions, and findings (Figure 2). As I examined each piece

of literature I began to develop categories for important themes that were identified in individual

studies. I then organized the studies according to theme, research tradition, and participants and

have included this information in Figure 3. Finally, I compared each piece of research to each

other, conducting an analysis similar to cross-case analysis (Yin, 2003).

Figure 1
Definition of Terms

Author, Year, Page	Term	Definition	Notes
Applegate, A.J & Applegate, M.D, 2004, p. 557	Enthusiastic reader	Individual reporting a positive attitude toward reading (regardless of genre) and who engaged in reading that extended beyond newspapers and magazines and included at least one book over the summer prior to this study	How does this fit with Sulentic-Dowell, Beal & Caproro's (2006) "active" reader?
Applegate, A.J & Applegate, M.D, 2004, p. 557	Unenthusiastic reader	Individual associating no or very little enjoyment with reading with no or little reading over previous summer.	Compare with Sulentic-Dowell, Beal & Caproro's (2006) continuum on p. 247.
Sulentic-Dowell, M.M., Beal, G.D. & Capraro, R.M., 2006	Literacy	Defined in the context of reading: learning to read, being read to, or other early reading behaviors.	How does this relate to NIL's definition of literacy?
Sulentic-Dowell, M.M., Beal, G.D. & Capraro, R.M., 2006	Mathematics	Refers to problem solving similar to tasks contained on high-stakes tests, heavily relying on context and reading comprehension to produce a correct solution.	
Sulentic-Dowell, M.M., Beal, G.D. & Capraro, R.M., 2006	Independent reader	A reader who knows how to read; reads for pleasure, information, and personal growth; reads at home as well as at school; frequents the local library, and is more likely to read than watch television (p. 246).	Great table on p. 247 that could be used in data analysis or could prompt interview questions. It also contains an interesting personal reading profile on p. 253.

Figure 2

Summary of Research Results

Author, Year	Article Title & Type	Research Tradition/Design	Questions	Findings
Applegate, A.J & Applegate, M.D, 2004	The Peter Effect: Reading habits and attitudes of preservice teachers; Research	Survey with open-ended questions; Pilot Study: 195 responses and follow up study: 184 responses	How widespread is the "Peter Effect" among preservice teachers drawn from two east coast universities. (Peter Effect refers to "the condition characterizing those teachers who are charged with conveying to their students an enthusiasm for reading that they do not have" p. 556).	PILOT: 54.3% were classified as unenthusiastic readers 25.2% were classified as enthusiastic readers FOLLOW-UP : 48.4% were unenthusiastic readers; Over two years surveyed 379 and found 51.5% as unenthusiastic readers; Responses to open-ended questions: 45 recalled reading instruction consisting of dull books, book reports, and teachers who didn't make reading interesting; 61 students recalled struggles learning to read, lowest reading groups, disabilities; 21 recalled difficulties in reading comprehension; 36 recalled reading as fun and teachers sharing good books and allowing students choice in

				what they read; 18 noted that teachers' attitudes about reading were clear in their instruction, 17 of these noted that the attitude was negative; 22 stated that their own attitudes toward reading had improved as a result of college reading, suggesting that it is possible to change reading habits and attitudes of college-age students.
Block, C. & Mangieri, J.N., 2002	Recreational reading: 20 years later; Research	Survey: 514 responses: Interviews of some participants dependent on response	What is the knowledge of elementary educators concerning recently published children's books as well as their knowledge of practices that promote students' desires to read? How do these figures compare with the ones in the study published in 1981?	17% (1 in 5) elementary teachers surveyed could not cite one children's book written in the last five years and 33% could cite only one; there was a bimodal distribution: 88% of teachers could be placed at opposite ends of the spectrum being either very knowledgeable about recent literature and activities to develop lifelong reading habits or very unknowledgeable about these topics; teachers who had a high knowledge of children's literature and appropriate teaching activities

				were lifelong readers themselves. See p. 6 for more info.
Brooks, G.W., 2007	Teachers as Readers and Writers and as teachers of Reading and Writing; Research	4 qualitative case studies with interviews and field notes from observations in a larger study.	How did the 4 fourth-grade teachers describe themselves as readers and writers? What relationships, if any, did these teachers believe existed between their own reading and writing and their teaching reading and writing? How did these teachers respond to the "Do as I do, not as I say" hypothesis? What factors most influenced the teachers' reading and writing instruction?	Author reports on the following components for each case: 10 perception of self as a reader and writer; 2) report of major literacy teaching influences and practices, 3) report of relationships between individual reading and writing practices and teaching of reading and writing, 4) response to the hypothesis, and 5) response to the reader and writer and teacher of the reading and writing hypothesis. (Hypotheses on p. 6). Results suggest that effective teachers do not necessarily read and write often for professional or personal purposes. Findings indicate that effective teachers differ as readers and writers (p. 14). Two of the teachers in this study described themselves as confident readers who shared their

				passion for reading with their students. Additionally, interests and responsibilities in the lives of these teachers often dictated the types of reading and writing they could participate in. While reading and writing experiences and abilities played a role in their teaching, other factors had a greater influence on what and how they taught. Teachers felt that knowing and supporting their students as readers and writers was more important than showcasing their own reading.
Commeyras & Degroff, 1997, Reading Research Quarterly	Literacy professionals' perspectives on professional development and pedagogy: A United States survey; Research	Survey; 1,519 responses	How interested are literacy educators in some of the new trends and emphases in the field of literacy education? What experiences are participants having related to these contemporary trends? To what degree are teaching practices being influenced by	Results indicate that literacy practitioners (a) read practitioner journal articles, books, and professional newspapers more often than research journals or electronic sources; (b) believe that collaborative experiences between mentor teachers, student teachers, and teacher educators

			these trends? And What beliefs are literacy professionals forming about these trends?	are important, but many of them have had little experience with such collaborations; (c) are familiar with teacher research, are interested in becoming teacher researchers, and find their practices influenced by teacher research; (d) agree that book clubs are a valuable form of pedagogy, but most have not had such experiences themselves and fewer still have had experiences with book clubs in which multicultural literature was read; (e) have knowledge, experience, and interest in portfolio assessment, but do not agree that portfolios should replace other forms of assessment; and (f) find intrinsic indicators of motivation to be more meaningful than extrinsic indicators (p. 435).
Donahue, 2003, Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy	Reading across the great divide: English and math teachers	Qualitative, Exploratory; 8 teachers (4 pairs)	When teachers across the divide of English and math encounter one another over	Teachers came to see: themselves connected by intellectual interests; the power

	apprentice one another as readers and disciplinary insiders; Research		a text from one discipline or the other, what do they discuss? What are the notions of reading they hold, that they take for granted, or that they are surprised to learn are not universal when seen in the light of the other discipline? How can these conversations across the biggest disciplinary divide in secondary schools help both sides rethink what reading means? What are the implications for teachers in different disciplines as they come to see themselves as reading teachers? And what are the implications for teacher educators who want preservice teachers to implement a reading apprenticeships approach in their middle and secondary classrooms?	of reading beyond one's own discipline; the potential support in interacting through reading with a colleague from another discipline; reading interests expand reading interests into less familiar subjects and genres; insight for helping students expand their own reading territories; they engaged in metacognitive conversations about how they were reading; gained increased awareness of the role prior knowledge played in understanding; insight into the difficulty that novice readers, including their students, faced when encountering texts

Draper, M.C., Barksdale-Ladd, M.A., & Radencich, M.C., 2000	Reading and writing habits of preservice teachers; Research	Qualitative: Reading and writing surveys administered to 107 preservice teachers: based on survey data, 24 students were asked to participate in semi-structured interviews: 6 who held positive habits/attitudes about reading, 6 who held negative habits/attitudes about reading, 6 who held positive habits/attitudes about writing, 6 who held negative habits/attitudes about writing	What factors have influenced the development of beliefs about reading and current reading habits in preservice elementary teachers? What factors have influenced the development of beliefs about writing and current writing habits in preservice elementary teachers? How do students' histories of reading and writing relate to present attitudes and habits? How do students relate their own histories, attitudes, and habits to their plans for teaching reading and writing in the classroom?	Newspaper and/or magazine readers reported that they did not like to read for enjoyment. Book readers tended to see themselves as readers with a more positive attitude toward reading, readers of more types of texts, and with greater motivation for reading. They also saw themselves as better readers than those who didn't enjoy reading books. None of the preservice teachers, regardless of their personal habits and attitudes about reading were able to articulate any plans for instilling a love for reading or writing in their future students. Participants who saw themselves as writers were able to identify events from family and home lives that encouraged or built writing in to life. Those who saw themselves as non-writers shared no example of help or support from home. In school, both writers and non-

				writers had positive and negative experiences in writing. However, the non-writers shared many more negative writing experiences and the writers shared more positive experiences.
Duffy, A.M. & Atkinson, T.S., 2001	Learning to teach struggling (and non-struggling) elementary school readers: An analysis of preservice teachers' knowledges; Research	Qualitative; 22 preservice students; Data sources p. 3; Data analysis using Patton's qualitative content analysis	How do elementary school preservice teachers' beliefs, understandings, and instruction of struggling and non-struggling readers evolve over time in two university reading education courses? What are the processes teachers go through as they learn and continue to learn to teach reading?	Preservice teachers improved in their abilities to integrate personal, practical, and professional knowledges informing reading instruction; Misunderstandings about reading instruction decreased while critical examinations and ideas about their own preparation for teaching struggling readers increased; Their views about assessing student reading proficiency and thoughts about tutoring struggling readers became more positive.
Flood, Lapp, Alvarez, et.al., 1994, NRRC Reading Research Report No 22	Teacher book clubs: A study of teachers' and student teachers' participation in contemporary	Qualitative; 56 book club participants: 12 HS teachers in 6 content areas and 4 ethnic groups volunteered to participate in one book group; two	How did participants come to know and grow in their knowledge of multiculturalism? How did participants articulate	Book clubs were received positively by all participants. Each participant increased his/her understandings about multiculturalism. Participants gained

	multicultural fiction literature discussion groups; Research	groups of student teachers (14 each), 1 secondary, 1 elementary in 4 ethnic groups; 12 elementary teachers, 2 instructional aides, 1 principal, and 2 university based teachers in 4 ethnic backgrounds.	knowledge about the ways in which they read and respond to stories? How did participants transform experience as active participants in a book club to actions within their own classrooms? And how did participants communicate with their peers in a discussion group?	insights about cultures and felt free to question one another without fear because of their limited cultural knowledge. Their interest in learning more about other cultures grew. Student teachers talked about turning new insights into actual classroom practices more often than practicing teachers. Some teachers implemented book clubs in their classrooms. Participants gained understanding of their own literacy processing. Participants became more comfortable and willing to share insights. Participants wanted to be a vital part of the conversation.
George, 2001	Teachers Learning Together: Faculty book clubs as professional development in an urban middle school; Paper presented at AERA	Qualitative; 23 school personnel participated over a year and a half. Many participated sporadically, but six teachers, two assistant principals, a staff developer (the researcher) formed the core group. Club met	What are participants' perceptions of adolescent literature before and after participating in faculty book clubs?

What are participants' perceptions of book clubs | Faculty book clubs are an effective approach to literacy staff development. There was a shift in the perceptions and practices of the teachers. Teachers used very positive language when describing adolescent literature and began incorporating the |

| | | 20 times for approximately 30 minutes for each meeting.

Survey questionnaires, interviews with faculty book club members, observations in classrooms, interviews with students comprised data sources | before and after participating in faculty book clubs?

Do participants in faculty book clubs integrate the literature read there into their curriculum?

Do participants integrate student book clubs in their own classrooms after participating in faculty book clubs?
How are students impacted by faculty book clubs? | new literature in their classrooms. Participants began incorporating book clubs with their students. Students also responded positively and were more actively involved in discussions and reported an increase in their independent reading because of the teachers' enthusiasm when talking about the books they were reading in the faculty book club. A number of teachers who did not participate in the faculty book club also began using the adolescent literature titles in their own reading programs. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Hill & Beers, 1993 | Teachers as readers: Survey of teacher personal reading habits and literacy activities in the classroom; Paper presented at NRC | Survey: 625 teachers attending 1993 IRA conference | What are teachers' personal reading habits and attitudes? Do those habits have any impact or influence on their teaching practice? | Teachers were avid readers of books and many kept up with the Journal of Reading or Reading Teacher. Most didn't read booklists or reviews on a regular basis. Teachers indicated that their reading pedagogy was based upon what they know good readers do rather than explicitly methods, which |

				would motivate the reluctant reader. They also indicated that they knew the least about working with the alliterate or unmotivated reader.
Kooy, 2006	The telling of stories of novice teachers: Constructing teacher knowledge in book clubs; Research	Qualitative; Six women students; "Women only" reading group; Data: three interviews, literacy biographies, annual planning session, book club sessions, reading logs	This study examines shared reading experiences of six teachers as they reveal existing teacher knowledge and co-construct their new stories of teaching (p. 663).	Evolution of discussions: 1) Reading, responding, and releasing the imagination, 2) Teachers, teaching, and professional knowledge, 3) from literature to life: stories of teaching, 4 Teacher knowledge: stories of making sense and constructing meaning; and 5) the book club as context for developing teacher knowledge and identity (p. 665). As the book club continued, growth of new knowledge, relational learning, and the value of "storying" and "restorying" increased. "Blending narratives, teachers, and talk in book clubs provides space, time, and opportunity, to co-create new stories to live by, new

| | | | | knowledge and identity for developing their (newly minted) professional lives.

The participants were very aware of gender dynamics and believed that including men in the group would change the group, and would "make the ethos less stable for them" (p. 672).

The book club provided participants with a safe place and felt that the participants were true friends. "They referred to themselves as a bonded community of women" (p. 672).

Book groups can provide a place for novice teachers to examine their knowledge in an unthreatening and supportive manner.

Teachers confirmed that their learning was "changed, stimulated, and provoked" (p. 673). |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lassonde, Steams, Dengler, 2005 | What are you reading in book groups? Developing | Mixed Methods: Qualitative: Weekly self-reports, teacher | How do teacher candidates participating in book groups in | Teacher candidates invested in various ways and to varying degrees. |

	reading lives in teacher candidates; Research	observation, focus-group discussions, and written reflections; Quantitative: Pre and post surveys; 185 Preservice teachers	an academic setting develop as readers and preprofessionals? How do book groups influence the reading attitudes and practices of future teachers?	Participants brought everything they knew and had experienced to the group along with visions of their futures as teachers and readers. Participants reported learning a lot about their fields and reported that the environment was collaborative and supportive. Some groups of students resisted the academic application of book groups. They saw the groups as a requirement to enjoy reading and they saw literacy tied closely with successful completion of the assignment. Some did not see any connections between reading and professional growth. Participants reported that the groups were motivating, encouraged risk taking, established high expectations, and encouraged participation

| | | | | through small group size. They agreed that reading groups could be used across grade levels and content areas.

As readers candidates were encouraged by the experience to read more and that their thinking was transformed on different issues, helped them develop as communicators, and broadened their reading interests.

Pre and post survey results showed an increase in the number of participants who saw themselves as readers. Those identifying themselves as non-readers decreased, while those describing themselves as avid readers doubled.

For many of the participants literacy was seen as a way to complete a task rather than a way to enrich their lives. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Morrison, Jacobs, Swinyard, 1999 | Do teachers who read personally use | Quantitative survey: 1874 elementary teachers, | Purpose: To examine the relationships between the | The surveyed teachers reported reading often and enjoying books. |

	recommended literacy practices in their classrooms? Research	nationwide;	personal, recreational reading of teachers with their use of recommended literacy instructional practices in their elementary classrooms.

To what extent are teachers "readers" in their personal lives?

What characterizes teachers who are readers?

Which teachers use recommended literacy instructional practices in elementary classrooms (e.g., do primary grade teachers use these practices more often than intermediate grade teachers; what about teachers with more years of teaching experience; what about older or younger teachers)?

What are | Authors found that younger teachers read less than older teachers.

Younger teachers and those who were new to the teaching profession used recommended practices more often than older teachers.

Primary grade teachers used recommended literacy instructional practices more often than intermediate teachers.

Teachers who had more favorable opinions about reading and books more frequently used recommended literacy instructional practices in their classrooms. |

			relationships between the personal reading of teachers and their uses of recommended literacy instructional practices?	
Smith, M.W, 1996	Conversations about literature outside classrooms: How adults talk about books in their book clubs; Research	Qualitative; 2 adult reading clubs: one group of 6 men from Chicago; one group of 12 women from Iowa City Data consisted of audiotapes from two meetings from each club and interviews with club members	The purpose of this article is to examine the discourse of adult reading clubs demonstrating that the patterns of discourse in classroom discussion of literature are not natural or inevitable.	Club members expressed the importance of the social aspect, getting together with friends to discuss books. Participants made many personal connections with one another. This element of discourse is often absent in classroom discussions. Members in both clubs sought "meaningful moral or psychological insights." The strong presence of this moral dimension was also limited in classroom discussion. Equality among group members was important to participants. Participants were not worried about impressing a teacher or professor

				and the number and nature of the responses also indicated equality. Groups contained a strong spirit of cooperation. This was evident through very fluid discussions with cooperative turn taking virtually absent from classroom discussions of literature. Often in group discussions, members worked together to express a single point.
Sulentic-Dowell, M.M., Beal, G.D. & Capraro, R.M., 2006	How do literacy experiences affect the teaching propensities of elementary preservice teachers? Research	Mixed methods: Questionnaire of 129 elementary pre-service teachers and a structured interview of eight purposefully selected participants	What is the relationship between literacy experiences, reading attitudes and behaviors of 129 elementary preservice teachers and their ability to assist students with reading mathematics word problems?	The majority of participants were not active readers, but their literacy affected their teaching of math word problems. Teachers who read regularly actively engaged students in comprehension strategies during math instruction. Active readers were more likely to check vocabulary understanding with students. Non-active readers relied on key word strategies for

				solving word problems and matched specific vocabulary to certain arithmetic operations.
Tribbe-Socol, T., 2006	Immersed in literacy learning: One staff shifts its thinking and lives to tell about it; Research	Qualitative; 14 teachers and 1 principal participated; data was collected from multiple sources including lesson plans and focus groups	In what ways does professional development using an immersion model change teachers' understandings of literacy concepts? What are the key factors that support or inhibit changes in the teachers' literacy instruction?	Teachers were immersed in whole literacy experiences. Teachers connected their reading with their teaching. Teachers developed deeper understanding and began questioning each other about implementing ideas in the classroom. Teachers then began acting more knowledgeable because they tried the concepts in their classrooms and then had experience to build upon. Teachers began using common language. Nine of the 11 teachers began implementing literature circles in their classrooms. Teachers were often hesitant to try new strategies but built confidence through support in the group. Teachers also began to develop a better understanding of

				the importance of demonstration and modeling. Teachers began gaining a deeper understanding of themselves as learners. Voluntary abandonment of old practices came following a deeper understanding by the teachers. The teachers needed something new to replace old practices
VanLeirsburg, P. & Johns, J.L., 1994	Teachers as readers: Literacy research report no. 18. Research	Quantitative: Survey of 204 primarily elementary educators enrolled in classes or in a workshop.	Are teachers readers of both personal and professional materials? What are some of the things that teachers believe enhance opportunities to read, and what do they perceive as some of the detractors to reading?	Over half of the participants read at least three journal articles a month and two professional books a year. At least three-fourths read the newspaper daily, one magazine that was not a professional journal, and one book for pleasure reading monthly. Only half of the respondents reported that administrators where they worked shared research and other professional writing with them. About 40% of participants feel

				that colleagues frequently referred to ideas and research from professional reading. Respondents expressed that they didn't have enough time for personal or professional reading. "Discussions with colleagues and sharing pertinent information is vital to professional growth" (p. 10). "Teachers who keep current with professional reading and who enjoy personal reading are role models who promote life-long literacy" (p. 10).
Van Sluys, K., Legan, N., Tropp-Laman, T. & Lewison, M., 2005	Critical literacy and preservice teachers: Changing definitions of what it might mean to read; Research	Qualitative: Collaborative inquiry and case study with three focal students in a class of 32 undergraduate students enrolled in a methods course.	What is the nature of undergraduate teacher education students' discourses, over time, as they discuss children's literature? What can texts tell us about their conceptions of what it means to read?	Students' responses were text-based. Students were often engaged in "doing school."

Williamson, J., 1991	Teachers as readers; Research	Quantitative; Questionnaire of 178 respondents	What are teachers' attitudes to reading and their reading habits?	61% of the teachers questioned put themselves in the two highest categories concerning the amounts they read. About 10% felt they didn't read "very much."
Zancanella, D., 1991	Teachers Reading/ Readers Teaching: Five teachers' personal approaches to literature and their teaching of literature; Research	Qualitative; Case Studies of five teachers: interviews (8 each) and observations	How are the teachers' attitudes and beliefs about literature reflected in their teaching? How are the teachers' ways of responding to texts reflected in their teaching? What factors in the classroom and school context interact with the teachers' personal approaches to literature as manifested in their teaching? How can the knowledge that exists in the teachers' personal approaches to literature be specifically described? What is the relationship between the	As a group the teachers approached reading as an imaginative experience. Through these experiences they hoped to gain wisdom that supplements that gained through real-life experience. Teachers' personal approaches to literature emphasized vicarious involvement. The teachers' use of their own personal knowledge was limited by school approaches and expectations that exist in part due to state mandated testing practices. Teachers noted that through the interviews and reading tasks they developed a greater

			teachers' personal approaches to literature and the other sources of knowledge they draw upon in the teaching of literature? How important are the teachers' lives as readers to their lives as literature teachers?	understanding of how their personal reading might influence their teaching of literature.

Figure 3
Studies Organized by Themes

Author, Year	Reading Beliefs and Practices (A)	Knowledge and Growth (B)	Reading Groups and Collaboration (C)	Impact of Reading on Teaching Practice (D)	Quant. (N) Qual. (D) Mixed (M)	Preservice (P) First Year (F) Inservice Educators (I)
Applegate, A.J & Applegate, M.D, 2004	X	X		X	N	P
Block, C. & Mangieri, J.N., 2002		X		X	N	I
Brooks, G.W., 2007	X			X	D	I
Commeyras & Degroff, 1997, Reading Research Quarterly	X	X	X	X	N	I
Donahue, 2003, Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy	X	X	X	X	D	P
Draper, M.C., Barksdale-Ladd, M.A., & Radencich, M.C., 2000	X			X	D	P

Author, Year	Reading Beliefs and Practices (A)	Knowledge and Growth (B)	Reading Groups and Collaboration (C)	Impact of Reading on Teaching Practice (D)	Quant. (N) Qual. (D) Mixed (M)	Preservice (P) First Year (F) Inservice Educators (I)
Duffy, A.M. & Atkinson, T.S., 2001		X			D	P
Flood, Lapp, Alvarez, et.al., 1994, NRRC Reading Research Report No 22		X	X	X	D	P, I
George, 2001	X		X	X	D	I
Hill & Beers, 1993	X	X		X	N	I
Kooy, 2006		X	X	X	D	F
Lassonde, Steams, Dengler, 2005	X	X	X	X	D	P

Author, Year	Reading Beliefs and Practices (A)	Knowledge and Growth (B)	Reading Groups and Collaboration (C)	Impact of Reading on Teaching Practice (D)	Quant. (N) Qual. (D) Mixed (M)	Preservice (P) First Year (F) Inservice Educators (I)
Morrison, Jacobs, Swinyard, 1999	X			X	N	I
Smith, M.W, 1996		X	X		D	I
Sulentic-Dowell, M.M., Beal, G.D. & Capraro, R.M., 2006	X			X	M	P
Tribbe-Socol, T., 2006		X	X	X	D	I
VanLeirsburg, P. & Johns, J.L., 1994	X	X	X		N	I
Van Sluys, K., Legan, N., Tropp-Laman, T. & Lewison, M., 2005	X	X			D	P

Author, Year	Reading Beliefs and Practices (A)	Knowledge and Growth (B)	Reading Groups and Collaboration (C)	Impact of Reading on Teaching Practice (D)	Quant. (N) Qual. (D) Mixed (M)	Preservice (P) First Year (F) Inservice Educators (I)
Williamson, J., 1991	X				N	P, I
Zancanella, D., 1991	X	X		X	D	I
	14	14	9	15	D=12, N=7, M=1	P=9, F=1, I=12

The Studies

Methodologies and Theoretical Frameworks Used to Explore Teachers as Readers

Twenty peer-reviewed research studies provide the data for this review. Of the twenty studies examined, twelve were written from a qualitative research perspective (Brooks, 2007; Donahue, 2003; Draper, Barksdale-Ladd & Radencich, 2000; Duffy & Atkinson, 2001; Flood et.al., 1994; George, 2001; Kooy, 2006; Lassonde, Steams & Dengler, 2005; Smith, 1996; Tribbe-Socol, 2006; Van Sluys, Legan, Tropp-Laman & Lewison, 2005; Zancanella, 1991), seven from a quantitative perspective (Applegate & Applegate, 2004; Block & Mangieri, 2002; Commeyras & Degroff, 1997; Hill & Beers, 1993; Morrison, Jacobs & Swinyard, 1999; VanLeirsburg & Johns, 1994; Williamson, 1991) and one from a combined qualitative/quantitative perspective (Sulentic-Dowell, Beal, & Capraro, 2006). Within these frameworks, quantitative survey and qualitative interviews were used most often when gathering data about teachers as readers. While three researchers used case study to examine the habits and beliefs of teachers about reading, none of these examined the experience of teachers in a reading group.

Several of the studies examined in this review were written without explicit statement of the theoretical frameworks guiding the research, but instead leave this interpretation up to the reader. Overwhelmingly, two dominant theoretical perspectives surfaced in my analysis. The first perspective situates learning in social contexts and draws from theories such as Vygotsky's theory of social development and Louise Rosenblatt's theories of reader response and transactional theory. From this position, researchers accentuate the impact that discussion, social awareness and interaction with others around literature have on teaching and learning.

Researchers of teachers as readers also situate their work from a perspective of teachers as influential models of literacy. Within this position lies the assumption that enthusiasm for reading and writing is transmittable through teachers' instructional and empathic decision-making. In addition to enthusiasm and other beliefs and habits, teachers' knowledge about literature and the teaching of reading is related to their own literary lives, and in turn has am impact on classroom practice. Most researchers drew connections between the teachers' literacy and the students' experiences and performance with reading.

What Has Been Learned About Teachers as Readers?

Seven of the twenty studies focused on preservice teachers, most of whom were selected from education programs at colleges and universities (Applegate & Applegate, 2004; Donahue, 1997; Draper, Barksdale-Ladd & Radencich, 2000; Duffy & Atkinson, 2001; Lassonde, Steams & Dengler, 2005; Sulentic-Dowell, Beal & Capraro, 2006; Van Sluys, Legan, Tropp-Laman & Lewison, 2005). Ten studies drew participants from groups of inservice teachers and other education professionals including instructional specialists and administrators (Block & Mangieri, 2002; Brooks, 2007; Commeyras & Degroff, 1997; George, 2001; Hill & Beers, 1993; Morrison, Jacobs & Swinyard, 1999; Smith, 1996; Tribbe-Socol, 2006; VanLeirsburg & Johns, 1994; Zancanella, 1991). Two studies focused on a combination of preservice and inservice teachers (Flood et al., 1994; Williamson, 1991), and one study focused on first-year teachers (Kooy, 2006). For the studies involving inservice teachers, participants were selected from a national education database, schools, classes, workshops and national conferences. Participants represented various grade levels from elementary to high school with varying degrees of teaching experience.

Data in this review are organized using the following themes: (a) reading beliefs and practices (what teachers read and teachers' attitudes and feelings about reading), (b) knowledge and growth (teachers' content and pedagogical knowledge and growth and learning), (c) reading groups and collaboration (teachers' experiences and attitudes about book groups and connections and support) and (d) the impact of reading on teaching practices (See Appendix C). For each theme I will discuss important patterns, findings and limitations.

Reading Beliefs and Practices

Fourteen out of the twenty studies reviewed discussed ideas surrounding teachers' reading beliefs and practices. In this category, authors also discussed reading attitudes, interests, experiences, histories, perceptions, and conceptions. In compiling research findings I organized information into the following categories: (a) what teachers read and (b) teachers' attitudes and feelings about reading.

What teachers read. Commeyras and Degroff (1997) used questionnaire and survey methods to collect information from 1,482 literacy professionals from across the United States about professional development (i.e., teachers' beliefs, professional literature reading habits, teacher education, and teacher research) and pedagogy (i.e., book clubs, portfolio assessment, and student motivation). Results indicated a broad span of teacher involvement in reading for their own professional development. Questionnaire items focused on practitioner journals, magazines, research journals, books, newspapers, and electronic sources. Findings indicate that literacy professionals read practitioner journals, magazines, and books more often than they read research journals and electronic sources.

Hill and Beers (1993) found similar results in their survey of 625 teachers attending a book and author luncheon at the 1993 International Reading Association's annual meeting. In

this study, 77% of the respondents categorized themselves as avid readers, but cited a low amount of reading of professional journals, book lists, and reviews. Williamson (1991) surveyed five groups of preservice and inservice teachers and found that 61% of the teachers questioned put themselves in the two highest categories concerning the amounts they read. Conversely, about 10% felt they didn't read "very much."

In another similar study, VanLeirsburg and Johns (1994) surveyed 204 educators enrolled in education classes or workshops in Illinois. Findings from this study indicate a higher number of teachers who read professional journals than found by Commeyras and Degroff (1997). VanLeisburg and Johns (1994) found over half of the participants read at least three journal articles a month compared to Commeyras and Degroff's (1997) study where 34.9% read research journals 1-5 times in the past year. Another discrepancy between the two studies concerned frequency of newspaper reading. VanLeisburg and Johns (1994) noted that at least 75% of respondents read the newspaper daily while Commeyras and Degroff (1997) found that only 34.7% of respondents read newspapers six or more times in the past year.

Discrepancies in the findings are likely related to differences between the populations who participated in the studies and the size of the samples used in each study. All of the studies, with the exception of Commeyras and Degroff (1997) drew from a population of educators who were actively participating in education programs, conferences, or workshops. The authors did not discuss the possible relationships between the survey outcomes and the reading or academic requirements of these classes or workshops. It is also likely that those teachers who have chosen to participate in conferences and workshops or advance their learning and careers through additional study in classes and through attainment of higher degrees are more likely to participate in more literate activities than those who do not participate in these activities. While I believe

that each of these studies contributes important data about teachers as readers, the results are limited in generalizability. Commeyras and Degroff's (1997) study draws from a much larger population using an education marketing service to select educators nationwide and therefore contributes a larger perspective on this issue.

While these studies also show that many teachers are reading for their own professional and personal development and are reading from a variety of sources, the findings also leave room for questions concerning those teachers who are not reading or staying current on teacher research. Additionally, with the tremendous growth of technology in the last decade, new studies would likely yield different results on the prevalence of use of electronic literacy resources.

Feelings and attitudes about reading. Like reading choices, teachers' feelings and attitudes about reading differ. Applegate and Applegate (2004) surveyed 379 preservice teachers over a period of two years. Their survey instrument focused on reading habits and attitudes in addition to influences on the formation of those habits and attitudes. When examining the preservice teachers' current reading attitudes, Applegate and Applegate (2004) found that 51.5% of their respondents were unenthusiastic readers. The authors defined *unenthusiastic readers* as, "those respondents who associated no or very little enjoyment with reading and did little or no leisure reading over the previous summer" (p. 557). Sulentic-Dowell, Beal and Capraro's (2006) work with student teachers gleaned similar results finding that most of the participants were not active readers. The authors defined *active reading* on a continuum describing reader profile types from elementary grades through adulthood. Using this continuum, elementary, middle, and high school students who showed enjoyment, skill, choice, and interest in reading throughout school become active readers in adulthood. Conversely, those K-12 students who disliked reading, struggled with reading, or chose not to read become functional readers, reading only when

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necessary, or alliterate readers, adults who can read but choose not to. These concepts of alliterate, or functional readers are reflected in Lassonde, Steams and Dengler's (2005) study, which examines the use of book groups with preservice teachers. The authors found that many of the participants in their study saw literacy as a way to accomplish a task rather than a way to enhance their lives.

In their effort to explore influences on reading habits and attitudes Applegate and Applegate (2004) questioned participants about their early reading experiences. The authors found that 16% of the preservice teachers recalled struggling as they learned to read, being placed in the lowest reading groups, and struggling with disabilities. Additionally, 6% recalled having difficulties in reading comprehension. Preservice teachers also related memories of their experiences with early instruction. Of the preservice teachers who responded, 12% recalled reading instruction that primarily consisted of uninteresting books, assignments such as book reports, and teachers who did not engage the students in a way that made reading interesting.

While only 9% of the respondents in this study recalled reading as a fun activity or shared memories of teachers who shared engaging books and allowed the students to exercise power in their reading choices, research does demonstrate that many teachers and preservice teachers exhibit passion, confidence and excitement about reading (Applegate & Applegate, 2004; Block & Mangieri, 2002; Donahue, 2003; Draper, 2000; Flood et al., 1994; George, 2001; Kooy, 2006; Lassonde, Steams & Dengler, 2005; Morrison, Jacobs & Swinyard, 1999; Smith, 1996; Tribbe-Socol, 2006; Zancanella, 1991). Those teachers who enjoyed reading often expressed appreciation for opportunities to converse and interact with colleagues about their reading (VanLeirsburg & Johns, 1994).

Interestingly, Draper, Barksdale-Ladd and Radencich (2000) found a relationship between the genres and types of reading material their participants read and the participants' attitudes about reading. Those who reported that they did not like to read for pleasure also reported that they did regularly read newspapers and magazines. Respondents who reported positive attitudes and greater motivation toward reading tended to be book readers and readers of more types of texts. This finding generates questions concerning the definitions that these respondents hold concerning reading and enjoyment. Do they enjoy reading newspapers and magazines? And if they do not, why are they reading them? Is there a tendency to associate reading with books instead of other forms of media? How do these definitions limit our understanding of literacy?

Knowledge and Growth

Of the twenty studies reviewed, fourteen discussed ideas surrounding knowledge and growth. Studies varied in purpose, with some exploring teachers' knowledge of children's literature, methods for teaching reading, cultural influences on learning, integrating knowledge and experience, and personal growth. I discuss these issues using the following topics as a guide: (a) teachers' content and pedagogical knowledge and (b) growth and learning.

Teachers' content and pedagogical knowledge. Block and Mangieri (2002) explored professional development activities of teachers and children's literature knowledge by surveying 514 elementary teachers. They found that 17% or 1 in 5 elementary teachers surveyed were unable to cite one children's book written in the last five years. Of those teachers who were able, 33% could cite only one book. An interesting trend noted in this study was the contrast in knowledge of the surveyed teachers. Almost 90% of the surveyed teachers' responses could be placed on opposing extremes on a spectrum, ranging from very knowledgeable to very

unknowledgeable about current children's literature and teaching methods. Another striking finding was that overall, teachers who had a higher knowledge level concerning current children's literature and appropriate teaching activities were also lifelong readers.

While Block and Mangieri (2002) focused specifically on teachers' literature knowledge, Donahue (2003) explored the impact of reading in other content areas outside of a teacher's primary area. In his study, Donahue (2003) created a "reading apprenticeship" (p. 25) to help preservice teachers explore reading with other preservice teachers in content areas other than their own. Through this collaboration, participants came to see power in reading outside of their own disciplines and sharing thoughts and ideas with others. Participants noted that their reading interests extended beyond familiar topics and genres to those less familiar. Another notable finding was that through the experience of reading outside of their content areas and engaging in metacognitive conversation about this reading, preservice teachers were better able to understand struggles students might have in reading unfamiliar content. The participants increased awareness of how their own prior knowledge of concepts influenced their reading comprehension and the challenge that inexperienced readers face when approaching new texts.

Growth and learning. Along with content and pedagogical knowledge, Tribbe-Socol (2006) focused on the impact of the immersion model on teacher growth and learning. Participants noted that through immersion in whole literacy experiences with other teachers, they began to understand their own learning on deeper levels. As the study progressed, the author found that the teachers began uniting a deeper understanding of learning processes and methods with implementation of these new ideas in their classrooms. This learning was largely influenced by collaboration and questioning of others in the group.

Many of the studies reviewed emphasized the positive impact of teachers working together in groups to read explore topics together (Donahue, 2003; Flood et al., 1994; George, 2001; Kooy, 2006; Lassonde, Steams & Dengler, 2005; Smith, 1996; Tribbe-Socol, 2006; VanLeirsburg & Johns, 1994). Flood et al. (1994) looked at this trend from a different perspective. Understanding the challenge facing teachers and students in very diverse populations, Flood et al. (1994) focused specifically on ways several teacher book clubs set out to examine multicultural texts with their ultimate goal being enhanced awareness about multicultural issues. Participating teachers, who worked with culturally diverse student populations, used texts from various cultures as prompts for discussion and worked together to clarify their thoughts, knowledge, and feelings about various cultures. Additionally, participants explored appropriate instructional strategies that would better address the needs of their students. Outcomes were positive with evidence of increased cultural understandings by all participants. The teachers began to find similarities between themselves and their students that they originally did not see. Moreover, because all group members had the opportunity to share their own personal insights relating to the literature and to their own life experiences, the group members were able to cross boundaries that were challenging to overcome.

In addition to constructing knowledge about similarities between themselves and individuals from other cultures, the teachers also began to analyze the role of reading in this cultural exploration. This exploration led teachers through a metacognitive process toward understanding their own literacy development. The teachers related the effects of conversing with colleagues, journaling, and rereading texts and the contribution of these activities to their understanding of literacy processing (Flood et al., 1994). Donahue's (2003) findings were similar in that students appreciated the opportunities to engage in metacognitive conversations about

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how they were reading. This engagement with others increased their motivation to continue reading and their understanding of ideas.

Furthermore, Kooy (2006) confirmed that participants' constructed knowledge was "changed, stimulated, and provoked" (p. 673). As her participants interacted together in a book club, their growth of new knowledge and relational learning increased, contributing to their "newly minted" (p. 672) professional identities. The group also provided these beginning teachers a supportive and unthreatening environment to cultivate their ideas.

The positive stimulation and changes in thought described by Kooy (2006) were themes that surfaced in many of the studies reviewed (Donahue, 2003; Duffy & Atkinson, 2001; Flood et al., 1994; George, 2001; Kooy, 2006; Lassonde, Steams & Dengler, 2005; Smith, 1996; Tribbe-Socol, 2006). Furthermore, this change, growth and integration of personal, practical and professional knowledge encouraged teachers to analyze and develop identities representing their professional aspirations and beliefs (Duffy & Atkinson, 2001; Lassonde, 2005).

Book Groups and Collaboration

Nine of the twenty studies reviewed discussed the use of book groups and collaboration. Teachers' experiences and attitudes, discourse, connection, support, conversation, gender, friendship and safety are some of the themes the authors explored in this set of studies. I organized these topics in the following categories and discuss them at length below: (a) teachers' experiences and attitudes about book groups and (b) connection and support.

Teachers' experiences and attitudes about book groups. Commeyras and Degroff (1997) questioned literacy professionals about their experiences and attitudes concerning book groups and collaboration. One significant finding was that many literacy practitioners believed that collaboration was important, but had limited experiences with it. This was evident in the

responses about elementary teachers' experiences with book groups. Commeyras and Degroff (1997) found that 89% of the elementary teachers surveyed never or seldom participated in book clubs with other adults. However, 42% of these teachers frequently or very frequently used book clubs with their students in their classrooms. While it is encouraging to see that more teachers use book clubs with their students than participate in book clubs themselves, it does raise questions about the inconsistency of these experiences. Commeyras and Degroff (1998) noted concern about educators' abilities to draw from their own experiences in book clubs when so many teachers have little or no experience with book groups personally.

Furthermore, Commeyras and Degroff (1998) examined teacher beliefs about what book clubs offered students and adults in regard to ways they could learn about literature. Approximately 89% of the elementary teachers surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that book clubs for adults presented important ways to learn about literature while approximately 96% of these teachers agreed or strongly agreed that book clubs for students presented important ways to learn about literature.

This examination shows a strong belief among these teachers in the importance of the learning that takes place within reading groups and collaborative environments for both children and for adults. Unfortunately, as Commeyras and Degroff (1998) noted, many teachers are not interested in participating in book groups. While approximately 84% of surveyed elementary teachers agreed or strongly agreed that they were interested in using book clubs with students, only 43% of these teachers agreed or strongly agreed that they were interested in belonging to an adult reading group for themselves. Furthermore, even with strong interest on the part of elementary teachers for using reading groups with their students, approximately 58% of these

teachers never or seldom used this practice with students. As detailed through this study, overall, teachers are remaining detached from this type of group reading experience.

For those teachers who have experiences with book groups, most report that the experience impacted them in positive ways (Donahue, 2003; Flood et al., 1994; George, 2001; Kooy, 2006; Lassonde, Steams & Dengler, 2005; Smith, 1996; Tribbe-Socol, 2006; VanLeirsburg & Johns, 1994). Flood et al. (1994) found that all participants reacted positively and wanted to be an integral part of the conversations that took place around the books and learning. Club members also expressed the importance of and their appreciation for the social aspect of getting together with friends to discuss books (Smith, 1996). Kooy (2006) found that book clubs gave participants the opportunity to develop their identities and draw support from their peers. VanLeisburg and Johns (1994) echoed this idea of identity development and growth when they found that the discussions and camaraderie educators shared became a vital aspect to their growth as professionals.

Connection and support. The connection and support that was provided through collaboration and reading groups was a theme that was present in almost all of the literature. Many of the participants in book group studies noted the importance of friendship and community, interaction, exploring ideas in a safe and unthreatening environment, and discussion (Donahue, 2003; Flood et al., 1994; Kooy, 2006; Lassonde, 2005; Smith, 1996; Vanleisburg & Johns, 1994).

Kooy's (2006) participants offered a unique perspective on the importance of connection and support for women. In this book club the participants were very aware of the role of gender on the dynamics of their group. This "Women's Only" reading group became, as the participants described, "a bonded community of women" (p. 672). The women believed that mixing up the

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gender in the group would change the dynamics and "make the ethos less stable for them" (p. 672).

While these women bonded, in part, due to their commonalities surrounding gender, Donahue's (2003) participants connected through intellectual interests. Furthermore, Smith's (1996) participants made personal connections with one another and emphasized the importance of equality in the group. Each member was seen as having something to contribute and the group had a strong element of cooperation. Conversations were fluid and members worked together to express a single point or idea prompted by the literature or discussion. Through this work, Smith (1996) compared the type of discourse that was present in adult reading groups with the types of discussion that typically take place in classrooms and found that this powerful interaction was often missing in classroom discussions.

Impact of Reading on Teaching Practice

Fifteen of the twenty studies discussed the impact teacher reading has on teaching practice. The findings will be discussed using the following themes as a guide: (a) teachers as reading role models and (b) implementation of new strategies.

Teachers as reading role models. Applegate and Applegate's (2004) respondents noted that teachers' attitudes about reading were often clear to them as students. Participants shared that their teachers' interactions and instruction often relayed the teachers' negative attitude towards reading. In several studies, researchers emphasized that because attitude is evident, teachers are influential role models when it comes to sharing enthusiasm and engaging students in reading (George, 2001; Lassonde, 2005; Morrison, 1999; VanLeirsburg & Johns, 1994). Lassonde (2005) found when teachers share the ways that reading enhances their professional and personal lives they make evident, for their students, the priority they place on reading.

George (2001) observed and interviewed the students of teachers who were participating in a teacher book group. Through his data, George (2001) found that not only were the teachers more enthusiastic about literature, but the teachers' students became more enthusiastic as well. Many of the students expressed a stronger preference for the new literature that was introduced as a result of the teacher book group than for previous literature they had studied. Students also reported increased independent reading and greater involvement in discussions about literature. As these teachers became role models revealing that reading was an enjoyable, fulfilling, and social experience for them, the students began patterning their reading and literate behaviors after the teachers, even requesting to read the same books (George, 2001). In sharing positive experiences and attitudes about personal reading, and staying current with professional knowledge and reading, teachers become role models of the qualities and habits of lifelong readers (VanLeirsburg & Johns, 1994).

Implementation of new strategies. Further research has found that there is a relationship between a teacher's personal reading and the teacher's practice in the classroom (Commeyras & Degroff, 1997; Donahue, 2003; Flood et al., 1994; George, 2001; Morrison, Jacobs, and Swinyard, 1999; Tribbe-Socol, 2006). Block and Mangieri (2002) found that teachers who were lifelong readers were also very knowledgeable about appropriate teaching strategies and children's literature. Likewise, Hill and Beer's (1993) participants highlighted that the choices they often made in their reading instruction was based upon their personal understandings of what good readers do, instead of specific strategies that they have been taught to use when teaching reading. These innate strategies stem from their own successes as readers.

Another significant finding highlights specific differences in teacher instruction as related to the teachers' reading lives. Sulentic-Dowell, Beal, and Capraro (2006) compared teacher

reading habits and math instruction of word problems. They noted that teachers reacted

differently to students depending on how often and actively they themselves engaged in reading.

Teachers who were regular and active readers tended to engage their students in more

comprehension strategies when instructing students in math concepts. Teachers who were active

readers were also more likely to make sure their students understood appropriate vocabulary than

the non-active readers. Non-active readers, on the other hand, often focused on key word

strategies when helping students learn how to solve word problems.

Through these studies, teachers who are actively engaged in personal reading seem to

have an advantage, both in being aware of current teacher research and recommended strategies,

and in developing their own reading skills so that they instinctively choose more effective

strategies when helping students. However, Brooks (2007) offers a different perspective on this

issue. Brooks (2007) explored the various factors influencing teachers' practice and found that

his participants were all different in their own reading and writing habits and attitudes. Brooks

(2007) reported that while these habits and attitudes did influence teaching practice, there were

other factors that had a great influence on teachers' choices in the classroom. Examples of other

influencing factors include the teachers' responsibilities and interests, required standards and

curriculum, expectations from others, student interests, abilities, and needs, and personal goals.

Others have reported that teachers' reading and practice is influenced by lack of time

(VanLeirsburg and Johns, 1994), and that some teachers feel that their ability to utilize some of

their own personal knowledge is limited by mandated standardized testing (Zancanella, 1991).

Summary and Discussion

In summary, teachers vary in their reading beliefs and practices and in their feelings and

attitudes about reading. While many teachers consider themselves to be avid and enthused

readers, many teachers dislike or avoid reading. Research has shown that reading professionally and personally and interacting in collaborative groups affects teachers' attitudes and their teaching practice positively. While most teachers believe that reading and discussing literature in groups is beneficial, many are uninterested in pursuing occasions to participate in these opportunities.

Instructional Implications

Administrators should provide opportunities and support for teachers to collaborate and read together in groups. This reading can be on various topics, ranging from professional literature to children's literature. Specific details should be catered to the needs and desires of those involved. Choice was important for participants in the studies included in this review, and should therefore be taken into consideration when creating new groups with teachers or students. Teachers should also show their enjoyment and value of reading to their students through modeling and enthusiasm. Reading should be promoted in social contexts, both with teachers and with students. A safe and supportive environment is important so that participants can explore new ideas together. Conversations about literature and exploring personal implications of new knowledge should be encouraged.

Research Directions

After examining these research reports, I have identified several areas for additional research that could contribute to the current base of findings and enhance our understanding of teachers as readers. Overall, there was a strong imbalance in regard to the ways in which participants were selected. Most of the studies drew from teacher populations who were involved in conferences, workshops or college classes. These samples do not represent the larger

population of teachers in our nation. More research is needed on national populations of teachers, specifically on those teachers who are not choosing to participate in professional conferences, workshops, or classes.

Additionally, very few studies have included technological reading sources in their examinations. Commeyras and Degroff's (1997) national survey elicited responses concerning electronic reading sources. However, advancements in technology have proliferated since 1997 and this impact has yet to be explored in relation to teacher reading. Therefore, new studies should consider the impact increased technology has had on teacher reading.

In exploring various perspectives of teachers' beliefs and attitudes about reading, researchers have asked preservice teachers and teachers to share their experiences and memories of their own early experiences with teachers. Several of these respondents mentioned that as children their teachers' attitudes about reading were evident in their instruction, and were often negative. Future surveys and interviews should focus on current students in K-12 schools, and adults, both in teaching professions and outside of teaching professions about their perceptions of teachers' attitudes. As young students, were they impacted by these obvious attitudes? Were current teachers impacted differently as children than those individuals who chose professions and careers outside of education?

Another area of new research possibilities could involve an examination of the definitions that teachers hold concerning literacy, reading and good readers. Some research has shown that individuals claim to dislike reading, while also noting that they read magazines and newspapers frequently. Has the term *reading* come to be defined only in relation to books and research? Can you still enjoy reading and consider yourself a reader if you dislike reading books, but enjoy reading magazines and newspapers?

Furthermore, very few studies looked at teacher reading involving issues of culture and diversity. What and how much do teachers know about multicultural literature? How can participation in diverse collaborative groups using literature about diversity impact teachers and teaching?

Finally, knowing the positive impact of teacher reading groups and collaboration on teachers' attitudes and practice, how can we involve more teachers in the book group/collaborative model? Research reports that many educators are detached from getting involved in reading groups. Why is it that teachers do not want to participate, or why do they choose not to participate in book groups? All of these questions open new areas of research that could build upon our current understandings of teachers as readers.

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

I, _____, agree to take part in a research study entitled, "Teacher Reading Groups: Case Studies of Teachers' Experiences" which is being conducted by Diana Durbin of the University of Georgia (706-542-4244) under the direction of Dr. Betty Bisplinghoff, Department of Elementary and Social Studies Education. As a volunteer, I do not have to take part in this study. I can stop taking part at any time without giving any reason, and without penalty. I can ask to have information related to me returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The purpose of this research is to explore the experiences of participating in a book group with other teachers. There are no reasonably foreseeable risks and/or discomfort associated with participation in this study. Expected benefits could include a deeper understanding of the participant's literacy and teaching strategies through reflection.

The duration of participation expected for this study is approximately eight months. This time will consist of at least six reading group meetings (approximately one session per month lasting 90 minutes each) and one to two individual or focus interview sessions (approximately 60 minutes each).

Expected procedures for participants and researchers include the following:
- I will be part of a reading group that will read literature chosen by the group, and participate in discussions about the readings and about the effects of this experience on my perceptions, motivation, teaching practice, and relationships.
- I may be asked to journal about my experiences, thoughts, reactions, and reading practices throughout my participation.
- I may be asked to participate in individual and/or focus group interviews.
- I may be asked to participate in member checks and data analysis.

Group meetings and interviews may be audio and/or videotaped. The results of all participation will be confidential, and will not be released in any individually identifiable form without prior consent of the participant unless required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by providing a pseudonym for the participant. Audio and videotapes will be destroyed upon completion of the dissertation research.

The researcher is available to answer any questions regarding any part of this research study presently or at any time during the study by calling the following numbers: (706) 354-7904 or (706) 542-4244.

My signature below indicates that the researcher has answered all of my questions to my satisfaction, that I have read this form in its entirety, and that I consent to volunteer for this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

_____

Signature of Researcher　　　　Date

_____

Signature of Participant　　　　Date

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to the IRB Chairperson, Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia, 606A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu

APPENDIX C

INFORMATIONAL SURVEY

1. Please choose a pseudonym:

2. What degrees have you earned?

3. How many years of experience do you have teaching?

4. What grade levels have you taught?

5. What subject areas have you taught?

6. Have you ever been involved in a reading group before? If so, how many

   times?

APPENDIX D

PARTICIPANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Participants	Degrees Earned	Years of Experience	Grade Levels Taught	Subject Areas Taught	Prior Reading Group Participation
K-5 Teachers					
Lynn	B.A English, Communications and Photography	1 year substitute teaching; 2 years paraprofessional; 4 years classroom teacher	K and 1st grades	All	None
Jill	B.A in English Education; MEd. in ECE	4 years in Korea; 6 years in Japan; 6 years in U.S.	Toddlers to adults	All	None
John	B.S. Psychology; MEd. ECE; Ed.S Instructional Leadership	5 years classroom teacher	5th grade	All	None
Eliza	B.S Health Promotion and Education; MEd. Elementary Education	4 years classroom teacher	4th grade	All	Three reading groups that were school based.
Hannah	B.A History, Political Science; MEd-ECE	4 years classroom teacher	1st grade	All	Three
Betty	Leadership; ECE	21 years	K, 1, 3, 6 & Adult	All	Five
Diana	B.S. ECE; MEd. ECE	8 years	2, 3, 4 & Adult	All	One

APPENDIX E

The Pseudo Creek Written by John*

At a certain point in a child's life they are allowed to explore the outside world. My outside world began at the age of eight. I was finally allowed to go out of the yard. The neighborhood kids all received this same freedom around the same time. When we would all get together we had about ten friends of various ages, but all of us were boys. We decided that the best place to explore our freedom was the creek.

Through the eyes of an eight year old the creek seemed to be a magical place that was ideal for exploration. The creek had tons of rocks everywhere. You had to go between two houses at the end of my grandmother's street to reach the creek. The creek was a popular short cut to reach other places quickly. To us the creek was another land. There was a small pond-like structure in the middle of the creek that was littered with different items such as lawn mowers, tricycles, and garbage bags. Deeper in the woods, there was another place that was like a well. The well was filled with a black substance that resembled oil. We kept that our biggest secret for fear that people would come and take over our perfect place to get the riches. Deeper in the woods, there was a place where there were bigger rocks where the water flowed. This water didn't resemble the water at the beginning of the creek. This water was clear, and so we decided to call this part of the creek, "Clear Water," to distinguish it from the other parts. The opposite side of the creek was a place in which you could literally walk on water. It was the place in which you could stand in the water and not get wet, and listen to the cars rush quickly over the bridge. The creek seemed to go on forever, and we never made it to the end during any of our explorations.

I explored the creek with my friends for almost two years. When I was ten, on a cold winter day we decided to go to the creek. The air was very cool, and we were properly dressed with gloves and hats to keep warm. When we got to the creek we noticed that something seemed to be different. From a distance, we could see a man lying down on the bank near the pond-like structure. We thought that the man was sleeping, so we yelled and threw rocks near the area. The man didn't move. We all went home to share our story. Later, we heard the ambulance come to the creek, and the emergency crew stayed a long time. Later, we heard that the man had died of hyperthermia. He wasn't from the neighborhood, and no one knew how he had made it to the creek.

After that discovery, the creek was transformed. Workers came in, and destroyed the pond-like structure, and they got rid of the well with the oil. They took out the old rocks, and put in new shiny rocks. They really made the creek look like a park. We were sad to see the old creek change, and we never explored again. As I got older, I forgot about the creek, but I often think about it as an adult. I now realize as an adult that the creek was actually the place where the sewer system drained. I used to wonder as a little boy about where my ball went that fell in the sewer. I can honestly today say that I know exactly where the ball goes. The many balls that are lost in many of the cities around the world probably end up floating through the creek. The balls explore the creek, and search for the end.