Navigating through "our bumps on the road to reading": A multi-case analysis of how literature-based response experiences inform and influence pre-service teachers' reading perceptions

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NAVGATING THROUGH "OUR BUMPS ON THE ROAD TO READING":
A MULTI-CASE ANALYSIS OF HOW LITERATURE-BASED
RESPONSE EXPERIENCES INFORM AND INFLUENCE
PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' READING
PERCEPTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Navigating Through “Our Bumps on the Road to Reading”: A Multi-Case Analysis of how Literature-Based Response Experiences Inform and Influence Pre-service Teachers’ Reading Perceptions

by

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The purpose of the study was to present multiple perspectives (multi-case design) that define pre-service teachers reading perceptions. This study sought to understand prior experiences that defined pre-service teachers’ reading perceptions and to understand how response-based explorations in a children’s literature course informed and influenced their existing perceptions of reading. This study employed a qualitative methodology and was framed by reader response, teacher knowledge and preparation literature, and a socio-constructivist perspective. Data sources included pre- and post-course interviews, course assignments, participant’s reflection journals, and researcher’s log with analytical memos. Open and axial coding as described by Strauss and Corbin (1998) were utilized to uncover the prior experiences and influence of response-based exploration on pre-service teachers’ perceptions of reading.
Study findings suggest that pre-service teachers do enter into their preparation programs with a wide variety of experiences that have already influenced their beliefs and perceptions of reading. Regardless of previous studies stating that teacher education courses often do not make a difference for pre-service teachers, and that they often revert to teach the way they were taught, this was not revealed to be the case. The multi-case study findings indicate that pre-service teachers’ perceptions of reading can be influenced through reflection on their prior experiences, participation in response-based explorations, and through exposure of multiple-perspectives with fellow students and the course instructor. It is here where pre-service teachers’ serious consideration of the role of children’s literature as a literary form in their own lives, as well as those of their future students, becomes a reality.
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CHAPTER 1

NAVIGATING THROUGH “OUR BUMPS ON THE ROAD TO READING”:
A MULTI-CASE ANALYSIS OF HOW LITERATURE-BASED
RESPONSE EXPERIENCES INFORM AND INFLUENCE
PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS’ READING
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Statement of the Problem

Literacy education in the United States is at a hazardous intersection (NICHD, 2000; Spiegel, 1998). Educators are aware that there is not a one-program-fits-all approach (Cunningham & Allington, 1994; Serafini & Giorgis, 2003) for children’s literacy education, and yet many teachers currently find themselves with scripted programs and little classroom autonomy. In the present day educational realities of testing and scripted programs, in-service teachers may begin to forget about why they chose to become teachers in the first place. Many pre-service teachers enter educational programs with predisposed beliefs to personal theories of good teaching based upon their own life experiences (Bird, Anderson, Sullivan & Swidler, 1993; Calderhead & Robson, 1991; Scharer, 1992). These students arrive with their own life biographies of “teacher”, “reading”, and “school”. These biographies often collide, question, or integrate with course texts, assignments, and even professors.
Research has shown that many pre-service teachers are not readers themselves, and that this lack of engagement with reading could be passed on to their future students (Anderson, Heibert, Scott, and Wilkinson, 1985; Applegate & Applegate, 2004; Smith, 1988; Sulentic-Dowell, Beal, & Capraro, 2006). Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (2000) and Applegate and Applegate (2004) discovered that teachers who read regularly often modeled positive reading skills and behaviors in their classrooms. Therefore, one might assume that teachers who read less regularly may provide their students with poor reading skills or negative reading behaviors (Sulentic-Dowell, Beal, & Capraro, 2006).

Through their study on the effect of literacy experiences on the teaching propensities of pre-service teachers, Sulentic-Dowell, et al., recommended that pre-service teachers: “(a) should serve as models of active reading, (b) read aloud to students, regardless of level, (c) provide creative and flexible reading strategies, (d) promote reading as a social activity where [one shares] meanings and interpretations, and (e) provide as many opportunities for open discussion of reading passages as time allows. Such recommendations should foster positive reading attitudes and habits for transfer to other subject areas” (p. 251).

Motivation to read is crucial at all age levels (Wigfield, 1997). Researchers have determined that beliefs about reading have an important relation to both engagement and understanding during reading. Positive beliefs or perceptions of reading (Mathewson, 1994; McKenna, 1994) translate directly into higher levels of motivation and better understanding (Schraw & Bruning, 1999). Every reader brings some type of implicit model, a belief system that affects one’s goals and strategies for reading, to the task of reading (Hynds, 1990). Schraw and Bruning (1999) determined that implicit models of
reading constitute belief systems that increase or decrease motivation to read depending on the type of beliefs readers hold about themselves.

If pre-service teachers are guided in creating robust reading identities based on experience and current theory and practice, the issue of not feeling unprepared may help to change the future of the educational terrain. Specifically, we as teacher educators must provide pre-service teachers the opportunity to place course content within the context of the future teaching practices (Applegate & Applegate, 2004; Brindley & Laframboise, 2002). Asselin (2000) argues that teacher educators should conduct research in their own classrooms to identify effective ways of preparing pre-service teachers for literature-based reading instruction by addressing not only their subject knowledge, but also their pedagogical content knowledge. Probst (1992) states “there ought to be some correlation between what students go through as they grow up and what great writers have written about” (p. 75). Therefore, it is imperative to bring heightened awareness of various reading response explorations, provide opportunities for personal reflection, as well as offering students multiple ways of promoting thinking that enable these pre-service teachers to visibly understand their connections with literature. Pre-service teachers must be aware of the importance of transactional reading that promotes active reading and personal engagement to catch and hold readers interest and engagement (Mitchell, 1993; Rosenblatt, 1978; Schraw & Bruning, 1999). Pre-service teachers’ should be encouraged to give serious consideration to the role of children’s literature as a literary form in their own lives, as well as in their future students.
Teacher Preparation

Research on teacher preparation is limited (Hoffman & Pearson, 2000). During the last few decades, research in teacher education relied on descriptive-correlational-experimental methodology (Hoffman & Pearson, 2000). The science of teaching was studied by “taking the findings on effective teaching behaviors uncovered through correlational studies and putting them to the test in true experimental studies where the causal relationships are fully revealed” (Hoffman & Pearson, 2000, p. 36). Teachers were typically trained in direct instruction teaching practices and student achievement was then monitored and measured after learning through these instructional techniques. Results were then analyzed for the causal relationships between the influences of the teaching practice on achievement. Hoffman and Pearson (2000) argue that this model is not sufficient for today’s teacher preparation programs. Recent research on teaching is now beginning to address “the reflective, adaptive, and responsive aspects of teaching” (Hoffman & Pearson, 2000, p. 37).

The context of teaching has changed as our society has changed, just as the context for literacy practices has changed. Yesterday’s standards for teaching …will not support the kinds of learning that tomorrow’s teachers must nurture among students in the next millennium (Hoffman & Pearson, 2000, p. 28).

A relatively new phenomenon and push has been to engage pre-service teachers in educative practice and inquiry, rather than training them to teach scripted or packaged reading programs (Hoffman & Pearson, 2000; Schon, 1983). Today, “many teacher preparation programs require pre-service teachers to do extensive, meaningful work in actual classroom settings throughout their programs of study” (Lefever-Davis, 2002, p. 196). Students enrolled in the elementary education program at South Western University (pseudonyms have been used) where this study took place are required to complete a
minimum of 30 hours observation in an elementary classroom setting, two-semester-long practicum experiences in conjunction with their methods courses and finally, their semester-long student teaching experience. All of these classroom experiences work to contribute to pre-service teachers’ knowledge in working with elementary school learners. “Teachers, especially reading teachers, must be very clear about the skills their students require and must be able to meet their students’ diverse learning needs” (Lefever-Davis, 2002, p. 196).

The focus of research on preparing teachers has changed over the past decade. To help understand how pre-service teachers develop as they work to become teachers, it has become essential to consult research completed with in-service teachers. There is research that examines not only how and what teachers know about their subject matter, but also themselves. This research includes, but is not limited to, research on practical knowledge (Elbaz, 1983), personal practical knowledge (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, 1996, 2000), wisdom of practice (Shulman, 1987), as well as teacher research (Cochran-Smith, 2000). The research movement has made significant and lasting impacts on teacher education research and practice (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Richardson, 2001). Due in part to this, teacher education programs have developed to include curriculum and practices that shape prospective teachers as reflective practitioners who make complex decisions.

Research reviews on preparing future teachers to teach reading (Anders, Hoffman & Duffy, 2000; Hoffman & Pearson, 2000; Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998), have also enhanced our understanding of reading teacher preparation and describe common conclusions and suggestions for teacher education research. First, pre-service teachers
learn what they are taught in their preparation programs, however, it is not always clear how long these changes are continued (Anders et al., 2000). Second, course work should have an extensive coverage of early literacy learning, comprehension processes, and assessment and should build on a knowledge base that prepares teachers to respond strategically to students’ needs in reading (Hoffman & Pearson, 2000). Third, supervised, relevant, field-based or clinical experience in which pre-service teachers receive ongoing support, guidance, and feedback is crucial (Darling-Hammond, 1999). All of these skills are essential for future teachers. In addition, the studies reveal that becoming a teacher is an identity-forming process where individuals engage in language and literacy practices with others to author themselves as teachers (Danielewicz, 2001). They describe the importance of drawing on one’s past experiences, beliefs, prior knowledge in a school-based community, and how narrative serves to inform and influence one’s development as a teacher.

Studies on pre-service teachers’ beliefs indicate that methods courses, fieldwork, and student teaching influence pre-service teachers’ beliefs about literacy and reading instruction (Agee, 1998; Grisham, 2000; Mosenthal, 1996; O’Callaghan, 2001; Shaw, 1994; Wolf, Mieras, & Carey, 1996). O’Callaghan (2001) found that student teachers’ beliefs about reading instruction were deeply rooted in their own early home and school experiences. These experiences were related to their conceptualization of the role of the teacher. Wham (1993) followed pre-service teachers for two years. She found that half of the participants in the study experienced no changes in their beliefs towards reading and instruction while half of the participants changed their beliefs. Wham attributed changes in beliefs to coursework rather than student teaching.
It has always been prominent to focus on both how and what pre-service teachers learn in their courses; and in teacher education literature this concept is becoming even more significant in the current time of standards and accountability. Peressini, Borko, Romagnano, Knuth, and Willis (2004) provide the following synopsis of the relation teachers' professional knowledge and goals of teacher education:

From a cognitive perspective, knowledge and beliefs are major determinants of what teachers do in the classroom, and a central goal of teacher education is to help prospective teachers acquire new knowledge and beliefs. (p. 73)

What teachers think about reading and literature affects how they employ literature-based reading instruction in their classrooms (Sadoski, Norton, Rodriguez, Nichols & Gerla, 1998; Scharer, 1992). Policy makers, researchers, and teacher educators are now beginning to acknowledge that understanding pre-service teachers as learners; the knowledge required for the classroom and how they learn their craft, can assist in clarifying the role of formal teacher education in learning to teach (Kress, Jewitt & Tsatsarelis, 2000; Shulman, 1987). Much has been written about the affective results of reader response with children; looking specifically at how students take pleasure in reading more (Samway et al.; 1991, Yocom, 1993), students read more (Anzul, 1993; Borders & Naylor, 1993) and are engaged with reading (Enciso, 1992; Noll, 1994; Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991). Draper, Barksdale-Ladd, and Raderich (2000) recommend that teacher educators should conduct research in their own classrooms by looking at the reading activities of pre-service teachers during their education program.

There is not much literature that exists which examines the overlap of previous literacy experiences in conjunction with exposure to response-based experiences and
explorations with pre-service teachers. Part of my aim in this dissertation is to communicate the voices of pre-service teachers, which thus far are unheard in educational research (Clift & Brady, 2005). This study seeks to add to this perceived gap.

**Literature as a Lens**

Readers of children’s literature often find their experiences mirrored in texts, and they are able to consider the experiences of others through books (Mathis & Giorgis, 1999). Eeds and Hudelson (1995) wrote:

> Literature provides a lens through which we can examine our own lives, our own experiences, our own cultural realities, our own world viewpoints. But literature also allows us to enter into realities that are different from our own. When we do this, we broaden our perspectives and extend our humanity by considering ways of thinking and making sense of lives other than our own. We may also create connections; we may construct meanings that focus on how we are similar as well as how we are different. (p. 3-4)

Children’s literature contains the “emotions, experiences, dreams, and visions that have made us who we are” (Mathis & Giorgis, 1999, p 24). Children’s literature is a valuable tool for literacy development, and it is important to “provide pre-service teachers with supportive opportunities to select, read, and analyze literature in order to construct criteria for themselves about … what is great literature for sharing with children” (Hoewisch, 2000, p. 5). It is through these literate experiences and practices that individuals’ identifications and positioning are shaped (Street, 1994).

Sadly, an online survey reveals that teacher certification programs at state and private universities across the country have chosen to place the responsibility for children’s literature courses on community colleges, or they have merely given these courses “general education” status (Hoewisch, 2000). It is essential to expose pre-service teachers
to the educational benefits of children’s literature and ways of effectively sharing this literature with their students. It is not enough to have pre-service teachers read a number of books and simply create an annotated bibliography; nor is it beneficial to have them only complete an activity like creating a diorama on Creech’s (1994) book, *Walk Two Moons*.

It is critical that pre-service teachers understand how to go about teaching with authentic literature (Scharer, 1992; Short, 1992). Therefore, course content in children’s literature courses must be taken very seriously. If we facilitate pre-service teachers’ understandings of the power contained within children’s literature, they will employ children’s literature as a purposeful and meaningful experience and will capitalize on its educational benefits with their students. This type of framework for a children’s literature course could help to encourage engaged readers who make connections between books and their lives (Friere & Macedo, 2003) and in turn pass on these traits to their future students.

**Research Questions**

Building upon the existing shift in teaching about literature, this study suggests a conceptual framework for the teaching of children’s literature that takes into consideration the pre-service teachers’ reading perceptions towards response-based approaches utilized in a college children’s literature course setting. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What prior experiences define pre-service teachers’ reading perceptions?
2. How do response-based explorations inform and influence pre-service teachers’ reading perceptions?
The first question was designed to address what experiences define pre-service teachers’ perceptions of themselves as readers. I looked specifically for recurring patterns in what the pre-service teachers were influenced by or encountered in terms of reading experiences during school and home experiences. The second question addressed the influence of response-based course experiences on pre-service teachers’ reading perceptions. This question was designed to look both at their knowledge and their understanding of response-based activities in their coursework and the broader context of their future classrooms. In chapter two, I discuss the concept of reader response theories in greater depth and provide a conceptual framework for understanding this study.

In what follows, I highlight the theoretical framework and research design of this study. Then, I provide a brief overview of the children’s literature course in which this study took place. Finally, I provide some background on my personal interest in this study and my role as the researcher.

Theoretical Framework

This study supports the work of theorists in reader response literary criticism. It also moves beyond their assumptions of the reader as a generic human being and looks at pre-service teachers’ attitudes and responses to response-based approaches and literature through: reader response literary criticism, teacher knowledge, and multi-case comparative case-study methodology. In the current reality of testing and scripted reading programs, it is essential to encourage pre-service teachers to think differently about literature, thus making teacher education more transformative (Fahrenbruck, et al., 2006). This study could ultimately help children’s literature teacher educators design pre-service
programs that recognize the individual ways of knowing that beginning teachers bring to and develop within their pre-service years.

The central conceptual framework supporting this study was built from general theories of learning, especially of reading, which hold the potential of bringing into reading instruction many features and understandings of pre-service teachers' reading perceptions with response-based explorations. The framework of the study was based on reader response theory, which perceives reading as an active, analytical process enabling the reader to shift perspective to create meanings.

Socio-constructivists (Brown & Duguid, 1991; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Resnick, 1991) allege that knowledge is situated in and grows out of the contexts of practice. Theories of cognitive apprenticeship suggest that individuals come to see themselves as they engage in practices with others while acquiring certain beliefs, behaviors, and knowledge (Lemke, 1997). These knowledge-building and meaning-making practices are socially constructed in situated contexts, which give shape to individual identities. Pre-service teachers come to the classroom with reading identities constructed through previous life and school experiences (Lortie, 1975). Social constructivists (Bakhtin, 1981; Vygotsky, 1978) emphasize the importance of taking on multiple voices and perspectives in understanding literature and analytical thinking. Therefore, it is through reader response and multiple perspectives that pre-service teachers come to understand themselves and how their teaching identities are informed and influenced not only by prior experiences, but also by their responses to literature, and through interactions with fellow classmates and the instructor. Each of these lenses provides a framework for understanding influences on the construction of pre-service teachers' reading identities.
The diagram below (Figure 1.1), modified from Putney's Theoretical Framework Model (2004), illustrates how the theoretical and conceptual frameworks presented in this paper work to create a multifaceted approach towards pre-service teachers' perceptions of themselves as readers.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 1.1.** This figure is a theoretical and conceptual framework model of the multifaceted approach to understanding pre-service teachers constructed reading perceptions.

Each of these lenses provided insight into the multifaceted approach in the context of literary understanding and development of pre-service teachers' constructed perceptions or reading and response-based explorations. This framework also helped to determine that a multi-case comparative case study qualitative methodology was best suited for the research questions and determined the type of data collection.
Overview of Course

This study took place in a pre-service children’s literature in elementary education course. This course served as a framework to explain how the discourse of one’s past and that of teacher education programs can greatly influence the perceptions of individuals learning to become teachers. It is through this framework that pre-service teachers’ prior literacy experiences, as well as response-based experiences and explorations of literature were explored.

The focus of the course was extensive and intensive reading of children’s literature and strategies for sharing the literature with children in the elementary classroom. This course examined children’s reading interests and needs as a basis for evaluation and selecting children’s literature, and provided class members with an opportunity to enjoy and discuss a wide variety of quality children’s books while experiencing various response strategies to literature. Participants also explored numerous authors and illustrators of children’s literature as well as experiencing ways for integrating literature into the curricula (as stated in the course syllabus created by Dr. G.).

The undergraduate children’s literature course is a required course for elementary education majors. Most students take this course their junior or senior year, with students typically having completed a practicum experience or concurrently enrolled in their first practicum. This course provides the foundations of children’s literature through a genre approach. Students read a wide variety of picture books and chapter books in each of the genres and are required to complete a reading record detailing one hundred children’s books. In addition, students are exposed to a wide-variety of response-based experiences and course assignments that encourage them to gain meaning from the text, themselves
and fellow class members. The course assignments students complete could be replicated in their future classrooms, and students regularly discuss their thoughts and understandings of this type of reading instruction. In addition, a wide variety of professional readings were incorporated into instruction throughout the semester. Prior to this study, it had been informally observed that many students came to understand and appreciate the role of children’s literature in the classroom.

Construction of the Children’s Literature Course

Scharer (1992) found that teachers who were most familiar with basal programs found themselves deficient in the depth of knowledge of reading and literature necessary to put into practice literature-based instruction. Mueller (1973) discovered that if teachers do not value reading, then this has serious implications for teaching effectiveness in reading. In my teaching of the children’s literature course, I continually seek to have the students understand the fact that scripted programs have not always been the focus of reading instruction, nor will they always be. Therefore, a focus in my class is to make students aware that it is imperative that one understands how to teach with children’s literature. “Sound pedagogy tells us that children's literature cannot be used as a simple, trendy device for organizing instruction” (Hoewisch, 2000, p. 8). Knowing which books to choose is crucial, and so is knowing how to use these books most effectively with students. This is particularly essential in schools moving to more literature-based and interdisciplinary curricula. It is critical for pre-service teachers to understand how different understandings are constructed and how readers themselves are positioned by various meanings and interpretations (Serafini, 2003).
It is vital that students are given a voice within the curriculum. When curriculum is constructed more broadly, it can impel students to seek answers to their own questions (Roser & Keehn, 2002). By moving away from the teacher as the central source of knowledge, we are then able to liberate and promote student's knowledge construction. "Reading in its broadest sense...is what we do as part of the process of becoming who we are" (Robbins, 2000, p. 23). Huck, Helper and Hickman write, "Literature can take us out of ourselves and return us to ourselves-slightly different with each book we have loved" (1990, p. 36). Children’s and young adult literature have quickly become resources that can be used at multiple levels in a wide variety of classroom settings. All readers should have a say in classroom matters and need to be able to express their own feelings and beliefs towards literature. This helps to promote literacy and understanding among all readers of varying abilities. The transactional theory of reading recognizes that all readers will have different perspectives based upon their own experiences and beliefs.

We need to discuss and demonstrate to pre-service teachers the kind of traits we expect from the people we identify as readers. For one thing, we should explore the multiple and varied nature of reading. We must remind pre-service teachers that they are constantly readers as they go about their lives, and as college instructors, we must talk with them about the ways students engage in reading and for what purposes. Rosenblatt (1978) argues that readers need to first share their thoughts, feelings, and connections from their individual transactions with a text. It is through this that pre-service teachers learn to take "intellectual responsibility for their interpretations and to support their responses by referencing the text and their lives" (Fahrenbruck, Schall, Short, Smiles & Storie, 2006, p. 28). It is essential they understand the different approaches children take.
while reading. If we can clarify what we mean when we ask pre-service teachers to assume the identities of readers and teachers of reading, we have taken the first step in demystifying a potentially frustrating and intimidating obstacle in the classroom.

It is important that we plan opportunities for students to “live through” experiences in literature (Rosenblatt, 1991). “The purpose of literature extensions...are primarily to enhance the enjoyment of reading and to deepen understanding (Brindley & Laframboise, 2002, p. 407). This type of instruction is a central part of the children’s literature course I teach. In this study, I specifically looked at the factors that influenced pre-service teachers’ reading attitudes previously and how the children’s literature course response-based explorations influenced their perceptions of themselves as readers. Students participated in reader response explorations and experiences first-hand, were instructed and further informed of the current views of reader response in education, and were then given opportunities to reflect on and express their beliefs about reading and literature.

Research Design

This study focused on the relationship between pre-service teachers’ reading perceptions and how response-based explorations in a children’s literature course inform and influence pre-service teacher’s perceptions of reading. It is through qualitative research methods that a researcher is able to make sense of participants’ worlds and experiences they have in their world, as well as the meanings these participants have constructed (Sherman & Webb, 1988). Thus, an interpretive approach through qualitative research was best suited to explore this relationship.
Case studies provide a useful means in understanding classroom dilemmas (Stake, 1995). By using a qualitative approach, I gained a deeper understanding of what happened through this course. Creswell (1998) states that case studies are an exploration of a bounded system which in this study was the children’s literature course, and included pre-service teachers, the curriculum, and the instructor. A case study is “an exploration of a bounded system or a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context” (Creswell, 1998, p. 61).

Participants

To determine study participants, purposeful sampling was utilized. Purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990) is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight from a sample that yields the most data. Patton (1990) states “the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information rich cases for study in depth” (p.12). In obtaining participants for this study, it was essential to obtain subjects that presented the maximum diversity of study participants whenever possible. A subject selection matrix was created to help increase the diversity of subjects represented within the children’s literature course sections. This matrix, presented in detail in chapter three, addressed subject ages, gender, if the participants had children, experiences working with children in the schools, and attitudes towards reading. The subject selection matrix helped provide for the maximum variation of study participants whenever possible.
Method

On the first day of the course, I spoke with the pre-service teachers about the study. I spoke at length about the study requirements, discussed the informed consent form (Appendix A), and asked for their participation. In addition, measures for protecting the rights of the participants (i.e., confidentiality) were fully explained both during the study introduction, and listed further in the informed consent form. I made it clear to the participants' that this study and their choice to participate would have no bearing on their grade for the course. Students understood that they had a choice of whether or not they wished to participate in this research study. All of the data sources were scheduled classroom assignments listed on the syllabus for the students that were selected from the course I instructed. To further account for researcher bias, four students from a different section of the undergraduate children’s literature course were selected to serve as a representative case study.

A case study can utilize different forms of data collection methods such as interviews, observation, and document collection (Merriam, 1998). This study specifically utilized interviews, coursework, reflection journals, researcher’s log, and field notes. By utilizing different forms of data sources, I was able to triangulate the findings, thereby strengthening the trustworthiness of the study.

By combining the techniques of comparing, coding and categorizing the data with the writing of analytical memos, this enabled me to find a balance between fine detail analysis and the narratives of the participants. This also helped contribute to crystallizing thoughts, ideas, and theories about the prior experiences that define pre-service teachers’ perceptions of themselves as readers. In approaching the data, I used no preconceived
categories. It was through repeated readings and microanalysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) of the data sources that recurring issues and topics were constructed. Open coding was the process through which concepts and categories, and their properties and dimensions were constructed within the data sources. It was through the constructing, naming, and the developing of concepts that the texts were identified of thoughts, ideas, and meanings. The data were then broken down into discreet parts, closely examined, and compared for similarities and differences before being condensed through repeated readings and analysis.

Data Collection

Data collection included audio taped, semi-structured individual pre-post class interviews and literature discussions; response-based course artifacts (assignments produced by students for coursework), participant’s reflection journal, and a researcher’s log as well as analytical memos. Data from interviews, artifacts, observations, participant’s journal, researcher’s log, analytical memos and the participants themselves were crystallized to strengthen reliability and internal validity. It was through this triangulation of qualitative data that allowed for multiple perspectives of the data sources to emphasize the participants’ frames of reference (Marshall & Rossman, 1995).

Limitations

There are three noteworthy limitations of this study: generalizability, researcher bias, and longitudinal effects. The generalizability of these research findings is limited because they were generated in an exploratory qualitative case-study inquiry. This research design is not intended to produce results that account for, or predict, the behavior of a wide classification of people. The goal of qualitative work is not to generalize across a
population; rather it is to provide understanding from the respondents' perspectives which could enable the reader to generalize findings to their contexts (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Marshall & Rossman, 1995).

The second limitation is that conducting research in a classroom where I am the instructor may bias participants' answers. To account for this, I explained my study and its purpose clearly and concisely to the students. Participants understood that when they were reflecting and responding, they were responding to and reflecting on the response-based experiences and explorations and not to my teaching methods. I made it clear to the participants' that this study and their choice to participate had no bearing on their grade for the course. Students understood that they have a choice of whether or not they wished to participate in this research study. All of the data sources were scheduled classroom assignments listed on the syllabus for the students that were selected from the course I instructed. To further account for researcher bias, four students from a different section of the undergraduate children's literature course were selected to serve as a representative case study. The instructor of this course utilized many of the same methods and techniques that were employed in the class that I instructed.

The final limitation was time. It would be practical to assess how pre-service teachers reading identities might have influenced their long-term thinking over multiple months or years, but collecting such data was beyond the scope of this current study. However, future studies might consider narrative-based experiential learning interventions, which are followed up with longitudinal check-ups for months or longer to explore if, and how long-term after-effects actually occur when the pre-service teachers become in-service teachers in a classroom.
Role of the Researcher

When thinking about the issues and belief structures from which I gain my perspective, I believe it is important to situate myself within the framework of this study. I experienced a childhood full of reading and literary experiences. My mother was a teacher and she worked with my reading skills on a regular basis. This enabled me to enter kindergarten already having the ability to read. She and I made weekly trips to the library, and I typically checked out the maximum allotment of 30 books each visit. I continually read these books, and the weekly trips to the library ensued throughout much of my childhood. My schooling experiences nurtured my reading experiences. I remember being read to regularly and utilizing various reading materials throughout my early childhood. Even though my reading interest dropped off a bit during high school and college due to curricular demands, I still found time to read for pleasure.

When I began teaching in my own elementary classroom, I sought to teach through response-based reading instruction. I wanted to instill that love of reading with my own students that I had developed. Sulentic-Dowell, Beal, and Capraro (2006) deem that “if educators truly believe in fostering life-long reading practices, then teachers must be active readers who choose to engage in recreational and academic reading” (p. 237). I regularly based instruction in reading and skills through the use of various children’s literature novels. Themes and topics generated from the novel studies were incorporated into various subject areas to help children further their understandings. Even though my enthusiasm and love for literature permeated the classroom, oftentimes I saw that my elementary students had not encountered the fond childhood memories of reading that I had experienced. I frequently ran into students that believed their previous teachers did
not care about reading and that they made it boring for the students. It is for this reason that I sought to teach the children’s literature course. I felt that if pre-service teachers could see my excitement about reading and literature that this would be passed on to their students.

I have been teaching the children’s literature course for the past five years. Although each semester is different, I have continually noticed the wide amount of growth and change that the pre-service teachers seemed to experience throughout the semester. Several students regularly reported to me through informal comments or course evaluations that they initially disliked reading literature and through the course, this feeling changed to an appreciation of reading. Comments like “I wasn’t sure about this course before I took it” or “I thought this would be a boring class since I had to read kid’s books” permeated the early course evaluation statements. Other comments included “do we really have to read 100 books? I am a college student with a life”. However, these same students went on to say “She helped me understand just how important literature is in the classroom”, “all required work will serve me well as future resources”, or even “100 books isn’t nearly enough to prepare me for my classroom, we should have read more”. Many of the evaluation comments reflected this student’s sentiments: “She made me appreciate reading and introduced me to new and exciting books. I learned more in this class than I have in my entire college career”. These comments made me question the impact this class was having.

I knew the benefits and rewards of literature-based instruction, as I had seen the successes in my own elementary classrooms. Yet my pre-service teachers seemed to lack this knowledge. I was curious to understand how a one semester children’s literature
course enabled these pre-service teachers to not only understand response-based approaches, but also how this course worked to change students’ perceptions of themselves as readers. These observations led to the focus of my study: to understand how literature-based response explorations and experiences in a children’s literature course inform and influence pre-service teacher’s perceptions of themselves as readers.

Significance of Study

The intent of this study was to understand how response-based explorations and experiences in a children’s literature course inform and influence pre-service teacher’s perceptions of reading. In the current reality of testing and scripted reading programs, it is essential to encourage pre-service teachers to think differently about literature, thus making teacher education more transformative (Fahrenbruck, et al., 2006). This study will ultimately help children’s literature teacher educators design pre-service programs that recognize the individual ways of knowing that beginning teachers bring to and develop within their pre-service years. These concepts were determined by studying the contextual aspects of the teaching of literature and literary practices and by viewing the pre-service teacher as a unique individual whose professional identity shifts as they encounter new challenges, new social contexts, and new ideas (Britzman, 1994).

Findings

The title of this dissertation was adapted from a quote spoken by Olivia, “We all experience bumps on the road to reading” during the final course interview (FCI, 4/30). (All participants have pseudonyms to further account for confidentiality.) This quote helped to shape the metaphor of reading that the study participants constructed when
thinking about or encountering reading in their lives both past and present. Each of us is on a road that leads to our reading abilities and perceptions. Even for the most competent readers, this road is often marked with potholes or speed bumps that keep us from enjoying reading or seeing reading in a positive light at some points in our lives.

This study’s findings revealed that study participants’ perceptions toward reading and thinking about reading as a future teacher were influenced by the response-based explorations they experienced throughout the course. The pre-service teachers were guided in creating robust reading identities based upon both prior experiences and current theory and practice. Therefore, it was imperative to bring heightened awareness of various reading response explorations, provide opportunities for personal reflection, as well as offering students multiple ways of promoting thinking that enable these pre-service teachers to understand their connections and attitudes towards reading.

Definition of Terms

The following is a list of terms and definitions used in this study. The terms are ordered alphabetically and are included to assist in clarification of specific vocabulary found in this study.

*Children’s Literature*- literature that is written specifically for children or youth; in this study children’s literature includes picture books and chapter books

*Children or Youth*- preschool through adolescent

*Literature-based*- students have the opportunity to select, read, and respond to a wide variety of children’s literature books across the genres and across curricular subjects

*Pre-service teacher*- students enrolled in an accredited teacher preparation program that are seeking a teaching license or endorsement; in this study the pre-service teachers are future elementary teachers, sometimes referred to as students or study participants in this study

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Response-based approaches to literature and reading instruction designed to develop meaning-making between the reader and the text

Response Explorations - As experienced in the children's literature course, these were approaches that emphasize the text, reader and context are all integral parts of the construction of meaning

Reflection Journal - notebook where pre-service teachers' reflective writings about reader response explorations and experiences will be written about

Students or Study Participants - pre-service teachers currently enrolled in a children's literature course as determined through the subject selection matrix

Organization of Study

This study is presented in five chapters. Chapter One describes the problem and questions that guide the study. Chapter Two presents a review of relevant literature that informs the study. Chapter Three includes research methods and procedures that were followed. Chapter Four contains the major findings, including a collective case study describing the major themes all eight participants' data sets, and a cross-case analysis. Each case study provides background information about the participants and describes pre-service teachers' perceptions of reading as well as response experiences and explorations as evidenced by the data. Chapter Five then provides a discussion of the study's findings, implications, and further study ideas.

The review of literature is discussed in the next chapter, and includes a review in three major areas (The pros and cons of Reader Response Theories, Classroom Implications, Teacher Beliefs and Influences). Finally, the connections between the literature and the study are discussed in Chapter Five.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Contextual Framework of the Study

Research on beliefs about reading instruction has always been a topic of interest among literacy researchers (e.g., Duffy & Metheny, 1979; Harste & Burke, 1977; Hoffman & Kugle, 1982; Richardson, Andres, Tidwell, & Lloyd, 1991). “Teachers who are engaged and enthusiastic readers are more likely to encourage and cultivate” these types of readers in their own classrooms (Applegate & Applegate, 2004, p. 555). It is also in these classrooms that students are more apt to “encounter teaching strategies that foster a love for reading and a high level of engagement in reading” (Applegate & Applegate, 2004, p. 555) and that beliefs are related to instructional practices in the classroom (Dewey, 1933; Harste & Burke, 1977). The current restructuring of “curricula around the test[s], is making students’ learning experiences as narrow as the tests themselves” (Pearson, Vyas, Sensale, & Kim, 2001, p. 177). Since teachers play a significant role in motivating children to read, it is important to challenge teachers to promote engaged and motivating reading and experiences for their students (Allington, 1994; Ruddell, 1995). Reading models affect readers, therefore, teachers are influenced by their model of reading or system of beliefs (Applegate & Applegate, 2004).

Although the assumption is made that teachers are literate (Gentile & Mc Millan, 1977), researchers have conceded that teachers exist that do not value reading highly
(Mueller, 1973; Sulentic-Dowell, Beal, & Capraro, 2006), lack enthusiasm for reading (LaBonty, 1991), or spend little time each day reading (Smith, 1990). Gray and Troy’s (1986) survey of pre-service elementary education majors documented that only 36 percent were reading any kind of book other than required course work. Motivation to read is crucial at all age levels (Wigfield, 1997). Researchers have determined that beliefs about reading have an important relation to both engagement and understanding during reading. Positive beliefs or attitudes about reading (Mathewson, 1994; McKenna, 1994) translate directly into higher levels of motivation and better understanding (Schraw & Bruning, 1999).

Gambrell (1996) states, “teachers become reading models when they share their own reading experiences with students and emphasize how reading enhances and enriches their lives (p. 20) and it is in these classrooms where reading motivation is fostered. As a teacher educator, I have an obligation to address my pre-service teachers’ attitudes about the nature of reading and to plan instructional practices that may alter their negative views of reading (Applegate & Applegate, 2004). Reader response theory offers possibilities for understanding the reading of a text from the point of view, recollections, life experiences, sentiments, thoughts, and perspectives of the individual reader (Langer, 1994).

Over the last several decades, many response-based experiences have begun to be practiced in American classrooms (Spiegel, 1998). Language arts teachers at many levels now widely accept certain tenets of response-based learning (Asselin, 2000), particularly the notion that learning is a practical and active process in which students come to understand meaning from texts through experiencing, hypothesizing, and synthesizing
(Farnan & Kelly, 1993; Probst, 1981). In addition, reader response approaches can encourage students to be aware of what they bring to texts as readers by helping them to recognize their own cultural backgrounds; enabling them to understand the cultural background of others (Rosenblatt, 1995). There are various perspectives and stances theorists have taken on reader response. In the past, reading education typically saw skill acquisition separate from the enjoyment of literature (Asselin, 2000). Reader response theory (Bahktin, 1981; Fish, 1980; Iser, 1978; Rosenblatt, 1978) swung the focus from text-based meaning to a meaning-making process between the reader and the text.

It has often been assumed that reader response criticism represented a relatively unified position (Beach, 1993). However, there have been a wide range of attitudes toward and assumptions about the roles of the reader, the text, and the social or cultural contexts that work to shape the transaction between reader and text. These critics have a wide variety of theoretical frameworks including Marxism, feminism, phenomenology or psychoanalysis. These different theories of reader response work to shape classroom instruction and practice. Beach (1993) classified reader response theorists into five theoretical perspectives: the textual, experiential, psychological, social and cultural (p. 8). Each of these theories has their differences, but they all focus on the process of how readers create meaning. Teachers often draw on these theories when designing and implementing curriculum.

Reader response theory defines the transaction in which readers draw upon their experiences and social context to actively construct meaning. Karolides confirms the important role the reader plays in making meaning stating, "The words, in effect, have no symbolic meaning-are only marks on the page-until the reading event occurs, until the
literary work has been lived through by the reader” (2000, p. 12). A reader response approach to literature thus affords students a wide variety of ways and means to personally connect and interact with literature. Reader response theory framed the course explorations students experienced in the children’s literature course. Although this theory framed the course experiences, it should be noted that analysis of readers’ responses was not the focus of this study.

Reader Response

Scholars have researched the role of individual readers in response to literary texts as early as the 1920s (Richards, 1949; Rosenblatt, 1938). Eagleton (1983) points out that literary theory is “less on object of intellectual enquiry in its own right than a particular perspective in which to view the history of our times” (p. 195). Research describing influences of responses to literature, features of these responses, and the specific efforts students take in creating meaning is known as reader response theory (Beach, 1993; Beach & Hynds, 1991; Galda, 1983; Martinez & Roser, 1991; Probst, 1981; Rosenblatt, 1978; Iser, 1972). Reader response theory offers numerous possibilities for understanding the reading of a text from the point of view, recollections, life experiences, sentiments, thoughts, and perspectives of the individual. Reader response theory is noteworthy because it raises questions about how the reader and the text function together in the formation of meaning. This theory in turn challenges the previous traditions in literary theory of privileging the text over the reader (Rosenblatt, 1978). The following sections detail several well-known theorists and their work in the field of reader response theory,
in addition to showing how the focal point of meaning has gone from the text specifically, to the reader.

**Perspectives of Reader Response**

In order to understand the focus given to the text by early reader response theorists, it is important to look at this theory's beginnings. During the Industrial Revolution, record numbers of children attended school, and society believed that literature should teach children civic responsibilities and cultural heritage by placing implicit themes within the literature (Straw & Sadowy, 1990). Scholars began to “question whether the kind of broad knowledge of history, biography, and philosophy assumed necessary for literary understanding” was what the focal point should be (Straw, 1990, p. 54). Due in part to this questioning, the focus was driven away from the author, and was instead placed upon the text. A person could come to know the main concept by examining a work’s textual features (Straw & Sadowy, 1990). Readers simply needed to crack the hidden code in the text to find the hidden meaning, and these meanings could be evaluated for correctness (Walmsley, 1991). If one wasn’t able to find the correct interpretation, it was the reader’s fault. The text was viewed as the dominant force and some theorists from this camp considered that to read was to create the text according to its own promptings (Fish, 1989; Iser, 1978).

Instructional practices within this perspective typically focused on teaching children how to read. Skills were taught with sequential and measurable objectives (Honing, 1995), and emphasis was placed on “decoding, oral performance, and literal comprehension (Serafini, 2003). Readers were required to focus on the text itself and have very little social interaction with the literature. They simply needed to provide

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examples from the text to support generalizations and conclusions (Hall, 2001). A particular focus was given to paradoxes, images, symbols, and ironies of literature (Straw, 1990). The meaning was typically singular and stable, and there were few deviations from what the text explicitly stated.

Several well-known theorists took this textual notion a step further and included the reader and the process of interpretation. Iser (1978) discussed the ways in which texts call upon and alter the reader's own expectations. As the reader uses various perspectives offered to him by the text, they ultimately awake responses within themselves. Also important in his theory are the gaps in the text: places in which the text expects the reader to fill in information or otherwise use their imagination. For Iser (1980), readers create the text, filling in gaps, anticipating what is to come, all along using their own understandings to process the work. Although the reader fills in the gaps, the author's intentional acts impose restrictions and conditions upon the reader; therefore, the transfer of the text's meaning to the reader is not brought about solely by the text, rather the text may work well "to incorporate the social norms and values of its possible readers" (Iser, 1978, p. 107). It is this merging of the text and reader that creates the interaction between "the textual signals and the reader's acts of comprehension" (Iser, 1978, p. 9).

Fish, best known for his analysis of interpretive communities, takes Iser's approach a step further by considering the reader and his interpretive community. Although Fish (1989) argues that the only possible meaning of a text is what the author intends, he claims that any actual attempt to determine this meaning is based upon the interpretive community of the reader making the interpretation. Fish writes, "the reader's activities are at the center of attention, where they are regarded not as leading to meaning but as having
meaning” (Fish, 1980, p.158). Meaning does not exist out there somewhere. It exists, rather, within the reader.

For Fish, a text is like a Rorschach blot onto which the reader projects their self-understanding or culturally determined assumptions. The text contains nothing in itself; rather the shape of text, its form, and its content is determined by the reader (Fish, 1989). This is how Fish claims that readers write texts. Fish’s work starts from and begins to question the New Critic’s efforts to locate literary meaning in the formal features of the text, rather than the author’s intention or reader’s response. For Fish (1980), reading is not a matter of discovering what the text means, but rather a process of experiencing what it does to you. This “what it does” question allows attention to frame around the structure of the reader’s experience.

Reader response researchers began focusing on the construction of text meaning and reader stances within socio-cultural contexts. Several researchers defined learning as occurring through participation in collective activity with readers, texts, and contexts as constituted by history. Tompkins (1976) stated that experience or meaning is constructed between the text and reader. Wells (1999), Wenger (1999), and Wertsch (1998) looked into the key tenets of socio-cultural learning, noting that learning typically occurs through joint, collective activity mediated by cultural tools. Hynds (1997), Sumara, (1996) and Wilhelm (1997) noted the notion of reading as an active process. Galda and Beach (2001) determined that “students learn to respond to literature as they acquire various social practices, identities, and tools not only through participation in interpretative communities of practice, but also through experience in acquiring social practices and tools in constructing identities within specific cultural worlds” (p. 36). It is through
examination of the interpretative and social practices students acquire that teachers could help students to critically reflect not only on the literature, but also on their “lived world” (Galda & Beach, 2001, p. 37).

Rosenblatt’s Transactional Theory of Reader Response

Usually teachers were held accountable for their students’ ability to state the “true” meanings of school texts (Apple, 1993), and often students’ oppositional readings of text were marginalized or discouraged. Within the transactional theory, the reader was recognized to be a part of the reading process. Meaning was considered in conjunction with the reader’s own background and social circumstances (Straw, 1990). No two readers generate the exact same meaning from a text, but a model reader was one that was able to “successfully unpack the reading experience and associate that experience within the context of his or her own purposes for reading” (Straw, 1990, p. 74). Readers are identified as members of a continuous cycle of sampling, inferring, predicting, and confirming simultaneously to determine how the information will be integrated into their thoughts, language, and memory (Goodson et al., 1996; Rosenblatt, 1983).

The transactional theory of reader response states that both the reader and the text are fundamentally important in the reading process (Rosenblatt, 1978). The reader takes a central role within the reading process based upon his/her background experiences, social circumstances, and interpretations of the text (Lee & Liang, 2003; Rosenblatt, 1978). This perspective differs significantly from the modernist theories that did not identify or value the reader as a part of the reading process and considered that meaning resided only in the text (Straw & Sadowy, 1990).
The transactional theory of reader response theory was the focus of Louise Rosenblatt’s research for nearly eight decades (1938, 1978, 1991, & 2005). Her theory of reader response is concerned with how meaning exists within both the reader and the text. The reader is seen as crucial to the construction of meaning, while the text facilitates this production of meaning. In an interview with Nicholas Karolides (1999), Rosenblatt indicated that the word transaction emphasizes “that the meaning is being built up through the back-and-forth relationship between reader and text during a reading event” (p. 160). As such, the transactional theory suggests that readers are both actively engaged in the reading while continually and repeatedly making meaning out of what they are reading (Karolides, 1999). “The relation between reader and text is not linear. It is a situation, an event at a particular time and place in which each element conditions the other” (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 16).

It is the teachers of literature that Rosenblatt cries out to initially. She asserts that many of these literature teachers considered that it was “their task...to make students more sensitive to the art of words, to induct them into our literary heritage” (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 4). She argues this view of literature was short-sighted, and left students wanting; decreeing that literature involves a whole range of human concerns and students should be allowed to assume an attitude towards texts. Rosenblatt (1995) states that the reader must be an active participant in this process, just as you, the reader transact and make meaning from this research presented (Britzman, 2003; McWilliam, 1995). Rosenblatt (1995) believes that by focusing on efferent reading approaches, teachers have not allowed children "to savor the experience, to linger on, recall or reenact nuances, tones, and states of consciousness produced by the lived-through images, ideas and
events" (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 123). It is through these multiple interpretations that meaning and understanding are gained from the text. Students are no longer in search of the one right answer, they interact with the text and with their own background and interpretations to gain understanding from the text. In Rosenblatt’s words, they create a transaction with the text.

Rosenblatt became suspect of the fact that “traditional teaching methods, passed on from generation to generation, were...producing shallow and unquestioning readers who passively accepted the authority of the printed word (2005, p. ix). Her theory espouses fostering a critical approach to reader response that helps serve the advancement of democracy. Like the critical literacy theorists, Rosenblatt (1995) stresses that in order for students to transact with a text, the ideas and images presented by the work should have relevance to the reader’s past experience or emotional needs. It is through this transaction that personal understanding and meaning are gained from the literary work. The teacher “should not impose a set of preconceived notions about the proper way to react to any work...the student must be free to grapple with his own reaction” (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 63). It is the teacher’s job to “help students realize that the most important thing is what literature means to them and does for them” (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 64).

Rosenblatt (1995) states that there is “no such thing as a generic reader or a generic literary work; there are only the potential millions of individual literary works” (p. 24). It is through this interaction of the student with the text that intellectual and emotional meanings are formed and created. “In the past, reading was too often ...thought of as an interaction, the printed page impressing its meaning embedded in the text” (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 26). However, Rosenblatt affirmed that the reader and the text both continually
affect each other; there is a give and take relationship with the text. The reader imposes what he feels the meaning of the text is and this in turn is supported or challenged by the text. In Rosenblatt's eyes, "both the reader and the text are essential to the transactional process of making meaning" (1995, p. 27). It is through this type of interaction that literature provides a "living through" not just "knowledge about" approach to learning (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 38).

Criticisms of Reader Response Theory

Reader response theory was articulated by Richards (1949) and Rosenblatt (1938). This theory holds that meaning is made through the reader's transaction with the text, and that meaning is created through a process rather that extracted as a correct interpretation which resides within the text (Rosenblatt, 1978). This theory has become popular in English classrooms where aesthetic responses to literary works have become common (Franzak, 2006). Critics believe that a problem with this theory lies in the lack of familiarity for marginalized readers in approaching texts in this way. Beardsley (1958) argued that to evaluate a work of literature in terms of its emotional effect through response was to confuse the work with its result. Wilhelm (1997) stated that some readers may need assistance to experience meaningful response in this way. Wilhelm argues that when teachers make visible the strategies engaged readers use, that less engaged readers can work to model their reading behaviors to meet with greater success. Lewis (2000) contends that oftentimes personal response has become conflated, and that the text has been stripped of interpretative and critical possibilities. Lewis also observes that a number of English teachers have taken "issue with reader response theory, noting that it
fails to acknowledge the sociocultural construction of textual interpretation and evaluation" (p. 121). Lewis promotes for a broader view of aesthetic reading that recognizes that response is always culturally situated. Another criticism against reader response is that it is often fiction centric (Franzak, 2006). It is essential to expose readers to a variety of materials and modes.

One major criticism of a reader response approach is the assumption that it serves students' personal needs at the expense of the text and its author. Close inspection of Rosenblatt's work debunks this misconception and counters the claim that reader response intends anything of the sort (Karolides, 2000). Reader response reflects the transaction that emerges from readers' interactions with a text, allows for differences of opinion, and encourages students to make personal connections, in addition to holding their responses accountable to the text.

Freire (1970) would take issue with these criticisms against reader response, for him "reading always involves critical perception, interpretation, and rewriting of what is read" (p. 36). Gee (2000) also holds that reading is not a stand-alone practice, but rather is one entrenched in socially situated identity activity. Moje, Young, Readance & Moore (2000) also maintain that readers need models of reading that value their identities, knowledge, interests and abilities and provide a means of addressing the numerous influences that affect their reading experiences. Rosenblatt (1994) stated an individual's "linguistic-experiential reservoir reflects the reader's cultural, social, and personal history" (p. 1064).

Rosenblatt's (1983) transactional process has readers working to develop their own individual response and interpretations of a text, which are then challenged and
negotiated through dialogue with other readers. Gaughan (2001) suggests that if students question their own identity, they will participate in literacy learning that is both motivating and meaningful. It is through the multiple interpretations and transactions with reader response theory that this possibly becomes a reality. The criticisms against reader response theory do not seem to hold true to when we discover how effective reader response theory is in extending reader’s abilities to read texts and contexts through individual, classroom, and cultural responses.

Summary of Reader Response Theory

Reader-response theory is a group of approaches to understanding literature that explicitly emphasize the reader's role in creating the meaning and experience of a literary work. Looking at the focus given to reader or text, it is simple to see the distinction between reader-response theorists who see the individual reader driving the whole experience and others who think of literary experience as largely text-driven and uniform.

The reader is an essential component in each of these theorists' views. It is typically the text and response that differs. For Iser (1980), there is a virtual space in between the text and reader where meaning is created; whereas for Rosenblatt (1978), the reader is actively engaged with the text and is continually making meaning throughout the reading experience. Each of the theories brings forth a slightly different slant on readers, texts and responses.

Reader-response theorists such as Rosenblatt (1978), Iser (1980), and Fish (1980) believe that readers are actively involved in the construction of meaning. However, their responses often differ due to particular textual, reader, and contextual factors. Iser (1978)
discusses the ways in which texts call upon and alter the reader's own expectations. As the reader uses various perspectives offered to him by the text, they ultimately awake responses within themselves. For Iser (1980), readers create the text, filling in gaps, anticipating what is to come, all along using their own understandings to process the work.

For Fish (1980), reading is not a matter of discovering what the text means, but rather a process of experiencing what it does to you. This "what it does" question allows attention to frame around the structure of the reader's experience. McClure and Zitlow (1991) suggest that reading and response become grounded in purposeful, enjoyable activity where readers are not hurried away from the lived-through aesthetic experience by being asked only to summarize or paraphrase. Rather, students are encouraged to reflect, listen, savor, explore, and contemplate, then to respond to the work with new perspectives and understandings. In classroom practice, reader response develops through the transaction between reader and text to encourage students to identify explanations, form their own opinions, and create meanings based upon their own individual experiences. See the following page (Table 2.1) for a detailed look at Fish, Iser's and Rosenblatt's views.
Table 2.1 Reader Response Viewpoints

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fish</th>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Reader</th>
<th>Response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Text contains nothing in itself; its content is determined by the reader</td>
<td>-Meaning exists within the reader; they project their self-understanding or culturally determined assumptions</td>
<td>-Interpretative community; a process of experiencing what the text does to the reader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iser</td>
<td>-Literature generates effects of meaning for the reader in a virtual space between the reader and text</td>
<td>-Reader creates the text</td>
<td>-As the reader becomes aware of perspectives offered by the text; response is ultimately awakened within themselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosenblatt</td>
<td>-Text works to direct the production of meaning</td>
<td>-Reader is seen as crucial to the construction of meaning</td>
<td>-Meaning exists within both the reader and text; readers are actively engaged in reading while continually making meaning out of that they are reading</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When focusing on literary content through emphasis on the author, society, and/or text, the tendency is for teachers to teach about literature, and in these approaches the reader’s role is often neglected or omitted (Karolides, 1992). Each of the theories presented rest on different assumptions of meaning, yet they all intersect and overlap when focusing on the reader’s textual knowledge and experience as being embedded within global, social, and cultural contexts (Beach, 1993). By examining each of these perspectives, teachers may consider and examine their basic goals for teaching literature. It is through these theories that classroom instruction for teacher education can be based.

Reader response theory acknowledges the meaning of responses can vary significantly according to differences in particular social, historical, or cultural contexts.
(Rosenblatt, 1978; Beach, 1993; Sipe, 1999). This theory shows not only differences, but also how to bridge these differences (Rosenblatt, 1978). Reader response allows students individually to create their own meaning of a text. In classroom practice, reader response develops through the transaction between reader and text to encourage students to identify explanations, form their own opinions, and create meanings based upon their own individual experiences. In a reader-centered classroom, students’ rationalizations, opinions, and meanings constructed are invited, encouraged, valued, and seen as beneficial.

The primary focus of reader response theory is the personal connection between the reader and the text (Lee & Beach, 2001, Rosenblatt, 1995). The text becomes both a springboard and a resource. By reflecting on their own thinking, readers come to understand what triggers their own responses, how these affect their developing impressions, and how they might be affected by the insights of others (Karolides, 1992). This seems to be an essential ingredient missing in many classrooms.

Classroom Implications of Response-based Approaches

Incorporating response-based approaches in the classroom can have a remarkable impact on how students view texts and reading. Rather than relying on a teacher to give them a single, standard interpretation of a text, students learn to construct their own meaning by connecting the textual material to issues in their lives and describing what they experience as they read (Rosenblatt, 1978). This process of identifying reactions, reflecting on others reactions and questioning themselves promotes personal growth and allows readers to maintain ownership of their reading (Karolides, 1992). Because there is
no one right answer or correct interpretation, the various responses of individual readers are essential to constructing the variety of possible meanings that a poem, story, or other texts can evoke.

In classroom practice, knowledge develops through the transaction between reader and text to encourage students to identify explanations, form their own opinions, and create meanings based upon individual experiences. Students’ rationalizations, opinions, and the meanings constructed are invited, encouraged, valued, and seen as beneficial in a reader response centered classroom. Response-based approaches allow students individually to create their own meaning of a text. This process is highly personal and complex, and therefore quite individualized. The primary focus is this personal connection between the reader and the text.

Students in response-based classrooms become active learners, and since their personal responses are valued, they begin to see themselves as having both the authority and the responsibility to make judgments about what they read (Rosenblatt, 1983). The responses of fellow students also play a pivotal role. The making of meaning through response to reading involves meaning being constructed and revised by the reader themselves, and not given by a fellow group member (Probst, 1981; Purves, 1985). Through interaction with their peers, students move beyond their initial individual reaction to take into account multiple ideas and interpretations, thus broadening their perspective (Rosenblatt, 1978).

Reading “is a dynamic, reflective, introspective process” (Spiegel, 1998, p. 42). In the past, meaning was assumed to reside in the text (Iser, 1972), but now the reader has replaced the text as a central element in reading (Probst, 1981). Meaning is constructed
by readers through the given text, and is influenced by various socio-cultural perspectives as well as fellow students or group members' responses. In turn, each of these influences not only each other, but the reader's response. Due in part to this, the literary text is not viewed as static, but as dynamic and changing (Dias, 1992). This helps to leave students open to new ideas, even their own (Yocom, 1993).

"For decades, research has concluded that children's books not only provide great pleasure to readers, but they also play a significant role in [student’s] academic, social, and literacy success (Hoewisch, 2000, p. 1). However, Lortie (1975) found that often much of what pre-service teachers believe to be most educationally effective are the strategies and modes of learning incorporated in the 13 or so years of schooling they have had prior to their teacher training. Often, this type of instruction did not include literature-based teaching and learning as Tyson and Woodward (1989) found that in the 80s, "textbooks structur[ed] from 75-90 percent of classroom instruction" (p. 15). More recently, researchers have stressed that it is important to consider the connections readers make between texts and their life experiences (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993; Cochran-Smith, 1984; Short, 1992; Sipe, 1999).

It is important to critically scrutinize the real value of practices in children's literature, various genre books, and the future this literature may have in the pre-service teachers' future classroom. Pre-service teachers must understand the critical nature of children's literature, they should see how their own identities are represented in the literature, and they need to understand the value of the literature in their future classrooms. Pre-service teachers must also realize that the approach to literature and the books selected "send messages to their students not only about what kinds of literature

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are valued, but also who is valued" (Agee, 2000). It is imperative that pre-service teachers reflect about the books they share and the instructional methods they employ with students (Hoewisch, 2000).

The value of children’s literacy development cannot be argued (Mathis & Giorgis, 1999) therefore; it is valuable to educate the pre-service teachers about the educational benefits of children’s literature and ways of effectively sharing this literature with their future students. By means of her research on Canadian students’ identity construction through children’s literature, Pantaleo (2001) determined that teachers’ knowledge about children’s literature is of critical importance to the success of literature-based literacy programs. Pre-service teachers must be provided with support and opportunities to select, read, and analyze literature to determine the best and most appropriate books to share. These teachers should also be given the opportunity to test and reflect on instructional methods they hear about in their courses (Hoewisch, 1998; Posner, 1996).

It is also imperative that teacher educators “create a classroom atmosphere that encourages and values pre-service teachers’ choice of readings from a wide range of genres, authors, and illustrators, past and present” (Hoewisch, 2000, p. 6). This should also involve developing in students an awareness of their fundamental assumptions, a demand for consistency among their existing beliefs, and a sense of the value of new beliefs (Posner, 1996). In addition, some class activities could be designed to create cognitive conflict, and teacher educators should structure instruction to identify students’ beliefs.

By helping pre-service teachers develop “new habits of mind about literature, not just knowledge of books and teaching resources” it may help make teacher education
influential and personally meaningful (Fahrenbruck, Schall, Short, Smiles & Storie, 2006, p. 36). It is when education is personally meaningful that pre-service teachers’ serious consideration of the role of children’s literature as a literary form in their own lives, as well as their future students, becomes a reality. It is for these reasons that I chose to implement this study in a children’s literature course. I wanted to enable pre-service teachers examine their perceptions of themselves as readers and document how teacher educators can structure course experiences that can influence these perceptions.

Teacher Knowledge and Preparation

Teaching is a “process of ongoing learning, reflection, and decision making” that develops over the course of multiple stages (Barr, Watts-Taffe, Yakota, Ventura, & Caputi, 2000, p. 464). Fenstermacher (1994) characterizes teacher knowledge as formal and practical. Shulman (1986) categorized practical knowledge through pedagogical content knowledge such as subject matter knowledge, and student learning or understanding. According to Dewey (1933), beliefs are matters that “we are sufficiently confident to act upon and also the matters that we now accept as certainly true…” (p. 5). This brings to light the importance of teachers’ subject knowledge and how this is best taught to their students. In teacher education, research literature demonstrates that knowledge of teaching practices is a crucial element in the way teachers interpret and construct the nature of their work (Kelchtermans & Vandenberghe, 1994) and events and experiences of the personal lives of teachers are closely linked to the performance of their professional roles (Ball & Goodson, 1985; Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996).
Research on the effectiveness of teacher preparation courses is somewhat disturbing. In general, the impact of teacher education on practice seems to be meager or, at best, somewhat unclear (Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998). Teaching is one of the few professions that everyone has experienced throughout their life, and therefore they feel qualified to speak about teaching or methods. As Blume (1971) states, “teachers teach as they are taught, and not as they are taught to teach”. Even inexperienced teachers usually consider teaching as an easy task and believe that they are prepared to teach even before entering a teacher preparation program (Britzman, 2003). It is imperative to make students aware that the methods they learned by were not always the best practices. We must have them reflect on ways and means that they were taught or influenced by and find ways for pre-service teachers to thoughtfully ponder theory presented in a course in conjunction with their previous experiences in school.

“We often send teachers into the classroom naked, in terms of ammunition to meet the needs of the students,” says Darling-Hammond (as quoted in Gardner, 2005). Many researchers emphasize the usefulness of relating university coursework to actual classroom teaching (Goodlad, 1991; Meade 1991; Sumpter, 1995). Future teachers need to know how students learn and develop and how they acquire and use language. They must understand their subject matter and the purposes of curriculum. And they should know and understand teaching - how to teach subject matter so it can be understood by diverse learners, how to assess learning, and how to manage a classroom effectively (Gardner, 2005).

Literacy researchers (e.g., Duffy & Metheny, 1979; Harste & Burke, 1977; Hoffman & Kugle, 1982) were among the first that showed interest in teachers beliefs in the late
1970s and early 1980s. Research on teacher beliefs and identities about reading instruction has “focused on ways of facilitating belief changes among teachers toward more desirable beliefs” (Qian & Tao, 2005). Several researchers (Nias, 1989; Hargreaves, 1994; Sumson, 2002) have noted that teacher identities are not only composed from technical and emotional aspects of teaching and their personal lives, but also “as the result of an interaction between the personal experiences of teachers and the social, cultural, and institutional environment in which they function on a daily basis” (Sleegers & Kelchtermans, 1999, p. 579). This study, related to the personal and social aspects of learning to teach with children’s literature, extends beyond traditional training models and instead is concerned in how we “prepare teachers for reflective, adaptive, and responsive aspects of teaching” (Hoffman & Pearson, 2000, p. 37). As Hoffman and Pearson (2000) note:

Training may get teachers through some of the basic routines and procedures they need for classroom survival, but it will not help teachers develop the personal and professional commitment to lifelong learning required by those teachers who want to confront the complexities and contradictions of teaching (p. 36).

This distinction between the technical aspects of teacher training and the complex, personal practices of learning to teach is central to this investigation (Schon, 1983).

Learning to teach surpasses the technical knowledge often associated with teacher training models. As Maxine Greene (1981) explains, learning to teach is a process of development, “it is about choosing yourself, [and] making deeply personal choices about who you will become as a teacher” (p. 12). For Bakhtin (1981), as individuals discuss the words and thoughts of others, they restructure language to create personal meaning. In other words, individuals author themselves as they organize the words of others and...
construct personal meaning. Through social interactions, individuals are in a constant state of authoring of self (Bakhtin, 1981).

Researchers have addressed the impact of the creation of personal biographies of pre-service teachers (Bean & Readence, 1994; Britzman, 2003; Samuel & Stephens, 2000). Several recent studies have taken a close, comprehensive look at the processes individuals go through as they learn to become teachers (Britzman, 1991; Clark & Flores, 2001; Danielewicz, 2001; Gimbert, 2001; Ritchie & Wilson, 2000). Lortie (1975) found that pre-service teachers enter into their teacher education programs with numerous biographical experiences with specific subjects, as well as teaching and learning. Weinstein (1990) stated that these experiences act as filters on their teacher education experiences. It is important for teacher educators to help pre-service teachers “translate propositional knowledge into practical knowledge” (Asselin, 2000, p. 35). Grossman (1990) and Holt-Reynolds (1992, 1999) found that student subject knowledge and expertise in reading and literature did not necessarily translate into effective reading teaching methods. They found that oftentimes, students reverted back to the long-held positivist views of learning and teaching that were typically rampant during their early schooling experiences. Whereas, Mueller (1973), found that if teachers don’t value reading, than this has serious implications for teaching effectiveness in reading. The way teachers feel about reading and the knowledge they bring about effective teaching strategies all effect reading success and achievement.

Specific to reading and literacy, The Report of the National Reading Panel (NICHD, 2000) determined that comprehension strategy instruction has been a focus for more than 20 years; yet the panel also noted that few studies have been conducted on how to best
teach pre-service teachers strategy instruction. Responding to this report, the International Reading Association (2003) stated that there should be “a major investment in teacher preparation” (pp. 4-119-4-131). Research has shown that teachers do learn what they are taught (Darling-Hammond, 1999a; Hoffman & Pearson, 2001) and that well designed teacher preparation programs have a positive effect on reading outcomes (RRSG, 2002).

Cooper and Olson (1996) argue that with pre-service teachers the self is not yet substantive, but is constructed through an ongoing process of experience which is temporal and grounded in daily living. They further state that meaning is created by individuals through processes of interaction where the self is neither fixed nor standing still, but is rather an ever changing entity. From this perspective, Cooper and Olson (1996) assert that a fundamental problem for teacher knowledge lies in the tensions teachers experience between their personal knowledge of children, which includes their own childhood histories and memories, and rationalist models and constructions of knowledge; and they argue that pre-service teachers’ actions are not strictly determined by present circumstances nor tightly constrained by the past. Rather, “they are creating their world while also being shaped by it” (Cooper & Olson, 1996, p. 83).

Ritchie and Wilson (2000) investigated the teacher preparation program in the college where they instruct, by focusing on the knowledge growth and development of twenty-five prospective English teachers. Subscribing to the belief that learning to teach is a discursive practice shaped by various and often contradictory discourses (Britzman, 1991), they looked at how pre-service teachers narrated their experiences and beliefs in autobiographies, case studies, and reflective journals; and how these narratives shaped their knowledge as teachers. Ritchie and Wilson noted that as prospective teachers
constructed narratives about their educational experiences, past beliefs, and future responsibilities, and in the process they revised themselves as teachers. Likewise, Gimbert's (2001) study found that pre-service teachers appropriated knowledge, values, beliefs, and experiences concluded that these pre-service teachers developed an understanding of the classroom, how to teach, and what it means to be a teacher. He proposes that future studies should examine multiple discourses that influence the development of prospective teachers.

Wolf, Carey & Mieras (1996) studied 43 pre-service teachers in an undergraduate children's literature class by analyzing the effects of using carefully assisted case studies to prepare pre-service teachers to be more knowledgeable and skilled in supporting children's responses to literature. Their initial findings revealed that the pre-service teachers began the class with relatively low expectations. However, through course instruction that highlighted the value of interpretation over comprehension and through working with actual children, these pre-service teachers broadened their expectations and began to emphasize the affective, personal, and social nature of literary discussions. Through the course, the pre-service teachers learned that “children had much to say about text and its relationship to their lives” (p. 130). Wolf, Carey, & Mieras determined that university courses “balanced with authentic, literary interaction with children helps pre-service teachers shift from limited comprehension-based expectations to broader interpretative possibilities for literary engagement” (p. 131).

These studies reveal that becoming a teacher is a knowledge forming process where individuals engage in language and literacy practices with others to author themselves as teachers (Danielewicz, 2001). They describe the significance of drawing on one's past
experiences, beliefs, and prior knowledge in a school-based community and how narrative serves to inform one’s development as a teacher. Each study used teacher knowledge as a framework to explain how the discourse of one’s past and that of teacher education programs can greatly influence the teaching selves of individuals learning to become teachers. In order to document the language used by participants and the culture of schools and teacher education programs, these studies utilized traditional written assignments and individual reflections as primary data sources.

The studies previously mentioned suggest that teacher preparation programs should give future teachers the chance to rename and negotiate their teaching knowledge as teachers through narrative practices with others. They further stress that collaborative reflection enables pre-service teachers to share narratives with others and to critically deconstruct their theories about teaching, learning, and students.

The stories that pre-service teachers tell about their own experiences with educational become a “critical instrument” by which attitudes and perceptions are constructed (de Laurentis, 1984). Specifically, personal narrative can serve to name and tell one’s story (Meyer, 1998). Not surprisingly, the socialization of pre-service teachers begin early in their childhood experiences of the numerous days and hours that children and young adults spend in classrooms (Britzman, 1991; Grossman, 1990; Lortie, 1975). These narratives can also be used as a reflective tool to understand the ways in which individuals develop their perceptions of themselves (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). As we look at what influences pre-service teachers’ emerging identities as teachers, and understand their development as teachers, we must recognize the past stories about teaching and learning that future teachers bring with them (Ritchie & Wilson, 2000).
Influence of the Teacher in Reading Engagement

Studies have revealed that teachers who are enthusiastic readers are more likely to use engaging instructional activities such as literature circles and discussions (Morrison, Jacobs, & Swinyard, 1999). Galda (1982), Hancock (1993) and Sipe (1998) looked into expectations, attitudes and practices of readers and discovered that response styles might be connected to readers’ lives both within and outside the classroom. Applegate and Applegate (2004) believe that “teachers’ beliefs about reading as well as their reading habits may have a significant effect upon the motivation and engagement levels of their students” (p. 555). Ruddell (1995) conducted research on influential and non-influential teachers. Ruddell was able to identify influential teachers based partly on their adherence to Rosenblatt’s (1978) aesthetic stance. These influential teachers as identified through Ruddell’s work, tended to be highly effective and utilized motivating teaching strategies to create a sense of excitement about the subjects and themes learned and taught in the classroom.

Gambrell (1996) discovered that reading motivation is typically fostered in classrooms where the teacher is a reading model. He wrote “teachers become reading models when they share their own reading experiences with students and emphasize how reading enhances and enriches their lives” (p. 20). There have also been reported linkages between student achievement and the amount of reading done by their teachers (Lundberg & Linnakyla, 1993).

It is in these highly effective classrooms that students are likely to experience an elevated level of engagement in reading (Galda & Beach, 2001). Applegate and Applegate (2004) deem that since elementary teachers play a major role in motivating
children to read, “A lukewarm or task-oriented attitude toward reading can be problematic” (p. 556). Their study with classroom practices and engagement of reading with undergraduate students suggests that it is possible to affect the reading habits and attitudes of college-age students. Therefore, institutions that prepare these future teachers have a critical obligation to address the nature of their students’ attitudes towards reading, and to make these prospective teachers aware that what they project to their students about reading and literature really does matter.

Summary

Policy makers, researchers, and teacher educators are now beginning to acknowledge that understanding pre-service teachers as learners; the knowledge required for the classroom and how they learn their craft, can assist in clarifying the role of formal teacher education in learning to teach (Kress, Jewitt & Tsatsarelis, 2000; Shulman, 1987). The studies presented are important and pave the way for teacher educators to understand how pre-service teachers construct knowledge and reflect about their practice, further research is needed. Currently, not much literature exists which examines the overlap of previous literacy experiences in conjunction with exposure to response-based experiences and explorations with pre-service teachers. In this dissertation I explored pre-service teachers perceptions of reading based upon both prior experiences and current theory and practice. Therefore, it was imperative to bring heightened awareness of various reading response explorations, provide opportunities for personal reflection, as well as offering students multiple ways of promoting thinking that enabled these pre-service teachers to understand their connections and attitudes towards reading.

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CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study was designed to investigate response-based exploration in a teacher education program. The purpose of the study was to present multiple perspectives (multi-case comparative design) that define pre-service teachers reading perceptions. This study sought to understand the prior experiences that defined pre-service teachers reading perceptions and to understand how response-based explorations in a children’s literature course informed and influenced their existing perceptions of reading. Response-based exploration included course activities designed around literature that had multiple layers of meanings, and instruction that worked to identify students' beliefs and responses to this literature. Framed by reader response, teacher knowledge literature, and a socio-constructivist perspective; this study explored the following questions:

1. What prior experiences define pre-service teachers' reading perceptions?

2. How do response-based explorations inform and influence pre-service teachers' reading perceptions?

This chapter consists of four sections. First, I explore my theoretical view of the research and my research design. Second, I describe the context of the classroom, including the course instructors' backgrounds, the study participants' characteristics, and the content of the course. Third, I examine my own positionality in this study to provide an understanding of how my subjectivity has played a role in data collection, analysis,
and interpretation. Finally, I explain the methods of data analysis through which I can ground my interpretations and findings in the available data.

Qualitative Research Design

Historically, educational research has been linked with quantitative measurement and experimental design. Over the last several decades, research in education has embraced qualitative techniques of participant observation, thick description, and in-depth interviewing (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982) resulting in findings that are trustworthy, credible, and transferable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

One philosophical assumption of both quantitative and qualitative research is that the research design should seek to understand the meaning of an experience. Creswell (1998) defines a qualitative study as an “inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting” (p. 2). While research is often based on the assumption that there is a single, objective reality we can observe, measure and know; qualitative research often assumes that there are multiple realities. Qualitative research is exploratory, inductive, and emphasizes the process of research (Merriam, 1988; Yin 1994).

Qualitative research methods in the educational setting are not new. When obtaining research on the insight of schooling processes, Goodlad (1984) chose a qualitative approach for his study. He confirmed his research design choice against critics who were used to researchers testing theories and hypotheses, by citing the qualitative works of
Rutter (1979) and Cronbach (1975) who both utilized qualitative methodology when studying the settings of school and schooling practices.

The place of qualitative research in the improvement of teacher practice led Connelly and Clandinin (1990) to advocate that teaching and research are integrated through stories of experience and narrative inquiry. Ornstein (1995) agreed and stated that research on teaching must look at personal and practical knowledge, the culture, and the language and thoughts of the participants. Qualitative research covers several forms of inquiry that help one to understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible (Merriam, 1998, p. 6). It is through qualitative research methods that a researcher is able to make sense of participants’ worlds and experiences they have in their world, as well as the meanings these participants have constructed (Sherman & Webb, 1988).

This qualitative study was designed to present the socially constructed nature of response-based explorations in a children’s literature course. Through qualitative research methods, I sought to document the concrete details of the response-based exploration in the classroom to obtain specific understanding of the participants’ experiences (Erickson, 1986). Qualitative research allows the researcher to make visible the “invisibility of everyday lives” of the study participants by making the “familiar strange” (Erickson, 1986, p. 121). Thus, an interpretive approach was utilized to explore this relationship.

One of the key concepts of qualitative research is to understand the phenomenon of interest from the participants’ perspectives, not the researchers. Particular research methods include participant observation (Spradley, 1980), case studies (Stake, 1995), and
ethnography (Atkinson, 1990). My choice of inquiry was constructed through multi-case
study qualitative research. Qualitative data were collected through observations,
interviews, chapter reflections, journal entries, and course assignments to understand the
relationships between pre-service teachers' reading perceptions within the context of a
children's literature course.

There were three major reasons for my choosing a qualitative case study over a
quantitative design. The first reason was a philosophical one. I believe that research is an
interpretative and subjective process, through which the researcher seeks to obtain a
better understanding of the meaning making processes of the study participants. The
second reason was a practical one. Because the purpose of this study was to explore,
describe, and understand, I chose to utilize qualitative methods through which I could
gain in-depth, thick and rich description (Merriam, 1998) of pre-service teachers' reading
perceptions. Instead of studying large groups, qualitative researchers conduct an in-depth
study on a limited number of participants (Merriam, 1995). Qualitative researchers use
various methods such as participant observation and interview (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).
Finally, the nature of the research questions call for a qualitative methodology to describe
and understand the phenomenon studied. Accordingly, I chose a multi-case comparative
study as the basic framework and methodology to understand pre-service teachers'
reading perceptions.

Case Study

Case study is often compared to or equated with fieldwork, ethnography, participant
observation, and qualitative research (Merriam, 1998). I chose a case study design
because the research questions focus on the study participants’ actual experiences and
perceptions of reading. Yin (1994) observed that case study design is particularly suited to situations in which it is impossible to separate the phenomenon’s variable from their context. Merriam (1998) described the featured characteristics of case study: These studies are particularistic, meaning that the case focuses on a particular event, program or phenomenon and that the case itself reveals what is important about the phenomenon.

Case studies are descriptive and provide rich thick description, and include as many variables as possible (Geertz, 1973). In addition, case studies are heuristic and illuminate the reader’s understanding of the phenomenon under study. Stake (1981) claims that case study knowledge is: More concrete because knowledge resonates with our own experiences, more contextual because our experiences are rooted in context, and finally, more developed by reader interpretation because readers bring to the case study their own experiences and understandings. Bromley (1986) writes that case studies “get as close to the subject of interest as they possibly can, partly by means of direct observation in natural settings, partly by their access to subjective factors (thoughts, feelings, and desires)” (p. 23).

One of the reasons that affected my selection of case study as the research design and methodology for this study was the assumption that teaching and learning is an interactive process. Through case study design, one is able to obtain an in-depth understanding of the situation and experiences of the study participants. Merriam (1998) states that case study “offers a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon. Anchored in real-life situations, the case study results in a rich and holistic account of a phenomenon” (p. 41). Goetz and LeCompte (1984) assert that case study research is “one
of the few modes of scientific study that admit the subjective perception and biases of both participants and researcher into the research frame” (p. 95). Because of these strengths of case study research, “educational processes, problems, and programs can be examined to bring about understanding that in turn can affect and perhaps even improve practice” (Merriam, 1998, p. 41).

This study looked at pre-service teachers’ perceptions of themselves as readers prior to and after experiencing response-based explorations in a children’s literature course. According to Merriam (2002), basic interpretative qualitative case study research methodology involves learning how participants interact and experience their world and the meaning it has for them. “Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding what those interpretations are at a particular point in time and in a particular context (Merriam, 2002, p. 4). The nature of this qualitative study involved presenting data in its narrative form. Interviews and questions were created with the participants and with the data collected from the participants to elicit further information. Results were compared, contrasted, and informed through various member checks (Ratcliff, 1995) to solidify understanding.

This multi-case comparative case study design followed Lightfoot’s (1983) study of high schools where she presented individual case studies and then provided cross-case analysis to suggest generalizations. “By looking at a range of similar and contrasting cases, we can understand a single-case finding, grounding it by specifying how and where and, if possible, why it carries on as it does. We can strengthen the precision, the validity, and the stability of the findings” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 29). In addition,
the inclusion of multiple cases in a research design is a common strategy for enhancing external validity and the generalizability of the study findings (Merriam, 1998).

Case study methodology provides the flexibility to relate the data to the constructed themes. The themes illustrated pre-service teachers’ prior experiences and reading perceptions and how response-based practices inform and influence their reading perceptions. These experiences could inform course instructors and departmental practices and policies so as to understand the various reading experiences and ways of knowing pre-service teachers experience in their lives, and to positively impact pre-service teachers learning experiences throughout their undergraduate program.

Anderson (1998) defines case study as a “holistic research method that uses multiple sources of evidence to analyze or evaluate a specific phenomenon or instance” (p. 38). He maintains that a researcher conducting a case study must establish boundaries for the case; collect data skillfully from multiple sources; interpret, synthesize, and recast information during data collection; triangulate multiple sources of information; and place findings in a context supported by prior theoretical knowledge, to enhance understanding (p. 152). My objective was to meet all these criteria. However, since I was a course instructor for one of the courses studied, my study crossed the boundary from case study into practitioner research (Smythe & Murray, 2000).

Zeni (2001) defines practitioner research as “qualitative research conducted by insiders in educational settings to improve their own practice” (p. xiv). She identifies “insiders” and other stakeholders as participants in the research that seek to address issues raised in their own practices by using qualitative methods of inquiry. Zeni defines the three purposes of practitioner research: “to understand themselves and their students;
to solve professional problems; and/or to change society” (pgs. xiv-v). Through this research, it was my goal to not only understand my students, but also to obtain information for solving the professional problem of negative perceptions of reading in the pre-service children’s literature course.

Creswell (1998) states that case studies are an exploration of a “bounded system” which in this study was the children’s literature course, and included pre-service teachers, the curriculum, and the instructor. Case studies provide a useful means in understanding classroom dilemmas (Stake, 1995); and by using a qualitative approach, I gained a deeper understanding of what happened through this course. A case study is “an exploration of a bounded system or a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context” (Creswell, 1998, p. 61). The setting of this course was the children’s literature course and the multiple cases were the pre-service teachers. It must be noted though that the bounds of this setting do extend beyond the classroom because this study looks at pre-service teacher perceptions and these perceptions do go beyond the classroom studied.

One limitation of case study research is the ability to generalize from the findings (Yin, 1994). By giving detailed background information, readers are better able to understand the context of this case study. Therefore information is included about the university setting, course, instructors, and the participants. Additionally, such detail can help make the findings of this study more interesting, and perhaps even more compelling for the reader.
University Setting

South Western University (SWU) is located in a major metropolitan city in the Southwest United States. (Actual names and places have been converted to pseudonyms for this study.) There are currently over 28,000 students at the university, with nearly 22,000 undergraduate students enrolled. The average age of undergraduate students is 23.6. The undergraduate student demographics include: 50.3% Caucasian, 13.6% Asian, 12.4% Unknown, 10.7% Latino, 7.7% African American, 4.3% Foreign National, and 1% Native American. The enrollment figures determined that 43.5% of the populations mentioned were males, and 56.5% were females. In the fall of 2006, 617 students were enrolled in the elementary teacher education program and an additional 115 students were enrolled in the early childhood teacher education program. The children’s literature course serves students enrolled in both programs.¹

The Teacher Licensure Program at SWU

Coursework

The participants for this study were all students in South Western University’s (SWU) School of Education. The Teacher Licensure Program is for prospective elementary school teachers at this large university in the Southwest region. Students could complete the program as an undergraduate or post baccalaureate student. The College of Education is committed to creating an intellectual environment that promotes quality instruction, significant research, and professional service. Particular attention is focused on preparing professionals for diverse educational settings and on contributing to educational and

¹ All of the statistics listed were obtained from the university’s website on June 5, 2007, but for purposes of confidentiality, the website address is not listed or cited.
pedagogical knowledge through scholarly endeavors. The College provides leadership in both the art and science of educational practice. Furthermore, the College is committed to creating an inclusive learning environment that values and promotes diversity (College’s mission statement, 2007). Students enrolled in the undergraduate and post-baccalaureate programs are required to take 85 credits of education courses including:

- 16 credits of education core courses
- 48 credits of education program/methods courses
- 21 credits of field experiences

*Children’s Literature Course Content*

The focus of the children’s literature course is extensive and intensive reading of children’s literature and strategies for sharing literature with children in the K-8 elementary classroom. This course examines children’s reading interests and needs as a basis for evaluation and selecting children's literature, and provides class members with an opportunity to enjoy and discuss a wide variety of quality children's books while experiencing various response strategies. Participants also explore numerous authors and illustrators of children's literature along with exploring ways for integrating literature into the curricula (as stated in the course syllabus created by Dr. G (pseudonym used).

The undergraduate children’s literature course is a required course for all elementary education majors. Most students typically take this course during their junior or senior year, with students having completed a practicum experience or concurrently enrolled in their first practicum. This course provides the foundations of children’s literature through a genre approach. Students read a wide variety of picture books and chapter books in each of the genres and are required to complete a reading record detailing one hundred
children’s books. In addition, students are exposed to a wide-variety of response-based experiences and course assignments that encourage them to gain meaning from the text, themselves and fellow class members. The course assignments students complete could be replicated in their future classrooms, and students regularly discuss their thoughts and understandings of this type of reading instruction.

The course was selected for this study for several reasons. First, response-based exploration was used as an instructional method to explore, promote, experience, and participate in various issues of reading and response. This distinction was necessary rather than just being a methods course that teaches students how to teach response to literature. It was an important difference because the focus of this study was to understand how response-based explorations informed and influenced pre-service teachers’ reading perceptions as they participated and experienced response-based explorations, rather than how they acquired response-based explorations as a method. Second, since I have instructed this course, I was familiar with the course set up and learning experiences.

Through my personal experience, I have come to see that participants report learning a great deal about response through this course. I was curious to investigate this phenomenon further to understand learning and implications that may stem from the course experiences. To further account for researcher bias, four students from an additional course section of the undergraduate children’s literature course were selected to serve as a representative case study. Background information about both myself and Cheryl, the course instructor for the additional section, are included for additional
information about our backgrounds and philosophical stances towards teaching this
course.

The Instructors

Researcher

When thinking about the issues and belief structures from which I gain my
perspective, I believe it is important to situate myself within the framework of this study.
As I noted in the role of the researcher section in Chapter 1, I have taught this course
seven times over the past five years. As such, I have in-depth knowledge of both the
readings and assignments. Although each semester is different, I have continually noticed
the wide amount of growth and change that pre-service teachers seemed to experience
throughout the semester. Several students regularly reported to me through informal
comments or course evaluations that they initially disliked reading literature and through
the course, this feeling changed to an appreciation of reading.

I began to question the impact this class was having on pre-service teachers. I know
the benefits and rewards of literature-based instruction, as I have seen the successes in
my own elementary classrooms. Yet my pre-service teachers seemed to lack this
knowledge. I was curious to understand how a one semester children’s literature course
enabled these pre-service teachers to not only understand response-based approaches, but
also how this course changed students’ perceptions of themselves as readers. My initial
informal observations led to the focus of my study: to understand how literature-based
response explorations and experiences in a children’s literature course informed and
influenced pre-service teacher’s reading perceptions. In what follows is a brief statement of Cheryl’s background and reading experiences.

Cheryl

This was Cheryl’s first experience in teaching the children’s literature course. Therefore, I was asked by Dr. G. to spend time planning with Cheryl at the beginning of the semester to familiarize her with the course requirements and experiences. I deemed that it was essential to situate the study within the context and framework of the course she instructed as well. The following biography was created by Cheryl and explains her background as a reader and approaches to teaching this course.

I have always thought of myself as a reader. I knew how to read before I started kindergarten, and I know this is because of the reading that occurred in my household. My parents read to me, with me, and around me. They were both educators who valued reading for enjoyment and learning. My mom tells how my favorite activity as a baby was to crawl up to the bookshelf and pull the books out one by one. Some of my most vivid childhood memories are of my brothers and I curled under blankets while my dad read chapter books to us a chapter or so each night. Every family road trip began at the library so I was able to check out books for the trip. I loved to read as a child, and I still love to read!

In elementary school, I remained an avid reader, although my experiences at school did little to reinforce that. In first grade, when I finished my work early, I was given...more work. In fact, the teacher found a second grade workbook for me to work through while the rest of the students completed their work. I remember sitting in fourth grade with a book under my desk trying to read while the teacher was talking. I don’t remember a lot of authentic reading taking place during my schooling. It was much of the same in junior high and high school, but I continued to read ferociously at home. And reading was the only activity that could truly get me out of cleaning up the kitchen after dinner. My reading for pleasure decreased in college, as I found myself overwhelmed with reading textbooks and articles. Actually, as I look back, my personal reading is like a wave, decreasing during major events and increasing once things settle down again. Reading is the one activity I can always jump back into without much effort, and I have always been able to do that after life changes: college, teaching, marriage, and having a baby.

Although it was absolutely a better choice for me, becoming a teacher was my second choice in careers. I went through a graduate licensure program in order to
obtain my Master’s Degree and my teacher certification. During that time, one of
the required courses was Children’s Literature. The opportunity to immerse
myself in children’s literature brought me back to my own childhood, as I realized
my parents had exposed us to much of the same literature I was seeing now. The
experience proved invaluable to me when I entered the classroom. When I began
my teaching career in a fourth grade classroom, I knew I wanted my students to
love reading too. I knew to do that they had to be immersed in quality literature,
which meant I needed a large library affording them many choices. I immediately
referred to my children’s literature knowledge gained from the course, and I filled
my library with as many titles and authors as I possibly could. I tried to offer my
students as many response based activities as possible, and I even implemented
Readers’ Workshop, as best I knew how at the time. My students often laughed
aloud as I introduced every new read aloud stating, “This is my favorite book.” It
became apparent that, with few exceptions, my students’ attitudes about reading
reflected my own attitudes. My enthusiasm about reading and books was
contagious, and the books I read aloud were the same books my students rushed
to read. It was a powerful realization.

I was cautious when I was approached to teach the Children’s Literature course
for the same university where I took the course. Then I realized the connection I
made about elementary students could also be true for university students: if I am
excited, they will be too. Teaching this course has been another powerful learning
experience for me. I have made many important discoveries: reading aloud is not
a talent everyone possesses, not everyone loves to read, and children’s literature is
one of the best tools available for reaching those reluctant readers, adults and
children alike (biography statement created by Cheryl, 2007).

Although I did meet with Cheryl on a regular basis to assist with course preparation
and planning, she had the latitude to set up the course and experiences according to her
preferences. The courses needed to be similar in the required learning experiences as set
forth by the curriculum committee, but we both given opportunities to teach this course
and design course experiences based upon our own philosophical beliefs and
understanding of teaching. We used essentially the same syllabus (Appendix C and
Appendix E), but brought our own teaching experience and expertise to the class.
Therefore, there are several learning experiences that students experienced in my course
section that student’s in Cheryl’s course section did not. These included the literary
journey reflection and the creation of a personal text set. Although several of the learning experiences differed, Cheryl’s course followed the same philosophical beliefs that my course did. (See her syllabus listed in Appendix E). It was for this reason that Cheryl’s course was selected to provide a multi-case comparative study across course sections to further account for my researcher bias.

Setting

During the spring 2007 semester, I served as the instructor of one section of the children’s literature course. This course section met on Mondays and Wednesdays for 1 hour and 15 minutes for each class session. There were 17 students enrolled in the section that I taught, with 16 females and one male student. The class demographics included: 11 European Americans, 3 Hispanic Americans, 1 African American, and 1 Pacific Islander. The room was set up with the teacher’s instructional area at the front with six tables grouped together throughout the room. Up to six class members sat together in groups at the various tables.

Also during spring 2007, I spent the semester in Cheryl’s course as a participant observer. The course met on Monday nights for 2 hours and 30 minutes each week. There were 22 students enrolled in this section with 17 females and 5 males. The class demographics for the students enrolled in this section included: 12 European Americans, 4 Hispanic Americans, 2 African Americans, 2 Asian Americans, and 2 Pacific Islanders. The room was set up with the teacher’s instructional area in the front right corner of the room with five groups of tables with eight chairs at each table arranged around the room.
It is from both of these class settings that study participants were selected for data analysis. I received approval from the Institutional Review Board (Appendix D) prior to the start of the semester. On the first day of the semester, I introduced the study to both classes of pre-service teachers. After an explanation of the study and the interviews and information I would collect, I asked all pre-service teachers enrolled in the class to participate. They were all given student information forms (Appendix B) and an Informed Consent Form (Appendix A). Students were told that their participation was voluntary, and they were allowed to take home these materials to make their participation decision and sign and return the forms by the next class session. From the students that returned their informed consent forms and student information sheet, purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990) was utilized to determine the final case studies that would be analyzed. This process is detailed further in the sections that follow.

Participants

As previously stated, purposeful sampling was utilized to determine study participants. Purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990) is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight from a sample that yields the most data. Patton states “the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information rich cases for study in depth” (p.12). Purposeful sampling also depends on determining selection criteria and attributes that are essential to the study (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993).
Initial selection criteria for the study were as follows:

1. Participants needed to be students in the Children’s Literature Course in the Elementary Curriculum during the spring semester.

2. Participants were from a variety of cultural backgrounds, demographics, part-time vs. full-time students, or various ages when at all possible or available.

I initially recruited four participants through enrollment in the pre-service teacher’s children’s literature course which I instructed that semester. All students that were enrolled in the course had the opportunity to participate in the study. In addition, I located and recruited four individuals from a different section of the children’s literature course that had a comparable set-up and experiences similar to the course I instructed. I felt that the selection of students from another section and analysis of their data might help to accommodate for my researcher bias instead of only looking at students that were enrolled in the section I instructed. Furthermore, the inclusion of comparing multi-cases in the research design is a common strategy for enhancing external validity and generalizability of the study findings (Merriam, 1998). A human subject protocol was obtained through the Internal Review Board, and this study continued for the duration of the course.

According to Creswell (1998), to represent diverse cases and perspectives of the study participants, “maximum variation” should be selected as criteria for selecting study participants. In obtaining participants for this study, it was essential to obtain subjects that presented the maximum diversity whenever possible (Patton, 1990; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). A subject selection matrix was created to help in the procedure. This matrix is pictured below in Figure 3.2. This matrix addresses subject ages, gender, if they had children, experiences working with children in the schools, and attitudes towards
reading. The subjects that signed the informed consent forms were plotted on this matrix to obtain the greatest amount of diversity possible from the subject sample.

Figure 3.2. Subject selection matrix for determining study participants.

Out of the 39 students enrolled in the two sections of the children’s literature course, it was essential to locate cases that were information rich for the study. Students were asked to complete a student information form (Appendix B) in addition to the informed consent forms. This student information form listed selection criteria that were useful in narrowing down cases. LeCompte and Preissle (1993) use the term criterion-based selection, wherein one determines a list of attributes essential to the study and then proceeds to find or locate cases that match the list created. The selection criteria for this
study included: age, gender, ethnicity, experience in working with students, having their own children, and attitudes towards reading. Out of the 39 students, 20 students were identified as possible study participants. These 20 possible participants were then narrowed down to 16 participants based on preliminary data microanalysis of the student information forms and plotting subjects on the subject selection matrix. These 16 participants were finally narrowed down to eight that represented the maximum diversity possible within the study sample. The eight cases included four students from the section of the course I instruct, and four students from Cheryl’s section so as to allow for a multi-case comparative case study (Stake, 1995; Yin, 1989). Multiple sources of information included observations, interviews, written documents, and audio-taping material.

The Table (3.2) on the following page details each of the participants’ identities as represented through the subject selection matrix. This table charts the eight participants’ descriptive and biographical categories.
# Participants' Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Full/Part Time</th>
<th>Experience with students</th>
<th>Attitude Towards Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lauryn</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>1 ½ year old daughter</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>&quot;I struggled because I didn’t read.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sidney</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>3 grown step-children</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>&quot;I loved reading, it was something I could do, and still do.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trevor</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>Teaching Internship in high school</td>
<td>&quot;Reading is just so positive, I read every day because it is so important!&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olivia</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>Substitute teacher</td>
<td>&quot;I always felt like reading had some big headache following it.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katherine</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>10 month old son</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>Practicum 1</td>
<td>&quot;Reading is a huge part of my life, it always has been.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bailey</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>&quot;I try to read nightly because I can relax while I do it.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esperanza</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>8 year old daughter</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>Substitute, Librarian, Practicum 1</td>
<td>&quot;I rarely read for pleasure, and I work at the library now!&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abby</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>&quot;I have a really hard time reading.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The analysis of the multiple sources of information enabled holistic analysis of the entire case, as well as embedded analysis of specific cases (Yin, 1989). It was through further analysis that the eight participants were then narrowed to four case-study participants. This decision was based upon microanalysis, open and axial coding, and through constant comparison of the emerging categories (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) to the subjects’ collected data, and is explained in detail in the data analysis section following. It was through these methods that a detailed description of the case emerged as well as analysis of the categories generated (Creswell, 1998). This type of analysis is rich in the context of the case and the setting in which the case presents itself (Merriam, 1998).

The Role of the Researcher

Throughout this study, I often had two researcher roles. As stated previously, I was the course instructor in one of the research settings. I was familiar with the course set up and the response-based explorations students were expected to take part in throughout the course. Since I was the instructor, I took on the role as a practitioner researcher (Smythe & Williams, 2000; Zeni, 2001). In the first class session, I introduced the study and my position. I assured students that I was simply interested in their experiences and reflections of the response-based explorations presented through this course and that their participation would have no bearing on their course grade. This position was welcomed by the students, and they were eager to help with my study. To enhance the studies reliability and to account for biases that may result from my being a position of authority in the participant’s eyes, I took on an entirely different role in Cheryl’s course section.
In Cheryl’s course, I took on the position as participant observer. Although I often participated in group and classroom activities, my primary position was the observer. Merriam (1998) calls this position “observer as participant” (p. 101). Bogdevic (1999) states that “if the focus of interest is how the activities and interactions of a setting give meaning to certain behaviors or beliefs, participant observation is the method of choice” (p. 48). Through participant observation, I was directly involved in the activities of the classroom, watched carefully what the participants did and said, and by following their example, I slowly became a part of their group, activities, conversations, and connections (Eisenhart, 2001).

At the first class session, Cheryl introduced me. I explained my position and study. The students wanted to know if I was going to evaluate their work, or if the course grade would be determined by my findings. I assured them that I was interested in their reflections and experiences with the response-based explorations that were presented through the course, and that participation or non-participation in the study would have no bearing on their course grade. My attempt to become a part of the classroom was welcomed by students, and the majority of students offered their help with the study and were accommodating with the interview scheduling.

Through participant observation, practitioner research observations, and interactions with the students, I believe I was able to obtain an insider’s view. I was able to reach both the “emic” view (an insider’s perspective) and the “etic” view (the outsiders perspective) of the participants (Wolcott, 1999). Both views are important for this study. The emic view allowed me to get a deeper understanding of the participants’ experiences in their socio-constructivist settings; the etic view allowed me to distance myself from the
participants in order to present an accurate description of their experiences and compare them across cases (Wolcott, 1999).

**Ethical Considerations**

One of the concerns of qualitative research in terms of ethical issues is the process of representing other people's lives and experiences to the general public. During a qualitative study, the researcher writes about the lives of others and takes actions on their behalf (Eisenhart, 2001). First, the research has to be concerned about truthfulness and fairness. Others will judge the participants presented in the research in regards to the writings of the researcher. For this reason, researchers need to represent and communicate the participant in a clear manner, as well as be truthful and fair. Second, there is a major tension between representing detailed accounts of the participants studied and the intimate details that may be revealed through this process. This tension is often worse when multiple and diverse perspectives are represented (Eisenhart, 2001).

My multiple positions in this study presented an ethical concern. This study involves parties (instructors and students), whose interests might be contradictory from time to time. It became an ethical issue to be fair among these parties and respect their confidentiality. When contradictions arose, it was important for me as the researcher to remain equally distant to both sides and not take the side of either party. To ensure participants of the confidentiality of the study, I informed them the interview tapes, course assignments, and all data collected would not be shared with anyone except my advisor, and the participants were able to choose their pseudonyms at the start of the
study. I used these pseudonyms in the transcriptions, my written notes, and the final report.

Limitations

There are four noteworthy limitations of this study: generalizability, researcher bias, participants' self-reporting, and longitudinal effects. The generalizability of these research findings is limited because they are generated in a multi-case comparative qualitative inquiry. This research design is not intended to produce results that account for, or predict, the behavior of a wide classification of people. The goal of qualitative work is not to generalize across a population; rather it is to provide understanding from the respondents' perspectives (Marshall & Rossman, 1995).

The second limitation is that conducting research in a classroom, where I am the instructor, may bias participants' answers. To account for this, I explained my study and its purpose clearly and concisely to the students. Participants understood that when they were reflecting and responding, they were responding to and reflecting on the response-based experiences and explorations and not to my teaching methods. I made it clear to the participants' that this study and their choice to participate would have no bearing on their grade for the course. Students understood that they had a choice of whether or not they wished to participate in this research study. All of the data sources were scheduled classroom assignments listed on the syllabus for the students that were selected from the course I instructed. To further account for researcher bias, four students from a different section of the undergraduate children's literature course were selected to serve as a representative case-study. The instructor of this course utilized the same methods and
techniques that are employed in the class that I instructed. For the students from the other
section course, all of the study requirements were given to participants along with the
informed consent forms for initial study enrollment.

Finally, in order to validate my analyses, I engaged in the following verification
procedures as recommended by Creswell (1998). I clarified and continually reflected on
my own subjectivity from the start of the study, and I utilized triangulation through the
various forms of data collected. When reporting the findings of my study, I drew on the
definition of interpretive research as stated by Erickson (1986), which approaches a
situation through a variety of lenses. This allows one to construct specifics, but also
allows for a holistic perspective. By gathering a variety of interpretation from my
participants through the various data sources I have made a conscious effort of seeing the
whole picture while acknowledging individual perspectives.

The third limitation in this study was the notion of participants’ self-reporting. In the
pre- and post-course interviews, participants could have supplied answers to provide
results they perceived the researcher expected. This may especially be true for
participants enrolled in the researcher’s course. It was for this reason that additional
participants from another course section not instructed by the researcher were selected for
data analysis and multi-case comparison. Additionally, multiple sources of data were
utilized to further accommodate for this limitation. Although it would have been
beneficial to determine if participants actually lived the perceptions they reported, due to
time constraints this step was beyond the scope of this study. It would be a beneficial step
to consider for future studies.
The final limitation was time. It would be practical to assess how pre-service teachers reading identities might have influenced their long-term thinking over multiple months or years, but collecting such data was beyond the scope of this current study. However, future studies might consider narrative-based experiential learning interventions which are followed up with longitudinal check-ups for months or longer to explore if and how long-term after-effects actually occur when the pre-service teachers become in-service teachers in a classroom.

Data Collection

Data were collected in several different ways:

1. **Interviews**: Two planned: structured pre-course interview, semi-structured post-course interview  
   *At time it was necessary to schedule additional interviews or email correspondence for clarification purposes*

2. **Response-based Explorations**: Including the following course experiences:  
   - Chapter/Professional Readings Reflections  
   - Literature Discussion Reflections  
   - Personal Text Set and Literary Journey Reflections

3. **Participant Reflection Journal**: This included reflections and writings to course assignments, literature discussions, and answers to clarification questions

4. **Researcher's Log - Analytical Memos**: Based upon participant - naturalistic observation, were used to address topics that needed clarification, further teaching, or categories for analysis

Data collection included audio-taped, semi-structured individual pre- and post-class interviews and literature discussions; response-based course artifacts (assignments produced by students for coursework), participant's reflection journal, and a researcher's log as well as analytical memos as noted above. Data from interviews, artifacts,
observations, participant’s journal, researcher’s log, analytical memos and the participants themselves was crystallized to strengthen reliability and internal validity. It was through this triangulation of qualitative data that allowed for multiple perspectives to emphasize the participants’ frames of reference (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). The timeline listed in Appendix F details when data collection occurred throughout the semester. Each of the data sources are further explained in the sections that follow. The following Table (Table 3.3) highlights the data collection that occurred throughout the entire 16 week semester.
Table 3.3  Data Collection Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Type of Data to be collected/ Abbreviation</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Process of analysis</th>
<th>Supporting Research</th>
<th>Time of collection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1. What prior experiences define pre-service teachers' reading perceptions?</td>
<td>1. Interviews-structured and semi-structured, individual Pre-course (PCI) *Clarification Interviews via email as needed (EMV)</td>
<td>Christine and Cheryl's</td>
<td>Microanalysis Domain</td>
<td>Strauss &amp; Corbin, 1998; Spradley, 1980; Merriam, 1998; Clandinin &amp; Connelly, 1995; Kvale, 1996; Toma, 2000</td>
<td>Two scheduled pre and post course interviews; Periodic sampling throughout the 16 week semester often will be utilized for clarification purposes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Chapter/ Professional Readings (CRR)</td>
<td>Christine and Cheryl's</td>
<td>Taxonomic Open Coding</td>
<td>Borko &amp; Putnam, 1996; Samuel &amp; Stephens, 2000</td>
<td>Ongoing throughout the 16 week semester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Participant Reflection Journal (PRJ)</td>
<td>Christine and Cheryl's</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Researcher's Log/Analytical Memos/Field Notes (RLM)</td>
<td>Christine and Cheryl's</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interview protocols were ethnographic in design because ethnography seeks to elicit answers from within a culture’s point of view during a particular time and were utilized to understand participants “vision of the world” (Spradley, 1980, p. 3). By culture I mean “the acquired knowledge that people use to interpret experience and generate social behavior” (Spradley, p. 5). For this study, culture refers specifically to the classroom culture and the learning communities that work to construct and inform participants’ perceptions of themselves as readers. Kvale (1996) states that the qualitative research interview “attempts to understand the world from the subjects’ points of view, to unfold peoples’ experiences” (p. 1). In the interviews, I included audio-recording for purposes of further discovery, analyzing, understanding, and validation (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). I conducted a pre-course structured interview and a post-course semi-structured interview with each participant that helped to develop individual profiles of pre-service teaching identities in order to create a “rich, thick description” (Merriam, 1998, p. 29) and which were used later in case portraiture and data analysis of the participants.

Drawing from interviews constructed by previous researchers (e.g., Brandt, 2001), as well as from a collective sense of the kinds of information I hoped to elicit, a detailed interview schedule was created. At the same time though, I sought to keep the interview open and, where appropriate, to follow the flow of the interviewee. Each pre-course interview session was recorded on standard audio-cassette tapes, with the average length of interview being 20 minutes. The data analysis started with the writing up of the observational notes and transcription of the audio taped interviews. Following
transcription of interviews, the transcripts were checked against the tapes, and participants were asked to review their transcripts for any recording errors or discrepancies. Participants made only minor editing changes at this time, no significant changes were made.

Interview questions were structured around three different types of ethnographic questions: descriptive, structural, and contrast (Spradley, 1980). Descriptive questions helped to determine the participant’s perspective on meaning, relevance and importance of previous literacy events. An example of this type of question was: What specific books do you remember reading in school? Structural questions helped to probe the various domains of narrative. An example of this type of question was: What positive and/or negative experiences do you associate with reading? Whereas, contrast questions sought to understand what the participant’s “mean” through their narrative explanations and choice of terms used. These types of questions included: Did your experiences with reading at home differ with your experiences at school? It is through these narrative interviews that I was able to gain an understanding of the participants’ experiences and viewpoints.

Participants were asked to complete both the pre- and post-course structured and semi-structured interviews. For clarification purposes, it also became necessary for the participants to meet with me up to three more times for focused interviews throughout the study or through electronic communication. Additional clarification data obtained from emails or from casual conversation during class are referenced as (EMV-email verification or RLM-researcher’s log and memos) in data analysis. These clarification interviews were often conducted during browsing time that was built into the class
schedule, or they were conducted online through email. The additional interviews were essential to gain further information about key concepts discussed. In addition, closeness through interactions helped to provide subjective understanding that greatly increased the quality of the qualitative data (Toma, 2000).

Pre-course Interview

Kvale (1996) states that it is essential to understand the context of the interview methods to help understand and account for interviewing bias. The pre-course interview helped me to expressly answer question one of the study by addressing pre-service teachers’ perceptions of themselves as readers. This data source is referenced as (PCI) for data analysis. The interview occurred during the second week of class instruction, after students had signed the informed consent forms. Students were given the questions ahead of time so that they were familiar with my questions and were able to reflect on their previous knowledge and experiences. These were structured interviews, but further questions were often asked for clarification purposes. The format of the interview was as follows:

Pre-Course Interview Questions

1. What specific books do you remember reading or being read to at certain ages? Think of elementary, middle/junior, and high school.
2. What types of assignments do you remember completing with books or in reading classes?
3. Did your experiences with reading at home differ with your experiences at school? How?
4. What positive and/or negative experiences do you associate with reading?
5. What else can you tell me that can help me to understand you and your background as a reader?
6. Describe your current reading habits and/or selections?
7. What do you view as the role of children’s literature in the classroom?
8. How might you teach reading with children’s literature in your future classroom?
Post-course Interviews

Based on the information obtained from the pre-course interview (PCI), and based on preliminary data analysis, semi-structured interviews were then conducted at the end of the course. The post-course interview data source is referenced as (FCI) in data analysis sections. These semi-structured interviews enabled participants to engage in reflecting on their perceptions and experiences of data and concepts that were realized during the pre-course interview. This method of interview was used because it "offers maximum flexibility to pursue information" (Patton, 2002, p. 342). I also conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews to capture the participants' lived experience and worldviews through their own words (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Thus, the semi-structured interview format helped to ensure that the data collected would be appropriate for comparison, and that it would facilitate collection of the most complete stories possible.

Post-course semi-structured interviews (FCI) particularly addressed both questions one and two in the study by examining how pre-service teachers responded to the response-based experiences and how these experiences may have informed and influenced their perceptions of themselves as readers. Post-course interviews again were semi-structured. Study participants were given the main questions in advance just like the pre-course interview, but many of the questions that were asked in the semi-structured interview were for further clarification of answers that participants had given in the pre-course interview or from course assignments or reflections. This interview took place during the last weeks of the semester. Each interview session was recorded on standard audio-cassette tapes, with the average length of interview being 30-40 minutes. The format of the semi-structured interview was as follows, keeping in mind that each study
participant was asked individual questions relating to preliminary data analysis and further clarification needed by the researcher.

*Post-course Interview Questions*

1. What do you view as the role of children’s literature in the classroom?

2. What role did reflection play in your comprehension of literature and/or response-based experiences?

3. What are your beliefs on response-based experiences?

4. What else can you tell me about what you experienced and/or learned through this course and response-based approaches?

5. What do you view as the role of children’s literature in the classroom?

6. How might you teach reading with children’s literature in your future classroom?

The data collected from both the structured pre-course interview and semi-structured post-course interview helped me to gain a detailed personal narrative of previous and course-based experiences from each of the participants. Narrative inquiry has increasingly been used in education research as an approach to understanding people’s lives in relation to their work as teachers (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996; Thomas, 1995).

This form of data collection goes further in arguing that people understand their lives and explain them through narrative stories that not only represent the participant, but also shape action (Bruner, 1987; Somers, 1994). This data brought a personal element to both of the research questions. The pre-course interview addressed question one specifically by looking at pre-service teachers’ perceptions as themselves as readers. The post-course interview addressed both questions one and two by looking at how these pre-service teachers responded to the explorations presented in class, and how these experiences informed and influenced their perceptions of reading.

Interviews were purposeful for gathering data that was supportive of research. Interviews were also important to record participants’ thoughts and reactions in their own
Response-based Explorations

In order to “prepare teachers for reflective, adaptive, and responsive aspects of teaching” (Hoffman & Pearson, 2000, p.37), it was essential for pre-service teachers to be exposed to and aware of the educational benefits of children’s literature and ways to effectively share this literature with their students. It was also critical that pre-service teachers understand how to teach with authentic literature (Scharer, 1992; Short, 1992). They then are able to understand the power contained within children’s literature and can utilize literature as a purposeful and meaningful resource that capitalizes on educational benefits with their students. We must “provide pre-service teachers with supportive opportunities to select, read and analyze literature in order to construct criteria for themselves about how to judge what is great literature for sharing with children” (Hoewisch, 2000, p. 5). Therefore course activities were designed around literature that had multiple layers of meanings, and instruction worked to identify students' beliefs and responses to this literature.

Gambrell (1996) found that effective teachers often focused on an aesthetic stance (Rosenblatt, 1978) when having students respond to literature. Therefore, it was essential
to include response-based experiences that enabled pre-service teachers to encounter these types of teaching methods that could foster in themselves and their future students a love for reading and high level of engagement (Applegate & Applegate, 2004).

Throughout the course, the pre-service teachers read literature that represented a wide variety of genres. These response-based explorations enabled pre-service teachers to go beyond the current view of text-driven comprehension skills (Hollingsworth, 1989; Holt-Reynolds, 1992). These experiences included golden lines (finding a significant quote in a book), sketch-to-stretch (connecting how the book relates or connects to one’s life), compare and contrast, as well as others throughout the course. All of these explorations encouraged students to focus on their response with the text and the professional readings utilized throughout the course. These response-based explorations were then reflected upon and commented on in participant’s reflection journals (PRJ). This data source addressed both research questions one and two by looking at how teachers respond to the experiences provided and by seeing if these experiences influenced their perceptions of themselves as readers.

By understanding the multiple nature of reading response experiences, students were able to move beyond their initial individual reaction to take into account multiple ideas and interpretations, thus broadening their perspectives (Rosenblatt, 1978). Course assignments were designed around reader-response approaches that enabled pre-service teachers to view how response develops through the transaction between reader and text and in turn encourages students to identify explanations, form their own opinions, and create as well as reflect upon meanings based upon their own individual experiences. The following response-based explorations enabled me to look at participants’ responses to

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the experiences provided within the children’s literature course, and to experience and understand how these explorations may have worked to influence pre-service teachers’ perceptions of reading

*Literary Journey Reflection*

The literary journey exploration included pre-service teachers looking at their engagement, experiences, or influences of their development (or lack thereof) as readers. This response-based exploration was engaged in by students enrolled in the course I instructed, and the data source is referenced as (LJR) for data analysis. Students found artifacts that looked at the texts, motivators (friends or family), and suppressors of their perceptions of themselves as readers. Students then brought in these artifacts or representations and shared them with the class. Through this response, students were often able to understand the relationships associated with literature and how literature can connect to our lives (Johnson & Giorgis, 2007). After viewing each other’s literary journeys, students then wrote-up a reflective piece explaining how their artifacts represent their reading journey, in addition to writing about the connections or new understandings gained from looking at each others literary journeys. Although this exploration was experience only by students enrolled in my section of the course, it provided valuable insight into pre-service teachers’ prior experiences and was included in data analysis for this purpose. This data source addressed research question one by specifically looking into pre-service teachers’ perceptions of reading based on prior experiences.
Personal Text Set

The creation of a personal text set was one of the culminating activities in the children’s literature course for students enrolled in the section of the course I instructed. Personal text sets are defined as “five to fifteen texts that are conceptually related in some way, such as similar themes, text types, topics, and so on” (Harste & Short, 1988, p. 295). These text sets allow readers to experience and thoughtfully ponder books in which powerful connections are made that personally relate to student’s own life experiences (Mathis & Giorgis, 1999). Text sets enable readers to make active transactions with literature. Rosenblatt’s (1978) transactional theory of reader response is the theoretical foundation for the creation of personal text sets, by allowing the reader to bring to the texts “his/her emotions, experiences, biases, and insights and (by maintaining) an active role in the literacy event” (Mathis & Giorgis, p 25). The personal text set (PTS) response provided an additional data source that provided insight into research questions one and two by exploring how the experiences and explorations provided within the course informed and influenced pre-service teachers’ perceptions of reading.

Literature Discussions

Students in reader-response classrooms become active learners, and since their personal responses are valued, they begin to see themselves as having both the authority and the responsibility to make judgments about what they read. The responses of fellow students also play a pivotal role. Through interaction with peers, students move beyond their initial individual reaction to take into account multiple ideas and interpretations, thus broadening their perspective (Rosenblatt, 1978). Throughout the course, students

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experienced reading and responding to children's literature by participating in literature
circles and engaging in small group and whole group discussions about the book.
Conceptually, literature circles are anchored in Freebody and Luke's model of reading as
social practice (1997). Arthur Applebee (1997) found that the best teachers thought about
curriculum in terms of what conversations they wanted their students to be engaged in,
not in terms of what concepts they wanted to introduce through reading or through direct
instruction. Incorporating response-based approaches in the classroom can have a
remarkable impact on how students view texts and how they see their role as readers.
Rather than relying on a teacher to give them a single, standard interpretation of a text,
students learn to construct their own meaning by connecting the textual material to issues
in their lives and describing what they experience as they read (Rosenblatt, 1978). This
process of identifying reactions, reflecting on others reactions and questioning
themselves promotes personal growth and allows readers to maintain ownership of their
reading (Karolides, 1992). It was based upon these ideas that literature circles were
incorporated throughout the course.

Literature circles were student-centered and directed, but teacher facilitated. I set the
parameters of the discussions and selected the books they were to responded to, but the
students ran the operation of the discussion group. These groups met on a regular basis as
the class completed selected novels. Books selected for discussion in my course section
included Love That Dog by Sharon Creech, Because of Winn Dixie by Kate DiCamillo,
Gossamer by Lois Lowry, and The Giver by Lois Lowry. Books selected for discussion
in Cheryl's course section included Out of the Dust by Karen Hesse, Bud Not Buddy by
Christopher Paul Curtis, and The Giver by Lois Lowry. Both course sections started out
the semester by reading *Esperanza Rising* by Pam Munoz Ryan. These books were selected because they were viewed as response-rich, multi-layered books from which students could form opinions and connections.

Students met in small groups of no more than five literature circle members. They were asked to finish reading the book before the class session and be prepared to discuss their thoughts, ideas, connections and wonderings to discuss with fellow group members. There were no assigned roles or specific assignments to complete with the books. Literature circles met for an average of thirty minutes and during this discussion students presented and discussed their thoughts, connections, or wonderings about the book.

During these discussions I was often present as an observer taking field note observations, or my tape recorder was present to record the conversation. These notes and recordings revealed the rich conversations that occurred with the selected books. Students often discussed opinions and connections, there were heated discussions about issues that evolved from the books, and students also came to understand and discuss the potential of literature circles and group discussions as a beneficial addition to their future classrooms.

I audio-taped or observed three separate literature circle experiences that occurred at the beginning, middle and end of the course. Students were also asked to articulate knowledge that resulted from these experiences by writing reflections in their journals. Course reflections on literature discussions written in participants’ response journals were referenced as (PRJ) for data analysis; knowledge obtained from the researcher’s field notes or observations was referenced as (RLM). By looking at student’s reflective writings in response to the novels they read and by analyzing the transcripts and researcher’s log notes of the literature discussions, I was then able to contextualize the
approaches and processes students used to interpret literature. These reflective writings and literature discussion experiences enabled me to gain further data for research question two. I was also able to observe if students changed their perceptions throughout the children's literature course.

Course Text/Professional Readings

In order to understand what was being experienced and learned in relation to teaching, students also read professional readings from the course text and from various professional journal articles that related to the concepts, theories, and topics discussed in the course. In addition, students met and discussed their reactions to the text and engaged in small group conversations based upon the response explorations generated through the text. The pre-service teachers then wrote-up detailed reflections about these activities and the small-group discussion experiences. Both of the course sections used the same text (Reading aloud and beyond: Fostering the intellectual life with older readers, Serafini & Giorgis, 2003), and they completed the same professional readings for the semester. Students were asked to respond, comment, or reflect on the required course readings. Data obtained through chapter or professional readings are referenced as (CRR) for data analysis.

Participants' Reflection Journal

Borko and Putnam (1996) believe that teacher education programs should "help prospective teachers make their implicit beliefs explicit and create opportunities for them to confront the potential inadequacy of those beliefs" (p. 701). To encourage pre-service teachers to recognize their beliefs about reading and literature, they kept a reflection journal that sought to assist in articulating knowledge that resulted from the course
experiences. Students participated in experiences and professional readings that introduced them to the past and current views of reader response in education; they participated in response-based explorations with the literature read as previously mentioned. Throughout the course they were required to reflect on and express their beliefs about reading and literature. These reflection journals helped students understand themselves as learners, the learning process, using literature in the classroom, and assessment and evaluation of literature response. Data obtained from reflection journals are referenced as (JE) for data analysis. Through students’ reflective writings I utilized analysis techniques that enabled me to describe their beliefs about reading and literature. This data source was used to analyze all of the research questions, but I felt this source helped to identify pre-service teachers’ perceptions of themselves as readers. This source also brought to light how pre-service teachers responded to the response-based explorations utilized throughout the course and informed me further if these approaches influenced their reading perceptions.

Secondary Sources

In addition to the primary data-gathering methods, I incorporated additional secondary methods into the study design. Due to my role as the course instructor for four of the participants, I took on the role of an active participant (Spradley, 1980) during observation. Observation and analytical memos were additional forms of data collection for this study. Since I participated during these observations, I took field-notes immediately after the observation was finished and I constructed analytical memos (Jessop & Penny, 1999). I also took observation field notes for the students in the
literature course where I was not the instructor. Data obtained from these sources were referenced as (RLM) in data analysis. These notes and memos enabled me to reflect on my own assumptions, as well as the participants’ voices in the data. They also brought to light any information I needed from participants to provide further clarification.

Data Analysis

Preliminary Analysis

Data analysis for the study was ongoing and intensive. I organized the data by cases for specific, descriptive, and in-depth analysis and analyzed the data in several stages. In the first phase, I transcribed pre-course interviews (PCI) and created file folders for each of the eight pre-service teachers. Inside each file folder I included the following:

Pre-course Interview Transcript;
Biographical sketches;
Copies of personal reflection journal entries;
Copies of Chapter Reflection Responses;
Printouts of e-mail interview clarifications;
Research memos and summaries of emerging categories developed case-by case;

In addition, students enrolled in my course section had the following data sources:

Literary Journey Reflection;
Personal Text Set.

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Preliminary Data Coding and Analysis

The following Table (Table 3.4) details the data sources utilized and the codes assigned for data analysis, as well as the research question each source highlighted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Abbreviations Used (Course Collected)</th>
<th>Research Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Course Interview</td>
<td>PCI (Both Courses)</td>
<td>Questions 1 and 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Course Interview</td>
<td>FCI (Both Courses)</td>
<td>Question 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarification Interviews</td>
<td>EMV (Both Courses)</td>
<td>Questions 1 and 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(via email)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literary Journey Reflection</td>
<td>LJR (Christine's Course)</td>
<td>Question 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Text Set</td>
<td>PTS (Christine's Course)</td>
<td>Questions 1 and 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Reflection Journal</td>
<td>PRJ (Both Courses)</td>
<td>Questions 1 and 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter/Professional</td>
<td>CRR (Both Courses)</td>
<td>Questions 1 and 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher's Log/Analytical</td>
<td>RLM (Both Courses)</td>
<td>Questions 1 and 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memos/Field Notes</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interviews were conducted in both course sections at the beginning of the children's literature course to gain insight and understanding of what prior experiences pre-service teachers bring with them. This data source focused specifically on research question one: What prior experiences define pre-service teachers' reading perceptions? The pre-course interviews (PCI) were structured, but had a conversational tone that allowed lines of
inquiry to be pursued as they developed (Jessop & Penny, 1999). Interviews were on the average, around 20 minutes in length and were transcribed verbatim for data analysis purposes.

The pre-course interviews along with informal conversations personally or through emails were conducted to elicit clarification. Participants were given their transcripts and asked to check for errors or discrepancies and to strengthen the findings through member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The participants made minor corrections with misspellings or incorrect names, but no major changes were made to these transcripts. Students enrolled in both course sections were also asked to complete a reflection journal throughout the semester. Students responded to instructor questions posted each class session, completed responses to literature read, and posed their own questions or comments to the instructor. The pre-course interviews (PCI), email clarification interviews (EMV), and the personal reflection journal (PRJ) formed the core data for microanalysis and initial broad concept generation. Furthermore, they provided scope for analyzing across multiple contexts.

Additionally, participants enrolled in the researcher’s course section completed a literary journey reflection at the beginning of the course. This required pre-service teachers to understand their engagement, experiences, or influences of their development (or lack thereof) as readers. During the literary journey, students discovered artifacts that looked at the texts, motivators (friends or family), and suppressors of their perceptions of themselves as readers. Students then brought in these artifacts or representations and shared them with the class. They also completed a written reflection detailing what they chose and how these artifacts represented their literary journey. Although the literary
journey was only experienced by participants enrolled in the researcher’s course, this data was included in analysis due to the rich nature of response and information this provided about the study participants.

The interviews and personal reflection journal enabled pre-service teachers to reflect on prior reading experiences. Sprinthall et al (1996) remarked on the “reflection movement” that began in the late 1970s and continues into the present. First suggested by Dewey (1958), the concept of reflective thinking was further developed by Schon (1990) and promoted by researchers working in teacher knowledge research. Shulman, Lotan & Whitcomb (1998) furthered reflective thinking by utilizing case study research to evoke reflective thinking. It was this reflective thinking that research question one sought to address and reveal about the pre-service teachers’ prior experiences.

It was during this first phase that initial broad concepts were generated and biographical sketches were completed for each of the eight participants. I used both micro-analysis and generative or open coding as described by Strauss and Corbin (1998). I began analysis by reading and re-reading all of the initial data (pre-course transcribed interviews, participant reflection journals, and researcher’s log and memos) and identifying short phrases or utterances that seemed to have relative meaning to the purpose of this study. I looked for content-based patterns and references about prior experiences and reading perceptions. I wrote research and theoretical memos in the margins such as “ways to get books” or “schooling influences.” Next, I organized repeated phrases into initial broad concepts. Through this process, I found that there were several initial broad concepts that did not directly relate to the research questions. I collected those phrases in a category labeled “other themes.”
The system of coding and categorizing went through various stages as the initial broad concepts were refined and challenged through further comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Generative or open coding, as the term is used in grounded theory methodology, is the process of developing categories of concepts and themes constructed from data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). It is an open process in that one engages in exploration of their data without making any prior assumptions about what one might discover. Since I had taught this course before, I wanted to ensure that I did not bring in my own pre-conceived concepts or categories. Therefore, it was through microanalysis and continuous reading and re-reading of the data sources that initial broad concepts and categories that recurring concepts and topics were constructed (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Analysis of Prior Experiences

The participant reflection journals, literature discussions, interviews and response-based explorations were analyzed throughout the semester. This detailed analysis was necessary at the beginning of the study to generate initial categories and to suggest relationships among these categories. Included in this microanalysis was examination of the data gathered and also the participants’ interpretations (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The first coding came through microanalysis, which is the “detailed line-by-line analysis necessary at the beginning of a study to generate initial categories with properties and dimensions and to suggest relationships among categories” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 57). This microanalysis enabled me to examine assumptions about the data, and to systematically discover relevant dimensions to relate categories and sub-categories in terms of their properties and dimensions. This type of analysis is a combination of both
open and axial coding. This initial microanalysis of the pre-course interviews led to the construction of 90 initial broad concepts generated from the data.

During the analysis, it was essential for me to realize my own subjectivity in this study. I had to understand my own background as a reader and course instructor. I also had to realize that concepts constructed also related to my own background with reading and what I experienced and brought to this study. Therefore, it was essential to write down the dominant concepts that related to my research questions and organize them in a table. I went back to the data numerous times, making sure I included all relevant data and excluded phrases that did not apply. These analysis procedures were important to help eliminate my own subjective influences.

The concepts changed and new ones were constructed as I revisited the data. It was through repeated readings and breaking down of the initial concepts that categories were then constructed. I wrote summaries describing each category and then shared these with participants via email. Participants were asked to verify and elaborate on their perceptions of these initial categories. This process, known as member checking, was used as a way to ensure the credibility and confirmability of the data. It allowed participants "a chance to indicate whether the reconstructions of the inquirer are recognizable" (Erlandson, et al., 1993, p. 142).

According to Patton (1990), "the first decision to be made in analyzing interviews is whether to begin with case analysis or cross-case analysis" (p. 376). After I completed the microanalysis of the eight interviews, I then utilized both open coding and constant comparison method "to group answers . . . to common questions [and] analyze different perspectives on central issues" (Patton, p. 376). Glaser and Strauss (cited in Lincoln &
Guba, 1985) described the constant comparison method as following these four distinct stages: “Comparing incidents applicable to each category, integrating categories and their properties, delimiting the theory, and writing the theory” (p. 339).

The categories generated through open and axial coding of the pre-course interviews, literacy journey reflections, and e-mail clarification/verification interviews included: Teachers, Family Influences, Places to Get Books, Titles and/or Authors, Approaches to Reading, Attitudes, and Assignments. Structural questions such as “are there different stages or degrees of attitudes towards reading” were applied to each included term. This enabled me not to overlook important information that was contained within each of these terms, and to approximate the cultural knowledge obtained from the informants (Spradley, 1980).

It was through constructing categories that texts were opened up and exposed of the thoughts, ideas, and meanings contained within. Then I began cross case analyses to understand recurring patterns and concepts. I examined the cases to see how they were similar or different and what unique characteristics they shared within each category. According to Goetz and LeCompte (1981) this method “combines inductive category coding with a simultaneous comparison of all social incidents observed. As social phenomena are recorded and classified, they are also compared across categories. Thus, hypothesis generation begins with the analysis of initial observations” (p. 58).

After the initial broad concepts and themes were constructed, axial coding was then utilized to develop these concepts into categories. Axial coding facilitated building connections within categories - that is, between categories and sub-categories, and thus served to deepen the theoretical framework (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). It was through this
rigorous process that the categories emerged from the initial concepts. Finally, selective coding reflected the structural relationship between the categories - the relationship between a core category and related categories - which were integrated to form the theoretical structure of the analysis.

To help facilitate the process of coding and categorizing, I wrote analytical memos to reflect on my own and the participants’ voices and assumptions in the data. Combining the techniques of comparing, coding and categorizing the data with the writing of analytical memos, enabled me to find a balance between fine detail analysis and the narratives of the participants. This also helped to crystallize thoughts, ideas, and theories about the prior experiences that defined pre-service teachers’ perceptions of themselves as readers. In analyzing pre-service teachers’ narratives, it became essential to present their experiences and perceptions in their own words. Therefore, data were represented in quotes that participants’ directly stated or wrote.

This process underwent continuous refinement throughout the data collection and analysis process, continuously feeding back into the process of category coding. “As events are constantly compared with previous events, new topological dimension, as well as new relationships, may be discovered” (Goetz & LeCompte, 1981, p. 58).

The data collection process left me with an overabundance of data. As Marshall and Rossman (1989) explain, data analysis must result in data reduction so data can be “brought into manageable chunks” (p. 113). It was through conceptualizing and reducing data, elaborating the concepts in terms of properties and dimensions, and relating or breaking down these initial broad concepts that analysis on question one began to move forward. By making comparisons of the various data sources, categories were constructed
and further developed. Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) open coding enabled me to open up the texts, expose the thoughts, ideas and meanings contained and to uncover, develop and name concepts, categories, or subcategories. Data were broken down into discreet parts, closely examined, and compared for similarities and differences. This allowed for close examination of the data “for both differences and similarities...and allows for fine discrimination and differentiation among categories” (Straus & Corbin, 1998, p. 102). It was close examination and constant comparison across the cases that led to the consolidation of the 90 broad concepts to initial categories. It was through further analysis and breaking down of these concepts that the main categories of family, school, and self perceptions became evident across the cases. It was also during this phase that I narrowed the focus of eight participants to four participants based upon the rich data representation of the four cases.

Analysis of Response-Based Explorations

Instead of approaching each data source of the response-based exploration as a single source, I chose a holistic approach to capture pre-service teachers’ perceptions of reading. The qualitative multi-case research design allowed me to comprehend the whole process of response-based explorations as a narrative in which there was an integral structure of a beginning (prior experiences), development (influence of response-based exploration), and an end (thinking of their future classrooms). According to Tedlock (2000), “One of the most important forms for creating meaning is a narrative that attends to the temporal dimension of human existence and shapes events into a unity” (p. 471). Considering the data as a narrative enabled me to think beyond the data and see the “socially and
culturally managed and constructed” (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 81) nature of response-based exploration and pre-service teachers’ reading perceptions.

Content analysis, or analyzing the content of interviews and observations, is the process of identifying, coding, and categorizing the primary patterns in the data (Patton, 1990). “The qualitative analyst's effort at uncovering patterns, themes, and categories is a creative process that requires making carefully considered judgments about what is really significant and meaningful in the data” (Patton, 1990, p. 406). By grouping or clustering data, categories were constructed and became the basis for the organization and conceptualization of data; “Categorizing is therefore a crucial element in the process of analysis” (Dey, 1993, p. 112).

Throughout continued data collection and analysis, I utilized open and axial coding, and constant comparative analysis to look for statements and signs of behavior that occurred over time during the study (Janesick, 1994). This process of analysis is inclusive and takes into consideration discrepant categories that do not “fit” into the constructed categories. Therefore, it becomes essential that the patterns, themes, and categories of analysis be constructed from the data rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection and analysis” (Patton, 1990, p. 390). This process of constant comparison “stimulates thought that leads to both descriptive and explanatory categories” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 341).

Strauss and Corbin (1998) state that it is important for researchers to be open, listen, and give “value” to respondents (p. 43). One technique I employed for gaining distance was to obtain multiple viewpoints of a concept through interviews, researcher observations, and multiple and varied representations of the data. This process of varying
data-gathering techniques and approaches is commonly referred to as triangulation (Begley, 1996; Sandelowski, 1996).

A case study can employ different forms of data collection methods such as interviews, observation, and document collection (Merriam, 1998). This study specifically utilized interviews, coursework, reflection journals, researcher’s log, and field notes. By incorporating and varying the different forms of data sources, I was able to triangulate the findings thereby strengthening the trustworthiness of the study. According to Stake (2000), “triangulation has been generally considered a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation” (p. 443).

Summary

Recent research indicates that the formation of teaching knowledge is a socially constructed process influenced by multiple experiences and past beliefs related to learning and teaching (Gimbert, 2001; Samuel & Stephens, 2000; Travers, 2000). One’s teaching identity develops as individuals search for their thoughts and voice amidst the voices and thoughts of others. Bakhtin (1981) refers to this negotiation as the “authoring of self” to explain how one continually draws on the words of others to make meaning that addresses one’s specific needs and experiences. “Authoring of self” is about orchestrating the voices (or words, intentions, beliefs, values) of others and organizing, forming and reforming the social and personal meanings of language (Holland et al., 1998).
At the start of this study, eight participants were initially selected for representative cases across the two children's literature courses. During the data analysis of research question one, the three main categories of family, school, and self perceptions emerged concerning the prior experiences that define pre-service teacher's perceptions of themselves as readers. It was also determined through reading and re-reading data, microanalysis, and initial broad concept generation of all eight participants that four participants' data was revealed to be the richest for representation in relation to the generated categories of family, school and self perceptions (Merriam, 1998). Therefore, I decided to include four participants, Olivia, Bailey, Sidney, and Abby for the final written dissertation. Chapter Four further addresses the findings that emerged and presents case studies of these four participants from the data collected.
CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF THE STUDY

Introduction

*Abby’s Vignette*

I am 21 years old, and am in my junior this year. I have not participated in any practicum experiences yet. Thinking back, I can remember only a few books from my early childhood like *The Cat in the Hat* and *Where the Wild Things Are*. I recall that my parents were very busy and weren’t often able to read to me or my sister. I have always had a hard time with spelling and writing and my mother tried to encourage me to read more to become a better writer. Presently though, I do not consider myself a reader and I only reads if I absolutely have to. In elementary school, I remember being in a reading improvement program, but this was only for a few years. I do think this program began to help me, but when I moved to a new school they didn’t have that program. I also remember having to re-read things a lot to comprehend it better, and I still utilize this strategy. I regularly have to read a paragraph or a page and then write down what I just read so that I don’t miss the meaning. Presently, I still don’t care for reading and just don’t enjoy reading both at school and home.

When asked to create this vignette on her prior experiences, Abby revealed that her prior experiences with reading both at home and school were often filled with negative memories and recollection. As a researcher, when I began to analyze this vignette, I initially began constructing broad concepts that ran not only in the vignette, but throughout all the data sources. As represented above, family and school influences and self-perceptions were categories represented not only through Abby’s vignette example, but also through the other participant’s data sources as well.

This qualitative study utilizing case study methodology was designed to explore response-based exploration in a children’s literature course situated within a teacher
education program. The purpose was to provide multiple perspectives (multi-case comparative design) and to understand the experiences that define pre-service teachers’ reading perceptions prior to the children’s literature course. The intent of this study was to also recognize how response-based explorations in a children’s literature course informed and influenced their existing perceptions of reading.

During the study I was a participant observer in Cheryl’s course, a fellow instructor of a section of the children’s literature course. In addition, I was a practitioner researcher in another section of the course I instructed. This research took place in a semester long (16 week) children’s literature course at the large campus of South Western University (SWU). (Actual names and places in the study have been converted to pseudonyms.) The children’s literature course examines children’s reading interests and needs as a basis for evaluation and selecting children’s literature, and provides class members with an opportunity to enjoy and discuss a wide variety of quality children’s books while experiencing various response strategies. Participants also discover numerous authors and illustrators of children’s literature as well as exploring ways for integrating literature into the curricula (as stated in the course syllabus created by Dr. G.).

In this chapter, I narrate the journey pre-service teachers took in discovering response-based exploration during the spring semester in 2007. I represent the participant’s reflections and thoughts from their own words as often as possible to portray them accurately. The four case study perspectives presented are of pre-service teachers as they came to describe their prior experiences and perspectives of reading and then to further understand how response-based explorations informed and influenced their perceptions of reading. In addition, this study narrates the journey that I as a novice
researcher and future teacher educator came to question and understand the various 
backgrounds of pre-service teachers and their perceptions of reading. My goals in this 
chapter include presenting the data, detailing the specific categories which were arrived 
at through an inductive process, and contextualizing these findings within related 
theoretical frameworks. The narratives and explanations presented will enable readers to 
gain a sense of what these pre-service teachers experienced as readers and learners.

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter is divided into three main parts. The first part of this chapter details a 
vignette of “Abby”, one of the study participants. Following this the analysis completed 
on research question one and the prior experiences that influenced pre-service teachers’ 
reading perceptions. This chapter then details analysis completed with research question 
two. This specifically looks at how response-based experiences informed and influenced 
these four case studies reading perspectives. Both the first and second sections include 
cross case analysis of these findings. These findings are interrelated and the analysis and 
interpretation that took place integrated data sources from both parts. However, for the 
sake of clarity, they have been divided for this discussion. Finally, a summary of findings 
is discussed at the conclusion of the chapter.

Case studies have been used widely as a means of presenting stories or narratives to 
describe and explore teachers' beliefs, experiences, knowledge and understanding (Doyle 
& Carter, 2003; Merriam, 1998). In order to obtain a more complete and detailed picture 
of the analysis of pre-service teachers' perceptions of reading, this chapter provides for a 
"dual perspective" methodology based on a vignette of one of the study participants. This 
dual perspective method looks through the lenses of both the pre-service teacher and the
teacher educator/researcher. Data analyzed throughout this study looked through the dual lenses of both study participant and researcher. The following sections detail data analysis and findings as represented through the multi-case study participants.

Data Analysis of Prior Experiences

"Qualitative data consist of direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge" (Patton, 1990, p. 10). Participants’ quotes were obtained through interviews, observations, and other types of data. As Patton points out, "multiple sources of information are sought and used because no single source of information can be trusted to proved a comprehensive perspective" (p. 244). Therefore it was essential in this study to include multiple sources of data, to constantly compare data sets, and to also compare findings across cases. These comparisons led to initial broad concepts that were then compared to each other and other instances or cases (Merriam, 1998). It was for these reasons that I chose multi-case study methodology and utilized a wide variety of data sources.

Narrative inquiry has increasingly been utilized in education research as an approach to understanding people’s lives (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Goodson, 1992; Thomas, 1995). Bruner (1987) and Somers (1994) contend that people understand their lives and explain them through stories, and that these narratives not only represent but also shape action. As we further understand what influences pre-service teachers’ emerging identities as teachers, and understand their development; we must recognize the past stories about teaching and learning future teachers bring with them (Ritchie & Wilson, 2000). Miles and Huberman (1994) warn that summarizing superficially across themes
tells us little. “We have to look carefully at the complex configuration of processes within each case and understand the local dynamics, before we can begin to see patterning of variables that transcends particular cases” (p. 205-206). This qualitative, inductive, multi-case study was designed to further understand patterning and similarities both in and across the cases.

**Biographical Sketches**

Throughout preliminary data analysis, to further ensure that participants’ stories were represented within the contexts as told, biographical sketches detailing each of the study participants were written (Jessop & Penny, 1999). The biographical sketches were produced to help me, the researcher; more fully understand how prior experiences influenced participant’s reading perceptions. In addition, the biographical sketches highlighted each of the eight study participants’ backgrounds and life experiences as told within the contexts of the data sources.

The biographical sketches detailed each of the participants’ backgrounds as readers, and were created during the early stages of data collection and initial data analysis. This allows the reader to get as close to its evocation as I had been when talking and listening to these pre-service teachers. Therefore, I used much of the “voice” of the pre-service teachers in direct quotation. As Jessop and Penny (1999) recommend, this allows for a closer and more evocative reading and picture of the participants’ stories through their own words, rather than the researchers. Strauss and Corbin (1998) state that giving voice “to respondents...means hearing what others have to say, seeing what others do, and representing these as accurately as possible” (p. 43).
Data obtained through these biographical sketches provided an alternate way of seeing each individual pre-service teacher as represented through their own words. These sketches also enabled the participants to begin to understand how their backgrounds and experiences had influenced their current reading perceptions. After the creation of the biographical sketches, the eight participants were invited to read and respond to the sketches as member checks (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The only changes to the sketches that participants made were minor editing changes and word choices (i.e. changed “struggled” to “had difficulty with”).

Prior Influences of Family, School and Self Perceptions

Research question one asked: What prior experiences define pre-service teachers’ perceptions of reading? I relied on all data sources for initial analysis. The artifacts that yielded the majority of the data presented below were from the pre-course interview (PCI), final interview (FCI), emails for further interview clarification or verification (EMV), chapter reflections responses (CRR) and personal reflection journal entries (PRJ). In looking at experiences that define pre-service teachers’ reading perceptions, the influences of family, self-perceptions, and school were common threads that ran across the participants’ experiences, as revealed in the data analysis.

Each of these constructed categories was a unique and significant pattern at the end of my analytic process. The categories are certainly interrelated, but for my purposes and for the sake of clarity, I will discuss each case study participant individually with the categories of family, school and self perceptions intertwined throughout their case study representation. The order in which the categories are discussed is neither arbitrary nor
hierarchical. The case studies are organized based on similarities among the patterns and ordered based on connections I saw across them. The following case study summaries synthesize information obtained through open and axial coding, and constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) analysis completed with the data sources mentioned above.

Case Study #1: Olivia

"I guess I'm just not a good student when it comes to reading" (FCI, 4/23).

Olivia is a 21 year old Caucasian female and is currently a junior in college. For her, reading was "always a big headache...it always had something negative following it" (PCI, 1/29). Olivia struggled with reading throughout her life and continues to do so. She can remember "being read all those Dr. Seuss books at home" (PCI, 1/29), and thinks of "books and bedtime stories" (FCI, 4/23). Her parents also took her and her brother to the library every Sunday after church (FCI, 4/23). "I mostly liked the video section and the arts and crafts sections of the library...every once in awhile I would get a book" (FCI, 4/23). Family reading with her Mom was a positive experience partly "because I got to stay up a little bit later and partly because it was when Mom could be all with me" (PCI, 4/23). Even though Olivia's parents modeled positive reading skills and regularly took both her and her brother to the library, Olivia did not develop a love of reading. "I hated reading for pleasure; there was no pleasure to it" (PRJ, 3/26). "I think I was scared of reading, I've never been really good with words, I still can't spell worth anything" (FCI, 4/23). She also stated that "I didn't read very often and because I wasn't a smooth reader I had to stop and figure out the words often" (FCI, 4/23).

Her fondest reading memory was when her step-mom gave her a book to read and she "read it with my Dad in the summer...it was the best reading experience I ever had".
because it was the first time I did something on my own” (PCI, 1/29). Another time her teacher in school had the students create poems about a story they had read. “I was really proud of that work in the end...there were a couple students that cried and a few people wanted a copy of it” (FCI, 4/23). She can vividly recall a teacher in 7th grade who had a huge willow tree with big comfy cushions, “it was a fun place to be, you wanted to go there whether you were reading or not, but you could only go there if you were reading” (FCI, 4/23). Regardless of these positive memories of reading, Olivia still stated that reading “scared me, it always had a negative effect in the end. It always had something bad following it.” (PCI, 1/29).

When thinking back, several significant memories stuck out for Olivia, “way more writing than reading” (PCI, 1/29) and a “librarian that was very mean, and didn’t read to us much” (PCI, 1/29). She stated that “I never liked the library...and maybe that was because of that mean elementary librarian” (PCI, 1/29). Due in part to this she still struggles with selecting books, “I’ve never been able to pick a book, I just don’t know how...even to this day” (PCI, 1/29). Olivia also recalls writing a lot of papers that followed her reading assignments which caused her to think “reading causes headache, reading causes three-page essays, reading causes a big huge test” (PCI, 1/29). “I always wanted to read the book on Reading Rainbow, but I never did because I thought some assignment would come with it.” (PCI, 1/29). She struggled with reading and comprehension in school, and because of this the “teacher recommended that I do second grade again” (PCI, 1/29). For Olivia, “we were moving to a new state, so it wasn’t a big deal that I did second grade again” (PCI, 1/29), “I don’t remember it bothering me...I don’t see how an extra year couldn’t help” (FCI, 4/23). But this extra year didn’t help her
in terms of reading, “it wasn’t that I didn’t understand the story cause I always could read all the words and I would be able to tell you the majority of it right after I read it. Being able to go back the next day and tell you, now that was hard for me.” (PCI, 1/29). “I know I’ve always had trouble with reading, and I still do at times” (PCI, 1/29).

Olivia stated, “In my very early years of schooling, reading started off as fun and adventurous. As I got older...reading became a long and sleepy activity, books became things I read for fact and comprehension NEVER for enjoyment” (CRR, 4/2). Looking back at her experiences with reading, she feels as though “I am a victim of teaching that makes reading boring and sanitized, and then children refuse to engage in reading” (CRR, 2/12). She further states that “I obviously never got read to enough” (CRR, 3/26), “I just never enjoyed reading” (FCI, 4/23), “looking back on my past reading encounters, I’ve begun to realize I had a negative reading community and I have allowed my past to determine my future reading habits” (CRR, 2/12).

Looking at the data represented in the above narrative, Olivia’s reading perceptions were often formed in opposition to her family and school experiences. Although Olivia’s family encouraged reading and regularly read to her or took her to the library, Olivia still did not have a positive perception of reading. School provided her with a “fun” environment when she was younger and other positive experiences as well, but she still viewed reading as work to be completed, never for enjoyment. Having to repeat a grade did not seem to have a negative effect on her reading perception, in fact Olivia felt as though “it may have helped me read a little better with that extra year” (FCI, 4/23). Yet, she still continued to struggle selecting books and still only read when she had to.
Regardless of the positive experiences her family and school provided, Olivia struggled to see reading as positive, and continued to do so at the beginning of this course.

Case Study #2-Bailey

"School giving you so much assigned reading kinda ruins reading for you" (PCI, 1/31).

Bailey is a Caucasian 20 year old male and is currently in his third year of college. He didn’t struggle with reading, he was always good at it, and remembers reading quite frequently for enjoyment (FCI, 4/25). Even though he didn’t have reading difficulties, he didn’t “remember my parents reading to me much...I’m sure they taught me a little bit, but not like I see parents doing today” (PCI, 1/31). His father always gave him money for the book fair and he remembers collecting Goosebumps by R. L. Stein books. It was the book fair that also helped him to realize there were other “kids that love to read” (PCI, 1/31). He thinks that his Dad “always knew in the back of his mind that if I was reading that it would help later on, and I think it did” (PCI, 1/31). He later mentioned that his Dad “really encouraged that it was a good thing to read rather than watch TV” (FCI, 4/25). His Dad would often say to him “whenever I see you read it makes me very happy because we never read as kids” (FCI, 4/25). Bailey felt that his father grew up without reading “and probably wished he got into the habit of it, because he realized it was a good habit” (FCI, 4/25). He would always comment on Bailey’s good grades in school saying “see when you read it helps your grades in school” (FCI, 4/25). This influenced Bailey’s thoughts about reading and he remembered thinking that finding a “book you enjoy and you can read for a long time rather than watch TV is a really positive thing” (PCI, 1/31).

Even though Bailey did not see his parents directly modeling reading behaviors, he was repeatedly told how important reading was and his parents regularly bought him new
books. Despite this lack of modeling at home, Bailey understood the importance of reading and excelled in reading and writing throughout school. “Reading just came natural to me. I was always in the accelerated programs. It’s always been a high point (PCI, 1/31). Reading in school was always very easy for him, yet he “associated reading with work for school” (PCI, 1/31) and he remembered “more writing than reading…the reading kinda disappeared” (PCI, 1/31).

One thing Bailey felt very strongly about was that “memorizing facts of what I was reading is not the way to learn things” (CRR, 1/29). Due in part to this way of teaching reading in school, Bailey mentioned that “I used to enjoy reading when I was younger, but after being forced to read so much stuff I had no interest in, I don’t enjoy reading anymore” (CRR, 1/29). He regularly “felt it was a waste of time reading a book I didn’t particularly care about” (FCI, 4/25). When he did read and discuss he would constantly “try to say what the teacher wants to hear rather than what I think” (CRR, 3/26).

“Responding only to what the teacher wants you to say teaches students to shut down” (FCI, 4/25). He remembered “studying my teachers every year to find out what they would be expecting from me in their class. After knowing what I needed to do to get an A, I focused on that rather than on understanding what I was reading” (CRR, 4/9).

Bailey did recall some positive experiences with reading and writing. In sixth grade “I wrote a poem that caused my teacher to cry in class. She said it was amazing” (PRJ, 4/2). Also, he can recall a reading teacher that really focused on creating a classroom community (PCI, 1/31). He felt that this really helped him with being able to read and discuss because “when you feel comfortable with your classmates, then you can share everything that’s on your mind…you aren’t scared of what other people are going to say
if you have the wrong answer” (FCI, 4/25). He can remember a first grade teacher who
had a big green chair that she read in and he recalled at times she would allow them to
read aloud from the chair too. “It was a privilege that you got to do the read aloud once in
awhile” (FCI, 4/25).

Bailey had mixed experiences with reading in school. He was good at reading and
received praise for it from certain teachers, but more often than not, Bailey was forced to
read things he didn’t like and wasn’t interested in (PCI, 1/31). “When I went through
school I thought a lot of times, ‘Oh, I’m never going to use this. This is stupid’” (FCI,
4/25). This turned him off towards reading, and this feeling still permeates his present
life. Bailey stated, “because of school giving you so much assigned reading it kind of
ruins the reading for you...you don’t want to read anymore because you associate reading
with work for school” (PCI, 1/31) and “when I have some free time I’m not going to
choose reading” (PCI, 1/31).

School provided Bailey with both positive and negative experiences. Even though he
excelled and did well at reading, he often got discouraged with being forced to read
books he wasn’t interested in. He even began to feel the reading was “a waste of time”
(FCI, 4/25) when he had to read a book he didn’t care about. He often felt that school
forced him to only figure out what the teacher wanted and that he never really read to
understand what the book was about or meant to him. Even though he never struggled
with reading, he still views reading as a negative experience, due in part to his schooling
experiences.
Case Study #3-Sidney

"Reading was a big escape for me...I could get away from any problem by immersing myself in a book" (PCI, 1/31).

Sidney is a 52 year old Caucasian female and is considered a non-traditional college student. She is currently a junior. Sidney had always been a “voracious” (EMV, 5/4) reader. She stated that she currently reads as much as possible, whenever possible. This love of reading was evident throughout her early years as well. Her “mother read to us every night, books like Chitty Chitty Bang Bang [by Ian Fleming]…and we did the fudge recipe at the back of the book” (PCI, 1/31). She remembers that even though her parents were busy with seven children, that “as a family we would sit around and read aloud” (PCI, 1/31) and this was such a “positive experience” (CRR, 2/12). She also recalls that her mother signed them up for Weekly Reader, “even though there was little money in the house” (PCI, 4/16). She can recollect taking her younger brothers and sisters with her on a trek to the local library. Although, for her reading was usually an escape “much of my childhood was spent reading as a way to escape the problems of a highly dysfunctional family. I often learned about normal families by reading about them” (CRR, 2/12).

Upon completing the literary journey reflection, Sidney noticed that many fellow students “have wonderful memories of our mothers reading to us” (LJR, 1/30). Yet, she also noticed the differences in support that her family gave and how this was not always evident for her fellow students “Unlike me, I found that even though some kids had been encouraged to read by their parents, they never liked reading and it was not an important part of their lives” (LJR, 1/30). For her, it was the simple act of reading that made a
difference, “I really think it wasn’t the books so much as it was the fact that my Mom was reading, just the fact that she had the time to do that with us” (PCI, 4/16). When Sidney created her personal text set there were several books where she mentioned “I cannot think of this book without remembering being snuggled into bed and my mom’s voice reading to us” (PTS, 4/23).

For Sidney, reading was a part of her family and her life. Her parent’s regularly modeled reading behaviors and Sidney felt as though she excelled in “reading and writing because of it” (PCI, 1/31). She knew that any reading and writing assignments would be easy for her and that she could accomplish them with no problem. Even when she began to skip school due to some family issues, she “just knew I’d be alright with those reading and writing assignments” (PCI, 1/31). “I loved reading, it was something I really knew I could do and did” (PCI, 1/31). For her, reading was associated with freedom because she could select any book she wanted to read, and felt “there was too much control in my family” (PCI, 1/31).

Sidney stated that school was “a big positive for me, nothing but positives, I responded well and I really enjoyed it” (PCI, 1/31). Positives included “read-alouds by the teacher, awards for reading accomplishments, and great grades because of my language skills and reading abilities” (CRR, 2/12). She can recall having a reading competition where she read the most books in 3rd grade. She also vividly remembers her 4th grade teacher reading Where the Red Fern Grows by Wilson Rawls and “everyone sobbing their eyes out at the end while the teacher calmly read on” (PCI, 1/31). For Sidney, “reading at school was about learning...I was in the advanced program and got to work at my own pace when other kids were in group work” (PCI, 1/31). As a student she
felt that she was “often able to get the right meaning from a text” (EMV, 1/28) and “throughout my public school education, I easily arrived at the answer that the teacher was looking for…I remember feeling satisfied, even smug about this” (CRR, 3/27).

Sidney felt that she was “able to experience many things as a result of reading, even as a young reader” (EMV, 2/28). For her, it meant everything to have the teacher read-aloud to the class, when she was “a student, the teacher read-alouds were very special, I can still hear each teacher’s voice and style as they read” (CRR, 4/9). Reading and book reports were “a feeling of accomplishment for me, and it wasn’t that hard, they never were” (FCI, 4/16). Sidney appreciated when teachers noticed her reading, “When they commented ‘Oh you’re such a good reader’, it really increases your own interest and drive” (FCI, 4/16). Reading for Sidney was always a positive experience, and continued to be so presently.

Sidney could recall numerous positive experiences with both family and school that shaped her reading perceptions. Her family regularly modeled reading, read to her nightly, and bought her books. School was nothing but positives for Sidney. Her teachers often told her how good she was at reading, and she was placed in accelerated programs. Reading was seen as something easy for her that she could do. Despite all these positives, reading in school did have some negative experiences for her. She felt that reading at school was typically only about learning and that it was often difficult for her to find that one right answer the teacher wanted, so she resorted to Cliff’s Notes. She was “mortified” when the teacher spoke about her using this resource to the entire class and stated that the correct meaning wasn’t what he was looking for (CRR, 3/19). She really had a hard time making her life connect with books she read at school, even though the books she read at
home were such an escape for her. Despite these negative experiences, Sidney still was reading as regularly today as she did throughout her childhood. She still loves reading and enjoys re-reading certain books throughout the year.

Case Study #4-Abby

“I wish I had really read more as a kid and enjoyed it more” (PCI, 1/31).

Abby is a 20 year old Caucasian female. She is a junior this year and has not participated in any practicum experiences yet. Abby did not enjoy reading, not only early in her life, but at the start of this course as well. On the first day of class when Abby was asked what role literature has in her life, she responded “no role at all… I haven’t selected a book to read in years, I’m not a big reader” (CRR, 1/17). This lack of reading enjoyment was evident throughout her early years as well. When she completed the literary journey reflection experience in class, Abby noted the significance of “parents reading to you” and of seeing “pictures of fellow students reading with family members (CRR, 1/22). She noted that “my sister really helped me out” (PCI, 1/31), but that she didn’t feel as though her parents “understood the importance of it [reading]” (PCI, 1/31). Abby also recalls that her sister was great at reading and writing, while Abby was good with math and numbers, so she felt like it was “ok for us to be opposites” (FCI, 4/19). Abby really looked “up to her in terms of reading and writing, and she [her sister] does the same with me, I help her with her math and stuff” (FCI, 1/31).

Abby remembers her mother continually telling her “if you read more books your writing will get better” (PCI, 1/31), or her father telling her “it [reading] is so important because everything revolves around it” (PCI, 1/31). Her mother “pressured me to read, she always wanted me to read more and I’d be like yeah, whatever, and I never did. I
mean how much can your parents really force it on you?” (FCI, 4/19). Abby revealed that her “Dad liked to read, but they were so busy, I don’t think they read to us much” (PCI, 1/31). She does recall times that she would put off her reading assignments until the morning they were due, and her Dad would sit with her “and just do it… and he would get really angry” (FCI, 4/19). She also felt as though her parent’s didn’t “understand the importance of it either, and so it was just like they’ll [the girls] read when they can… reading wasn’t their first priority” (FCI, 4/19).

Abby bluntly stated “school was always a negative experience for me with reading” (PRJ, 2/12). Reading was “not a lot of fun, I think if it were more fun I would have liked it more” (PCI, 1/31). She struggled with reading and went to “reading improvement class when I was in school… where I left the regular classroom each day to meet with a specialist to work on my reading and comprehension (EMV, 2/5). The reading improvement program did give her “extra help and I liked it because I like more one-on-one, and I got more help reading and it made me do better in my class” (FCI, 4/19). Unfortunately, when she and her family moved to a different school, this service was unavailable and Abby no longer received one-on-one support with her reading.

Throughout junior high she continued to struggle with reading and “would just skip the readings for class and just have a friend summarize the story enough for me so I could complete the work and pass the class” (PRJ, 2/5). Instead of reading the books she became less interested and “only read if I couldn’t get out of it” (PRJ, 2/5).

Reading in school was a very stressful experience for Abby. She feels as though she “was always so nervous that the teacher would call on me and I wouldn’t know what was going on since I really didn’t read it… I think I made it [reading] a lot harder than I
thought by not reading” (FCI, 4/19). She also experienced the negative effects of round robin reading. She remembers “counting and reading my paragraph five times and praying I wouldn’t miss-say a word...I had no idea what the whole thing we were reading was about” (FCI, 4/19). Abby also recalls fooling her teacher everyday during silent reading time, everyday “I’d be like oh I’m just looking at my book...I’m just pretending like I’m reading that” (FCI, 4/19).

Abby’s experiences reveal a student that constantly “struggled with reading throughout school” (FCI, 4/19) and continues to do so to this day. Oftentimes in her life, Abby received mixed messages about reading. Abby’s family regularly told her to read and had lots of books in the house, but they were often very busy with work and weren’t able to read to her. Abby’s younger sister often had to help her out with reading, because Abby struggled with spelling and comprehension. Abby cannot remember very many positives about reading when it came to school. She did receive help with her reading difficulties when she attended reading improvement, but when this program was not available at another school; she was forced to read on her own with little assistance. This caused her to complete reading as the “very last thing” (PCI, 1/31) and to “put it off as long as possible” (FCI, 4/19).

Abby often relied on her classmates to summarize what was read so she could “fake” her way through discussions if the teacher called on her. She regrets her schooling experiences and reveals that she “wishes she would have done it [reading] more and enjoyed it more in school” (PCI, 1/31). When thinking about her reading ability, she “still wonders how I can be a better reader.” (PRJ, 3/5). Because her parent’s didn’t think of reading as a first priority and because of her schooling experiences, Abby struggles with
reading to this day. It was not something she enjoyed doing or even wanted to do when she began this course.

Cross-Case Analysis

The purpose of research question one focused on the prior experiences that defined pre-service teachers' reading perceptions. By incorporating the theoretical and conceptual framework that guided this study with the categories created during initial analysis, the study of question one revealed that both school and life experiences defined pre-service teachers' perceptions of reading. The case study narratives presented detail data within each of the cases. The following charts take data and analysis a step further by looking across the cases.

Family

Family influences emerged as a broad category through the repeated readings, open and axial coding, and constant comparison of the data sources (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The Table on the following page (4.5) details the category of family influences across all four participants' cases. These influences were perceived as both positive and negative as revealed through pre-service teachers' prior experiences.
Table 4.5  Family Influences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Positives</th>
<th>Negatives</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Olivia</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>“I remember being read lots of books at home” (PCI, 1/29).</td>
<td>“At home I always wanted to read those books from Reading Rainbow, but I always worried an assignment would be following it” (PCI, 1/29).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“The first book I read on my own for fun was with my Dad one summer” (PCI, 1/29).</td>
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<td>“When my Mom read a book with me, she could spend time with me one-on-one” (FCI, 4/23).</td>
<td>“My parent’s went with my teacher’s request for me to repeat second grade” (PCI, 1/29).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“My family took me and my brother to the library after church” (FCI, 4/23).</td>
<td>“I obviously never got read to enough just for fun” (CRR, 3/26).</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“At home I always wanted to read those books from Reading Rainbow, but I always worried an assignment would be following it” (PCI, 1/29).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Bailey</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>“My Dad would always give me money to get a book” (FCI, 1/31).</td>
<td>“I don’t remember my parents reading to me much” (PCI, 1/31).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“My Dad always knew in the back of his mind if I was reading it would help later on and I think it did” (PCI, 1/31).</td>
<td>“I don’t think my parents really taught me much about reading” (PCI, 1/31).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“My Dad would really encourage me to read rather than watch TV” (FCI, 4/25).</td>
<td>“Reading at home was done just to get to the last page and get finished so you could complete the questions or assignment” (FCI, 4/25).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sidney</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“My mother read to us every night” (PCI, 1/31).</td>
<td>“Much of my childhood was spent reading as a way to escape the problems of a highly dysfunctional family” (CRR, 2/12).</td>
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<td>“Even though there was little money in the house, she signed us up for Weekly Reader” (PCI, 1/31).</td>
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<td>“I think it wasn’t so much the books, but just the fact she had the time to read with us” (PCI, 1/31).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“My brothers and sisters and I would put on puppet shows for my parents” (PTS, 4/23).</td>
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<td>“I loved to read in bed as a young child” (CRR, 4/9).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Abby</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>“I remember being read Dr. Seuss book when I was really little” (PCI, 1/31).</td>
<td>“I don’t think my parents understood the importance of it [reading]” (PCI, 1/31).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“My sister really helped me out with reading” (PCI, 1/31).</td>
<td>“My parents were busy and didn’t have time to read with us often” (PCI, 1/31).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“My Dad always liked to read” (PCI, 1/31).</td>
<td>“I don’t think reading was my parents’ top priority” (FCI, 4/19).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“When my Dad or Mom would sit and help me, I felt OK about reading” (FCI, 4/19).</td>
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</table>
Looking across the four cases presented, family influences had a significant impact on prior experiences both positively and negatively. These varied family experiences helped each participant become more aware of the prior influence of family on their reading perceptions. Three of the four cases can remember being given books throughout their lives. All four of the cases spoke about a family member that encouraged them to read or helped them with reading. Both Olivia and Sidney can recall being taken to the library on a regular basis. They both enjoyed being snuggled in bed and sharing these books with their moms and spending that one-on-one time reading. Olivia, Sidney, and Abby spoke about a family member that regularly modeled reading. For Abby, it was having a sister that worked with her and helped her with her reading. Olivia and Sidney both had parents that read to them and that they saw reading on a regular basis. Even though Bailey did not see his father modeling reading, he was regularly encouraged by him to read. Bailey’s father helped him to understand that reading a book rather than watching TV was “a really positive thing” (PCI, 1/31).

Despite all of these positive family influences, Olivia, Bailey and Abby did not enjoy reading. Regardless of positive prior experiences with family and reading, some of the memories participants recalled about family reading experiences were negative. Olivia was always worried that an assignment would follow reading; even at home she refused to watch Reading Rainbow because of this. She felt that she was never read to enough just for fun. Although Bailey’s father encouraged him to read on a regular basis, he never saw his parents actually modeling reading for him. Sidney felt that her family was dysfunctional and she spent a great majority of her childhood reading about “normal” families (CRR, 2/12). For Abby, she believed that reading was not “a top priority” for her
parents (FCI, 4/19). It was often these negative memories that influenced their
perceptions of reading, since Olivia, Bailey and Abby stated that they did not enjoy
reading. Although family influences were a part of the participants’ prior experiences,
they were not the only influence. As the next chart reveals, schooling was an additional
influence on the four participants’ perceptions of reading.

School

Throughout the analyses, schooling experiences both positive and negative emerged
as a broad category across the cases. Each of the four participants drew on different
schooling experiences to help make sense of their prior experiences and explored their
views of reading as positive or negative.

Looking across the four cases, positive school influences included choice in reading
materials (Olivia, Bailey), reading being easy (Bailey, Sidney), or receiving one-on-one
help with reading (Abby). It was often through hearing about books or seeing fellow
classmates reading that Olivia and Bailey would read. For Sidney, it was having teachers
acknowledge her reading abilities and placing her in an accelerated group so she could
work at her own pace. Abby began to do better at reading with the one-on-one support
she was given through the reading improvement program. There were several high
quality books participants directly recalled being read in school like *Where the Red Fern
Grows* by Wilson Rawls. It was through these classroom read alouds and seeing other
fellow students react to books that Sidney was able to understand the power of sharing
literature. Despite these positive experiences, three of the four participants did not enjoy
reading.
The following Table (4.6) details the category of school influences across all four participants' cases. These influences were perceived as both positive and negative as revealed through pre-service teachers' prior experiences.
Table 4.6  School Influences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Positives</th>
<th>Negatives</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Olivia</td>
<td>“I thought it was really great when he [a classmate] was able to choose a Bible for what he wanted to read in school” (PCI, 1/29).</td>
<td>“I’ve never liked the library. Our librarian in elementary was mean and didn’t read to us very often” (PCI, 1/29).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“In my very early years in school, reading was fun and adventurous” (CRR, 4/2).</td>
<td>“I had to repeat second grade due to reading difficulties” (PCI, 1/29).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“A friend in class told me about Shel Silverstein. I spent many weeks checking out his books” (FCI, 4/23).</td>
<td>“I feel as though I am a victim of sanitized, boring teaching with reading” (CRR, 2/12).</td>
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<td>“My 7th grade teacher created a big, comfy place with a huge willow tree and big cushions. You could only go there if you were reading, I liked it” (FCI, 4/23).</td>
<td>“In the higher grades, reading became a long and sleepy activity, just for work” (PRJ, 4/2).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Reading just came natural to me; I was always in the accelerated programs” (PCI, 1/31).</td>
<td>“I didn’t read aloud very often and because I wasn’t a smooth reader I had to stop and figure out the words often” (FCI, 4/23).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bailey</td>
<td>“I had a really good teacher in 10th grade...she established community in the classroom ...so you wouldn’t be uncomfortable discussing and stuff” (PCI, 1/31).</td>
<td>“Associate reading with work for school” (PCI, 1/31).</td>
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<td>“I always remember the book fair at school being a really good thing...it got kids reading and excited about it” (PCI, 1/31).</td>
<td>“Because of school giving you so much assigned reading, it kind of ruins reading for you” (PCI, 1/31).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“During discussions I would often say that the teacher wants to hear rather than what I think” (CRR, 3/26).</td>
<td>“When I read at school I often thought I’m never going to use this, and this is stupid” (FCI, 4/25).</td>
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<td>“It was a privilege to be able to do the read aloud from the [teacher’s chair]” (FCI, 4/25).</td>
<td>“Every time you read a novel it was all about what you were going to write about at the end, not about what the book was about or meant” (FCI, 4/25).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sidney</td>
<td>“School was a big positive for me, nothing but positives” (PCI, 1/31).</td>
<td>“Tenth grade was a tough time for me and I began skipping school” (PCI, 1/31).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“I was always very successful in both language arts and reading” (PCI, 1/31).</td>
<td>“I couldn’t make life connections with books, but I could find the ‘right’ answer” (CRR, 2/12).</td>
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<td>“I was in an advanced group and I got to work at my own pace” (PCI, 1/31).</td>
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<td>“I have always reread books, and I am able to reconnect with my past when I reread” (CRR, 2/12).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sidney</td>
<td>&quot;I received great grades because of my reading accomplishments&quot; (CRR, 2/12).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>&quot;Throughout my public school education, I easily arrived at the answer that the teacher was looking for&quot; (CRR, 3/27).</td>
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<td>&quot;Teacher read alouds were very special to me&quot; (CRR, 4/9).</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abby</th>
<th>&quot;I remember going to reading improvement when I was young... I do remember going to that and it helped&quot; (PCI, 1/31)</th>
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<td>&quot;I liked the extra one-on-one help with reading...it made me do better&quot; (FCI, 4/19).</td>
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<td>&quot;I would read my schoolbooks only if I absolutely had to&quot; (PCI, 1/31).</td>
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<td>&quot;I usually didn't read, I would just go along with the discussions&quot; (PCI, 1/31).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>&quot;I always had a hard time with comprehending, spelling and writing&quot; (PCI, 1/31).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>&quot;As far as homework went, reading would always be the very last thing I did&quot; (PCI, 1/31).</td>
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<td>&quot;When I moved schools, they didn't have a reading improvement program, so the extra help stopped there&quot; (LJR, 2/5).</td>
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<td>&quot;I would have a friend summarize the reading for me so I could complete the class and pass&quot; (LJR, 2/5).</td>
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<td>&quot;School was always a negative experience for me with reading&quot; (PRJ, 2/12).</td>
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<td>&quot;I made reading a lot harder than it was by not doing it&quot; (FCI, 4/19).</td>
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<td>&quot;I really struggled with reading throughout school&quot; (FCI, 4/19).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>&quot;Everyday I would just pretend like I was reading in school&quot; (FCI, 4/19).</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Although the participants could recall positive memories of reading and school, it was negative memories that seemed to inform their perceptions. Three of the four participants spoke about reading being negative or just for work at school. For Olivia and Bailey, reading became a “boring” activity that was typically just associated with work. This view often caused them not to want to read because of the “assignment” that might follow reading. Although Sidney never struggled with reading and could always find the “right answer”, the forced readings at school did not allow for “life connections” (CRR, 3/27). Abby was so turned off from reading that she only read when she had to or she would just have a friend summarize what was read so that she could pass the class; or she would “just pretend” like she was reading in class (FCI, 4/19).

Self Perceptions

Data analysis revealed that it was often negative experiences that influenced pre-service teachers’ self perceptions of reading. The following Table (4.7) details the self perceptions of reading that were influenced by both family and schooling experiences. It is with these perceptions that pre-service teachers entered into the ICG 415/615 children’s literature course. It was also these perceptions of reading that were informed and influenced through reader-response exploration.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self</th>
<th>Positives</th>
<th>Negatives</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Olivia</strong></td>
<td>“When I do get into a book, I really like it, but that’s rare” (PCI, 1/29).&lt;br&gt;“I really enjoyed reading that book, it was the first time I did something on my own” (PCI, 1/29).&lt;br&gt;“Reading at home seemed like it was for fun, but school was for work” (PCI, 1/29).&lt;br&gt;“I liked short and sweet books, I … felt like I was accomplishing something” (FCI, 4/23).</td>
<td>“Reading was always a big headache… it always had something negative following it” (PCI, 1/29).&lt;br&gt;“Reading cause headache, reading causes three page essay, reading causes a big huge test” (PCI, 1/29).&lt;br&gt;“Looking back… I had a negative reading community and I have allowed my past to determine my future habits” (CRR, 2/12).&lt;br&gt;“I hated reading for pleasure; there was no pleasure in it for me” (PRJ, 3/26).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bailey</strong></td>
<td>“Finding a book you enjoy and can read for a long time rather than watch TV is a really positive thing” (PCI, 1/31).&lt;br&gt;“I never struggled with reading, it came natural to me” (PCI, 1/31).&lt;br&gt;“If you feel comfortable with your classmates, then you can share everything that’s on you mind, like the teacher in 10th grade did for our class” (FCI, 4/25).</td>
<td>“I used to enjoy reading when I was younger, but after being forced to read so much stuff I had no interest in, I don’t enjoy reading anymore” (CRR, 1/29).&lt;br&gt;“When I have some free time, I’m not going to choose reading” (PCI, 1/31).&lt;br&gt;“I would often try to discover what the teacher expected from me and focus on that rather than understanding the story read” (FCI, 4/25).&lt;br&gt;“I often thought things we read were stupid and would never be used” (FCI, 4/25).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sidney</strong></td>
<td>“I loved reading, it was something I really knew I could do and did” (PCI, 1/31).&lt;br&gt;“I know that I was able to experience many things as a result of reading” (EMV, 2/28).&lt;br&gt;“Reading was always an escape for me” (FCI, 4/16).</td>
<td>“Unlike me I found that… some kids never liked reading” (LRJ, 1/30).&lt;br&gt;“I think I stunted my own reading growth by only having the ‘right’ answer” (FCI, 4/16).</td>
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<td>Abby</td>
<td>“I did enjoy reading about things that were more personal to me, like my name” (FCI, 4/19).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“I think if it were more fun I would have enjoyed it more” (PCI, 1/31).</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Some of the stories I remember as a kid I remember loving them” (PCI, 1/31).</td>
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<td>“Literature has no role in my life...I haven’t selected a book to read in years, I’m not a big reader” (CRR, 1/17).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“I had a hard time with reading as a child” (PRJ, 1/29).</td>
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<td>“I have always been a very slow reader and have to sound out words and re-read to understand” (LJR, 2/5).</td>
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<td>“I just didn’t like reading” (PRJ, 4/9).</td>
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<td>“I didn’t read because I wasn’t very good at it, I wasn’t really positive with it” (FCI, 4/19).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“I remember being so scared I would mess up when reading aloud” (FCI, 4/19).</td>
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The category of self perceptions emerged through data analysis. It was with these negative and positive perceptions of reading that pre-service teachers entered into the classroom. All four participants were able to think of reading as positive. For Olivia, Bailey, and Abby it was finding a book that they enjoyed or was personal to them. For Sidney and Bailey, it was knowing that reading was very easy for them. Even though they had positive perceptions of reading, negative perceptions permeated their feelings and thoughts of reading.

Regardless of these positive experiences, Olivia, Bailey and Abby typically saw reading in a more negative light. Olivia saw reading as only for work and she “hated reading for pleasure; there was no pleasure in it” (PRJ, 3/26). Bailey’s perceptions of reading changed due to all the books he was forced to read that he had no interest in. Abby always had a hard time with reading and just didn’t read because she wasn’t good
at it. The majority of the negative perceptions of reading stemmed back to schooling experiences. Olivia and Bailey both spoke of the negatives of reading, be it an assignment following it, or a book that they had no interest in. It was the negative perceptions of reading that three of the four pre-service teachers focused on when they entered the children’s literature course.

Summary of Prior Experiences

To summarize the findings presented in the above narratives and the charts, family and school experiences often led to self perceptions, both positive and negative, towards reading. When completing the cross-case analysis of the four study participants, all four of the study participants spoke about family and school influences that led to both positive and negative self perceptions about reading throughout their lives.

The participants recognized and addressed positives associated with reading. They spoke about reading being an “escape” (Sidney) they enjoyed being able to “choose” what they read (all participants) and they also spoke about taking pleasure in being able to take their time and re-read sections or books that were difficult to understand (Bailey, Abby). When thinking about assignments related to reading, three of the four case study participants spoke about completing assignments that were “meaningful” (Bailey, Olivia) and helped them to make “personal connections” (Abby). Often these same participants talked about reading seeming like “fun” at home, and “work” at school. Bailey talked about finding “a book you enjoy and you can read it for a long time rather than watch the TV” (Pl, 1/31). While Olivia and Abby spoke about difficulties with comprehension, spelling, or lack of content knowledge. Yet, all four of the case study participants spoke about loving reading at a very early age.
Each of the case studies revealed that the categories of family, school, and self-perceptions cut across the data for each of the study participants. Study participants had positive and negative experiences in each of these categories. Family experiences typically influenced the participants at early stages of reading, whether it was reading to them or encouraging them to read. All of the participants talked about their family encouraging reading, even if family members didn’t directly model reading. Even though the majority of the participants had positive experiences with reading with family and school, they often did not have a positive perception towards reading. Another common thread running through the data for all four of the participants was negative feelings towards reading at school. Reading was typically viewed as work or only for learning in school. This was due in part to the lack of personal connections, the type of reading, or the sheer volume of written work they were expected to complete with the book.

The following diagram illustrates that the self (the participant) acts upon both school and family experiences. The self is also acted upon by both family and school experiences and this in turn shapes self-perception in positive and negative ways as presented in the data. The Figure on the following page (Figure 4.3) details the noteworthy influences of family, school and self-perceptions as revealed in the analysis of question one: What prior experiences define pre-service teachers’ perceptions of reading?
Figure 4.3. Prior Experiences That Define Reading Perceptions.

The analysis of question one revealed that family and school experiences both positive and negative worked to shape pre-service teachers' perceptions of reading. Research question two looks at how response-based exploration as presented in this course influenced pre-service teachers' perceptions of reading.

The Influence of Response-Based Explorations

Research question two asked: How do response-based explorations inform and influence pre-service teachers' reading perceptions? As discovered in the analysis and findings of question one, it was determined that prior experiences with family and schooling often influenced pre-service teachers' perceptions of reading both positively and negatively. Sidney and Bailey mentioned their "love" of reading. For Bailey, this love had tapered off presently due to course demands, but he did try to read on a regular basis nightly. Olivia and Abby spoke about that reading being a "high point" in their early experiences, but almost nonexistent in the present day.
Data Analysis

In this section I describe three emerging categories: community, connection, and attitude. These categories were generated from microanalysis, open and axial coding, and constant comparison of the various data sources (Merriam, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Data sources analyzed for question two included: pre-course interviews (PCI), post-course interviews (FCI), email clarification and verification (EMV), chapter reflection responses (CRR), personal reflection journals (PRJ), and personal text sets (PTS).

It was through rigorous reading and re-reading of each of these data sources that initial broad concepts were derived from the data and then grouped under categories. It was through this conceptualizing that large amounts of data were reduced to smaller manageable pieces (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Procedurally, axial coding was then utilized to relate categories to subcategories along the lines of their properties and dimensions both across the categories and across the cases. During axial coding I looked for answers to questions such as why, where, when, how, and with what results. Doing so enabled me to uncover relationships among the categories. Since I, as an analyst, could distort meaning by my own subjectivities, it was important for me to validate my interpretations by constantly comparing one piece of data against another. It was also important to discover the ways that categories related to one another (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). A category was considered saturated when no new information seemed to emerge from the coding.

Although I entered into data analysis with no pre-conceived categories, the categories that emerged were related to the philosophical stances from which this course was
purposefully designed. Both Cheryl and I structured this course based upon course requirements and our teaching backgrounds. We designed experiences that promoted students responding to and finding connections with quality literature. We encouraged sharing in both small groups and whole class experiences. Finally, we both stated that we wanted students to learn to enjoy reading and not see it as boring or as work.

Based on my prior experiences with this course, I have seen that students enjoy working together and responding to books as a group. They made connections to the quality literature that was purposefully selected for response in this course, and they often did experience changes in their attitude towards reading. Although I didn’t enter into data analysis with the pre-conceived categories of community, connection and attitude, I was not surprised at their emergence.

Additionally, there were several sub-categories that emerged in relation to the main categories. These sub-categories pertained to the category and gave it further clarification and specification (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The sub-categories that emerged under community included multiple perspectives and peer culture. The sub-category under connection was personal connections. Finally, the sub-categories under attitude were change and thinking as a teacher. All of these categories and sub-categories cut across the participant’s data sources. Figure (4.4) illustrates how these categories were closely interrelated.
In the following sections, I examine how these three categories (connection, community, and attitude), respectively, have manifested through response-based exploration and how they have affected the participants’ thoughts about their future classrooms. The following excerpts are representative of the categories of community, connection and attitude. For the purpose of discussion, I present these findings as embedded within the participants’ data because it is important to be aware that these categories are closely interrelated and mutually affect each other.

*Case Study #1-Olivia*

"As crazy as it sounds, I have learned a love for reading" (EMV, 4/30).

At the beginning of the course Olivia came into this course hating to read. She was asked to think about what she thought the role of children’s literature was in her future classroom. Olivia stated “I’m hoping it will be one with more enjoyment. You know we can read a book and not make everything an assignment. Not attach some big headache to
the book...reading always had a negative effect in the end. It always had something bad following it.” (PCI, 1/29). Reading “at home seemed fun, at school for work...I hated hearing other people reading out loud, I never could get it” (PCI, 1/29).

For Olivia, the notions of community and connection became apparent at an early stage in the semester. Olivia’s chapter reflection comment (2/5) stated that “Students aren’t always given enough opportunity to discuss and come to their own conclusions”. She later stated, “I want to provide the opportunity for my students to form an opinion...sharing ideas is an awesome activity that isn’t always present in classrooms today. It is a way to build a stronger community. It [forming an opinion] is a hard concept and I feel the only way that can be done is through discussion” (CRR, 2/12). It was through participating in literature discussions with her fellow classmates that Olivia began to discover responding to books was enjoyable because “[discussions] were so open-ended. I was allowed to share the knowledge I took from a book ...I wasn’t restricted by strict requirements and formatting. It allows you to see different views of the same material” (EMV, 3/02). “I just like talking about them [books], I like not just sharing in front of the whole class...it gives everyone an opportunity to speak and say something about what you liked” (FCI, 4/23). “I felt like my being in the classroom mattered” (EMV, 4/30).

The biggest change for Olivia was her attitude and the notion of thinking as a teacher. Her beginning statements of “I never liked the library, I’ve never been able to pick out a book”, or “I always felt like reading causes headache...reading always had a negative effect in the end” (PCI, 1/29) permeated many of our earlier conversations. This attitude quickly changed. Olivia stated in a journal entry during February “despite my own
experiences with reading, reading can be so much more... it’s important to read just to read” (PRJ, 2/5). “I have learned to enjoy books and I am currently reading two at a time. Ask me three months ago if I thought that would ever happen in my lifetime and I would have said no” (PRJ, 2/26). She stated that this course made her look at reading differently, “I have never looked at reading so intensely before, I feel that I am beginning to understand the intensity reading is capable of” (CRR, 2/5).

It was through responding to books that much of this attitude shift occurred, “I could express my knowledge and I didn’t feel like it was a headache or hard task” (EMV, 3/02). On February 5th, Olivia reported “I love reading aloud, I’m sure I will use it as often as possible to introduce new topics” (PRJ, 3/5). “I always thought of reading as a boring drill and skill, you get it or you don’t... change the view-change the teaching” (PRJ, 4/9). Her final comment to me in an email summed up her attitude change towards reading, “As crazy as it sounds, I have learned a love for reading. How can anyone teach tomorrow’s readers without first being a reader of today?” (EMV, 4/30).

Case Study #2-Bailey

“When I went through school I thought a lot of times, ‘Oh I’m never going to use this’... you can’t let students see that side because you are there to promote learning for them and to promote reading.” (EMV, 4/25).

Bailey stated that he enjoyed reading, but that the demands of “forced” reading at school had soured his attitude toward reading. “School ends up giving you so much assigned reading... it takes away the fun of it and then you don’t even want to read books you enjoy because you associate reading with work for school” (PCI, 1/31). Reading came “natural” to him and he “was in all accelerated programs” (PCI, 1/31). Even though
he is a good reader, he doesn’t “really read for enjoyment now because I still associate reading with schoolwork…when I have some free time, I’m not going to choose reading” (PCI, 1/31). When he was asked about the role of reading in his future classroom, he bluntly stated “I came into this class with the impression that we read aloud just to fill time and keep students busy” (PCI, 1/31).

The notion and understanding of community and multiple perspectives became very apparent for Bailey. He felt it was essential that we as teachers “get excited about reading and lessons, and the students will mimic that emotion…getting them on our side rather than against us is the first step in getting them to learn” (PRJ, 1/29). He felt that it “is important to build a community of trust in the classroom so nobody is afraid to express their opinion or share their point of view” (CRR, 2/12), “discussions and debates are a good way to get students passionate about a subject, and passion creates a desire to learn” (EMV, 3/5). “If you feel comfortable with your classmates, then you can share everything that’s on your mind…you aren’t scared of what other people are going to say if you have the ‘wrong’ answer” (FCI, 4/25).

For Bailey, a personal connection was formed through the group discussions. “The activities done in class helped me get other’s perspectives of the stories we read…then we are always keeping our minds open and leaving room for our knowledge to expand” (EMV, 4/25). He also learned how important it is for people to discuss books, “One main thing I learned in the class is that there are always students that have to voice their opinions about every topic…we need group discussions so they aren’t disruptive and can have more talk time to voice their connections with a book” (EMV, 4/25). Reading books
allows students “to have something to contribute to the discussion...they know they will have to read in order to have something worthwhile to say” (EMV, 4/25).

Bailey experienced an attitude change towards thinking about how to teach reading and in thinking about his early experiences being forced to read. “Over time there has been a wall built between school and home. I think this wall needs to be torn down and students need to realize they can learn things wherever they go, not just at school” (CRR, 3/5). “I think it’s the teacher’s job to find good books that the students are interested in...that’s when they are engaged because they don’t want to be forced to read a novel they don’t like” (FCI, 4/25). Relating back to his own experiences, he felt that it was important for students to “choose what they want to read about, that’s when they associate it with something enjoyable, when you are assigned something you have to do, it’s work, but choice seems like less work” (FCI, 4/25). He also felt that it was essential for students to also see the teacher reading, “that’s what students expect to see from teachers, constantly reading and learning...It’s going to give them the positive memory of the teacher practicing what they preach” (FCI, 4/25), “You are there to promote learning for them and to promote reading” (EMV, 4/25).

Case Study #3-Sidney

“It’s not just about reading stories, it’s about life, it is learning about life in books...books will always drive my curriculum” (FCI, 4/16).

Sidney always loved to read throughout her life, “I loved it, it was something I really knew I could do, and do well and did, and I really enjoyed it” (PCI, 1/31). At the beginning of the course she knew the “literature would be a springboard...it would take us on our discovery of what we want to learn” but questions she had were “What is it that
can really make or break a reading? What gets them turned away from reading” (PCI, 1/31). Due in part to her background and positive experiences with reading, it was hard for her to comprehend why people didn’t like to read.

Exposure to community and multiple perspectives began to answer Sidney’s questions about students that didn’t enjoy reading. Through group discussions and the literary journey experience, Sidney realized that, “Unlike me, I found that even though some kids had been encouraged to read, they never liked reading and it was not an important part of their lives” (LJR, 1/30). While participating in response-based explorations, she recognized that discussion and common experiences, “pulls the group together, gives them something in common…it creates a history and kids can relate to that and it can lead to another book, and another book” (FCI, 4/16). She stated, “I like talking about books because of the connections I make with other people that result from such discussions” (EMV, 2/28). She understood that it might be a lack of connections that make children shut off to reading, and that discussing books provided opportunities for students to learn from each other. “I think students from my future classrooms would enjoy talking about books like we have in our class. Many children enjoy giving their opinions about most everything and if I use authentic stories and books, the students will probably have a great deal to say about them” (EMV, 2/28).

After experiencing various responses, strategies, and literature discussions, Sidney made personal connections to her future classroom, “What we teach or offer students has to have meaning for them. If they cannot place literature into their own lives, than how can we expect them to find value in it…they must be able to connect with the curriculum” (PRJ, 2/21). “This will allow my students to personalize what they learn and
pursue their interests in a curriculum that is meaningful to them” (CRR, 2/6). “I think a personal touch and connection is called for at times...Find the interests of the child and what the child is reading and ask them questions about why they picked the book and things like that” (FCI, 4/16). She also mentioned how important it would be for her students to know her connections with reading “I would like to share with them how important books were for me when I was young” (FCI, 4/16). “It is important for children to see that books are meant to be a life experience—not just a school experience” (PRJ, 4/2).

Although Sidney always had a positive attitude towards reading, her thoughts about reading and classroom experiences changed throughout this course. She saw the value of making connections and hearing multiple-perspectives. Responding to literature helps students “discover, internalize, connect to, create, and brings students together” (EMV, 4/27). It was through an interaction with a fellow classmate that Sidney really began to think about her students in her future reading classroom. Sidney and Abby were paired in the same literature discussions throughout the semester. Abby’s attitude changed during the course, and Sidney took notice. When Sidney reflected on the question, “Can students learn to enjoy reading?” she responded, “I think that they can. I look at Abby and how she hated to read, and yet she has talked with such joy about some of the books we have read and has really jumped in our conversations...she can remember details that I don’t even remember. It kind of blows me away. It is about finding those connections, finding things about that story you can relate to” (FCI, 4/16). For Sidney, “I want a noisy classroom. I want kids to talk about books a lot. I don’t want to hear ‘OK, you need to be quiet now’. I don’t want to say that. I want them to talk and connect” (FCI, 4/16). As she
aptly stated at the end of our final interview, “It’s not just about reading stories, it’s about life, it is learning about life in books...books will always drive my curriculum” (FCI, 4/16).

Case Study #4-Abby

“I realized how important reading is and why kids should read, I don’t think I could be a teacher without at least enjoying it a little bit” (FCI, 4/19).

Abby started this course with a negative perception of reading. During the first class session she responded that “literature has no role at all in my life. I haven’t selected a book to read in years; I’m not a big reader” (PRJ, 1/17). For Abby, the community connections and exposure to multiple perspectives made her think not only about her background as a reader, but also about how these experiences could benefit her future students. “I kind of wish I had really done more reading as a kid and enjoyed it more. There is a girl at my table and she loves it and I wish I had that passion” (PCI, 1/31).

When she completed the literary journey experience, she noted “more people enjoy to read then I originally thought” (PRJ, 1/29). She further stated “I have learned just how important reading is to a lot of people. I didn’t think anyone really enjoyed it” (PRJ, 1/31).

It was through the sharing of multiple perspectives that allowed Abby to “see how much we enjoy books in just this semester...I can help my students by bringing the joy of reading a book out for them and helping them connect with it” (FCI, 4/19). For her, the group discussions and literature circles encouraged one to “think, and the connections and wonderings shared really help people understand what they are reading and look deeper into it...they are an effective way to get students talking and understanding what
they read” (CRR, 2/12). “Discussing a book in class helps because you just don’t think about all the same things. You don’t have the same background as everyone else…it helps to hear everyone else’s opinions to further understand a book” (FCI, 4/19). She liked the “thought of having children start a discussion by relating the book to personal events they can connect to” (CRR, 3/28).

Abby made powerful personal connections thinking about her own background as a reader, as well as thinking about her future students. She stated, “If there is one thing I would like for my future students to get from me, it is reading. I truly believe that without it you will struggle for the rest of your life” (LJR, 2/5). She began to realize that her attitude and lack of connection towards reading needed to change. On March 26, Abby stated “I do read a little more now, and when I see a book I look at what I can do with it in a classroom” (PRJ, 3/26). She stated the following week that reading “can be a lot more fun than I ever thought. I have found some books that I just love and I have even read a few books more than once. I’m starting to enjoy reading more” (PRJ, 3/28). “I learned a great deal about myself in this class. I was unaware that reading could actually be fun and not just boring” (EMV, 5/27).

For Abby, a major realization occurred when she connected her negative attitude towards thinking about her future classroom. She bluntly stated, “I didn’t understand the importance of reading for all students because I didn’t like it. I have now realized that it is extremely important for everyone” (PRJ, 4/09). After participating in the various response-based explorations throughout the semester, Abby said “I do like anything like these activities that would get the students interested in the book more than I was as a child. Hopefully these types of strategies and experiences will get the students to enjoy
books and literature for years to come” (CRR, 2/12). It was through personal connections and discussion that Abby felt her future students would benefit, “When you make connections, you don’t really think you are learning anything about the book, you are like ‘Oh, that’s just my life’, when you are actually having them tie the two together. You learn a lot more from your peers than anyone else.” (FCI, 4/19). A powerful attitude change was stated on April 16, “I did hate to read, but it’s getting a lot better. I hope I am able to get my students interested along with me. I would hate to be negative in front of the classroom and cause them to dislike reading as well, because it is so very important” (CRR, 4/16).

Cross-Case Analysis

Each of the case studies presented revealed that the categories of community, connection and attitude emerged throughout this course. It was through the emergence of these categories that I began to understand that it is not only the prior experiences that pre-service teachers enter our course with that informs and influences their perceptions of reading. It is also the course experiences and philosophical stance we take when instructing these courses. The sections below summarize analysis that revealed the impact of the community, connections, and attitudes on pre-service teachers’ perceptions of reading.

Community

The four case studies present the emerging category of community that each of the participants experienced or came to understand through response-based exploration in the
children's literature course. The data revealed that community was manifested in several different ways through multiple perspectives and peer culture. In this children's literature course, the elements of a strong peer culture became apparent. As the study progressed, issues related to pre-service teachers' response-based explorations started to connect with the classroom context and shared culture. Corsaro (1997) defines peer culture as, “a stable set of activities or routines, artifacts, values and concerns that are produced and shared with peers” (p. 95). The pre-service teachers in the classroom and study actively contributed to and created their own peer cultures. This insight into the peer culture as constructed through interactions among students and between students and the instructors (Fennie, Davies, Kantor & McMurray, 1993) provided several useful insights to this study to help understand pre-service teachers' experiences with response-based exploration.

The participants were asked to regularly discuss, in small groups, the books and materials read. Through chapter and professional readings, students came to understand that reader response approaches can encourage students to be aware of what they bring to texts as readers by helping them to recognize their own cultural backgrounds; enabling them to understand the cultural background of others (Rosenblatt, 1995). When students were interacting and discussing with each other, the instructors' presence was often limited. Study participants described the interactions and community formed with their classmates in positive terms. The case study narrative excerpts and the Table (4.8) presented on the following page present data that were representative of how these participants viewed their participation, involvement and understanding of multiple perspectives within their peer culture community.
Table 4.8  Pre-service Teachers’ Beliefs of Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Perspectives prior to the Course</th>
<th>Perspectives after Response-Based Exploration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Olivia</td>
<td>Self “I remember reading was mostly popcorn reading, following where the first person left off, we didn’t really discuss as a class” (PCI, 1/29). “Reading and discussing a book with my Dad over the summer was one of my most enjoyable reading experiences” (PCI, 1/29).</td>
<td>Self “By discussing, I could show and explain my thinking in a way that made sense to me” (EMV, 3/2). “I was able to see other ways of looking and understanding the same information” (EMV, 3/2). “It is so important to understand where students are coming from and their experiences outside of school, we need to talk with them and learn about them to guide our curriculum in the right direction for our students” (PRJ, 3/4). “Your background creates who you are, by talking about where we have come from or our experiences, we realize we are more similar and more different than we originally thought” (FCI, 4/23).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>“I always enjoyed sharing and discussing things I had written” (PCI, 1/29). “When I talked with my friends about books it made me realize that it was ok if I didn’t understand something she read because they didn’t either” (FCI, 4/23).</td>
<td>Beliefs “You can read just to read and discuss, you don’t have to always do an assignment with a book” (PRJ, 2/5). “Sharing and discussing helps to make friends and build a stronger community” (CRR, 2/12). “Discussion is what enables students to look at a book differently” (CRR, 2/12). “Sharing allows students a way to express things in the way they say them and to see a different view on the same material” (EMV, 3/2). “Discussing in smaller groups allows all students time to share and talk about their opinions” (CRR, 3/4). “Both the students and the teacher can learn through and with each other” (FCI, 4/23).</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Bailey

**Self**

"I remember reading round robin style around the room, but there was no discussion" (PCI, 1/31).

"My Father encouraged me to read...we spoke about it often (PCI, 1/31).

"I often responded only to what the teacher wanted and I didn’t think about stories from a different perspective" (FCI, 4/25).

**Beliefs**

"I remember that seeing other students buying books at the book fair, this encouraged me to read more" (PCI, 1/31).

"I had a 10th grade teacher that established community in the classroom...she made it a comfortable learning environment" (PCI, 1/31).

"Having my work shared with fellow classmates and discussed was a powerful experience" (PRJ, 4/2).

Self

"It is interesting to hear multiple perspectives and how each reader interprets the same story so differently" (CRR, 2/12).

"Hearing others thoughts or difficulties with a book made me understand the book more" (EMV, 2/18).

"Expressing your opinion and thoughts with a group makes you passionate about what you say and creates a desire to learn" (CRR, 3/5).

"Reflecting and responding to books with fellow classmates helped me to understand other perspectives of the books" (FCI, 4/25).

**Beliefs**

"It is important to get kids on our side, show them we are all learning together" (PRJ, 1/29).

"It is important to build a community in the classroom so no one is afraid to share their point of view" (CRR, 2/12).

"Students should be given opportunities to participate in discussion groups, but you should monitor them to keep them on task" (EMV, 2/18).

"When students hear multiple perspectives, they are often forced to take a stance on an issue or they have to provide reasoning for their interpretation" (CRR, 3/5).

"Children will never forget what they teach themselves or fellow group members" (CRR, 4/16).

"Giving students the opportunity to share and respond to books in groups gives them the time they need to talk about their opinions, everyone is heard" (FCI, 4/25).

"By encouraging sharing during group discussions, students will need to have read the book in order to bring something worthwhile to talk about with their group members" (FCI, 4/25).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sidney Self</th>
<th><strong>Beliefs</strong></th>
<th><strong>Self</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;As a family we would often read together (PCI, 1/31).&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;I can vividly recall me and my fellow classmates crying to a reading of <em>Where the Red Fern Grows</em>&quot; (PCI, 1/31).</td>
<td>&quot;Sharing and discussing really brought the class closer together&quot; (PRJ, 1/29).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I would read books with my younger siblings and we would talk about their thoughts and connect with each others opinions&quot; (PCI, 1/31).</td>
<td>&quot;I want my future students to talk and discuss books with me&quot; (PCI, 1/31).</td>
<td>&quot;Talking and discussing similar likes gives you a common ground with your classmates&quot; (CRR, 1/28).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>&quot;When I was in school, reading and discussing was about impressing the teacher with the answer that they wanted&quot; (PCI, 2/6).</td>
<td>&quot;Re-reading stories often gives me a new perspective from the first time I read it&quot; (CRR, 2/11).</td>
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<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>Beliefs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>&quot;I want my future students to talk and discuss books with me&quot; (PCI, 1/31).</td>
<td>&quot;Hearing why others enjoyed a book actually made me enjoy the book more&quot; (EMV, 2/28).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>&quot;When I was in school, reading and discussing was about impressing the teacher with the answer that they wanted&quot; (CRR, 2/6).</td>
<td>&quot;I think being in a book club and discussing books might be something I want to participate in&quot; (EMV, 2/28).</td>
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<td>Beliefs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>&quot;Through hearing others connections, you can think on and on, the story doesn’t end when the book ends&quot; (FCI, 4/16).</td>
<td>&quot;You should give students time and guidance to discuss their thoughts and opinions of the book, not mine&quot; (CRR, 2/6).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>&quot;Discussion gives students a chance to personalize what they learn and makes curriculum meaningful to them&quot; (CRR, 2/6).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>&quot;Sharing and discussing what they learned as well as hearing what others learned is effective and beneficial&quot; (PRJ, 2/21).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>&quot;Discussing and sharing helps students develop accepting attitudes about different cultures and people&quot; (EMV, 2/28).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>&quot;Sharing and having common experiences pulls the group together and allows them to relate things&quot; (FCI, 4/16).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>&quot;Discussion and hearing multiple perspectives can help students notice or understand what they might not have previously&quot; (CRR, 4/15).</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Abby</strong></th>
<th><strong>Self</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;My sister read with me and really helped me out with comprehension&quot; (PCI, 1/31).</td>
<td>&quot;Learning about each persons different experiences and thoughts helped me understand them and myself better&quot; (PRJ, 1/29).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I would skip the readings for class and have a friend summarize the story enough for me so I could complete the work and pass the class&quot; (LJR, 2/5).</td>
<td>&quot;Each reader brings a different look and background to a book, you can learn from and about each other&quot; (CRR, 2/12).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beliefs</strong></td>
<td><strong>Beliefs</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I was always so nervous that the teacher would call on me and I wouldn’t know the ‘right’ answer they wanted...I worried others would laugh at me (FCI, 4/19).</td>
<td>&quot;It is important to create a comfortable environment for students to share and discuss books without feeling threatened&quot; (CRR, 1/31).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self</strong></td>
<td><strong>Self</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Discussion gives me the opportunity to see and understand why others liked or didn’t like a book&quot; (EMV, 3/1).</td>
<td>&quot;Students should discuss what they have learned or opinions they have formed about the book&quot; (CRR, 2/7).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Discussion can get you to understand a story in a different way&quot; (CRR, 4/16).</td>
<td>&quot;Students should start discussion relating the book to personal events or feelings because this helps them understand multiple perspectives&quot; (CRR, 2/12).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;You get more meaning out of a story by hearing others perspectives&quot; (FCI, 4/19).</td>
<td>&quot;Discussions can help students that learn differently&quot; (FCI, 4/19).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Discussion enabled me to see and understand the different ways people learn to read and understand&quot; (EMV, 5/27).</td>
<td>&quot;It is important to model to students how to make and share their connections&quot; (FCI, 4/19).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Hearing and making connections with group members helped me enjoy reading again&quot; (EMV, 5/27).</td>
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The case studies and narrative excerpts detail the positive influence and support of discussing literature and professional readings within the peer community. For example, Abby who hated to read when she began this course stated that “discussion can get you to understand the story in a different way” (CRR, 4/16). In addition, the narratives speak to and imply the nature and interaction of the small group discussions that were a large part of the response-based exploration in this course. For Sidney, it was “hearing or coming in with that different perspective” (FCI, 4/16) that made the difference in group discussions. Each of the participants spoke of the necessity of making the classroom comfortable and non-threatening for students to be able to share. Bailey mentioned that it was this being “open in class, encouraging people to speak up and share their things” (FCI, 4/25) that made the peer discussion enjoyable, insightful, and not intimidating.

When comparing community back to previous experiences that influenced pre-service teachers’ reading perceptions, it is interesting to note how the category of community informed and influenced their current perceptions. All of the participants spoke about the notion of creating a comfortable environment in which to share books and responses. This category finding is not surprising because the course was set-up for students to experience this type of learning environment. It was through experiencing a supportive peer community and understanding multiple-perspectives that pre-service teachers reading perceptions were influenced. In addition, they realized these types of experiences would have an impact on their future classrooms.

For Olivia, she initially stated that she hated reading; there was no pleasure in it for her (PRJ, 3/26). Throughout the course she began to understand the value of reading and discussion with her fellow peers. “By discussing I could show and explain my thinking in
a way that made sense to me" (EMV, 3/2), and "Both the students and the teacher can
learn through and with each other" (EMV, 3/2). Olivia stated discussion is what "enables
students to look at a book differently" (CRR, 2/12). She summed up her feelings about
learning along with the students when she stated "How can anyone teach tomorrow’s
readers without first being a reader of today?" (EMV, 4/30).

It was also through multiple perspectives and sharing within the peer culture that
Bailey too appreciated sharing and response with books. Bailey initially stated that he
would study his teachers and answer with what he thought they wanted to hear, he rarely
actually understood what he was reading (CRR, 4/19). After participating in groups
discussions and sharing response with books, Bailey recognized that "hearing others
thoughts or difficulties with a book made me understand the book more" (EMV, 2/18).
He also stated that "expressing your opinion and thoughts with a group makes you
passionate about what you say and creates a desire to learn" (CRR, 3/5). It was through
sharing and discussing books that Bailey realized the importance of building a
community in the classroom to encourage sharing and discussing of books (CRR, 2/12).

Sidney came into the course loving to read and appreciating reading. Yet, she felt as
though stories she was forced to read in school did not often connect with her life. While
discussing books with her fellow classmates, Sidney realized that "sharing and discussing
really brought the class closer together" (PRJ, 1/29). Additionally, she recognized that
"hearing why others enjoyed a book actually made me enjoy the book more (EMV, 2/28)
and that "hearing others connections" allows you to think on and on, the book doesn’t
end where it ends (FCI, 4/16).
Abby started this course hating to read and feeling that it had “no role in her life” (PRJ, 1/17). It was through discussion and response with class members that she was able to “get more meaning out of a story by hearing other’s perspectives” (FCI, 4/19). She also recognized that it was important for her as a future teacher to “create a comfortable environment for students to share and discuss books without feeling threatened” (CRR, 1/31).

In classroom practice, reader response develops through the transaction between reader and text and encourages students to identify explanations, form their own opinions, and create meanings based upon their own individual experiences (Rosenblatt, 1978). Students’ rationalizations, opinions, and the meanings constructed are invited, encouraged, valued, and seen as beneficial in a reader-centered classroom. The excerpts presented represent the positive peer culture and community understanding that was created in part to the response-based group exploration of the course and through understanding and appreciation of the multiple perspectives presented and discussed with fellow class members. As stated above, participants directly related their positive understandings of sharing and discussion with the classroom. In addition, it is noteworthy that these pre-service teachers realized the value of multiple perspectives and that this type of learning experience was viewed as beneficial and desired in their future classrooms.

Making Connections

All of the participants spoke of a lack of connection with reading or reading materials they were forced to read. Since teachers play a significant role in encouraging children to
read, it is important to challenge teachers to promote engaged and motivating reading experiences for their students (Allington, 1994; Ruddell, 1995). Reading models affect readers, therefore, the teachers are influenced by their own model of reading or system of beliefs (Applegate & Applegate, 2004). Reader response theory offers possibilities for understanding the reading of a text from the point of view, recollections, life experiences, sentiments, thoughts, and perspectives of the individual reader -- what Langer (1994) refers to as “a horizon of possibilities” (p. 23). Therefore, in this course it was essential to provide pre-service teachers numerous opportunities and numerous resources with which to personally connect. The readings for this course were purposely selected to promote reactions through multi-layered, response-rich literature. Whether meeting with the peer groups discussed previously, or conversing about books and materials whole class, students were expected to thoughtfully ponder how they connected with the book or material read.

Throughout the course, all students spoke of different materials and books they connected with or didn’t connect with for various reasons. Although all the participants spoke of connections they made in the group discussions the researcher sat in on, the more significant finding was the participants’ thoughts and attitudes towards the potential power and sharing of these connections. Excerpts of the study participants’ attitudes and thoughts of personal connections are presented in the Table (4.9) that follows.
Table 4.9 Pre-service Teachers’ Connections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Connections</th>
<th>Perceptions Prior to the Course</th>
<th>Perceptions after Response-Based Exploration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Olivia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>“I often connected reading with work, reading with a test, reading with a three page essay” (PCI, 1/29). “I often didn’t know which book to choose and books I finally did end up picking I often didn’t find a connection with” (PRJ, 2/5).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>“I couldn’t connect with the story we were reading in class and had trouble comprehending it” (PCI, 1/29).</td>
<td>“There is always a book out there that someone can connect to” (CRR, 2/12). “Books that I connect with, I enjoy more” (PRJ, 2/26). “Open-ended response enabled me to display the knowledge I had learned form a book more easily and more personally” (EMV, 2/13). “I have realized that a teacher needs to enjoy reading and connect with it if they are to teach it” (EMV, 2/13). “Sharing what I felt gave me the sense that my being in the classroom mattered” (FCI, 4/23). “Reading doesn’t always have to connect with an assignment-you can read just to read” (PRJ, 2/5). “It’s important for students to explain their connections with books in their own ways” (EMV, 2/13). “It is important to connect books to students’ daily lives” (CRR, 2/5). “Questions that the teacher asks should help readers make connections to their lives” (CRR, 2/12). “Smaller groups allow everyone to share their own connections” (FCI, 4/23).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bailey</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Bailey</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“My father helped me see the connection with reading and good grades” (PCI, 1/31).</td>
<td>“Everything we go through in life connects with and is a result of previous events” (CRR, 1/29).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“There was no diversity or choice in reading at school; I just couldn’t connect with the stories” (FCI, 4/25).</td>
<td>“It is easier to remember, and you can connect with things that pertain to your own life” (EMV, 2/18).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>“I always tried to figure out the answer the teacher wanted, never thought about what I had learned or connected with” (CRR, 1/31).</td>
<td>Beliefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I hated being forced to read things I didn’t enjoy or connect with” (PCI, 1/31).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“I feel that stories that have morals and interests for the students will enable them to connect and relate with the books” (PCI, 1/31).</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I feel that reading and re-reading stories can help students connect with and understand books better” (PCI, 1/31).</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sidney</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Sidney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Reading was always positive; I could escape from life and family problems (PCI, 1/31).</td>
<td>“I was surprised when I made the connection that not everyone enjoys reading” (LJR, 1/30).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I am often able to reconnect with my past by re-reading books” (CRR, 2/11).</td>
<td>“Learning from each others connections makes the curriculum more personal” (PRJ, 2/12).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I learned about and connected with families in books that weren’t dysfunctional like mine” (FCI, 4/16).</td>
<td>“Hearing the connections others made with books and authors I enjoyed helped us find common ground” (LJR, 1/30).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I love to share when I got from a book with others” (FCI, 4/16).</td>
<td>“There are now a variety of genres I connect with after learning about them” (PRJ, 3/5).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Seeing a fellow classmate learn to enjoy reading through relating to the story and making connections was a powerful experience for me” (FCI, 4/16).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sidney</td>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>Abby</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;I can vividly recall me and my fellow classmates crying to a reading of <em>Where the Red Fern Grows</em>&quot; (PCI, 1/31).</td>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I was often able to get the 'right answer' by using Cliff Notes, but I rarely personally connected with books at school&quot; (CRR, 3/27).</td>
<td>&quot;Students must be able to connect with the curriculum to establish learning on their own&quot; (PRJ, 2/21).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;You should encourage kids to bring books they have enjoyed and share why they connected with them&quot; (PRJ, 2/26).</td>
<td>&quot;Learning about and sharing each others connections brings the class together&quot; (EMV, 2/28).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Allowing students to personalize learning and make connections with what they learn is more meaningful to them&quot; (CRR, 3/27).</td>
<td>&quot;Through understanding connections with books, students learn that books are life experiences, not just school experiences&quot; (FCI, 4/16).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Through a personal touch is often needed with reading; find out the interests of your students&quot; (FCI, 4/16).</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;I learned how important reading is to other people, and realized that I need to enjoy reading too&quot; (PRJ, 1/29).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Because I didn't read, I think that I had a hard time finding books I connected with&quot; (PRJ, 1/29).</td>
<td>&quot;I found books that I could connect or relate to and I actually enjoyed them&quot; (PRJ, 3/5).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Reading wasn't fun because I didn't connect with it and had a hard time comprehending&quot; (PCI, 1/31).</td>
<td>&quot;Reading a book twice to understand it better made me understand the connections with it I had&quot; (FCI, 4/19).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Talking with fellow group members brought about further connections&quot; (FCI, 4/19).</td>
<td>&quot;I have realized that a teacher needs to enjoy reading and connect with it if they are to teach it&quot; (FCI, 4/19).</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As presented in the chart and the case study sketches, the study participants’
connections with reading and thinking about reading as a future teacher were influenced
by the response-based explorations they experienced throughout the course. An
interesting finding that emerged from the analysis of the personal connections category
was that the participants made the connection between their prior experiences and their
reading perceptions. Bailey, Olivia, and Abby became aware that many of their previous
negative experiences with reading and literature had to do with the fact that they were
forced to read books with which they could not connect. They understood how this
affected their reading interests and stated that this was an issue they hoped to address in
their future classrooms. All of the participants spoke about the value of discovering their
students’ interests to make better choices in selecting literature for them to read. They
realized they had to select literature that would promote and encourage personal
connections.
The case study narratives revealed that pre-service teachers understood the importance of choosing quality literature and creating experiences in the classroom that help students make connections. Thinking back to her previous experiences with reading, Olivia recalled that she “couldn’t connect with the story [they] were reading in class and had trouble comprehending” (PCI, 1/29). When reflecting on literature circle discussions, she revealed that “books I connect with, I enjoy more” (PRJ, 2/26). Olivia understood that ‘There is always a book out there someone can connect to” (CRR, 2/12). It was through sharing and understanding connections that Olivia began to appreciate reading again.

Bailey had a similar experience. Bailey’s prior experiences with reading left him with “no choice” in reading materials that he just “couldn’t connect with” (PCI, 4/25). His negative perception of reading began to change through this course. He began to understand that “learning from each other’s connections makes the curriculum more personal” (PRJ, 2/12). He realized the importance of this for his future classroom and felt that his “job is to challenge students on a personal and individual level. We must learn their connections and interests” (PRJ, 3/19). Although Bailey’s prior-experience did not provide him with many opportunities to connect and enjoy literature, it was through the connections he made in this course that he was able to comprehend the power of connecting with literature and realize that was an essential element that should be a part of his classroom.

Sidney was shocked at the beginning of the course when she discovered that “not everyone enjoys reading” (LJR, 1/30). Although Sidney never struggled with reading and enjoyed it throughout her life, she “rarely personally connected with books at school”
(CRR, 3/27). She realized that it was through hearing others connections and understandings of a book that “made the curriculum more personal” (PRJ, 2/12). Personal connections discovered through her classmates or through her own reading became “a powerful experience” for her (FCI, 4/16). It was through discussions and responding to literature that she understood that “you should encourage kids to bring books they have enjoyed and share why they connected with them” (PRJ, 2/26), and that “students must be able to connect with the curriculum to establish learning on their own” (PRJ, 2/21).

Abby suspected that it was because she didn’t read that she had “a hard time finding books [she] connected with” (PRJ, 1/29). It was through discussions and hearing classmates’ reactions to books that she “found books that [she] could connect or relate to and [she] actually enjoyed them” (PRJ, 3/5). She also made the connection of “how important reading is to other people and realized that [she] needs to enjoy reading too” (PRJ, 1/29). It was through discussions and making connections with her prior experiences and her current reading enjoyment that Abby thought about her future classroom. She realized that “when kids can connect with books they have more fun reading them” (FCI, 4/19). Abby further stated that “making connections really helps students understand what they are reading and look deeper into it” (CRR, 2/12).

Looking across the multiple cases presented, all participants understood the importance of making connections with reading and in thinking about how their future students could connect with reading. The participants mentioned that a positive classroom community was important and that sharing during discussions enabled them to understand other’s viewpoints. They were often able to connect their own learning with what a classmate had stated. It was these connections that made reading personal and
meaningful to each of them. Due in part to this understanding, the four pre-service teachers began to understand the importance of reading and responding to texts from the point of view, recollections, life experiences, sentiments, thoughts, and perspectives of each individual reader. As Sidney stated, it was through connections that students would understand reading was not just about school, it was about life. It was also through their guidance of forming connections and personal understanding that these pre-service teachers felt that their students would become lifelong readers and learners.

Perception of Reading

A noteworthy category that emerged through analysis was perception. The subcategories of change and the notion of thinking as a teacher were observable behaviors during classroom explorations and interviews. Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (2000) and Applegate and Applegate (2004) discovered that teachers who read regularly often modeled positive reading skills and behaviors in their classrooms. Researchers have determined that beliefs about reading have an important relation to both engagement and understanding during reading. Positive beliefs or perceptions of reading (Mathewson, 1994; McKenna, 1994) translate directly into higher levels of motivation and better understanding (Schraw & Bruning, 1999). Every reader brings some type of implicit model; a belief system that affects one’s goals and strategies for reading, to the task of reading (Hynds, 1990). Therefore, it was essential to look at the study participants’ beliefs and perceptions of reading. At the beginning of the course, all of the participants had different perspectives towards reading. By the end of the course, these participants had all formed similar perceptions of how reading and reading experiences would be
conducted in their future classrooms. Excerpts of the study participants' perceptions and thoughts towards reading and their future classrooms are presented in the Table (4.10) and summary on the following page.

As presented in the following table and the case study sketches, the study participants' attitudes towards reading and thinking about reading as a future teacher were influenced by the response-based explorations they experienced throughout the course. These pre-service teachers were guided in creating robust reading identities based upon both past experiences and current theory and practice. Therefore, it was imperative to bring heightened awareness of various reading response explorations, provide opportunities for personal reflection, as well as offering students multiple ways of promoting thinking that enable these pre-service teachers to visibly understand their connections and attitudes towards reading.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception</th>
<th>Perceptions Prior to the Course</th>
<th>Perceptions after Response-Based Exploration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Olivia</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>“I hated reading, always felt as though something bad was following it” (PCI, 1/29).</td>
<td>“I need to model reading as being positive for the students (CRR, 2/5).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I struggled with reading and comprehension” (PRJ, 2/5).</td>
<td>“You can read just to read or discuss, don’t have to have a written assignment” (CRR, 2/12).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I have always viewed reading as boring (PRJ, 2/26).</td>
<td>“I will actively read with my students to model thinking and comprehension skills while reading aloud” (CRR, 2/12).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom</td>
<td>“Reading at school was just for work” (PCI, 1/29).</td>
<td>“You should show them reading can be fun, not just busy work or assignments, expand the book and topics to all areas of the curriculum” (FCI, 4/23).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I see the value of reading, and plan to read to my students’ everyday after recess (PRJ, 2/26).</td>
<td>“Allow both books and students to create the curriculum-see where they [the students] want to go” (CRR, 3/4).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bailey</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>“I’ve always enjoyed reading and it was easy for me” (PCI, 1/31).</td>
<td>“I want to treat reading as a reward and treat-make them look forward to it” (PRJ, 3/5).</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>“Being forced to read things I didn’t like changed my attitude towards reading” (CRR, 1/29).</td>
<td>“I will need to consider students’ interests when constructing experiences”(CRR,3/26).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom</td>
<td>“The one right Answer in the teacher’s head turned me off towards reading” (CRR, 2/12).</td>
<td>“You should leave room for responses to be creative and original; our discussions should lead students rather than just answer” (CRR, 3/26).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I think reading in my future classroom will be to fill time or entertain” (EMV, 2/18).</td>
<td>“Books are to be interpreted and can generate curriculum” (FCI, 4/25).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Growing up, I sometimes felt as though things I was asked to read or learn about would never be used” (FCI, 4/25).</td>
<td>“If you show enthusiasm for learning and make students understand how it relates to their lives, they will enjoy reading” (FCI, 4/25).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sidney</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Classroom</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Reading was an escape” (PRJ, 1/29).</td>
<td>“Reading was an escape” (PRJ, 1/29).</td>
<td>“Reading was an escape” (PRJ, 1/29).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Reading was positive, nothing but positive for me (PCI, 1/31).”</td>
<td>“Reading was positive, nothing but positive for me (PCI, 1/31).”</td>
<td>“Reading was positive, nothing but positive for me (PCI, 1/31).”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Reading was always easy for me” (PCI, 1/31).</td>
<td>“Reading was always easy for me” (PCI, 1/31).</td>
<td>“Reading was always easy for me” (PCI, 1/31).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Classroom</strong></td>
<td><strong>Self</strong></td>
<td><strong>Classroom</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Since I was in the accelerated program, I was able to work at my own pace (PCI, 1/31).”</td>
<td>“I realized that not everyone is positive towards reading, I need to help them learn to enjoy it” (PRJ, 1/29).</td>
<td>“It is important to give students time they need to get the meaning” (CRR, 2/11).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“In my future classroom, literature should be shared when there is time, if possible” (PCI, 1/31).</td>
<td>“It will be important to model how much I enjoy reading and share why” (LJR, 1/30).</td>
<td>“I see now that literature can drive the curriculum, it’s not just an extra” (FCI, 4/16).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abby</th>
<th>Self</th>
<th>Classroom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Literature has no role in my life. I haven’t selected a book to read in years” (PRJ, 1/17).</td>
<td>“Reading is so important for everything that you do or learn about” (LJR, 2/5).</td>
<td>“Reading is so important for everything that you do or learn about” (LJR, 2/5).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I had a hard time with reading as a child (PRJ, 1/29).”</td>
<td>“You should allow students to write down things they can relate to while reading and after” (CRR, 2/7).</td>
<td>“You should allow students to write down things they can relate to while reading and after” (CRR, 2/7).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I was good at math so it was OK not to be good at reading (PCI, 1/31).”</td>
<td>“Students need to feel comfortable with reading” (CRR, 2/12).</td>
<td>“Students need to feel comfortable with reading” (CRR, 2/12).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I struggled, so I gave up and just didn’t do it” (LJR, 2/5).”</td>
<td>“Make the activities and experiences fun and exciting so they actually want to read” (FCI, 4/19</td>
<td>“Make the activities and experiences fun and exciting so they actually want to read” (FCI, 4/19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Classroom</strong></td>
<td><strong>Self</strong></td>
<td><strong>Classroom</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Reading is just something extra for my students to do” (PCI, 1/31).”</td>
<td>“I need to show students my positive attitude about reading-it can be fun” (CRR, 4/16).</td>
<td>“I need to show students my positive attitude about reading-it can be fun” (CRR, 4/16).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Reading was not very fun for me in school. I think if it were more fun I would have enjoyed it more” (PCI, 1/31).”</td>
<td>“It is important to have strategies and experiences that get students enjoying the books and interested in them” (CRR, 4/16).</td>
<td>“It is important to have strategies and experiences that get students enjoying the books and interested in them” (CRR, 4/16).</td>
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</table>
For Olivia, the change in attitude towards reading was especially apparent. She entered into this course “hating reading” and always feeling as though “something bad was following it” (PCI, 1/29). It was through read alouds, discussions and response-based exploration that Olivia’s negative perceptions of reading began to change. She quickly realized, “I need to model reading as being positive for the students” (CRR, 2/5). She also realized that you can “read just to read”; you don’t always have to have a written assignment with a book (CRR, 2/12). She realized that her attitude and tone would set the mood her students had about reading. She bluntly stated, “How can anyone teach tomorrow’s readers without first being a reader of today?” (EMV, 4/30).

Baileys’ attitude towards reading was negative at the beginning of this course because of prior experiences of forced reading in school. He initially stated that reading would be simply “to fill time or entertain” in his future classroom (EMV, 2/18). He quickly realized that his past experiences did not need to be what happened in his classroom. “You are there to promote learning for them and promote reading” (EMV, 4.25). “I think it is the teacher’s job to find good books that the students are interested in” (FCI, 4/25). Bailey experienced an attitude change through the semester. He realized that if he “show[ed] enthusiasm for learning and [made] students understand how it relat[ed] to their lives, they [would] enjoy reading” (FCI, 4/25).

Even though Sidney enjoyed reading, and viewed it as “nothing but positive”, she came into the course stating that “literature should be shared when there is time, if possible” (PCI, 1/31). Throughout the course, she realized that even though she had a positive attitude towards reading, many people didn’t. It was this understanding that made her realize “students need to be comfortable with reading” (CRR, 2/12) and that she
needed to “make activities and experiences with books fun and exciting so they actually want to read” (FCI, 4/19). It was through witnessing a fellow student’s negative attitude towards reading change that Sidney understood the power of literature and reading. She realized that students can learn to enjoy reading and that literature “can drive the curriculum, it’s not just extra” (FCI, 4/16).

For Abby, a major shift in attitude occurred when she thought about her negative attitude towards reading and how this could affect her future students. At the beginning of the course she stated that literature had “no role in her life” (PRJ, 1/17) and that she didn’t think “anyone enjoyed [reading]” (PRJ, 1/31). It was through this course that Abby’s attitude towards reading began to change. She stated, “I did hate to read, but it’s getting a lot better” (CRR, 4/16). “I didn’t understand the importance of reading for all students because I didn’t like it. I have now realized that it is extremely important for everyone” (PRJ, 4/09). She understood that, “I need to show students my positive attitude about reading, it can be fun!” (CRR, 4/16).

Summary

Looking across the multiple cases presented, the participants all experienced changes in their attitudes towards reading and in thinking about how their future students would learn about reading. These attitude changes occurred in varying degrees, but all students reported a positive attitude change towards the value of reading and about teaching reading, even Olivia and Abby who came into the course with negative perceptions of reading. Among each of the participants, they stated that reading was going to be a positive, enthusiastic, and personal experience for their future students. These pre-service
teachers’ attitudes were informed and influenced and they have begun to give serious consideration towards reading and of the role of response-based explorations in their own lives, as well as in their future students.

Regardless of previous studies stating that teacher education courses often don’t make a difference for pre-service teachers (Goodlad, 1991; Meade 1991; Sumpter, 1995), and that they often revert to teach the way they were taught. The study findings seem to indicate that pre-service teachers’ perceptions of reading can be both informed and influenced through reflection of their prior experiences and through experiencing and participating in response-based explorations. Chapter five addresses the findings that emerged and discusses the implications of data analysis. This chapter also suggests further areas of research that could be pursued in relation to these findings.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This study sought to understand the prior experiences that defined pre-service teachers' reading perceptions and to understand how response-based explorations in a children's literature course informed and influenced their existing perceptions of reading. The study was not an evaluation of the children's literature course, but examined response-based explorations within the context of the course. The focus was not to assess response-based explorations, but to capture the participants' process and experiences with response-based learning and to analyze the influences on their perceptions of reading.

In this qualitative multi-case study, I examined a children's literature course at South Western University (SWU). The primary data sources were pre- and post-class interviews, response-based course artifacts (assignments produced by students for coursework), participants' reflection journal, and a researcher's log with analytical memos. The multi-case qualitative study design helped me to examine and understand the local meaning that participants constructed during their experiences with response-based explorations (Wolcott, 1999). Through this dissertation I sought to answer the prior experiences that defined pre-service teachers' perceptions of reading, and how response-based explorations inform and influence pre-service teachers' reading perceptions.
In Chapter Four, I presented the contexts in which prior experiences defined pre-service teachers' reading perceptions. I further explored the concepts of community, personal connection and perception, which were constructed from the data on response-based exploration, to illustrate how these concepts manifested in the course context and influenced the pre-service teachers’ perceptions of reading. The study’s findings indicated there was a strong relationship with prior experiences and current reading perceptions. There were similarities among early preconceptions and how they shaped the form in which pre-service teachers assimilated new information gained through response-based exploration in the children's literature course.

The analysis revealed that pre-service teachers entered the children’s literature course impacted by both positive and negative experiences with reading. These experiences shaped their attitudes and perceptions towards reading. As Olivia aptly stated, “we all have these little bumps on the road to reading” (FCI, 4/23). All four participants realized that their present attitudes and perceptions of reading were often shaped by their experiences. It was further determined that response-based exploration informed and influenced pre-service teachers. Response-based explorations impacted their thoughts and experiences with reading in their classrooms and changed their personal attitudes towards reading.

The current initiatives and reforms of the No Child Left Behind Act (2002) forces teacher educators to focus on the critical aspect of teacher preparation and university programs to support the growth and professional development of pre-service teachers. Pre-service teacher education programs would benefit from acknowledging these prior experiences and preconceptions and providing opportunities to examine these beliefs.
early on in their coursework. Designing high quality children’s literatures courses that utilize best practices in reader response theory and constructivist teaching and investing the time to foster critical self reflection practices would allow pre-service teachers the opportunity to examine themselves first as learners and would further support their professional growth in a way that would be personally meaningful to them.

Analysis of prior experiences and of the response-based explorations presented a complex picture of the influences on pre-service teachers’ reading perceptions. Observing this in the children’s literature course provided a context in which I observed various elements of pre-service teachers’ development and practice. In this chapter I discuss the findings in light of the theories presented previously in this study (reader response, teacher knowledge and preparation, socio-constructivism) and possible practical implications (policy and curriculum). Finally, I synthesize what I have learned and extend its possibilities to make it useful for teacher educators, course planners, and policy makers.

Prior Experiences Defining Reading Perceptions

In this study, a total of eight participants were plotted on the subject selection matrix, participated in a pre-course interview, and then were selected for analysis of their reading perceptions in the children’s literature course. After the initial data analysis, micro-analysis, and coding, four pre-service teachers were then selected for in-depth case study analysis from the semester long children’s literature course.

At the start of this course, pre-service teachers participated in various experiences and interviews that enabled them to think about and uncover what prior experiences had
influenced their reading perceptions. According to Bruner (1990), identity is not only socially and culturally mediated, but is also represented through the narratives that people use to describe their own actions and interactions with others. Bruner (1990) encouraged using research to discover how identity is defined by both the individual and by the culture in which they participate. In looking at experiences that defined pre-service teachers’ reading perceptions, the influences of family, self-perceptions, and school were common threads running through participants’ data, as revealed in the analysis. Family and school experiences often led to self perceptions, both positive and negative, towards reading.

Many pre-service teachers enter educational programs with predisposed beliefs to personal theories of good teaching that are based upon their own previous life experiences (Bird, Anderson, Sullivan & Swidler, 1993; Calderhead & Robson, 1991; Scharer, 1992). Every reader brings some type of implicit model, a belief system that affects one’s goals and strategies for reading, to the task of reading (Hynds, 1990). Schraw and Bruning (1999) determined that implicit models of reading constitute belief systems that increase or decrease motivation to read depending on the type of beliefs readers hold about themselves.

Research on the effectiveness of teacher preparation courses is somewhat disturbing. In general, the impact of teacher education on practice seems to be meager or, at best, somewhat unclear (Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998). Teaching is one of the few professions everyone has experienced throughout their life, and therefore they feel qualified to speak about teaching or methods. As Blume (1971) states, “teachers teach as they are taught, and not as they are taught to teach”. Even inexperienced teachers usually
consider teaching an easy task and believe they are prepared to teach even before entering a teacher preparation program (Britzman, 2003). Joram and Gabriele (1998) identified the pre-service teachers often felt that university courses had nothing to offer them and that they could learn how to be a good teacher by copying their past teachers. Because these beliefs are embedded in their life stories, researchers argue that these beliefs are stable and resistant to change (Joram & Gabriele, 1998; Richardson, 2001).

It was imperative to make students aware that the methods by which they were taught were not always the best practices. Therefore, it was essential to provide opportunities for pre-service teachers to reflect on ways and means that they were taught or influenced by and to thoughtfully ponder theory presented in this course in conjunction with their previous experiences in school.

We often “send teachers into the classroom naked, in terms of ammunition to meet the needs of the students,” says Darling-Hammond (as quoted in Gardner, 2006). Many researchers emphasize the usefulness of relating university coursework to actual classroom teaching (Goodlad, 1991; Meade 1991; Sumpter, 1995). Future teachers need to know how students learn and develop and how they acquire and use language. They must understand their subject matter and the purposes of curriculum. In addition, they should know and understand teaching - how to teach subject matter so it can be understood by diverse learners, how to assess learning, and how to manage a classroom effectively (Gardner, 2006).

Each of the case studies revealed the categories of family, school, and self-perceptions that cut across the data for each of the study participants. Study participants had positive and negative experiences in each of these categories. Family experiences
typically influenced the participants at early stages of reading, whether it was reading to
them or encouraging their reading. All of the participants talked about their family’s
support of reading, even if family members didn’t directly model reading. Even though
the majority of the participants had positive experiences of reading with family and in
school, they often did not have a positive perception towards reading.

When completing the cross-case analysis of the four study participants, all four
participants spoke about family and school influences throughout their lives. Further
analysis revealed that through the influences of family and school, self perceptions were
often formulated about reading in both positive and negative aspects. Gambrell (1996)
states that “teachers become reading models when they share their own reading
experiences with students and emphasize how reading enhances and enriches their lives
(p. 20) and it is in these classrooms where reading motivation is fostered.

This study extends the research completed by Bransford et al. (2000) suggesting a
need for exploring prior conceptions and experiences among pre-service teachers and
providing a rich description of common perceptions. Further, Hoffman et al. (2005)
suggested a need for examining pre-service teachers’ assumptions of teaching and their
own literary histories. By making participants aware and reflecting on their prior
experiences with reading, this enabled them to begin to understand how their
backgrounds and experiences had informed and influenced their current reading
perceptions. It was also through this understanding of prior experiences that I was able
determine participants’ backgrounds and perceptions of reading and to then later compare
how response-based explorations influenced these perceptions.
The Influence of Response-based Explorations

This study’s findings revealed that it is through reader response and multiple perspectives that pre-service teachers come to understand themselves and how their teaching identities are informed and influenced not only by prior experiences, but also by their responses to literature, and through interactions with fellow classmates and the instructor. Posner (1996) states “the foundations of education help us raise questions and supply concepts about our own teaching practices” (p. 67).

Kagan (1992) and Richardson (2001) suggest that in order for change to happen, pre-service teachers must be willing to examine their assumptions and beliefs about their teaching philosophy and to take risks and apply new ideas into their practice. I argue through this dissertation’s findings, that methods we instruct pre-service teachers with should be relevant to their lives, values and interests. Pre-service teachers begin to develop their guiding set of theoretical principles in their early stages of teacher preparation (Hoewisch, 2000). It is during this stage that instructors could scaffold courses and course assignments that encourage the understanding of literacy perceptions and practices in shaping identity. Pre-service teachers cannot be expected to know how to use literature as a purposeful and meaningful education tool, unless we teach them this.

It is important to “provide pre-service teachers with supportive opportunities to select, read, and analyze literature in order to construct criteria for themselves about …what is great literature for sharing with children” (Hoewisch, 2000, p. 5). This experience is essential because literate practices play a role in identifications and positioning, and “who students are influenced by, how they interact, respond, and learn in classrooms” (McCarthey & Moje, 2002, p. 229). We must remind pre-service teachers that they are
constantly readers as they go about their lives. As college instructors, we must talk with them about the variety of ways students engage in reading and for what purposes.

Rosenblatt (1978) argues that readers need to first share their thoughts, feelings, and connections from their individual transactions with a text. It is through this that pre-service teachers learn to take "intellectual responsibility for their interpretations and to support their responses by referencing the text and their lives" (Fahrenbruck, Schall, Short, Smiles & Storie, 2006, p. 28). This study's findings revealed that multiple perspectives, response-based explorations, and questioning or understanding prior experiences all worked to influence pre-service teachers' perceptions of reading and in thinking about the role of reading in their future classrooms. The following figure (5.5) details these influences.

Figure 5.5. Influences on Pre-service Teachers' Reading Perceptions.
Community

In this study, community and the sharing and understanding of multiple perspectives was a common thread that ran throughout the data sources analyzed. It was not only understanding themselves and their own backgrounds as readers, but also through experiencing and understanding their classmates’ backgrounds that participants came to understand their perspectives toward reading. The data suggested that community manifested in several different ways through multiple perspectives and the peer culture. In this children’s literature course, the elements of a strong peer culture became apparent. As the study progressed, issues related to the pre-service teachers’ response-based explorations started to connect with the classroom context and their shared culture.

Corsaro (1997) defines peer culture as, “a stable set of activities or routines, artifacts, values and concerns that are produced and shared with peers” (p. 95). The pre-service teachers in the classroom and study actively contributed to and created their own peer cultures.

Much of the early research on reader response did not look into how readers developed through participation in communities of practice (Galda & Beach, 2001). In this study, it was important to discover how teaching practice and classroom content shape responses. Furthermore, it was important to look at the multi-faceted socio-cultural nature of response and what it meant for classroom instruction. Researchers state that more research is needed that addresses the developmental processes pre-service teachers go through as they learn to teach with literature (Brindley & Laframboise, 2002). Anders, Hoffman, and Duffy (2000) conclude:

While there has been an increase in teacher education research in the most recent decade we still struggle with conceptions of teacher knowledge, beliefs, attitudes
and habits—how they are formed, how they are affected by programs and how they impact development over time (p. 725).

The findings of this study reveal that pre-service teachers reacted and responded positively toward the notion of community and multiple perspectives through participating in response-based explorations. These included literary journeys, literature circles, and personal text sets. In their reflection journals, chapter reflections, clarification interviews and final interviews, all of the participants spoke of the importance of community, and in making students feel comfortable and relaxed when responding to books. They also noted the importance of hearing multiple perspectives about books. Through responding and hearing multiple perspectives, the pre-service teachers stated that their own perspectives towards reading were often influenced. In addition, they all reported how necessary it would be to incorporate multiple perspectives and to provide a strong supportive community of readers in their future classrooms.

The findings uncover the power of response and discussion and the notion of community in the classroom. It was through hearing and understanding multiple-perspectives that pre-service teachers recognized that reader-response encourages students to be aware of what they bring to texts as readers, and helps them recognize the backgrounds of others (Rosenblatt, 1995). They further understood that reading and response to reading could occur with fellow students and not just the teacher. It was this type of experience that encouraged students to learn both from and with each other.

*Connection*

In this study, all students spoke of different materials and books they connected with or didn’t connect with for various reasons. The study participants’ connections with
reading and thinking about reading as a future teacher were influenced by the response-based explorations they experienced throughout the course. An interesting finding that was constructed from the analysis of the personal connections category was that the study participants made the connection between their prior experiences and their reading perceptions. Bailey, Olivia, and Abby became aware that many of their previous negative experiences with reading and literature had to do with the fact that they were forced to read books with which they couldn’t connect. They understood how this affected their reading interests and stated that this was an issue they hoped to address in their future classrooms.

Teaching needs to become an active process that helps students to build upon their prior knowledge. Many teachers have difficulties with creating units of study out of seemingly unrelated curricula; they often are not able to find that single unifying strand that produces clarity. Without this focus, students are left to suffer through unrelated and confusing single lessons (James & Zarrillo, 1989). This simply relates back to the time and curriculum constraints felt by teachers and imposed by districts. “More studies of the complex, personal, and interpersonal understandings that characterize the process of becoming a reading teacher” should be completed (Anders et al., 2000, p. 732). This study examined the prior experiences that defined pre-service teachers’ reading perceptions and took into consideration how response-based exploration in an undergraduate children’s literature course influenced these pre-service teachers’ reading perceptions.

The findings of this study revealed that pre-service teachers made connections not only to literature and books read throughout the course, but also to previous experiences
with reading that formed their current perspectives towards reading. The participants mentioned the importance of community and sharing during discussions enabled them to understand other’s viewpoints and to connect their own learning with what a classmate had stated. It was these connections that made reading personal and meaningful to each of them. Due in part to these connections, pre-service teachers began to understand the importance of reading and responding to texts from the point of view, recollections, life experiences, sentiments, thoughts, and perspectives of each individual reader. It was through connections that these pre-service teachers’ understood that reading was more than just school, it was about life. It would also be through their guidance and sharing of forming connections and personal understanding that their future students would become lifelong readers and learners.

Perceptions

A noteworthy category that emerged through analysis was change in perception. Changes in perception of reading and the notion of thinking as a teacher were observable behaviors during classroom explorations and interviews. The study participants’ perceptions towards reading and thinking about reading as a future teacher were influenced by the response-based explorations they experienced throughout the course. Looking across the multiple cases presented, one can see that all participants experienced changes in their perception of reading and in thinking about how their future students will be taught reading. These changes in perception occurred in varying degrees, but all students reported a positive change towards the value of reading and teaching reading, even Olivia and Abby who came into the course with negative perceptions of reading.
Researchers have determined that beliefs about reading have an important relation to both engagement and understanding during reading. Positive beliefs or attitudes about reading (Mathewson, 1994; McKenna, 1994) translate directly into higher levels of motivation and better understanding (Schraw & Bruning, 1999). Every reader brings some type of implicit model; a belief system that affects one’s goals and strategies for reading, to the task of reading (Hynds, 1990). Regardless if reading was viewed positively or negatively, all of the pre-service teachers spoke about the importance of presenting reading in a positive light. They all mentioned they would show enthusiasm for and create positive attitudes towards reading with their future students. Pre-service teachers’ attitudes towards reading were positively influenced; and they have begun to give serious consideration towards reading and of the role of response-based explorations in their own lives, as well as in their future students’ lives.

The findings revealed that even though pre-service teachers often (3 of the 4 participants) entered into the course with negative perceptions towards reading, these negative attitudes and perceptions changed. Although prior-experiences do impact pre-service teachers as readers, response-based explorations enabled them to see that oftentimes their negative attitudes were unjustified and unwarranted. They further understood the importance of being a positive role model in regards to reading. Olivia stated, “How can one teach tomorrow’s readers without first being a reader of today?” (EMV, 4/30). Abby realized “I don’t think I could be a teacher without at least enjoying reading a little bit” (FCI, 4/19). It was this change in thinking about reading that got pre-service teachers not only thinking about their perceptions of reading, but also about how
they need to portray reading for their future students. These findings reveal the power and influence of response-based explorations.

Implications

While this qualitative multi-case study does not allow for generalization of results to large populations, the study does make unique contributions to the fields of reader response and teacher knowledge and preparation. By juxtaposing these two fields, this study identifies essential issues and challenges for teacher educators and presents the pre-service teachers' voices as participants with response-based explorations. With the insight gained from this study, teacher educators should be mindful of the backgrounds and experiences students bring to a course. They should provide opportunities for students to explore and understand how their previous experiences have shaped their attitudes and current perceptions. It is important to understand that pre-service teachers enter our course with prior-experiences that have influenced them both positively and negatively. One also needs to further understand that these perceptions can be informed and influenced through instructors' teaching practices and philosophies.

Teacher Knowledge and Preparation

The findings in this study have implications for teacher educators and program planners as they make decisions regarding the content and focus of children's literature coursework. The findings suggest that the instructional strategies utilized in coursework programs have the potential to influence the eventual teaching practices of pre-service teachers. This would, in turn, lead to future teachers having a solid foundation in reader
response methodology and being able to implement key concepts and best practices in their future classrooms thereby influencing student achievement.

Pre-service teachers recognized the potential power of learning with and from fellow students. Through response-based exploration they learned about literature and about their perceptions of reading not only through the literature selected, but also through previous experiences, and through their classmates’ experiences and views as well. It is important to provide the students the opportunity and time to engage in professional dialogue about teaching practices and about what they see as beneficial for students.

Within the context of the children’s literature course, pre-service teachers engaged in response experiences that in turn enabled them to internalize and understand their possible influence on their future classrooms. The analysis revealed that response-based exploration made learning personally meaningful for pre-service teachers and had a significant impact on their re-thinking about reading and reading instruction. Olivia hated reading when she came in. Yet, through this response-based course approach she began to change her views towards reading. At the final interview she questioned, “How can anyone teach tomorrows readers without first being a reader of today?” (FCI, 4/23).

Abby, who also came into this course hating reading, echoed Olivia’s sentiments when she stated, “I don’t think I could be a teacher without at least enjoying reading a little bit” (FCI, 4/19). By making pre-service teachers aware that how they were taught doesn’t have to be the way they teach, we can change the future educational terrain. We can incorporate reading experiences that are meaningful for students and that promote connections.
These findings suggest that pre-service teachers do enter into their preparation programs with a wide variety of experiences that have already influenced their beliefs and perceptions about reading. Teacher preparation instructors should acknowledge and address that these beliefs can be resistant to change and can serve as a powerful lens to filter new information and learning in the course. If any long-lasting change is to occur, time should be devoted to constructivist teaching practices and self-reflection which support best practices in teacher knowledge theory. These types of teaching methods make the pre-service teachers aware of what they don’t know in order to receive new information (Cunningham et al., 2004) and probe for both correct prior knowledge and misconceptions (Shapiro, 2004). It should be noted that a program or course that supports pre-service teachers’ development, through the acknowledgement of their preconceptions and misconceptions, takes time. Looking at one’s own personal reading history places a value on how prior experiences and beliefs shape opinion and biases; and further how this affects teaching practices.

Sadly, an online survey reveals that teacher certification programs at state and private universities across the country have chosen to place the responsibility for children’s literature courses on community colleges, or they have merely given these courses “general education” status (Hoewisch, 2000). Teacher preparation programs need to include courses that instruct effective means for teaching with children’s literature and response-based practices. The study findings revealed that through the response-based course design, participants were able to determine that response-based practices enabled them to not only understand the value, but also to appreciate reading. As Sam aptly
stated, “I learned the importance of reading throughout every subject area of the curriculum...reading is important in every subject throughout our entire lives” (EMV, 5/27). The study participants furthermore realized how essential this type of instruction is for their future students. It was response-based explorations that made curriculum meaningful for learners. Students would be able to personalize their learning and understand what they are learning effects not only their schooling, but their lives.

As instructors we need to become aware of our philosophical stances towards teaching and learning. Contrary to previous research stating that teacher education courses have minimal influences on pre-service teachers (Goodlad, 1991; Meade, 1991), this study’s findings seem to suggest that our influence may stretch farther than we might think. We need to thoughtfully consider the structure and design of the courses we teach. We need to consider the learning experiences and model best practices for our students. This course was based on my philosophical stance of constructivist principles as presented through response-based exploration. Students not only spoke about the connections with literature, community participation and learning, and changes in attitude, they also began to see implications for their future classrooms. Sidney brought to my attention, “I appreciated being able to participate in the experiences and I learned so much from this class, things I can do...this class helped me to visualize what I can do in my classroom” (FCI, 4/16). Our instruction can make a difference, and by making students aware that the ways they learned were not always the best ways to learn, we can help to change the methods through which future students will learn.
Policy Makers

In addition to program content and teacher preparation programs, this study has implications for policy makers at the state and federal levels. Teacher preparation programs should be given more time to implement response-based practices in the classroom. By only focusing on teaching instructional strategies, there is little time given to exploring and directly challenge prior experiences or preconceptions held by teachers. The current program focus of a mile wide-inch deep format should be challenged and reexamined by future policy makers.

In the current political climate of endless tests, packaged curriculum, and scripted reading programs, there is little opportunity for students to connect with the curriculum or to construct meaning with the materials provided in the majority of classrooms. Even Bailey, who initially enjoyed reading, became discouraged because of his experiences with reading in school. He stated at the beginning of the course that “because school ends up giving you so much assigned reading, it kind of ruins reading for you. It really takes away the fun of it” (PCI, 1/31). It was the “boring” reading that pre-service teachers that were unable to connect with that influenced their perceptions of reading.

However, not all of their experiences were negative. Pre-service teachers spoke about those memorable prior experiences with meaningful literature, literature that allowed them to respond and connect with the books. They spoke about experiences with literature that had multiple layers of meanings and enabled powerful responses and connections that stuck with them long past the actual experience with the book in their classroom. These types of experiences continued to influence even their current perceptions of reading. It is these types of experiences that policy makers need to realize.
the importance of, and include these in the curriculum. Barbara stated that reading was
"not just about reading stories, it’s about life, it’s learning about life through books"
(FCI, 4/16). Students are not able to make long lasting, personally meaningful
connections with scripted reading programs. It is time that we begin to look at the
materials we are bringing into classrooms and see if these types of materials have any
lasting impact on student’s learning.

Recommendations for Future Research

While this study has addressed some of the gaps in the research pointed out in the
literature review, several directions for future inquiry have evolved from this study. The
research in this study contributes to a body of work that moves beyond prior, limited
analyses. Through this study, children’s literature teacher educators or education
professors may determine innovative measures and assessments and design pre-service
programs that recognize the individual ways of knowing that beginning teachers bring to,
and develop within their pre-service years.

I recognize that there is a need for further research that recognizes and understands
the social and life experiences and processes pre-service teachers go through in the
process of becoming a teacher. We need to know more about prior experiences and
influences that affect the teacher education process. There is a strong need for research
that investigates not only their current learning experiences, but the prior-experiences that
influence their philosophies today. I believe that studying pre-service teachers’ prior
experiences is crucial not only to improve teacher education, but also to expand our
understanding of the experiences of the pre-service teacher on their journey towards becoming a teacher.

The findings revealed that this course had significant impact on pre-service teachers considering their prior experiences and re-thinking their beliefs and perceptions of reading. The findings further revealed that participants often had positive attitudes about powerful multi-layered literature that provided them with memorable experiences. It is these types of materials that we need to look at the impact of in classrooms. Is the current political environment of endless tests and scripted reading providing students with the memorable experiences and materials needed to form positive attitudes towards reading? We need to take a serious look at the materials we are bringing into classrooms and determine if these materials are best suited for teaching needs.

Future research might also address and confront preconceptions in order to gauge program effectiveness in changing beliefs. Furthermore, it would be beneficial to follow these pre-service teachers into their future classrooms to see if these beliefs and reported knowledge gained from the course were sustained and observable in their teaching practices. Finally, I feel that research on this topic might need to start at an earlier stage. We should look at materials and approaches utilized throughout student’s school careers and determine what methods, practices, or materials may be turning them off to reading. It is time to understand the root of this reading dilemma.

Concluding Thoughts

I started this study with a strong conviction of the value of response-based exploration within the context of children’s literature course. During this study, I came to
realize the value of encouraging pre-service teachers in understanding their prior-experiences. I further understood that it was through the acknowledgement of their preconceptions and misconceptions that pre-service teachers were able to explore and understand how their previous experiences have shaped their attitudes and perceptions currently, and then were able to think about implications for their future classrooms and students.

This study’s theoretical framework is based on a socio-constructivist perspective to examine response-based explorations in a teacher education children's literature course. In this perspective, social context and multiple perspectives had a major influence on the response-based classroom explorations. In the beginning of the study, my understanding of socio-constructivism was mostly theoretical, but I did have experience implementing various constructivist practices with the public school children I educated. As the study progressed, my understanding of social context and multiple perspectives deepened. Through the research and findings with pre-service teachers on the influence of response-based explorations, my understanding of socio-constructivism, particularly relating to response-based explorations, has reached a higher level of conceptual understanding.

 Regardless of previous studies stating that teacher education courses often do not make a difference for pre-service teachers (Goodlad, 1991; Meade 1991; Sumpter, 1995), and that they often revert to teach the way they were taught, this was not revealed to be the case. The multi-case study findings indicate that pre-service teachers’ perceptions of reading can be influenced through reflection of their prior experiences, participation in response-based explorations, and through exposure to multiple-perspectives. Through this study I understood that when pre-service teachers are guided in creating robust
reading identities based upon both past experiences and current theory and practice, the issue of not feeling “unprepared” may help to change the future of the educational terrain. Above all, instructors, policy makers, teachers, and students need to see the necessity for change. This is going to be a struggle, but we need to give change a chance.
APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT FORM EXAMPLE

Purpose of the Study
You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to understand how response-based experiences in a children’s literature course identify and influence pre-service teacher’s perceptions of themselves as readers. You will be asked to think about your background as a reader and to participate in response-based experiences in this course and to see if these influence your perceptions of yourself as reader.

Participants
You are being asked to participate in the study because you are a student currently enrolled in Christine Jordan’s or (Cheryl’s), Spring 2007, ICG 415/615 Children’s Literature Course.

Procedures
Although all class members may sign the informed consent form, only 8 students will be selected for data analysis. If you volunteer to participate in this study, and if you are chosen as one of the eight participants, you may be asked to do the following: Participate in a minimum of two scheduled interviews (pre/post class). In addition, we may need to schedule additional interviews (up to three) for clarification purposes. The assignments you complete in this course will also be collected and utilized. If you sign this form and if you are chosen as a study participant, you give the researchers permission to use your course assignments for data analysis.

Benefits of Participation
There may not be direct benefits to you as a participant in this study. However, we hope to learn about pre-service teachers’ understandings of children’s literature, and how response-based experiences shape perceptions of reading. A summary of the report will be made available to you at the conclusion of this project. At this time, if you disagree with any of the researcher’s findings, you may choose to have this information removed before publication of the professional article.

Risks of Participation
There are risks involved in all research studies. This study may include only minimal risks. This study may include only minimal risks since reflecting on literature and thinking about personal connections could bring in personal memories or discomfort associated with the questions.

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Cost /Compensation
There will not be financial cost to you to participate in this study. The study will take the regular class time and additional time to complete required assignments outside of class. The semi-structured interviews will be conducted during course browsing time, which is the last 30 minutes of class as listed in the syllabus. You will not be compensated for your time. **SOUTH WESTERN UNIVERSITY may not provide compensation or free medical care for an unanticipated injury sustained as a result of participating in this research study.

Contact Information
If you have any questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Cyndi Giorgis at XXX-XXXX or Christine Jordan at XXX-XXXX. For questions regarding the rights of research subjects, any complaints or comments regarding the manner in which the study is being conducted you may contact the *SWU Office for the Protection of Research Subjects at XXX-XXX-XXXX.

Voluntary Participation
Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of this study. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice to your relations with the university. You are encouraged to ask questions about this study at the beginning or any time during the research study.

Confidentiality
All information gathered in this study will be kept completely confidential. No reference will be made in written or oral materials that could link you to this study. All records will be stored in a locked facility at *SWU for at least 6 years after completion of the study. After the storage time the information gathered will be destroyed.

Participant Consent:
I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study. I am at least 18 years of age. A copy of this form has been given to me.

_________________________  ________________
Signature of Participant    Date

Participant Name (Please Print)

_________________________
Signature of Participant

I have read the above information and agree to be audio taped in this study. I am at least 18 years of age. A copy of this form has been given to me.

_________________________  ________________
Signature of Participant    Date
Participant Name (Please Print)

Participant Note: Please do not sign this document if the Approval Stamp is missing or is expired.
APPENDIX B

STUDENT INFORMATION FORM

Student Information Form

Name: __________________________

Email: _________________________

Phone #: _______________________

Age Range: (circle one)

18-20  21-23  24-26  27-30  30-39  40+

Year in college: (circle one)

Sophomore  Junior  Senior  __________

Do you have children?   If yes, how many/list ages ____________________

Student Status: (circle one)

Part-time    Full-time  __________

What practicum experiences have you completed? (circle all that apply)

Practicum I  Practicum II  Other __________

What experience do you have in working with elementary students? (sub, tutor, etc)

________________________________________

What do you know about children’s literature?

________________________________________
APPENDIX C

COURSE SYLLABUS

“Preparing Professionals for Changing Educational Contexts”

Department of Curriculum & Instruction
College of Education, *SOUTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

ICG 415/CIL 615
Children’s Literature in the Elementary Curriculum
Spring 2007
Monday and Wednesday 10:00-11:15

Instructor: Christine Draper
Office: 
Phone: 
Email: 

**This course/syllabus designed by Dr. Cyndi Giorgis

Course Introduction

ICG 415/CIL 615 focuses on extensive and intensive reading of children’s literature and strategies for sharing it with children in the elementary classroom. We will examine children’s reading interests and needs as a basis for evaluation and selecting children’s literature. This course will provide class members with an opportunity to enjoy and discuss a wide variety of quality children’s books while experiencing various response strategies. Participants will also explore numerous authors and illustrators of children’s literature as well as exploring ways for integrating literature into the curricula. Various resources available on children’s literature will be examined. (3 credits) Prerequisite ICE 201.

General Course Objectives

The primary learning intent of this course is to facilitate your exploration of literature for children in a way that is personally meaningful to you. Strategies for using literature will be experienced as we interact with books and each other but is not the focus of the course. I will provide the basic framework for the course, but

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what and how much you learn will depend on the choices you make during each class period and in your independent reading and projects.

Knowledge
Prospective elementary teachers should be able:

• To exhibit a knowledge of an extensive array of children's literature
• To create criteria for evaluating and determining quality literature for children
• To explore various response strategies to assist the reader in gaining meaning from the text
• To determine how technology will support both teaching and learning

Performance (Skills)
Prospective elementary teachers should be able:

• To read and record over 100 books written and illustrated for children (INTASC 1)
• To participate in small and whole group discussions about literature (INTASC 2, 3, 4)
• To integrate relevant technology into the curriculum (INTASC 1, 5)
• To respond through written, oral, and aesthetic methods to literature (INTASC 1, 2, 6)

Dispositions
Prospective elementary teachers should be able:

• To make personal connections to literature related to their own life experiences (INTASC 1, 3, 4, 7)
• To gain ownership in the learning process by making choices within small group activities and individual projects (INTASC 1, 2, 3, 4)
• To reflect on various learning activities through written means, dialogue, and self-evaluations (INTASC 3, 7, 8, 9)
• To gain an understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures (INTASC 3, 8, 9)
• To explore, evaluate, and use technology for professional development and to integrate it into classroom teaching (INTASC 9)
• To recognize that learners require both choice and voice within a democratic classroom (INTASC 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9)

Results
Students in ICG 315 will demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and dispositions to infuse children's literature into their teaching and learning; plan, organize and deliver instruction in the following ways:
• Read and respond to a variety of children's literature (INTASC 1, 5)
• Develop criteria to determine quality children's literature (INTASC 1, 2, 4, 7)
• Locate instructional materials in the Curriculum Materials Library and from the Internet (INTASC 5)
• Create a portfolio that reflects their understanding of children's literature (INTASC 1, 2, 4, 5, 10)
• Reflect on the learning process (INTASC 10)

Required materials:
Textbook: Reading Aloud and Beyond: Fostering the Intellectual Life with Older Readers by Frank Serafini and Cyndi Giorgis
*Esperanza Rising by Pam Munoz Ryan (May borrow from instructor)
*Lit Study Books (May borrow from the instructor)
*Handouts & materials available from the instructor and posted on WebCampus

In this classroom, everyone is a student, everyone is a teacher.

LEARNING PROJECTS AND COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. Professionalism
   Participation and attendance are essential. You cannot participate if you are not here. You also cannot participate if you are unprepared. 5 POINTS will be deducted for each class missed. Beyond 2 absences will result in loss of points from your overall points for course assignments. In class assignments cannot be made up. You cannot make up for a discussion that you missed in class. Although, students participate in class discussions to various extents, each student is responsible for involving themselves in the class activities. You are expected to be in class by 10:00 a.m. and to stay until class has ended. If you arrive late (10:10 a.m.) or leave early (11:00 a.m.), 1 POINT will be deducted for each class in which this occurs.
   (Attendance= 10 points)

2. Reading Record/Reflection Journal
   Extensive and intensive reading of children's books is the primary focus of this course. Keep a reading record of all the books you read. The books you record can come from class sessions, the required textbooks, or books you gather from the CML or public library.
   The major function of the reading record is for you to write down information you think you will want for future uses of the book. This record is for your personal use. Please keep track of your books on note cards, using a template that can be organized within a notebook, or on a computer database. You must develop a system
of organization for your reading journal—so PLEASE do not use a spiral notebook as this does not allow you the flexibility to move your records around.

The reading for this course should be done each class session. There may be some days when you read fewer books than others, but this is not a project that you put off until it is due. This course is based on continuous reading of children's literature and you will greatly decrease your learning and participation in this class if you are not reading regularly throughout the course. At several designated times throughout the semester, you will share your reading record in whole group and small group formats.

Required Readings in Children's Literature:
* 10 picture books for each genre we discuss
* 5 Literature Study chapter books
* 10 Caldecott Award Winners
* Books for author study
* Additional reading of picture books and chapter books to bring your final total to a minimum of 100 books for the semester.

Required Information for Reading Record:
* Title, author, illustrator, publisher & copyright date
* Media used for illustration
* Brief summary of book (2-3 sentences. Avoid generalizations like "cute")
* Potential ways to share the book with child (lesson idea)
* Personal response, if any

Reflection Journal
Throughout the semester, please keep a record of the questions asked in class and your responses/reactions to these questions. These will be collected at various times throughout the semester. This will be discussed further in class.

(Reading Record = 50 points) (Reflection Journal = 10 points)

3. Responses to Professional Literature

You will be required to submit your responses to the professional reading: Reading Aloud and Beyond at various points in the semester. These are due on the day that we discuss the chapters. Please format your responses in the connections, wonderings, implications format, which I will model in class. (Please be certain to mention points from each chapter!)

(6 responses @ 5 points = 30 points)

4. Lit Studies
Students will participate in five class lit studies. Students will need to read the selected books BEFORE the scheduled class. You will bring a written response/reflection to each of these literature studies. As a class, we will be practicing various ways for students to respond to literature in writing; I will model/review the assigned reflection the week before it is due. These reflections will be shared in your literature study groups. Be prepared to extensively discuss these books during the scheduled class.

If you are absent on the day of the literature study, you can turn your written response strategy in for the book, but you cannot make up the participation points for the literature study; if you’re not here, you can’t participate!
(Participation in 5 lit studies @ 5 points = 25 points)
(5 response strategies @ 5 points = 25 points)

5. Literature Learning Experiences and Strategies
Throughout the semester, teacher candidates will participate in learning experiences outside of class. These will be shared in class.

Learning Experience #1- Journey Museum Artifacts. Collect and present 3-5 artifacts for our museum that relates to the broad theme of "journeys". These artifacts should represent what reading journeys you have experienced as a reader, both past and present. An artifact may be a photo, a book, a memento, or anything that is significant to you and represents how you define reading journeys. Create information plates for each selected piece similar to what a visitor might encounter in a museum. These artifacts might provide details as to the significance of the item or could be more abstract that asks a question or provides a clue as to the journey it represents. (10 points)

After we “visit” the museum, you will be asked to complete a written response that details your reading journey in the past, present, and future. (10 points)

Learning Experience #2- Caldecott Analysis. Analyze a Caldecott Award Winner (not an honor book) using the information provided in class to analyze a book of your choice. (10 points)

Learning Experience #3- Music/Book Pairing. Select a picture book, chapter from a novel, or poem appropriate for use in an elementary classroom. Find a piece of music to accompany your selection. You will share your pairings in small groups in class; you will also turn in a written description of the pairing and your thoughts about this type of learning experience. (10 points)

Learning Experience #4- Personal Text Set. Each student will create their own text set. You will create an annotated bibliography which you will turn in. This bibliography should contain 8-10 books that relate to your “personal reading journey”.

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They should include a description as to why you chose the book and how it defines you as a reader. (10 points)

Extra Credit Option:
Learning Experience #5- Reader's Theater. Develop a script for an ORIGINAL reader's theater experience. Examples will be shared in class and final scripts should be posted on WebCampus. (Possible 10 points extra credit)
(4 learning experiences= 50 points)

6. Author or Illustrator Study
This will be an in-depth study of one children's literature author or illustrator. We will share our author studies during the final class sessions of the semester. You will present this to the members of our class. The following requirements must be met for your study.

1. Read at least 7 picture books if your individual author is an author or illustrator of picture books, or at least 3 chapter books if you have selected an author that focuses on writing chapter books. (Or a combination if they do both)

2. An author or illustrator binder/box/resource that will contain artifacts (files/and or information) that support your author study. An example will be shared in class. Basically this will include everything someone would need to teach your author study to children—all handouts, lesson plans, models, samples, etc.

3. A one page front and back handout that includes a brief biographical account, as complete a bibliography as possible, websites for further information and a brief analysis of the author's work based on your readings. (Make sure you cite sources on your handout!) Evidence that you have read and examined the author's work is important for this assignment. A copy of the handout will be made for each member of the class and lesson plans should be posted on WebCampus.

(Author Study= 40 points)

7. Genre Study Presentations
Students will sign up in groups of three or four to gather information on a particular genre and lead a class discussion/create a presentation. Information for each genre can be obtained from children's literature textbooks (check the CML) and from the Internet. At least one textbook must be used and referenced. Please be sure to cite your sources. The group will be responsible for creating a handout for the entire class that contains the following:

1. A definition of the genre created by a review of the available literature.

2. Criteria for selecting the books and authors that are included in your handout.

3. A list of 20 books that fit this genre, with bibliographical information.

4. A list of 10 authors/illustrators that are prominent in this genre.
5. At least 3 websites that connect to the genre being presented.
6. Other relevant/creative information you want to share with the class.

Genre presentations should last approximately 20 minutes—ideas to consider include read aloud, sample lessons, etc.

**Genre presentation= 20 points**

**Student Course Evaluation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading Record</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection Journal</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Responses</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Experiences</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Studies</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response Strategies</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genre Study/Presentation</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author Study</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Reflection/Map</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL POINTS= 280**

Grades:
A=280-252  B=251-224  C=223-196  D=195-168  F=167 and below

**Minuses and pluses will be at the discretion of the instructor based on number of points earned, class participation, and professionalism.**

For those enrolled in ICG 615, it is assumed that all work will be completed at a level consistent with graduate work. In addition, ALL assignments should be typed.

**TENTATIVE FOCUS FOR EACH CLASS SESSION—Subject to revision, as needed**

January 17:  Introduction to the course
Syllabus

January 22:  Valuing literature for children
Genres—overview, book pass strategy
Tour CML

January 24:  Learning Experience #1 Due: Journey Museum Artifacts
Sign up for genre groups
Chapter 1 & 2 response due—connections, wonderings, implications format
January 29: The Caldecott Award
Chapter 3 & 4 Response Due
*Reflection Notebook Collected

January 31: Visual Literacy
Illustrator Techniques and media
Learning Experience #1-Final Write up due

February 5: Using a broad concept book to frame curriculum
Generating thematic connections
Literature study 1: Esperanza Rising
Response: Post Its
Chapter 11 Response Due

February 7: Role of reading aloud in the Elementary Classroom
Thematic Connections-Generating Text Sets
Author Study/Focus Study examples/models
*Reflection Journal Collected

February 12: Chapter 6 & 7 Response Due
Learning Experience #2 Due: Caldecott Analysis
Sign up for author studies

February 14: Genre Group 1: Traditional Literature
Browse books, response activity

February 19: President's Day-No School

February 21: Genre Group 2: Realistic Fiction
Browse books, response activity

February 26: Literature Study 2: Love That Dog-Realistic/Poetry
Response: Webbing

February 28: Genre Group 3: Poetry
Poetry Jam
Response: Sketch to Stretch

March 5: Learning Experience #3 Due: Music/Book Pairing
*Reflection Journal Collected

March 7: Genre Group 4: Historical Fiction
Browse books, response activity
March 12/14: Spring Break!

March 19: *Work on Author/Illustrator Studies

March 21: Literature Study 3: Rose's Journal—Historical Fiction
Response Strategy: Timeline

March 26: Genre Group 5: Informational Books
Browse books, response activity

March 28: Chapter 8 & 9 Response Due

April 2: Genre Group 6: Biography/Autobiography
Browse books, response activity

April 4: Literature Study 4: Ellis Island—Biography
Response: Penny for your Thoughts
*Reflection Journal Collected

April 9: Genre Group 7: Fantasy
Browse books, response activity

April 11: Literature Study 5—Fantasy book
Response: Student Choice

April 16: Literature that teaches reading & creates readers
Chapter 5 & 10 Response Due

April 18: Writing/Reading Workshop

April 23: Literature that Invites Response
Learning Experience # 4 Due: Personal Text Set

April 25: Class Sharing of Author Studies
**Author Studies Due

April 30: Class Sharing of Author Studies
**Author Studies Due
Reading Records Due
*Reflection Journal collected

May 2: FINAL CLASS
Literary celebration
Due Final Reflection Paper/ Literary Journey Concept Map
Pass back reading records, reflection journals and author studies

May 7: Finals week.

NOTES:
UNLV and its College of Education demand a high level of scholarly behavior and academic honesty on the part of students. Violations by students in exhibiting honesty while carrying out academic assignments and procedural steps for dealing with violations of academic integrity are delineated with the HANDBOOK OF REGULATIONS GOVERNING PROBATION AND SUSPENSION WITHIN THE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION. This publication may be found in the Curriculum Materials Library (CEB 101), ICS Department Office (CEB 354), or the Office of the College of Education Dean (CEB 301).

In addition, to successful academic performance in prescribed coursework, you are enrolled in a professional course of studies which is governed by a standard code of ethics and programmatic expectations. THE HANDBOOK OF THE COMMITTEE TO REVIEW INITIAL LICENSURE STUDENTS outlines the UNLV Student Code of Conduct, NEA Code of Ethics for the Teaching Profession, and ICS Student Expectations. The Handbook is available in the ICS Office.

The University requires all members of the University Community to familiarize themselves and to follow copyright and fair use requirements. You are individually and solely responsible for violations or copyright and fair use laws. The University will neither protect nor defend you nor assume any responsibility for employee or student violations or fair use laws. Violations of copyright laws could subject you to federal and state civil penalties and criminal liability as well as disciplinary action under University policies. To help familiarize yourself with copyright and fair use policies, the University encourages you to visit its copyright web page at: http://www.unlv.edu/committees/copyright.

If you have a documented disability that may require assistance, you will need to contact the Disability Services (DS) for coordination in your academic accommodations. DS is located within the Learning Enhancement Services office in Reynolds Student Services Center, room 137. The DS phone number is 702-895-0866 (TDD 702-895-0652).

Misdemeanor or felonious conviction(s) may bar teacher licensure in Nevada or other states. If you have any questions, please direct them to the Director of Teacher Education, CEB 301, 895-4851.
APPENDIX D

IRB APPROVAL
DATE: January 8, 2007

TO: Dr. Cyndi Giorgis, Curriculum and Instruction

FROM: Office for the Protection of Research Subjects

RE: Notification of IRB Action by Dr. Paul Jones, Co-Chair

Protocol Title: A Case-Study Analysis of How Response-Based Experiences Inform Pre-Service Teacher’s Reading Perceptions

Protocol #: 0611-2164

This memorandum is notification that the project referenced above has been reviewed by the UNLV Social/Behavioral Institutional Review Board (IRB) as indicated in Federal regulatory statutes 45 CFR 46. The protocol has been reviewed and approved.

The protocol is approved for a period of one year from the date of IRB approval. The expiration date of this protocol is January 3, 2008. Work on the project may begin as soon as you receive written notification from the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS).

PLEASE NOTE:

Attached to this approval notice is the official Informed Consent/Assent (IC/IA) Form for this study. The IC/IA contains an official approval stamp. Only copies of this official IC/IA form may be used when obtaining consent. Please keep the original for your records.

Should there be any change to the protocol, it will be necessary to submit a Modification Form through OPRS. No changes may be made to the existing protocol until modifications have been approved by the IRB.

Should the use of human subjects described in this protocol continue beyond January 3, 2008, it would be necessary to submit a Continuing Review Request Form 60 days before the expiration date.

If you have questions or require any assistance, please contact the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects at OPRSHumanSubjects@unlv.edu or call 895-2794.
APPENDIX E

CHERYL’S COURSE SYLLABUS

Preparing Professionals for Changing Educational Contexts
Department of Curriculum and Instruction, College of Education
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
ICG 415 / CIL 615 - Children's Literature in the Elementary Classroom

Spring 2007, Mondays, 7:00 - 9:45 P.M., CEB 143

Instructor: Cheryl
Phone: Day
Office hours: by appointment only
Email:

**Course and syllabus designed by Dr. Cyndi Giorgis.

Course Introduction

ICG 415/CIL 615 focuses on extensive and intensive reading of children’s literature and strategies for sharing it with children in the elementary classroom. We will examine children's reading interests and needs as a basis for evaluating and selecting children's literature. This course will provide class members with an opportunity to enjoy and discuss a wide variety of quality children's books while experiencing various response strategies. Participants will also explore numerous authors and illustrators of children's literature and explore ways to integrate literature into the curricula. Various resources available on children's literature will be examined. (3 credits)

Prerequisite: ICE 201.

General Course Objectives

The primary learning intent of this course is to facilitate your exploration of literature for children in a way that is personally meaningful to you. Teaching strategies for using literature will be experienced as we interact with books and each other, but these strategies are not the focus of the course. I will provide the basic framework for the course, but what and how much you learn will depend on the choices you make during each class period and during your independent reading and projects.

"A kid is a guy I never wrote down to. He's interested in what I say if I make it interesting." 
Theodore Geisel (Dr. Seuss)

Knowledge
Prospective elementary teachers should be able:

• To exhibit a knowledge of an extensive array of children’s literature
• To create criteria for evaluating and determining quality literature for children
• To explore various response strategies to assist the reader in gaining meaning from the text

Performance (Skills)
Prospective elementary teachers should be able:
• To read and record over 100 books written and illustrated for children (INTASC 1)
• To participate in small and whole group discussions about literature (INTASC 2, 3, 4)
• To integrate relevant technology into the curriculum (INTASC 1, 5)
• To respond through written, oral, and aesthetic methods to literature (INTASC 1, 2, 6)

Dispositions
Prospective elementary teachers should be able:
• To make personal connections to literature related to their own life experiences (INTASC 1, 3, 4, 7)
• To gain ownership in the learning process by making choices within small group activities and individual projects (INTASC 1, 2, 3, 4)
• To reflect on various learning activities through written means, dialogue, and self-evaluations (INTASC 3, 7, 8, 9)
• To gain an understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures (INTASC 3, 8, 9)
• To recognize that learners require both choice and voice within a democratic classroom (INTASC 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9)

Results
Students in ICG 415/CIL 615 will demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and dispositions to infuse children’s literature into their teaching and learning; plan, organize and deliver instruction in the following ways:
• Read and respond to a variety of children’s literature (INTASC 1, 5)
• Develop criteria to determine quality children’s literature (INTASC 1, 2, 4, 7)
• Locate instructional materials in the Curriculum Materials Library and from the Internet (INTASC 5)
• Create a portfolio that reflects their understanding of children’s literature (INTASC 1, 2, 4, 5, 10)
• Reflect on the learning process (INTASC 10)

"I never spent less than two years on the text of one of my picture books, even though each of them is approximately 380 words long. Only when the text is finished ... do I begin the pictures." - Maurice Sendak

Required Materials:
Textbooks:
Reading Aloud and Beyond by Frank Serafini & Cyndi Giorgis (available in the UNLV bookstore or from Heinemann.com)

Chapter Book:
Esperanza Rising by Pam Munoz Ryan (available from the instructor - $4.75)

In this classroom, everyone is a student, everyone is a teacher.
1. ATTENDANCE, PARTICIPATION
(10 points)

Attendance and participation are essential. You will be given large amounts of time to peruse, critique, enjoy, and respond to children’s literature. You will be expected to share your experiences and the experiences of other participants. You are responsible for involving yourself in the class activities. Discussions and other class experiences cannot be made up. For the purposes of this class, attendance is defined as presence and participation in class discussions and activities. Lack of participation will be considered an absence from class.

Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class. Tardy is defined as 15 or more minutes late or leaving class 15 or more minutes early. Your record of absences, tardies, and participation will be taken into consideration when determining your final grade. If you are going to be absent or late, you are responsible for notifying the instructor prior to the beginning of class.

As per University policy, excused absences are religious holidays or university-sponsored trips or activities. Students planning to take religious holidays must inform the instructor no later than the last day of late registration. There are no other identified excused absences. Three recorded tardies (defined as late arrival or early departure) will be considered equivalent to one absence. Your attendance pattern defined as your absences, tardies, and participation will influence your final grade as follows:

<table>
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<td>0-1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>Deduction of 10 points each</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 or more</td>
<td>Grade an F</td>
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</table>

2. REFLECTION JOURNAL
(10 points)

You will need a notebook to use primarily for response strategies and reflection questions/quotes. DO NOT use this notebook for taking notes during class. Its purpose is for recording your responses to your reading and aiding in your thought process for books you have encountered or would like to read in the future. You will also use this journal to respond to questions or quotes periodically throughout the semester. This journal will be checked periodically throughout the semester.

3. READING RECORD
(50 points)

Reading, reading, and more reading of children’s literature is the primary focus of this course. You are to design and maintain a reading log to keep track of all of the children’s books you have read DURING the semester. The books you include in the log may come from class browsing sessions, the required literature study books, or books you gather from the CML or public library.

The major function of the reading record is for you to write down information you think you will want for future uses of the book. This record is for your personal use. This can be on notecards (please use larger than 3x5), a template that can be organized within a notebook, or a computer database. You must develop a system of organization for your reading log, so please do not use a spiral notebook, as this does not allow you the flexibility to move your records around.

The reading for this course should begin immediately and should be done in and out of class. The browsing time given in class will be invaluable to the creation of the reading record. There may be some days when you read fewer books than others, but this is not a project you put off until it is due. This course is based on continuous reading of children’s literature, and you will greatly increase your learning and participation in this class if you are reading regularly throughout the course.

REQUIRED READINGS in CHILDREN’S LITERATURE:

- Five (5) picture books for each of the genres we discuss

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• 5 Lit Study Chapter Books
• 10 Caldecott Winners (make sure these are Caldecott Award winners, not honor books)
• Books for author study
• Additional reading of picture books and chapter books to bring your final total to approximately 100 books for the semester.

You will be asked periodically during the semester to bring in your reading log. During these times, think about a book or books you have read that you might want to recommend to others.

REQUIRED INFORMATION FOR READING RECORD:
• Title, author, illustrator, publisher, & copyright date
• Media used for illustration
• Brief summary of book
• Potential ways to share the book with children
• Personal response, if any

"All really good picture books are written to be read five hundred times"
Rosemary Wells

3. RESPONSES TO PROFESSIONAL LITERATURE
(7 responses @ 5 points each = 35 points)
You will be required to submit your responses to the assigned reading from Reading Aloud and Beyond and/or to other assigned readings. These responses should be in a double entry format: quotes, passages, ideas from the book on one side; your response/reaction on the other. Sometimes you will be reading more than one chapter or article, but it will count as one response. These are due on the day we discuss the chapter or article as directed in the syllabus.

4. LIT STUDIES
(5 Lit Studies @ 5 points each = 25 points)
You will participate in five (5) in-class lit studies. Please read the selected books BEFORE the scheduled class. You will bring a written reflection/response as directed in class. Please bring this to class with you on the evening of the Lit. Study. These reflections will be shared in your literature study groups. Be prepared to extensively discuss these books during the scheduled class.

"I believe that good questions are more important than answers, and the best children's books ask questions, and make the readers ask questions. And every new question is going to disturb someone's universe." Madeleine L'Engle

5. LEARNING EXPERIENCES
(4 experiences @ 10 points each = 40 points)
Throughout the semester, you will participate in learning experiences outside of class. These will be shared in class. If applicable to the experience, a short (1-2) paragraph reflection on the learning experience will be turned in the following week, as directed in class.
The experiences are as follows:
1. Museum Artifacts - Collect and present 3-5 artifacts for our museum that relate to the broad theme of "community". These artifacts should represent what community or communities you feel you are a member of as a reader, both past and present. An artifact may be a photo, a book (limited to one), a memento, or anything that is significant to you and represents how you define community. Create information plates for each selected
piece similar to what a visitor might encounter in a museum. These artifacts might provide details as to the significance of the item or could be more abstract: asking a question or providing a clue as to the community it represents.

2. **Esperanza Rising Response** - Using the book as inspiration, develop a timeline that depicts a visual representation of the critical events and/or significant moments of Esperanza Rising.

3. **Caldecott Analysis** - Analyze a Caldecott Award winner of your choice (with a gold medal, not an honor book with a silver medal) using the information provided in class.

4. **Music / Book Pairing** - Select a picture book, chapter from a novel, or poem appropriate for use in an elementary classroom. Find a piece of music to accompany your selection. You will share your pairings in small groups in class. You will also turn in a written description of the pairing and your thoughts about this type of learning experience.

6. **AUTHOR or ILLUSTRATOR STUDY**

   (30 points)

   This will be an in-depth study of one children's literature author or illustrator. We will share these studies at the end of the semester. The following requirements must be met for your study:

   ◆ Read at least 7 picture books if your individual is an author or illustrator of a picture book or at least 3 chapter books if you have selected an author who focuses on writing chapter books (or a combination if the person does both).
   ◆ Develop a ten-day plan for classroom implementation of the study of your author/illustrator.
   ◆ Create an author or illustrator box, collection of files, notebook, etc. that will contain artifacts (files and/or information) that support your study. An example will be shared in class. This collection should contain anything needed to teach the author/illustrator study in the classroom.
   ◆ A one page (front and back) handout that includes a brief biographical account, as complete a bibliography as possible, websites for further information and a brief analysis of the author's work based on your readings (make sure that you cite your sources on your handout). Evidence that you have read and examined the author's work is important for this assignment. **Bring a copy of the handout for each member of the class.**

7. **GENRE STUDY PRESENTATIONS**

   (20 points)

   Students will sign up in groups of three to four to gather information on a particular genre and lead a class discussion and/or create a presentation. Information for each genre can be obtained from children's literature textbooks (at least one must be used and referenced) and from the internet. The group will create a handout for the class that includes:

   • **Definition** of the genre
   • List of 15 books that fit, with brief bibliographical info (author, title, publisher, date)
   • 10 authors / illustrators who are prominent in that genre
   • Your criteria for selecting the books and authors included in your packet
   • At least three (3) web-sites that connect to the genre being presented

   Be sure that your handout is visually appealing, contains the correct information, and provides enough information for use now and in the future. **Be sure to cite all sources.**

   Genre presentations should be NO MORE THAN 20 MINUTES. Ideas to consider for your presentation: read-alouds, booktalks, sample lessons, response ideas, connections to other curricular areas, etc. (Be creative!)

   "...a good poem contains both meaning and music" Eve Merriam
STUDENT COURSE EVALUATION

Attendance & Participation 10
Reflection Journal 10
Reading Record 50
Professional Responses 35
Literature Studies 25
Learning Experiences 40
Reflections of experiences 10
Author / Illustrator Study 30
Genre Study & Presentation 20
Final 20

Total Points 250

GRADES:  
A= 250-225  B= 224 -200  C= 199– 175
D= 174-150  F= BELOW 150

MINUSES AND PLUSES WILL BE GIVEN AT INSTRUCTOR'S DISCRETION BASED ON NUMBER OF POINTS EARNED, CLASS PARTICIPATION, AND PROFESSIONALISM.

*For those students enrolled in CIL 615, it is assumed that all assignments be competed at a level consistent with graduate work.

TENTATIVE Course Schedule

January 22  
Introduction to the course
Syllabus Review
Valuing Literature for Children
Role and value of reading aloud to create community
Genre Overview

January 29  
Role of reading aloud in elementary classroom
Interactive read alouds
Sign-up for genre groups
Browsing
Due: Museum artifact and information cards
Due: Ch. 1 & 2 response

February 5  
Using a broad concept book to frame curriculum
Generating thematic connections and text sets
Literature Study #1: Esperanza Rising
Due: Ch. 11 response
Browsing

February 12  
The Caldecott Award
Visual Literacy
Illustrator techniques and media
Genre presentation #1 - Traditional Literature

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February 19  
NO CLASS - PRESIDENTS' DAY

February 26  
Genre presentation #2 - Realistic Fiction  
Browsing  
Literature Study #2 (Response: Webbing)  
Due: Caldecott Award analysis

March 5  
Genre presentation # 3 - Poetry  
Browsing  
Response vs. questioning  
Response strategies  
Due: Ch. 7 & 8 response

March 12  
NO CLASS - UNLV SPRING BREAK

March 19  
Genre presentation # 4 - Historical Fiction  
Browsing  
Literature Study #3 (Response: Impressions, Connections, Wonderings)  
Picture books in writing

March 26  
Genre presentation # 5 - Informational books  
Browsing  
Using chapter books in the classroom  
Facilitating meaningful Literature Studies  
Due: Ch. 9 response

April 2  
Genre presentation # 6 - Biography / Autobiography  
Browsing  
Work on Author/Illustrator Studies

April 9  
Genre presentation #7 - Fantasy  
Browsing  
Literature that teaches reading & creates readers  
Writing / Reading Workshop  
Due: Ch. 10 response

April 16  
Readers' theater  
How to develop and perform a script  
Literature study #5 (Response: Reader's choice)  
Due: Ch 5 & 6 response

April 23  
Literature that invites response  
Due: Music / Book Pairing  
Due: Author/Illustrator Studies (Group 1)

April 30  
Literature that promotes inquiry

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Due: Author/Illustrator Studies (Group 2)
Due: Reading Record

May 7

Due: Final reflection
What have I learned about children’s literature?
What have I learned about the role of children’s literature in the elementary classroom?

UNLV and its College of Education demand a high level of scholarly behavior and academic honesty on the part of students. Violations by students in exhibiting honesty while carrying out academic assignments and procedural steps for dealing with violations of academic integrity are delineated with the HANDBOOK OF REGULATIONS GOVERNING PROBATION AND SUSPENSION WITHIN THE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION. This publication may be found in the Curriculum Materials Library (CEB 101), ICS Department Office (CEB 354), or the Office of the College of Education Dean (CEB 301).

In addition, to successful academic performance in prescribed coursework, you are enrolled in a professional course of studies, which is governed by a standard code of ethics and programmatic expectations. THE HANDBOOK OF THE COMMITTEE TO REVIEW INITIAL LICENSURE STUDENTS outlines the UNLV Student Code of Conduct, NEA Code of Ethics for the Teaching Profession, and ICS Student Expectations. The Handbook is available in the ICS Office.

If you have a documented disability that may require assistance, you will need to contact the Disability Resource Center for coordination in your academic accommodations. The DRC is located in the Reynolds Student Services Complex in Room 137. The DRC phone number is 895-0866 (TDD 895-0652).

APPENDIX F

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REFERENCES


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Dissertation Examination Committee:
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Co-Chair, Dr. Cyndi Giorgis, Associate Professor, Ph. D.
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