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Larson, Mindy Legard and Phillips, Donna Kalmbach, "Becoming a Teacher of Literacy: The Struggle between Authoritative Discourses" (2005). *Faculty Publications*. Accepted Version. Submission 4. https://digitalcommons.linfield.edu/educfac_pubs/4

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Becoming a teacher of literacy: The struggle between authoritative discourses

Mindy Legard Larson

Donna Kalmbach Phillips

Abstract

This study describes and analyzes the influence of an ideological conflict between a teacher education program and a school district upon one pre-service teacher's emerging identity as a teacher of literacy. Using poststructural feminism as the theoretical framework and a single case study analysis, the study illustrates how the discourse of the school district's scripted reading program and the discourse of the university's comprehensive literacy positions Claire, the pre-service teacher. The data analysis demonstrates how being positioned between these two competing and authoritative discourses conflicts with her understanding of reading and reading instruction. Reflecting upon the data, the research becomes a self-study of the teacher educators/researchers. Four unresolved tensions seek to create spaces of resistance and change.

This study has several identifiable characters: white, middle class, female teacher educators; student teachers; a school district reading specialist; children. There are other characters not so easily identified yet powerful in the shadows of politics and ideology. In the language of narrative this study is not without plot: the study is shaped by a conflict arising over literacy, how and who should define literacy, and the nature of literacy instruction. As we retell, analyze, and attempt to make sense of our practice in this space our inquiry becomes a study of subjectivity and authoritative discourses shaping ourselves and our students; it is work situated in a contested space *between*:

Between things does not designate a localizable relation going from one thing to the other and back again, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps one *and* the other away, a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle. (Original emphasis, Guttari, cited in St. Pierre, 2001, p. 150)

This is a research study in the midst of such a river of student teachers' becoming teachers of literacy.

The "stream" of this study includes the authoritative discourse of a scripted reading program and the mandate for student teachers to become "script caretakers" while volunteering in an after-school program primarily for English language learners. This discourse clashes with that of the comprehensive literacy discourse taught by the university. While we could retell this story in a number of ways, we chose to apply poststructural feminism theory and illustrate how the colliding discourses conflict with pre-service teachers' emerging identity as teachers of literacy. Specifically, we highlight the voice of one pre-service teacher, as a case study, who is representative of the group.

Her subjectivity becomes “the site of a bent force” of discourses (Boundas, cited in St Pierre, 2001), for “It is the outside that folds us into identity, and we can never control the forces of the outside” (St Pierre, 2000, p. 260). Yet in the midst of such forces there is also agency and hope; we consider this possibility as well. Finally, we analyze the dynamics of our own positions and roles as a self-study of how we might reframe our own practices in creating spaces of resistance within teacher education (Gore, 1993).

Theoretical Framework

Language is central to poststructural feminism for it is the common factor in the “analysis of social organizations, social meaning, power, and individual consciousness” (Weedon, 1987, p. 21). Language as a reflection of larger social and cultural context means that no language can transcend history and social relations of power (Britzman, 2003). While language is the way we think, speak, and interpret the world, discourse “positions the subject in a dual way: in relation to what and how something is said and in relation to a community that makes particular practices become possible and others unavailable” (Britzman, 2003, p. 39). Authoritative discourses become powerful when they are sanctioned by institutions (Foucault, 1972) and are “...indissolubly fused with...political power, an institution, a person – and it stands and falls together with the authority” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 343). Discursive practice, Foucault (1972) wrote is “a body of anonymous, historical rules, always determined in the time and space that have defined a given period, and for a given social, economic, geographical or linguist area, the conditions of operation of the enunciative function” (p. 117).

Self as subjectivity is fluid and shifting, socially constructed by such powerful discourses (Lather, 1991; Spivak, 1993; Weedon, 1987). The site of self is subjected to many authoritative discourses seeking to call it into existence and it is because of this that this same site of self-struggle is a space of resistance and possibility (Butler, 1997; Gore, 1993; Lather, 1991; McNay, 1992). Within the space of subjectivity we argue, debate, do battle, and confront powerful forces of discourses, and in doing so we re-invent ourselves. At this site of conflict not only are we subjugated, but also we can also choose and can develop resistance to the forces that would control us.

If a subject were constituted once and for all, there would be no possibility of reiteration of those constituting conventions or norms. That the subject is that which must be constituted again and again implies that it is open to formations that are not fully constrained in advance. (Butler, cited in St Pierre 2000, p. 277)

Agency occurs within subjectivity by the way the subject responds to authoritative discourses.

Phillips (2002) illustrated how authoritative discourses work upon the subjectivity of pre-service teachers in forming their identity as teachers. The disciplinary power of discourses had the influence to confine thinking and subvert intentions, as well as provide alternative retellings of self as teacher and female. Britzman (2003) further demonstrated how cultural myths, carrying the authority of politically privileged discourse, “structure the individual’s taken-for-granted views of power, authority, knowledge, and identity” (p. 30). Her study of two student teachers show how pre-service teachers are, “Marginally situated in two worlds, the student teacher as part student and part teacher has the dual struggle of educating others while being educated” (p. 36).

We use this framework to retell the specific story of one student teacher in our study as she faced the authoritative and politically privileged discourse of a “scientifically proven” scripted reading program. Through her words, we illustrate how these discourses conflict with the student teacher’s emerging concepts of reading and reading instruction. She becomes a picture of the struggle and marginalization of student teachers and yet, simultaneously, illustrates hope in the presence of mentorship and collaboration. As teacher educators/researchers we are not “neutral” voices, but active participants in this study. We acknowledge, with Clandinin and Connelly (2000) that, “Sometimes ... our own unnamed, perhaps secret, stories come to light as much as do those of our participants” (p. 62). In this analysis, we are implicated in our good intentions and conflicted in our own narrative; however, by adopting a poststructuralist feminist position, the study attempts to take issue with “the technology of control, the silent regulation” (Luke & Gore, 1992, p. 4) of a scripted reading program in regulating the developing identities of pre-service teachers.

Data collected and methodology

Data for this study were collected over a five month period. Six graduate teacher education students volunteered to participate by teaching in a university-district partnership elementary after school program. The five females and one male were all enrolled in private university in the western USA. These students had taken two courses in literacy designed and/or taught by Mindy and Donna, the teacher educators and researchers for this project. The first course is an overview of literacy theory and introduction to literacy methodology; the second builds on the first course, developing

additional literacy methodology. Of the six student teacher volunteers three became participants in the study due to a number of scheduling factors. Their primary reason for joining was the opportunity to have “free reign” in determining the curriculum of the after school program and to continue working closely with their professors. While we collected data from all three student teachers, we have chosen a case study approach and highlighted data from one student teacher, Claire, to illustrate how discourses compete at the site of her subjectivity in forming her identity as a teacher of literacy.

The data were collected for this study between December 2003 and April 2004. Multiple data sets include four audiotaped and transcribed meetings between the teacher educators/researchers and the volunteer pre-service teachers. These range in length between 45 minutes and 90 minutes. One of the teacher educators visited and observed pre-service teachers at the practicum site. All email communications during this time between the teacher educators and the preservice teachers, between the two teacher educators, and those between the teacher educators and the district personnel were collected. In the analysis that follows we identify e-mail conversations by placing these quotations in italics.

In addition, the teacher educators kept reflective journals. These journals were often the result of our own long conversations concerning the story we found ourselves living. In this way the study becomes a self-study, and, in fact, continued analysis of our own discourses and uses of power is yet another story we have to write.

To analyze the data, we listed the language of the two primary discourses of reading, that of federal policy and our own theoretical framework for reading. We then read through the data and began to code how this language reappeared and was used by

the student teachers. Claire emerged as the leader of the student teachers; her voice was often the first to speak, question, or make connections. We categorized the language according to discourses and then analyzed this by applying Britzman's (2003) questions,

For whom does the teacher speak: the curriculum, the school, the profession, the students, the teacher? How does the teacher negotiate between the polyphony of voices and the competing interests that each represent? And, what do student teachers think about when they consider their own voice? (p. 44).

We have used pseudonyms for all student teachers and district personnel.

Authoritative discourses of the study

Claire, the student teacher we highlight in this study, becomes a teacher of literacy in the midst of highly competing discourses of reading. These discourses can be illustrated in the political institutions of the state and federal governments. The state department of education's benchmarks and assessment procedures for reading are the result of years of collaboration between teachers and higher education, with occasional interventions from the legislature. The result of this collaboration defines reading at primary grades in terms of comprehension, fluency, and accuracy, and at upper grades as comprehension, extending understanding, and critical text analysis.

This policy is usurped, however, by federal legislation Title IV, Part B, of the No Child Left Behind Act of the United States Congress (U.S. Department of Education 2003b). This legislation endorses a definition of reading reflecting the research of The National Reading Panel (2000) entitled *Teaching children to read*. According to this research, learning to read is a step-by-step process of acquiring skills, beginning with

phonemic awareness progressing to phonics then to fluency followed by vocabulary and finally to comprehension. Although No Child Left Behind (U.S. Department of Education, 2003b) does not specifically state this, it is noteworthy that to receive grant monies teachers' instructional decisions must be based on scientifically based reading research and must include five key early reading skills: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (Oregon Department of Education, 2002).

Due to budget cutbacks at the state level the district with which the university partnered sought grants to fund its after-school program for the 2003-2004 school year. They were able to secure a federal grant, but this required a restructuring of the after school program to conform to federal policy, re-authorized under Title IV, Part B, of the No Child Left Behind Act of the United States Congress (U.S. Department of Education, 2003a). The stated mission of the grant is to provide expanded academic enrichment opportunities for children attending low performing schools by using those programs that have been proved effective through "scientific research." One of the requirements of the federal grant is for students regularly participating in the program to "show improvement in achievement through measures such as test scores, grades, and/or teacher reports." (U.S. Department of Education, Indicator 8.1, 2003).

The district chose a scientifically proven scripted reading program reflecting the research of The National Reading Panel titled *Put reading first* (2000). The program teaches and tests towards one aspect of fluency as measured by timing students on the number of words read per minute. Students are to work independently through the 10 scripted steps and the teacher's role is to time students, correct multiple-choice questions,

and make goals for students to increase their words read per minute or the text difficulty level. The program reflects Luke's (1996) analysis of official texts on reading in that it tends to focus on a generic child and generic culture, at once generating, omitting, constructing, and monitoring various forms of difference for classification on what Foucault termed a 'grid of specification.' This is often done under the auspices of "meeting individual needs. (p.37)

Indeed, the district adopted the curriculum in order to "meet the needs" of individual children who were deemed to be failing in the area of reading fluency.

The federal grant that funded the after school program creates the authoritative discourse in this story. In this paper we will refer to this discourse as the scripted reading discourse. This discourse enjoys a politically privileged position since it is supported by the federal government and "scientific" research; furthermore, considerable federal monies support its rhetoric. The discourse disciplines by requiring allegiance through compliance with the script and measurable growth as evidenced in timed fluency tests. Joyce, the district's reading specialist, becomes the spokesperson for this discourse.

The tension of this story is between the scripted reading discourse and a discourse we as university professors subscribe. We employ a discourse that in this article we refer to as comprehensive literacy (Goodman, 1996; Goodman, Watson, & Burke, 1996; Halliday, 1975; Smith, 1994). While this is not a monoglossic position, common themes include reading as a transactional, meaning-making experience between the author and the text (Smith, 1994). Readers are in a continuous cycle of sampling, inferring, predicting, and confirming simultaneously to determine how the information will be integrated into their thoughts, language, and memory (Goodman, 1996; Goodman *et al.*,

1996; Rosenblatt, 1994). Textbooks for the course include those by Routman (2000), Taberski (2000), and Atwell (1998). We will refer to our discourse concerning literacy as comprehensive literacy throughout the remainder of this paper.

The Dilemma and the Struggle for Teacher Identity

Donna arranged for preservice teachers to teach in an after school program with our university-district partnership school. This after-school program was designated for elementary children considered by the district to be “at risk,” primarily due to their socio-economic and/or status as a second language learners. The student teachers were to assume responsibilities for teaching the children deemed most at risk in reading in the after-school program two days a week throughout the duration of their full-time student teaching experience. The goal was to create a rich experience where pre-service teachers planned collaboratively and practiced many literacy strategies they were not always able to use in their traditional student teaching settings.

The three student teachers and Mindy, one of the professors of literacy, received training in the scripted reading program before the after-school teaching began. Joyce stated that in order for the program to be effective, it must be administered a minimum of three times a week and the teachers and students must adhere to the script; consistency is the primary factor for success.

Concerned by the new mandates on the after-school program and the positioning of the student teachers as “script care takers,” we intervened on a number of levels. After some negotiations it was agreed that the student teachers would use comprehensive literacy strategies to teach fluency. However, Joyce, the reading specialist, disagreed with

this decision and insisted upon consistency, i.e. having the scripted reading program used as prescribed three times a week. When negotiations failed to result in a compromise between using the scripted reading program only as Joyce insisted, we elected to withdraw the student teachers from the after school program for the following reasons:

1. Time commitments. The student teachers were not keeping a modified schedule, coming in later in the day to teach late, but were, instead, teaching from 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and also completing coursework.
2. Broken promises. The student teachers were promised “free reign” to design a literacy program. This did not occur.
3. Discouraged student teachers. The student teachers were discouraged from the experience, and we chose to spend time with them debriefing rather than attempting to “sell” a fractured agreement.

It is not these political and power decisions that we want to interrogate in the remainder of this paper, although they certainly do play a prominent role in this study and deserve a closer analysis. Rather, we want to deconstruct how the authoritative discourse of the scripted reading program and our own discourse of comprehensive literacy struggle at the site of one student teacher’s subjectivity to form her emerging understanding of reading and reading instruction. We have chosen the words of Claire, a student in Mindy’s literacy course and Donna’s cohort, to use in this illustration. Claire was considered an outstanding student and student teacher. Her bilingual abilities and deep passion to teach second language learners often positioned her as a leader. Claire became the “spokesperson” for the group at the school site. We find, in analyzing her words, the ironic echo of discourses that continues to teach us as teacher educators.

The Struggle Between Authoritative Discourses

The authoritative discourse of scripted reading program not only interfered, dodged, and collided with the university's discourse of comprehensive reading instruction, but also conflicted with Claire's concept of reading instruction. This in turn played upon her subjectivities and her emerging identity as a teacher of literacy. This is perhaps most illustrated in an analysis of the e-mails and transcripts from Claire. Such an analysis reveals dramatic shifts in her thinking and articulation of reading instruction as influenced by discourses of power.

In the first e-mail to Mindy after receiving training in the scripted reading program Claire writes suspiciously of a program that values the ability to decode quickly as a definition of reading. Yet, she also told of the "*success*" a student in her class enjoyed from using the scripted program due to the "*measurable improvement*" the student observed. In a follow-up email she deconstructed the scripted reading program by listing the benefits and the drawbacks. Key words and concepts listed under benefits included: "*success, reach goals, watch improvement, immediate gratification, adult supervision, and the ability of the program to target a specific need – fluency.*" Under drawbacks the key words and concepts included: "*sole focus on fluency, the lack of authentic text, the poor demonstration of authentic reading on the tape recordings, the loss of contextual cues for understanding when speed is the goal.*" Within the first month of the experience Claire appeared able to deconstruct the scripted reading discourse by considering "benefits" and "drawback" and avoiding the binary of "good/bad."

Once the student teachers had taught using the scripted program for a few weeks Mindy, the literacy professor, received permission from the grant coordinator to allow the

student teachers to teach fluency using comprehensive literacy strategies. Claire sensing the need to negotiate the discourses of power, began a conversation with her colleagues, “How can we make this work?” Mindy suggested using reader’s theater as a possible instructional strategy and Claire was energized, “Reader’s theater would be excellent. It would be exciting.”

Five days later, however, Claire drops by the after-school program to update Joyce, the reading specialist, about the new plan. Joyce was alone with “eight or nine kids” and struggling to keep them all engaged in the scripted reading program. Claire volunteered to stay and assist Joyce; this strongly influenced Claire’s emerging definition of reading instruction. During the remainder of the session Joyce, as speaker of the authoritative discourse, overcame Claire’s subjectivity. Excerpts from Claire’s e-mail to Mindy and her student teaching colleagues demonstrate this.

Yesterday, I found myself sucked into helping with the after-school program...when I stopped in to update Joyce [the reading specialist]...I found her alone...The whole set up was a nightmare – as the kids were just wild and would not even sit down and get started on their reading... Joyce is doing this on Wednesday with only one other person to help her.

In addition to the concern over the number of kids..., I am greatly concerned about the continuity/consistency of these kids’ after-school programs. The kids in our program have already been labeled ‘at risk’ for various reasons including, but not limited to, their reading fluency...They have different teachers and schedules every single day with no consistency.

Additionally, the [scripted reading program] is not one you can just do once a week. In order for the kids to see growth they must do the program at least three days a week...And if this is the program Joyce is doing on Wednesday (which she supports because it shows measurable growth in the students – a necessary piece of receiving grant funds), I see that as throwing their Wednesday away unless we are able to give them at least 30 minutes of the [scripted reading program] on Tuesday and Thursday as well. They must get this three times a week.

Claire is positioned by blame; the discourse seems to frame her as selfish, lacking consideration for both the reading specialist and the children. In the second paragraph, Claire is seized with the mantra of the scripted reading program: consistency and fluency (as reading more words per minute). The discourse seems to say, “You are putting these children at risk.” This concern for consistency spills into the third paragraph with the insistence that the children must engage in the fluency drills three times a week. Throughout the remainder of the data, Claire struggles with this discourse of consistency. She never did find language to juxtapose the idea of consistency with meaningful activity. There persisted the need for sameness, regardless of the activity/principle in which one is acting consistently. Claire’s concept of fluency was limited to words read per minute. In addition, a critical phrase enters the message: “*measurable growth*” directly translates to “*grant funds*.” Claire was now positioned to consider her responsibility in assuring children demonstrate “measurable growth” so that funding continued.

The force of political privilege found in the discourse of the scripted reading program reminded Claire that she was not qualified to disagree with the “scientific evidence” of the program. Later Claire described herself and her colleagues as “*nobodies*,” without ideas, experience, or expertise. Claire found herself unable to recall and use the earlier deconstruction of the program she had e-mailed to Mindy. It seems Claire recognized the disciplinary power of the discourse at some level of consciousness for she began the e-mail with, “*I was sucked into helping....*” The word sucked provides a powerful metaphor of being pulled into the ideological vacuum of the scripted reading program. At the end of the email she wrote that she was “*trying to not get overwhelmed*

by it or frustrated,” but the power of the discourse temporarily called her into a teaching identity that was aligned with the privileged discourse of the reading program. “*I want what is best for these kids – and I want them to have a good time – both of these should be reachable goals,*” she wrote. Again, the struggle is evidenced: how can she as a teacher do what is best for kids, especially if “best” is a “rote” reading program that cannot be equated with the other discourse of “having fun”?

Mindy, the university literacy professor, replied to Claire and her pre-service colleagues using the discourse of comprehensive literacy. In her electronic dialogue she first responded by synthesizing the students’ earlier deconstruction of the scripted reading program. Mindy subverted the scripted reading discourse by reminding students that consistency, as a worthy literacy instructional goal, can be obtained through meaningful activities and assessments. She reminds them about running records and alternative fluency scoring guides. “*Let’s be consistent,*” she wrote and then provided a structure for the after-school program that included the goal of the program to increase fluency, but through comprehensive literacy strategies: buddy reading, teacher-student reading conferences, modeling of fluency and comprehensions strategies, and guided reading.

The discourse of the comprehensive literacy allowed Claire the language to resist the disciplinary power of the scripted reading program:

The email was really encouraging because when I got sucked in last Wednesday, I was really frustrated and overwhelmed because I am a peacemaker and to find Joyce like WAAA!. Joyce was at her wits ends with these kids and feeling like, “What are you guys doing? You are going to totally screw up the program.” ... I came away saying, “We’re stuck doing the program” and not feeling like we were just out of our league, but like we were stepping on people’s toes. And, whoa, we should back up the cart...just go with what we had set up and just be bored because that will be best for kids and that will be consistent and that’s the thing they need. I felt plowed over...so the [email] was encouraging , like oh, wait, we

are not nobodies...but I still don't know how we are going to balance it with Wednesday [and the scripted program] and how to deal with the inconsistencies.

The use of the metaphor “sucked in” and other words such as frustrated, overwhelmed, and plowed over, along with the felt-accusations of “You screwed up” and “You are stepping on people’s toes,” and the perceived title of “nobodies,” illustrates the violence with which the discourse disciplines and subjugates. Bakhtin (1981) wrote “The authoritative word demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own; it binds us, quite independent of any power it might have to persuade us internally; we encounter it with its authority already fused to it” (p. 342). Claire was encouraged, but she lacked the ability to articulate a response or to negotiate the discourses to form an alternative definition of reading instruction. The meta-narrative of consistency as rote remains a central tenet in her idea of reading instruction.

Mindy redirected the conversation by using the language of comprehensive literacy. The women began to brainstorm ways of teaching the fluency through comprehensive literacy strategies. Claire was slowly engaged, but continued to use the language of “consistency”: “But it will be a wasted day. Because just to do the program one day a week, I’m not sure how it is going to help the students.” She did not engage with the idea that “other types of reading” may also increase fluency, even though Mindy provided multiple examples of such reading strategies. Mindy continued to prompt and the women became progressively more interactive and energized to teach without concern about “consistency” alone.

By the final group meeting Claire’s subjectivity was still a struggle between the two competing discourses of the scripted reading program and comprehensive literacy. Mindy began by asking the women, “What has the after-school program taught you about

being a teacher of reading?” Claire’s initial response was the language of comprehensive literacy:

[The experience] taught me how complex reading is, how multifaceted it is. It is not just about understanding what you are reading or how fast you are reading, it also is about how you are reading it, about multiple meanings, kids coming from different backgrounds and how that affects what they are ready and how quickly they are reading... Yes, fluency is important, but it is so much more complex.

The response aligns closely with Claire’s first e-mail after receiving the scripted reading program training: “It is so focused on speed as a means of comprehension and misses so many other parts of the needs of a reader.” It seems significant to note that both of these responses are made in the presence of university professors of literacy. In some ways this might be interpreted as the “right” response. She would receive affirmation for these words. But this also appears to be evidence that Claire knew this discourse and could use it, if called upon to do so.

Later in the same meeting, the authoritative discourse claims Claire’s description of reading when describing her regular student teaching classroom: “We had no reading instruction in our classroom whatever. We did lit circle type reading and project-based reading but we didn’t teach any reading skills.” Claire did not consider literature circle or project-based reading in the fifth grade to equate with teaching reading. She later said of the same classroom, “We should be teaching good reading skills and how to be a good reader,” but the only example she gave of this was “taking time with informational text...with stuff that helps you read effectively.” Her inability to articulate what kind of “stuff” might make a reader read more effectively leaves her vulnerable to the politically privileged discourse of not only the current scripted reading program, but of other such power charged programs in the future. Later Claire bemoaned the use of silent reading in

her fifth grade classroom. During this time, she argued, there is “no individual instruction...to meet their needs...to give them the skills.” She continued, “They don’t have the skills to read fluently.” Claire’s emerging definition of reading and reading instruction was reliant upon an expert teacher, giving individualized instruction in fluency (defined by words read per minute), and while this concept is a part of comprehensive literacy, in the context here, it is more likely reflective of the scripted reading program. In addition, she said of reading aloud, “this is down time for their [the children’s] minds and they really enjoy listening.” Reading aloud, however, is not equated with reading instruction.

This is the scripted reading program discourse and it argues strongly against her earlier statement that reading is “multifaceted.” She came back to the concept of “individualized instruction” three more times, worrying in part over how to do this with so many children. Again, this makes her vulnerable to any program that reduces reading to a timed drill with multiple-choice questions.

At the end of the conversation, Claire returned to the discourse of comprehensive literacy. She said that in the future, “I want to pull in the other strategies we have learned [from the university] and utilize them. I could teach some of those strategies during other times in the day in social studies or science.” Indeed, Claire stated, “I feel prepared to pull from different things.” But “different things” is a muddy translation into practice and, given Claire’s understanding that literature circles and project-based reading is not reading instruction, it is unclear what kinds of “different things” she sees herself using in the future.

For Whom do the Teacher Educators Speak? (And with what discourse shall they speak?)

For whom do we as teacher educators speak in this study? We have spoken for comprehensive literacy, for an approach to reading instruction that validates the lived experiences of young readers and the complexities of making sense of texts. We have spoken to resist generic forms of reading instruction that classify difference. We have spoken for ourselves, in defense of our own practice. But have we tried too hard to speak for our teacher education students? Living this study has been in many ways painful for us as teacher educators. How do we to reinvent our practice to further disrupt discourses like the scripted reading program that deskill both teachers and children? We share four unresolved tensions where we seek to speak praxis.

Resist Setting up Binaries. Throughout the transcripts, we use the language of comprehensive literacy. While this is useful, we also see it as dangerous. The establishment of a right/wrong binary in relationship to reading instruction, or perhaps any instruction that is politically charged, forces students to choose not only between discourses but also between the speakers of these discourses. Claire desired affirmation from us, but she also lived with the politically privileged and authoritarian discourse of the scripted reading program. She expressed fear that she would never be considered for jobs in this district. Furthermore, she felt blame and responsibility for making sure the children demonstrated growth in order to keep the grant money coming. This fear can be accentuated if there is a binary established between university/district discourses. The goal of poststructural feminist theory is to keep the tensions at play in order to break

down and deconstruct authoritative discourses. Resisting the establishments of such binaries and maintaining the tension of opposition is a critical lesson for us to live.

Resist the Lure of Patriarchy. Throughout this experience we found ourselves wanting to protect the student teachers: we wanted to protect them from learning reading instruction according to the school district's mandate, we wanted to protect them from the negotiations over how the after school program would be structured, we wanted to protect their identities and provide safety in the midst of the political storm. However, our desire to protect became a form of patriarchy that also served to further devalue their role as fellow learners and teachers. And, what do student teachers think about when they consider their own voice? We do not know. We continue to ponder this question: How do we as teacher educators honor our students' emerging teacher identities by providing a scaffolding that does not become a fortress for exploring a plethora of discourses surrounding reading practice?

Teaching the Skills of Deconstruction. We are now experimenting with deliberately teaching our students skills of critical literacy and deconstruction. If we move away from our patriarchal stance as protectors, we see the need to empower our students to have the language and the skills to deconstruct curriculum and practice acts of self-agency and advocacy. We will include practice, authentic experience of critical literacy, and deconstruction in our literacy courses.

The Power of Student Collaboration. As we review the transcripts from this study we are encouraged by the power of student collaboration. At the beginning of one meeting the student teachers were angry and frustrated. The student teachers lacked the language to respond to the mandate of the scripted reading program. Mindy made a few

suggestions. The tone of the transcript changes, there is movement away from long monologues to short, interrupted, spurts of energetic brainstorming. This synergy appears to come from the infusion of Mindy's discourse, followed by the opportunity for the students to practice their own agency and form their own alternative versions of comprehensive literacy. How might we continue to experiment with ongoing small group spaces of inquiry and mentorship that offer alternative discourses to frame student teaching experiences?

Projects in teacher education using a poststructural feminist analysis are projects seeking to reassemble and collect the identities of those involved in education (Gore, 1993). This is the act of reinvention, of creating oneself as art, the never ending exploration of subjectivity (Foucault, 1984; Gore, 1993; McNay, 1992). What this process implies is the "possibility for rupture, for interrupting our current regimes and practices, perhaps even more so than the constant attempts to innovate beyond what we 'know'" (Gore, 1993, p. 130). As privileged discourses sanctioned by government move to mandate the identity of pre-service teachers, perhaps such inquiries become even more urgent.

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