

NARRATIVE INQUIRY

STORIES TO LIVE BY, STORIES TO TEACH WITH: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY  
INTO PRESERVICE TEACHERS' KNOWLEDGE OF TEACHING LITERACY  
FROM A CRITICAL LITERACY FRAMEWORK WITH DIVERSE CHILDREN'S  
LITERATURE

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by  
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Running head: NARRATIVE INQUIRY

The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

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FROM A CRITICAL LITERACY FRAMEWORK WITH DIVERSE CHILDREN'S  
LITERATURE

presented by Christina U. King,

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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Professor Angie Zapata Hampton

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research would not have been possible were it not for the willingness and contributions of narrative inquiry participants - Sarah, Margie, Rosalie, and Lindsey. I am grateful to them for their trust and confidence in me as a researcher and storyteller, and sharing their *stories to live by* (Connely & Clandinin, 1999) over the 11 weeks (about 2 and a half months) of the inquiry. When I first set out to conduct this inquiry, I believed that it would have been much easier to get PSTs to participate. I was proven wrong. I don't know that I ever could have imagined that there would be a virus outbreak of pandemic proportions and that COVID-19 would change the way that we could/would research, learn and teach, live, and communicate with each other. As a researcher, I experienced many obstacles to research the likes of which had not been previously lived and experienced. PSTs similarly faced obstacles to teaching during the pandemic that none of us had ever experienced before. A lot of the learning and teaching that went on during the early part of the pandemic was off the cuff and lived and learned in the moment. There was a lot of trial and error. The same could be said for the beginning of my research. Going into the inquiry I leaned onto PSTs and sought to work together with them to navigate this unfamiliar research and teaching landscape.

I almost got discouraged, more than once, around getting PSTs to participate. I had to figure out how to communicate to participants that their stories mattered - especially now during the pandemic - and that I would not put them to misuse. The inability to communicate about my research in-person with potential participants due to the restrictions brought on by the pandemic, I had to rely on flyers and word of mouth from instructors and undergraduate students and preservice teachers who knew me or knew of me from a

former class to share about the project and need for participants. I eventually found participants – or conversely, the ideal participants for the inquiry found me. It would take me some time to realize that all the difficulty I experienced with finding participants ultimately led me to the right participants.

Through inquiry into the four PST participants' stories to live by, I was able to traverse varied landscapes, plotlines, characters/identities, and pull-out commonalities and even some peculiarities of the PSTs studied. From inquiry participants I learned about children's authors and literature with which I was not familiar. Participants reaffirmed some of my previously held understandings around literacy teaching and diversity, as well as provided me with new ways to understand and teach about literacy and diversity alongside teaching diverse children's literature. As a teacher educator of literacy, following this inquiry, I am now contemplating what roles race and whiteness and anti-whiteness play(ed) in my own learning and teaching critical literacy and diverse children's literature. I have learned that, despite my fear of being persecuted for being explicit about race, I am doing my students a disservice if I don't teach about race explicitly. Though it is uncomfortable, I must work through and with(in) the discomfort towards better teaching.

I am grateful for the opportunity to learn how collectively our narrative - participants' research narratives and mine - serves teacher educators in the area of literacy education course (re)design possibilities for better critical literacy teaching diverse children's literature. In the future, I plan to conduct more narrative inquiries with both pre- and in-service teachers following the Connelly and Clandinin (1999) stories to live by framework. In doing so, I believe that I will have the opportunity to learn from

even more experiences and perspectives on teaching literacy and children's literature from teachers themselves.

This inquiry has reiterated the notion that the work of learning, teaching, and researching teachers and their teaching decisions is never ending. I have only begun to scratch the surface. There are undoubtedly more plots and storylines around critical literacy teaching diverse children's literature to be explored. I look forward to their exploration in my new role as teacher educator, and I look forward to teaching and learning with many more teachers to come.

Additionally, I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Angie Zapata Hampton for her endless support and encouragement. She has been a great teacher, model teacher educator, and educational researcher who has shown me boundless patience and generosity through sharing her knowledge, time, and attention. I appreciate all of her guidance and feedback alongside space for my own learning, teaching, and growth. I would also like to thank my dissertation committee whose teaching, guidance, and responses have strengthened both my research and my writing. I extend my appreciation to Dr. Lisa Dorner for her introducing and teaching me about qualitative research methods and nudging me to be more explicit in my research and writing. I also greatly appreciate her time and attention on the dissertation revision suggestions. To Dr. Mike L. Metz, I extend my gratitude for his introducing and teaching me about critical literacy and reminding me to funnel my thoughts when writing. I still have the diagram that you shared with me during the critical literacy course. To Dr. Robert Petrone, I extend thanks for his review of my writing with insightful responses, and his continued encouragement to keep writing.

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## ABSTRACT

This narrative inquiry offers research of literacy and children's literature teaching through inquiry into stories told from the perspective of preservice teachers (PSTs). Through inquiry into PSTs' *stories to live by* (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999), teacher educators and educational researchers learn about PSTs' experiences with literacy and children's literature and how they work to inform their teaching decisions. The research narratives provide literacy teacher educators with space to consider why and how to (re)design courses taught to PSTs on critical literacy teaching diverse children's literature. Educational researchers learn of ways to further research into PSTs' chosen ways of teaching through study of the research narratives.

This inquiry into PSTs' stories follows the research question of: How do preservice teachers' *stories to live by* inform their orientation towards certain literacy teaching practices of children's literature? It is framed by Connelly & Clandinin's (1999) conceptualization of *stories to live by* which merges PST participants' personal practical knowledge, lived experience on the professional knowledge landscape, and their identity (i.e., student teacher, future teacher) stories.

Analysis of PSTs' stories was done following structural and thematic models and found that PSTs held different views of literacy involving literacy as method and as social practice; they approached teaching literacy following behaviorist, constructivist, and socio-cultural ways; and held conceptualizations of children's literature including as teaching tools, mirrors, diverse, and culturally relevant. Implications for teacher educators include the need for explicit critical literacy teaching diverse children's literature and provision of explicit classroom experiences of teaching diverse children's

literature texts. Implications for educational researchers suggest the need for more individual and longitudinal studies of individual PSTs and their stories.

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

As a graduate instructor of a literacy education course on diverse children's literature, I am commonly asked questions by undergraduate students about my choosing to teach literacy within a critical literacy framework and decisions around teaching of literacy with diverse children's literature. My responses to undergraduates around such questions typically follow the form of stories. Some of the stories I tell are consciously constructed (Anzaldúa, 2015) or authored; these stories I will refer to as I attempt to create what undergraduates need to hear. Other stories emerge like imaginings or dreams (Anzaldúa, 2015), triggered by something within the classroom space (i.e., a conversation around a lived experience). As a former teacher librarian, reading teacher, paraprofessional, and school library clerk, I have authored and shared many stories – which I will call my teaching experience stories – from which to draw curriculum and instruction examples to share with undergraduates and preservice teachers.

My literacy teaching experience(s) stories are, to borrow from Anzaldúa (2015), “ontological beings with lives and various types of agency that at least partially exceed or in ways escape human knowledge and control” (p. xxx). Through literacy teaching experience(s) stories, I explore and attempt meaning-making around choices – past and present – regarding how to teach literacy and which books to share alongside my experiences both within and outside of teaching and education. My understanding of what literacy teaching *is*, is grounded in my literacy teaching stories. These literacy

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teaching stories take place over different knowledge landscapes<sup>1</sup> of both personal and professional nature (Connelly & Clandinin, 1985; 1999), involve various plots, and have different characters or identities (i.e., my pre-marital self, my married self, my married-parent-mother self, etc.). These are my stories to live by. Connelly and Clandinin (1999) conceptualized *stories to live by* as those stories that merge personal practical knowledge, life on the professional knowledge landscape, and identity.

I liken literacy teaching stories and stories to live by to emancipatory fairy tales. Lewison, Leland, and Harste (2008) introduced the concept of emancipatory fairy tales as a way of challenging the stereotypical ways many characters within fairy tales were depicted. After reading a fairy tale, students are invited to think about what story is central alongside whose story is told, and who is left out either through omission or silencing. Students then (re)author the story by altering one or more of the elements of the story (setting, plot, characters) to begin to identify and disrupt some of the greater social stories commonly held by readers as sites of meaning and knowledge.

Emancipatory fairy tales share similar characteristics to their more traditional counterparts but emancipate themselves through not conforming to cultural norms more commonly situated in fairy tales. Freedom in emancipatory fairy tales is actualized through their removal of the limitations of existing cultural norm(s) (i.e., all princesses are white, blonde, and blue-eyed, and need to be rescued). Stories are both situated within and shapers of culture – what (i.e., behavior(s) or practice(s)) is accepted as norm or

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<sup>1</sup> Szecsi et al. (2010) cite Greene (1994), who uses the term “landscape” to describe one’s personal understandings, including biases, preferences, and vacancies. Vacancies are described as experiences to which one has never been exposed or contemplated and likely create holes of misunderstanding (pp. 44-45).

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expected of persons within a given group. Anzaldúa (2015) defined culture or *cultura* as, “the fabric of life that the scissors of previous generations cut, trimmed, embroidered, embellished, and attached to new quilt pieces, but it is the cloth that the wash of time discolors, blends the dyes, and applies new tints” (p. 85). Though you may get your identity story from your culture, it is not permanent and cultural practices and beliefs can be influenced or disrupted by stories and their (re)telling.

My stories to live by, specifically my teaching stories, take place primarily across the teacher knowledge landscape and within a teacher cultura. *Teacher cultura* is understood as the collective story of teacher group identity – what people of a certain cultural group (i.e., teachers) collectively identify as what it means to be a teacher. These stories inform teachers as members of the cultural group about how to teach and what tools to teach with; these stories are rooted in the past and oft hold onto traditional ways of knowing and doing around teaching because of the feelings of comfort and the ability to withstand-the-test-of-time which they engender. My stories to live by serve to emancipate readers and listeners from the normative and provide new and/or different perspectives and possibilities to consider around and within teacher cultura – specifically, those of critically teaching literacy with diverse literature for children.

As a teacher of literacy and literature, I teach from a critical literacy frame. Within a critical literacy framework, literacy is more than just mere reading and writing. The teaching of literacy from a critical literacy frame is described as a “means of looking at an issue or topic in different ways, analyzing it, and suggesting possibilities for change and improvement” (Vasquez, Janks, & Comber, 2019, p. 300). I intentionally teach with diverse children’s literature to create spaces for critical literacy discussions inclusive of

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traditionally marginalized voices – those of BIPOC authors and illustrators oft omitted or absent from children’s literature shared in public elementary school classrooms – alongside the sharing of my stories to live by. Through my stories to live by, I provide undergraduate students and preservice teachers with different perspectives and understandings of literacy education and children’s literature – those of a Black, female, graduate student, instructor, researcher concerned with learning and teaching literacy for all children.

My responses to undergraduates’ questions about literacy and literature teaching – curriculum and pedagogy are mostly well received. Many undergraduate students share their enthusiasm around critical literacy and diverse children’s literature and the eagerness with which they anticipate opportunities to do similar work in their own future classrooms. Nevertheless, just as many undergraduate students are apprehensive of teaching literacy and literature from a critical literacy perspective. Those who are uneasy about this type of teaching tend to ask questions about what they are to do when faced with potential challenges (i.e., parents, administration, communities) to critical literacy teaching practices and diverse children’s literature. I am sometimes unsure of how to best respond to questions about challenges. I fear that it has a lot to do with my own teaching experiences and knowledge landscapes.

### **Background & Context**

The landscapes of my K-12 literacy and literature teaching stories are urban (Greater Metro Atlanta, GA; Austin, TX) and some suburban (Covington, GA; Anderson, SC) settings and Title 1 (federally funded schools with large concentrations of low-income students) schools with sizeable African American and/or Latinx populations.

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Much of the work of critical literacy is similarly situated, due to the goal of critical literacy to (re)address the needs of those historically marginalized – persons/students from non-white families, of lower socioeconomic standing, who live in urban spaces. The work of critical literacy allows space for the examination and disruptions of the language and power relations that attempt to keep non-white persons in the margins and work towards social transformation.

As a literacy teacher and teacher librarian in the K-12 context I loved sharing diverse – primarily culturally and some linguistically – literature texts with students. In so doing I provided them with the many mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors (Bishop, 1990) that were previously absent from their educational curriculum and literacy learning. My literacy teaching experiences were without many of the challenges faced by current undergraduate students and preservice teachers (PSTs) around the teaching of elementary literacy with diverse children’s literature from a critical literacy framework. PSTs, within the current U.S. political climate, in many ways fear parent and community disapproval and retribution around choosing to teach in such a manner and with certain literature texts (i.e., BIPOC authored and illustrated literature; stories of experiences outside of white, Christian culture). Conversely, my literacy teaching with diverse children’s literature was welcomed by school administration, teachers, parents, and community members. This was the beginning of my critical literacy teaching experience with diverse children’s literature. As a teacher librarian at schools within Black and Brown communities, I transferred what I had learned in graduate school about teaching literacy with diverse children’s literature and what I had learned about the need to center and share Black, Indigenous, and Person of Color (BIPOC) voices from my



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undergraduate studies in African American Studies. Through both programs (undergraduate and graduate), I learned about literature from authors and illustrators of historically marginalized cultural groups and its power to disrupt Western concepts of what/how literacy education is and what/how it could be taught. How would I/should I share my knowledge and understandings about teaching with diverse children's literature and its importance with undergraduate students – preservice teachers?

The knowledge landscapes of undergraduate students and inquiry participants and preservice teachers (PSTs) at a predominantly white institution of higher learning in the Midwest vary vastly. Some PSTs are from urban and suburban places, while others are from rural places across the Midwest. Some are of middle-class family backgrounds, while others are of higher or lower-socioeconomic family backgrounds. Some were raised in households of readers, while others were not. Some PSTs were taught literacy from a critical literacy perspective and how to teach with diverse children's literature within such work during their childhood experiences, while others are experiencing critical literacy and diverse children's literature for the first time as undergraduate students and future teachers. Some PSTs chose to complete their student teaching experiences in urban/suburban school settings, while others chose rural school settings. PSTs in the elementary education program complete their Senior Year On-Site Program (SYOSP) with cooperating teachers from and with whom they learn of teaching pedagogy and teacher culture or *cultura* (Anzaldúa, 2015). Early Childhood Education (ECE) PSTs similarly can choose to complete their senior year teaching internship with a cooperating teacher and learn of teaching pedagogy and teacher cultura. All these landscapes constitute fertile ground for PSTs' varying knowledge and understanding

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around their engagement in literacy curriculum and pedagogy practices – especially critical literacy curriculum and pedagogy.

Adding fuel to the fire was my perceived failure to better respond to PSTs' questions around their fears about teaching literacy and literature from a critical perspective; and their feeling ill-prepared to teach from a critical literacy perspective and with diverse children's literature. Was this even possible then? I needed to find stories – stories to live by told from another perspective(s) – that would help me to provide better answers for PSTs and me, and to explore and consider teacher education curriculum and pedagogy on teaching preservice teachers how to teach literacy and diverse children's literature from a critical literacy frame. Who would be better, to tell these literacy and teaching stories to live by from which I/we could all learn, besides PSTs themselves? No one.

Therefore, the need to hear and inquire into the stories or narratives of education PSTs (elementary and ECE) who had questions about how and why to engage in critical literacy teaching with diverse children's literature following their having taken methods course(s) on literacy education emerged. In essence, the need to hear PSTs' stories and use the phenomena derived from their narratives to bridge the gap between literacies learned through their teacher education and literacies informing their curriculum and pedagogy practices was created by them and they hold the answers to their questions – through narrative inquiry into their stories to live by, we (researchers and teacher educators) could begin to better understand what, who, when, where around the teaching of literacy done by PSTs – inclusive of what and how around critical literacy teaching and diverse children's literature.

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### **Research Questions**

Given the desire to conduct this inquiry into How do (or do not) preservice teachers become engaged in critical literacy? How do they make decisions about which children's literature texts to teach with? Alongside my understanding that within preservice teachers' "stories to live by" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Clandinin, 2013) lie phenomena about their personal practical knowledge, their teachers' professional knowledge and teacher identity which potentially inform their teaching practice decisions. I pose the following research question: How do preservice teachers' "stories to live by" inform their orientation towards certain literacy teaching practices with children's literature? Further guidance is given to the inquiry into preservice teachers' stories by sub questions of: What are the literacy experiences of preservice teachers prior to teacher education? What are preservice teachers' experiences with diverse children's literature texts prior to teacher education? What are the literacy experiences of preservice teachers in teacher education? What are the experiences of preservice teachers with literacy instruction during their senior year teaching internships? What are preservice teachers' teaching experiences with diverse children's literature texts?

### **Nature of the Study**

There are five participants in this narrative inquiry – four preservice teacher participants and me as co-participant and researcher – into our stories to live by. The inquiry is primarily that of biographical narrative inquiry into the stories of undergraduate PSTs. Such inquiry “explores lived experiences and perspectives that people have of their daily lives, including their past, present, and future, focusing on how they make sense of the meanings they give to stories they tell” (Denzin, 1989; Kim, 2016, p.125). Alongside

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the biographical narratives of undergraduate PSTs is my own autobiographical narrative inquiry which allows me to “travel to the self that illuminates a larger social problem” (Kim, 2016, p. 122). As I listen to and analyze the stories to live by of undergraduate PSTs, I similarly do the same work with my own story to live by. Together, our interwoven narratives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) share the collective story of teacher knowledge and teacher education towards possibilities around how and why decisions about teaching practice from a critical literacy perspective with diverse children’s literature.

Within the role of storyteller, I ask PSTs to share stories about both their personal practical knowledge, professional knowledge landscapes, and teacher cultura as all these stories inform their teaching decisions. When teaching the reading and writing of texts, I often share about the relationship between texts and readers and writers. Beginning with texts – texts are not neutral; they are written from and for a certain perspective(s). Readers are not neutral either. How one reads texts varies from person to person. The reading of text is done from both literal and figurative positions – I may be literally sitting down in at my desk, within the comfort of my home reading articles about preservice teachers who are described as white, female, undergraduates of a PWI; while I am figuratively understanding who they are based on my prior experience(s) with and knowledge of PSTs – good, bad, or indifferent; positive or negative – and making assumptions about the PSTs I am reading about based on prior knowledge. Within our stories to live by lie those literal and figurative positions. Within PSTs’ stories about teaching and teacher education, I read and listen to learn about their knowledge, positions, and landscapes across time – past, present, future. For me to hear these stories,

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not only do I have to be a good listener, but I also must have the trust of those sharing their stories. Such a relationship of trust involves my taking on the role of narrative inquirer as midwife (Kim, 2016).

As narrative researcher midwife, I work alongside my students as preservice teacher participants through inquiry – listening, questioning, theorizing, listening some more, understanding, questioning, etc. – towards birthing of participants’ stories. The stories are not mine, but my involvement is crucial. My responsibilities to the participant, according to Clandinin & Connelly (2000) include: providing a safe and loving environment for participant and their embryo (story in-process); providing space for myself and my own stories; having an awareness of “the larger landscapes on which we all live” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 81) and the professional knowledge landscapes we currently inhabit; and ensure a healthy birth (co-constructed research narrative). The success of my work as narrative researcher midwife predetermines my success as a storyteller or narrator of our – PSTs and my – story to live by and story to teach with. Within our collective story – the narrative research text – I am able to engage in the work of making sense of myself as a teacher educator and researcher and the decisions that I have made and continue to make, alongside those of the inquiry participants towards exploration and provision of possibilities for others – other teacher educators, researchers, and PSTs who wish to further the work of cultivating diversity and inclusion through education designed around critical literacy teaching practices and teaching with diverse children’s literature.

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### **Assumptions and Delimitations**

Preservice teacher participants in this inquiry are purposefully chosen. By this, I mean that participants in this study are selected based on certain criteria. When looking for participants, I was interested in identifying people who would be able to serve as valuable sources of knowledge about how and why PSTs make teaching practice decisions based on their stories to live by. Based on this initial criterion, all undergraduate students, preparing to be teachers through the College of Education (i.e., elementary education majors and ECE majors) where I taught as a graduate instructor would make good participants in the inquiry.

Initially, PSTs in this inquiry were also to provide me with information about their literacy and literature education experiences and knowledge from an elementary methods course on diverse children's literature taught from a critical literacy frame. Having been a student in the course was originally a criterion. However, only undergraduate students who had previously taken this course would be considered to participate in this inquiry. This criterion would prove to be too limiting, as it omitted the voices of potential preservice teacher candidates from the ECE program. Finding inquiry participants required a balancing act between and amongst criteria. As the researcher, I was reminded of the chosen method of narrative inquiry and what was most important – finding participants who are willing, trustful, and trustworthy (Kim, 2016).

One of the most important criteria of narrative inquiry is that the researcher and participant(s) trust each other. As the researcher, I must have the trust of those (i.e., participants) sharing their stories, and would add that I would also have to trust them. This is the type of trust relationship described earlier around the researcher as midwife

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(Kim, 2016) and participant as fiduciary and reciprocal relationships. Narrative inquiries rely on rich stories as phenomena from which to learn and grow. Rich and healthy stories are born in healthy environments – such environments need trust and rapport. To establish rich and healthy stories and their environment, I as a researcher would select participants with whom I had either developed relationships or could envision developing such relationships. Initially, I envisioned working with prior students and PSTs as inquiry participants – having served as their instructor in one or more of their previous literacy methods courses, I believed that our previously established relationships could serve as fertile ground for our rich conversations. However, given the self-selective nature of participants who wished to participate in this inquiry, I had to expand how I viewed relationships with participants and included in the inquiry preservice teacher participants who I had no prior relationship with as well.

A delimitation of this study, due to its narrative inquiry form, is the inability to generalize the findings to a larger preservice teacher population. The stories shared by participants in this inquiry may not echo those of other PSTs in literacy teacher education, though they provide a window into the experiences of these PST inquiry participants. PSTs would have had multiple teacher educators of varying teaching philosophies and teaching pedagogies teach them about literacy education and children's literature. PST participants may not share similar backgrounds (i.e., cultural, racial, religious, etc.) or knowledge. The only shared experience would be that of undergraduate student and PST perhaps.

For these reasons, the stories or PST narratives would have to be contextualized – these are the “stories to live by” of inquiry participants and undergraduate PSTs who,

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following purposeful sampling and self-selecting process, are white, females in their senior year internships at a predominantly white institution of higher learning (PWI) in the Midwest, U.S. Relationships held between myself, and inquiry participants were both old and new. Included in our interwoven and co-constructed narrative(s) are the many shifts and emergences of relationships of power and knowledge, our collective story to live by and teach with that informs the possible decisions that teacher educators and education researchers can make around the critical literacy teaching and learning of literacy with diverse children's literature.

### **Organization of the Dissertation**

The remainder of this inquiry is organized into eight chapters. Chapter two presents a review of literature. It helps to situate the inquiry within narrative interview conversations and their interpretation around inquiry into teacher knowledge, identities, and education alongside those about preservice teachers, critical literacy, and literature-based curriculum and pedagogy in teacher education programs. Chapter three presents the methodology for understanding the stories shared by preservice teachers alongside my own. Methodology structures an argument in support of narrative inquiry as the preferred method of inquiry.

Chapters four through eight present the narratives of participants and their stories to live by – myself included – of this inquiry. Chapter nine, shares of the exploration into the narratives in chapters four through eight. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explain that within this chapter, “the pages are filled with people, events, and summaries of their stories, not with theoretical literature” (p. 161). Chapter nine, entitled “Daunting Possibility” (Rose, 1997), is the space wherein the narrative inquiry researcher and



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participant can revisit the dilemmas or puzzles that brought them to the research and look towards future possibilities. This chapter has a reflective tone, though it provides room for my thinking as researcher and teacher educator around the future teaching of critical literacy with diverse children's literature texts. This is where I contemplate my work as a graduate instructor and researcher, teacher, and mother, alongside my future work as a teacher educator and researcher of literacy education. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) share that it is here that narrative researchers make references to "narrative categories, such as cover stories and landscapes" (p. 161). Chapter nine concludes with a return to both the personal and social significance of the work, "reminding us as readers that narrative inquiries need to do both" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, 161).

## Chapter II

## SITUATING THE INQUIRY WITHIN THE RESEARCH LANDSCAPE

This review of literature explores three areas related to the narrative inquiry: Narrative research in teachers, teaching, and teacher education; Critical literacy as a framework for teaching and research, and diverse children's literature as a teaching tool for preservice teachers within such a framework; and Analysis of preservice teachers' (PSTs') literacy teaching knowledge and teacher education. Guided by the research question of: How do elementary preservice teachers' "stories to live by" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) shape their orientation towards certain literacy teaching practices? This review of literature helps to situate the narrative inquiry within preservice teachers' stories to live by alongside conversations and thinking around critical literacy and other transformative sociocultural pedagogies as frameworks of elementary literacy curriculum and instruction.

**Narrative Research on Teachers, Teaching, and Teacher Education**

Bruner (1986) asserts that there are two modes of thought, the paradigmatic or traditional logical-scientific and a narrative mode. These modes of thought are complementary, with each providing differing ways of ordering experience or constructing reality. The narrative mode, according to Bruner (1986) centers "around the broader and more inclusive question of the meaning of experience" (p. 13). There has been extensive narrative research done on teachers, teaching, and teacher education (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990, 1995, 1996; Craig, 1995, 2011; Craig & Olson, 2002; Akin, 2002; Alsup, 2006). The exploration of narrative research literature on the development of teachers, teaching, and teacher education foregrounds my research inquiry into preservice teachers' (PSTs') storied understandings or knowledge around elementary

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literacy and its teaching – interested in whether PSTs engage in critical literacy teaching practice with diverse children’s literature as a tool within such a pedagogical frame.

### *Teacher & Teacher Identity Narratives*

The narrative research into teachers’ experiences and knowledge is purposeful; seeking to illuminate the teacher as a professional and as knowledgeable. Akin (2002), in defining teaching and teachers, shares the metaphorical nature of the shadow and its workings around the teacher. She explains, “in the world of public schooling the most essential players, the students and the teachers, are often mere shadows for others to define as they will, choosing particular descriptors, ignoring others, all the while making what amounts to very definitive interpretations about the nature of that which casts the shadow, often without actually having seen the student or teacher to whom the shadow belongs” (p. 65). Through narrative inquiry, teachers can move from the shadows into the light, and share their knowledge, experiences, and understandings as teachers firsthand. Their teacher narratives provide readers with stories about teachers and their teaching told from the perspectives of the teachers themselves, thereby (re)centering their stories.

Clandinin and Connelly’s (1986) narrative inquiry of teachers, centers the teacher and the development of teacher knowledge as “narratively accounting for the context in which teachers come to know – their professional knowledge landscapes – to narratively accounting for teachers’ identities – that is, teachers’ ‘stories to live by’” (p. 25). Connelly and Clandinin (1999) conceptualize stories to live by as a merging of “personal practical knowledge, life on the professional knowledge landscape and teacher identity” (p. 4). Craig (2011) shares that “in stories to live by, identity takes on narrative understandings of knowledge and context” (p. 25). Craig (1995) building on Connelly and Clandinin’s (1985) work on personal practical knowledge, inquired into how teachers construct and reconstruct their personal practical

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knowledge and come to know professional knowledge. Building on the work of Clandinin and Connelly (1985, 1990, 1995, 1996, 1999) and Craig (1995, 2011), I am interested in learning more about preservice teachers' "stories to live by" – their development of knowledge across their personal practical knowledge and professional knowledge landscapes alongside whether they decide to teach from a critical literacy framework and teach with diverse children's literature. Through narrative research into preservice teachers' stories to live by as phenomena, I, as a teacher educator and curriculum designer, can work to review, reread, and retell towards (re)structure and (re)design of teacher education (i.e., curriculum and instruction) around elementary literacy. In so doing, I hold true and continue to center the teacher as expert and further what Clandinin (2000) asserts, "questions about preservice teacher education do not begin with what theoreticians, researchers, and policy makers know but, rather, with what preservice teachers know and have found in professional practice" (p. 29).

Informed by Dewey's (1916) work on "the individual and the group being modified by experience," Craig (1995) studied and learned from/with a beginning teacher, named Tim, within the cultural context of the school and learning through experience. Craig's (1995) research followed a "telling stories" method, which she describes as "an approach lodged within narrative inquiry" (p. 153; Craig, 1992) and allowed space for both Craig and Tim to select and order experiences from shared stories of what they both believed and felt best described Tim's beginning teaching experiences. Craig (1995), through her movement between the stories (i.e., analysis), found that two questions arose: Whether knowledge communities are emergent or whether they are intentionally cultivated? What of the relationship between Tim's knowledge communities and the competing interpretations of what constitutes a healthy school? She concludes, "the conceptualization [of knowledge communities] has helped me unravel some of

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the complexities surrounding how beginning teachers' knowledge is subtly shaped in their professional knowledge contexts" (Craig, 1995, p. 173). Tim, the teacher, is both shaped by what he has learned through the course of his education and his student-teaching experiences. Craig's (1995) findings are fascinating to me and suggest that there is possibility that preservice teachers' knowledge and identities are influenced by both their education and their subjective experiences. Through this narrative inquiry into preservice teachers' stories to live by, I learn about how much of an influence, if at all, on their teacher education (i.e., curriculum and instruction) is and can be on both their chosen ways to teach and the tools they choose to teach with. Application of findings from the inquiry serve as ways and means for thinking about how designers of elementary literacy education curriculum and instruction can better structure the education preservice teachers for greater influence potential towards their engagement in literacy teaching from a critical literacy framework and teaching with diverse children's literature.

Craig and Olson (2002) conducted a narrative study of teachers and teacher learning in a first year, first term sociology of education course. The goal of their study was to highlight narrative practices (i.e., reading responses, base groups, journal writing) that place teachers' knowledge at the forefront of teacher learning. Their study is built upon understanding teachers' knowledge is formed by narrative authority and knowledge communities. Craig and Olson (2002) define narrative authority as, "the expression, enactment, and development of a person's narrative knowledge as individuals learn to authorize meaning in community with others" (p. 116). They describe knowledge communities as "safe, storytelling places where educators narrate the rawness of their experiences, negotiate meaning, and authorize their own and others' interpretations of situations" (Craig & Olson, 2002, p. 116). Within the course, their students can engage in "narrative practice that promotes the development of narrative authority and the

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cultivation of knowledge communities with preservice teachers” (Craig & Olson, 2002, p. 117). They found both strengths and weaknesses of narrative practices emerged in their findings.

One of the strengths identified was that “the featured exemplars show narrative practices assisting individual and groups of undergraduate and graduate students to explore dimensions of their personal practical knowledge, to develop their narrative authority, and to form knowledge communities that promote positive growth” (p. 127). Conversely, an identified problem was that within their narrative practices, students demonstrated their becoming or changing, and not yet knowing of who they are as teachers or where they fit – “there are transitional periods where individuals may no longer fit comfortably in a conventional system but may be living a story that is yet to be or is in competition with stories of ‘the way things are’” (Craig & Olson, 2002, p. 128). Craig and Olson’s (2002) findings offer support for both the current inquiry design and future curriculum and instruction design. Their research supports the centering of preservice teachers (PSTs) towards identifying possibilities of working with them towards consideration of change – towards change in teaching pedagogy. Additionally, their research speaks to the fluidity of PSTs’ identities and understandings especially as they move across the teacher educational landscape towards their professional teaching landscape. Preservice teachers encompass a “becoming teachers” space of understanding and of teaching; choosing how and what to teach along the way.

Research on narrative inquiry into teachers and teaching done by Clandinin and Connelly (1996), Craig (1995), and Craig and Olson (2002) collectively, provides a means of learning from teachers about their teacher identities and knowledge acquisition. It is within the spaces of personal practical experience and professional experience along varying knowledge landscapes (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) that teachers come to greater understanding. These spaces,

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communally, provide PSTs with their knowledge of who, what, how, and other things around teaching within and through what I call *teacher cultura*. The concept of teacher cultura draws from work done by Anzaldúa (2015) who defined *cultura* as, “the fabric of life that the scissors of previous generations cut, trimmed, embroidered, embellished, and attached to new quilt pieces, but it is the cloth that the wash of time discolors, blends the dyes, and applies new tints” (p. 85). Such an understanding of culture allows space for thought about it in broad terms – inclusive of that which we have been taught and learned alongside what we hold onto and those we let go. Identity stories emanate from our cultura – helping us to understand who we are as members of a community. Teacher cultura, then, consists of stories about teaching and teachers, often told by teachers – past, present, and future alongside the teacher’s, PST’s, storyteller’s own stories around the same. It can be understood as the collective story of group identity – what people of a certain cultural group (i.e., teachers/educators) collectively identify as. These stories inform teachers about not only who a teacher is but also of how to teach and what tools to teach with; these stories are rooted in the past and oft hold onto traditional and mainstream ways of knowing and doing because of the feelings of comfort and the ability to withstand-the-test-of-time that they engender. These stories can also share new ways of knowing and doing that challenge and disrupt much of the mainstream understandings and practice.

The work of teacher identity development involves teachers wrestling with questions of what a teacher is and does, what a teacher looks like, and as Britzman in Alsup (2006) adds, “whether the teacher’s body is a normal teacher’s body” (p. xi). This is a space of what Alsup refers to as “continual becoming” (p. 7). Connelly and Clandinin (1999) conceptualize this space as teachers’ stories to live by. Given the instability of this space and constant tensions – pulling and pushing, and movement in and out of past, present, and future experiences within teachers’

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personal practical knowledge alongside their professional knowledge – narrative inquiry still appears to be the best fit in terms of learning about and from teachers across varying terrain – knowledge communities, contexts, and acquired knowledge.

### *Teaching: Navigating teachers' professional knowledge landscapes*

Prior to discussing research in teaching, it is necessary to define where, wherein, and how around teaching and explore place, space, and time through the narrative research into teachers' teaching practice (Craig, 2011; Fowler, 2006; Alsup, 2006; Akin, 2002; Richert, 2002; Connelly & Clandinin, 1999). Connelly and Clandinin (1995) open their chapter on Teachers' Professional Knowledge Landscapes: Secret, Sacred, and Cover Stories with the question of "how [do] the embodied, narrative, relational knowledge teachers carry autobiographically and by virtue of their formal education shape, and is shaped by, their professional knowledge context?" (p. 3). This guiding question led Connelly and Clandinin to question the influences on teacher knowledge and identity development. With knowledge of teacher experiences and knowledge – practical and professional, understanding around where this takes place the *landscape* metaphor was created.

Landscape was determined to be best suited to describe this expansive terrain of space, place, and time, on and through which teachers' knowledge as meaning making becomes known narratively. For Connelly and Clandinin (1995) the landscape conceptualization was "composed of relationships among people, places, and things, [and] see it as both an intellectual and a moral landscape" (p. 5). Greene (1994), uses the term "landscape" to describe one's personal understandings, including biases, preferences, and vacancies – where vacancies are described as experiences to which one has never been exposed or contemplated and create holes of misunderstanding. Researchers learn about teachers' professional knowledge landscapes in terms



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of exploring teacher knowledge alongside “teacher stories – stories of teachers – school stories – stories of school” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996). The study of teacher landscapes is relevant to this inquiry because it provides data on what and how teacher’s professional identities are shaped and formed. Through narrative inquiry into and interpretation of PSTs’ stories, information about the landscapes that shape their professional identity emerge. These stories contain phenomena of literacy and its education – stories of PSTs as literacy teachers, their knowledge of literacy and its teaching, and their literacy teachers.

Building on Clandinin and Connelly’s professional knowledge landscape metaphor, Craig (2011) added two more sets of paired stories, “reform stories – stories of reform and community stories – stories of community.” Craig did so in response to her seeing increasing evidence of teachers lived and told stories amid school reform. According to Craig (2011), “stories of reform are stories given to schools and teachers, whereas reform stories are the reform narratives [which are] stories that are humanly lived” (p. 25). “Similarly, stories of community are narratives told about communities, whereas community stories – which necessarily would include parent stories – stories of parents (see Pushor & Murphy, 2004) – are those narratives lived and told, and re-lived and re-told, by community members” (Craig, 2011, p. 25). In terms of narrative research in preservice teachers’ teaching experiences, Clandinin & Connelly’s (1996) teacher stories – stories of teachers are still applicable. Specifically, for my research in preservice teachers’ teaching experiences with diverse literature, I would add “literature stories – stories of literature,” to the environment of stories that make up PSTs of elementary literacy professional knowledge landscapes. Stories of literature, then, are those of literature given to preservice teachers, whereas literature stories are narratives of learned and told, and re-learned and re-told by PSTs and their teaching and learning with children’s literature.

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### *Student Teaching: Teacher Education Narratives*

In the area of narrative inquiry into teacher education, Craig (2011) shares the contributions of teacher educators and researchers, Conle (1996, 2006) and Li, Conle, and Elbaz-Luwisch (2009) as notable. As a graduate instructor and researcher in the field of education who is interested in narrative inquiry in teacher education, the work done by others in the same field serves as entry points or guides to my own intended work with PSTs in the field of elementary literacy teacher education. Conle's narrative inquiry exploration of preservice teachers and teacher education is quite extensive (see Conle, 1996, 1999, 2006; Beattie & Conle, 1996; Conle, Loudon & Mildon, 1998; Conle & Sakamoto, 2002). Her (2006) inquiry into teacher education was structured around student (PST) responses to four narrative assignments: "1) a narrative portrait of a school; 2) a personal narrative of teaching and learning; 3) a personal cultural narrative; and 4) a narrative of the techniques and strategies preservice teacher education students encountered and used in their practicum experiences" (Craig, 2011, p. 30).

Conle's (1996) narrative inquiries into teacher education draw on both student and instructor perspectives. Her work on the resonance process within narrative builds on Clandinin and Connelly's (1985) work on practical knowledge for preservice teachers. Conle purports that resonance within narrative inquiry involves the creation of stories through triggers and that teacher educators – once they learn of the triggers through inquiry of preservice teachers' narratives – could then use those triggers to hear and encourage telling and retelling of stories around them. To achieve optimal stories, the teacher educator and researcher needs to utilize resonance within what Conle identifies as "conditions optimal for educationally productive resonance: participant observation; concrete, experiential contexts for storytelling; heterogenous groups; and the encouragement of narrative conversations" (p. 318). These conditions serve as a

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guide to the design of the inquiry into PSTs' stories to live by and work with participants from various groups.

Li et al. (2009) in a co-authored text, studied the shifting polarization among students in multicultural teacher education programs. Each of the authors/professors brought a unique perspective to the narrative inquiry. Craig (2011) shares, "as professors in the United States, Canada, and Israel respectively, the authors [Xin Li, Carola Conle, and Freema Elbaz-Luwisch] have increasingly experienced social polarization among students in their teacher education classes, especially in multicultural and cross-cultural education courses where diverse political opinions, competing economic interests, and adversarial religious beliefs are expressed" (p. 30). Their (2009) work presents possibilities around a "pedagogy of narrative shifting" (p. 281) - seeing diversity within unity and unity within diversity. These findings suggest that narrative inquiry holds the potential for shaping pedagogy in education. As both a teacher educator and researcher of teacher education, narrative inquiry into teacher education theoretically informs my future teacher education choices and possibilities for all – researchers, educators, and students.

### **Critical Literacy & Diverse Children's Literature**

Critical literacy is inclusive of viewing literacy as ideological and concerning social practice which includes values, attitudes, feelings, and social relationships involving power (Street, 1984, 1993, 2003; Luke, 2000). Large part of the work of critical literacy is to "make workings of power visible, to denaturalize 'common sense' assumptions (Gramsci, 1971) and to reveal them as constructed representations of the social order, serving the interests of some at the expense of others" (Janks, 2010, p. 36). This narrative inquiry into PSTs' stories to live by as storied phenomena (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Clandinin, 2013) is concerned with and guided

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by questions of: If/How do preservice teachers become engaged in critical literacy? How do they make decisions about which children's literature texts to teach with?

### *Critical Literacy as a Framework*

Janks (1993a, 1993b), through her work with young adults and adolescents in South African schools, used critical literacy as a tool in the fight against apartheid in the form of Critical Language Awareness (CLA) workbooks. Her interest in critical literacy began with the relationship between language and power and was concerned about "how language was used to persuade, deceive, construct, and produce representations of the world" (Turner & Griffin, 2019, p. 319). Janks used critical literacy to aid her students in the process of understanding what was being said in texts and how those texts were working to position them; and then used critical literacy work towards rewriting or reconstruction of language and texts. Within a U.S. context, critical literacy is similarly used as a framework for the teaching and learning of literacy instruction in teacher education.

Vasquez et al. (2019) identify multiple orientations to critical literacy, which include: critical literacy as a framework or perspective for teaching and learning; a way of being in the classroom; and a stance or attitude toward literacy work in schools. Within a critical literacy frame, literacy teaching and learning provides space for the questioning and interpretation of issues or topics from multiple viewpoints or perspectives, analysis of those issues and their interpretations, and suggestion of possibilities for change and improvement (Vasquez, 2010, 2014; Vasquez et al., 2019). A critical literacy frame in teacher education affords PSTs "opportunities for disrupting and "unpacking myths and distortions and building new ways of knowing and acting upon the world" (Luke, 2014, p. 22) that challenge our taken-for-granted assumptions and naturalized practices" (Vasquez et al., 2019, p. 301).

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Together, Janks and Vasquez offer important insights for this narrative inquiry into PSTs' storied phenomena around literacy and its education. Specifically, their work provides windows into learning how critical literacy education can either work with or against preservice teachers' becoming teachers of literacy from a similar frame. In other words, the inquiry is interested in seeing where the tensions or places of resistance/reluctance to engaging in teaching literacy from a critical literacy frame, if any, lie. Given the nature of the work of critical literacy to disrupt the commonplace and mainstream, as seen through units of study done by Jenny O'Brien (1994, 2001) around Mother's Day cards and flyers and by Maras and Brummett in 1995 around the presidential elections. Both studies, featured in Vasquez's (2014) work on *Negotiating Critical Literacies with Young Children*, share their students' explorations of the issues/topics through materials (e.g., Mother's Day catalogs, newspapers, news programs) and discussions at home and in-school; alongside providing space for students' considerations of other possibilities. O'Brien (1994, 2001) and Maras and Brummett (1995) demonstrate how critical literacy work involves reading and comprehension inclusive of their students' multiple perspectives and existing knowledge and culture, space to question the purpose or intent of the text and its writer(s); as well as room for ways to either change or extend what was read (Vasquez, 2010, 2014; Vasquez et al., 2019). This inquiry is interested in understanding: How do preservice teachers feel about engaging in similar work within the professional landscape of elementary literacy teaching? What are they sharing as concerns? How are they addressing these concerns? If PSTs are engaging in and teaching from/with critical literacy perspectives, what has/is influencing them to do so? PSTs responses to the are collected and interpreted through/with(in) their narratives and storied phenomena on literacy and its teaching. Phenomena is then considered in the design/(re)design of literacy education curriculum.

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In the analyzing and designing of curriculum, Janks' (2010, 2014) applies the interdependent model for critical literacy. It includes four dimensions: power, diversity, access, and design/redesign which "are distilled from careful reading of the literature in a range of related areas as they pertain to education – anti-racism, whiteness, feminism, post-colonialism, sexual orientation, critical linguistics, critical pedagogy, sociocultural and critical approaches to literacy, and critical discourse analysis" (Vasquez, Janks, & Comber, 2019, p. 305). In *Literacy and Power* (2010), Janks also shares of the interdependent model's usefulness for analyzing research data and provides two examples: one in which "Shariff and Janks (2001) used the model as an analytic tool to examine the stories in *Heart to Heart*, a comic that Shariff developed with high school students as part of her research (1994)" (p. 209); and another in which Jerome Harste and his colleagues at Indiana University (2007) "used the model as a way of analyzing the artwork produced by pre-service and in-service teachers in response to the question '*What changes do you wish to see in our society's conceptions of literacy?*'" (p. 209). Both research projects had findings that demonstrated the interrelatedness of power, diversity, and design, alongside "giving weight to the theory of interdependence that the model argues for" (Janks, 2010, p. 2010).

While the interdependent model of critical literacy is useful for thinking about how the dimensions relate to each other, Janks (2010) cautions, "In focusing on the socio-cultural, it ignores the psychological. Because critical literacy is a rationalist activity it does not sufficiently address the non-rational investments that readers bring with them to texts and tasks" (p. 211). Janks challenges researchers like me, those interested in researching PSTs' engagement in critical literacy, to look beyond reason and towards "the territory of desire and identification, pleasure and play, the taboo and the transgressive" (p. 212). She describes identification as "a

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non-rational process that affects our desires below the level of consciousness” (Janks, 2010, p. 221). The framing of the analysis and design of curriculum within narrative inquiry into PSTs stories to live by (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) with Janks’ interdependent model of critical literacy aids the movement towards unearthing PSTs’ “non-rational” thinking and decision-making around literacy and its teaching.

**A Freirean View of Critical Literacy.** Much of critical literacy work begins with critical theoretical thought from The Frankfurt School and theories of Marxism. However, Freire’s work on critical consciousness and critical pedagogy is more prominently associated with the origins of critical literacy. Freire’s work is considered “groundbreaking as it pushed to the fore the importance and effects of critical pedagogy as a way of making visible and examining relations of power in order to change and dismantle inequitable ways of being” (Vasquez, Janks, & Comber, 2019, p. 301). Freire (1970) pulled from Marxism and was concerned with raising conscientização or critical consciousness of oppressed learners. Marx, according to Willis et al. (2008) “believed that consciousness, as an idea, was formed in response to social and economic contexts” (p. 7). Freire’s thinking around consciousness builds on Marx’s, and he states, “Being conscious...is a radical form of being, of being human. It pertains to beings that not only know but know that they know” (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 127). Simply stated, Freire’s conscientização comprises oppressed persons’ awareness of issues related to their position and way of thinking, followed by their dialogic work around identified issues towards transformation.

Within conversations of who and why around critical literacy, Freire’s work is particularly important. Certainly, this inquiry into PST identities and knowledge is interested in hearing and understanding whether conscientização lives there – whether PSTs are conscious of

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power and the need for its question and disruption in their stories to live by and teach with around elementary literacy and its teaching. Freire's praxis provides space for readers to engage in the cycle of naming, problematizing, and renaming through participation in dialogic discourse (Shor & Freire, 1987) towards social change. An example of Freirean informed approach to critical literacy can be seen in "Vasquez's problem-solving work with young children" (Janks, 2010, p. 206). Vasquez's (2017) work involves providing opportunities for young children to engage in problem-posing and taking a "what-if" stance toward a problem, situation, or story. Within this space, young children name, problematize, and rename what a story is made of. As children move through this process, they see a world of related stories embedded within other stories. As young children question or problematize any given story/problem more, the greater they come to understand it.

Within the teacher education context, PSTs are similarly given opportunity to learn about and practice literacy that names, questions, problematizes, and works to rename/retell around literacy teaching with diverse children's literature. PSTs in the elementary education program at the University where this inquiry takes place, learn about how to teach literacy in culturally responsive (Gay, 2010) ways with culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1995) literature. Through narrative inquiry, I am interested in learning from participants' (PSTs') stories to live by, about whether they are similarly engaging their students in critical literacy work, and if they are – how are they doing this? Conversely, if they are not – why are they choosing to do so? Are there any reform or community stories (Craig, 2011) present that could help me to better understand what/who is informing their meaning making and decision-making about what and how to teach literacy?



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In addition to Freire's belief in the need to develop consciousness, he also believed in the right to one's language which can be seen in Freire and Macedo's (1987) sharing around Black Americans use of what they called "Black English" (p. 127) in the English classroom. Freire and Macedo supported the use of a group's native language (Brathwaite, 1993) as part of critical literacy, citing that its use would make literacy work of coding and decoding easier for members of the group. To move "beyond the linguistic code issue," Macedo states, "educators must understand the ways in which different dialects encode different world views, [and] the semantic value of specific lexical items belonging to Black English differs radically, in some cases, from the reading derived from the standard, dominant dialect" (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 127).

Morrell and Duncan-Andrade (2002) as English teachers at an urban high school studied promoting literacy with urban youth through engagement with hip-hop culture. Their study looked at hip-hop lyrics as home to a "voice of resistance and liberation for urban youth" (p. 89). Hip-hop lyrics were chosen by Morrell and Duncan-Andrade (2002) given their resonance with working class urban youth and based on Rose (1991) and Powell's (1991) argument, "that Hip-Hop music is the representative voice of urban youth, since the genre was created by and for them" (p. 88). Morrell and Duncan-Andrade's study provides room for urban students to work with texts in their own voice/language and to explore how poetry and music from their own culture could be centered as valuable. Once centered, hip-hop lyrics could be explored critically by students for what was being said? And who was represented? Hip-hop lyrics could be viewed similarly to poetry that served as political commentary. The conversation of critical literacy and language – specifically native language – is related to the literature or literary texts one chooses to teach with. Would preservice teachers go against the grain so to speak – against the more mainstream ways of teaching literacy with works from the traditional literary canon and teach

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with literature that was culturally and linguistically diverse? How could PSTs' literature stories help teacher educators and curriculum designers to work to (re)design instruction such that PSTs could/would consider and teach with literature that was culturally and/or linguistically diverse?

Freire's emphasis on the importance of education and literacy for the masses can be seen in his thoughts around teachers and teaching. "For teachers," according to Freire and Macedo (1987), "this means being sensitive to the actual historical, social, and cultural conditions that contribute to the forms of knowledge and meaning that students bring to school" (p. 15). For Freire, critical literacy teaching involves educators who challenge their students to recognize oppression and its constraints whilst collaboratively working with students "[using] their students' cultural universe as a point of departure, enabling students to recognize themselves as possessing a specific and important cultural identity" (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 127). An example of such can be seen in research done by Petrone and Gibney (2006).

Petrone and Gibney, working with high school English students, provided them with the opportunity to explore the forces at work in everyday American culture, and utilize various American literature and culture representations from certain time periods to draw from their developed collective cultural memory towards addressing the questions of – who and what was visible and invisible. Students did out of class research, speaking with and learning from family members, and participated in in-class dialogic discourse (Shor & Freire, 1987). Critical literacy, in this example, created room for high school students to call into question what they had observed and/or experienced about the issue from their communities outside of school, and work towards consideration of what was missing and what was possible (Petrone & Gibney, 2006).

The emphasis on Freire's (1970) action-reflection cycle of praxis has offered participants a concept through which to construct meanings that support their literacy for civic engagement.

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Freirean praxis is understood as the dialectic relationship between theory, reflection, and action.

A Freirean view of critical literacy suggests a more sociopolitical interpretation informed by other social theories, within which “English teaching and schooling are political interventions, struggles over the formation of ideologies and beliefs, identities and capital” (Luke, 2004, p. 86).

Considering critical literacy and its close relationship to critical consciousness – wherein, critical literacy is thought of as a way of being and doing and providing space for the sharing and analysis of literature, I pose the question of: Would PSTs, be willing to go against the grain so to speak – against the more mainstream ways of thinking about and teaching literacy? If so, what might this work look like in the elementary literacy classroom setting? How could PSTs begin to engage their students in this work? One of the possibilities that I would like to further explore about the last question involves the use of diverse children’s literature. Would PSTs teach with diverse children’s literature? If so, how did they go about selecting the literature and how/what did they teach?

### *Diverse Children’s Literature*

The idea of teaching with diverse children’s literature has everything to do with critical literacy. In explaining what is meant by this statement, I borrow from Gardner, Knezek, and Crisp (2021) who describe *diversity* in a manner informed by theories of critical multiculturalism, culturally relevant teaching, and critical multicultural analysis, “as social, political, and cultural resources preserved and sustained to articulate realities and dimensions of race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, religion, nationhood, geography, and language, all of which influence readers’ consciousness, engagement, and responses to literature” (p. xvii). Diverse children’s literature centers the stories by and about historically marginalized persons – their

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histories, peoples, and cultures – and provides readers with opportunities to learn with, from, and about those who have been historically omitted from school curricula and texts.

**Defining Diverse Children’s Literature.** At the heart of Bishop’s (1990) metaphors for children’s literature is her cultural authenticity work towards making children’s literature more inclusive of persons of color. Historically, in the United States, children’s literature features the stories of white Americans. Multicultural children’s literature, as a term, according to Botelho and Rudman (2009), “gained recognition in the late 1980s [when] The Horn Book Guide editors adopted the term alongside the categories of Afro-American and Black” (p. 82). Multicultural literature came to be synonymous with underrepresented communities (i.e., African Americans, Native Americans, Latino Americans, and Asian Americans) and persons within the United States. Through multicultural children’s literature, there would be more accurate, authentic, and humanizing representations of children of color. However, as Schwartz (1995) argued, multicultural children’s literature is problematic in several ways including “it signifies that white is the normative term against which all other groups are defined as ‘Other’” (p. 641). In this sense, multicultural literature was thought of as having to do primarily with culturally represented difference(s). Difference here had to do with something other than white. Thomas (2016), in defining diverse children’s literature asserts that:

*Multicultural* was initially intended as a term inclusive of cultures beyond race and ethnicity, but it did not sufficiently address our growing awareness of differences in gender, sexual orientation, religion, immigration status, cultural and linguistic differences, and disabilities. As these other intersectional factors became more essential, the term *diverse* emerged as a way to include a broader range of identity in literature (p. 119).

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As I work to be more equitable and inclusive in my teaching and learning, I use the term *diverse* to define diverse children's literature. Defining children's literature in such a way, allows room for disruption of the once predominantly white literary canon of U.S. schools alongside seeing such literature as inclusive of those multi-cultures previously insufficiently addressed by multicultural literature. However, such defining does have shortcomings too, as Thomas (2016) shares, "beyond diversity, decolonization is an oft-cited goal for attaining equity in education" (p. 119). Along with its predominantly white authorship, children's literature has historically been the site of colonial ideals and supremacist thinking transmitted under the guise of childhood stories. Thomas (2016) suggests that we, as educators who are intent on teaching in equitable ways, teach with literature that is multicultural, diverse, and decolonized, and (re)presents humanizing stories.

**Teaching Diverse Children's Literature.** The work of teaching diverse children's literature involves building upon or dismantling the mainstream children's literary canon. Within education in the U.S., teachers teach with literature and texts of a canon – a collection of books/texts that share about mainstream culture and its practice that has been compiled by members of the culture as exemplars – as many find teaching with such texts comfortable and familiar. Canonical children's literature texts are those that teachers, over the years, come to recognize as the standard for teaching and learning with and from. As a teacher librarian in the U.S. elementary educational context, I have witnessed examples of canonical children's literature seen in books authored by Dr. Seuss, Brothers Grimm, Eric Carle, Arnold Lobel, David Shannon, Barbara Park, Ron Roy, and Mary Pope Osborne, to name a few. Teaching with literary texts solely from the canon is problematic given that many of them feature characters and stories of white, middle-class, and cisgender persons, or of animals. Largely absent from many of

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these texts are stories that feature characters and stories representative of today's growing diverse student population of Black, African, and African American, Asian, Asian Pacific Islander, Asian Pacific American, Latinx, First Nation, Native American persons. Aston (2017) cautions about canonical teaching and states, "in a country that is growing increasingly less white, positing essential texts that exclude the pasts, cultures, and values of multiple ethnicities shuts out diverse intellectual viewpoints and heritages, carving a path of assimilation for children and giving them a myopic, not liberal, education" (p. 43).

Teaching diverse children's literature can be thought of as a way to "explode the very idea of the canon and produce a continually changing literature curriculum representative of students' varied backgrounds" (Aston, 2017, p. 49). However, it should be noted that teaching diverse children's literature does not require omission of existing canonical texts unless they are deemed to be damaging or harmful for Black, indigenous, persons of color (BIPOC) students. An example can be seen in Morrell and Duncan-Andrade (2002) teaching literacy with canonical and hip-hop texts, and providing students as readers and explorers of texts with opportunity to read both while making considerations around them. Parker (2022), when speaking of the selection of children's literature, cautions that teachers, "must approach any book they are considering teaching with an antiracist eye, even before we put that text into a student's hands" (p. 131). Teaching diverse children's literature requires that it be done through culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and responsive (Gay, 2010) teaching pedagogies and in antiracist ways. Parker (2022) shares, "a "diverse" text in the hands of an assimilationist or segregationist teacher, to use the categories from Jason Reynolds and Dr. Ibram Kendi's (2020) *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You*, has the potential to perpetuate a tremendous amount of harm for young people" (p. 16). She suggests that teachers (PSTs) dedicate time to building their own

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racial literacy and then work on teaching diverse children's literature in culturally relevant ways.

Parker shares Sealey-Ruiz's (2021) thoughts around racially literate teachers as people who “develop curricula that are centered on fostering open-mindedness, commitment to inquiry and reflection, and exploration of ideas connected to the concepts of democracy and equity in schooling” (p. 2). For Parker, teaching of this sort occurs in the culturally relevant intentional literacy community (CRILC). A CRILC, according to Parker (2022):

is a space where educators work deliberately with students to create a literacy environment that systematically normalizes the high achievement of everyone within that community. In CRILCs, the three foundational pieces of community are present (i.e., connection, interdependence, and necessity), as are all three components of culturally relevant pedagogy (i.e., a focus on students' learning and achievement; development of their cultural competence; increasing students' sociopolitical and critical consciousness) (p. 52).

Culturally responsive teaching requires the use of a variety of curriculum content and design, instructional materials and resources, teaching techniques, and assessments that are responsive to ethnically diverse students' cultural heritages and individual experiences (Gay, 2010). Teaching of this sort can be done through instructional materials like diverse children's literature in the form of picturebooks, biographies, autobiographies, short stories, novels, poems, songs, and play that feature stories written about and by BIPOC authors. Wanless & Crawford (2016) share those literary texts can help children to visualize and develop positive racial identities, interracial relationships, and cognitive understanding of racial injustices. Through teaching with diverse children's literature, teachers can “develop and sustain their cultural competence and critical consciousness, as well as that of their students” (Gardner, Knezek, & Crisp, 2021, p. xviii).

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Engagement in diverse children’s literature is intended for all students and readers; however, it provides children of color with mirrored views of themselves through which they can “begin to historicize their lives and see themselves and their futures as historical actors” (Gutiérrez, 2008, p. 155). In selecting diverse children’s literature to teach with, teachers are asked to make certain considerations. Yenika-Agbaw & Napoli (2011) suggest that children’s literature include representations of the various cultural characteristics of a person’s lived experience(s), with focus on setting and racial relevance. Wanless and Crawford (2016) provide tips for selecting diverse children’s literature that include:

Base your selection on quality. Books should not just teach a lesson but should have a good story, high-quality text, and engaging illustrations; Choose books that help children see themselves. Include books that mirror different aspects of identity (e.g., race, setting, beliefs) of children in the class, so that they can imagine themselves in the story; Choose books that help children expand their understanding of others in this multicultural world; Look widely for texts; and Use text sets (p. 11).

Teaching with diverse children’s literature is not only about the selection of what books to teach with, but it also involves thinking about why we read certain books and what happens during the reading process (Thomas, 2016). Thinking of what the book *is*, the reading process, and how text and readers function together and position each other are all critical components of teaching with children’s literature. Such teaching is involved in critical literacy, wherein we learn and teach about language, culture, representation, and positioning. In teaching diverse children’s literature, teachers and students can explore how characters and the people that they (re)present are positioned, and how power functions in the story. Being able to locate and disrupt power are invaluable tools that readers can use to dismantle the colonial and supremacist ideology often



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located in children's literature. Thomas (2016) speaks of the importance of teaching children's literature in ways that are critical and multicultural and suggests teaching from a critical multicultural analysis (Botelho & Rudman, 2009) frame.

Flores, Vlack, and Lammert (2019), through an extensive study of literature published between 2000 and 2018, examined the ways in which high-quality diverse children's literature has been used as a teaching tool in literacy education courses to disrupt mainstream teaching practices. Flores et al. (2019) found a diverse array of descriptions of children's literature (i.e., multicultural, Latino and African American children's literature, urban fiction, and culturally relevant texts) within the literature reviewed. As a teaching tool, children's literature plays multiple roles, some of which include as a tool for: 1) learning literacy instructional practices (i.e., writing instruction, reading instruction, and text selection); 2) learning sociocultural knowledge and transformative pedagogies (i.e., culture; race and ethnicity; transformative pedagogies). They found that "in a majority of the studies, teacher educators (TEs) used children's literature as a tool to engage preservice teachers (PTs) in learning and experiencing transformative pedagogies (i.e., culturally relevant pedagogy) that recognize the race, ethnicity, and linguistic resources of students" (Flores et al., 2019, p. 227). When children's literature was used in such a manner, it provided space for preservice teachers to engage with children's literature as windows, mirrors, and glass sliding doors to learning and teaching about diverse views of the world – real or imagined alongside their own experiences and selves as part of a greater human experience (Bishop, 1990).

Building on the work done by Flores et al. (2019), through this narrative inquiry, I explore preservice teachers' stories around their knowledge of diverse children's literature and how they chose to teach children's literature in general. Within their teaching of literacy, could or

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would diverse children's literature function as a tool to engage their students in learning and experiencing literacy? Did PSTs feel as though they were given and/or supported in their student teaching and learning opportunities to teach with diverse children's literature? How/what do PSTs feel about the teacher preparation they received overall? Do PSTs feel prepared to teach literacy with diverse literature? What could teacher educators do (differently or the same) to engage PSTs in the work of teaching diverse children's literature?

### **Analysis of Preservice Teachers' Knowledge and Teacher Education: Preservice Teachers' Preparation, Critical Literacy, and Diverse Children's Literature**

The research on the practice of teaching and teacher preparation is extensive. Critical literacy teacher preparation research is equally broad. For this inquiry, research on preservice teacher preparation around critical literacy was explored, with special attention to relevant narrative inquiry methods? Critical literacy is a perspective or frame through which language and power in texts and social practices can be critiqued. The work of critical literacy involves reading diverse literature and engaging in rich dialogue around the literature, wherein the perspectives of the writer/illustrator can be challenged alongside analyzing our own reading and considering how past, present, and future experiences inform that reading. For this inquiry, critical literacy is an essential strand of scholarship to keep in mind given my interest in how it functions in the preparation of preservice teachers to effectively teach our diverse student populations.

#### ***Critical Literacy and PSTs' Teacher Education***

Contemporary English teacher education courses taught from a critical literacy frame provide preservice teachers with opportunities to consider, discuss, challenge, and share diverse perspectives through literature and discourse alongside examining how their own identities affect their worldviews and influence their understanding of and teaching students (Giroux, 2009;

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Freire, 1972). Teacher education within a critical literacy framework, involves the teaching of student teachers and PSTs to “move beyond advocating for sound content knowledge and delivery...toward a sustained commitment of working against oppressive structures that impede the academic success of students from diverse backgrounds” (Haddix & Price-Dennis, 2013, p. 248). Much research is done on teacher education of middle-school and high school student teachers and PSTs of literacy; for this inquiry I am most concerned with elementary teacher education research, especially that done from a critical literacy framework.

Exploration of such research led me to the work done by Hill (2012). Hill provided elementary PSTs with exposure to culturally relevant pedagogy, CSI, and varying participation discourses. Her research of critical literacy and teacher education centered around case study actor – Jennifer (pseudonym). Hill encouraged Jennifer to use “authentic controversial literature” (Hill, 2012, p. 46) text *The Watsons go to Birmingham – 1963* as part of an expository and narrative comprehension lesson on the basis that this type of literature has the potential to present accurate portrayals of discrimination and social issues and makes space for discussions on controversial topics with students. Hill (2012) met with Jennifer about her negotiation and planning of expository materials to complement the text (p. 51) and shared lesson plan ideas inspired by the narrative text and companion expository texts – inclusive of “the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute website ([www.bcri.org](http://www.bcri.org)), travel websites, and a social studies textbook” (p. 52).

Jennifer, in Hill’s (2012) study, demonstrates critical literacy through literature-based engagement with disruption of the mainstream through the selection and use of literary texts outside of the canon (i.e., authentic controversial literature and the use of expository texts); interrogate multiple viewpoints – use of expository texts alongside the narrative text; focus on

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sociopolitical issues (i.e., Civil Rights and African Americans); take action and promote social justice – teaching of literacy lessons utilizing social justice-oriented texts.

This inquiry, though not following the case study design, is very much interested in learning about how PSTs negotiate their teacher professional landscapes in their preparation and implementation of teaching English to elementary students during their student teaching practice. Would PSTs participants of this inquiry similarly engage with non-mainstream literature texts? Hill (2012) encourages the use of diverse literature for teaching. Would PSTs participants of this inquiry be inclined to use diverse literature texts even if not explicitly encouraged?

Another example of exploration of teacher education from a critical literacy perspective through research on children’s literature-based engagement, can be seen in Dover’s (2013) work. Dover’s (2013) research involved 24 teachers (in-service vs. preservice) and questioned how ELA (English Language Arts) teachers conceptualized teaching for social justice and how they reconciled that vision with the demands of teaching amid curricular mandates. Dover shared a story of Angela (pseudonym), a white teacher, in a predominantly white rural community in the Northeast, who invited students to analyze *The Crucible*, “focusing specifically on the role of propaganda, blacklisting, and hysteria during the Salem witch trials” (p. 522) alongside “primary, photographic and journalistic accounts of the post-9-11 experiences of Arab Americans in their local community, including the high-profile arrest of a local Sikh man” (p. 522). Patrick (pseudonym), another teacher highlighted in Dover’s (2013) study, used justice-oriented children’s books to help students investigate what he called “sophisticated and politically charged topics in [accessible and] uncomplicated ways” (p. 522). Dover (2013) provides readers with resources for teaching justice-oriented children’s literature, emphasizing “good starting points for students seeking examples of justice-oriented children’s literature and

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lesson plans and instructional resources related to the analysis of social justice themes in children’s literature” (p. 523).

Teachers in Dover’s (2013) study, demonstrate their critical literacy through literature-based engagement and disruption of the mainstream through the selection of and teaching literary texts outside of the canon (i.e., primary, photographic and journalistic accounts of the post-9-11 experiences of Arab Americans, and justice-oriented children’s books) (Hill, 2012; Dover, 2013); interrogate multiple viewpoints – teaching expository texts alongside canonical or traditional texts (Hill, 2012; Dover, 2013); focus on sociopolitical issues (Hill, 2012; Dover, 2013); take action and promote social justice – teaching literacy lessons utilizing social justice-oriented texts (Hill, 2012; Dover 2013).

Would PSTs participants in this inquiry demonstrate a similar agency in their student teaching along the professional teaching landscape? If not, what might PSTs identify as hindrances to their doing so? Conversely, if they did demonstrate similar ability to utilize literature for disruption of the mainstream, how did they do so? Would they need to have certain support like those spoken of in Hill’s (2012) study? Would PSTs refer to information learned from teacher education literacy methods courses? How and why? Or why not?

### ***The Role of Diverse Children’s Literature in PSTs’ Teacher Education***

Recent work on the role of diverse children’s literature in teacher education done by Flores et al. (2019) explored, through an extensive review of the literature, how teacher educators used children’s literature as a tool in literacy methods courses to teach preservice teachers (PSTs) practices that “disrupted technocratic approaches to literacy instruction” (p. 220). Their findings suggest two major conceptual areas of interest concerning teaching with

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children's literature for preservice teachers: 1) as a tool for learning literacy instructional practices; and 2) as a tool for learning sociocultural knowledge and transformative pedagogies.

Scholarship on diverse children's literature as a tool for learning literacy instructional practices includes the exploration of teacher educators focused on the uses of children's literature for comprehension and reading strategy development (e.g., Barnes, 2006; Hill, 2012, 2017; Stallworth, 2001). Also included within this conceptual area of interest is the study of teacher educators focused on supporting preservice teachers' knowledge of how to select their own children's literature for classroom instruction (e.g., Barnes, 2006; Hill, 2012, 2017; Lewis & Petrone, 2010; Mathis, 2000; Nathanson-Mejía & Escamilla, 2003).

Within this inquiry, research is done into preservice teachers' storied accounts around why and how they select children's literature for their future classrooms. Mathis' (2000) work with PSTs using popular children's picturebook texts most closely mirrors the space that I am interested in inquiring about. Within her research on teaching of literacy practices, she created space for PSTs to reflect on their personal memories with popular children's literature and to critically examine less popular children's literature texts together with making determinations about the texts.

The Flores et al. (2019) inquiry also illuminates literature as a tool for preservice teachers' (PSTs) learning of sociocultural knowledge and transformative pedagogies. They identify three focus areas: using children's literature to build understandings about culture (broadly defined) (e.g., Heineke, 2014; Riley & Crawford-Garrett, 2016) using children's literature to build understandings about race and ethnicity specifically (e.g., Mosely & Rogers, 2011; Haddix & Price-Dennis, 2013), and using children's literature to learn broader transformational pedagogies (p. 223). The last area of focus – children's literature as a way to

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learn broader transformational pedagogies – is of most interest to this inquiry, given its purposing of literacy as a tool for PSTs to address political and social issues, to question inequities, re-envision and revise realities (Freire, 1970; Souto-Manning, 2009; Souto-Manning, 2010) and its site within Janks' (2010, 2014) interdependent model for critical literacy which includes the four dimensions: power, diversity, access, and design/redesign.

Within the space of researching teaching and learning with children's literature to broaden transformational pedagogies, education researchers and teacher educators explore the collisions and conversions between PSTs' "own sociocultural backgrounds and examine the world at the intersection of culture, equity, and justice, thus beginning to consider ways to disrupt the 'standardization of knowledge' (Giroux, 1984/2010, p. 2) in their future classrooms" (Flores et al., 2019, p. 226). Research done by Szecsi et al. (2010) on a multicultural literature project and Lohfink (2014) on a read aloud project serve as examples of this type of work with children's literature as a starting point from which PSTs can begin to do critical literacy work. Szecsi et al. (2010) and Lohfink (2014) also serve as places from which this inquiry builds.

Szecsi et al.'s (2010) research purpose is to understand preservice landscapes<sup>2</sup> through self-reflection. Lohfink's (2014) research had a similar commitment to explore PSTs' understandings. Both researchers were concerned with PSTs' pedagogical understandings and the impact felt from the use of diverse literature. Szecsi et al. (2010) research was guided by transformative learning theory (Cranton & Knox, 2006; Mezirow, 1991; Wilson et al., 2006) and

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<sup>2</sup> Szecsi et al. (2010) cite Greene (1994), who uses the term "landscape" to describe one's personal understandings, including biases, preferences, and vacancies. Vacancies are described as experiences to which one has never been exposed or contemplated and likely create holes of misunderstanding (pp. 44-45).

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its provision of opportunities for teacher educators to see what, if any, changes PSTs underwent in their understanding around diverse children's literature and its teaching affordances.

Szecs et al. (2010) found through their exploration of PSTs' journeys toward cultural transformation the emergence of four themes as indicators of such transformation: "Theme 1: Emerging awareness of a new culture with evidence toward a lasting impression; Theme 2: Shaping personal awareness of his or her own culture; Theme 3: Recognizing the need for further learning; and Theme 4: Emerging proactive planning for culturally responsive instruction" (pp. 46-47). From their analysis of these emergences, they were able to conclude that "when teacher candidates have opportunities to experience multicultural literature, to reflect on it, and to discuss the narratives, transformative thinking clearly emerges in their discourse" (Szecs et al., 2010, p. 47). Their findings and conclusion confirmed their proposed changes in instruction and working with culturally and linguistically diverse students.

Lohfink's (2014) research, given its emphasis on read alouds, was guided by a framework formed by sociocultural learning/teaching theory and reader response theory. Lohfink appears to see PSTs in the role of cultural brokers (Gay, 2010) and their work with and teaching diverse children's literature as spaces for negotiation of culture, learning, and teaching. Through the exploration of PSTs' reflective responses to prompt 1) "What did you notice about the multicultural read aloud? What was a noted strength?" Lohfink (2014) found evidence of cultural knowledge construction/understanding culture; acting as cultural brokers; literacy teaching practices that depicted cultural responsiveness; aesthetic responses to literature; and efferent responses to literature. Through her exploration of prompt 2) "Implementing multicultural literature relative to my CLD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse) students has helped me..." Lohfink (2014) found "gaining knowledge via multicultural literature facilitated the participants'



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understandings about (a) their own self-identities, (b) other cultures, and (c) their elementary students” (p. 43).

This narrative inquiry builds on Szecsi et al. (2010) and Lohfink (2014), and is driven by a similar purpose of understanding how PSTs make teaching practice decisions around literacy teaching with diverse children’s literature but does so differently. This inquiry makes space for PSTs’ reflective responses (Lohfink, 2014) and phenomena across their preservice landscapes (Szecsi et al., 2010; Greene, 1994), and explores further into PSTs’ *stories to live by* (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999). “The conceptualization, stories to live by, merges personal practical knowledge, life on the professional knowledge landscape (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, 1996), and teacher identity into one story. In stories to live by, identity takes on narrative understandings of knowledge and context” (Craig, 2011, p. 25).

This inquiry extends work done by literacy education researchers and teacher educators concerned with exploration of preservice teachers, teacher education, and teacher practices. Through narrative inquiry – both autobiographical and biographical – into PSTs’ *stories to live by* (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999), the research moves across various personal and professional knowledge landscapes. Within such an inquiry, research is done through and with PSTs’ storied phenomena around literacy, its teaching, and learning. There is a vast amount of research into PST knowledge and practice especially around critical literacy. However, much of this research is done and written from the perspective of the researcher around the experiences and chosen practices of the researcher about PSTs. Within such research, preservice teachers remain silent – as if unable to speak for themselves; relegated to the shadows (Akin, 2002). This narrative inquiry is positioned within this space of relative silence and shadow, intent on amplifying the stories and voices of preservice teachers and moving them out of the shadows as professionals

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who can and do teach researchers and teacher educators about who/what shapes their teaching and how that shaping in turn influences how/what they choose to teach literacy.

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### Chapter III

## METHODOLOGY: NARRATIVE INQUIRY INTO PRESERVICE TEACHERS' STORIES TO LIVE BY

Narrative inquiry is defined by Clandinin (2013) as, “an approach to the study of human lives conceived as a way of honoring lived experience as a source of important knowledge and understanding” (p. 17). This research follows a narrative inquiry design method into preservice teachers' (PSTs) *stories to live by* (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) around literacy and its teaching, along with children's literature and its teaching. Connelly and Clandinin's (1999) *stories to live by* are composed and share of PSTs' personal practical knowledge, professional knowledge, and identity - specifically teacher identity - stories. Research into PSTs' stories to live by takes place within a metaphorical three-dimensional inquiry space that draws upon Dewey's concept of experience: interaction (personal and social dimension); continuity (past, present, future); and situation (place) (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Huber, 2002; Connelly & Clandinin, 1999). Through this inquiry, PSTs' stories are explored for evidence of critical literacy (Janks, 2010; Vasquez, Janks, & Comber, 2019; Vasquez, 2014) teaching, along with selecting and teaching diverse children's literature (Botelho & Rudman, 2009; Souto-Manning & Martell, 2016; Leland, Lewison, & Harste, 2018).

Preservice teachers (PSTs) are central to this inquiry in their role of narrators who both know and tell their stories alongside the narrative inquirer and researcher as one who interprets told stories and retells them as research texts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). PSTs' narratives involve “detailed organization of narrative events arranged in a (story) structure – [beginning, middle, end] – based on time although the events [and] are not necessarily in chronological order” (Kim, 2016, p. 8). Narratives are shaped by experiences over time, place, and power, or

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across *landscapes* (Greene, 1994; Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). Landscapes are important to narratives as they serve as both literal (i.e., physical location) and figurative (i.e., how a person is understanding) terrain across and through which we travel as we recount our stories. Through a narrative inquiry into preservice teachers' stories to live by, I gained greater understanding around the research question of: How do preservice teachers' stories to live by inform their orientation towards certain literacy teaching practices of children's literature?

Central to narrative inquiry is the element of story. Narrative inquiries into preservice teachers' stories to live by within the field of education, are concerned with listening to PSTs along with interpreting and retelling our (PSTs and researcher/teacher educator) "stories about teaching and teacher education rather than simply reporting correlation coefficients or generating lists of findings," as Carter (1993, p. 6) states. Narratives as stories, through their sharing about lives and lived experiences, can serve as windows, mirrors and sliding glass doors (Bishop, 1990) and offer readers a means to build knowledge and make meaning about the world and its communities inclusive of others and themselves.

At the heart of narrative stories, are the meanings people make around them and their interpretations and constructions of meaning (Bruner, 1986; Lyons, 2002). This meaning-making occurs around the plot or the series of events that person's recount or (re)creates – the story that is told – as they string their experiences together. Through narrative inquiry, I explored our lives – preservice teachers and mine – and our identities as elementary teachers within and across various plot lines. Plot lines included those of defining literacy, teaching literacy with or against the grain (i.e., chosen teacher pedagogy), and teaching children's literature (i.e., canonical, diverse children's literature texts). All the elements and plot lines of the story are considered and analyzed when engaged in narrative inquiry. As a narrative inquirer, I was interested in

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understanding what preservice teachers' stories to live by tell about themselves as teachers and their actions, especially around their teaching of literacy with children's literature. This inquiry explored preservice teachers' stories to live by and dug deeper into preservice teachers' storied phenomena around literacy knowledge and teaching along with their children's literature knowledge and teaching.

### **Narrative Inquiry**

Research through narratives involves working within a three-dimensional space (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) – involving interaction, continuity, and situation. Narrative research provided space for learning about preservice teachers (PSTs) in terms of their past, present and future experiences. Within narrative inquiry, narratives are both the data and the method of inquiry (Clandinin & Huber, 2002; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Milner, 2007). This narrative inquiry into PST knowledge provided insight into PSTs' shaping of themselves as teaching professionals and their chosen practices and pedagogies across the teacher education and professional landscapes. Specifically studied were PSTs' stories around childhood literacy experiences and chosen literacy teaching practices, which illuminated how and why preservice teachers made certain teaching pedagogy (how) and curriculum (what) decisions around literacy education with children's literature. Central to this inquiry was my interest in whether elementary preservice teachers chose to teach literacy within a critical literacy frame, and whether preservice teachers chose to teach diverse children's literature.

Narrative inquiry engages *field* – negotiating relationships, negotiating purposes, negotiating transitions (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). A straightforward way to think of field is as an expansive space wherein we live and experience life alongside people, places, things, and space itself while simultaneously telling of those lived experiences. Clandinin (2013) asserts, “in

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narrative inquiry, we negotiate with participants an ongoing relational inquiry space, a relational space we call the *field*” (p. 45). The way that we analyze field in narrative inquiry is through the exploration of field texts. Field texts, the term used for data, according to Clandinin (2016; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), include field notes, transcripts of conversations, and artifacts. Field texts are composed by both researchers and participants. Clandinin and Connelly (2016) assert that researchers read field texts in search of “patterns, narrative threads, tensions, and themes that shape field texts into research texts...as they read the field texts in the context of other research and theoretical works” (p. 133). Within field and field text engagements, I as narrative inquirer, determined and analyzed plot lines or emergent themes. This narrative inquiry used conversations, transcriptions, narrative interviews, artifacts, journal writing, and interim research texts as field texts.

### **Rationale for Narrative Inquiry Approach**

This inquiry into PSTs’ stories to live by followed the traditions of narrative inquiry into teacher knowledge and teacher education (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Craig, 2011) and gave formal attention to story (Carter, 1993). My own experiences, early on, as a graduate instructor of elementary preservice teachers, especially those along the landscapes of elementary literacy methods courses, led to initial questions of: If preservice teachers become engaged in critical literacy? How do preservice teachers become engaged in critical literacy? How do they make decisions about which children’s literature texts to teach with? Do they teach diverse children’s literature?

As a graduate instructor in literacy education, I engaged undergraduate elementary education students (preservice teachers) in literacy theories, curriculum, and pedagogies within literacy methods courses. Together, we explored the power of story and texts – through reading

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and writing and conversation – as sites of teaching and learning about life and the development of knowledge and identities. My experience as a graduate instructor provided space for working with preservice teachers on their personal and professional growth around teaching and learning, alongside my own growth and becoming a teacher educator. The purpose of teacher education, in my understanding, is to prepare preservice teachers as future teachers, lifelong learners and contributing members of a just society. The development of lifelong learners involves my teaching of content and “sharing in the intellectual and spiritual growth of students” (hooks, 1994, p. 13).

Instruction is provided through demonstrations of and discussions around multiple ways in which elementary preservice teachers can work towards meeting their goals within the field of literacy education. Instruction decisions are guided by my intention to and understanding that instruction serves to support students’/PSTs’ learning. Students learn best through having multiple and diverse opportunities to practice, learn, and share new material alongside taking into consideration, problematizing, and discussing their prior knowledge and understandings; thereby building upon and challenging past and present understandings concurrently towards building their greater future understandings. Students’ learning is best accomplished in environments wherein they are engaged and feel supported. In my role as teacher instructor during this study, I provided a learning environment which fostered mutual respect and space for growth through critical exploration for both myself and students.

As a literacy education researcher, who was intent on uncovering why and how education undergraduate students and PSTs engaged in literacy education critically or not and with or without diverse children’s literature, I approached this inquiry from within a similar philosophy as with my role of teacher educator. Within the study of teaching and teacher education, I am

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interested in learning about how PSTs make meaning around information that has been shared with them and the experiences they have had in their lives – past, present, and future, all of which inform their knowledge and identity and chosen ways of teaching.

For amplifying the preservice teachers' stories and movement beyond solely referential meanings and understandings, a narrative inquiry was chosen. Within narrative inquiry, the researcher takes on roles beyond that of observer and reporter and includes those of listener and interpreter of PSTs' told stories along with composer or research narratives. Within narrative inquiry, the researcher not only desires to see and describe the story of the participants, but they are "personally engaged in living, telling, reflecting, and retelling and reliving as well [with] both participant and researcher addressing intended futures which, for the most part, are different" (Rose, 1997, p. 53). Narrative inquiry appealed to me, because it afforded learning about participants' personal identity and self-development alongside the researcher within our shared inquiry site (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Kim, 2016). Narrative inquiry was preferred, because it provided me as a teacher educator room to continue learning alongside undergraduate students/preservice teachers and co-constructing stories about literacy and its teaching alongside our stories to live by that inform the future practice of teacher education. As preservice teachers who have recently learned about literacy teaching and diverse literature for children through their teacher education methods courses, and made decisions about literacy teaching and teaching children's literature in their student teaching, they hold the position and authority to tell this story. Preservice teacher stories to live by serve as phenomena that are explored into learning about their experience and knowledge as preservice teachers across personal and professional knowledge landscapes towards provision and consideration of possibilities for literacy teacher education in the future.



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### *Narrative Research Advantages*

Advantages of narrative inquiry include its “attention to sequences of action [providing space for] the investigator’s focus on ‘particular actors, in particular social places, at particular social times’” (Riessman, 2008, p. 11). Within social times, researchers explore stories of participants from the past, present and future – “revealing truths about human experience” (Riessman, 2008, p. 10). Additionally, narrative analysis connects biography and society through close analysis of stories. As we – researchers, teacher educators, preservice teachers, teachers, students, elementary school administrators and personnel – navigated uncharted terrain havocted with the COVID-19 virus and blanketed by hateful and harmful, racist, and white supremacist rhetoric spewed by a narcissistic, former President of the United States, it was vital for engagement with PSTs and future teachers to learn of and from their experienced and lived stories, to tell and teach PSTs and future teachers towards freedom and hope.

Advantage of narrative research lies in the fact that narratives are individual stories and not generalizations. Each narrative offers a participant’s specific (re)presentation or (re)telling of a story. Bold (2012) shares,

a personal narrative is not an exact record of what happened and [does not] mirror the wider world, although it might have common points with other similar stories across space and time. Each person witnessing the same event will tell a slightly different story, depending on what captures their attention and how they make sense of the event in relation to their own experience (p. 18).

As a narrative researcher, I explore individual participant’s stories to qualitatively understand what shapes their stories - temporality, people, action, certainty and context (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Through research into what multiple participants share, I can look across their

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narratives for specificities and commonalities - not generalities. Within educational research, narrative provides space for temporal - across time - attention to events and their influences and/or impact over time. Narrative also allows space for exploration and interpretation of contextual influences (i.e., childhood experiences, family background, cultural practices and experiences) in ways that other research methods may not.

Preservice teachers hold the knowledge and experience of teaching literacy within a space as we found and continue to find ourselves – the COVID-19 pandemic. Researchers and teacher educators do not possess similar in-school teaching experience. Narrative research provided space to hear and learn from research participants as authors from their position – PSTs and student teachers at elementary schools in the United States during the COVID-19 pandemic during a time of great civil unrest during and post-leadership of President Donald Trump. The work of the narrative inquirer - researching and learning from and with PSTs - involves taking on the role of narrative inquirer as midwife (Kim, 2016).

### **Narrative Inquirer as Midwife**

As a narrative inquirer midwife (Kim, 2016), I worked alongside participants through inquiry – listening, questioning, theorizing, listening some more, understanding, questioning, telling, retelling, transcribing, writing, rewriting, etc. – towards the birthing of participants’ stories in the form of research narratives. The story is theirs, but my involvement is crucial as I bore the responsibility of telling their story. My responsibilities to the participant, according to Clandinin & Connelly (2000) include: providing a safe and loving environment for participant and their embryo (story in-process); providing space for myself and my own stories; having an awareness of “the larger landscapes on which we all live” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 81) and ensuring a healthy birth (told story). I draw from narrative inquiry researcher Kim (2016)

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who states, “I positioned myself as a midwife who mediated the demands of research with the meaning of personal stories, while staying away from traditional position of researcher as authority” (p. 119). In the role of narrative researcher midwife, I explored preservice teachers’ *stories to live by* through hearing and interpreting their telling of their stories alongside telling my own, while writing and retelling our collective story. This work included the examination and narration of inquiry participants’ lived experiences, identities, and understandings – past, present, and future and held both possibilities and limitations.

### **Narrative Research Limitations**

Limitations of narrative inquiry lie within narratives themselves - specifically in construction of the participant’s experience and understandings. Some truth lives within their constructions, and truth is heard in their understanding – not the understanding of all, but their own understanding and what the participant chose to highlight; how they chose to talk about it; and is based on their own subjectivity. Peshkin (1988) cautions that as narrative researchers we should be ever aware of how subjectivity – researchers’ and participants’ – may shape the inquiry and its outcomes. Additionally, another limitation of narrative is as Bold (2012) cautions, “there is no certainty in narrative research. It seeks not to establish certainty but to apply tentativeness due to the different interpretations that are possible” (p. 20). Within this narrative inquiry, a preservice teacher’s (PST’s) decision to teach literacy and children’s literature in a certain way could be due to several influences: teacher cultura, teacher education, professional landscape to name a few. A narrative approach to analyzing PST practice would highlight the range of different influences on a PST, bring into discussion the range of potential causes and accept that sometimes a clear correlation between two events cannot be provided (Bold, 2012). There is no control over what and how around the function of influences on participant(s). Bold

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asserts, “in any social context the lack of certainty about outcomes is evident, and perhaps seeking for definitive answers is a rather utopian ideal” (p. 21).

### **Research Questions**

Through this inquiry, I explored how preservice teachers’ *stories to live by* (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) shape their literacy teaching with children’s literature by posing the following research question: How do preservice teachers’ stories to live by inform their orientation towards certain literacy teaching practices of children’s literature?

This inquiry additionally considered research sub-questions of: What are the literacy experiences of preservice teachers prior to teacher education? What are preservice teachers’ experiences with diverse children’s literature texts prior to teacher education? What are the literacy experiences of preservice teachers in teacher education? What are the experiences of preservice teachers with literacy instruction during their senior year teaching internships? What are preservice teachers’ teaching experiences with diverse children’s literature texts?

### **Narrative Inquiry Research and Participant Contexts**

This inquiry is set within a predominantly white (PWI) Midwestern university College of Education with four undergraduate students who were studying to be teachers during their spring semester and senior year of student teaching (see Appendix A – Inquiry Timeline). The inquiry took place during the COVID-19 pandemic. Three of the participants were elementary education majors; for them, the inquiry began after completion of literacy methods coursework, which included a course on critical literacy and diverse literature for children and youth. The other participant was an early childhood education major who had similarly completed literacy methods courses, though they did not have the same course on critical literacy and diverse literature for children and youth taken by the elementary education majors. The early childhood

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education PST participant had, however, completed extensive reading on and studied critical literacy and culturally responsive pedagogy teaching in the early childhood classroom.

The university is in a city considered a college town; it is one of three institutions of higher learning located in a town of approximately 120,000 residents. Geographically, the town sits in the central part of the state, between two major urban city areas at the farthest eastern and western borders, north of the state's capital, and nestled within surrounding smaller, rural, agrarian towns. Undergraduate students and preservice teachers at this Midwestern university call many of the neighboring states, cities, and towns home. Undoubtedly, preservice teachers' differing home communities – urban, suburban, and rural – along with their experience across these communities have shaped how they think about literacy, teaching literacy, and teaching children's literature.

All participants were in the “Senior Year On-Site Program” (SYOSP), which is a two-semester, year-long, student teaching experience. Elementary education PSTs request their preferred SYOSP school placement during their junior-year and spring semester. SYOSP placements through the College of Education at the university can be in elementary schools across the Midwestern state, with preservice teachers having the opportunity to return home and complete their student teaching there, as well as choosing to learn and student-teach in a community different from their home and the university.

Quite ominously, this inquiry took place during an ever-worsening COVID-19 pandemic and time of great civil unrest and racial divide within the United States. The context of the inquiry is thought of in terms of the metaphor of a “knowledge landscape” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) and preservice teachers' interconnected set of stories – teacher-self stories, stories of other teachers, stories of children's literature, and stories of teaching children's

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literature following similar research done by Clandinin & Connelly (1996) on teacher stories.

Within the context, stories that are influenced by both the participants' physical and mental site are told and heard. As preservice teachers in student teaching internships, participants are charged with navigating the professional knowledge border space between teacher education, student teaching and their future teaching. As the researcher, I explored into preservice teachers' storied experiences within and across this space, towards learning about how participants chose to navigate this space and the decisions that they made about literacy teaching and children's literature whilst within/crossing it.

### *Participant Recruitment and Delimitations*

As the inquiry took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, in-class and in-person recruitment of participants was not an option, though it would have been preferred. Recruitment of participants was done through email contact and online announcements to students following IRB. Determinations regarding the number of participants and sampling were guided by Bold's (2012) assertions about "collecting life stories" and necessitated small interviewee samples and "relying on people being interested and willing participants" (p. 98). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) also provided guidance on what constituted adequate narrative inquiry participant sizes through selected and featured narrative inquiry dissertations which had small numbers (2 to 3) of participants.

In addition to their being senior-year, preservice teachers, this inquiry was interested in furthering work with participants who were willing to commit to the semester-long study while completing their student teaching internships. Participants in this study, after meeting the aforementioned criteria, invariably chose to participate in this study and to share their stories with the inquiry researcher. Mindful of Goodson and Gill's (2011) advise to not select

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participants whose stories appeal to the researcher or who the researcher most sympathized with, and to avoid telling the researcher's story (the researcher's storied understandings of PSTs); as the researcher, I let the participants do the selecting, thereby ensuring that *their* stories were told and not the stories that I wanted told. The recruitment of participants was broad-reaching across the College of Education, and the selection of participants was at their discretion. Though this was not ideal in terms of recruiting participants and keeping to the proposed inquiry timeline, I followed narrative inquiry guidelines. I was grateful that narrative inquiries do not require large numbers of participants; rather, they rely on the sharing of rich stories by fewer, willing participants over time because finding willing participants who met all of the criteria was a slow process. I was also grateful for having had some previous relationships with undergraduate, elementary education students who chose to participate in this inquiry.

### *Researcher as Participant and Co-Storyteller*

As a graduate instructor, in my teaching of a course on critical literacy and diverse children's literature, I shared many stories about my own literacy teaching and the processes of selecting and teaching diverse children's literature; and often invited students to share their own stories. In doing so, I had the opportunity to hear and learn about/with some participants in this study. Our learning about literacy education and children's literature was discussion-based and provided space for elementary education PSTs to learn about and consider literature (i.e., diverse children's literature) and other materials with which they may not have previously been familiar and think about how and why/why not they would teach these materials with elementary students. PST participants in this study were invited to continue the work of living, telling, retelling stories around literacy and children's literature with me as co-participants through this inquiry towards redesign of teacher education and research around literacy, elementary literacy

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teaching, and teaching children's literature. Through the telling of stories, participants shared with and learned from each other and perspectives as plot lines emerged.

As co-participant, researcher, and graduate instructor of some participants of this inquiry, I was mindful of the challenges and affordances of my various positions. As a co-participant, I learned both with and about preservice teacher participants' experiences as we engaged in conversation within their current borderland site (in between student teaching and future teaching) and across the professional landscapes that make up student teaching alongside previous knowledge landscapes - personal and professional. Although we both inhabited similar space, we experienced it from varying points of view or perspectives. My gaze and ear on their stories were those of a graduate instructor/teacher educator and researcher. Try as I might to connect with participants around stories of shared or similar experiences, I was aware that I did not wish to taint their experiences or understandings with my own. Throughout the inquiry, I remained committed to consciously muting my stories at times, so that I amplified and better heard/told theirs. My position as instructor and researcher potentially sanitized participants' stories – PST participants may have still seen me as an instructor and provided me with responses that they believed I wished to hear, or they may have repeated back to me only those ideas around literacy and its teaching that I had previously shared with them during literacy methods courses.

Throughout the inquiry, I continuously reassured participants that my interests lay in their stories not mine, and encouraged authentic telling of their stories to live by without fear of judgment or question on my part. To aid in this effort, the interview guiding questions were structured such that there was room for more of the participant's own thoughts and experiences and less of what I may have taught or shared with them earlier. Additionally, while in



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conversation and narrative interviews with participants, are shared stories about my own experiences as a preservice teacher, teacher, and parent of elementary-aged children and literacy learners.

As a researcher-participant, I was afforded the space to interpret the stories shared with me. Within this position and place, I read stories told by participants and interwove/threaded my own voice – in the form of thoughts, considerations, questions around what was shared and future teaching and learning possibilities. My voice was louder here, and spoke of how and why from the perspective of a graduate student instructor who teaches and learns from a different place and position than the undergraduate students and PST participants of this inquiry.

Additionally, my voice is that of an Afro-Caribbean, Black, female, feminist, former educator in elementary and high school, primarily urban and historically marginalized spaces, now researcher, and future teacher educator of teachers. How I would do and did the work of interpreting the stories of white, female, undergraduate students and future educators is undoubtedly different, yet much needed, as it provides us both better understanding and aids identifying possibilities within the teacher education and preservice teacher space.

### *Narrative Field Texts*

For this inquiry, I employed narrative interviews (Kim, 2016), narrative conversations and artifacts as field texts alongside the composing and utilizing of *interim research texts* (Clandinin, 2016; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 133). Kim (2016) describes narrative interviews as having two distinct phases: the narration phase and the conversation phase. The two phases of narrative interviews are not linear, and do not have to take place in any prescribed order. Narrative interview structure mirrors understanding of knowledge formation as non-linear and without a prescribed pattern (i.e., beginning, middle, end). During the narration phase, the

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participants were asked to give a full narration or telling of events and experiences from their own life, encouraging their narrative thinking processes (Kim, 2016, p. 167). Within this place (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006), as the researcher I took on the role of active listener. “Active listening or a narrative competence of listening,” according to Kim (2016), “also comes with a keen observation of the way the interviewee talks, the use of body language, emotional expressions, feelings, pauses, and more” (p. 168). The conversation phase consists of a series of semi-structured, in-depth questioning or interchange when the researcher seeks clarifications on the issues presented in the first narration. During the conversation phase, the interviewer/researcher is an active co-constructor rather than a passive collector or recorder of data.

**Narrative Interviews as Field Texts.** This narrative inquiry consisted of three, hour-long, audio/visual recorded narrative interviews with each PST participant. Interviews were semi-structured and provided space for participants to speak freely and tell rich stories of their lived experiences and stories around literacy, literacy teaching, children’s literature, and its teaching. Interviews began with me briefly talking about the inquiry and myself as a researcher along with space for reminding participants that their participation was voluntary and could end whenever they wished. Interviews were guided (not bound) by questions that allowed space for learning about PST participants’ past and present, practical personal knowledge, as well as teacher professional knowledge around literacy and children’s literature and their teaching. See Appendix B – Interview Protocol. Subsequent interviews began with questions based on the prior individual interview, its transcript, and journaling entries (i.e., questions for clarification and to follow-up on emerging themes).

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The first narrative interview provided space for hearing PST participant's stories around childhood literacy. Through PST participant Sarah's first interview, for example, we learned that she co-taught with a cooperating teacher in a fifth-grade class at a culturally diverse public school for her senior-year onsite placement (SYOSP). From what she shared in the interview, I was able to gather more about her understanding of literacy and how it informed her teaching literacy in the elementary classroom. As a researcher, I was mindful that Sarah, as a former student and now research participant, could respond to interview questions and share stories in ways that cast all of us (participant and researcher) in certain lights depending on how questions were posed, how stories were framed, and what she believed I wanted to hear. In light of this, when I posed questions, I tried to keep them free of any explicit direction. For example, though I was intent on hearing about literacy teaching from a critical literacy frame, I did not explicitly ask Sarah or other participants to tell me about critical literacy and what it was or was not. Instead, I asked participants to tell me stories about their experience(s) with literacy, teaching of literacy, and children's literature, hopeful of hearing their authentic stories and interpreting whether or not critical literacy framed their learning and teaching beginning with their early childhood experiences.

The second interview provided space for hearing PST participants' stories around teaching literacy and favorite or most memorable literacy teachers in grades K-12. Through PST participant Lindsey's second interview, for example, we learned about two types of literacy teaching: literacy teaching as socio-cultural and literacy teaching for social justice. From what she shared in the interview, I was able to gather support for emerging themes around socio-cultural and social justice literacy teaching. Lindsey's teaching of literacy involved space for

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Kindergarteners to learn with and from each other through exploration and discussion in non-traditional literacy learning spaces and through culturally relevant literature.

The third, and final interview, provided space for hearing PST participant's stories around children's literature and its teaching. Through PST participant Margie's third interview, for example, we learned children's literature and teaching children's literature. From what she shared in the interview, I was able to gather data sources to support the emerging theme of children's literature as diverse. During this interview, Margie spoke about teaching diverse children's literature like *Red Pencil* (Pinkney, 2014) and other diverse literature texts.

Whenever possible, when conducting narrative interviews, the least formal setting (i.e., coffee shop) is preferred. As such, interviews conducted in narrative inquiries before the COVID-19 pandemic, were held in informal spaces to maintain participants' feelings of comfort and trust necessary to facilitate the sharing of their stories. This inquiry, however, took place during a time of a widespread COVID-19 virus pandemic, and required meeting via online Zoom platform instead of face-to-face. These interviews were quite lengthy and demanded a great deal of time from PST participants during their senior-year and student teaching practice. PST participants were asked via email prior to interviews to provide a day and time that best worked with their schedules for the interviews to take place.

**Narrative Conversations as Field Texts.** Narrative conversations functioned similarly to focus groups and served as a space for collective sharing and building of participants' stories, along with the researcher's observations and interpretations of how the stories aligned, conflicted, or competed with individually told stories shared in narrative interviews. The narrative conversations of this inquiry were guided by semi-structured questions and followed a focus group protocol. (See Appendix C – Conversation Group Protocol). This inquiry had three

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narrative conversations. The first conversation was over preservice teachers' practice in elementary literacy education. Prior to the conversation, participants were asked to submit a "teacher trading card" artifact. The artifact along with the guiding questions structured the conversation space. Prior to meeting for the second narrative conversation over reading choices, participants were asked to complete the "thinking about my reading choices" artifact. Participants met in two paired Zoom meetings for the final conversation due to scheduling challenges.

Within this space, there were primarily participants' narrations. As the researcher, I was an active listener and creator of interim research texts (Clandinin, 2016; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) around preservice teachers' conversations on teaching and their professional knowledge landscapes. As the researcher, I listened to and interpreted preservice teachers' stories told and retold around their experiences in-field during student teaching, alongside their stories about experiences and knowledge from within previously taken literacy methods courses – especially stories about critical literacy and teaching with diverse children's literature. At times, when prompted or invited, I shared about an experience or thoughts around the subject of discussion.

Narrative conversations as a field text, within this inquiry, furthered the possibility of building plot lines. It is common, within the collective conversational field, for participants to tell and retell stories that are shaped by each other's experiences and understandings. It is within this space that I, as the researcher, assembled stories and discovered unities or commonalities (i.e., plot lines) that linked them. It was also within this space of the inquiry that participants posed questions of each other and learned from each other. An example of this can be seen when Sarah mentioned something that Margie had brought up in one of our earlier narrative conversations during our individual interview on diverse children's literature.

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**Zoom Recordings as Field Texts.** When using Zoom online recordings as field texts, there are several choices around the viewing of recorded video and audio: speaker view, gallery view, audio only, audio transcript. Gallery view shows researcher and participant at the same time. Within the inquiry, I primarily utilized gallery view and audio transcript for reading and rereading field texts. Gallery view allowed me to see and hear participant(s) as well as my own actions and role as an active listener (Kim, 2016); I was able to track our body language (i.e., facial and body expressions, eye and body movement and position, room noise) and the questions/responses and utterances of both speaker and listener. I viewed/read the video alongside the audio transcript to capture words and utterances through/with the typed transcription done by Zoom that I failed to hear/see. There was an added layer of support towards the crafting and retelling a more complete story. The use of Zoom's gallery-view recordings and audio transcript provided me with more of the PSTs' stories to interpret and in turn, retell.

**Artifacts as Field Texts.** Collection of artifacts as field texts involved participants bringing and/or sharing about themselves as future teachers (i.e., My Teacher Trading Card) [See Appendix D], children's literature texts of their choosing and other teaching materials from their student teaching. The number of participant artifacts was not predetermined; their narratives and the researchers' interim research text guided the need and inclusion of artifacts within the inquiry field. Kim (2016) suggests that the collection of artifacts be done in "the spirit of creating a cabinet of curiosities" (p. 178). She shares that historically, the cabinet of curiosities consisted of things (i.e., souvenirs) collected by European travelers as they visited foreign countries; the items were often grouped and displayed in their homes upon their return from travel. The collections would tell both a story of the place visited and the person who collected the items. Thinking of

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the artifacts that PSTs shared in terms of a “cabinet of curiosities,” created space for building on their *stories to live by* (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) and exploration into what the artifacts meant to them and/or shared about their literacy and children’s literature teaching. Kim (2016) says it best, when she states, “we wonder, mull over, and possibly take another journey with the artifacts collected in the cabinet of curiosities in the hermeneutical excavation of stories through our narrative inquiry” (p. 178).

As a researcher in this inquiry, I was curious about how PSTs made choices around children’s literature texts; how they understood the role of children’s literature; how they defined children’s literature; and whether they were inclined to select and teach diverse children’s literature texts alongside how they understood and teach literacy. Within this space, convergences or intersections of stories tended to occur – PST’s literacy stories, stories of teachers past and present, student teaching stories, and stories of school past, present, and future.

Within this inquiry, participants were asked to complete a “teacher trading card,” an artifact which served as a point of reference for the preservice teacher participant. Prior to meeting with PST participants within a narrative conversation group, I used the teacher trading card to learn about their individual thoughts of themselves as teachers and their teaching - Was there a grade level that appealed to them? Was there a classroom structure that was most appealing? What type of literature would they teach with? The second artifact was a “thinking about my reading choices” artifact. Again, participants were asked to complete the artifact as an individual before meeting and sharing with the group. Participants’ responses on this artifact/document provided me views of ways that participants were understanding literature for personal and professional purposes. This helped me to see if anyone was influenced by anyone else in the group around literacy and literature understanding and teacher practice.

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**Transcriptions and Journal Writing as Field Texts.** Journaling is a site of tension for the narrative inquirer and “[offers] a blend of detailed field notes interwoven with journal reflections on the experience” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 103). It is within this space that I, as a researcher, composed field texts about my experiences, knowledge, and identities alongside those of research participants across the various explored knowledge landscapes. It was within the journaling space that “my inner experiences, feelings, doubts, uncertainties, reactions, remembered stories, and so on” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 86) were explored. Reflective notes were also made and kept on literature that I had read before and during the inquiry on PST research and teacher education. Journal writing involved a layering or interweaving of observations and my interpretations collected through field texts and notes on my thoughts, reading and understandings and further questions. Through my journaling and transcription work, I was able to turn inward and work introspectively while watching outward and doing the work of observation, recording, transcription, and interpretation.

This inquiry involved extensive researcher journal writing and transcription work over 11 weeks (about 2 and a half months) with research participants. [See Appendix A – Inquiry Timeline]. Both researcher journal notes and transcriptions were shared with participants during the inquiry to aid in the co-creation of the research narrative. Narrative inquiry work – towards creation of blended stories (participant’s and mine) or narratives – relies on rich journal writing and close, accurate transcriptions of participant(s)’ stories.

### **Narrative Data Analysis and Interpretation**

“Narrative meaning,” according to Kim, “concerns the diverse aspects of experience that involve human actions or events that affect human beings” (p. 191). The search for meaning, according to Bold (2012), is essentially what is best described as the purpose of qualitative



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research analysis. Within the interpretation of data, the researcher's essential undertaking is to establish a balance between the researcher's telling of events and what is told by the participant. Bold (2012) shares, "there is no single process to analyze and present narrative data as part of qualitative research [and] the analysis can start at any point within an iterative process: analyzing, collecting data, synthesizing, reanalyzing and so on" (p. 121). For this inquiry, the process of analysis was an iterative, ongoing process whereby I did the following: (1) collected and organized data alongside posed research questions around earlier thoughts/understandings of critical literacy teaching and teaching diverse children's literature; (2) decided on the significance of specific storied phenomena; and (3) began to shape the analysis of narrative data (Bold, 2012).

### *Interpretation and Interim Research Texts*

The work of narrative data analysis is defined by Clandinin (2016) and Clandinin and Connelly (2000) as movement from field texts to interim research texts and occurs in tandem (Kim, 2016). Interim research texts are the journaling or jottings and ponderings done by the researcher that emerge from the participants' stories and aid in their analysis towards identification of ways that researcher and participants struggle through our understandings towards coherence or incoherence of our lives and participation in the narratives of our lives we compose and co-compose within the narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2016).

This inquiry began with the creation of interim research texts during the very first narrative interview, on the first day of field text creation and continued throughout the inquiry with participants in the form of researcher journaling - questioning and interpretation and the creation of analytic memos done alongside and with research interviews and conversations and transcripts as field texts. Given the embedded nature of field texts within narrative inquiry

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research, the work of analyzing field texts occurred as ongoing practice alongside the creation and co-creation with inquiry participants of research narratives. Clandinin (2016) asserts, “although interpretation is always underway as the inquiry is lived out with participants in the field, at some point there is a move away from the close intensive contact with participants to begin to work with the field texts” (p. 47). Narrative research with field texts along with interim research texts served as sites of analysis and exploration of themes as well as coherences across participants’ stories towards possibilities for the field.

Alongside the work of narrative data analysis are member checks, which provided “transparency...and make sure that [participant’s] voices were not filtered too strongly through my own preconceptions, [and] shaped by my own understandings” (Player, 2021, p. 225). Member checks provided participants in this inquiry – preservice teachers – space to amplify their voices over their stories and ensure that the research narrative expressed *their* stories as their narratives did. As I read through participant’s narrative interview transcripts and conversation group transcripts, I made note of places where I may have missed a piece of their story or required clarification over something they shared through/within a story. An example of this from within the inquiry can be seen in the revision of guiding question #3, where I modified pre-existing guiding questions based on what I had learned of/from the participant through my reading/re-reading of the shared story transcript (See Appendix E).

Through subsequent narrative interviews and email, I checked in with participants, shared my thoughts, and posed questions. The space for PST participants’ emailing and posing additional questions or sharing artifacts also existed within this inquiry. Participants and I emailed frequently back and forth during the inquiry. Participant responses, journaling, and analytic memos worked together to fill in the gaps and make the research narrative both richer

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and clearer, as well as reflective of the participant's storied experiences and understandings alongside my own as researcher and co-participant.

### *Models of Analysis*

Reissman (2008), Bold (2012), and Kim (2016) share diverse models of narrative data analysis (i.e., structural, thematic, dialogic, performative). This inquiry involved a mixture of two models of analysis: structural and thematic. Together, these models of analysis provided credible and trustworthy evidence supporting research into PSTs stories to live by around their literacy and children's literature teaching and willingness to engage in critical literacy teaching with diverse children's literature texts.

**Structural Analysis.** According to Reissman (2008), the “systematic study in social linguistics of narrative form began with the pioneering work of William Labov and Joshua Waletzky, who developed a model of narrative structure” (p. 81). Labov's (1972) subsequent research would “elaborate on the structural coding system that Labov and Waletzky had developed earlier” (Reissman, 2008, p. 82), and serve as a guide for the structural model of narrative analysis. Labov, according to Reissman (2008), “wanted to identify sequences and structural parts of the narrative that recur across stories about experiences” (p. 84).

Within Labov's model of analysis, “he keeps narrative segments of longer exchanges intact and closely analyzes their internal structure – component parts of the story and their relationship to one another” (Reissman, 2008, p. 84). Labov's Model consists of the following six components: 1. Abstract: a summary of the story and its points; 2. Orientation: providing a context such as place, time, and character to orient the reader; 3. Complicating Action: skeleton plot, or an event that causes a problem as in ‘And then what happened?’; 4. Evaluation: evaluative comments on events, justification of its telling, or the meaning that the teller gives to

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an event; 5. Result or Resolution: resolution of the story or the conflict; and 6. Coda: bringing the narrator and listener back into the present. Reissman (2008) notes, “not all stories contain all elements, and they occur in varying sequences” (p. 84).

This inquiry utilized Labov’s Model as a means to organize the research narratives. Such a consideration enabled building onto the model and considered, for example, the third component, Complicating Action as inclusive of “other [events or] human issues like anxieties, expectations, desires, wishes, failures, future developments, and the like, which are not considered events by Labov, [but] might have complicated our storyteller’s life” (Kim, 2016, p. 201). My use of the Labovian Model of analysis would be best described as a liberal application, wherein large sections of the narrative interview transcript were analyzed for evidence of action or events within literacy and children’s literature teaching stories.

Analysis within this inquiry began with Labov’s Model and used it to structure the research narratives of inquiry participants. The Labovian Model, according to Kim (2016) is instrumental in helping researchers get to what is at the heart of the story. She explains that determining what the story is about “is an important investigative problem because the main point of the story may not always be stated explicitly by the storyteller” (Kim, 2016, p. 202). A shortcoming of the structural analysis and Labov’s Model, according to Bold (2012), however, is that it is “most useful when seeking common elements in a set of stories [and] it is not useful for developing understanding of the meanings behind the stories, the reasons for actions, or justifications of choices” (p. 141). This inquiry into preservice teachers’ literacy teaching decisions required an understanding of their stories’ meanings and uses Labov’s Model as a point of departure, which according to Mishler works because “the Labovian model can be expanded, modified, and elaborated. Using the Labovian model as a foundation, we can create our own

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model, depending on what the focus of our research is” (Kim, 2016, p. 202). This inquiry begins with structuring the research narratives with the Labovian Model’s structure but elaborates on it with/through thematic analysis.

**Thematic Analysis.** Thematic analysis, according to Bold (2012), “encompasses two ideas: that the researcher is often seeking and identifying themes (or not) within the narratives, and that experiences usually involve relationships between people and contexts” (p. 129).

According to Riessman (2008), “thematic narrative analysis is akin to what scholars in folklore and history use with archival data” (p. 53). Within thematic analysis of narrative data,

data are interpreted in light of thematics developed by the investigator (influenced by prior and emergent theory, the concrete purpose of the investigation, the data themselves, political commitments, and other factors). There is minimal focus on how a narrative is spoken (or written), on structures of speech a narrator selects, audience (real or imagined), the local context that generated the narrative, or complexities of transcription (Riessman, 2008, p. 54).

Within this inquiry, thematic analysis is used to analyze narrative interviews about preservice teachers’ (PSTs’) teaching of literacy and children’s literature in the elementary classroom context. This inquiry builds on prior narrative research work done by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), and analyzes PSTs’ *stories to live by* (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) to learn about their levels of engagement or disengagement with teaching critical literacy and diverse children’s literature. Analysis and findings suggest that within PSTs’ stories are influences on how they choose to teach and what they choose to teach with. Analysis of PSTs’ stories was done in the areas of: literacy models, approaches to literacy, and children’s literature conceptualizations.

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Areas of analysis and subsequent emerging themes found through analysis of PSTs' stories are shown below in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Inquiry Areas of Analysis and Emerging Themes*

<b>Area of Analysis</b>	<b>Emerging Themes</b>	<b>Participant(s)</b>
Literacy Models	Literacy as method: reading and writing	Sarah, Margie, Rosalie
	Literacy as social practice	Lindsey, Margie
Approaches to Literacy	Literacy teaching as behaviorist	Sarah, Rosalie
	Literacy teaching as constructivist	Margie
	Literacy teaching as socio-cultural; Literacy teaching for social justice	Lindsey
Children's Literature Conceptualizations	Children's literature as teaching tools: canonical literature, basal readers, leveled-readers, curriculum guides	Sarah, Rosalie
	Children's literature as mirrors	Sarah
	Diverse children's literature: picturebooks; chapter books	Margie
	Culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1995) children's literature: picturebooks	Lindsey

A research narrative or case was created for each PST participant to illustrate both choices they made and influences on their choices around the critical teaching of literacy with diverse children's literature (or the lack thereof). Within this inquiry, PSTs' *stories to live by* (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) serve as spaces for exploration into and analysis of how and what PSTs teach literacy in the student teaching, elementary classroom and provide insight into how to better structure teacher education courses on critical literacy teaching diverse children's literature to best prepare PSTs to teach literacy from/within such a framework.

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Saldaña (2016) describes a theme as “an outcome of coding, categorization, or analytic reflection, but it is not something that is, in itself coded” (p. 15). Within this inquiry, thematic analysis is done through reading and rereading of field texts alongside narrative coding.

Thematic analysis and narrative coding was done with field texts – specifically, narrative interview transcripts, journals, analytic memos following Bold (2012) who shares, “a thematic analysis focuses on the content of the narratives, the events that occur, the experiences that people have and the meanings that emerge through finding a set of themes within the data” (p. 131). Within this inquiry and the composure of research narratives, I read and analyzed interview and conversation transcripts alongside journal notes and analytic memos, and researched emerging themes within the areas of literacy models, approaches to literacy, and children’s literature conceptualizations. Through the writeup of journal entries and analytic memos of each interview – summary, emergent themes with segments of supporting transcript, analysis, further questions – I identified possible themes of PST participant’s stories alongside the presence or absence of critical literacy teaching and teaching with diverse children’s literature. An example of such work can be seen in Appendix F.

### *Theorizing Narrative Meaning – Narrative Coda*

In narrative inquiry, the coda provides the answer to the, “so what?” question, following the researcher’s interpretation and (re)presentation of storied phenomenon. According to Kim (2016), “The role of coda is not just to expand the existing literature. The ultimate goal of our theorizing is to make a difference in society by planting a seed for social justice” (p. 237).

Through this narrative inquiry – reading and (re)reading of field texts within the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space and deriving narrative coda – into preservice teachers’ stories to live by and teach with, I moved deeper into the multiple meanings of experiences and

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made visible potential solutions to research questions around how preservice teachers make decisions about engaging in critical literacy teaching practice with or without diverse children's literature texts, towards the possible (re)design of teacher education course design and (re)designed research into PSTs chosen ways of teaching literacy and children's literature.

Within the coda for each narrative/ PST participant story (Kim, 2016; Bruner, 2002), I analyzed the preservice teachers' stories around the areas of analysis for critical literacy teaching with diverse children's literature. Within this space, I researched diverse stories told from multiple perspectives - mine, preservice teachers, theory - which are then considered against untold and unheard stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and build on previous research about preservice teachers of elementary literacy with diverse literature for children (Szecsi et al., 2010; Lohfink, 2014). The coda of this inquiry, presents my reflexive understanding as researcher and analyst of PST participants' stories, which Bold (2012) describes as "an understanding of one's position and thinking in relation to the research [and] is essential to the interpretive analytical process" (p. 137).

### *Composing Narrative Research Texts*

For this dissertation, I followed prior research (e.g., Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Kim, 2016) and chose to present the research narrative as follows. This research narrative presents storied interpretations or research narratives of four PSTs' literacy and children's literature understandings and chosen teaching methods. It involved exploring and analyzing PSTs' *stories to live by* (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) told across varying knowledge landscapes (i.e., personal and professional) for demonstrations of how and why related to their chosen ways to teach literacy and children's literature. The work of unpacking PSTs' stories happened across the inquiry landscape and included narrative analysis of field texts: narrative interviews, narrative



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conversations, transcriptions, journal writing, analytic memos, interim research texts in search of emerging themes and influences. Composing research narratives and coda (Kim, 2016) involved reading and interpretation of PSTs' stories around the inquiry's research question of How do elementary preservice teachers' "stories to live by"<sup>3</sup> (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) shape their orientation towards certain literacy teaching practices? The research narratives that follow (see chapters 4 - 7) tell the lived and told stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Kim, 2016) of preservice teacher participants of this inquiry around the areas of literacy, approaches to literacy, and children's literature conceptualizations. To compose and tell their stories, I looked inward into my personal reasons for doing this work and outward to the social significance of my work and present my interpretation of their chosen teaching practice of literacy and children's literature. The rationale behind this research involved developing knowledge and understanding of participants as individual persons and teachers, alongside how they made decisions about teaching – towards exploring and developing possible new ways of teaching preservice teachers about critical literacy pedagogy and diverse children's literature.

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<sup>3</sup> *Stories to live by* is a narrative term conceptualized by Connelly and Clandinin (1999) as a way to understand the interconnectedness of knowledge, context, and identity. (Clandinin, 2013, p. 78, n.3)

## Chapter IV

NARRATIVE I: SARAH'S BEHAVIORIST TEACHING OF LITERACY & CHILDREN'S  
LITERATURE STORY**Abstract**

This narrative research text offers my interpretation and retelling of Sarah's *stories to live by* (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999), composed within a Labovian story structure (abstract, orientation, complicating actions, evaluation, resolution, and coda) and analyzed along three themes. My analysis and interpretation of Sarah's stories revealed that she viewed *literacy as a method* for teaching reading and writing; she described this *literacy teaching as behaviorist*; and she perceived using *children's literature as teaching tools* (See Table 1). This research narrative provides teacher educators and educational researchers of literacy with space to consider how and why to structure and teach PSTs - especially those who similarly experience and teach literacy and literature as Sarah - about critical literacy teaching diverse children's literature within elementary education contexts.

This research narrative explores: What does it mean for Sarah to have her cooperating teacher and childhood teacher(s) view and teach literacy in a similar manner and with similar children's literature? Sarah's stories around favorite and/or memorable teachers of literacy paint a picture of her understanding of literacy as a method and focused on reading and writing. Her literacy experience stories centered around reading – be it fictional chapter books in elementary school or informational texts in high school, and applying learned skills around the mechanics of writing in high school. Interpretation of her stories suggested a chosen way of teaching literacy was with children's literature as teaching tools. Coda of this research narrative explores: What do

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Sarah's stories suggest is absent from and/or needed for critical literacy and diverse children's literature teaching in teacher education?

### **Orientation (times, places, characters, situations)**

Sarah is a white, female, senior-year, preservice teacher in the undergraduate, elementary education program at a predominantly white institution of higher learning (PWI) in the Midwestern United States. She is a sister to a younger brother, and a daughter of an elementary teacher. Sarah grew up in a white, middle-class, suburban setting of the same Midwestern state where she currently attends college. She is also a former student of mine, who took a literacy methods course on teaching diverse literature for children and youth that I taught the semester prior to her participating in the inquiry. Sarah has volunteered to participate in this inquiry and share her experiences and understandings around literacy, teaching literacy, children's literature and its teaching. At the time of the inquiry, Sarah student taught full-time at an assigned Senior Year Onsite Placement (SYOSP) – a local, culturally diverse, Title I, elementary school, in a fifth-grade classroom with a cooperating teacher.

As Sarah's former literacy methods course instructor, I appreciated having had a prior relationship with her, and appreciated that it made our interviews and conversations more authentic. I quite enjoyed learning and teaching with Sarah in the diverse children's literature course. She was an active participant in our class discussions and often raised good questions too. As a participant in this inquiry, Sarah would act as the teacher and provide me, as the researcher, with an opportunity to learn from her and her experiences.

### ***Identity and Culture***

In Sarah's narrative, there were a couple important 'characters' or influences who emerged in her literacy story - namely her mother. Sarah is the daughter of an elementary

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teacher, and she referred to her mother several times during our interviews. Sarah's mother is currently a fifth-grade elementary teacher and has taught in elementary school all of Sarah's life. For Sarah, I was additionally interested in how, if at all, was her mother – a fifth-grade elementary teacher – an influence on her understanding of what literacy was and how teachers teach literacy and children's literature? Sarah appears to create an identity - a fifth-grade elementary teacher - following what was demonstrated by and learned from her mother. Anzaldù (2015) shares that we “create identity and your life by reading (observing) the people, the events around you and your self” (p. 185). Sarah's stories tell about the shaping of her identity as an elementary teacher of literacy along with its ways to teach and learn from early on by persons around her.

Prior to being a preservice teacher in this inquiry, Sarah learned about literacy and children's literature and their teaching through experiences with her family, and grade school teachers. One of Sarah's stories about childhood reading and what excited her told of her “mom [who] is a fifth-grade teacher, she would constantly be giving me books for her classroom that she would want me to read before she would have her kids read them in her class.” Sarah spoke about enjoying reading chapter books following reading the ones her mother shared with her and encouraged her to read. Sarah further credits her family as an influence on her overall excitement about reading and shared, “I think, just because my family was super into reading that's what got me excited about reading.”

When asked to share about teachers from childhood who she considered to be “a great literacy teacher” or “favorite,” Sarah first told of her third and fourth grade teacher. It should be noted that Sarah mentioned “I don't know if I could pick one favorite, I had a few in [elementary and] in high school that I really liked.” Overall, she found her school experience to be positive

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and her teachers were viewed in a similar manner. However, of importance to this inquiry are three things about how her most “memorable” elementary teacher taught literacy that Sarah spoke of:

- 1) “he would read chapter books to us, like to the class, and we would all sit on the carpet and be able to like lay down while he read chapter books and I love doing that;”
- 2) “then he also had a good classroom library with a lot of series books and books that my teacher has now that I recognize;”
- 3) “and just promoted a lot of like independent reading time both in third and fourth grade, along with like independent writing time.”

Sarah additionally spoke of two high school teachers who she considered as “memorable” for their teaching of reading and writing.

During student teaching and this inquiry, Sarah’s cooperating teacher served as teacher and model of who and how around teaching of literacy and literature. Sarah’s mention of her cooperating teacher’s classroom library while recounting stories about her childhood teacher’s classroom library stood out to me. There was a notable similarity that existed between the two spaces. When I asked her about her thoughts of the similarity, she responded “yes she does [have similar books she reads/teaches] that’s great.” Together all of these people - her mother, family, elementary teacher, and cooperating teacher - and their shared literacy and literature experiences wove a culture – a literacy teacher cultura – around Sarah.

Anzaldúa (2015) defines culture or *cultura* as “the fabric of life that the scissors of previous generations cut, trimmed, embroidered, embellished, and attached to new quilt pieces, but it is the cloth that the wash of time discolors, blends the dyes, and applies new tints” (p. 85). Identity stories emanate from our cultura and help us to understand and define who we are as members of a given community or cultural group. *Teacher cultura* is understood as the collective

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story of teacher group identity – what people of a certain cultural group (i.e., elementary teachers) collectively identify as what it means to be a part of their community. Teacher cultura informs teachers, as members of the cultural group, about how to teach and what tools to teach with; these stories are rooted in the past and oft hold onto traditional ways of knowing and doing around teaching because of the feelings of comfort and the ability to withstand-the-test-of-time which they engender. It is up to the individual person to decide whether they wear the cultura as it is or they work to make it their own. This is the space of the personal story. Okri (1997) shares, “One way or another we are living the stories planted in us early on or along the way, or we are also living stories we planted – knowingly or unknowingly – in ourselves” (p. 46). It is within this space of deciding which stories we live that I explored and analyzed Sarah’s literacy and children’s literature stories - specifically researching areas of literacy models, approaches to literacy and children’s literature conceptualizations within a narrative inquiry and *stories to live by* (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) framework.

### **Complicating Actions (themes, plotlines) & Evaluation**

#### ***Sarah’s Theme # 1: Literacy as Reading and Writing***

Sarah’s stories around childhood literacy and literature took place across personal landscapes, and told of experiences she had at home and in school – kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Stories told across professional landscapes shared Sarah’s experiences as an elementary education undergraduate student and preservice teacher through to her senior year of student teaching at her SYOSP. Our first interview began with a question about how she defined literacy, to which she responded, “a range of different types of books.” Sensing that this response was incomplete, I posed more questions of Sarah about literacy. As the interview went on and Sarah

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shared about her experience with literacy, a clearer definition of literacy as reading and writing emerged.

Sarah's stories of literacy from her childhood experience were about reading as enjoyable. She explained,

[it was] enjoyable just because we had a lot of books at home that I love to read like picturebooks and I have two younger brothers, so I was reading books to them, reading to myself, so that I had that at home and then at school. I had great teachers... who had good classroom libraries. See I had good experiences.

As she shared these stories, I better understood how and why she defined literacy as children's books. For Sarah, reading was repeatedly identified as her "favorite subject." Reading children's books provided her with enjoyment and filled her world with lighthearted and humorous stories of mirrored childhood experience. She especially relished reading chapter books, books in a series, and shared that there was something about reading them in order when she stated,

And I had to read them in order is what my mom told me, 'cause like she would try to find some from the library or something. I was like, well no, I need them in order else I can't... I can't skip books... um so, I liked those a lot.

Sarah's childhood reading preferences were of children's fiction stories that offered what she described as "super happy" and easy to follow storylines, and were considered "light reading books" that were "popular" with her friends. Some of the most memorable chapter book series she spoke of included *Junie B. Jones* (Park, 1992-2013), *Magic Tree House* (Osbourne, 1992-2022), and *Judy Moody* (McDonald, 2000-2021). Sarah shared that these books were preferred over others because, "the storylines are easy to follow and there's a lot of them, so it was nice to know that once I finished one, there was another one waiting for me to read."

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When sharing about literacy in her personal life, Sarah referenced the reading of books - either her reading independently or books being read to her. She also referred to writing - be it writing of stories or assigned writing in school. Sarah's love of reading began with her family. She shared, "I think, just because my family was super into reading, that's what got me excited about reading." Sarah's mother could be described as the most influential on her excitement about reading and is seen and heard of quite frequently in Sarah's stories around literacy as either as participant in the story or having told her the story. Sarah credits her mother with first introducing her to reading and to children's books. When recounting a story of her first memory of childhood literacy, Sarah recalled her mom, "coming into my kindergarten classroom and me showing her or like reading a book to her, which was exciting." When speaking about children's books that she enjoyed reading as a child, Sarah often began with or included a statement about, "what my mom told me." As Sarah prepares to become a teacher of literacy herself, thoughts and reference to her mom continued.

During our second interview, Sarah continued defining literacy as reading and writing when sharing stories around teachers of literacy from her childhood experience. This can be evidenced in her sharing about her third and fourth grade teacher who she considered to be "favorite" for his teaching of literacy in elementary school. What set this teacher apart from other teachers, according to Sarah was as she stated,

I had the same teacher for both those years, so I got to know him really well and I remember, he would read chapter books to us. Like to the class and we would all sit on the carpet and be able to lay down, while he read chapter books, and I love doing that...and then he also had a good classroom library, with a lot of like independent reading time both in third and fourth grade, along with like independent writing time...



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which I prefer because I liked the reading and writing way more than math, which I struggled [with] in third and fourth grade, so I think that's why he's one of my favorites. Sarah went on to tell about her high school teachers as memorable and favorite teachers of literacy. Her high school teachers were memorable because they also encouraged and supported her love of reading and writing. Sarah recalled one such memorable teacher of high school literacy when she shared,

We would have a ton of books that we would read on our own, then essays we were assigned. We would schedule English conferences with our teacher. So, like during our lunch or before or after school. We would have to meet with our teacher and go over our essay and they would give us edits which was super helpful for college. Just like getting more help on how to write papers. And I kept all of them. Like I have all on my Google Drive. So that is why my high school English teachers, specifically my sophomore year one, she... I loved having English conferences with her. She helped me when I was writing my college essay and she did help me a lot on that. So, I think she was memorable.

Another of Sarah's high school teachers of literacy stood out to her because, "in high school, my senior year where... my English class was, I think it was called like English in the media, or something like that, where we looked at a lot of outside the classroom real world examples and compared it to books. We would read things like that." During high school, Sarah read less fiction and more informational texts. This class was a "favorite" of hers because she read different types of texts. Though she mentioned comparing and contrasting the two texts – media and print – she did not share about the discussions that were had around their reading. In high school, Sarah appears to have shifted from reading fictional books for enjoyment to reading

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informational texts for knowledge; and her writing appears to be more structural and less aesthetic – at least in her favorite or most memorable class.

Teachers of literacy in most of Sarah’s stories were regarded as memorable due to their: reading of chapter books – a favorite pastime of Sarah’s; having a classroom library filled with many of the book series she enjoyed (i.e., *Judy Moody* and *Magic Tree House*); providing space for her to read independently or enjoy a book being read to her; and supporting and encouraging her love of reading and writing. With regard to having a classroom library, when Sarah spoke about the classroom library from her most memorable teacher’s classroom, she mentioned her current SYOSP cooperating teacher’s classroom library and shared that there were, “a lot of series books and books my teacher has now that I recognize.” Sarah’s recognition of memorable and enjoyable books from her childhood does not go without notice, because it speaks volumes about the nostalgia and familiarity that seeing those books in her current student teaching landscape engenders.

The third interview with Sarah allowed room for her stories lived and told across professional landscapes – student teaching literacy with a cooperating teacher at her SYOSP as well as personal landscapes – at home, outside of taking college courses and student teaching. Our third interview was an important place for me to learn more about how Sarah viewed literacy and would teach it – interested in whether or not Sarah would carry her understanding of literacy forward from her personal childhood experience into her now professional experience and preservice teaching practice. Sarah’s student teaching SYOSP was at a racially, culturally, and economically diverse elementary school. This is important to note because the student demographic of the student teaching classroom does not mirror Sarah’s childhood classroom. Moll (1992, 1994) researched and wrote about the need for teachers of nonwhite students to

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value the “funds of knowledge” that students bring to school and use them as vehicles for literacy learning.

During the third interview, I asked Sarah about whether or not she considered her students’ “funds of knowledge,” in relation to her selection of reading materials to teach with given her previous stories around literacy with the reading of children’s literature as central. Though we had studied Moll and students’ funds of knowledge in the course on teaching diverse children’s literature the semester before; I found myself giving Sarah a refresher course on Moll’s funds of knowledge and Rosenblatt’s transactional theory during the interview. Following which Sarah’s response was,

In my own classroom I’m hoping to like get a bunch of materials that are way more diverse just to have in the classroom and then from there... But this year, I obviously just use what my host teacher had. But if I did, out of the chance, I think I would pick something way more like up-to-date. Because I mean also the books, I was reading were when I was in elementary school, which was not long ago, but they were written like long before then. Um and also, just that are more diverse, I think, for my classroom and just represent all the kids in my classroom. I would say, depending on wherever I end up teaching.

Reading Sarah’s response to the question around funds of knowledge, I paused to reflect on the last line where she said, “depending on wherever I end up teaching” and referred back to the earlier point that Sarah’s student teaching SYOSP was at a racially, culturally, and economically diverse elementary school that did not mirror Sarah’s childhood classroom. Moll (1994) reminds us that teachers must move away from the “deficit perspective” that perceives nonwhite and non-middle-class students as coming from homes with limited intellectual capital and possessing

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limited intellectual capability as it devalues the capital – funds of knowledge – that children of color bring to the classroom. In the diverse children’s literature course taken by Sarah and taught by me, we explored how we – teachers of literacy and diverse children’s literature – could (and should) be more culturally responsive and inclusive in our teaching. However, it appears as though what was taught and discussed may have relayed a situational understanding of this way of teaching. What I mean by this is, Sarah appeared to suggest that literacy and its teaching may look different depending on where it is being lived and who is or has experienced it. In her predominantly white and middle-class school experience of literacy, perhaps there was no need for nonwhite and non-middle-class literature and understanding of literacy beyond mere reading and writing and as sociocultural. Her student teaching landscape may have included more culturally and racially diverse students, however, literacy teaching from/with their cultural capital was not modeled nor reinforced by her cooperating teacher. Therefore, in her future teaching of literacy and children’s literature, a lot would depend on where (and who) she was teaching. Additionally, it would also depend on what/where Sarah would choose to teach.

Though Sarah’s childhood stories around literacy included lots of reading and writing, absent from them were any sociocultural elements – children’s literacy development through “exploring the cultural, social, and historical contexts in which the children have grown” (Davidson, 2010, p. 249). This noticing is both interesting and alarming to me – Sarah’s childhood literacy learning experiences and stories appear to have occurred without opportunity for her to become familiar with or see modeled literacy learning where social and cultural experience was central. Sarah’s childhood literacy stories were also missing any critical literacy elements – children’s literacy development through reading the word and the world (Freire &

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Macedo, 1987) that involves exploration into individuals, literacy, and social transformation. The absence of these views of literacy serve to explain Sarah's chosen way of teaching literacy.

### *Sarah's Theme # 2: Literacy Teaching as Behaviorist*

According to Tracey and Morrow (2017), "Behaviorism has affected the field of reading in multiple ways, including the way the task of reading is understood, perceptions of how reading instruction should proceed, the creation of reading materials, and the assessment of reading progress" (p.47). Within a behaviorism frame, reading is understood as a way of learning made up of component parts and its teaching or instruction becomes mastery of these components. The teaching of reading from this framework often involves direct instruction and reading readiness. Direct instruction, according to Tracey and Morrow (2017),

"is one form of reading instruction that is clearly linked to a behavioral theoretical perspective. In direct instruction, teachers explicitly focus children's attention on specific reading concepts, such as phonics, vocabulary, and comprehension skills, and provide information to students about those skills. Often direct instruction emphasizes discrete skills and subskills perceived as necessary for students' reading success" (p. 48).

In Sarah's teaching of literacy stories from our second and third interviews, she shared about teaching literacy from a behavioral theoretical perspective. This way of teaching is taught in an earlier course on reading methods where Sarah learned about reading and its instruction broken down into the Big 5 elements of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension - and writing. During our second interview on teaching literacy, I asked Sarah to describe her literacy teaching roles and responsibilities as a PST in student teaching to which she responded by describing her teaching of students in reading groups and shared,

We'll read and then have packets that go along with the reading where we'll fill out

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together um... just about vocab and like summaries about what we had read. So, I've been doing that. The kids really love that and that's uh I think it's a good way for me to get to know them better and it's awesome because it's smaller groups so it's a lot easier to control and they're more fun and friendly [and] the shy kids talk more.

On the topic of student teaching literacy in the beginning of her student teaching SYOSP experience, Sarah spoke about teaching with benchmark curriculum packets designed to provide students with literacy, social studies, and science instruction. She mentioned, "a lot of benchmarks and small groups, that's mostly what I've been doing for reading." When students read children's literature in small groups, they read trade books (Leland, Lewison, & Harste, 2018) - books "published for sale to the general public or commercial books other than basal readers, that are used for reading instruction" (p. 3). Trade books used for reading instruction by Sarah and her cooperating teacher were written by white authors and featured stories of white, middle-class, children and their childhood experiences; all of which were published several years ago. Sarah's small group reading selections were: *Dear Mr. Henshaw* (1983), *There's a Boy in the Girls' Bathroom* (Sahar, 1987), and *Hoot* (Hiaasen, 2002). Reading instruction books were selected for students based on their assessed reading ability or reading level and assigned reading group(s). This way of literacy instruction with mainstream trade children's literature provides an analogous way of teaching that harkens back to teaching demonstrated and displayed by some of Sarah's most memorable childhood teachers - literature used for reading enjoyment and instruction; literature read to or by the student without space for discussion, questioning of the author or storied representation(s), or space to make connections - text to self, text to text, text to world.

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Sarah's literacy teaching stories appear behaviorist in their telling of students reading instruction mostly in small groups with leveled reading material and absent of teaching with interactive read alouds, support of more complex responses to reading, and promotion of independent reading. Interestingly, the absence of independent reading in Sarah's student teaching was surprising to me given the fondness Sarah shared she felt over her own opportunities to read independently afforded her by teachers during childhood.

It appeared as though both Sarah's teaching literacy and literature were largely influenced by her cooperating teacher and her mother. These influences appeared to occur within a space of tension for Sarah - between teaching practiced by her cooperating and grade-level teachers and her mother and other fifth-grade teachers, and what Sarah learned (and was considering) in literacy methods courses. As Sarah moved across the student teaching landscape and drew from multiple perspectives, she wanted to have more support in the form of collaboration with other teachers as she began to develop her own understanding of how/what to teach literacy. This tension can be evidenced when she shared,

I tell you just collaborating and bouncing ideas off one another, a lot I don't see it. I mean, I do see it a little bit with my host teacher now and then with other fifth grade teachers. I think there's normally four fifth grades, but two of them are online. But I do see it a lot with my mom and her other grade-level teachers. They make Power Points for each subject and then each teacher kind of takes roles for one. Like one will be in charge of math, one reading and writing, and they all have Power Points that they add on to, which I think is great um for teachers to collaborate that way, and then share with one another how it went actually teaching it in class. I think that would be awesome.

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Whilst witnessing and interpreting Sarah's stories about literacy teaching, another complicating action around her becoming an elementary literacy teacher emerges as one of Sarah's sense of power(lessness) to make decisions as a PST and future teacher. Throughout her stories around who is a teacher of literacy, Sarah relied on and looked to other teachers - her mother, her cooperating teacher, and other teachers (both in-person and online media outlets/platforms) for representations of how to teach literacy, what literature to teach. Sarah began to see herself as the teacher as we moved through the second interview and were wrapping up and mentioned,

Those were interesting questions, things I've never thought about before... it got me thinking. It's getting me starting to think about how I would run my own classroom. Because it's crazy to think that I'm gonna have to do that one day. Instead of being in other teachers' classrooms, I'm I'm going to be in charge. So I think those questions get me thinking, yeah.

### ***Sarah's Theme # 3: Children's Literature as Mirrors & Tools for Teaching Reading***

As Sarah shared earlier, reading children's literature was an enjoyable part of her life across various personal knowledge landscapes - home and school. Sarah especially enjoyed reading fictional chapter books and books in a series. She also read picturebooks to her younger brothers and independently to herself. Some of the more memorable children's literature read by Sarah as a child included, *Junie B. Jones* (Park, 1992-2013), *Magic Tree House* (Osborne, 1992-2022), and *Judy Moody* (McDonald, 2000-2021). Sarah shared that these books in series were preferred over others because, "the storylines are easy to follow and there's a lot of them, so it was nice to know that once I finished one there was another waiting for me to read." The children's literature book series Sarah read as a child featured stories of white, middle-class, American children who led idyllic lives with space for exploration and adventure, and self-



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expression. Notably, the *Junie B. Jones* (Park, 1992-2013) series books were made popular for their movement away from teaching children moral lessons and towards making children laugh. Through reading books like these, Sarah found enjoyment and many mirrored views of her life and people - especially children - around her. At home and in school childhood experiences with children's literature for Sarah were absent of opportunity for her to learn from/with literature and storied experiences that featured protagonists of cultures and identities beyond/outside her own.

When Sarah shared stories of her elementary school teacher's "great classroom library," I listened intently for any mention of diverse children's literature but was left disappointed. The children's literature shared by her most memorable teachers did not feature works authored by or about persons of color. My feelings of disappointment continued as Sarah told of her cooperating teacher's classroom library that mirrored that of her favorite elementary teacher's classroom library. As Sarah shared stories of children's literature across her personal childhood and student teacher professional knowledge landscapes I heard several nostalgic references - she spoke of reading books from childhood that brought feel-good experiences she wished to share with her own students in the future.

In teaching children's literature, Sarah and her cooperating teacher selected and taught children's literature as tools for learning literacy instructional practices rather than as tools for sociocultural learning and transformative pedagogical practices. The children's literature that Sarah read and taught with were chosen mostly out of accessibility and availability and reading level. Around the selection of children's literature available to her in the student teaching classroom she shared,

um those books that we did for small groups, I picked, just from a collection that my

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teacher has multiple copies of one book. She has a ton in her library, so I picked from there, and then we do a read aloud as a class together and we finished one book, so we picked another from the same author and I do a read aloud with them.

On the topics of reading levels and selecting children's literature in the student teaching classroom she shared,

I kind of pick them. My [cooperating] teacher helped me look at what reading level each kid was, and then we put them into groups, and then I just looked at my [cooperating] teacher's collection...

Absent from Sarah's stories about selecting and reading children's literature are her students and their ability to: select reading material and reading for enjoyment; read about persons similar to and different from themselves, and stories that connect them, their lives, or experiences; question authors and/or stories through reading beyond the words. Notably, Sarah shares during the inquiry about wanting to read more contemporary stories with her students. She says during our last interview, "I'm hoping to have a library of I don't know what specifically, but I'm just wanting a lot of different kinds of books... types of literature." In the literacy methods course on diverse children's literature she was taught and learned of several resources to help her in finding and selecting such literature. She mentioned,

Well, there are some websites, I have a tab on my computer just from websites that were brought up in my Mizzou classes about ways for me to find books and different types of literature that I have saved. I think it was my literacy class my junior year, so last year, my teacher showed us a lot of different websites on just how to find books that cover a lot of different issues or topics that are harder to find. So, I think looking there would be

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great and not necessarily just for books but maybe topics I can cover [in] my classroom too.

Reading deeper into Sarah's statement that “maybe topics I can cover [in] my classroom too” is encouraging. Sarah appears to have tools to locate diverse children’s literature that she found valuable enough to save and plans to refer back to later on in her teaching children’s literature. These resources not only provide her with diverse literature texts but space for considering different ways to teach children’s literature as well - less of tools for reading instruction and more as sociocultural ways of understanding oneself and the world.

### **Resolution (outcome of the plotlines) & Coda (bringing the action back to the present)**

Through the analysis and interpretation of Sarah’s *stories to live by* (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) I have learned a lot about how she views teaching literacy and children’s literature. Specifically, Sarah’s stories told of how she, as a PST, views herself as a reader and fondness of reading and certain types of literature learned from childhood together influence the way that she chose to teach literacy. Through composing the research narrative around Sarah’s stories on literacy and children’s literature, I was reminded of Shirley Brice Heath’s research on the relationship between home and literacy. According to Heath (1983), children approach literacy according to models of literacy they learn and bring from home. Heath also found that stories read within and social practices that surrounded books in the mainstream middle-class community were like those found in many early-childhood classrooms. Sarah’s connection between the two places - home and school - while sharing stories about literacy and children’s literature appear to illuminate similar phenomena. Sarah’s storied experiences around family and literacy point to teaching practice influenced by lived experiences as far back as her early childhood. Sarah’s learned ways of literacy, children’s literature, and their teaching represented

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literacy as method - teaching of reading and writing; literacy teaching as behaviorist; and children's literature as teaching tools.

Sarah appears most comfortable - demonstrated through her stories about "feel good" and "enjoyable" literature that sparked nostalgia when encountered in the student teaching classroom book collection - teaching children's literature as mainstream trade texts and teaching tools.

Sarah wants to teach diverse children's literature, however, she is unsure about how to do so and feels challenged by potential roadblocks of access and availability to diverse literature texts. On one hand, Sarah, appears to be constricted by her cooperating teacher and her classroom library of leveled, mainstream, trade books; and she appears to be powerless in her ability to teach outside of the behaviorist ways modeled in her SYOSP. On another hand, Sarah appears to teach literacy from the behaviorist framework modeled by her cooperating teacher and her mother and other fifth-grade teachers around her (in-person and online platforms and groups) through/within teacher cultura, and she relies on reading packets, reading assessments, and leveled-readers to teach reading.

As a teacher educator, Sarah's narrative provides me with a better understanding of where to begin teaching preservice teachers with similar experiences about critical literacy and diverse children's literature. Given Sarah's connection to reading as a "favorite," I could encourage her to use it as a way to help her own students to come to feel similarly. In addition to learning about literature as a tool for teaching and learning, Sarah learned that literature was enjoyable - when the stories read (by or to her) provided an opportunity for her to see herself and her experiences reflected back. In teaching literature, PSTs can draw on this example and work to create teaching and learning experiences for their students with literature that reflects the experiences and cultures of themselves. Therefore, students of color and diverse cultural

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backgrounds need to have literature written by and about themselves taught to them. The absence of literature as windows to the world of cultures and experiences outside of one's own experience by Sarah, speaks to the need for not only providing PSTs with resources on how to find and select materials but also to the need for teacher educators and cooperating teachers to model teaching diverse children's literature. Teaching diverse children's literature is not situational. Neither is teaching diverse children's literature only for children of a certain culture. Teaching diverse children's literature requires that teachers view and teach literature as mirrors, windows and sliding glass doors (Sims Bishop, 1990). In so doing, students begin to see and know literacy as social because "literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection we can see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience" (Sims Bishop, 1990, p. ix).

This inquiry into Sarah's *stories to live by* (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) around literacy and children's literature and their teaching has helped me to revisit and rethink how I teach critical literacy and diverse children's literature in the future. Through my review and interpretation of Sarah's stories, I have come to realize that absent from my instruction of diverse children's literature with Sarah, were modeled examples of critical literacy teaching. In my teaching diverse children's literature, I provided many resources on where to find and select diverse children's literature. However, I failed to provide students, especially Sarah, with opportunities to see and do critical literacy teaching. In future design of courses on teaching diverse children's literature, I need to provide explicit instruction on critical literacy and diverse children's literature - what it is and why/how it is taught along with providing opportunities for PSTs to both plan and teach lessons from a critical literacy framework alongside having space to reflect on what went well and what did not in their implementation of the lessons. In so doing,

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provides me, as the teacher educator, with opportunity to learn with and from PSTs about what they understand and where they have questions and require support. Beginning with where and how the PST understands literacy and children's literature is recommended as each PST brings their own understanding and knowledge to the teaching of any subject. Teacher educators, similarly wanting to teach diverse children's literature courses from a critical literacy framework could use my research narrative on Sarah as a way to identify potential places to begin and work from.

Research into PSTs' *stories to live by* (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) within a narrative inquiry framework has enabled me to inquire with the participant across time and place, in multiple directions around decisions that they make/made about teaching literacy and children's literature. Through analysis and interpretation of PSTs' stories, researchers are able to learn about the various sites and forms of influence on their teaching practice by holding still specific storied experiences. A limitation of this type of inquiry is that there are many potential sites and forms of influence as well as practices not addressed by participants. For example, Sarah's stories do not include any specifics about critical literacy and its teaching because it was not part of her shared stories. Additionally, specific diverse children's literature examples are not provided because, again, they were absent from Sarah's stories. My interpretation and retelling within this inquiry cover Sarah's stories. Further research into other PSTs' stories could provide more on missing pieces and indicate additional areas that require teaching.

## Chapter V

NARRATIVE II: MARGIE'S CONSTRUCTIVIST TEACHING OF DIVERSE CHILDREN'S  
LITERATURE STORY**Abstract**

This narrative research text offers my interpretation and retelling of Margie's *stories to live by* (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) composed within a Labovian story structure (abstract, orientation, complicating actions, evaluation, resolution, and coda), and analyzed along three themes. My analysis and interpretation of Margie's stories revealed that she viewed literacy as *social practice*; she described this literacy teaching as *constructivist*; and she perceived *children's literature as diverse* – picturebooks and chapter books of varied genres. This research narrative provides teacher educators and educational researchers of literacy with insight into Margie's stories alongside space to consider how and why to structure and teach PSTs - especially those who similarly experience and teach literacy and literature as Margie - about critical literacy teaching diverse children's literature within elementary education contexts.

**Orientation (time, place, characters, situation)**

Margie is a white, female, preservice teacher (PST) and a senior-year elementary education major in the College of Education at a predominantly white institution (PWI) of higher learning in Midwestern United States. She is a non-traditional student who has taken online education courses and works part time to help pay for her education. Margie grew up in a predominantly white, rural town situated between the university and a major metropolitan city. Prior to attending college, Margie shared, "I stayed with... I knew everyone in my class, kindergarten through senior year... is just like the same group of us." Before pursuing a degree in elementary education at the current university, Margie considered other colleges and careers in

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event planning and social work. At one time, she even thought about following in her parents' footsteps and studied a career in agriculture. However, following working as an aid at a daycare facility, she "just fell in love with the kids and I was like I think this is what I'm actually meant to do." She first enrolled in the early childhood education (ECE) program but changed to elementary education because of conflicts with work and the ECE schedule. Margie shared that her changing to elementary education was "probably the best decision I made. I was in the same cohort for the whole semester and stuff and I really enjoyed that and enjoyed my experiences in the [program]." As an elementary education undergraduate student and preservice teacher (PST), Margie took four literacy methods courses – the last of which was a course on teaching diverse children's literature taken prior to the inquiry, and instructed by elementary education literacy faculty.

At the time of the inquiry, Margie was a PST at her chosen senior year onsite placement (SYOSP) in her hometown elementary school. About choosing to return home to student teach she shared,

I wanted to come back home, just because it was gonna be my fifth year and I wouldn't be able to work, so I was like "Well, I can live at home and save money on rent. I might like the smaller school better." And then, ended up I got to go back home and COVID hits and I was like well that was perfect for me. But no, I really enjoyed my placement.

At first, I thought it was to be weird going back because those teachers that are there now were my teachers, except for one. Sounds like this might be a little awkward. Like I don't know how it's going to be, but no, it's been really, really well.

As Margie shared about her experience of returning home as a student teacher with her former elementary school teachers and feeling awkward initially but realizing that it did not, reminded



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me of my own return home to my high school district to teach as a media specialist and teaching alongside some of my former teachers. Awkwardness – perceived or realized – around the return to childhood place as a professional can be challenging. It is encouraging that in both Margie’s and my experience it was neither negative nor challenging and instead teachers were supportive and the return worked out “really well.”

On the “teacher trading card” artifact shared with me earlier in the inquiry, Margie indicated that she did not have a preferred grade-level to teach but she would like to teach in any grade between 2<sup>nd</sup> through 4<sup>th</sup> if given the choice following student teaching. Margie’s student teaching was done in a third-grade classroom with a cooperating teacher who is the mom of a friend of hers from grade-school. When asked about “What do you want students to learn in/through your literacy (ELA) classes?” Margie replied, “Reading is fun! It opens up a whole new world.” When sharing about her SYOSP classroom makeup and teaching literacy, she said

My classes are all white people and so reading a book that is completely different from their culture is something that I would like have a conversation with them about. Like you know, like there’s a whole different world out there, outside of our small community. And so, just letting them kind of see and hear the different lives of other children around the world, and what kind of happens with them.

As a student teacher, and over the course of the inquiry, Margie read several diverse children’s literature titles with her students through read alouds and discussion. She spoke of wanting to expose her students to reading as fun and space for discussion and “deeper and more complex” exploration and learning about cultures and communities outside of theirs. Some of Margie’s favorite books to read and teach were “mysteries and stories based on real events.”

### **Complicating Actions (plotlines, themes) & Evaluation**

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***Margie's Theme #1: Literacy as Reading, Writing, and Social***

During our first interview, Margie shared about an understanding of literacy – similar to Sarah, another PST participant – centered around books and said,

So, my understanding would just kind of be like the book some students are reading and books that you introduced to your students, the different kinds of books that you introduced to your students, the different kinds of books that you have in your classroom library and what you're... what kind of books you're exposing students to.

As the researcher, I was interested in learning about how such an understanding of literacy informs Margie's chosen way to teach literacy and children's literature. In order for me to learn more about how Margie was understanding literacy beyond books, I posed more guiding questions to her about reading and writing and its teaching and learning. Her responses illustrated an understanding of literacy that was situated somewhere between methodical and social underpinnings.

When asked to share about memorable literacy moments from her childhood, Margie spoke of,

Growing up and stuff, my parents read to me. My grandparents read to me. We're a big like Ag people, so, like farm books and stuff. But um, I do really remember probably third, fourth grade really loving *Magic Tree House* and *Junie B Jones*. Those would be kind of like the first chapter books, my first books of well... like I really love the series that I got into.

For Margie, *Magic Tree House* (Osbourne) series books provided the opportunity to travel “to the different places” and “experience all these different things that happened, [and] that just kind of like drew me to it” during her childhood. During student teaching in her SYOSP, Margie

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shared “I still love learning about [different kinds of history and what’s happened], and my class read something about the Ice Age in a Magic Tree House Book, and I was like well tell me about it, like what happened? And what were they doing? And now I think it’s just like that kind of aspect that I really like.”

When Margie spoke of the experiences of learning to read and reading from childhood, she mentioned that she did not have much of a memory about learning to read and thought that was because she did not remember ever struggling with reading. She explained that for her “reading came pretty naturally.” Most of the reading Margie did and enjoyed throughout earlier childhood was “lighthearted” in nature and included books in series like *Junie B. Jones* (Park, 1992-2013) and *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* (Heffley, 2007-2021). Reading instruction from her childhood involved learning a lot about phonics and how to decode words. She recalled enjoying reading and writing in the lower grades, and by high school she said, “I kind of lost the reading [and] it wasn’t until college I got back into it.” Margie enjoyed writing poems and other creative forms of writing in the second and third grades, but did not enjoy it any more in the fifth and sixth grades. She did not have any difficulty with writing, she just grew uninterested in what she described as competing with classmates to do the best writing. Through our first interview I listened to Margie’s stories around literacy to help me paint a picture of how she was understanding it and would teach it. I began to hear and see literacy through Margie’s childhood literacy understanding and experiences as methodical – involving reading and writing specifically.

A shift toward understanding literacy as social practice appears to have happened during her student teaching of literacy. Such an understanding of literacy involved thinking of literacy as inclusive of social practices or “particular ways of doing and being as well as particular ways

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of acting and talking that are rooted in life experiences” (Vasquez, Egawa, Harste, & Thompson, 2004, p. xi). Vasquez et al. (2004) contend that “conceptualizing literacy as social practices further implies that different cultures value and have access to different literacies or malleable sets of cultural practices, that is, a community’s ways of being and doing” (p. xi). In her teaching literacy, Margie teaches from an understanding that her classroom community of white students in rural, Midwestern United States has their own culture and ways of being and doing but theirs is not the only way. She teaches diverse children’s literature to teach literacy as social practice to her students and expose them to multiple ways that communities around the country and world live and learn.

### ***Margie’s Theme #2: Literacy Teaching as Constructivist***

Margie’s literacy teaching could be described as constructivist. “From a constructivist viewpoint, learning occurs when individuals integrate new knowledge with existing knowledge” (Tracey & Morrow, 2017, p. 56) and involves the three components of: internalized learning, hypothesis testing, and inferencing. Around hypothesis testing in her literacy teaching Margie shares about, “we kind of come up with plans together... and like okay like let’s try this or okay, maybe we could do this instead.” Within her teaching *Red Pencil* (Pinkney, 2014), for example, Margie provides space for her students to use inferencing or “reading between the lines” (Tracey & Morrow, 2017, p. 56) and to figure out what it might be like for a child of a different country to experience life and school. Through group conversations about different cultural practices alongside the reading of the book, students are provided with space to make inferences about what the story is really about. Margie shared that she poses “guiding questions, but then sometimes I’ll just read a page and I’m like oh, that’s something really different” and allow

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space for students to make meaning on their own through connections – text to self, text to world, or text to text.

Margie’s literacy teaching involved many interactive read alouds. About teaching with interactive read alouds she shared, “I’m all for read alouds. I try and maybe do a text that would be harder for them to read, but easy to like understand if I read it to them.” Before reading the book with her students she shared about reading the book first to “make sure they’re, you know, appropriate.” During interactive read alouds, Margie provides space for the book to be read together and then students can use context clues and illustrations to help with meaning making around the text.

Margie’s literacy teaching was constructivist, but not transformative. By this I mean that her literacy teaching lacked space for transformative thinking. Margie, in her literacy teaching, selects, reads, discusses and learns about persons and cultures different from hers and her students through diverse children’s literature texts in terms of binaries: same and different, black and white, us and them, compare and contrast. Absent is teaching of the experiences of others without comparison. The stories she teaches with (i.e., *Red Pencil* and *Out of Hiding*) teach of what she describes as “sad things” that happen to people other than persons like her and her students and their community. The stories tell about places and spaces, past and present day that are foreign in many ways for Margie. She shared about the literature they read and said,

*The Red Pencil* it’s something that happened in a different country, something that I like wasn’t really aware of. So, like, I learned something new and then same thing with like all the books about the Holocaust and stuff like that. I like... you know, I wasn’t alive during that time so it’s a way for me to kind of like learn about it as well.

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How could Margie work to move both herself and her students away from the windowed view of diverse literature and their stories, towards more of a sliding glass door whereby she and her students could step into the experiences of the persons they are reading about and actually take time to consider potential actions or transformation (i.e., changed ways of thinking, knowing, and doing in relation to their new understanding and or experience)?

### ***Margie's Theme # 3: Children's Literature as Diverse***

The students of Margie's SYOSP are white students of agrarian and working-class families. Many of the students at her school have not traveled outside their hometown, except to visit the nearby city to attend a sporting event. Margie saw and teaches children's literature as a window out to the world around them that is made up of people who do not look, believe and/or live as they do. Margie, with an understanding of literature's ability to as Rudine Sims Bishop (1990) shared, "help them understand the multicultural nature of the world they live in, and their place as a member of just one group, as well as connections to all other humans" (p. ix), chooses to teach diverse children's literature. Some of the diverse children's literature titles she chose to teach her third grade students are: *The Last Fifth-grade of Emerson Elementary* (Shovan, 2016) a novel in verse about differing thoughts around whether or not to tear down a school, *The Red Pencil* (Pinkney, 2014) a realistic fiction verse novel about a young girl named Amira's pursuit of a dream to one day go to school despite insurmountable odds, and *Out of Hiding: A Holocaust Survivor's Journey to America* (Gruener, 2020) is the story of a young Jewish girl and her family's immigration into the United States following the trauma of World War II. Reading and discussing books like these offered Margie's students opportunities to learn about the experiences of other children and cultures while making connections and as Sims Bishop (1990) shared, "see [their] own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience" (p. ix).

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In teaching diverse children’s literature, Margie used a Book Madness reading activity that is designed after and coincides with college basketball’s March Madness. During the Book Madness activity, Margie identified the,

top 16 [picturebooks] and I made the brackets and stuff and every day we would... I just had one of the books, but we would watch them on YouTube and like compete against each other, and then like the classes would vote and then I would tally up the votes and I had like an actual bracket.

Through her use of technology (i.e., YouTube videos as texts), Margie demonstrated her willingness to find ways of bringing into her classroom and reading children’s literature that she did not have direct access to. She shared, “I’ll just pull it up on the SMART Board and YouTube and just show it.” The Book Madness activity allowed space for Margie’s students to experience diverse children’s literature within a real-life situation or purpose. Margie’s teaching with the Book Madness activity further demonstrates her constructivist teaching practice – students learn about brackets and voting and tallying indirectly through completing the activities and competing with other classes. Her students read and had read to them several diverse children’s literature texts, held discussions, and then voted on books that they liked.

The Book Madness diverse children’s literature titles and brackets were displayed prominently in the third-grade hallway. Margie shared pictures of the hallway displays with me as artifacts – photos via email. Teachers in Margie’s grade-level team shared with each other and parents – tweets about the chosen diverse children’s literature texts, their reading, and bracket predictions on Twitter. The “Final Four” books included, *The Man Who Walked Between the Towers* (Gerstein, 2003), *Your Name is a Song* (Thompkins-Bigelow, 2020), *The Oldest Student: How Mary Walker Learned to Read* (Hubbard, 2020), and *Mother Jones and Her Army*

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of Mill Children (Winter, 2020); and it was Gerstein's picturebook that was awarded the title of "2021 Book of the Year" by the third-graders of Margie's SYOSP. All of the literature read with and by students provided them with window views of the world – its diverse peoples, cultures, practices, names, beliefs, experiences, etc.

When selecting reading material for her students, Margie shared about following the traditional or more methodical criteria of making sure that the books: were grade-level appropriate; relevant and up-to-date; have a good storyline; could help with their development of fluency, as well as, she shares, "I want the stories to actually have meaning to them finding like that they can see themselves as that character and what can they relate to what can like they kind of compare it to." Margie uses diverse children's literature as a tool for, what Flores et al. (2019) share is, "for learning literacy instructional practices (i.e., writing instruction, reading instruction), as well as for "learning sociocultural knowledge (i.e., culture; race and ethnicity)" (p. 227). Such use of literature was not something that Margie had herself experienced as a child and student learner.

For Margie, as a PST, her work involved expanding the traditional literary canon that existed in her childhood school. Part of her work was being done within her own classroom space/place with considerations made about providing books that offer engagement and interest in reading, as well as opportunities for learning about selves and others. Margie was also thinking about this work of expanding the canon and providing more current literature for her students within the school at large. Margie mentioned that the school's library "it's like not huge, a lot of our books are older, which I don't know if they may be getting a grant or something to get like new books." Though she did not mention if she would be working on the grant, I was encouraged by her mention of thoughts around the library, expansion of its holdings to include



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more diverse children's literature, and its ability to better support her, her students, and the school's reading and learning. Classrooms do not exist on islands or within isolated spaces; classrooms and their communities are part of the larger school community along with school libraries. Teachers do not teach in isolation either; or benefit along with their students from access to materials afforded by up-to-date school libraries. Margie has a good grasp on selecting and teaching with diverse children's literature. However, what Margie does not share about, and appears to be absent from her teaching is a critical literacy frame.

### **Resolution (outcome of the plotlines) & Coda (bringing the action back to the present)**

In thinking of ways to engage Margie in critical teaching practice – teaching with diverse children's literature towards transformation. I am reminded of Hill's (2012) study done with her elementary education student Jennifer around critical literacy teaching through literature-based engagement. Hill suggested that teacher educators provide PSTs with instruction on how to build on their teaching with diverse children's literature texts and provide ways for students to interrogate multiple viewpoints around the text. She shared the example of using expository texts alongside the narrative text. An example of this could involve Margie's teaching about the Holocaust and the experiences of children which would include *Out of Hiding: A Holocaust Survivor's Journey* (Gruener, 2020) along with multiple texts like those which can be found on websites U.S. Holocaust Museum: <https://www.ushmm.org/collections/bibliography/children> or University of West Florida Libraries: Holocaust Resources for Children <https://libguides.uwf.edu/holocaustchildren>. Within the teaching and learning about child experiences during the Holocaust would be space for focus on sociopolitical issues and discussion about how Margie and her students could work towards acting against not repeating similar atrocities.

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Critical literacy work involves, “focus on social issues, such as race, class, or gender; and the ways in which we use language and images to shape our understanding of these issues. As such part of this work should involve making sense of the sociopolitical systems through which such issues play out and through which we live our lives and also questioning these systems” (Vasquez, 2017, p. 4). Children’s literature within the comprehension and reading strategy development view of literacy could provide students/readers with information about persons who both looked and lived like themselves or differently from themselves without encouraging students/readers towards change or transformation - tolerance. Within Margie’s teaching diverse children’s literature, this assertion holds true; her students read and had read to them multiple diverse children’s literature texts, yet they did not consider movement towards transformation or change. Margie’s use of diverse literature was to support the teaching and learning of her students in the areas of reading and comprehension explains her reference to reading at grade-level, interest, and engagement when sharing about her literature selection process.

Although Margie did teach diverse children’s literature – the discussions were geared towards determining student comprehension more so than talking about social justice and experiences of persons of different cultures/cultural practices. Absent from Margie’s stories was evidence of teaching with literature to address the three focus areas raised by Flores et al. (2019) around sociocultural and transformative literacy pedagogies of: using children’s literature to build understandings about culture (e.g., Heineke, 2014; Riley & Crawford-Garrett, 2016); using children’s literature to build understandings about race and ethnicity specifically (e.g., Mosley & Rogers, 2011; Haddix & Price-Dennis, 2013); and using children’s literature as a way to learn broader transformational pedagogies (p. 223).

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When speaking about selecting reading materials for her students, Margie shared about being torn between using culturally diverse reading material and using more mainstream children's literature, and said,

And so, I was like that'd be a really good book for them to kind of learn, and maybe kind of relate to a little bit or you know compare and contrast. But then, sometimes I'm like well, they should just have like a fun book that's for them to enjoy, so I think I'm still trying to figure that one out. Because I personally really like realistic stuff but then sometimes, I'm like okay, it can't all just be like...because *Red Pencil* (Pinkney, 2014) is kind of about a war and then *Out of Hiding* (Gruener, 2020) was also about the Holocaust, so those are two kind of like sad things, so I'm like I need to have something that is joyful, that has a happy ending. So that, yeah we're still trying to find that balance in those books that would be good for that.

Two words from what Margie says, when placed together, stand out, "sad reality." These words cause me to question: Do the real(ized) stories of historically marginalized persons always seem sad? When students are only given the space to "compare and contrast" BIPOC stories alongside their white stories of privilege and relatively carefree and joyful lives they might feel that way about stories that offer less than what they are familiar with. What if their teacher did not (re)present the stories in such a way? Could their teacher do the work of (re)presenting when they themselves felt this way about non-white persons and their experiences?

Through this inquiry, I have learned that for many PSTs and undergraduate student teachers of literacy, like Margie, the diverse literature course was the first time/place that they learned about diverse children's literature that functions as a tool for teaching and learning sociocultural knowledge and transformative pedagogies, alongside considering children's

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literature as mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors (Sims Bishop, 1990), and learning about different ways of teaching with children's literature. Margie was not one of my students for the course on diverse children's literature, though she was taught by an instructor who used similar texts for teaching diverse literature for children. All course instructors did not teach from/within the same frame (i.e., critical literacy), ideology or philosophy. It is possible that the instruction that Margie received focused more on the selection and teaching of diverse children's literature and less on ways of teaching literacy from/within a critical literacy framework.

Redesign of curriculum and instruction in the area of critical literacy education, following Margie's narrative as a guide, involves: continued teaching and learning with PSTs around the critical selection and use of diverse children's literature which represents authentic, accurate stories of culturally diverse characters; teaching PSTs about culturally relevant literacy teaching pedagogy – inclusive of consideration of how culturally and historically responsive literacy teaching (Muhammad, 2020) might aid the teaching of PSTs to be more transformational in their literacy teaching practices. From the narrative inquiry into Margie's stories of teaching literacy with diverse children's literature, I have come to realize that the missing piece from Margie's understanding and teaching literacy and diverse children's literature was consciousness. In my future teaching of courses on critical literacy and diverse children's literature, teaching would involve space for PSTs to challenge their students and themselves to work on consciousness and recognize oppression and its constraints on everyone, regardless of race, creed, or culture/cultural practice whilst recognizing and working on their own identities (Freire & Macedo, 1987). If I, as a teacher educator of literacy from a critical literacy frame, hope to see many of the PSTs, like Margie, take on oppression and teach to transform and not just tolerate, then I need to explicitly teach them how to do so.

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## Chapter VI

NARRATIVE III: ROSALIE'S BEHAVIORIST TEACHING OF LITERACY & CHILDREN'S  
LITERATURE STORY**Abstract**

This narrative research text offers my interpretation and retelling of Rosalie's *stories to live by* (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) composed within a Labovian story structure (abstract, orientation, complicating actions, evaluation, resolution, and coda), and analyzed along three themes. My analysis and interpretation of Rosalie's stories revealed that she viewed *literacy as a method* for teaching reading and writing; she described this *literacy teaching as behaviorist*; and she perceived using *children's literature as teaching tools*. This inquiry provides teacher educators and educational researchers of literacy with space to consider how and why to structure and teach PSTs like Rosalie about critical literacy teaching diverse children's literature within elementary education contexts.

**Orientation (times, places, characters, situations)**

Rosalie is a white, female, senior-year, preservice teacher in the undergraduate, elementary education program at a predominantly white institution of higher learning (PWI) in the Midwestern United States. She has a sister and a younger brother, and is the daughter of a mother and father all of whom she lived with prior to attending college. Rosalie grew up in a predominantly white, middle-class, suburban, quasi-rural community in the same Midwestern state where she currently attends college. A part of Rosalie's childhood literacy experience included learning how to live with selective mutism. "Selective mutism is a severe anxiety disorder where a person is unable to speak in certain social situations, such as with classmates at school or to relatives they do not see very often" (National Health Service, [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)). Rosalie

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is a former student, who took two classes with me: a literacy methods course on teaching diverse literature for children and youth that I taught the semester prior to her participating in the inquiry, and an earlier course on reading methods and contexts. Rosalie voluntarily participated in this inquiry and shared her experiences and understandings around literacy, teaching literacy, children's literature and its teaching. At the time of the inquiry, Rosalie was a student teacher at her chosen Senior-Year Onsite Placement (SYOSP) – a local, predominantly white, public elementary school located near the college campus in a first-grade classroom with a cooperating teacher. Rosalie is a self-described teacher from early on during her childhood. While student teaching and participating in this inquiry, Rosalie also babysat a first-grader from her SYOSP from time-to-time.

On the “teacher trading card” artifact Rosalie noted some of her “wants” around teaching literacy and shared, “I want students to have a strong foundation in all of the Big Five aspects of literacy, plus writing. I want my classroom to be structured, yet flexible with high expectations and high support. I want all my students to know that I care about them as learners, but also as people.” On the topic of preferred children's literature, Rosalie said

Honestly, I enjoy the books the kids enjoy most, so that will vary from year to year. I think there is something teachable in every book, so I prefer to read what they enjoy. This year, it is *Junie B. Jones* (Park, 1992-2013).

### **Complicating Actions (plotlines, themes) & Evaluation**

#### ***Rosalie's Theme #1: Literacy as Method: Big 5 & Writing***

In composing Rosalie's narrative around literacy, I explored stories she shared through interviews, conversations, artifacts and other field texts. Rosalie's stories around childhood literacy and literature took place across personal landscapes, and told of experiences she had at

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home and in school – kindergarten through 12th grade. Stories told across professional landscapes told of Rosalie's experience as an elementary education undergraduate student and preservice teacher (PST) through to her senior year of student teaching at her SYOSP. Our first interview opened with guiding questions around Rosalie's childhood experience with literacy and literature; the second interview covered the teaching of literacy; and the third interview covered children's literature. The first interview began with a question about how she defined literacy, to which she responded that she understood literacy as "language and communication," and "I see literacy as the Big 5 plus writing and incorporating those all together to create a reader." Rosalie's naming of the National Reading Panel's *Big 5* (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension) as integral to literacy and its teaching was very interesting to me as it provided a glimpse into her chosen way to teach literacy. She learned about the Big 5 as a key concept in one of her earlier elementary education literacy methods courses on reading methods and contexts. The Big 5 are the components of literacy education identified by the National Reading Panel (1997) as essential and effective methods for teaching reading following quantitative research into reading instruction. As I listened to Rosalie's stories around literacy told across personal practical knowledge landscapes of her childhood, I heard about her as a communicator with selective mutism alongside stories about reading to her mother (an education major), and began to better understand her defining literacy and choosing to focus on mechanical and methodical aspects of reading and writing and its teaching in lieu of other methods taught across the PST professional landscape.

From an early age Rosalie understood literacy to be methodical and encompassing the components of the Big 5. Rosalie's brother would serve as her first student of literacy. She was only in the seventh or eighth grade and she took on the role of his reading teacher. She stated,

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I was the first one to try to teach him how to read. Giving him, this book and you know reading it with him or to him and because he had practiced the sounds of the letters and everything. So, I was, like pointing to the words and like doing the sounds in each word and having him like put them together. He was so little. [It] went way over his head. But it was like... It's cringing to look back at because those words were so big in the books, I was trying to get him to read. [They] were so hard, with the complex letter combinations and all of that. I'm like, oh man.

Hearing Rosalie share about her teaching her brother to read with such detail prompted me to ask her about whether, and where she had seen such teaching modeled. To which she replied,

My mom was... early childhood education, that was her... that's her degree. I just, I don't know, I've always had the want to teach everybody. Like, I would go downstairs, and we'd play teacher all the time; and again, I was the one teaching my little brother math like just for fun. Like addition and subtraction and yeah, I don't know... my mom obviously, with her background in early childhood, she had that knowledge um... But, yeah, I don't know. It just kind of happened, I guess. I don't know.

Although Rosalie does not name her mother as an influence on her understanding of literacy and teaching literacy, I believe that her mention of her mother as a person who similarly studied education serves as an indication that her mother may have been an influence on her way of understanding and teaching literacy along with wanting to and becoming a teacher herself.

Without knowing much about her mom's style of teaching and if she ever taught, I am unable to say for certain whether or not she was an influence on Rosalie. Although, based on my understanding of cultura (Anzaldúa, 2015) as, "the fabric of life that the scissors of previous generations cut, trimmed, embroidered, embellished, and attached to new quilt pieces, but it is



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the cloth that the wash of time discolors, blends the dyes, and applies new tints” (p. 85), I believe that Rosalie may indeed be cut from the same cloth as her mother though she has put her own spin on teaching.

Rosalie’s stories about teaching during her childhood moved me to ask about what she remembered about her own learning of reading and writing. I was interested in hearing about “how do you remember learning or what do you remember about that experience?” To which she replied,

One of the first things I remember doing was... I actually still have it somewhere, I don’t know where it is... but I created this little book thing, and it was... it had like pictures from the computer that I like designed or whatever, and I wanted to write something on it. I can’t remember what I wanted to write on it, but the only thing I knew how to spell was my name. And so, what I did is I started writing my name and then just wrote random letters after it because I didn’t know what sounds because my mom was busy doing something else, and she couldn’t tell me what all the letters were right at the time, and so I took it upon myself to just write. And so, I remember that um... I remember always wondering. This was... this is random, always wondering why the I was upside down in an exclamation point. I remember writing lists for my parents. And it was a lot of writing. And the first thing I remember about reading was when I was in first grade, and my mom would come into the classroom or just another parent or whatever and pull us out and record us on like a tape thing. I’m reading a story or a book, and then that would be turned back into the teacher and the teacher could assess it. I’m pretty sure that’s how it all went. Um yeah, I don’t know... that’s tough, because I don’t... I don’t remember learning how to read specifically. I just remember doing it.

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As I listened to Rosalie's story about learning to read and write, several details stood out. One thing that stood out was her mother's presence. Though she did not mention that her mother was a teacher at her childhood school; she does mention that her mom was the person who would pull her out of class to read. Though reading to the teacher was anxiety inducing for Rosalie, reading to her mother was not. Rosalie's mom would pull her out of class to record her reading passages. Another detail that stood out from her earliest recollection of learning to read was how detailed the story was around what she did (i.e., sounding out letters and writing lists, and tape recordings). However, missing from her story was mention of what she read or why she was being pulled out to read. The story or reading passage appears as being of less significance for Rosalie than the act of reading itself. Rosalie shared that she enjoyed reading as a child, and she mentioned that,

It was the accomplishment of it, like, I remember um reading my first chapter book and being done with it... and super quick. I called my mom. She was actually in the hospital with my brother like giving birth to him, and I remember calling her. I'm like, mom I just finished my first chapter book, because I was just waiting at home with my grandparents, and she was you know... I think it was just the accomplishment for me. And then, as I got older, it was more of the content of the story, and you know the interesting parts of it, and I was more into things that were not real life, but it seemed like it could be.

As Rosalie grew older, her taste in books may have changed some, but her feelings of accomplishment around reading books (i.e., reading for content) remained – shifting towards feelings of successfully reading and testing about books that she had read. Although Rosalie found the act of reading and completing various chapter books to be enjoyable, she did not like taking the required tests about the books she had read and she shared,

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I remember, I had to do like an AR test. So, I have to go on and take a test to get points and I had to get so many points by the end of the quarter or semester, whatever. I hated it because I felt like it was forced and I don't know... it did get me to read, it did, but I don't know... I don't know if I would be as proficient of a reader as I am now if I hadn't done those things. Like just out of practice, over and over again, but I hated them at the moment.

Listening to Rosalie's response around reading and testing suggested an internal conflict she had with the Accelerated Reading program she was required to participate in as a child, and she now retrospectively sees or thinks about the benefits she believes it afforded her as a reader – reading more and becoming more proficient as a reader. When it comes to literacy, be it the teaching or learning of reading and writing, Rosalie when asked to provide me with one word to describe her experiences she had had, she stated, “thorough.” The act of being thorough has everything to do with mechanics and method. By this, I mean that it appears as though Rosalie's experience and understanding around literacy and its teaching has involved literacy as a method: reading and writing following the components of the Big 5 (NPR, 1997) plus writing. Such an understanding of literacy undoubtedly informed her teaching of literacy as behaviorist.

### ***Rosalie's Theme #2: Literacy Teaching as Behaviorist***

Within a behaviorist frame, reading is understood as a way of learning made up of component parts and its teaching or instruction becomes mastery of these components. The teaching of reading from this framework often involves direct instruction and reading readiness. “In direct instruction, teachers explicitly focus children's attention on specific reading concepts, such as phonics, vocabulary, and comprehension skills, and provide information to students about those skills. Often direct instruction emphasizes discrete skills and subskills perceived as

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necessary for students' reading success" (Tracey & Morrow, 2017, p. 48). As mentioned earlier, Rosalie tends to favor more of a methodical style of teaching with focus and attention on specific reading concepts (i.e., Big 5). Her chosen style of teaching appears to stem from her early childhood experiences with teaching her brother to read and her learning to read from her mother and elementary teachers with a focus on very systematic and methodical actions of sounding things out, labeling, and assessments of ability. During our second interview, I asked Rosalie to tell me about her teaching experience as a PST in SYOSP, interested in learning how she chose to teach literacy.

Rosalie began by describing her student teaching as systematic and involving "a gradual step into your role type of thing" where she "would take on one subject at a time, here and there, and we [she and her cooperating teacher] would do it as a team, and then it was all mine, and then now we're feeding back out." It was a team-teaching effort – her and her cooperating teacher. For the teaching of reading, Rosalie and her cooperating teacher worked with students in groups – reading lesson groups and book club groups. They began with five, but at the time of the inquiry there were four book club groups. "For the book clubs, we [select reading materials] based on like DRA level, um and so, we have a huge range honestly, because first grade has a pretty big range anyway, and so we kind of grouped kids based on them." To determine students' Developmental Reading Assessment or DRA level and their respective book club group, Rosalie gave students an individual reading assessment wherein she shared, "they just came one at a time out into the hallway and I screened, and I read, and I asked them questions, and then I made a prediction on what level they would be. And then my host teacher said, 'Oh, I agree with you, or I don't agree with you,' she agreed with me and then based on those levels we group them

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together.” The DRA is a series of leveled books and recording sheets designed to allow teachers to determine students’ reading accuracy, fluency, and comprehension levels.

Rosalie described the grouping of students in book clubs as “fluid” and “not something you know super strict” which allowed them to move between groups. Following the initial assessments, their first-grade classroom had students who were reading on a Kindergarten level, first-grade level, and second-grade level. DRA leveled texts were selected based on the student groups and offered students a variety of leveled fiction and nonfiction texts. Rosalie added, “A lot of our kiddos go to interventions in the afternoon, so they don’t get science or social studies. So, this past week, I really thought about that, when I was choosing the books for those two groups, because I think, I mean, those two groups for the most part, all leave, and so I did... like a providing services book and saving money book just to kind of tie in the social studies, a little bit, even if that’s not exactly what we were working on in social studies, just to give them a little something, because they miss it for interventions.” Upon hearing this last statement from Rosalie, my heart dropped a bit – it almost seems as though these students, because of their assessed reading level, were being short changed, provided solely the opportunity to hear and learn from a select few texts based on their DRA level that don’t even have to be as Rosalie shared, “what we were working on.”

Rosalie’s storied experiences around teaching literacy in SYOSP appeared to be behaviorist, but I was still curious about whether or not this was the way that Rosalie chose to teach literacy. How did Rosalie feel about this type of teaching – grouping by DRA level and only sharing texts that were on level with students? What would Rosalie’s teaching of literacy look like beyond student teaching? To find out the answer to these questions, I asked Rosalie to tell me about a favorite teacher of literacy from her childhood. Such stories of teachers viewed in

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a positive light would serve as sites of information for Rosalie about how she could emulate favored and memorable ways of teaching. She shared about Mrs. Atkinson, her 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade teacher. Having the same teacher for the two successive grades was a practice that was “just standard at our school, you had the same teachers for seventh and either grade. You just kind of switched classes around a little bit.” It allowed Rosalie to develop a relationship with her teacher.

Rosalie described Mrs. Atkinson as someone who,

She was also just so excited about the most boring things, and that’s terrible to say, but like who wants to teach middle schoolers about sentence structure and prepositions and nouns and verbs and all that stuff? Just think... that is... that’s brutal, I think. But she just made it so fun, and I just remember always laughing in her class. And actually, my award at the end of the year from her was best smile, because I was just always so happy in her class. And she just made it fun, and she would laugh and make jokes, but she knew when to get serious, and she made it very structured, but also very like flexible and fluid.

When describing herself as a future teacher, Rosalie appears to have borrowed pieces of teacher cultura from Mrs. Atkinson and has woven these pieces into her own future teacher identity and culture, and mentions,

I definitely think I want to be playful and fun and exciting and know when to be serious. Like when things need to be done, they need to be done and that’s the first and foremost priority, you know they got to learn. But you know... I feel like being fun and making things exciting and doing all of those things will just enhance it and make it better. And I think the knowledge and content will stick better because I still remember how we marked up sentences and made sentence frames. I still remember all of it. And she’s saying, like a song, to help us remember every single preposition and I could probably

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still sing it if I thought about it for a second. Like yeah. So, I think getting content across and being very structured and explicit with instruction but also providing flexibility in the fun, and obviously relationships are a huge part of that too.

From Rosalie's stories about literacy and her chosen way of teaching literacy, I interpreted it as behaviorist. Beginning with her understanding of literacy as methodical and inclusive of Big 5 plus writing components, all of Rosalie's stories around literacy and its teaching were composed of more structural and methodical parts (i.e., teaching phonics, vocabulary, fluency, sentence structure, etc.). Who, what and how around literacy and its teaching, specifically reading, were all shaped by her childhood and grade-school experiences towards teaching in structured ways based on assessed ability with appropriate and leveled texts as tools to teach with determination through assessments.

### ***Rosalie's Theme #3: Children's Literature as Teaching Tools***

Throughout her stories about teaching literacy during student teaching in SYOSP, Rosalie's sharing about children's literature has been mostly as tools for teaching. An example of this can be heard when she told about reading stories from the literacy unit and curriculum:

Lately, it's been a lot about... we've been reading like folktales and stuff that's kind of what we're on right now. And so, there's a lesson like per week per story that we've done that has talked about the central message. There was one about a turtle grew feathers and had a race or something with around it and the central message was we can count on our friends to do hard things and I mean that wasn't explicitly said in the text, but we could figure that out, based on you know the details in the story, and all that.

As Rosalie shared about teaching folktales to first-graders, again I heard less about the story itself and more about how the story is used as a teaching tool. From the aforementioned story,

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the focus was on having students identify and know the details in the story alongside figuring out what the basis of the story was. Again, I desired to hear more stories from Rosalie about children's literature before I would feel certain that I had a clear understanding about how she felt about it and would potentially teach it in the future. Rosalie enjoyed reading chapter books when she was younger and in grade school. I wondered if Rosalie had any favorite children's literature books and whether or not these books would be diverse children's literature texts or canonical texts favored by teachers.

The first chapter book that she describes as "one of her favorites," was *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane* (DiCamillo, 2006); it is considered a middle-grade or intermediate-level, fantasy, fiction literature text. Perhaps, this is why her mother was a little apprehensive to purchase the book for Rosalie from a school Book Fair when she was only in elementary school. Rosalie shared about the experience and said,

I was at the Book Fair one time, I think, I begged my mom for it, and she's like 'Rosalie, you can't read that yet. Like, why do you want that?' And it was one of the most expensive books at the Book Fair. And I kept begging and begging. Like this is only what I want. And I don't know why I just like the picture on the front cover. And so, she's...she finally gave in. And she read it. And it's actually been my favorite book since. So, yeah, I remember that one.

The second chapter book she mentioned was *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon* (Lin, 2009); it is a fantasy-adventure children's novel inspired by Chinese folklore.

My interpretation of Rosalie's stories around early childhood book favorites, speak of her liking and interest in books featuring fantasy and adventure stories. She mentioned during one of our interviews, "Oh gosh, what were some other ones that were my favorites? There were so



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many.” Though there were many books she considered her favorites, the ones that she could recall and spoke about the most – *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane* (DiCamillo, 2006) and *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon* (Lin, 2009) – both fall within the similar genre of fantasy-adventure children’s novels. Rosalie describes the genre of her favorite books as more of adventure stories. Though she is careful to point out, “it was not like an adventure book where there is like fighting and this and that and the other, because that was not me. It was more like traveling and journey through time and life.”

Both of Rosalie’s favorite children’s books offer stories of adventure and fantasy and provide *diversity* through differing characters and settings. Of the two, however, only *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon* by Grace Lin (2009) would be considered a *diverse children’s literature* text based on how I define the category. In my understanding, diverse children’s literature is akin to multicultural children’s literature of which Botelho and Rudman (2009) shared,

has been defined as literature by and about people of color. It is bound to the history of all literature and multicultural education, and tied to trends in publishing. It is linked politically to social movements to include underrepresented populations. In the United States, people of color were virtually invisible in children’s literature prior to the 1960’s. When they were rendered in text, for the most part, they were stereotypically represented. The literary category of multicultural children’s literature developed out of this historical and sociopolitical context (p. 73).

This distinction is important to make as I reflect on what Rosalie shared about questions on teaching with children’s literature. I remember asking her, “As a future teacher, what are some

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[books] you would really like to share with your students and are any of those some of the ones you just mentioned?” To which she responded:

Yeah, if I was teaching second grade or up, I would definitely, as a read aloud, do *Edward Tulane* or one like that. My mom came and actually read that story aloud when parents were allowed in the building. She came in and read that to, I think, all three of our classes – me, my brother, and my sister. Just as a guest reader and she’d come like once a week, and she read like two or three chapters, or something, and she actually read that in the second-grade classrooms and it was perfect. They all loved it. So, I would definitely read that one.

Regarding her other favorite book, the diverse children’s literature text she shared, “I don’t know. I feel like I would definitely have to look at age levels for *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon*.”

My interpretation of her responses here illuminated a safeness that Rosalie feels with sharing the *Edward Tulane* text with her students that is wrapped up in the familiarity that is provided by her mom’s reading and sharing of the text with several children in elementary school, including herself and her siblings. The story is one of toys – a China rabbit who is owned by a young and privileged white mistress in the 1930s until it meets with its demise and becomes separated from her. It goes on many adventures following the separation and learns a lot about self and selflessness, only to return to its mistress sometime later. In many ways, the story itself offers an equally safe story – it does not share a story of a once possession that becomes free, it shares a story of a once possession that experiences hardships when not with its mistress and is somehow changed and appreciative of what it lost once it has been returned.

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*Where the Mountain Meets the Moon* (Lin, 2010) offers readers a less safe story. It is a fantasy-adventure story about a person, instead of an inanimate object or animal, and their journeys. The protagonist of the story is a girl of color named Minli. The story, written from the perspective of a female, author of color, offers readers the opportunity to see a young girl of color serve as central to the adventure story and capable of pursuing her own destiny – encouraged by the stories shared by her father, she sets out to meet the Old Man of the Moon and learn how she can help to change the fate of her family.

### **Resolution (outcome of the plotlines) & Coda (bringing the action back to the present)**

I have learned a lot about teaching literacy and children’s literature through the analysis and interpretation of Rosalie’s *stories to live by* (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999). Specifically, Rosalie’s stories told of how she, as a PST, views herself as a reader and her fondness of structured reading and its instruction together influence the way that she chose to teach literacy. Through my composing of Rosalie’s research narrative on literacy and children’s literature many questions arose. One such question was: Could it be that Rosalie felt ill-prepared to share diverse children’s literature, especially with students whose cultural knowledge was like hers?

This question was posed in response to a comment Rosalie made when speaking about children’s literature, her selection of diverse children’s literature, and teaching with it at her Senior Year On-Site Program (SYOSP). She shared,

I think that that’s super important to have like we talked about, the windows and the mirrors. I think that’s so important. I absolutely loved that idea in class, and I’ve kept it ever since because I love it. And so, I feel like they need to bounce ideas off of each other. But also, like if I’m thinking about [where I am student teaching] where it’s not very culturally diverse or whatever. You know? I feel like branching out and exploring

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those [books]. And, knowing that we don't have all the answers and I don't have all the answers. It's going to come from somebody who actually is living it or lived it and explore as much as we can. But understand that we're not going to understand perfectly. As I reflect on what Rosalie said, I am struck by her statement that "it's going to come from somebody who actually is living it or lived it and explore as much as we can." I wonder how much is "as much as we can"? Can this be measured? If so, how much is enough?

For PSTs, like Rosalie, who see the student population at her student teaching SYOSP monolithically and mono-culturally and shared, "like if I'm thinking about [where I am student teaching] where it's not very culturally diverse or whatever," having the opportunity to learn about literacy education from a critical literacy framework could help to illuminate ways for her and other PSTs to disrupt such monolithic and monocultural thinking. Through learning about whiteness and identity alongside the selection of and teaching diverse children's literature from Janks' (2010, 2014) Interdependent Model for critical literacy, for example, PSTs could begin to address their teaching decisions towards thinking about how they could support students in teaching and learning about diverse experiences and understandings – even those not personally held.

Lohfink (2014) engaged PSTs in work like that which is described as potentially beneficial to Rosalie and her choosing to teach with more culturally relevant and inclusive materials with a critical literacy orientation or framing. Within Lohfink's teaching, PSTs engaged in planning and conducting multicultural read alouds with elementary school children and were asked to reflect on how the read alouds aided their understanding of self, diverse cultures, and their students. Lohfink's PSTs shared that they felt that multicultural read alouds supported their understanding of culturally responsive pedagogies, but Lohfink cautioned,

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“culturally responsive pedagogy is challenging for most novice and practicing teachers and will require more than one assignment in literacy methods courses to reflect effective implementation” (p. 45).

Rosalie, as a student in the method’s course on diverse children’s literature, shared read alouds of children’s literature with students at her SYOSP on more than one occasion; however, she was not required to read diverse children’s literature texts. Additionally, the reflections she was asked to do during the course were not designed to provide space for thinking around how the reading of multicultural or diverse children’s literature texts either aided or hindered her understanding of self and students and culture. The assigned reflections also did not provide her with the opportunity to engage in the critical literacy work of addressing power, diversity, access, and design/redesign as the Janks’s model requires of PSTs to help them to engage in critical literacy teaching practices. Perhaps, had she been given these opportunities, we may have heard a different story from Rosalie about her teaching of literacy and children’s literature - one that offered a critical literacy approach to teaching diverse children’s literature.

Through this inquiry and my interpretation of Rosalie’s *stories to live by* (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) alongside reflecting on the research done by other teacher educators and researchers on PSTs teaching of literacy with diverse children’s literature I have come to the following realizations: First, PSTs like Rosalie who may not have had prior experience with diverse children’s literature, need more than one course that can share and teach them about the many titles and authors. If possible, literature written by and about persons of color should be shared across the many methods courses taken by PSTs in the elementary education program. The critical teaching of literacy and diverse children’s literature should be modeled and PSTs should be given opportunities to critically teach diverse children’s literature both in-class and in-

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field. When teaching, PSTs and teachers will pull from their “teacher toolboxes” all of the knowledge and understanding collected and deemed necessary across knowledge landscapes around teacher cultura – ranging from childhood into adulthood, personal to professional. If the space and time spent on learning and teaching with diverse children’s literature is but a speck in the great expanse of their lived experiences and understanding, then it is not surprising that it does not show up, as was in Rosalie’s case, in their teaching with children’s literature.

Secondly, how PSTs are taught is often reflected in how they choose to teach. In Rosalie’s case, her past favorite childhood teacher and current cooperative teacher both modeled more methodical and behaviorist ways of teaching. They both focused on structured ways of teaching literacy with emphasis on assessments and measurements of reading ability and teaching with leveled readers or literature as teaching tools. A way to address this could be to design and teach PSTs methods courses from within a critical literacy framework, thereby introducing PSTs like Rosalie to teaching and learning of a social reconstructionist educational philosophy. Such a philosophy has its purpose to empower students to understand society, its roles in it, and their power to change it if necessary.

Thirdly, it is not enough for PSTs to learn about diverse children’s literature and teaching of reading and writing from a critical literacy frame in methods courses. If Rosalie had had the opportunity to practice learned skills around critical literacy teaching with diverse children’s literature texts from her methods courses in her student teaching SYOSP then perhaps she would have thought and shared about ways that she would carry that forward into her own future classroom. The design of future courses for PSTs should be inclusive of such opportunities and would require working with cooperating teachers who shared literature and taught literacy from a similar educational philosophy and structured their classrooms as environments where student

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discussions, debates, decision-making, and social action are commonplace, and where curriculum is based on a variety of texts and experiences that allows opportunity for students to question – things taken for granted along with how and why things are the way they are (re)presented.

## Chapter VII

## NARRATIVE IV: LINDSEY'S SOCIO-CULTURAL TEACHING OF LITERACY AND CULTURALLY RELEVANT CHILDREN'S LITERATURE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE STORY

**Abstract**

This narrative research text offers my interpretation and retelling of Lindsey's *stories to live by* (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999), composed within a Labovian story structure (abstract, orientation, complicating actions, evaluation, resolution, and coda) and analyzed along four themes. My analysis and interpretation of Lindsey's stories revealed that she viewed literacy as *social practice*; she described this *literacy teaching as socio-cultural and for social justice*; and she perceived *children's literature as culturally relevant*. This narrative research text provides teacher educators and educational researchers of literacy with space to consider how and why to structure and teach preservice teachers (PSTs) - especially those who similarly experience and teach literacy and literature like Lindsey - about critical literacy teaching diverse children's literature within elementary education contexts.

**Orientation (times, places, characters, situations)**

Lindsey is a white, female, senior-year, preservice teacher in the undergraduate, early childhood education (ECE) program at a predominantly white institution of higher learning (PWI) in the Midwestern United States. Lindsey grew up in a white, middle-class, suburban community outside of a large urban and metropolitan city in a neighboring Midwestern state to where she currently attends college. She is a traditional undergraduate student who has moved from her hometown to attend university full-time and prepare to be an early elementary education teacher. She is deeply passionate about teaching; her passion for education and teaching can be seen through her facial expressions as she *lights up* when she shares stories about



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her learning to teach and her future teaching in an elementary classroom in the future. Lindsey is also a self-described reluctant reader and “different learner.” She was diagnosed with ADHD later on in grade-school and credits her diagnosis with helping her to better understand and meet the needs of students who are similarly diagnosed as different learners. Lindsey has volunteered to participate in this inquiry and share her experiences and understandings around literacy, teaching literacy, children’s literature and its teaching following a call for senior-year education majors to participate in this inquiry shared via email. At the time of the inquiry, Lindsey was a student teacher at a local, culturally diverse, Title I, elementary school, in a kindergarten classroom with a cooperating teacher. Lindsey is the only participant in the inquiry who co-teaches with a Black, female cooperating teacher.

On her “thinking about my reading choices” artifact, Lindsey noted she would rather read children’s literature that: has characters both like her and different from her; and has characters that are equally the same and different from her. She also shared that she could learn a lot about people who are different from her by reading children’s literature, and that books can help her change her views on social justice, diversity, and equity issues. Lindsey identified two diverse children’s literature books – *If Dominican Were a Color* (Recio, 2020) and *Show Way* (Woodson, 2005) as “great” books to learn about diverse cultures.

As an early childhood education major, Lindsey did not have the same course requirements, and did not take the elementary education literacy methods course on diverse literature for children and youth required of the other inquiry participants who are all elementary education majors, and some of whom I had previously taught. Conversely, Lindsey and other undergraduate PSTs of the early childhood education program were taught from an abolitionist teaching (Love, 2019) framework. Information provided by the teacher educator and designer of

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courses taken by Lindsey described the conceptual framework of courses of the ECE program as based on cultivating teachers as social justice advocates for children, schools, and communities. More specifically, the courses in the Early Childhood Education program at the college that Lindsey attends aimed to cultivate *abolitionist* teachers.

Given the difference in teacher education programs, my first interview with Lindsey began with her telling me about the ECE program from her perspective. I was interested in hearing and learning whether the two teacher preparation programs – elementary education and early childhood education – shared any similarities around teaching critical literacy and diverse children’s literature. The two programs shared a focus on cultivating PSTs as advocates for children but differed in their teaching frameworks. Lindsey’s understanding of what the ECE program teaches her about literacy, its education and children’s literature served as a foundation from which I inquired more deeply into her chosen ways of teaching literacy and her teaching children’s literature. All of which supported my thinking and understanding about future design of courses on teaching critical literacy and diverse children’s literature based on what I interpreted of her literacy and children’s literature stories.

### **Complicating Actions (themes, plotlines) & Evaluation**

#### ***Lindsey’s Theme #1: Literacy as Social Practice***

An understanding of literacy involves thinking of literacy as inclusive of social practices or “particular ways of doing and being as well as particular ways of acting and talking that are rooted in life experiences” (Vasquez, Egawa, Harste, & Thompson, 2004, p. xi). During the first interview, Lindsey began by sharing about how Kindergarteners in her student teaching classroom demonstrated literacy alongside what she was learning about how to teach younger

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children; and started with what she considered to be the “social emotional side of things” as an ECE major because as she said:

A lot of it is more like, they are very emergent readers. They are not always there yet. Depending, especially on the age [of the child] and work, since we’re certified birth through third that the certification for that birth portion we do work with infants and toddlers. In class we do focus a lot on looking at work and trying to guess... decipher what is... I guess [what is] learning? [Because] in ways that you may not realize like even when they’re drawing pictures [you] see noticing how they’re holding their pencil grip and depending on it, like seeing how if they are going from left to right, even in drawings, like how are they trying to hold their paper, like their book handling... looking at pictures and being able to say “Okay, I see.” Where this is evidence of, they knew their shapes because they’re able to label them or whatever it is. So, we do focus a lot on that. Also, I feel like [the university] overall, but I guess ECE especially, um focuses a lot on cultural diversity and how to be a very open and tolerant and well-spoken teacher, I guess.

From Lindsey’s response and her stories about students as literate and their ability to understand and communicate through words and the world, I could see and hear how she defined literacy. Literacy has been and still is viewed by some as a “commodity: a set of useful skills that you either had or didn’t have and for which different teaching pedagogies and materials were developed, bought, and sold” (Vasquez et al., 2004, p. xi). Within such an understanding of literacy lives more skills-based and content-knowledge understandings and teaching of literacy. Another, more recent, way to view literacy is, as Lindsey does, as sets of social practices. Vasquez et al. (2004) share that “conceptualizing literacy as social practices further implies that

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diverse cultures value and have access to different literacies or malleable sets of cultural practices, that is, a community's ways of being and doing" (p. xi). Kindergarteners', according to Lindsey, ways of being literate are inclusive of their drawings and their ability to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of things through multiple modes of communication.

When asked to define literacy during one of our early interviews, Lindsey spoke of literacy as,

a combination of reading and writing skills, and how I guess they mesh together and interact with one another. Um, so seeing how even reading and stuff is someone else being a writer, and that they kind of go hand in hand, naturally, and that it's not always something that's, I guess, black and white, as people may see. That even as an infant, that making marks on the paper is their idea of literacy. And it could be singing. It could be even seeing it in drum beats and musical instruments, since any type of way that I guess people can communicate with one another, whether that be verbal or nonverbal. And whether that be, I guess, the same thing as we identify language today.

Lindsey's response represents an understanding of literacy as social practice. It appeared as though this view of literacy comes from what she has learned about literacy through the ECE program and its ways of teaching children ages birth to grade 3. Additionally, Lindsey learned to think about literacy in this manner based on her own childhood literacy experiences and how she has come to love and appreciate as well as wants to teach literacy – as a social and cultural art of communication.

When asked about her first memory of literacy from childhood, Lindsey first paused and then shared a story of the first chapter book she read when she recounted,

I feel like I remember, I remember the first chapter book I had read was *Junie B. Jones*

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and it wasn't even necessarily reading it. It was me listening to the audio books while holding the books. And I remember this because... I'm still like... she's still one of my best friends, even today... She's coming out next week. But we've been friends since first grade. She was bright. She always read. She was like the kid that could read in preschool. Like could read whatever, and I was not that way. I was... I still have ADHD, and so... definitely my brain was not focused enough to be able to do that. But I remember her always reading. Then there's like kind of a group that's forming of kids that all sat together and like would talk about the book they're reading. And they were all reading *Junie B. Jones*. Like, I can't read or know how to do it, but I'm friends with her and they're all talking, but I can't. So, then my mom ended up getting me the audio books. I remember learning to kind of read that way... by listening to audiobooks while also trying to actually read.

Lindsey's way of learning to read through listening appears to relate back to her defining of literacy as she does – inclusive of multiple ways of being and doing literacy. For her, it was hearing the words alongside seeing what was on the page that helped her. Undoubtedly, I know that there is so much more to learning to read. For example, she would have had to have some knowledge of what sounds were made by what letters and then the sounds that they made when all strung together. I absolutely get that, but I can't help but to think that this story and the earlier one she told about her understanding of literacy – two storied understandings are related in so many ways. The way that she describes her experience of learning to read was motivated by what she perceived as her best friend's ability to read and be “bright” along with the way that she understands what literacy is – as more than just “black and white as people may see it.” From Lindsey, I learned that the experience of learning to read has lots to do with the socio-emotional

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and socio-cultural. For Lindsey, learning to read – by whatever means, even the non-traditional – was vital to her ability to function within a friend group that had established as part of its culture conversations around reading materials, specifically *Junie B. Jones* (Park, 1992-2013) series books. Her inability to read the books was more than just that; it also meant potentially her inability to be part of the group and not spend time with her friend.

Lindsey's stories tell of non-traditional ways of learning and becoming a reader. Traditionally, stories about young white girls from American suburbia, like Lindsey, learning to read often include parents or guardians reading them children's stories, and them finding comfort in the shared stories of little girls and boys of shared backgrounds and experiences. Lindsey's experiences with and stories about reading during childhood were mostly absent from such mainstream stories in relation to her parents. Lindsey described her parents as not being much of the type to read and shares,

I feel like I definitely...my parents were not the type to pick up a book and read. Even still [today], my mom has custody of my nephews and I'm like, "you need to read to them." But she's like they're not doing well in reading. They're scoring really low in writing. I'm like, "read to them." And she's like, "no."

Alongside this story, however, are stories of her mom reading books when they went on vacation. The type of books that her mom read were not children's books, however. Lindsey shares,

She would read on vacations, but it was like always chapter books or whatever it was, but still not a fan of kids' books. Not a fan of watching kids' shows on TV. It was always more adult shows.

This perceived lack of support from her mother was also how she felt about teachers in school.

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Lindsey described herself as a reluctant reader who stuttered in school and had an ADHD diagnosis that had not happened until she was in high school. She wanted more support from her mother and teachers but felt like she never got the type of reading support she needed to be successful from either of them. Instead, she felt like she was labeled as a failure by teachers which led to her not wanting to read. As I listened to Lindsey share stories about herself as a reader, I heard two or more stories from her simultaneously – one of her as a reluctant reader who was labeled as a struggling or failing reader by teachers; another of her liking to read certain stories like those found in *Boxcar Children* (Warner) book series and *Mary Kate and Ashley* (Scholastic) book series, and writing poems; and another about her teachers and her mom missing the mark and not supporting her in developing reading and writing skills; alongside yet another story of her having ADHD and stuttering and experiencing a lot of trauma during her early childhood. All these stories, together, make up a tapestry of Lindsey's childhood experiences with reading.

She remembered even during those times of feeling unsupported and like she was not a good reader, that she could and would always find joy in singing, drawing, and authoring poems. Just getting her thoughts on paper – she prefers to write her ideas and thoughts down with pen and paper instead of typing even today. As a student teacher, she is trying to tap into the old desire to write things down. She shares,

it's something I've actually been challenging myself to do more of recently... is trying to journal. Trying to especially with student teaching. Everyone told me, like try and write as much down. You're not going to like to. You won't remember it [if you don't] and you'll thank yourself later if you do so. Trying to push myself to more of the longer forms of writing, or just more continuous and more structured [writing]. Because I

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always enjoyed... I felt like I had a unique style of writing. I still do. That is very much so.

Poetry, for Lindsey, along with her fondness for putting things down on paper might have served as her inroad into reading and writing, and into wanting to teach others – using non-traditional methods to teach and learn how to read and write.

### *Lindsey's Theme #2: Literacy Teaching as Socio-Cultural*

Student-centered teaching and the encouragement of learning through fun and exploration involving conversations and room to question are consistent with a socio-cultural theory perspective. Lindsey shared about using poetry and “jabber walking” as examples of some of the methods she uses to teach literacy. At the time of our interview, Lindsey and the students of her student teaching class were celebrating National Poetry Month and going on jabber walks which she describes as,

Where you go on a walk, like a walk somewhere, and you just take notes, and you are going to... you pretty much draw or take like, I guess you could do shorthand notes of what... oh jabber walking is what it's called. They all had their poetry notebooks and they had three pages to go. So, they could draw a tree, they could draw the word bird if that is what they wanted to do instead of writing it. They could do different things, because that is also a form of writing... it's a form of well, language.

Another example shared by Lindsey involved her and her students again learning about poetry through studying diphthong poems. She states,

Something else we've done is we had a diphthong poem the other day where they would... they had to find six words out the... that they could find them [the words] throughout the class, or can make them up, but it was only allowed to be six words and it



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was just supposed to be like a nonsense poem that likely wouldn't make sense. But if the kids knew how to read, they made that... they tried to make them make a little more sense. But it was using all the resources around the room. So, that was able to teach them... with posters, and these things that you are seeing around the room, or the shirts you have on can also be seen as resources for literacy. Um... or they were able to make them up, which is still practicing the same thing.

Through the lessons and methods of literacy teaching and learning Lindsey described we are able to see that the role of the teacher within this space is that of guide and co-learner – allowing her students to build upon and share about their understandings, observations, and experiences. As the teacher, she is still teaching her students about literacy skills but is doing so through a less structured manner of teaching. Their lesson on poems included reading and memorizing Maya Angelou's *Life doesn't frighten me* (1993) where Lindsey describes,

we've been memorizing that poem... so, we've been making up the hand [gestures] or emotions of it and then going through and highlighting our sight words in it, underlining the digraphs. Um, going through like... Oh well, here's a comma and just kind of going through and breaking it down on the like smaller level.

Within this manner of teaching literacy, Lindsey has removed walls – classroom walls – and allowed students to read the world and words; taking time to see and learn about the relationships between the world and words and vice versa. Within the classroom space/place everything down to the T-shirts that the students are wearing serve as sites of learning and understanding. All this teaching and learning is done regarding helping her students to make connections with not only the text, but also with each other, and move towards learning about and addressing issues.

***Lindsey's Theme #3: Literacy Teaching for Social Justice***

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Teaching for social justice is all about teaching about issues – societal issues or concerns – and how we (students and teachers and school communities) can address them. Even in the early grades, like where Lindsey is student teaching, children learn about environmental issues and race relations through reading and having conversations around social justice-oriented children’s literature that introduce stories about the issue and how the protagonists work with/through adversities and challenges towards change. During their poetry month unit, Lindsey shared that she and her cooperating teacher were reading poems from a poetry book entitled *Woke: A Young Poet’s Call to Justice* (Browne, Acevedo, & Gatwood, 2020) with their kindergarten students. Through their sharing of the poems from *Woke*, Lindsey and her cooperating teacher helped their students get a better understanding of what the terminology meant. Lindsey highlighted the sharing of one of the poems,

So, there was one about... it was about how, when people say like ‘don’t rock the boat,’ it was like... well there’s certain situations [when] we might make others mad. If you see things that are unjust, speak out against them and, like... is what it teaches. I guess being woke. But just how to be an advocate, which we talked about a lot.

Upon learning about the terminology (i.e., defining woke), Lindsey, her cooperating teacher, and students discussed what they had read and worked on making connections to the reading.

Students were encouraged to make and share about either heart or head connections as responses to their reading and discussions. Lindsey described the process in her sharing that,

There was a heart connection or like what it made you feel... like a head connection was the other one... was what made you think of something. So, at the bottom of the page they had to circle the light bulb because they brought the new idea, and they write about the new idea. Or, if it gave them their heart connection, so what it made them feel

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or their connection to it. So, if they have ever felt angry, or they were in a situation... So then pulling on those naturalistic things that they're likely already feeling anyways and want to share and just giving them... saying, instead of saying just bring it to the paper.

This way of responding to literature provided students with a way and the space to both come to and share about how and what they are understanding. How they share those understandings is what Lindsey describes as their “becoming storytellers.” She talks about the role of storytelling for the students as they are learning about social justice issues and thinking with their heads and hearts towards thinking about changes that even they can make as younger citizens and members of our community. Storytelling also serves as a literacy teaching tool and as Lindsey shares:

[Gives] them space to tell stories that either are real or aren't because it's still developing their language skills and also, going off of that, giving them the space to talk is also important. It's... you need to be able to... you need to have the space to practice talking to peers and talking to people that are not only your age, but older, and just kind of to be able to find your own place in the world and to find your voice, to find how you're similar and how you're different.

### ***Lindsey's Theme #4: Teaching Children's Literature as Culturally Relevant***

The students in Lindsey's kindergarten student teaching class are learning to be advocates through storytelling alongside reading, hearing, and discussing ideas and experiences shared by diverse children's literature authors and illustrators who are advocates themselves. What does it mean for children's literature to be culturally relevant? Based on my understanding of Gloria Ladson-Billings' (1995, 2021) work on culturally relevant pedagogy, children's literature within the U.S. classroom context is culturally relevant when it does not emphasize or oversimplify lived experiences of all culturally different persons into one model – the ideal American model.

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Culturally relevant children's literature conversely highlights the uniqueness of African Americans and their cultural experiences. Ladson-Billings (2021) citing Franklin and Moss (1988) states, "the African American social and cultural experience, like those of each cultural group, is unique. African Americans are the only group forcibly brought to the Americas for the expressed purpose of labor exploitation through racial slavery" (p. 109). Therefore, when teaching African American students and others about the lived experiences of African Americans it is important to use literature and other teaching resources that do not attempt to neutralize or omit their experiences but highlights them for what they are.

Throughout the inquiry, Lindsey spoke a lot about culturally relevant children's literature shared with her kindergarten students. We began the inquiry into books that she chose to teach with, through her sharing about books that she herself had read. Lindsey shared that her reading of literature in school was done mostly as a way to demonstrate that she *could* read and not because she was really interested in reading them. When she did find books that she enjoyed reading, she noted that these books served as a way for her to become immersed in the story and escape from reality. In her selection of literature for her students to read, Lindsey worked from this similar space of literature to immerse oneself into an experience or another world – very much like literature as a window and sliding glass door (Bishop, 1990). The selection of children's literature – how, why, what – is linked, in my understanding, to both personal and professional experiences and understandings. As I listened to Lindsey's stories about the selection of literature for her future classroom library, I listened for those experiences, or as I have been understanding them, as influences on decisions or actions. Lindsey shared about her selection process through an example around planning with her cooperating teacher for teaching Mother's Day with children's literature and stated,

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I also think it's important, with like [my cooperating teacher] and I were talking the other day about Mother's Day... and she's like...obviously I know... you have to be careful because if you're doing something on Mother's Day, and you know, someone has recently lost a mother or doesn't have a mother in their life, well that could be a sensitive thing. So, even when reading books on Mother's Day, you have to be careful what type of one you choose, depending on what maybe you know your students are going through.

Her selection of literature that she read with her students was done based on not only knowledge of their reading levels but also of knowledge of the students themselves; sensitive to the concerns of students as individuals within your classroom community who could/would experience the reading quite differently. I wondered how she went about sharing Mother's Day literature with her students. Was she aware of a unit of study mentioned in Vasquez (2014) that another early childhood education teacher, Jenny O'Brien (1994), had done around Mother's Day cards and flyers framed from a critical literacy perspective? If so, her thoughtfulness on the part of her students' differing experiences and understandings of the holiday could have served as a springboard for the creation of activities that allowed space for their looking at the topic in different ways towards being able to suggest possibilities for change or improvement – around how or whether they continue to observe Mother's Day.

This way of teaching – demonstrates consciousness of and teaching around different experiences – positions students and their lived experiences as central to guide the teacher's decisions around what and how literature would and should be shared for the better interests of all members of the learning community or classroom. Such teaching and selection of literature works hand in hand with critical literacy teaching culturally relevant literature. Lindsey, in her

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selection of literature with which to teach would work from a space of consciousness and consideration that centered on the experiences of those who have been historically marginalized. When specifically asked about her potential teaching culturally relevant children's literature and her concerns about any tensions or concerns around so doing, Lindsey responded,

[My student teaching school site] has been very, very open to [teaching with culturally relevant literature] entirely. I think that also has been something I've kind of been very aware of and very cautious of. Well, going on this job application process, that's been a huge thing. And even my, like applying for jobs is... what have you done for families during COVID? What, how do you see... for your families of minorities throughout this time? Like, and making sure I'm asking about things they're also going to tell me how much they support those communities and the people in their communities. So, I feel... well, when I do come in and teach an anti-racist curriculum, because that is what I believe in, am I going to be viewed as giving my own bias? Or teaching like a... like a political agenda? When me teaching to respect everyone isn't political. Is that going to be a fear that I have to have? Especially, as someone obviously... I told um... I talked to [my cooperating teacher] about this... I'm like, I'm sure that's a lot like obviously not easier and obviously what I have with the uncomfortableness I have to go through to say these things is nowhere near the uncomfortableness that has been surrounding the Black community for years that they've had to stand up by themselves. So, my allyship and uncomfortableness in this situation is worth it, a million times over, because it compares nothing.

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Hearing Lindsey share about feeling compelled to teach what she referred to as “an anti-racist curriculum” and empathizing with her Black, cooperating teacher around the challenges that she faces in teaching in such a manner and with such materials, spoke of her commitment to teaching against the mainstream. Her comments prompted me to tell her about Bettina Love’s (2019) writing on abolitionist teaching and the role of white teachers as co-conspirators in the work of anti-racism in education. I was not aware at the time that she had been taught to teach from such a framework through the ECE teacher education program. I also shared with Lindsey that I believed that both Black and white teachers who chose to teach an anti-racist curriculum with culturally relevant children’s literature would both potentially experience challenges, especially from those who either did not agree with or understand teaching in such a manner as beneficial to ALL children and learners. This type of opposition can be seen in anti-CRT (Critical Race Theory) framed teaching sentiments and current laws against CRT teaching and curriculum across the United States. Such is accomplished because culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally relevant children’s literature are not about demonizing anyone. Rather, it is about teaching and learning about African Americans as individuals of a history and experience that makes them unique and worthy of learning about through reading literature about their lived experiences, culture, and contributions to the American landscape.

### **Resolution (outcome of the plotlines) & Coda (bringing the action back to the present)**

Analysis and interpretation of Lindsey’s *stories to live by* (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) and retelling of the research narrative demonstrated that there are white, female, preservice teachers (PSTs) who would, like Lindsey, want to teach in a culturally relevant manner and would try to do so even in student learning contexts where there is limited opportunity and power on the part of the PST. Lindsey’s narrative points to some requirements of the teacher education

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program that are absent from preparation of elementary education PSTs to teach literacy and diverse children's literature from transformative frameworks.

Through Lindsey's narrative, I and other teacher educators and educational researchers can see students, as early as Kindergarteners, can be taught the literacy methods through/with teaching culturally relevant children's literature and engage in anti-racist teaching, and not miss a beat nor do they not learn important reading and writing concepts. Doing this work – this type of teaching – does take a lot of work along with a consciousness and commitment to a way of teaching that may not be practiced by many. Lindsey's statement of, "my allyship and uncomfortableness in this situation is worth it," resonated with me and made me wonder – how can I work with other white PSTs to trouble the uncomfortableness and begin the work towards forming alliances with persons and communities that do not mirror their own? Another statement that Lindsey made during our conversation around teaching with culturally relevant literature, equally resonated with me, when she says, "When my teaching to respect everyone isn't political." It resonated with me because of my knowledge that this way of teaching *is* political. So, how do we teach white PSTs to understand that this type of teaching is political?

Currently, in the United States any kind of teaching – but especially culturally relevant teaching – goes against what is mainstream and *is* political. To address the question of: How can I work with predominantly white PSTs to trouble the uncomfortableness and begin work towards forming allegiances with communities that do not mirror their own? As a teacher educator of literacy, I draw upon culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) to engage PSTs in the work of critical literacy teaching. Through learning about culturally relevant pedagogy, PSTs become familiar with what culturally relevant pedagogy is and its teaching practice; and learn about cultural competence alongside its development. Ladson-Billings (2021) states, "cultural



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competence can be supported in the classroom by acknowledging the legitimacy of students' home language and using it as a bridge to American Edited English [and] use of curriculum content selections that reflect the full range of humanity extant in students' cultures" (p. 114). Some strategies for improving the education of teachers suggested by Ladson-Billings (2021) include teaching that includes: "work that uses autobiography, restructured field experiences, situated pedagogies, and returning to the classrooms of experts" (p. 111).

**Autobiography.** Culturally relevant pedagogy researchers Jackson (1992), Gomez and Tabachnick (1992), Hollins (1990), and King and Ladson-Billings (1990) have all used autobiography work as a means for PSTs to critically examine difference (Jackson, 1992, p. 4), reflect on their practicum experiences in diverse classrooms (Gomez & Tabachnick, 1992), "resocialize in ways that help them view themselves within a culturally diverse society" (Hollins, 1990, p. 202), and "consciously re-experience their own subjectivity when they recognize similar or different outlooks and experiences" (King & Ladson-Billings, 1990, p. 26).

In a study done by Szecsi et al. (2010), the researchers drew on culturally transformative pedagogies alongside using diverse children's literature and provided opportunities for PSTs "to explore their own sociocultural backgrounds and examine the world at the intersection of culture, equity, and justice, thus beginning to consider ways to disrupt the "standardization of knowledge" (Giroux, 1984/2010, p. 2) in their future classrooms" (Flores, Vlach, & Lammert, 2019, p. 226). Szecsi et al. (2010) engaged PSTs in reading and discussing three chosen books from a culture that differed from their own and completing reflective activities like autobiography work shared by Ladson-Billings (2021). PSTs in the Szecsi et al. (2010) study kept journals of their experiences and authored a paper about how their understandings of the chosen culture had changed. Analysis of their papers demonstrated that when PSTs "have

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opportunities to experience multicultural literature and reflect on it, and discuss the narratives, transformative thinking clearly emerges in their discourse” (p. 47).

**Restructured Field Experiences.** Ladson-Billings (2021) speaks of restructured field experiences in terms of them providing PSTs with opportunities for learning to teach in the field with cooperating teachers. Ladson-Billings (2021) focus was on addressing what she describes as, “many of the field experiences occur in white middle-income communities that offer a different set of challenges and opportunities from those that teachers can expect to encounter in the urban classroom populated by African American students” (p. 112). Lindsey’s field experience does occur in a predominantly white community of middle-income families. However, her field experience is quite different from most other white PSTs in that she was a student teacher at a remarkably diverse elementary school – the student population is both culturally (approximately 43% of the student population is Black) and economically (close to 70% of the students receive free or reduced lunch) diverse. Additionally, Lindsey’s co-operating teacher is African American and who I would describe as a culturally relevant teacher based on her chosen teaching curriculum and instruction along with her teaching culturally relevant children’s literature. What could it mean for other white PSTs to have such field experiences alongside providing them with exposure to the critical and transformational theoretical frameworks and methods? Ladson-Billings (2021) states, “restructuring field experiences may help [PSTs] to understand the complexities of communities and cultures” (p. 116).

One of the suggested ways to go about the work of restructuring field experiences involves providing PSTs with opportunities to work in schools that offer diverse settings (i.e., student teaching in Title I schools with diverse student populations). However, if the time spent in the schools is relegated to only their student teaching or senior year onsite program (SYOSP)

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then students may not have adequate experience with working with students of color and learning how to go about culturally relevant and anti-racist teaching. Ladson-Billings (2021) states, “spending limited time in urban classrooms often serves to reinforce students’ stereotypes and racist attitudes toward African American students because they are not accompanied with requisite understanding about African American culture and cultural practices” (p. 112). To address the aforementioned, Ladson-Billings (2021) cites Mahan (1982) and Noordhoff and Kleinfeld (1991), and shares that some education programs have stressed *immersion* experiences in diverse communities “placing [PSTs] in community (as opposed to school) settings to help them understand the daily lives of the children in context” (p. 112). These programs are successful in creating better understandings of communities at large and their cultural strengths. PSTs can benefit from such programs and their experiences “learning to see students [as members of communities] with strengths as opposed to seeing them solely as having needs may inform the pedagogical practices of novice teachers in positive ways” (Ladson-Billings, 2021, p. 112).

Through hearing Lindsey describe how she teaches literacy with a culturally relevant pedagogy and critical literacy framework with culturally relevant children’s literature, I feel hopeful. As a teacher educator of critical literacy and diverse children’s literature, I desire to teach PSTs about the many ways that they can teach literacy that are more student-centered and culturally relevant and critical. Lindsey’s narrative serves as an example of what is possible for other white PSTs who desire to teach ALL students through teaching with texts that align with their cultural backgrounds and experiences. I have also learned that this kind of teaching can be uncomfortable for white PSTs and that requires that I, as the teacher educator, provide ways for them to both experience the uncomfortable and learn from/with(in) it.

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Teacher education programs that seek to prepare white PSTs to teach ALL students need to provide student teachers with opportunities to immerse themselves in communities that differ from theirs and learn about culture and difference in non-deficit and affirming ways outside of their student teaching in diverse schools. Courses on critical literacy teaching should not only introduce PSTs to diverse children's literature, but the literature should be additionally culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1999). Researchers (Freeman & Freeman, 2004; Boston & Baxley, 2007; Tatum, 2000) on the use of culturally relevant texts with immigrant and African American students have found that it promotes engagement, positively shapes students' identities, and broadened their social consciousness. Such experiences work to "inform the pedagogical practices of novice teachers in positive ways" (Ladson-Billings, 2021, p. 112).

As a researcher and teacher educator of white preservice teachers, who set out to learn more about and address my research questions of - How do/don't PSTs become engaged in critical literacy? and how do PSTs make decisions about which children's literature texts to teach with? Lindsey's narrative serves as a viable guide and will undoubtedly serve to inform my design of curriculum and instruction on how to teach diverse children's literature from a critical literacy frame.

## Chapter VIII

## NARRATIVE V: MY OWN STORY

This is a narrative of a Black, female, teacher educator and educational researcher of color at a college of education and predominantly white institution (PWI) of higher learning in the Midwestern United States. This narrative is of an autobiographical genre, which presents the subject of this inquiry as the story of the researcher's self – this is my *story to live by* (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) and story to teach with. Through this narrative I travel to – “the untold story that you hold inside you, because autobiographical narrative inquiry helps us travel to the self that illuminates a larger social problem” (Kim, 2016, p. 122). My journey takes place and is interpreted across personal, professional, and research knowledge landscapes (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Although different in genre, this narrative similarly follows Clandinin and Connelly (2000) with a model of analysis resembling – “fluid inquiry, a way of thinking in which inquiry is not clearly governed by theories, methodological tactics, and strategies” (p. 121). The write-up of my narrative, following their model, presents rich descriptive detail and a three-dimensional rendering of my life as an educator and educational researcher, with emphasis on how my transformation progresses through time. My narrative serves as a research representation that shares “how and why a particular outcome came about” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 19). Unearthed through my interpreting and retelling of my story are my lived, experienced, and shared as “contradictions, nuances, tensions, and complexities that traditional academic discourse with its expository stance and more distanced impersonal voice cannot” (Cochran-Smith, 2000, p. 158).

Through the telling and interpretation of my own story, I offer a window into a different way of choosing to be and to teach - critical literacy teaching diverse children's literature. On the

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topic of using stories for teacher and teaching inquiry, researcher Geneva Gay (2010) shares, “invariably, teaching is a very personal endeavor, and what it looks and feels like in actual practice is best conveyed through personal stories. My teaching stories offer readers a glimpse of my own *pedagogical creed* (Gay, 2010) – the how and why around my teaching of literacy with diverse children’s literature.

### **Who/What is the story about?**

To begin, this is a narrative inquiry participant’s autobiography within which I explore my experience as a Black, female, research participant, researcher, and teacher educator. This autobiographical narrative provides me with space for introspection, reflection, and interpretation of my experiences of learning and teaching from a critical literacy framework with diverse children’s literature, and how together they “function as a resource for learning about literacy instructional practices and transformative pedagogies in separate and intersecting ways” (Flores et al., 2019, p. 227). I do not offer explicit directions on how to teach literacy from a critical literacy frame, which is in keeping with Vasquez, Janks, and Comber (2019) who share, “theorists and educators including Comber (2016), Vasquez (2010, 2014), and Luke (2014) have maintained that as a framework for doing literacy work, “critical literacy” should look, feel, and sound different in different contexts; the model(s) used as part of one’s critical literacy toolkit contribute to the kinds of work accomplished from such a perspective” (p. 300). Rather, through narrative exploration, I illuminate some of the questions I, as a teacher educator, wrestle with through my thinking about and design of teacher education curriculum and instructional programs around literacy for predominantly white preservice teachers. I begin with research questions of: How do elementary preservice teachers’ “stories to live by” shape their orientation towards certain literacy teaching practices with children’s literature? How do/don’t PSTs become

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engaged in critical literacy? and how do PSTs make decisions about which children's literature texts to teach with? and additionally ask: What is the role of teacher educator? What approach(es) to critical literacy and multicultural education do we take on in the teaching of literacy from a critical literacy frame or perspective?

### *Teacher Educator of Color, Black Feminist Researcher, & Research Participant*

To begin, I am a Black teacher educator who also refers to myself as a person of color; throughout the narrative I move between the two. When describing myself to others, I often share about my multiracial and multicultural background. I am a Black woman of proud Afro-Caribbean heritage and ancestry. Though racially I am *mixed*, with parts of African, Asian, and European, I choose to identify, and I am commonly identified by others as a Black person largely because of how I present to the world with my tightly curled hair, broad nose, fuller lips, and beige skin. I was raised as a child in the Caribbean of the Catholic faith; though as an adult, I still recognize the faith but would not say that I ascribe wholeheartedly to the tenants of Catholicism. I believe in God and gods and spirits, and that our life here on earth is but a part of our temporary existence and guided by our own choices. My choosing to live a certain way and to serve others are choices I make not because of my religious affiliation but because of my belief in a higher power and purpose. I am a cisgender, female who is married to an African American man and I am mother to two beautiful and intelligent African American children. I am also a Black feminist. "Black feminism is a critical social theory born out of the lived experiences and struggles of Black women living at the intersections of race, class, and gender oppression" (Evans-Winters, 2019, p. 17).

As a Black feminist and teacher educator of color, I am committed to respecting and honoring my ancestry and my past alongside myself, the present, and my children, the future,

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through my critical multicultural teaching of literacy with diverse children's literature. My chosen way to teach is rooted in my *cultura* (Anzaldúa, 2015) and my commitment to making my/our community, culture, and our collective past, present, and future experiences, and understandings as central in my teaching and learning with and from future teachers. As a Black, female researcher I bring my/our lived realities into the research process.

**Teaching Philosophy.** As a female, teacher educator of color at a predominantly white institution (PWI) of higher education and learning, I am conscious that “although [school] classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse – culturally, racially, and linguistically – the majority of teacher candidates remain monolingual, white females” (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). What does this mean for me and my teaching within the PWI space? How does it work to shape my teacher's philosophy? How do I go about teaching to support mostly white PSTs in their becoming culturally responsive; using a critical literacy teaching frame; and teaching and learning about social justice in the classroom (Janks, 2010; Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2008; Papola-Ellis, 2020)?

I would be naïve to believe that my experience with teaching, as a Black, female, teacher educator in higher education is the same as my white, female counterparts. Black feminist theorist bell hooks (2000) shares, “There is much evidence substantiating the reality that race and class identity creates differences in quality of life, social status, and lifestyle that take precedence over the common experience women share – differences that are rarely transcended” (p. 4). However, as a Black, female, teacher educator I consciously choose – for my physical and mental health – to not dwell in a space of negativity and choose to not give any further power to those who wish to oppress me. Within a racist American society there will always be persons – students, colleagues, and others – who see me and my work as inferior because of my race and



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gender and other parts and identities of me; I have no control over that. Conversely, what I do have control over *is* me – how I teach, what I teach, the materials/texts that I teach with, my teaching philosophy.

My primary goal, as a teacher and teacher educator, is to prepare lifelong learners and contributing members of a just society. The development of lifelong learners involves my teaching of content and “sharing in the intellectual and spiritual growth of [my] students” (hooks, 1994, p.13) through “teaching and sharing knowledge in a manner that does not reinforce existing structures of domination (those of race, gender, class, and religious hierarchies)” (hooks, 2003, p. 45). This involves engaging my students’ critical understandings of content, knowledge production, language, cultures, and community. Such development and engagement require that my students think about themselves as learners, individuals, and community members. I can do this by providing my students with significant learning experiences (Fink, 2003), and space to learn with and from each other, as well as modeling through my teaching.

As contributing members of a just society, teachers and learners learn with and from each other through discourse about meaningful ways to respond to the lives of our students and our own lives (Love, 2019). Within and from this space, I teach my students to be culturally relevant and culturally competent. As a Black mother and former teacher and library media specialist in schools – elementary and high school – attended by Black and Brown students, I have and bring first-hand knowledge of the vital need for teachers to teach from such a space. The teaching of future teachers to be culturally relevant and competent requires that I teach about culture – as a complex way of knowing and being that occurs within community with others. My teaching of literacy and culture from a culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) framework rests on “three criteria of students’ development: (a) students must experience academic success; (b)

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students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and (c) students must develop a sociopolitical consciousness” (p.160).

How do I, as a Black, female, teacher educator, best work with predominantly white, female, PSTs towards their consideration of culturally relevant and responsive pedagogies and critical literacy teaching practice with diverse children’s literature? To create such pedagogical and transformative learning experiences for my students, I begin each class by sharing about me as an individual, my teaching philosophy, and my expectations. I also invite my students to begin with sharing about themselves – their cultural identities and experiences – as individuals and future teachers. Through the process of identity development, from the beginning of our work together, we embark on the journey of us learning with each other as a community of teachers and illuminating the diversity among us and our greater communities along with the realities – joys and challenges – of teaching and learning faced every day. This work is crucial to the shaping of a learning environment that is my desired classroom – one that is built on and fosters respect – mutually respectful – shown between student teachers and teacher educators as co-learners and co-teachers. My desired classroom space is one where we – student teachers and teacher educators like myself – can have conversations around difficult issues and trends in education, and work towards a collective understanding or agree to disagree at times. Such a classroom space fosters our learning and building/growing as a community. Through the creation and provision of a classroom community that offers student teachers safety, respect, and understanding around and through difficult conversations and uncomfortable learning, I can model for PSTs my goal of teaching and learning with lifelong learners and contributors to a just society.

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During classes and throughout the semester, I provide students with opportunities to apply what they are learning about the content and themselves as teachers to real world situations. For example, in the design of a Diverse Literature for Children and Youth course, I provide opportunities for PSTs to connect what they were learning in class to their field experiences with classroom connections. Student teachers complete multiple classroom connections over the semester and engage in literacy work with students and teachers at their field experience school sites alongside composing their personal reflections about the experiences – contemplative of what their students responded well to or did not respond well to and if/how they as PSTs could improve their teaching and their students' learning experiences. Further opportunity for PSTs to think about real world application along with content knowledge and thinking of themselves as teachers is provided through final project of the previously mentioned course, in which they curate children's literature text sets around a theme, topic or issue of personal or community interest; identify benefits and potentials of teaching with the texts for future students; and begin to consider how the texts could be used for teaching across subjects – cross-curricular purposing.

Over the years, as an educator of teachers, my practice of teaching in higher education has grown to become more meaningful and purposeful. My teaching experiences have taught me to value and practice active listening and reflection. I have also learned to be intentional in modeling for PSTs how to listen and learn from your students and to teach for academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness. I have and continue to grow each day as a teacher and lifelong learner myself. The adage of “you can't teach an old dog new tricks” does not ring true to me; as I continue to learn and try new ways – of thinking, learning, and teaching and I am committed to continuing to teach and learn with and from PSTs – hopeful of

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contributing to the education of future teachers who leave my classes with knowledge of: methods and content; teaching from a critical literacy frame with culturally relevant and responsive pedagogies; culturally relevant literature; knowledge of themselves as culturally different persons, teachers, and lifelong learners; as well as how to be and grow as teachers and contributors to a just society.

**Researcher Participant – Narrative Researcher as Midwife.** The PST participants in this narrative inquiry mirror the student teachers I have taught and learned with as a teacher educator and graduate instructor of language and literacies at a Midwestern PWI. Of the four participants, two of them are former students and the other two are not. As a researcher participant, I take on the role of narrative researcher as midwife where “the metaphor of midwife signifies the role of researcher who will work with “what is in the womb” and collaborate with the informants in delivering “healthy, trustworthy” stories. Of course, I also used my own discretion and imagination, as a midwife would do, in reconstructing the protagonist’s reality of what I heard and saw” (Kim, 2005; Kim, 2016, p. 119).

As a narrative researcher and participant, I was aware of my fiduciary relationship with and responsibility to the participants in this inquiry to be true to them and their stories, and careful to not overshadow or misrepresent them in any way. My research philosophy is like my teaching philosophy in that I assume the position of co-participant and co-creator of the narrative and work with participants in a community of mutual respect. In narrative research, much of the process is out of the researcher’s *control* – there is no control. The researcher is not an authority. Rather, the researcher is an active listener and participant themselves. There is a two-way discourse wherein the participants share stories, and the researcher listens to those

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stories (sometimes shares their own stories of similar or shared experiences as well), and then the researcher shares their interpretation of the stories heard and told with participants and others.

### *Teaching with Diverse Children's Literature*

Flores et al., 2019 state, "Children's literature functions as a resource for learning about literacy instructional practices and transformative pedagogies in separate and intersecting ways" (p. 227). In my teaching and design of the diverse literature for children and youth literacy methods course, I have chosen to focus on children's literature as a tool for teaching and learning sociocultural knowledge and transformative pedagogies.

**Children's Literature as a tool for teaching and learning sociocultural knowledge and transformative pedagogies.** Flores et al. (2019) identify "three broad focus areas" that fall under the umbrella of tools for learning sociocultural knowledge and transformative pedagogies which are: "using children's literature to build understandings about culture (broadly defined), using children's literature to build understandings about race and ethnicity specifically, and using children's literature as a way to learn broader transformational pedagogies" (p. 223). Closest in relation to my own approach to teaching with children's literature is that described by Flores et al. (2019) of children's literature and culture. Within this approach, they share, "for example, Riley and Crawford-Garrett (2016) invited [preservice teachers] (PTs) to engage in literacy practices 'in the context of meaningful inquiry that challenged them to see the world from multiple perspectives, especially those that were not mainstream' (p. 100). PSTs read and responded to children's and YA literature – *Rosa* (Giovanni, 2005) and *The Circuit* (Jiménez, 1997), respectively – that addressed immigration, stereotypes, and racial justice.

Findings revealed that PSTs were hesitant about introducing "critical texts" in their own classrooms due to their own acknowledged learning gaps and a fear of being wrong" (Flores et

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al., 2019, p. 223). In my own teaching of a literacy methods course with children's literature, preservice teachers read and discussed diverse literature stories authored by and about BIPOC authors and illustrators. My intent was like other teacher educators (TEs) who Flores et al. (2019) state, "described a range of multicultural literature selected for inclusion in their methods courses to engage PTs in the experiences of different cultures" (Flores et al., 2019, p. 224). Like Crawford-Garrett's (2016) findings of preservice teacher (PST) reluctance and hesitation to teach diverse children's literature, I too observed the same from student teachers and inquiry participants. Parker (2022) echoes what we have seen and talks about teachers who, "tell me they would appreciate understanding how to select diverse texts, how to teach those texts, and how to address race and racism through texts in their classrooms. They sincerely want to teach *through* this moment, yet they are uncertain, afraid, immobilized" (p. 20). In my role as teacher educator, I aim to teach PSTs not only about diverse children's literature and its selection, but also about how they can do the intentional work of teaching diverse children's literature from a culturally relevant and responsive framework.

**Transformative pedagogies.** Research around teaching children's literature as a tool for teaching and learning transformative pedagogies includes studies done by Lohfink (2014) and Szecsi et al. (2010). "These studies highlight the pedagogical practices and frameworks that TEs drew upon to engage PTs in the intellectual work of literacy teaching. Through children's literature, TEs engaged PTs in reflection, exploration, and discussions that brought race, culture, linguistic varieties, gender, and "hard topics" from the margins of the curriculum to the center. In these studies, the pedagogy was "rooted in the practice of ethical and political formation of both self and the broader social order (Giroux, 1984/2010, p. 3)" (Flores et al., 2019, p. 226). In my design of curriculum for the diverse literature for children and youth literacy methods course I

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drew from the transformative pedagogies of Janks' (2010, 2014) Interdependent Model for Critical Literacy Instruction, Ladson-Billings' (1995) Culturally Relevant Pedagogy theoretical model, and Gay's (2010) Culturally Responsive Pedagogy theoretical model.

***Interdependent Model for Critical Literacy Instruction.*** Janks' (2010, 2014)

Interdependent Model for critical literacy instruction, alongside creating a curriculum that is culturally inclusive and supportive of the needs of diverse readers and learners, includes four dimensions: power, diversity, access, and design/redesign which “are distilled from careful reading of the literature in a range of related areas as they pertain to education – anti-racism, whiteness, feminism, post-colonialism, sexual orientation, critical linguistics, critical pedagogy, sociocultural and critical approaches to literacy, and critical discourse analysis” (Vasquez, Janks, & Comber, 2019, p. 305).

For PSTs, like narrative inquiry participant Rosalie (pseudonym), who see the student population at her student teaching site monolithically and mono culturally and shares, “like if I’m thinking about [where I am student teaching] where it’s not very culturally diverse or whatever,” having the opportunity to learn about literacy education from such a framework could help to illuminate ways for her and other PSTs to disrupt such thinking. Through learning about whiteness and identity alongside the selection of and teaching with diverse children’s literature from Janks' (2010, 2014) Interdependent Model for critical literacy, for example, PSTs could begin to address their teaching decisions towards thinking about how they could support students in teaching and learning about diverse experiences and understandings – even those not personally held.

***Culturally Relevant Pedagogy.*** As a theoretical model, culturally relevant pedagogy works to address student achievement and help students to both accept and affirm their cultural

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identity alongside their development of critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools and other institutions perpetuate. According to Ladson-Billings (1995), “culturally relevant pedagogy rests on three criteria or propositions: (a) students must experience academic success; (b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and (c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order” (p. 160). Teaching that Lindsey has had the opportunity to observe and engage in during her student teaching experience could be described as culturally relevant teaching.

As a teacher educator of literacy, I draw upon culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) to engage PSTs in the work of critical literacy teaching. Through learning about culturally relevant pedagogy, PSTs become familiar with what culturally relevant pedagogy is and its teaching practice; and learn about cultural competence alongside its development. In a study done by Szecsi et al. (2010), the researchers drew on culturally transformative pedagogies alongside teaching diverse children’s literature and provided opportunities for PSTs “to explore their own sociocultural backgrounds and examine the world at the intersection of culture, equity, and justice, thus beginning to consider ways to disrupt the “standardization of knowledge” (Giroux, 1984/2010, p. 2) in their future classrooms” (Flores, Vlach, & Lammert, 2019, p. 226). Szecsi et al. (2010) engaged PSTs in reading and discussing three chosen books from a culture that differed from their own and completing reflective activities like autobiography work shared by Ladson-Billings (2021). PSTs in the Szecsi et al. (2010) study kept journals of their experiences and authored a paper about how their understandings of the chosen culture had changed. Analysis of their papers demonstrated that when PSTs “have opportunities to experience multicultural literature and reflect on it, and discuss the narratives, transformative thinking clearly emerges in their discourse” (p. 47).



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It should be noted, although anti-racist teacher education like culturally relevant pedagogy is thought to be a promising practice, Ladson-Billings, citing Ahlquist (1991) and Tatum (1994), cautions that “teacher educators who have attempted to bring issues of race and racism to the forefront of their preparation programs have been subjected to resistance and harsh criticism from students” (p. 115). Some of the resistance and reluctance on the part of white PSTs to engage in teaching from a culturally relevant frame and/or critical literacy frame has much to do with the racist system within which they have been educated and have learned to embrace. Unlearning racist ideology and racist teaching and learning practices is possible but also extremely uncomfortable.

*Culturally Responsive Pedagogy.* The work of culturally responsive pedagogy is centered around beliefs which Geneva Gay (2010) asserts, “if teachers have positive beliefs about ethnic and cultural diversity, they will act in accordance with them” (p. 216). Parker (2022) believes that Gay “sharpens Ladson-Billings approach” (p. 30) and “Gay demands that we understand our students’ cultures through their multiple and intersecting identities and that we see them through an assets-based lens” (p. 31). Culturally responsive pedagogy consists of “using cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (Gay, 2010, p. 31). Toppel (2015) identified three recurring themes pertaining to culturally responsive literacy instruction: (1) culturally appropriate texts, (2) engaging students’ voices, and (3) incorporating students’ funds of knowledge.

Lohfink (2014) engaged PSTs in the work of choosing to teach with more culturally responsive and inclusive materials. Within Lohfink’s teaching, PSTs engaged in planning and conducting multicultural read alouds with elementary school children and were asked to reflect

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on how the read alouds aided their understanding of self, different cultures, and their students.

Lohfink's PSTs shared that they felt that multicultural read alouds supported their understanding of culturally responsive pedagogies, but Lohfink cautioned, "culturally responsive pedagogy is challenging for most novice and practicing teachers and will require more than one assignment in literacy methods courses to reflect effective implementation" (p. 45). In large part, learning to teach with culturally responsive pedagogy is difficult because as Toppel (2015) shares, "cultural responsiveness is actually a much deeper introspection of instructional practices in order to ensure that teachers are not simply teaching content but teaching *students* in ways that respect, promote, and incorporate diverse ways of thinking, learning, and communicating" (p. 559).

Although Lohfink's findings and Toppel's assertions about challenges have been observed through my teaching PSTs of teaching diverse children's literature practices, I cannot discount the value of such teaching. Teaching from culturally relevant and responsive frameworks is about providing instruction for all students, especially Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and Persons of Color (POC) ones who have been historically marginalized and omitted from considerations around addressing and increasing their achievement and success (Parker, 2022).

## Chapter VIII

## DAUNTING POSSIBILITY

In this chapter I begin with a background to the inquiry into PSTs' stories and provide an overview of how my own personal narrative and knowledge landscapes inform this inquiry. I follow up with an overview of the narrative inquiry into PSTs' *stories to live by* and the seeds of possibility they provide. This is followed by three implications drawn from my reading and interpretation of PSTs' research narratives including: 1) the need for explicit instruction on critical literacy teaching diverse children's literature; 2) the need for explicit literacy instruction that recognizes oppression, whiteness, and its constraints; 3) the need to provide PSTs with opportunities to work with cooperating teachers and administrators who both teach and support PSTs' teaching and (re)design of teaching critical literacy and diverse children's literature. I conclude by speaking about implications for teacher educators and educational researchers in the area of PST literacy education and research.

**Context & Background to the Inquiry into PSTs' stories**

Before sharing about how what I have learned from PSTs' stories is shaping my thinking about the design of diverse children's literature courses, I provide some context for this inquiry. This research came from my own work as a graduate instructor. As a graduate instructor, I learned and taught literacy and its teaching with undergraduate students and preservice teachers for five years. Alongside my work as an instructor, I learned about literacy teaching through working and studying as a graduate student. It was during my graduate studies that I learned about literacy as commodity and literacy as social practice alongside all the many conceptual frameworks from which literacy as social practice could be taught and learned. To say that this task of learning and unlearning around literacy was daunting would be an understatement. This

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way of viewing and later teaching literacy was very different from how I had learned about literacy prior to graduate studies. However, despite the challenges and tensions – growing pains – I found a home for myself and my understanding within critical literacy teaching diverse children’s literature.

Within critical literacy teaching there exists space to question, disrupt and challenge power situated within language and texts. Nestled within critical literacy teaching is teaching diverse children’s literature. Much research has been done into the role that children’s literature, especially diverse children’s literature, plays in cultivating PSTs as transformative intellectuals and teachers. Prior to my pursuit of an advanced graduate doctoral degree, and working as a graduate instructor, I enjoyed teaching as a reading teacher and teacher librarian who read and discussed books about Black, Indigenous, and persons of color (BIPOCs) with students who were similarly non-white. Part of my reason for teaching diverse children’s literature was that I had not read or have read to me children’s literature that featured stories about people that looked like, spoke like, and lived like me, as a child. My childhood education through fifth grade was not in the U.S. However, my education from sixth grade onward occurred in the U.S. Children’s literature - mostly through printed text - be they picturebooks or chapter books of various literary genres, read by me or to me within school in the U.S. or abroad, often featured and told stories of white persons, their lives, culture, language, and experiences and were absent of stories about persons of color in general.

In college, as an undergraduate student of African American Studies, was the first time that I learned about contributions – especially positive ones – made by Black and other persons of color and about literary contributions made by African American authors and illustrators of children’s literature. Upon learning about African American authors and illustrators – especially

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those of children's literature, the floodgates opened, and I sought out and read as many books by and about Black persons as I could find. African American literature served as the watershed for my foray into multicultural literature and what I today consider diverse (children's) literature. It helped that my first job was at a local bookstore and that I lived in a metropolitan city in the U.S. As fast as I would learn about an author or a book, I would find it, purchase or borrow it, and read it. When I became a teacher, I felt it my responsibility and my privilege to be able to share many of the stories and authors I had learned about and read, and I continued to search out more African American authors to read and then teach with. My doing so – reading and teaching literature written by and about persons like myself – was possibly a little self-centered, I know; but I found out later in graduate school that many other persons my age and older also shared similar experiences of not having read books authored and illustrated by authors of color. Many of my graduate school colleagues and professors felt the same way as I did. Perhaps, it was not so self-serving. Perhaps, instead the curating, reading, and teaching of diverse literature - works authored (and illustrated) by persons of color would provide windows and sliding glass doors (Bishop, 1999) to experiences of persons historically marginalized and/or omitted from elementary education.

Some, like myself, wrestled with ways to address how teachers (especially white PSTs and teachers) could and should adjust the way that literacy children's literature are taught - away from monocultural stories taught as tools within non-sociocultural ways of teaching. As a mother of two beautiful, Black, African American children who attend public elementary schools in the U.S., I was personally concerned about what I observed of PSTs and future teachers of my own children. I began to wonder, how can I as an educator of teachers – graduate instructor and future teacher educator – engage PSTs in critical literacy teaching diverse children's literature? This

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question arose from my viewpoint of critical literacy teaching diverse children's literature as a way for me to help PSTs and future teachers of children like my own to better teach toward their (BIPOC students) academic success and lifelong literacy learning.

### **Narrative Inquiry into PSTs' *Stories to Live By***

Through this inquiry, I explored the question of *how* having settled the *why* around PSTs teaching of literacy from a critical literacy frame and teaching with diverse children's literature. Specifically, this is a narrative inquiry into PSTs' *stories to live by* (Connelly and Clandinin, 1999) to better understand the role of experience(s) on decisions made by PSTs. My approach to this inquiry features narrative method and is framed in Connelly and Clandinin's (1999) conceptualization of *stories to live by* which merge PST participants' personal practical knowledge, life on the professional knowledge landscape, and teacher identity. Together with Janks' (2010, 2014) interdependent model for critical literacy I researched questions about PSTs' teaching choices. Through this inquiry, I explored stories told by participants who shared how varying experiences (i.e., childhood, student teaching) and influences (i.e., teachers, family) in their lives worked to shape and inform how they viewed and taught literacy and children's literature. For example, through research into stories shared by PST participants Sarah and Margie, I learned that their chosen ways of teaching (i.e., literacy as method, literacy teaching as behaviorist) harkened back to teaching demonstrated and learned from their childhood teachers and parents. Participants Margie and Lindsey told stories of learning to teach from their respective teacher education programs (i.e., elementary education, early childhood education).

PSTs' stories shared that depending on the landscape (i.e., personal or professional knowledge) PSTs made similar or different teaching decisions around literacy and literature. Lindsey's stories revealed that her personal childhood experiences with reading through/as non-

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traditional ways would inform how she later understood literacy as more than mere reading and writing, and as social practice for social justice. Additionally, PSTs' stories shared about tensions and questions they had around possibilities of teaching diverse children's literature. Though Sarah's stories revealed that she perceived children's literature as canonical teaching tools; towards the end of our interviews, she questioned where and how she could teach diverse children's literature.

### **Seeds of Possibility: What I have learned from PSTs' *Stories to Live by***

Across preservice teachers' (PSTs') *stories to live by* (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) of this inquiry I have learned how PSTs' experiences work to shape their knowledge, understanding, and chosen ways of teaching. Through research into these experiences (i.e., teaching literacy) I was led to emerging themes (i.e., teaching as social practice, teaching as behaviorist). Some themes appeared to be shared by participants. An example of this can be seen in the theme of literacy as a *method*: reading and writing which both PSTs Sarah and Rosalie shared literacy stories around. Some themes were seen in only one participant. Examples of this can be seen in Margie's teaching diverse children's literature and Lindsey's teaching culturally relevant children's literature. What did these themes suggest? Exploration of the themes and their occurrences in some participants but not others led to the question of: how PSTs of shared or similar experience across personal and professional knowledge landscapes could similarly share teaching philosophy and practice? What does/could that mean for teacher educators? When designing curriculum and instruction of diverse children's literature there is definitely not a one-size-fits-all approach - or at least there should not be such an approach.

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*Narrative I – Sarah’s Story*

Sarah’s *stories to live by* (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) were explored and retold along the themes of literacy as method for teaching reading and writing; literacy teaching as behaviorist; and children’s literature as canonical and tools for teaching. From Sarah’s story I learned how a PSTs’ view of self as a reader and fondness of reading and certain types of literature learned from childhood together influenced the way that they chose to teach literacy. Sarah’s storied experiences around family and literacy pointed to her teaching practice influenced by lived experiences as far back as early childhood.

The seed of possibility here is that from Sarah we can identify a missing storyline - critical literacy and diverse children’s literature - and use that as a springboard from which to teach. Undoubtedly, there are many other PSTs like Sarah who pursue professions/careers similar to their parents. Such persons learn and do within the chosen profession as they were taught. In this case, Sarah learned and taught absent of critical literacy teaching diverse children’s literature. PSTs like Sarah would benefit from space to learn and unlearn literacy and its teaching through teacher education as I did. The process of unlearning can seem very tedious, but it is so worthwhile. It has taken me five years to unlearn largely behaviorist ways of teaching canonical and predominantly white children’s literature. I am still learning about critical literacy teaching diverse children’s literature, and I am still unlearning old ways of being and doing. As teacher educators, we need to work to provide PSTs like Sarah with many opportunities - not just one class on diverse children’s literature - to learn and do critical literacy teaching diverse children’s literature.



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### *Narrative II – Margie’s Story*

Margie’s *stories to live by* (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) were explored and retold along the overarching themes of literacy as social practice, literacy teaching as constructivist, and children’s literature as diverse picturebooks and chapter books of varied genres. Margie’s story provides readers with insight into teaching possibilities for PSTs in rural, public elementary school settings. In her teaching literacy, Margie teaches from an understanding that her classroom community of white students in rural, Midwestern United States has their own culture and ways of being and doing but theirs is not the only way. She teaches diverse children’s literature to teach literacy as social practice to her students and expose them to multiple ways that communities around the country and world live and learn. Margie’s literacy teaching is constructivist, but it is not transformative. Absent is teaching of the experiences of others without comparison.

Though Margie was familiar with how to select and teach diverse children’s literature books and texts, she was not familiar with how to teach diverse children’s literature from a critical literacy frame. When selecting reading material for her students, Margie shared about following the traditional or more methodical criteria of making sure that the books: were grade-level appropriate; relevant and up-to-date; have a good storyline; could help with their development of fluency, as well as, she shares, “I want the stories to actually have meaning to them finding like that they can see themselves as that character and what can they relate to what can like they kind of compare it to.” Margie used diverse children’s literature as a tool for, what Flores et al. (2019) shared is, “for learning literacy instructional practices (i.e., writing instruction, reading instruction), as well as for “learning sociocultural knowledge (i.e., culture; race and ethnicity)” (p. 227). Such use of literature was not something that Margie had herself

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experienced as a child and student learner, but as her stories explain, she learned this through her elementary teacher education program.

Her seed of possibility is that Margie is willing to learn new ways of being and teaching as demonstrated through her stories. As teacher educators of PSTs like Margie, we need to provide more opportunities for her to learn and do critical literacy teaching. By all accounts shared through her stories of her SYOSP, Margie's cooperating teacher and school administration were supportive of her learning and taking new teaching initiatives (i.e., Book Madness) and would also support her in learning and teaching critical literacy.

### *Narrative III – Rosalie's Story*

Rosalie's *stories to live by* (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) were explored and retold along the overarching themes of literacy as method for teaching reading and writing, literacy teaching as behaviorist, children's literature as teaching tools. Rosalie's stories share themes similar to Sarah's though they differ slightly in that Rosalie used children's literature as a tool for teaching the Big 5 concepts of reading (and writing). Rosalie was a former student of mine along with Sarah. Though she does not explicitly say so, it appears as though Rosalie felt ill-prepared to teach diverse children's literature from a critical literacy frame. Perhaps, she did not feel the need to teach diverse children's literature from a critical literacy frame given the student cultural and racial demographic of predominantly white and middle class at her student teaching SYOSP. For PSTs, like Rosalie, who view the student population at her student teaching SYOSP monolithically and mono culturally and shared, "like if I'm thinking about [where I am student teaching] where it's not very culturally diverse or whatever," having the opportunity to learn about literacy education from a critical literacy framework could help to illuminate ways for her and other PSTs to disrupt such thinking. Through learning about whiteness and identity

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alongside the selection of and teaching diverse children's literature from Janks' (2010, 2014) Interdependent Model for critical literacy, for example, PSTs could begin to address their teaching decisions towards thinking about how they could support students in teaching and learning about diverse experiences and understandings – even those not personally held.

Rosalie's seed of possibility is similar to Sarah's. However, for Rosalie there was more of an emphasis on structure and "thoroughness" within her stories. From Rosalie, teacher educators learn of the need to be more explicit in their teaching of concepts. The teaching of critical literacy in such a manner is admittedly difficult or more challenging as there is a lot of "gray space" in my opinion within critical literacy teaching - there's not a prescribed way of doing as Rosalie would prefer. Though I believe that Rosalie would be open to challenging herself to design and author her own way - a new way - of teaching critically. So doing, would be in keeping with critical literacy teaching. Sarah would be taught how to teach through provided examples and given the opportunity to put her own "spin" or understanding on an existing method of teaching.

### *Narrative IV – Lindsey's Story*

Lindsey's *stories to live by* (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) were explored and retold along the overarching themes of literacy as social practice; literacy teaching as socio-cultural; literacy teaching for social justice; and children's literature as culturally relevant. Lindsey's story provided insight into early childhood education (ECE) preservice teacher (PST) experiences and how they informed their teaching practice. Lindsey was diagnosed with ADHD later on in grade-school and credits her diagnosis with helping her to better meet the needs of students who are similarly different learners. Lindsey's way of learning to read through listening related back to her defining of literacy as inclusive of multiple ways of being and doing literacy. For her, it was

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hearing the words alongside seeing what was on the page that helped her. Lindsey's story demonstrated that there are white, female, preservice teachers (PSTs) who would, like Lindsey, want to teach in a culturally relevant and anti-racist manner and would try to do so even in student learning contexts where there is limited opportunity and power on the part of the PST to do so.

Lindsey's seed of possibility is that she viewed literacy, following her own experiences with literacy as a "struggling reader" and ADHD diagnosis, as transformative and set out to teach literacy as social and for social justice. Lindsey's chosen way of teaching appears to have been learned through the early childhood education (ECE) program. Through the ECE program, Lindsey learned to be an abolitionist teacher of literacy from the theoretical foundation it provided and the opportunity to learn with a cooperating teacher who shared a similar teaching philosophy and ontology. Through the ECE Lindsey learned that she was not a struggling learner but that she learned differently. She took that knowledge and applied it to the way that she teaches and taught in SYOSP. She provides her students with opportunities to learn the word and the world through reading and learn from diverse and culturally relevant children's literature within a critical literacy frame - with space for students to question and disrupt and rewrite/retell.

### *Narrative V – My Own Story*

My own *stories to live by* (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) have informed me about teaching while Black, specifically my experiences as a Black, female, teacher educator teaching at a predominantly white institution of higher learning with predominantly white PSTs, and teaching about literacy as social practice, critical literacy, and diverse children's literature, which is not always met in receptive ways. Despite my best efforts to engage PSTs in critical literacy teaching with diverse children's literature, it appears to have fallen on deaf ears, or at least

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reluctant or resistant ears of some PSTs and participants in this inquiry. Given the nature of the climate of racial unrest and a resurgence of white supremacist thinking and doing in the U.S. currently, it is not altogether surprising or out of the question that I have had difficulty engaging teachers in critical literacy teaching diverse children's literature because it challenges the status quo. However, I do not believe that that is the root. It may be a contributing factor or influence across the teacher education landscape, but the research done in this inquiry suggests that the structure of teacher education programs is also part of the story, as discussed in this next section.

### **Educational Implications**

#### ***Teacher Educators***

Rogers (2013) argues that "critical literacy education holds the potential to deepen our awareness of language and power and cultivate the valuing diversity which, in turn, supports the development of culturally and linguistically diverse pedagogies" (p. 15). As teacher educators, intent on engaging preservice teachers in critical literacy work, we are charged with the responsibility of best preparing PSTs to do such work. Though there is not a blueprint, per se, for critical literacy teaching diverse children's literature, there are ways that teacher educators can structure instruction and provide opportunities for PSTs to learn and teach from and with. This research narrative provides suggestions for teacher educators about how and why to design and teach PSTs about critical literacy teaching diverse children's literature based on what was learned from this inquiry's PST participants' stories. Implications for teacher educators include: 1) the need for explicit critical literacy instruction; and 2) the need for explicit student teaching classroom experiences of teaching diverse children's literature.

**Explicit critical literacy instruction.** Several of the PST participants' research narratives pointed to the need for explicit critical literacy instruction for PSTs. Sarah's story

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pointed to the absence of modeled examples of critical literacy teaching diverse children's literature. In my teaching diverse children's literature, I provided many resources on where to find and select diverse children's literature. However, I failed to provide students, especially Sarah, with opportunities to see and do critical literacy teaching. In future design of courses on teaching diverse children's literature, there appears to be the need for explicit instruction on critical literacy teaching diverse children's literature - what it is and why/how it is taught along with providing opportunities for PSTs to both plan and teach lessons from a critical literacy framework alongside having space to reflect on what went well and what did not in their implementation of the lessons. So doing, would provide the teacher educator with opportunity to learn with and from PSTs about what they understand and where they have questions and require support.

Margie's story points to the need for explicit critical literacy that involves: continued teaching and learning with PSTs around the critical selection and teaching diverse children's literature which represents authentic, accurate stories of culturally diverse characters; teaching PSTs about culturally relevant literacy teaching pedagogy – inclusive of consideration of how culturally and historically responsive literacy teaching (Muhammad, 2020) might aid the teaching of PSTs to be more transformational in their literacy teaching practices.

Future teaching of a course on critical literacy and diverse children's literature, following Margie's story as a guide, would provide PSTs with opportunities to challenge their students and themselves to recognize oppression and its constraints on everyone, regardless of race, creed, or culture/cultural practice whilst recognizing and working on their own identities (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Such teaching and learning could be done through engagement with culturally relevant and responsive literacy pedagogies. Ultimately, if teacher educators are hopeful of

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seeing PSTs, like Margie, take on oppression and teach to transform and not just tolerate, it requires explicit teaching of how to do so.

Rosalie's story led to two realizations around the need for explicit teaching of critical literacy and diverse children's literature: 1) PSTs like Rosalie who may not have had prior experience with diverse children's literature, need more than one course that can share and teach them about the many titles and authors. Additionally, courses on critical literacy teaching should not only introduce PSTs to diverse or multicultural children's literature, but the literature should be additionally culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1999); 2) How PSTs are taught is often reflected in how they choose to teach. A way to address this could be to design and teach PSTs methods courses from within a critical literacy framework, thereby introducing PSTs like Rosalie to teaching and learning of a social reconstructionist educational philosophy and provide them with opportunity to put their own spin on learned and practiced critical literacy teaching pedagogies.

**Explicit student teaching classroom experiences of teaching diverse children's literature.** It is not enough for PSTs to learn about diverse children's literature and teaching of reading and writing from a critical literacy frame in methods courses. The design of future courses for PSTs should be inclusive of opportunities to teach and learn in field (i.e., student teaching), and would require working with cooperating teachers who shared literature and taught literacy from a similar educational philosophy and ontology. Student teaching classrooms would be structured as environments where student discussions, debates, decision-making, and social action are commonplace, and where curriculum is based on a variety of children's literature texts and experiences. Such classroom environments allow opportunity for students (and teachers) to

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learn about and question – things taken for granted along with how and why things are the way they are (re)presented.

Lindsey’s story suggests that preparing PSTs to teach ALL students from a critical literacy frame should include opportunities for PSTs to immerse themselves in communities and classrooms that differ from theirs and can learn about diverse cultures and difference in non-deficit and affirming ways outside of their student teaching methods courses. Such learning appears to be best done in culturally diverse schools like Lindsey’s SYOSP. What Lindsey learned from her students and cooperating teacher was invaluable. Additionally, the ECE program wherein/by Lindsey learned about literacy teaching from an abolitionist frame best prepared her as not only an advocate but as a culturally relevant teacher who was able to then practice “good teaching” (Ladson-Billings, 1999) in the field (i.e., student teaching). Lindsey’s story also speaks to the value of having a cooperating teacher to model teaching culturally relevant children’s literature from which she was able to learn and practice doing.

### ***Educational Researchers***

From PSTs’ stories and the research narratives of this inquiry the following implications for educational researchers were identified: 1) need for more studies of individual PSTs’ narratives; and 2) need for more longitudinal studies of individual PSTs.

**Studies of Individual PSTs’ Narratives.** This narrative inquiry is done within the Connelly and Clandinin (1999) *stories to live by* framework. In so doing, such an inquiry offers educational researchers space to explore PSTs’ personal practical knowledge and experience, life on the professional knowledge landscape (i.e., methods courses, SYOSP), and PSTs’ identity stories. Clandinin (2013) states, “a concept of stories to live by allows us to speak of the stories that each of us lives out and tells of who we are, and are becoming. This highlights the



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multiplicity of each of our lives - lives composed, lived out and told around multiple plotlines, over time, in different relationships and on different landscapes” (p. 53). Through this type of inquiry into PST literacy teaching choices, educational researchers can hear and learn from PSTs in a more holistic manner. For example, from Sarah’s stories we learned that she viewed literacy as a method, and her approach to literacy teaching was behaviorist with an understanding of children’s literature as teaching tools. What narrative inquiry into Sarah’s stories helps researchers to uncover were the influences or the backstory to her knowledge - views and understandings. Sarah’s backstory shared about how she learned to love reading and writing. Featured in her stories were persons who served as her early teachers (i.e., her teacher cultura) and how they taught her and shaped her way of knowing and doing - her teacher identity.

From the inquiry into multiple PSTs’ stories, educational researchers are able to explore the many parts (i.e., influences, landscapes, identities, etc.) that make up the individual PST alongside other individual PSTs across similar landscapes. Educational researchers further learn from PSTs through exploration into their chosen story(ies) and work to identify if and how those parts play into the decisions that PSTs make around how and what to teach - specifically, for this inquiry, literacy and children’s literature. For example, when looking across this inquiry’s multiple PST participants’ stories, we are able to research and learn from PSTs from rural and suburban settings and identify similarities in chosen views of literacy and literacy teaching, as well as differences. This suggests that such research works to reduce generalizations through the provision of specific examples from individuals. Which supports earlier claims around narrative inquiry into *stories to live by* giving voice and author(ity) to PSTs about their teacher(ing) decisions.

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**Longitudinal Studies of Individual PSTs.** The composing of research narratives around PST participants' *stories to live by* requires longitudinal study. Such study is required because within narrative inquiry into PSTs decisions, educational researchers have to live with and learn from their research participants across the research landscape. Within the research space, researchers and participants live and tell stories in/through developed fiduciary relationships. As I think back on the research relationships of this inquiry, I am reminded of the importance of having/taking time to learn about and hear from individuals. Over time, as the researcher in the inquiry, I was able to see PST participants becoming teachers and beginning to make decisions about their teaching that I had not previously witnessed. The sharing of such stories appears to follow the progression of their growth. When the inquiry first began, participants were student teaching. The collection of storied data across the research landscape moved through student teaching and concluded with the end of their student teaching experience and applying for and accepting teaching positions.

For example, Lindsey's stories towards the later part of the inquiry began to shift with her thinking about schools and administration being supportive of her teaching philosophy and ontology. During our last interview she shared about, "making sure I'm asking about things they're going to tell me how much they support those communities and the people in their communities." Lindsey, having lived the experience of working in a student teaching environment that supported its communities and her seeing how valuable that was for both her and her students, wanted to ensure that her new teaching environment provided the same. As a researcher, it was beneficial to have the space and time to see and explore how Lindsey's lived experiences were influencing her decisions about her future teaching.

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## NARRATIVE INQUIRY

## APPENDICES

**Appendix A***Inquiry Timeline*

Spring Semester 2021	Field Texts	Field
<b>Week 1</b> (ending 1/29/21)	Recruitment of participants. Collection of Participant Consent Forms	Canvas and email
<b>Weeks 2</b> (ending 2/5/21) <b>Narrative Interview #1</b> – <b>Participant #1</b>	Recruitment of Participants Collection of Participant Consent Forms  Narrative Interview as field text- Individual interview Participant(s) Conversation(s) – semi-structured interview; interested in hearing PST’s stories around their childhood literacy; experiences and understandings around childhood literacy – in and out of school	Canvas and email  Zoom
<b>Weeks 3 &amp; 4</b> (ending 2/19/21) <b>Transcription</b>	Recruitment of Participants Collection of Participant Consent Forms  Transcriptions as field text Journal Writing as field text - researcher’s stories offering a blend of detailed field notes interwoven with journal reflections on the experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 103) and analytic memos	Canvas and email
<b>Weeks 4 &amp; 5</b> (ending 2/26/21) <b>Narrative Interview #1</b> – <b>Participant #2</b>	Recruitment of participants Collection of Participant Consent Forms  Narrative Interview as field text- Individual interview Participant(s) Conversation(s) – semi-structured interview; interested in hearing PST’s stories around their childhood literacy; experiences and understandings around childhood literacy – in and out of school	Canvas and email  Zoom

## NARRATIVE INQUIRY

<p><b>Week 5</b> (ending 2/26/21)  <b>Narrative Interview #2</b>  – <b>Participant #1</b></p>	<p>Individual interview  Participant(s) Conversation(s) – semi-structured interview; seeking clarification and deeper understanding around what was shared during our first interview and interested in hearing PST’s stories around Elementary Literacy Teachers – interested in hearing PSTs’ stories around a particular elementary literacy teacher they remember; thoughts about themselves as an elementary literacy teacher; elementary literacy teacher(s) they currently work with.</p>	
<p><b>Weeks 5 &amp; 6</b> (ending 3/5/21)  <b>Transcription</b></p>	<p>Transcriptions as field text  Journal writing as field text - researcher’s stories offering a blend of detailed field notes interwoven with journal reflections on the experience (Clandinin &amp; Connelly, 2000, p. 103) and analytic memos</p>	
<p><b>Week 7</b> (ending 3/12/21)  <b>Narrative Interview #2</b>  – <b>Participant #2</b></p>	<p>Individual interview  Participant(s) Conversation(s) – semi-structured interview; seeking clarification and deeper understanding around what was shared during our first interview and interested in hearing PST’s stories around Elementary Literacy Teachers – interested in hearing PSTs’ stories around a particular elementary literacy teacher they remember; thoughts about themselves as an elementary literacy teacher; elementary literacy teacher(s) they currently work with.</p>	
<p><b>Weeks 7 &amp; 8</b> (ending 3/19/21)  <b>Transcription</b></p>	<p>Transcription as field text  Journal writing as field text - researcher’s stories offering a blend of detailed field notes interwoven with journal reflections on the experience (Clandinin &amp; Connelly, 2000, p. 103)</p>	

## NARRATIVE INQUIRY

<p><b>Week 9</b> (ending 3/26/21) <b>Group Conversation #1</b></p>	<p>Conversation as field text – Small Group Participant(s) Narrations Researcher as active listener and creator of interim research texts around PSTs’ conversations about literacy, teaching, and the professional knowledge landscape – SYOSP</p>	<p>Zoom</p>
<p><b>Weeks 9 &amp; 10</b> (ending 4/2/21) <b>Transcription</b></p>	<p>Transcription as field text Journal writing as field text – researcher’s stories offering a blend of detailed field notes interwoven with journal reflections on the experience (Clandinin &amp; Connelly, 2000, p. 103) and analytic memos</p>	
<p><b>Week 11</b> (ending 4/9/21) <b>Narrative Interview #3</b> <b>– All Participants</b></p>	<p>Individual interview Participant(s) Conversation(s) – semi-structured interview; seeking clarification and deeper understanding around what was shared during our first and second interviews, and interested in hearing PST’s stories around Children’s Literature – interested in hearing PSTs’ stories around children’s literature that they have shared; how the literature was selected; how the literature was shared.</p>	<p>Zoom</p>
<p><b>Weeks 11 &amp; 12</b> (ending 4/16/21)</p>	<p>Transcription as field text Journal writing as field text – researcher’s stories offering a blend of detailed field notes interwoven with journal reflections on the experience (Clandinin &amp; Connelly, 2000, p. 103) and analytic memos</p>	
<p><b>Week 13</b> (ending 4/23/21) <b>Group Conversation #2</b></p>	<p>Conversation as field text – Small Group Participant(s) Conversations Researcher poses semi-structured interview questions created of interim research texts from previous small group conversations around PSTs’ discussions about literacy</p>	<p>Zoom</p>

## NARRATIVE INQUIRY

	teaching and the professional knowledge landscape	
<b>Weeks 13 &amp; 14 (ending 4/30/21)</b>	<p>Transcription as field text</p> <p>Journal writing as field text – researcher’s stories offering a blend of detailed field notes interwoven with journal reflections on the experience (Clandinin &amp; Connelly, 2000, p. 103) and analytic memos</p>	
<b>Week 14 (ending 4/30/21) – Week 34 (ending 8/6/21)</b>	<p>Movement from field texts to final research text</p> <p><i>Narrative coding of field texts</i> (Clandinin &amp; Connelly, 2000, p. 131)</p> <p>Dissertation as research text – divided into chapters – Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Participant A story, Participant B story, Participant C story, Teaching Contexts, Exploring Possibilities – Researcher’s arguments</p>	

## NARRATIVE INQUIRY

### Appendix B

#### *Interview Protocol*

##### *Script*

##### Introduction

I want to thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. To begin, I must address a few things before the interview begins:

- You are voluntarily participating in this study and agree to the interview being recorded.
- Review signed Consent Form to Participate in a Research Study with participant.
- If at any time you would like to stop the interview or need a break just let me know.
- If at any time you would like to discontinue this interview just let me know.
- I anticipate the interview to last 45-60 minutes.
- This is a narrative interview and includes semi-structured interview questions to guide the interview with space for you to share your stories

Now, I would like to give you an overview of what to expect in this interview. I am interviewing you as a part of a qualitative research study that is interested in the understandings and experiences of preservice teachers like you, those who are preparing to be teachers of literacy in elementary classrooms. This is one of three (3) interviews – over the Spring 2021 semester – intended to provide data for analysis in support of my dissertation research questions focused on elementary preservice teachers' literacy education practice across educational and professional knowledge landscapes.

I want to encourage you to feel free to talk about anything that comes to mind as we move through the questions. The purpose of the questions is to elicit your stories. I am not looking for any specific response(s); instead, I am eager to learn about your thoughts, experiences, and understandings as it relates to elementary literacy education.

#### **Guiding Questions – Childhood Literacy**

1. What is literacy? How would you describe or define literacy to someone who is not familiar with it (i.e., someone other than an elementary teacher)?
2. What is your first memory of literacy from childhood?
3. What do you remember about the experiences of reading and writing during childhood? Inside and/or outside of school.
4. What did you enjoy about reading and writing in elementary school? And outside of school?
5. What about reading and writing during childhood made it enjoyable or not enjoyable?

## NARRATIVE INQUIRY

### Guiding Questions – Elementary Literacy Teachers

1. Did you have a favorite (or least favorite) literacy teacher in elementary school? Would you tell me about him/her/them? What was it that made him/her/them a favorite (or least favorite)?
2. How would you describe yourself as a future elementary teacher of literacy?
3. How did your favorite (or least favorite) literacy teacher influence you?
4. What are some of your best (or worst) memories from their class(es)?
5. Do you have a favorite (or least favorite) host literacy teacher in SYOSP? Would you tell me about him/her/them? What is it that makes him/her/them a favorite (or least favorite)?

### Guiding Questions – Children’s Literature

1. When you think about books that you read or that were shared with you as a child/student in elementary school (grades 1-6) or outside of school:
  - a. Did you have a favorite book or book series? Would you tell me about it/them?
2. What was it about that book/series that made it/them a favorite? Would you share that book/series with your future students? Why (How)? Why (How) not?
3. As a future teacher of elementary literacy. What are some books you would *really* like to share with your students? Why these and why not others?
4. What concerns you most (or least) when you are selecting books for your students?
5. You have taken a class on children’s literature, and you are sharing literature with students in your SYOSP. How are you feeling about your preparedness to share children’s literature with elementary students? Is there anything missing? If so, what?



## NARRATIVE INQUIRY

### Appendix C

#### *Focus Group Protocol*

##### *Script*

Hello and welcome to our group conversation. Thanks for taking the time to join us to talk about preservice teachers' practice in elementary literacy education. My name is Christina U. King. I am a graduate student researcher at the University of Missouri. I am interested in learning from you about your thoughts, experiences, and understandings about elementary literacy education practice – specifically critical literacy and diverse literature for children teaching practices.

You were invited because you are all senior-year, elementary education undergraduate students (preservice teachers) in SYOSP (student teaching practice) who have previously taken and successfully completed courses on elementary literacy education – and most recently, LTC 4241: Diverse Literature for Children and Youth.

There are no wrong answers but differing points of view. Please feel free to share your point of view even if it differs from what others have said. Keep in mind that we are just as interested in negative comments as positive comments, and at times the negative comments are the most helpful.

Our group conversations are recorded because I do not want to miss any of your comments. People often say helpful things in these discussions, and I cannot write fast enough to get them all down. We will be on a first name basis during these group conversations; however, your real names will not be used in my reports. You may be assured of complete confidentiality. The transcripts of these conversations will be used by me as data for the purpose of addressing my dissertation research questions.

I am hopeful that during/within our group conversations we can discuss elementary literacy and children's literature.

##### *Conversation 1*

Well, let us begin. We have shared our names upon signing on to Zoom. Let us find out some more about each other by going around our group (In order of Zoom images). Tell us your name and where your SYOSP, your host classroom, and school are located.

##### *Conversations 1-3*

Our conversations are semi-structured and guided by the following questions:

##### Guiding Questions – Childhood Literacy

1. Can we talk about literacy? What is literacy?
2. What does literacy look like in your cooperating school?

## NARRATIVE INQUIRY

### Guiding Questions – Elementary Literacy Teachers

1. How would you describe the role of an elementary literacy teacher? An elementary teacher of literacy does...?
2. What does a good (bad) elementary literacy teacher “look” like? What do they teach? What do they not teach? How do they teach?

### Guiding Questions – Children’s Literature/Diverse Literature for Children

1. When you think about books that you read or that were shared with you as a child/student in elementary school (grades 1-6), in or out of school:
  - a) What were some of your favorite books? Characters? Stories?
  - b) Who were some of your favorite authors? Illustrators?
  - c) Who do you remember the story being mostly about?
  - d) Who do you remember hearing or learning least about in books?
2. What was it about that book/series that made it/them a favorite? Would you share that book/series with your future students? Why (How)? Why (How) not?

**Appendix D***Teacher Trading Card*

# My Teacher Trading Card

IRB Project Number: 2039423

Principal Investigator: Christina Ursula King

Focus Group Conversation Prompt



Your Name Here

- What's your hometown?
- Where's your current SYOSP placement? (School name and location/city or town)
- What's your preferred grade-level to teach?
- What do you want students to learn in/through your literacy (ELA) classes?
- What type of learning environment would your classroom provide?
- What are some of your favorite books you would like to teach with?

Running head: NARRATIVE INQUIRY

## **Appendix E**

### *Member Check Example*

Participant 1 – SB, Interview #2, Guiding Questions – Revised

1. Can you describe for me what your literacy education (teaching of reading and writing) roles or responsibilities as a preservice teacher in SYOSP look like?
2. Can you describe for me what the literacy education (teaching of reading and writing) roles or responsibilities of your host classroom teacher look like?
3. I remember from our first conversation about childhood/elementary experiences, you mentioned your teacher from 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade as one of your “best” literacy teachers, and you shared that he created a welcoming classroom environment where you could read comfortably, had a great classroom library, and promoted independent writing time.
  - a. Would you say that he was your favorite literacy teacher (of all time)?
  - b. Can you describe for me a favorite literacy teacher – real or imagined? What do they teach? How do they teach it? Why?
4. Can you describe for me your future role as an elementary literacy teacher? What about your future classroom? Can you describe that for me?

## Running head: NARRATIVE INQUIRY

## Appendix F

## Participant 1 Analytic Memo

Sarah (pseudonym)

IRB #2039423

Stories to Live by, Stories to Teach with: A Narrative Inquiry into Preservice Teachers' Understandings of Teaching Elementary Literacy with Diverse Children's Literature

Analytic Memo

Analysis of participant's storied experiences as data, collected through interview for interpretation and exploration of emerging themes relative to research question: How do elementary PSTs' "stories to live by" shape their orientation towards certain literary teaching practices?

Interview: 01\_29\_2021\_SB interview 1

January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2021 6:04 PM

Zoom recording and transcript Zoom ID: 979 8052 7946

Interview Participant: Sophia "Sophie" Barnes - SB

Interviewer Participant: Christina U. King

Summary

Interview Participant was asked to share about childhood literacy experiences and understanding of what literacy is. Within this initial conversation/interview/storied experience space, my increasing interest in hearing more about the participant's autonomy (or lack thereof) within these spaces – childhood and current SYOSP – has emerged. I am wanting to hear more about SB's ability to make decisions about what is selected for reading? How it is shared/taught?

Literacy within the SYOSP space *across literary landscape*

39

00:05:30.150 --> 00:05:42.930

Sophie Barnes: Fifth grade, I would say it's different I mean we have been doing a read loud together, which is a chapter book. *It's like a mystery chapter book that my teacher will read.*

40

00:05:44.700 --> 00:05:59.280

Sophie Barnes: And we all just listen and then we just started small reading groups, so, I'm taking three groups and she has two and then we each group are reading a different chapter book together, so I guess, those are different.

41

00:06:00.750 --> 00:06:14.640

Sophie Barnes: They don't have any pictures but they're good chapter books for kids to popcorn read, so I think that's a good example children's literature, I think, in small reading groups because that's just what I had in elementary school to.

*On Becoming a teacher of Literacy: Mov't Across Personal Childhood to Student teaching Landscapes.*

Commented [KCUH]: I am interested in knowing if SB has had an opportunity to select the reading the material and share it with the students? Or is she just listening along with the students? Has she and her SYOSP classroom teacher discussed when she might take on the responsibility of selecting the reading and sharing reading selection with the class. I am curious about how SB is feeling about her role in the SYOSP classroom.

- \* Possible plot line "On becoming" a teacher. (drit. lit.)
- \* Witnessing SB's movement from student to teacher.

## NARRATIVE INQUIRY

Sarah (pseudonym)

IRB #2039423

Stories to Live by, Stories to Teach with: A Narrative Inquiry into Preservice Teachers' Understandings of Teaching Elementary Literacy with Diverse Children's Literature

**SB Analytic Memo #1**

Interview: 01\_29\_2021\_SB interview 1

January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2021 6:04 PM

Zoom recording and transcript      Zoom ID: 979 8052 7946

Interview Participant: Sophia "Sophie" Barnes - SB

Interviewer Participant: Christina U. King

**Summary**

The participant's storied experiences are collected as data through interview for interpretation and exploration of possible plot lines or emerging themes relative to research question: How do elementary PSTs' "stories to live by" shape their orientation towards certain literary teaching practices?

Sophie (SB) is interview participant 1. Sophie is one of three children. She's the eldest and has two younger brothers. Sophie considers her family to be a "big one" and has close relationships with extended family members, especially her cousins who are close in age. Sophie moved from Portland, Oregon to St. Louis, Missouri when in elementary school. Her family still resides in St. Louis. Sophie's mom is a teacher. I don't know that she has mentioned her dad's profession. Sophie's mom has played an integral part in her life. She credits her mom with first introducing her to reading and children's books and still looks to her mom for advice on how to be a teacher so to speak.

This is Sophie's last year of school in the College of Education at MU. She is an elementary education undergraduate student or preservice teacher who is completing her Senior Year On-Site Program (SYOSP) or student teaching at a local Columbia Public School (CPS) elementary school.

This first interview covered stories told by Sophie across personal practical landscapes – childhood literacy, childhood literature, childhood teachers, and professional knowledge landscapes - SYOSP literacy, SYOSP teachers. She was asked to share about childhood literacy experiences and understanding of what literacy is. Within this initial conversation/Interview/storied experience space, my increasing interest in hearing more about the participant's autonomy (or lack thereof) within and across landscapes – childhood and current SYOSP – has emerged. I am wanting to hear more about SB's ability to make decisions about: How to teach literacy? What is selected for reading? How it is shared/taught? I am wanting learn more about SB as the teacher. I'm wondering if she has thought about this too. She's definitely within the border space of preservice teacher/undergraduate student/future teacher.

\* Online setting timeline  
\* face-to-face timeline

## NARRATIVE INQUIRY

## Literacy within the SYOSP space

39

00:05:30.150 → 00:05:42.930

Sophie Barnes: Fifth grade, I would say it's different I mean we have been doing a read loud together, which is a chapter book. **It's like a mystery chapter book that my teacher will read.**

40

00:05:44.700 → 00:05:59.280

Sophie Barnes: **And we all just listen and then we just started small reading groups.** So, I'm taking three groups and she has two and then we each group are reading a different chapter book together, so I guess, those are different.

41

00:06:00.750 → 00:06:14.640

Sophie Barnes: They don't have any pictures but they're good chapter books for kids to popcorn read, so I think that's a good example children's literature, I think, in small reading groups because that's just what I had in elementary school to.

I am interested in exploring with SB – What is the relationship? Is there relationship between SB's knowledge communities (i.e., SB has identified home (her mother and her family) and school (specifically 2<sup>nd</sup> grade) as reading knowledge communities) and what Craig (1992) refers to as the “competing interpretations” of what constitutes a “great” teacher.

## Literacy within SB's childhood space

48

00:06:57.600 → 00:07:15.600

Christina King: from childhood or, I guess, I think I heard kind of a reference there, can you tell me what is your first memory from, and this can be from either in school or out of school of like childhood literacy?

49

00:07:16.320 → 00:07:18.840

Sophie Barnes: I would say um.

50

00:07:20.970 → 00:07:28.740

Sophie Barnes: I remember learning to read in kindergarten and **my mom is a fifth-grade teacher**, so I remember **her coming into my kindergarten classroom** and.

51

00:07:29.340 → 00:07:40.320

Commented [K4 U1]: I am interested in knowing if SB has had an opportunity to select the reading the material and share it with the students? Or is she just listening along with the students? Has she and her SYOSP classroom ever discussed when she might take on the responsibility of selecting the reading and sharing reading selection with the class. I am curious about how SB is feeling about her role in the SYOSP classroom.

Commented [K4 U2]: Reference to her mother as a teacher. When asked about first memory of literacy – childhood literacy.

## NARRATIVE INQUIRY

Sophie Barnes: me showing her or like reading a book to her, which was exciting and help them, or what but, but that is something that sticks with me and also.

61

00:09:16.140 --&gt; 00:09:24.090

Christina King: What is it that you would keep... you talk, maybe a little more about what is it about reading that you know that excited you? That you really enjoyed?

62

00:09:24.540 --&gt; 00:09:30.180

Sophie Barnes: um I would say again, because my mom is a fifth-grade teacher, she would.

63

00:09:30.210 --&gt; 00:09:35.580

Sophie Barnes: constantly be giving me books for her classroom that she would want me to read before.

64

00:09:36.480 --&gt; 00:09:50.190

Sophie Barnes: She would have her kids read them in her class or I could read, along with her students. Um so, I read a lot of that age group, like the young adult chapter books, I read so many of those, um.

65

00:09:51.480 --&gt; 00:09:54.480

Sophie Barnes: I just like I like a lot of Realistic fiction.

66

00:09:55.980 --&gt; 00:09:56.250

Sophie Barnes: um.

67

00:09:57.390 --&gt; 00:10:01.110

Sophie Barnes: I think, just because my family was super into reading that's what.

68

00:10:02.370 --&gt; 00:10:04.620

Sophie Barnes: got me excited about reading.

When asked about...

81

00:11:05.700 --&gt; 00:11:21.780

Commented [KCU3]: ?

Commented [KCU4R3]: In rereading this response, I have a clearer understanding of what SB is sharing. She is talking about her experience of reading books to her mom. She alludes to helping her mom here too. This she clarifies later on.

Commented [KCU5]: When asked about what it is about reading that excited her (as a child) she responded with telling about her mother "a fifth-grade teacher" "constantly be giving me books..."



## NARRATIVE INQUIRY

Christina King: In thinking about learning to read and I guess we'll add in writing here because I'm thinking of literacy sort of incorporating both...um so, in thinking about learning to read and write during your childhood.

82

00:11:25.140 --> 00:11:37.140

Christina King: I know you mentioned your family. But, was there anything else, maybe that made it enjoyable or maybe not enjoyable? Sounds like it was more enjoyable but.

83

00:11:37.620 --> 00:11:53.100

Sophie Barnes: Enjoyable just because we had a lot of books at home that I love to reread like picture books and I have two younger brothers, so I was reading books to them, reading to myself, so that I had that at home and then at school, I had.

84

00:11:54.180 --> 00:11:57.690

Sophie Barnes: Great teachers have had good classroom libraries.

85

00:11:59.010 --> 00:12:07.500

Sophie Barnes: See I had good experiences. I don't think I really had any negative ones, except for just being nervous about reading out loud, but I don't think.

87

00:12:11.850 --> 00:12:24.630

Christina King: Okay, can you tell me? You use the word and I always like to kind of hone in on the word sometimes that you use... the word "great." For like great teachers. Can you describe...

88

00:12:25.200 --> 00:12:36.210

Christina King: A great literacy teacher for me? And it could be a fifth-grade teacher or it could be a second-grade. I know you mentioned second grade. It can... you... How would you describe that person?

89

00:12:37.680 --> 00:12:50.190

Sophie Barnes: Oh, um in third and fourth grade, I had the same teacher for both those years, so I got to know him really well and I remember, he would read.

90

00:12:50.910 --> 00:13:14.730

## NARRATIVE INQUIRY

Sophie Barnes: chapter books to us. Like to the class and we would all sit on the carpet and be able to like lay down, while he read chapter books and I love doing that and then he also had a good classroom library, with a lot of series books and books that my teacher has now that I recognize.

91

00:13:16.650 --&gt; 00:13:23.940

Sophie Barnes: And just promote it, a lot of like independent reading time both and third and fourth grade, along with like independent writing time.

92

00:13:25.440 --&gt; 00:13:35.700

Sophie Barnes: which I prefer because I liked the reading and writing way more than math which I struggled in third and fourth grade, so I think that's why he's one of my favorites.

**Analysis**

Analysis of SB's storied experiences as data, collected through interview for interpretation and exploration of emerging themes relative to research question: How do elementary PSTs' "stories to live by" shape their orientation towards certain literary teaching practices?

Thinking of her shared storied experiences across the childhood literacy and SYOSP literacy landscapes, and exploring along the plot lines of autonomy or becoming a teacher or transformation has allowed me to witness SB's movement – through thoughts/shares – from student to teacher. Within the SYOSP landscape, SB mentioned (line 40) "And we all just listen and then we started small reading groups." As she described this moment/experience, I began to think and wonder if SB has had any opportunity to select the reading material? And whether or not SB has the opportunity to read to/share with students herself? Or is the selecting/reading/sharing of literature the sole responsibility of the host or cooperating teacher? Is SB just listening along with the classroom students? Has she and her SYOSP classroom teacher discussed when she might take on the responsibility of selecting the reading and sharing reading selection(s) with the class? SB has mentioned that her SYOSP classroom teacher has given her the opportunity to work with small groups. In line 40, SB shares "So, I'm taking three groups and she has two and then we each group are reading different chapter book together."

Across or within SB's personal practical knowledge landscape and SB's knowledge communities (i.e., SB has identified her home – her mother and her family) and school – specifically 2<sup>nd</sup> grade – as her reading knowledge communities, and presents what Craig (1992) refers to as the "competing interpretations" of what constitutes a "great" teacher. A great teacher is? Who is this person? What does he or she do? SB's stories told across/within her childhood literacy landscape share a recurring theme of her mother as teacher – both her personal teacher and what she has come to see, experience, and know as a "great teacher."

*So what? COVID?*

*Tell me about a time you took the lead.*

Commented [KCU6]: Here SB has referred to her current SYOSP teacher and made a connection between the two classroom spaces – her childhood classroom space(s) with a "great" teacher and her current classroom teacher. They both appear to have "a good classroom library"

Commented [KCU7]: SB describes a great literacy teacher as someone who reads to their students within a warm and comfortable environment and has a collection of literature that students would enjoy reading, and provides room for their students to enjoy reading the literature and writing about it.

Commented [KCU8]: I use the term "host" teacher a lot. This has a connotation of the preservice teacher as more of a guest and possible onlooker than an active teacher – collaborating or cooperating teacher – within the SYOSP landscape. I am curious about what term that participants use. This would be a good question to pose during our group conversation.

## NARRATIVE INQUIRY

Outside of her reference to her mother, family, and home as influences on her childhood literacy, SB mentions enjoying in-school classroom spaces that had "good libraries." In line 84, SB says, "Great teachers have had good classroom libraries." Further, when prompted to share more about classroom teachers as great teachers, SB shared about her 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, whose name she either didn't mention or couldn't recollect. As she describes him, some identifiers, so to speak, of who/what is a great teacher of literacy in her opinion emerge. The first identifier she describes, is a person who reads to the class. She remembered this experience of her teacher reading to her and her classmates fondly, sharing (lines 89 – 90), "he would read chapter books to us. Like to the class and we would all sit on the carpet and be able to like lay down, while he read chapter books and I love doing that." The second identifier SB mentions is the classroom library. A great teacher has a good library and her 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher did not disappoint. She shares in line 90, "he also had a good classroom library with a lot of series books and books that my teacher (reference to her SYOSP teacher) has now that I recognize. The third identifier SB mentions is that great teachers (line 91), "just promote [reading], a lot of like independent reading time both in third and fourth grade, along with like independent writing time."

Commented [KCU9]: I need to check in with SB about this. I am curious if she is able to recollect this teacher's name. He would have taught her for two grade-levels in elementary school. I am curious if she can name him.

My first meeting with SB has led me to revise the interview protocol for her upcoming second interview. Attempting to build on the plot line – on becoming a teacher: transformation from student to teacher, I pose the following questions:

*growth awareness*

1. Can you describe for me what your literacy education (teaching of reading and writing) roles or responsibilities as a preservice teacher in SYOSP look like?
2. Can you describe for me what the literacy education (teaching of reading and writing roles or responsibilities of your host classroom teacher looks like?
3. I remember from our first conversation about childhood or elementary experiences, you mentioned your teacher from 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade as one of your "best" literacy teachers, and you shared that he created a welcoming classroom environment where you could read comfortably, had a great classroom library, and promoted independent writing time.
  - a. Would you say that he was your favorite literacy teacher (of all time)?
  - b. Can you describe for me a favorite literacy teacher – real or imagined? What do they teach? How do they teach it? Why?
4. Can you describe for me your future role as an elementary literacy teacher? What about your future classroom – can you describe that for me?

Commented [KCU10]: As I am rereading this word "can," feel like I should have replaced it with "would." Although, both words open up the possibility of the participant saying "no" or "nothing" in response. Perhaps the use of the phrase "how would" works better. Just a thought.

Commented [KCU11]: My name. Not necessarily hers.

## VITA

Christina U. King immigrated to the United States from Trinidad and Tobago on December 12<sup>th</sup>, 1987. In 1994, she graduated from Redan High School, Stone Mountain, Georgia, and entered LaGrange College in LaGrange, Georgia in 1995. She transferred to Georgia State University in 1997. She received her Bachelor of Arts in African American Studies with a minor in Journalism – Public Relations from Georgia State University, Georgia in 2002. Following graduation, she held positions as a paraprofessional and library media clerk at public elementary and public charter elementary schools in Newton County Schools and DeKalb County Schools in Georgia. In 2003, Christina completed her Master of Education degree program in library teaching at Cambridge College, Massachusetts. She taught as a teacher librarian and library media specialist at public schools in DeKalb County Schools, Georgia; Austin Independent School District, Texas; and Anderson Schools, South Carolina. She also taught as an adjunct instructor in the College of Education at Clemson University, South Carolina, and as a graduate instructor in the College of Education and Human Development at University of Missouri – Columbia. Christina entered the doctoral program of Learning, Teaching, and Curriculum in the College of Education and Human Development at the University of Missouri – Columbia in 2016.