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ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation, *Re-Imagining Professional Development: A Study of Teacher Educators' Integration of a Web Seminar Series as a Component of University-Based Teacher Education*, by Christi L. Pace was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Doctor of Philosophy, in the College of Education, Georgia State University. The Dissertation Advisory Committee and the student's Department Chairperson, as representatives of the faculty, certify that this dissertation has met all standards of excellence and scholarship as determined by the faculty.

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RE-IMAGINING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A STUDY OF TEACHER EDUCATORS' INTEGRATION OF A WEB SEMINAR SERIES AS A COMPONENT OF UNIVERISTY-BASED TEACHER EDUCATION

by

CHRISTI L. PACE

Under the Direction of Dr. Peggy Albers

ABSTRACT

Internet platforms such as Blackboard Collaborate, Desire2Learn, and Moodle have revolutionized how educators communicate by creating collaborative opportunities once limited only to the face-to-face settings (King, 2001; LaJoie, Garcia, Berdugo, Márquex, Espíndola, & Nakamura, 2006). Using computer-mediated communication tools, teachers can now participate in quality, ongoing, collaborative, and situated learning. While an abundance of research exists pertaining to teacher professional development, little is known about the use of a web seminar as a venue for online professional development. Even less is known about teacher educators' integration of a professional development web seminar as a component of the courses they teach. The purpose of this qualitative study, then, was to understand teacher educators' use of an open access web seminar, Global Conversations in Literacy Research (GCLR), whose goal is to disseminate cutting-edge literacy research and improve literacy practices within their language and literacy teacher education courses. This qualitative study sought to answer the following:

(a) Why do literacy teacher educators use online professional development web seminars within their courses? (b) How do literacy teacher educators use online professional development web seminars within their courses, especially those presented by Global Conversations in Literacy Research? and (c) What value do literacy teacher educators see in working with the web seminars in their classes, especially those presented by GCLR? This study was grounded in critical situated learning, which includes theories of critical literacy (Janks, 2000), situated learning (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989), collaborative learning (Borko, 2004; Brown et al., 1989; Lave & Wenger, 1991), and legitimate peripheral participation (Brown et al., 1989). Within an interview study design, the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Merriam, 2009) was used to analyze data collected from semi-structured interviews and documents, namely teacher educators' course syllabi.

INDEX WORDS: Online teacher professional development, web seminars, teacher collaboration, online learning communities

RE-IMAGINING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A STUDY OF TEACHER
EDUCATORS' INTEGRATION OF A WEB SEMINAR SERIES AS A COMPONENT OF
UNIVERSITY-BASED TEACHER EDUCATION

by

Christi L. Pace

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in

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in

the College of Education

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2015

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my loving husband, Wayne, and our two sons, Zachary and Noah. Your loving support and can-do attitude throughout this odyssey has given me strength to see this project to fruition. You have walked with me through the triumphs and challenges, always encouraging and never losing faith in me. Thank you for allowing me the space to grow and loving me enough to help make my dream a reality. I love you all most preciousy.

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CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM

Background

According to Gee (2001/2004), language cannot be separated from its social and cultural existence, nor can it be confined only to reading and writing. Rather, it must embody language in all its capacities— reading, writing, speaking, thinking, listening, viewing, and interacting. “Such a broad perspective of reading”, Gee states, “is essential if we are to speak to issues of access and equity in schools and workplaces” (p. 116). The traditional view of reading as a skill for decoding text, therefore, has undergone a metamorphosis.

What we once recognized as reading has become literacy. Where we once held a book, we often hold a screen. Technology has introduced us to a new discourse, one which demands new ways of decoding, interacting, comprehending, and responding to text that are more encompassing than traditional definitions of literacy and what it means to be literate. Technology has changed forever the ways we produce and consume texts, making new literacies involving the Internet a critical area for literacy teachers to focus their instruction (Leu, Kizer, Coiro, & Cammack, 2004).

A broader view of literacy also positions teacher educators and teachers to think intentionally about our own dispositions, literacy pedagogy, and the instructional practices we use to teach 21st century learners. Questions about how knowledge is constructed, whose ideas and voices get heard, what counts as discourse, who gets to decide (Janks, 2000), all challenge dominant ways of thinking about and designing technology-integrated professional learning opportunities. Further, the continual and rapid evolution of technology places us as teacher educators and teachers within a perpetual cycle of learning, in order to stay abreast of these changes (Leu et al., 2004; Yoon, 2003). The following overview illuminates these advancements,

within a very brief time period, that have occurred regarding technology use and illustrates just how significant the Internet has become in our lives.

Of the more than 7 billion people living in the world today, over 2 billion (<http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm>) use the Internet (De Argaez, 2001-2013). Also, since 2000, all seven continents have experienced remarkable growth in the number of people accessing the Internet, with Africa (3,606.7 %), the Middle East (2,639.9 %), and Latin America/the Caribbean (1,310.8 %) experiencing the most growth. This unprecedented increase in Internet access creates opportunities for international collaboration, wherein people previously bound by different locations and time zones can come together in a single virtual space. With such globalization, according to Simonson, Smaldino, Albright, and Zvacek (2012), “The concept of distance will disappear as insignificant, and the idea of interaction will replace it” (p. 27). Using Internet platforms such as Blackboard Collaborate, WebCT, and Moodle, computer-mediated communication has revolutionized how we communicate with one another by creating collaborative opportunities beyond the face-to-face classroom (King, 2001; LaJoie, Garcia, Berdugo, Márquex, Espíndola, & Nakamura, 2006). By eliminating time and space barriers, therefore, computer-mediated communication has reshaped the potential for global knowledge sharing and collaborative learning.

With increased Internet access, the desire for postsecondary online learning continues to soar in the United States, and the rapid proliferation of student and teacher distance education via the Internet has made online learning one of the most popularized topics within the educational technology arena today (Means, Toyama, Murphy, & Bakia, 2010). According to *Grade Change: Tracking Online Education in the United States*, 2013, The Online Learning Consortium’s eleventh annual report of postsecondary online learning, approximately 7 million college/university students

take online courses (Allen & Seaman, 2014). The report defines online courses as those in which 80% or more of course content is delivered using the Internet. This eleventh and most recent report includes 2013 survey data collected from a sample of 4,726 U.S. college/university chief academic administrators, of which 2,831 responded. Despite reported decreases in the overall student enrollment rate (2.5% annually compounded from 2002-2012), the rate of students registered in one or more online courses continues to grow (16.1% annually compounded from 2002-2012). Such an increase indicates not only a need, but a desire for online learning in higher education.

The increased fervor for online learning has also extended to educators seeking professional development. Within educators' busy, fast-paced practice of preparing lessons, teaching, and the many other duties with which they are responsible, finding time to engage in quality professional development is difficult. The attraction, thus, to "on demand" and "just in time learning" has led to the burgeoning of online venues such as social/media outlets (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, blogs), wikis, podcasts, iTunes, TED talks, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), and web seminars as avenues for teacher professional development, collaboration, and knowledge sharing.

The emergence of online learning venues such as web seminars, thus, combined with greater access to the Internet, has created previously unimagined possibilities for teacher professional development. By sharing knowledge through computer-mediated discourse, namely in the form of online collaboration (Ribeiro, Kimble, & Cairns, 2011), people from across the globe can transcend time and space to synchronously participate in literacy teaching and learning opportunities formerly limited to those found solely in face-to-face settings (Albers, Pace, & Brown, 2013). Additionally, like a broad view of literacy, technology offers wide avenues for teacher educators to think critically and generatively about how they may harness this discourse, in

all its forms and combinations, to create optimal professional development experiences for learners.

While an abundance of research exists pertaining to teacher professional development, online learning, and the use of technology, little is known about the use of online teacher professional development within a web seminar format. And, even less is known about how and why literacy teacher educators integrate extrinsic online teacher professional development, particularly in a web seminar format, within the boundaries of their university established courses. Holmberg (1995) argues, “Once distance education is applied outside the organizational and administrative framework of conventional schools and universities, its potential for extra-paradigmatic innovation becomes evident” (p. 50). That is, just as they have stepped beyond traditionally held views of literacy, teacher educators may also dare to traverse conventional status quo borders of how they provide teacher professional development. Combining such a kaleidoscopic view of both literacy and professional development clears a path for literacy teacher educators to reimagine how they might integrate an external professional development web seminar into their university teacher education courses. I undertook this study, therefore, to understand teacher educators’ use of a free and open access professional development web seminar, situated around critical literacy research and practice, within their language and literacy courses.

In the next section, I offer a brief overview of the literature pertaining to online teacher professional development. I begin by discussing qualities of less effective professional development characteristic of many top-down approaches. Then, I discuss the affordances of online teacher professional development, contrasting it as a bottom-up approach and report what the research says about effective online teacher professional learning.

Phenomenon to Be Studied

Government mandates such as the No Child Left Behind Act (2001), the Race to the Top initiative (U.S. Department of Education, 2009), and most recently, the Common Core State Standards initiative (U.S. Department of Education, 2015) have heralded the call for teachers characterized as “highly qualified”. According to a New Teacher Center Policy Brief (2010), “States are directed to address new teacher needs within RTTT’s [Race to the Top’s] comprehensive reform template and connect them to related human capital strategies, such as teacher preparation, licensure, evaluation, compensation, and professional development systems” (Goldrick, Osta, & Maddock, para. 1). A new discourse, therefore, has emerged mandating that all teachers hold this highly qualified status.

Although the term *highly qualified* continues to garner much debate, the aforementioned government mandates have identified teacher education and professional learning as means to develop teachers with skills necessary for improved teaching and learning of today’s students. These imposed government cannons get handed down by policymakers who determine what gets taught and how, what counts as meaningful learning, and the assessments that define competence. The acquiescence of such directives often leaves teachers feeling less able instead of empowered to carry-out the kind of authentic, meaningful instruction needed for optimal learning.

It should come as no surprise then that mandated teacher professional development generally follows a similar top-down approach: school district administrators often decide what kind of professional training teachers need and how it will be delivered, which topics teachers will find useful, and how well they implement it with fidelity. Too often, teacher professional development becomes more about how to put into practice government-imposed edicts, leaving little room for teachers’ autonomy in choosing the professional learning that fits their

individualized learning needs (Flint, Zisook, & Fisher, 2011). So, while many who are in positions of authority have deemed teacher professional development an effective avenue to achieve highly qualified status, they also often determine what will be learned, the mode (how) in which it will be learned, and the medium (when and where) by which such learning will occur. This begs the question of whose needs the professional development is serving.

Paradoxically, Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) argue that too often professional learning models lack a foundation ground in learning theory or provide the necessary components to address educational reform efforts. These avenues are often inadequate, disjointed, and scarce in substance (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Borko, 2004; Dede, Kelelhut, Whitehouse, Breit, & McCloskey, 2006; Putnam & Borko, 1997). Ball and Cohen (1999) also assert that enacting proposed educational reform measures requires intensive and extensive teacher professional development lasting longer than the typical one or two day in-service training and workshops designed to offer quick-fix remedies, or what they describe as “the professional equivalent of yo-yo dieting for many teachers” (p. 4). Therefore, because they can offer ongoing, situated learning, many educators are turning to online professional development venues as a solution to the one-off types generally offered in traditional, single day, face-to-face, and often mandated, workshop formats.

Furthermore, online venues make possible new, alternative, and effective means of communication and collaboration using the tools of technology, while maintaining the desired characteristics of face-to-face teacher professional development (i.e., goals, pedagogy, collaboration, instructional strategies, etc.). Internet platforms such as Blackboard Collaborate, Desire2Learn, and Moodle, have revolutionized how educators communicate and co-construct knowledge by creating collaborative opportunities once limited only to the face-to-face classroom (King, 2001; LaJoie et al., 2006). These opportunities extend to online teacher professional

development through the use of computer-mediated tools such as Web 2.0 technologies, which can allow participation in the kinds of high-quality, ongoing, collaborative, and meaningful learning that the research espouses for effective teacher professional development.

Unlike some top-down district and school mandated professional development, online teacher professional development can provide teachers several affordances. The Internet, for example, makes possible a wide array of online learning venues (i.e., podcasts, TED talks, webinars, etc.) from which teachers can self-select the learning that they find meaningful and applicable to their specific needs, instead of have it chosen for them by school or district administrators (Foote, 2013). Many online professional development outlets also now require no fee to access them. Individualizing professional development, Foote (2013) argues, “Is what free online professional development is all about, and it’s the real revolution in what we’ve traditionally called professional development” (p. 34). Additionally, online teacher professional development has the potential to provide (a) just-in-time and convenient learning options, (b) cost-effective access to a vast array of resources that otherwise may not be accessible, and (c) ongoing, embedded learning and support (Dede, Ketlehut, Whitehouse, Breit, & McCloskey, 2006). Because online teacher professional development provides choice, flexible learning times and venues, the ability to individualize the learning experience, and opportunities for reflection, teachers tend to find it valuable and applicable and are more likely to participate (Brooks, 2012). Such affordances offer encouragement for exploring the integration of online professional development venues within established literacy teacher education courses and which have yet to be explored in the current literature.

According to a 2007 brief issued by the North American Council for Online Learning, “Professional development is most effective when it includes clinical field experience and ongoing

mentoring” (Davis & Rose, p. 9). This finding supports the need for contextually situated teacher professional development like which can be found when online groups of like-minded educators come together to discuss important issues they face and that matter to them (Fisher, 2009). Such collaborative professional development encourages dialogic exchanges, thus allowing teacher educators to develop learning experiences wherein teachers at all levels of expertise—pre-service, novice, and veteran—can come together to share ideas, co-construct knowledge, and support each other. Researchers have also identified networked communities as optimal online learning venues because of their ability to provide support and sustain interactions, two hallmark characteristics of effective professional development (Hiebert, Gallimore, & Stigler, 2002; Hur & Brush, 2009; Lieberman, 2000). Harwell (2003) argues that “professional development programs should focus on how people learn in a world of unbounded information, and they should give teachers time to reflect and interact within learning communities” (p. 9). As an effective resource for teacher collaboration and development (Clark & Hollingsworth, 2002), previous scholars have further acknowledged the potential of learning communities to create adult transformative learning (Freire, 1970; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007; Mezirow, 1997), as they position teachers as active agents who engage in reflective practice (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002). Dede et al. (2006) further posit that networked communities foster reflection and encourage “the contributions of teachers who tend to be silent in face-to-face settings, but ‘find their voice’ in mediated interaction” (p. 9). Online teacher professional development, thus, can support collaboration among teachers at various experience levels and position them to engage in reflective praxis, which is necessary for transformative classroom teaching and learning practices.

Global Conversations in Literacy Research (GCLR) is an example of a venue that offers online teacher professional development using a bottom-up approach. As a series of one hour web

seminars delivered through Blackboard Collaborate, GCLR features internationally recognized scholars in the field of literacy. GCLR provides participants opportunities to learn new skills, to sharpen existing knowledge, and to collaborate with others who share an interest in critical literacy and literacy education. Unlike many other online outlets that offer single session, workshop-style learning that is mainly strategy-based and disconnected from a teacher's day-to-day classroom, GCLR web seminars offer continuous professional development opportunities. Ongoing teacher professional development, according to Cox (2011), is associated with altered teaching practices, which in turn, may lead to improved teaching and learning. Because they are offered open to anyone with an Internet connection and are contextually situated within critical literacy, GCLR web seminars provide the kind of cost-effective, just in time learning espoused in the aforementioned professional development literature (Dede et al., 2006; Foote, 2013; King, 2001; LaJoie et al., 2006). Finally, the web seminars are archived and may be accessed for viewing after the live presentation through GCLR's Youtube channel (<http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCay7UB8Mm5SpRnPy6Mxl5Ggor>), which means teacher educators and pre-/in-service teachers may return to them again and again as an ongoing professional development resource.

While the research has identified educators' strong desire for online professional development, the affordances of these venues, and technology's increasing use for learning, studying online discourse remains a challenge for researchers. Due to technology's multifaceted and intricate nature (Sing & Khine, 2006), scholars have had difficulty keeping pace with developing theories that support the literacy skills required of these new technologies (Leu et al., 2004). Meanwhile, best practices for the development and execution of online teacher professional development models remain limited (Dede et al., 2006).

Furthermore, technology-integrated teaching and learning encompass a progressive skillset, approach, and form of social interaction specific to the Internet and digital communication technologies (Coiro, Knobel, Lankshear, & Leu, 2008; Greenhow, 2011; Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, and Cammack, 2004). In relation, researchers agree that achieving optimal technology-integrated instruction requires teachers to think intentionally about the relationship between technology and pedagogy (Friedhoff, 2008; Koehler, Mishra, & Yahya, 2007; Samarawickrema, Benson, & Black, 2010; Yoon, 2003). Samarawickrema, Benson, and Black (2010) posit, “If successful learning is to occur in these new learning spaces, teachers need to rethink their approaches and realign their teaching with the pedagogical possibilities the technologies offer” (p. 44). Killion and Williams (2009) extend Samarawickrema et al.’s sentiment by asserting, “Online professional development requires a school or a district to be intentional about its student achievement goals and the professional learning priorities that align with those goals (para. 8). We may surmise that Killion and Williams’s assertions meant for K-12 classroom teachers hold true for teacher educators who provide online teacher professional development to pre-/in-service teachers in that the same basic principles apply across both settings.

Decisions such as whether or not to integrate technology, which technologies to use, how best to integrate them, and the purposes they serve are critical considerations for 21st century teacher educators designing technology-integrated learning experiences, particularly since technologies and virtual environments impact learning in different ways (Savin-Baden, Gourlay, Tombs, Steils, Tombs, & Mawer, 2010). Such difficult curricular decisions often create tensions that teacher educators must negotiate (Zhoa, Pugh, Sheldon, & Byers, 2002; Savin-Baden, 2010), especially when those decisions challenge their own traditional ways of thinking, acting, and being (Freire, 1970/1996; Janks, 2000).

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand teacher educators' use of an open access online teacher professional development web seminar, Global Conversations in Literacy Research (GCLR), as a component of the language and literacy teacher education courses that they teach. The goal of GCLR web seminars is to disseminate cutting-edge literacy research and improve literacy practices. While GCLR allows online collaboration about critical literacy issues, questions remain regarding the use of online professional development web seminars within teacher education courses. Therefore, the current study sought to answer the following questions: (a) Why do literacy teacher educators use online professional development web seminars within their courses? (b) How do literacy teacher educators use online professional development web seminars within their courses, especially those presented by GCLR? and (c) What value do literacy teacher educators see in working with the web seminars in their classes, especially those presented by GCLR?

Overview of Teacher Professional Development and Distance Learning

In comparison to other disciplines, research on teacher education and professional development is a relatively young field (Borko, 2004; Wilson, Floden, and Ferrini-Mundy, 2001) that did not gain footing until the 1960s (Wideen, 1987; Wilson et al., 2001). In the following sections, I provide a brief overview of major shifts in teacher professional development over the past century and trace its trajectory from the traditional face-to-face workshop approach to current online learning venues such as networked learning communities, affinity spaces, and web seminars. I also provide an historical account of distance learning in relation to technological advancements that were the driving force behind improvements in distance learning.

Brief History of Teacher Professional Development

For decades, educational reform efforts designed to improve teaching and learning have driven school improvement (Wideen, 1987). Prior to the 1960s, teachers sought professional development on their own, disassociated with their schools/districts. As a result of the National Defense and Education Act (NDEA), prompted by the release of Sputnik, and then the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), by the 1960s the training model of teacher professional development was established and is often recognized by its many formats: teacher in-service, single workshops, institutes, and best practices training (Lieberman & Miller, 2008). Generally lasting no longer than a day and focusing on a single topic, research into teacher professional development has particularly criticized workshops for their “one dimensional, top-down, approaches designed to implement programs that outsiders had developed” (Wideen, 1987, p. 6). The training model, however, remained the norm through the 1980s, the most noteworthy change seen only with the term *professional development* replacing *in-service training*. By the 1990s, researchers began advocating for a shift away from the workshop approach to one that occurred “in a more active and coherent environment- one in which ideas can be exchanged and an explicit connection to the bigger picture of school improvement is made” (“Professional Development”, 2011, para. 6). Currently, the research calls for teacher professional development that is sustained, embedded, systematic, results-centered, and collaborative (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Learning communities have the potential to create such learning, as they have become an effective means for teacher collaboration and development (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002) with the potential to create adult transformative learning (Freire, 1970; Merriam et al., 2007; Mezirow, 1997), thereby positioning teachers as active, reflective agents in their own professional learning

and practice. Networked learning communities, therefore, emerged as a way for teachers to engage in collaborative professional learning across space and time.

Networked Learning Communities

As a venue for like-minded members to construct new knowledge through ongoing social interactions with each other (Brooks, 2010), Lave and Wenger initially introduced the idea of learning communities over a decade ago as *communities of practice* (Wenger, 2006). Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002) assert that with communities of practice “practitioners can connect across organizational and geographic boundaries and focus on professional development rather than merely the application of expertise to meet a specific goal” (p. 20). This comment shows the important role that learning communities play within professional development.

Through the years, educators (and those in other fields) have adapted the learning community concept using various terms to distinguish among the many types: a) communities of practice (CoPs) (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 2000, 2006, 2010; Wenger et al., 2002); b) professional learning communities (Lee & Shari, 2012); c) communities of inquiry (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000; Wanstreet & Stein, 2011); and d) networks of practice (Brown & Duguid, 1991). Although originally conceived as a face-to-face venue, learning communities today are often used in virtual or blended environments made possible through Web 2.0 technologies, hence the term *networked learning community*. They may also be included within other various combinations of face-to-face and online learning venues.

Brief History of Distance Learning

Distance learning began over a century ago and has a long history. Throughout this history, the media used to connect disparate learners with instruction has consistently set distance learning apart from face-to-face instruction (Holmberg, 2003). The first widely acknowledged incidents of

distance learning occurred as print/mail correspondence in 1833 when a Swedish newspaper placed an advertisement which offered writing instruction via newspaper correspondence and then later in 1840 when Sir Isaac Pitman introduced distance learning using mail correspondence (Bower & Hardy, 2004; Dinsdale, 1953; Holmberg, 1995; Simonson et al., 2013). By the end of the 19th century, a number of higher learning institutions throughout the world offered distance learning using mail correspondence (Holmberg, 1995; Simonson et al., 2013).

The beginning of the 20th century (1920s) brought radio-delivered correspondence, which eventually gave way to television delivery in 1950 (Simonson et al., 2013). Between the 1960s and 1980s, telecommunications, such as satellite, videoconferencing, and fiber-optic communication established television broadcasting as an economical distance learning instructional medium (Simonson et al., 2013). Also during the 1980s and into the 1990s, computer-mediated communication via the Internet made possible virtual classrooms, email, and servers, and later advanced to include the World Wide Web (WWW or Web). By 2004, Web 2.0 technologies such as wikis, blogs, podcasts, etc., enhanced online collaboration and creation (Hew & Cheung, 2013; O'Reilly, 2005) and improved two-way asynchronous and synchronous communication, particularly with Learning Management Systems (Casey, 2008; Simonson et al., 2013).

Today, Web 2.0 technologies have become an important mediator in delivering online teacher professional development. According to a 2002 UNESCO report, "Teacher training is an important area where open and distance learning has made a major contribution" (p. 9), particularly in teacher pre-service preparation and ongoing teacher professional development. Further, the majority of professional organizations currently include some form of distance learning in their conference presentations and publications (Simonson et al., 2013). Such inclusion

suggests not only a steady move toward online teacher professional development, but also one that is respected by professional teaching associations.

Online Teacher Professional Development

In its infancy, online teacher professional development generally amounted to self-guided online tours in which teachers independently navigated the content (Sawchuk, 2009). Lack of a facilitator and dialogic engagement made these early online efforts less than ideal. The evolution of asynchronous communication removed some of the isolation of early online learning formats because it gave teachers time for reflection and the ability to interact asynchronously with a facilitator and peers. This communication mainly occurred through discussion threads. Because online interactions can occur anywhere and anytime, the asynchronous facilitated format can provide learner convenience, multiple communication exchanges at a time, and a safe option for teachers who are reluctant to speak out in face-to-face professional development. Proceeding from the online facilitated model, the hybrid/blended model emerged, which divided instructional time between traditional face-to-face meetings and online formats.

Most recently, online teacher professional development using social networking (Web 2.0 tools) mediums has evolved in which teachers with similar interests can connect across an online network. Beyond mandated online teacher professional development, teachers today are seeking professional learning through informal networked formats. Twenty-first century technologies (i.e., Twitter, podcasts, chat rooms, online conferences, livestreams, etc.) provide educators opportunities to self-select professional learning that fits their needs, interests, schedules, and pocketbooks (Foote, 2013). That is, rather than relying solely on top-down approaches often associated with mandated professional development, educators are engaging in bottom-up, self-directed approaches that 21st-century technologies can afford (Foote, 2013). Among other

technology-based entities, web seminars are filling educators' online teacher professional development needs.

Web Seminars

Initially realized as a face-to-face venue, seminars have long been used as an educational forum in which learning, situated around a specific topic, occurs through dialogic interaction (Persell, 2004). A facilitator generally organizes and guides the seminar. As a collaborative venue, learning typically occurs as seminar participants engage in inquiry through conversations, sharing ideas and asking questions, for the purpose of increasing their knowledge about the topic under discussion. Persell (2004) argues, "In a seminar one goal is to have students realize that their understanding depends in part upon the learning and participation of others in the seminar" (p. 63). In this way, seminars become sites for collaborative inquiry.

Further, based on his study of early childhood teacher candidates enrolled in a face-to-face seminar, Wiltz (2000) delineated how seminars became a safe space for inquiry, sharing personal teaching experiences, and seeking advice to particular matters of interest related to participants' student teaching apprenticeship. Wiltz (2000) states, "Collectively, seminars became places where critical dimensions of teaching were raised and reviewed, and where goals, values and assumptions that guided student work were clarified, modified and refined" (p. 3). Thus, seminars provided a communal space for student teachers to interact with their peer student teachers, to critically reflect about their student teaching classroom experiences and problem-solve solutions, and further develop their teaching dispositions and pedagogy. That the seminar focused on inquiry about participants' ongoing student teaching experiences suggests that these sessions provided a type of collaborative situated learning since it was ground in authentic practice.

While the traditional seminar is still used by many colleges, universities, and other organizations, a derivative of the college-style face-to-face seminar has developed into a form of online learning referred to as a *web seminar*, or webinar (web plus seminar). These newer online seminar formats typically consist of real-time, or what Blackiston (2011) refers to as “live online presentations” in which a speaker presents information about a specific topic to an audience who interact using chat (p. 732). Web seminars may take many forms, ranging from single, one hour synchronous presentations (GCLR, 2010; Lorenzetti, 2008) to a stand-alone online or blended course delivered through an Internet-supported learning platform (Khechine, Lakhali, Pascot, & Bytha, 2014) to a series of individual but related presentations around a specific topic (GCLR, 2010).

Web seminars function in much the same way as traditional face-to-face seminars: facilitator-based, topic specific, learner-centered, dialogic. And, learning in web seminars is dependent upon the participation of others in the group (Persell, 2004). What is different are the modes through which participants communicate (i.e., synchronous discussion tools, or chat) and the medium in which the communication occurs highlight how current web seminars differ from their traditional counterparts.

In a web seminar, dialogic exchanges occur most often as situated texts using chat or discussion boards, emoticons, and white board tools (i.e., the wand, polling, hand-raise, etc.) and sometimes by voice using a built-in microphone (Albers, et al., 2013; Montgomery, 2010). Through interconnected networks made possible by the learning platform that hosts the web seminar (i.e., Moodle, WebCT, Blackboard Collaborate), people from across the globe can participate within a single space, learning through engagement and collaboration with others. According to Hayes-Jacobs (2010), today’s teacher professional development should include 21st

century avenues, as in web seminars, in which participants interact in meaningful discussions within “global professional learning communities” (p. 59). Such access to global others broadens potential learning from a variety of perspectives, both social and cultural, on a given topic. Computer-mediated communication platforms also provide recording capabilities so that the webinar sessions may be archived for later access, making them a useful learning venue even after the live presentations have ended (Yoon, 2003).

Many of today’s professional teaching organizations (e.g., National Council of Teachers of English, American Educational Research Association, and International Literacy Association) now provide web seminars and their archived copies as one way teachers can participate in just-in-time professional development, or learning around topics, times, and locations that fit their individual needs. And, although many of these organizations are beginning to offer webinars free of charge, many still must be purchased in advance and at a high price, limiting access to teacher professional development.

As it is used in this investigation, the term *web seminar* refers to a virtual learning venue that (a) uses a networked learning platform with Web 2.0 capabilities (Blackiston, 2011), (b) includes a live presentation by an expert in a specific domain (i.e., information, ideas, research) on a select topic (Lorenzetti, 2008), and (c) fosters interaction (Lorenzetti, 2008). I extend this definition to the *term teacher professional development web seminar* to delineate web seminar participants who generally come from the field of education and include (but not limited to) teacher educators, in-service teachers, teacher candidates, scholars, and students.

My Interest in Online Teacher Professional Development

In my role as a twenty-six year veteran teacher, I have experienced the ebb and flow of changes that have influenced the field of education and the teaching profession. As a novice

teacher in the late 1980s, I followed the guidelines handed down to me, whether from the federal, state, or local level. As a teacher new to the profession, who was I to question those with more experience and certainly more authority? I was merely trying to survive those first few years in the classroom.

As I gained more experience and confidence in my teaching, I began to think more critically about my own practice. Although I did not know it then, I now see that I was becoming a reflexive practitioner. That is, I thought critically about what I taught, how I taught, and the effects of my instruction on my students' learning. I questioned myself about what I might do differently to improve my teaching in a way that would motivate and best help my students to learn; I then made the necessary adjustments. My lesson planning frequently involved searching resources for instructional ideas and strategies, which in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, mainly consisted of workbooks, model lessons, and professional magazines. Increased fervor and availability of the Internet in the new millennium substantially broadened the resources and information available to me as a classroom teacher. With such easy access, the Internet became my primary mode for learning about and keeping up with current educational trends and issues. I also used the Internet to connect myself with information that interested me and served my needs as a classroom teacher. Reflecting now, I see my use of the Internet having many characteristics of today's online teacher professional development: individualized, convenient, and cost-effective. Missing, though, was the collaboration that I had read so much about in my online readings and which I, too, desired in my own professional learning. Trying to fill this need, I attempted to establish a team of collaborators among my peers; yet, we were simply trying to keep up with the multitude of day-to-day teaching tasks. The days left little time for intellectual collaboration about

our professional interests. The inability to establish a collaborative connection created tension for me.

Meanwhile, scheduled professional development days had already been planned with topics geared for the entire faculty. So, I pushed harder for what I considered were innovative ideas to be heard and enacted. My zeal sometimes created even more tension. I viewed myself as a proactive teacher, unafraid to question, trod uncharted waters, or discover new roads; in spite of my self-described innovative style, I often felt like a troublemaker. Ultimately out of these tensions, though, grew a positive interest in teacher professional development and desire to work with pre- and in-service teachers.

Because of my own experiences, I wanted to support teachers and those studying to be teachers in a way that not only challenged them to critically think and reflect about their own practice, but also to provide support that encouraged them to lead by example rather than to follow from behind, despite tensions that might arise. For these reasons, I chose teacher development as my cognate in the Ph.D. Language and Literacy program that I began in the 2011 Spring semester.

As part of my doctoral studies, I enrolled in a research internship with Dr. Peggy Albers who introduced me to Global Conversations in Literacy Research (GCLR), a web seminar project she had begun in 2009. The seminar consisted of a series of one-hour web seminars featuring world-renowned literacy experts. Among my many tasks as an intern, I attended each web seminar, assisted with putting together the introductory and concluding slides for the web seminars, and met with and prepared guest hosts (who were also doctoral students in my doctoral program). When I first began attending the GCLR web seminars, I was inspired by how educators from across numerous countries, languages, and cultures came together in a single virtual space to share ideas and opinions. While I knew that these teachers, scholars, and students shared an interest in literacy

that uniquely positioned us as a collaborative, the more seminars I attended, I increasingly felt a connection with the group, a sense of belonging with others who sometimes shared my beliefs about literacy and sometimes even challenged those beliefs. For me, GCLR provided a common space for the kind of collaboration that Royster (1996/2011) suggests, one in which “the goal is better practices so that we can exchange perspectives, negotiate meaning, and create understanding with the intent of being in a good position to cooperate, when, like now, cooperation is absolutely necessary” (p. 564). For me, GCLR not only became a space where I could learn about innovative research, but it also gave me an outlet where I could connect with others interested in literacy and explore some of my own thoughts and ideas with renowned scholars and other participants whom I very much regarded as experts. I felt privileged to be part of such a supportive group who seemed to share a similar excitement about learning.

Also during my research internship with GCLR, I assisted with data collection and analysis of web seminar chat transcripts and the live interactions between and among participants. From this work, I learned that teacher educators frequently attended the seminars with cohorts of pre-/in-service teachers whom they taught, which piqued my curiosity about how GCLR as a professional development project might support teacher candidates and in-service teachers in their own learning and teaching practices. Particularly with today’s test-crazed, hyper-accountable, mandated initiatives, I wanted to know more about literacy teacher educators’ use of a critical literacy professional development web seminar, such as GCLR, in their courses. Thus, I embarked on this dissertation study in my quest to better understand what may consider an intriguing teaching and learning dynamic.

Overview of the Study

The current investigation was part of a longitudinal study, “Global Conversations in Literacy Research: A Web Seminar Research Project” (GCLR), which investigates how an innovative web seminar project emerges and evolves over time using online technologies. Now in its fifth year, Dr. Peggy Albers, professor at Georgia State University, founded GCLR as a venue “to engage global audiences in conversation about literacy, and to effect changes in literacy research and practice within global settings” (GCLR, 2010, para. 1). As an open-access venue, anyone from around the globe who has an Internet connection may access GCLR by clicking the link located on the GCLR web page (<http://globalconversationsinliteracy.wordpress.com/>). Participants do not pay a fee and membership is not required, unlike many other organizations who host webinars.

Grounded in critical literacy, GCLR hosts a series of one-hour live web seminars in which internationally recognized literacy scholars present innovative research and practice in the field of literacy (GCLR 2010). Delivered through Blackboard Collaborate, GCLR provides a platform for global audiences to share ideas, possible solutions, and better understandings concerning literacy research, theory, and practice, all with the critical aim to support social action through literacy. Further, Angay-Crowder, Albers, Pace, Jung, Hwang, & Pang (2014) posit, “GCLR supports dialogic idea exchange and reflection on pedagogical decisions informed by research, and builds positive dispositions about teaching with an aim towards transformative education” (p. 190).

Further, as a critical literacy project, GCLR understands that access, power, privilege, and design (Janks, 2000) are important concepts in changing consciousness about critical issues in literacy. The GCLR founder and the research team prefer the term *web seminar* over *webinar* in order to emphasize the collaborative, inquiry-based characteristics similarly found in face-to-face

seminars. Further, while some webinars are designed as information gathering sessions, the GCLR web seminar encourages reciprocal discourse exchanges among participants, speakers, and hosts.

GCLR began in 2009 as a small collaborative of Georgia State University language and literacy doctoral students who shared their doctoral experiences through five open web seminars. In its second year in 2010, GCLR participation doubled (approximately 30), first and second year professors were invited to speak, and the GCLR website and logo were created. By 2011, GCLR featured international speakers from Canada, Great Britain, Australia, and the US and began garnering an international audience, approximately 115 per web seminar.

A Clustrmap was added to the GCLR website that tracked the number of hits from countries around the globe (see Figure 1). In 2012, audience participation soared, reaching upward to 280 participants in a single web seminar. Literacy teacher educators also began adding GCLR to their course syllabi and attended web seminars with their undergraduate and graduate students. Also, the National Writing Project (NWP) offered GCLR a small sponsorship, used to archive past web seminars, which participants frequently requested. Facebook and Twitter were added as two additional mediums to generate communication and conversations. In 2013, a SMART phone app further increased access, making it even more convenient for participants to attend the live seminars. The GCLR research team completed the archiving of past seminars on the GCLR



Figure 1: Clustrmap showing point of access of GCLR website (Albers et al., 2013).

YouTube channel. As of 2014-2015, GCLR participation continues to grow and sustain itself with only the small support offered by the National Writing Project grant. International speakers now represent literacy scholars from the USA, Australia, Canada, Colombia, Great Britain, and South Africa. One faculty member (Dr. Peggy Albers) assisted by eight language and literacy doctoral students now comprise the GCLR team.

Significance of the Study

This qualitative interview study brings to the forefront how teacher educators may harness 21st century technologies to create innovative learning spaces in the preparation of their student teacher candidates and in-service teachers. It also moves us one step further in the evolution of teacher professional development from traditional face-to-face approaches to the variety of online venues and now to the unique integration of a web seminar series within literacy teacher preparation courses. Finally, this study illuminates how and why teacher educators traverse traditional university and professional development boundaries to integrate an innovative literacy web seminar into their stand-alone pre-service and in-service courses and the value of such integration for the preparation of literacy teachers.

Theoretical Framework

I located this study within critical situated learning, which combines the sociocultural constructs of situated learning, especially as viewed through cognitive apprenticeship, collaborative learning, and critical literacy. The following five tenets guided this study:

- Knowledge construction and learning result from and through our social and cultural interactions with others (Brown et al., 1989).

- Knowledge production is embedded in the activity in which it is constructed through the process of cognitive apprenticeship (Borko, 2004; Brown et al., 1989; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Putnam & Borko, 2000).
- Learning, socially and culturally situated, occurs through collaboration (Brown et al., 1989).
- Language, knowledge, and access are often privileged and speak to issues of power and dominance (Albers et al., 2013; Janks, 2000).
- Diverse cultural and social ways of reading and writing the world are necessary for changing consciousness (Freire, 1970/1996; Janks, 2000).

Knowledge construction and learning result from and through our social and cultural interactions with others. Learning, therefore, according to this first tenet is both contextually interdependent and situated within activity (Brown et al., 1989). That is, how we construct knowledge is as important as the knowledge itself (Booth, 2012). Each person's particular experiences contribute to the development of new understandings and meaning. Lave (1991) further asserts that "meaning is negotiated, the use of language is a social activity rather than a matter of individual transmission of information, and situated cognition is always interest-relative" (p. 66). Gee (2010) posits, the tools and technologies that we use to distribute knowledge, "allow distinctive social practices to arise that could not exist otherwise" (p. 28). For example, using technological tools, such as chat, video, and/or audio, people can engage in online conversations, debates, questioning, etc.

Knowledge production is embedded in the activity in which it is constructed through the process of cognitive apprenticeship. As the second tenet, cognitive apprenticeship is a learning process that involves enculturation, embedded activity, and interaction (Brown et al., 1989).

Enculturation into a group occurs through a process of what Lave and Wenger (1991) term legitimate peripheral participation, in which participants learn the group's language, norms, and ways of interacting. Such learning may occur through active participation with the group; however, it can also mean observing from the sidelines the interactions of other more experienced participants. Another central feature of cognitive apprenticeship is that knowledge production occurs in and through the activity in which it is constructed (Borko, 2004; Brown et al., 1989; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Knowledge further develops with each situation in which it is used, as Brown, Collins, and Duguid (1989) state, "because new situations, negotiations, and activities inevitably recast it in a new, more densely textured form" (p. 33). Thus, knowledge is fluid, not static, and continually produces new understandings. The continual unfolding of knowledge within each distinct context requires the user to shift his or her worldview and to take on discourses of the particular culture in which he or she uses the knowledge (Brown et al., 1989). The learner, therefore, is enculturated into the learning situation through authentic, embedded activity and interaction with others.

Learning, socially and culturally situated, occurs through collaborative interactions and communication. According to Brown et al. (1989), collaborative learning entails a group of people who work together in order to develop viable solutions to problems. By collaborating, individuals within the group share the various roles involved in a learning task. Collaboration is also effective, Brown et al. (1989) state, "for drawing out, confronting and discussing both misconceptions and ineffective strategies" that otherwise might go unnoticed when an individual learns in isolation (p. 40). Kaplan (2008) further posits that the learning community concept can be seen in Dewey's and Vygotsky's conceptualizations of social learning "when they presented their similar views of education in the 1930s as a democratic process of shared problem solving" (p. 338). Thus, social

and cultural environments, such as those created using Web 2.0 technologies (wikis, blogs, web seminars, etc.) make conditions ripe for cultivating collaborations through which effective learning occurs.

Language, knowledge, and access are often privileged and speak to issues of power and dominance. This fourth tenet refers to how and whose language gets used, who is allowed to speak, whose and which ideas get heard, who gains access, and which communication modes are acceptable (Albers et al., 2013; Janks, 2000). Therefore, I also position this paper within Janks's (2000) four orientations of critical literacy: domination, access, diversity, and design. Domination refers to the power relationship inherent in discourses such as language, symbols, and the meaning assigned to them. Critical literacy from this lens acknowledges the inequities that often occur within socially situated interaction (Bartholomae, 1985/2011; Janks, 2000) and that certain discourses are more privileged than others. Access concerns the dominance inherent in language/literacy, discourse, and symbols, how they are/are not valued or acknowledged, and who gets to decide. Janks (2000) states, "Critical literacy education, based on a sociocultural theory of language, is particularly concerned with teaching learners to understand and manage the relationship between language and power" (p. 176). Diversity acknowledges various interpretations and "different ways of reading and writing the world in a range of modalities" and provides a means for "changing consciousness" (Janks, 2000, p.177). Finally, design recognizes creativity by encouraging the use of multiple modalities for meaning making in an effort to transcend cultural boundaries and enact change.

Diverse ways of reading and writing the world are necessary for changing consciousness, especially in relation to critical literacy issues (Janks, 2000). This fifth tenet recognizes that there are a variety of interpretations, understandings, and modalities through which consciousness is

changed. According to Janks (2000), “As individual human subjects enter into new Discourses they acquire alternative and additional ways of being in the world—that is, new social identities” (p. 177). Yet, since diversity is associated with different ways of “reading and writing the world”, it runs the risk of domination (Janks, 2000, p. 177). Diversity is important when studying discussion-rich professional development web seminars since these online formats encourage participants to express their opinions, develop broader and new thinking, and seek alternative worldviews. Further, as GCLR web seminar participants interact with others from across the world, thereby adding to their experiences and ways of seeing, acting, and being, makes conditions fruitful for transformation.

Summary

Using today’s digital technologies (i.e., Blackboard Collaborate, Facebook, Twitter, listservs), people from across the globe can surpass time and space to synchronously participate in literacy teaching and learning opportunities formerly limited to those found only in face-to-face settings (Albers et al., 2013). The explosion of information delivered and accessed online warrants study of projects whose purpose is to provide effective online teacher professional development. A breadth of research exists in the literature surrounding online learning in higher education, online teacher professional development, and Web 2.0 technologies such as asynchronous/synchronous discussion boards, blogs, and wikis. However, the literature pertaining to the use of web seminars (webinars) as a form of online teacher professional development is quite sparse. Even less is known about the integration of online professional development into stand-alone teacher education courses, which is extrinsic to and independent of the course itself. Therefore, this study, which investigated literacy teacher educators’ use of a professional development web

seminar (GCLR) within their pre-/in-service teacher education courses was timely and provided a better understanding about how and why such integration occurs and the value of doing so.

In the following chapter, I discuss research related to the use of computer-mediated communication technologies (Web 2.0) in online learning and highlight studies that exemplify how online teacher professional development supports situated, collaborative learning among pre-service and in-service teachers through teacher networks/communities. I then move into a discussion of web seminars and the few related studies that I located in the literature. I conclude by making a case for studying literacy teacher educators' integration of professional development web seminars in relation to the literacy courses they teach and those studying to be teachers.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In support of the research questions guiding this study, I organized this review around Web 2.0 technologies, online teacher professional development, online professional development learning networks/communities, and web seminars. Understanding what researchers in the field have already noted and identifying that which has yet to be reported has made transparent particular gaps in the literature, thereby indicating to me how I may best address the research questions of this inquiry. From my review, the following themes emerged from the literature: (a) Web 2.0 technologies are integral to online teacher professional development because they support inquiry, knowledge co-construction, interaction, and collaboration, all factors that researchers have identified as necessary for effective teacher professional development; (b) Online professional development learning networks/communities are often nested within other virtual learning spaces since they encourage collegiality, community-building, support, and transformative learning among like-minded individuals; and (c) Most studies concerning web seminars (or webinars) in teacher education are situated as a stand-alone course.

From my review of the literature, I found no extant studies related to teacher educators' use of a public, open access professional development web seminar integrated as a component of the courses that they teach. While the current teacher development literature contains a variety of studies in which teacher educators integrate Web 2.0 technologies into their courses, these studies predominantly addressed the use of blogs, wikis, asynchronous/synchronous discussion boards, or learning communities (Elgort, Smith, & Toland, 2008). I found few studies pertaining to the use of web seminars in teacher education and even fewer used as online teacher professional development. Of the studies that I did locate, the majority are situated within the context of the

traditional “college seminar”, offered as a stand-alone course (Carey, 1999; Garcia & Hooper, 2011; Jelfs & Colbourn, 2002). This absence of scholarship confirmed a gap in the language and literacy research, and more broadly in the teacher professional development literature. I believe my research questions are poised for narrowing this void.

Due to the scarcity of research on teacher educators’ integration of web seminars within their language and literacy teacher education courses, I foregrounded this study in research related to key characteristics of web seminars that foster teacher professional development. These include the use of computer-mediated communication (Web 2.0 technologies) to illustrate its function and value within online teacher professional development, of which web seminars are an example.

Next, I discuss studies pertaining to online teacher professional development networks/communities to highlight their potential for collaboration and community building. I then present the few studies pertaining to web seminars that my search of the literature produced. I make a case for studying these aspects of online spaces (i.e., computer-mediated communication, social networks, and learning communities) as situated, collaborative learning, as they relate to web seminars and teacher education and those studying to be teachers. I conclude with how my inquiry into teacher educators’ use of online teacher professional development web seminars as an integrated component of the courses that they teach may inform language and literacy scholarship, research, and practice.

Why Computer-Mediated Communication Matters

Sometimes referred to as social networking tools, Web 2.0 technologies (i.e., discussion boards, blogs, wikis, Twitter, etc.) play a key role in the learning that occurs within online spaces (Gray & Smyth, 2012). Educators, in particular, continue to show enthusiasm for how computer-mediated communication may be used for online teacher professional development (Gray &

Smyth, 2012; Schlager & Fusco, 2003), namely in the form of online collaborative learning (Dede, 2004; Kabilan, Adlina, & Embi, 2011; Ribeiro et al., 2011; Teng, Chen, & Leo, 2012). Gray and Smyth (2012) explain, “This potential has attracted increasing interest within education as a means to support new teacher development, continued professional development including mentoring initiatives, and for the sharing and dissemination of good practice beyond departments and disciplines” (p. 60). Thus, because social networking tools allow users to synchronously connect across traditional time and distance barriers to bring people together, they make possible access to inquiry, knowledge co-construction, idea sharing, interaction, and collaboration that may otherwise be impossible. As new literacies, Web 2.0 technologies position learners as active consumers and innovators of text, and invite them to take a direct role in their own learning (Gounri, 2009).

The literature further underscores the importance of social networking tools as an essential component for creating interactive, collaborative, and effective online learning environments for both pre-service teacher candidates and in-service teachers that extend beyond those generally found in traditional face-to-face teacher professional development. For example, teachers have begun using social networking technologies, such as Facebook, Twitter, blogs, wikis, and webinars as valuable resources to fulfill their professional development needs (Choy & Ng, 2007; Elgort, Smith, & Toland, 2008; Samarawickrema et al., 2010). Albers et al. (2013) state, “Networking, once done through professional conferences, has taken on alternative definitions—networking through new media, social media, and technology tools enable us [to] participate synchronously and asynchronously” (p. 100). Brown (2010) goes so far as to posit that Web 2.0 has recast the former paradigm for how we think about and use web-enhanced learning from one of the user as passive information consumer of text to one who is also an active text producer. In other words, instead of using the Internet only as a resource for locating and downloading information, Web 2.0

capabilities give learners the communication tools to be co-creators, collaborators, and publishers of a variety of texts.

Researchers have identified some of the unique affordances of using Web 2.0 tools, unlike those generally found in face-to-face meetings. These include the capability to (a) simultaneously include many people in a single discussion, (b) participate in deep, mediated discussions, (c) connect with others located in distant and/or remote locations, and (d) give voice to those who ordinarily may not get heard (Dede et al., 2006; Salazar, Afuirre-Muñoz, Fox, & Nuñez-Lucas, 2010; Sawchuk, 2009). Because of the anonymity of computer-mediated communication, those who normally would be too shy, reluctant, or fearful to “speak out” in traditional, face-to-face interaction often find that tools, such as chat, eases these tensions, thus making participants more comfortable and likely to join in collaboration (Carey, 1999). Web 2.0 tools also encourage users to take the lead in their own learning (Brown, 2010). Research on the use of computer-mediated communication within virtual spaces, therefore, has shown the positive effects of using Web 2.0 technologies for creating collaborative, discussion-rich environments, as illustrated in the following studies.

In their investigation of synchronous discussions, Chen, Chen, and Tsai (2009) studied the relationship between the timing of synchronous chat postings and four types of chat messages (participation rate, social cues, interaction types, and cognitive/metacognitive types, used content) used within an online teacher professional development. The course facilitator and 61 pre-service and in-service teachers participated in the study. In their content analysis of 3,600 chat messages, the researchers found synchronous messages tended to be (a) participant-centered, rather than facilitator-centered; (b) social cues accounted for approximately one fourth (27%) of the messages; (c) just over half (52%) of the messages related to something other than the course content; and (d)

participants used cognitive messages more frequently than metacognitive messages. Finally, preliminary evidence suggested that participating teachers viewed synchronous discussions as an avenue for inquiry, to provide information, and to share their teaching ideas.

In another study, Schallert et al. (2009) examined the role, or discourse function, of asynchronous and synchronous online messages and the politeness strategies, or face-saving and face-threat acts participants used during asynchronous and synchronous message exchanges within a graduate level psycholinguistics course. In total, 25 participants comprised of one teacher and 24 graduate students took part in six online discussions concerning course readings. This hybrid course met face-to-face twelve times and for three additional asynchronous meetings. On three face-to-face meeting days, the teacher and students participated in three synchronous meetings that were held in a lab housed within the school. These synchronous discussions followed 90 minutes of face-to-face class time. Researchers coded a total of 1916 messages, 1475 synchronous and 441 asynchronous, across 17 chat transcripts. Among the findings, 60.7 % of the messages pertained to course content, while those reflecting personal experience or emphasizing one's self constituted 20%. Social messages made up approximately 10% of the overall messages. When messages contained self-related discourse, such as self-evaluation or sharing personal experiences, participants did not incorporate as many politeness strategies as when their messages involved other participants, which were characterized as those offering a response, giving an opposing opinion, and initiating discussion. Thus, findings illustrated that approximately two thirds of all the messages exchanged related to the online course content, which suggests computer-mediated communication's effective use for knowledge construction in online, collaborative learning spaces. These study results intimate that Web 2.0 tools were a valuable resource for sharing ideas,

experiences, opinions, and social messages within not only online venues, but blended learning environments in which class meetings are divided between face-to-face and online meetings.

Bold (2006) studied the use of wikis in a Texas Women's University Online Masters in Family Studies program also suggests the collaborative power of Web 2.0 technologies. The online program used Blackboard, an online course management system, to facilitate learning. Along with Blackboard, several of the courses also incorporated a wiki as a means to improve collaboration. Bold states, "Online collaboration was seen as a desired component to replicate the collaboration of graduate students in oncampus [sic] settings" (p. 6). A second purpose of the wiki involved having students attend to some of the pragmatic chores associated with maintaining a wiki, in this case creating and keeping track of student sign-up sheets. Transferring some of the course management tasks to students, Bold suggests, encouraged them to take a more self-directed, active role in their learning.

Although Bold did not specifically survey students' opinions about collaboration using the wiki, 21 students enrolled in the Online Masers Degree in Family Studies did complete the Noel-Levits, Inc.'s Priorities Survey for Online Learning. This survey used a 7-point Likert scale. Results indicated that on average students were satisfied with the amount of student-instructor interaction ($M= 6.10$), which was slightly higher than the average on the surveys ($M= 5.68$). In terms of the value of the online collaborations, student responses reflected a 3% increase in mean score ($M = 5.33$) than the average ($M = 5. 17$). Findings from this study support the value of wikis and other Web 2.0 technologies in developing learner autonomy and self-directedness, thus, shifting some control of the learning environment from the teacher to the student. Bold further noted that his study's findings were similar to those of Haythornthwaite, Kazmer, Robins, and Shoemaker's (2000) earlier study in which they stated, "Students receive a 'dual education.' They

learn to use new technology and gain experience in distanced interaction as well as learn the subject matter for the program” (para. 75). That is, virtual learning environments foster not only the learning of content but also how to collaborate with others within the space using online tools.

Findings from the aforementioned studies highlight the importance of social networking tools within virtual learning environments: to bring many people together across time and space in a single location, to foster online discussions, and to create opportunities for student-centered learning. Such interaction creates an effective learning environment for inquiry, knowledge co-construction, knowledge sharing, interaction, and collaboration within online spaces. According to Leu et al. (2004), knowledge construction and learning using “the new technologies of literacy allow us to take advantage of the intellectual capital that resides in others, enabling us to collaboratively construct solutions to important problems by drawing from the expertise that lies outside ourselves” (p. 1598). Understanding the role of Web 2.0 in its various mediums helps us not only transform traditional approaches to teacher professional development, but also how we might reimagine a remix of 21st-century technologies to create optimal teacher professional development for teacher candidates and in-service teachers. In the next section, therefore, I provide research related to collaboration in online teacher professional development and how such collaboration supports the characteristics that researchers have identified as effective teacher professional development.

Online Teacher Professional Development

Researchers are beginning to elucidate the positive effects of teacher professional development within the context of online learning (Gray & Smyth, 2012; Schlager & Fusco, 2003), as these spaces create opportunities for ongoing, collaborative, sustained, and transformative learning that form the hallmark of effective teacher professional development (Darling-Hammond

et al., 2009). According to de Kramer, Masters, O'Dwyer, Dash, and Russell (2012), sustained online teacher professional development models fall into one of two categories. The first is an independent model wherein participants work alone, at their own pace to complete learning tasks that are then submitted to an instructor; the second is a community-based model in which participants interact with other teachers and an instructor. These two models can include online and face-to-face components and usually involve instructor-participant or participant-participant asynchronous and/or synchronous communication (Kleiman, 2004). Online professional development also offers affordances that may be more conducive in virtual environments than in face-to-face venues. For example, online collaborative learning allows time and space for extensive, in-depth discussions that might otherwise exceed time constraints within traditional, face-to-face settings (Dede et al., 2006). Further, Dede, Ketelhut, Whitehouse, Breit, & McClosky (2006) argue, "The accessibility of attractive online options not available in pure face-face teacher professional development is one reason why many programs are moving to blended or hybrid models that attempt to combine the strengths of both (p. 10). Brooks (2010) supports what she terms "hybridized' faculty development" in which teachers seek informal professional development outside the bounds of their traditional face-to-face venues (p. 261). She further argues that online venues can foster community-building by connecting with socially, culturally, and geographically diverse others who share similar interests.

According to the National Research Council's (2007) report, *Enhancing Professional Development for Teachers: Potential Uses of Information Technology*, "Growing numbers of educators contend that online teacher professional development (OTPD) has the potential to enhance and even transform teachers' effectiveness in their classrooms and over the course of their careers" (p. 2). The council's report also identified the following affordances of online teacher

professional development: anytime/anywhere learning, opportunity for community building among teachers and across teacher organizations/groups, self-directed learning, accountability of learning, and the capability to capture data via online software, such as linguistic, audio, and visual interactions. As used in the report, accountability connoted empowerment as it referred to participants taking ownership of their learning and the ability of facilitators to encourage participant active learning, particularly in online discussions. The National Research Council also suggested, “Because the participants have time to think about an activity or issue and post comments or responses, they have ways to communicate that are not possible face to face” (p. 13). Taken together, the abovementioned affordances suggest that online teacher professional development is a growing, viable forum for collaboration in which improved practice and transformative learning can occur among teachers.

A large corpus of literature pertaining to online learning, however, consists of studies involving asynchronous communication, with comparatively fewer studies relegated to learning in synchronous environments (Teng, Chen, & Leo, 2012). In relation to online professional development, Jelfs (2014) states, “A notable gap in the research concerns the use of online synchronous technologies for CPD [continuing professional development]” (p. 248). Therefore, more research is needed, such as my study which investigates synchronous web seminars integrated into literacy teacher educators’ courses and the value that these may hold for teaching and learning, especially in the field of literacy teacher education.

Online Teacher Professional Development Networks

For over twenty years now, educators have used “networks”, as in social networks, to engage in collaborative professional development, knowledge building, and educational transformation (Niesz, 2010, p. 37). Niesz (2010) states, “Many professional development

networks, for example, are premised on an understanding that teacher learning should take place in collegial communities that encourage active participation, support social interaction, and endure over time” (p. 37). Researchers studying online teacher professional development often reference learning communities as the context in which the learning occurs. According to Killion and Williams (2009), “The advent of quality online professional learning combined with in-person, peer-based professional learning communities has enabled this approach to professional development to have the greatest success for increasing teaching quality and student learning” (para. 3).

Researchers have identified numerous types of online learning communities over the past decade or so in which people synchronously communicate exclusively using Web 2.0 capabilities, such as chat, discussion boards, and electronic platforms (Brown & Duguid, 1991; Garrison et al., 2000; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Lee & Shari, 2012; Sing & Khine, 2006; Wanstreet & Stein, 2011; Wenger, 2000, 2006, 2010). Niesz (2010) states, “Organised around ideas and change, they often offer counter-discourses as resources for meaning making” (p. 44). Unlike the single workshop approach, learning communities create sustained learning opportunities in which participants continually learn and transform their practice over time. Among other specific types of learning communities identified in the literature, the social framework of communities of practice support skill-building and collegiality in which teachers can participate in professional learning in an environment that transcends the top-down mandates and initiatives that often keep practitioners bound (Brooks, 2010; Wenger et al., 2002).

Brooks (2012), though, suggests that as technology has evolved, the concept of *community* has taken on a broader meaning as well. Whereas a professional learning community once denoted a faculty collaborative within a single brick and mortar school, today the concept has been

expanded “to reflect the ways in which professional relationships and school cultures can thrive both within the school walls and online” (Brooks, 2012, p. 6). This new understanding of community is essential to our conception of teacher professional development now and in the future (Brooks, 2012). The studies below illustrate the value of learning networks/communities as a viable form of teacher professional development.

In a design experiment situated within sociocultural theory, Laferrière, Erickson, and Breuleux (2007) investigated pre-service, in-service, and teacher preparation educators’ use of three different Internet Communication Technologies (ICTs) to develop three collaborative communities within the context of “university-school partnerships” (p. 213). Laferrière et al. (2008) state, “These communities focused on learning-to-teach in network-enabled classrooms through collaborative inquiry” (p. 217). Participants within each networked community also participated in face-to-face meetings, thus creating a hybrid learning context. A central tenet of the research study was to traverse theory and authentic practice. Laferrière et al. (2008) further state, “The networked communities were hubs of innovation for authentic and real problems, use of digital tools, and peer learning” (p. 230). Findings suggest that the virtual setting allowed broader and longer occasions for participants at various levels of teaching experience (e.g., pre-service, in-service, teacher preparation educators) to discuss and connect theory to practice. Also, the virtual nature of the networked communities provided participants a way to collaborate within and across internet communication technology sites. Laferrière et al. concluded that engagement, types of activities, and having an inquiry base affected the community’s lasting stability.

Fisher (2009) conducted a case study in which she studied three beginning teachers who self-identified as social justice advocates. The researcher and participants co-created and co-participated in an online community of inquiry as an avenue of support for the novice teachers.

Among the findings, this study indicated the effectiveness of situated teacher professional development like which can be found when online groups of like-minded educators come together to discuss important issues they face and that matter to them. This type of collaborative professional development encouraged dialogic exchanges among educators in which participants shared ideas, co-constructed knowledge, and supported each other in their roles as new teachers dedicated to social justice. Fisher further stated, “These types of communities should be considered viable and productive professional learning engagements and valued by schools and accreditation agencies as a meaningful venue for continued education (p. 366).

In a similar study, Niesz (2010) examined how a networked community of practice fostered the members’ identity and educational practice and how they then negotiated these within their respective school/school district community of practice. Ground in social practice theory and Lave and Wenger’s (1991) concept of communities of practice, findings indicated that participation in a community of like-minded others contributed to the teachers overcoming their dilemma of feeling like outsiders among their school-based faculties. As a part of a larger investigation, participants for this study comprised the Democracy Collective (DC) and consisted of two groups—one with graduate students studying to teach in higher education and a second comprised of classroom teachers and school administrators. The latter DC practitioner group, identified as the Democracy Collective Practitioner Cohort (DCPC), provided the context and focus for this study. Initially, fifteen DCPD members participated in the study but due to attrition, this number dropped to nine. Data collection included interviews, observations, field notes, artifacts, and analytic memos. Findings indicated that Internet technology synchronously connecting DCPC participants in a single virtual space contributed to the group functioning as a situated community of practice. Prior to introducing synchronous group meetings, participants described the DCPC as functioning more

like a “classroom” rather than a as a collaborative (Niesz, 2010, p. 40). The virtual chat, white board, and audio provided participants with useful tools for communicating with group members. Online meetings synchronously connecting community members provided a space for participants to discuss not only their leadership projects, but the topics that mattered to them in a space with like-minded community members (i.e., those adhering to an educationally pragmatic vision). This shared practice further contributed to participants’ self-constructed identities in that they felt assimilated into their online communities of practice as members who shared a similar vision of education and who established and used an academic language specific to the community.

Participants also identified a sense of collective group identity in that “being passionate, committed, and intellectual about one’s work was embraced in the DCPC, but viewed with skepticism at home sites” (Neisz, 2010, p. 41). From their collaborative discursive exchanges, members learned that in their work-based communities among faculty, their discourse did not match those of their online community of practice. This provided a pivotal and generative insight into the marginalization many participants felt from their work-based communities, as Niesz (2010) describes in the following:

Participants contrasted the practice and the identities that were valued across the two communities. In schools and districts, practice did not include engaging in voluntary study, discussing practice vis-a-vis philosophical questions about schooling, and exhibiting particular kinds of passion and energy for their work. The identities that these activities suggested were not readily accepted by peers in their ‘home’ communities of practice. (p. 41)

As a result of their collaboration in the DCPC, participants came to realize that by changing their work-based language, or discourse, they could bridge the gap between their two communities.

Fisher's (2009) and Niesz's (2010) findings provide several implications regarding online teacher professional development. For example, language was integral on two levels, first as a means for understanding identity and second, as a way to gain social presence within the participants' work-based communities. These findings point to the positive impact of a shared discourse on community building, the development of social presence, and participants' efficacy as teachers. Their collaborations, made possible through the literacies of Web 2.0 technologies, the teachers were able to gain greater insight that resulted in a change of consciousness and ultimately a transformation (Janks, 2000) in how they viewed, negotiated, and resolved the tensions they encountered. This finding supports Wenger's (1998) assertion that within communities of practice, literacy teachers are able to articulate their tentative literacy understandings and thinking and receive supportive group feedback that generally reinforces or expands on what they said. At other times, the feedback offers positive correction and the learning community can help refine the individual's understanding (Courtney & King, 2009).

The above studies illustrated the capability of online teacher professional development learning networks/communities in building knowledge, using a shared Discourse, and encouraging collegiality and support among participants. The value of collaborating within a network/community of like-minded others can foster new understandings and a transformation in thinking. Further, often part of other learning environments, online professional development learning networks/communities encouraged collegiality and support among participants who shared similar goals and beliefs.

Web Seminars

The literature on face-to-face and virtual seminars used in higher education suggests that they are a valuable teaching and learning format (Cox, 2011; Foote, 2013; Khechine, Lakkhal,

Pascot, & Bytha, 2014; Lorenzetti, 2008; Montgomery, 2010; Porterfield , 2013, Wiltz, 2000). In my quest to locate research pertaining to web seminars, I found little information about their use in education beyond introducing them as an alternative to traditional teacher professional development venues and providing advice about organizations and web sites offering them.

Through my experiences in this literature review process, I did learn, however, that the way researchers define a web seminar matters. For instance, according to Khechine, Lakhal, Pascot, & Bytha's (2014), "A quick Internet search reveals thousands of universities scattered over the six continents using webinars in their courses" (p. 36). This plethora of research that Khechine et al. (2014) refer to certainly exists if we take up their definition of a web seminar as "a concept that describes web-based meetings using conferencing systems that some universities have adopted to support blended learning" (p. 35). Their definition synonymously equates a web seminar (webinar) to a Web 2.0 learning platform (i.e., Blackboard Collaborate, Moodle, Adobe Connect). To confine the meaning to a platform for learning, in my opinion, delimits the full essence and integrity of a web seminar as a teaching and learning medium. As previously mentioned, for my inquiry, the term web seminar refers to a virtual learning venue that (a) uses a networked learning platform with Web 2.0 capabilities (Blackiston, 2011), (b) includes a live presentation by an expert in a specific domain (i.e., information, ideas, research) on a select topic (Lorenzetti, 2008), and (c) fosters interaction (Lorenzetti, 2008). In the case of a GCLR teacher professional development web seminar participants are generally those from the literacy education field including (but not limited to) teacher educators, in-service teachers, teacher candidates, literacy education scholars, and students. While I did not limit my searches or readings to any particular definition of a web seminar (and in fact did just the opposite, trying a variety and combinations of search terms and

databases), beyond Khechine et al.'s understanding cited above, very little research emerged about the use of web seminars.

After an extensive search and sifting through the literature, I finally came upon a scant amount of literature that addressed web seminars. This research pertained to a web seminar in the context of a *closed* university course, or comprised only of students enrolled in the course. In other words, the web seminar in each study was not a separate, distinct public, open access professional development venue, such as GCLR web seminars. Other literature situated the web seminar as a separate, stand-alone teacher professional development venue. This dearth of research revealed to me a distinct gap in the current literature concerning web seminars in general and more specifically web seminars integrated into teacher education courses, especially those pertaining to literacy education.

In consideration of my review of the literature on web seminars, therefore, in the following section, I present research reported thus far of web seminars used as in the context of closed university courses and professional development venues. A portion of this literature is practitioner-based and offers valuable insight about how these spaces are organized for learning and the interaction that occurs. For organizational purposes and to delineate the two contexts, I addressed web seminars (a) in the context of a closed university course and (b) as independent professional development venues.

Web Seminars in the Context of Closed University Course

In a case-based study using a phenomenological design, Garcia and Hooper (2011) investigated Hispanic teacher candidates' perceptions of participating in an asynchronous web seminar created as an intervention and supplemental instruction of a teacher education course. The web seminar's focus was improving critical thinking and problem-solving. Forty-one pre-service

teachers formed the sample from which 10 participants were ultimately selected using purposive sampling. Participants were enrolled in a Hispanic-Serving Institution located in an economically disadvantaged city on the Texas–Mexico border. Grounding the study in cognitive and constructivist theories, Garcia and Hooper (2011) sought to answer the following: (a) “What seminar components do the preservice minority teacher candidates identify as influencing critical thinking skills? and (b) What seminar components influence problem-solving and decision-making skills of preservice minority candidates?” (p. 202). The WebCT platform hosted the four week web seminar entitled “Critical Literacy Advancement Seminar” in which the ten participants worked individually and at their own pace. Data were collected using a semi-structured interview (with one of the fifteen questions being open-ended), student artifacts, and field notes. Data analysis followed an iterative approach of coding and identifying themes. Researchers also used the software tool NVivo to assist with the analysis.

Several findings emerged concerning the value of the web seminar, but the one related to the discussion board was especially salient. The majority of pre-service teacher candidates (60%) perceived their peers’ discussion board postings as integral to developing their critical thinking skills, as seen in the following excerpts, as Garcia and Hooper (2011) noted:

Participant 1: It was an excellent experience because I had the opportunity to communicate with others. It gave me the opportunity to read what others think about certain issues.

Participant 7: This gave me insight on what others thought and developed my own thinking.

Participant 8: The discussions posted by the students and having the opportunity to read

and respond to others positively contributed to my own critical thinking.
(pp. 206-207)

The above participant responses illustrate the value of web seminars for encouraging collaboration within web seminars that ultimately can lead to critical thinking and deeper understandings. This finding also supports Porterfield's (2013) assertion that seminars are effective for developing critical thinking skills because they encourage students to reflect meta-cognitively and introspectively about others' ideas in relation to their own positions.

Another important aspect of Garcia and Hooper's (2011) study pertains to the researchers' purposeful design of the web seminar and its content. To create authentic, problem-based learning, the web seminar content pertained to common issues that novice teachers generally confront as they begin their careers: classroom management, considerations for creating learning groups, organizing instructional materials, standardized testing. The researchers further reported including the often contested topic of standardized testing to encourage teacher candidates to engage in critical literacy through critical text analysis. Students then developed their own position about the topic. Garcia and Hooper (2011) further emphasized the importance of Latino/a students, who often feel alone and inadequate having a voice:

By offering teacher candidates this tool of critical analysis of text, they had the opportunity to be empowered with voice. Latino/a teacher candidates were given the chance to challenge textbook views by questioning the author's motivations and assumptions with a series of questions. (p. 206)

Providing the teacher candidates the opportunity to have their voices heard and giving them a platform to do so (i.e., the web seminar) supports past research about the value of using social networking tools (Dede et al., 2006; Salazar, Afuirre-Muñoz, Fox, & Nuñez-Lucas, 2010;

Sawchuk, 2009) as situated learning (Borko, 2004; Brown et al., 1989; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Putnam & Borko, 2000). But, it also exemplifies a paradox inherent in language. That is, while socially situated interaction provides access to ideas and opinions, it also can limit whose ideas get heard and which thoughts are viewed as important (Bartholomae, 1985/2011; Janks, 2000). By providing access to traditionally marginalized students, Garcia and Hooper challenge the dominant discourse by creating a space for Latino/Latina students' voices to be heard (Janks, 2000).

In his paper, Carey (1999) reports on the use of WebCT, a course management tool, to create and instruct a virtual seminar that produced high levels of engagement and interaction akin to most traditional face-to-face graduate seminars. The seminar, entitled *Narrative as Inquiry and Intercultural Communication in the Asia-Pacific*, was offered through the University of British Columbia and specifically geared toward international students from various Asian-Pacific backgrounds. The seminar's design included rich, diverse resources, such as articles, hyperlinked access to globally located university experts, and additional Internet sites. Carey (1999) surmised that these resources "would allow students to gain multiple perspectives on any particular theory or works of a particular researcher on a theoretical viewpoint" (p. 375). Interestingly, since the graduate students did not speak English as their primary language, text-based resources that corresponded with each of the seminar's topics were provided at a variety of instructional levels. Further, using the WebCT asynchronous discussion board, he hoped, would diminish some of the challenges that students faced in traditional seminars, such as students' reluctance to participate in the dialogue because maybe they do not feel confident about their knowledge of the content, not having adequate time to develop questions, or anxiety about being a second language learner. Since students could use the asynchronous discussion board to post comments, offer feedback, share opposing ideas, and pose questions, Carey (1999) likened the web seminar to a "community

of scholars” (p. 377). He concluded from the experience that the WebCT platform and tools positively impacted the level of interactivity within the virtual seminar.

However, Morrison’s (2012) investigation of “web seminar-style courses” using the online learning platform Adobe Connect differed from Carey’s (1999) earlier findings which showed a positive impact for computer-mediated tools used in online learning platforms. Using an evaluative case study design, Morrison observed interactions within two online sections of a graduate level education course, one per semester for a total of two semesters. Fifteen to eighteen students enrolled in each course. The researcher collected data from field notes and an online student survey. Morrison found that while the Adobe Connect tools were in place to foster discussions, they sometimes failed and were challenging for her and her students to master. Again, this study occurred in the context of a stand-alone, fully online course and with a select learning platform, Adobe Connect. Based on the study’s findings, I suggest that the particular learning platform used and the researcher’s and students’ familiarity with its communication tools may have been a contributing factor of the overall lower level of synchronous interaction in comparison to the face-to-face environment. Important to note, then, is the possible effect that particular learning platforms and one’s expertise using them may have on interaction. For example, the learning platform Blackboard Collaborate used in Carey’s study and which many colleges and universities use for their online courses, might make the learning format one that is more familiar to teacher educators and students than another type.

Although not a study, Montgomery (2010) described in her article how librarians developed webinars and integrated them within courses across a university as a way to teach and support students’ information literacy. Although students today can communicate with a librarian through other technology-enhanced modes (i.e., email, text, and chat), the author supported

extending this access by developing instruction to meet students' information literacy needs relative to the specific courses and coursework. Montgomery (2010) explained, "By collaborating with the instructor, an embedded librarian can develop an online presence so as to enhance the instruction in F2F courses" (p. 309). She further postulated that unlike pre-recorded mediums (i.e. videos, podcasts, learning modules), live webinars afforded students the opportunity to interact with a librarian. Using learning platform (i.e., Elluminate, Moodle, Desire2Learn) tools such as voice, chat, whiteboard, and polls, webinars provided librarians and students various mediums through which to communicate in real-time. The webinars can also be recorded and archived for later use.

Montgomery (2010) argues in favor of "embedded librarians" in webinars over the one-off class meetings wherein an instructor schedules a librarian to present a lesson to the class. She further posits that the single instructional approach sends students a message that the librarian is simply a guest speaker instead of an integral stakeholder involved in students' learning. The webinars are a valuable instructional approach "that can enhance learning in both F2F and online courses" because they offer "an interactive and informative online experience" (Montgomery, 2010, p. 310). Thus, when integrated within a stand-alone course, web seminars can be a valuable learning asset that supports and augments the learning that is anticipated to occur in the university course.

In another practitioner article, Grant (2009) reported on the use of webinars at the Louisiana Virtual School and their effectiveness in sustaining cohesiveness among faculty and students, since both were geographically dispersed throughout the state. Grant states, "Webinars play a vital role in the school's ability to meet the challenges of educating students and facilitating staff development" (p. 64). Findings indicate that web seminars used for staff development

meetings, collaborative faculty instructional planning, and within all of the school's courses, the web seminars have allowed faculty to engage in inquiry, share ideas, and develop a feeling of community.

Funded by the state and operated by the Louisiana Department of Education, the Louisiana Virtual School enrolled 6,000 students, employed 115 teaching faculty, and had 450 on-site facilitators from 72 school districts throughout the state. In 2008, the Louisiana Virtual School piloted webinars in only a handful of courses as a way to enhance communication and create a sense of connection among faculty and students. This decision came in response to the negative feedback received on end of course surveys that students and faculty completed. Full implementation occurred during the 2009-2010 academic year.

Louisiana Virtual School's use of web seminars within their teacher education program, however, has been integral to the school's training of teachers new to the school. Not only did faculty use the web seminars for instructional purposes, instructors preparing to teach at the virtual school also used the space to collaborate with each other about research-supported instructional practices, pedagogy in online spaces, and teaching strategies. As part of their training, they also engaged in synchronous teaching experiences, similar to traditional face-to-face field experiences, in which they instructed students in real-time. According to Grant, "Webinars have been effective in transforming the Louisiana Virtual teacher training program from isolated methods to a dynamic, collaborative, university model" (p. 64). He also suggests the school's need to develop curricula that align with the webinar platform and to offer professional development that teaches the instructors how to implement it.

Web Seminars as Stand-alone Professional Development

In a *post hoc* study, Fusco, Haavind, Remold, and Schank (2011) investigated facilitator engagement in relation to participation level and post-seminar survey responses in four virtual professional development web seminars. Findings indicated that how the facilitators designed and implemented the web seminars related to their perceived positive or negative value as reported on an exit survey. The exit survey included items regarding improved knowledge about the particular topic, level of satisfaction with the content, and level of satisfaction with the discussions. Study participants included members of the online Centers for Learning and Teaching network, which the National Science Foundation funded (number of participants not reported). The study's context consisted of four professional development web seminars held in the summer, two in 2006 and two in 2007 (for a total of four). Each web seminar addressed a different topic related to the instructional use of Web 2.0 technologies and pedagogy related to online learning. Data were collected and coded from asynchronous discussion board posts and participant ratings on web seminar quality satisfaction surveys, as reported according to mean scores on a Likert-type scale for each of three sections.

Researchers used the community of inquiry model (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000) as the theoretical framework in which to ground the study. In brief, this model views learning in online spaces through three interrelated components: social presence, cognitive presence, and teaching presence. Social presence refers to the interactions that are social in nature and integral to developing an environment of trust, support, cohesion, and collaboration for the purpose of sharing ideas, even those that may be controversial or critical. Cognitive presence refers to the strategies and skills used for understanding, applying, and extending knowledge. These include “brainstorming, exploring topics, integrating information, constructing understanding, and

applying that knowledge in reflection and dialogue” (Fusco, Haavind, Remold, & Schank, 2011, p. 140). Finally, teaching presence includes designing the learning experience and space, facilitating learning and interaction, and teaching.

Study results indicated that the 2007 web seminars showed a greater amount of participation and better satisfaction ratings than did the 2006 seminars. Conversely, the seminar with the least amount of participation of the four also had the lowest satisfaction level in comparison to the other three seminars. Researchers point to low levels of social, cognitive, and teaching presence as contributing factors for such low results. The facilitators’ design, unclear expectations and lack of community building (social presence), unclear expectations (cognitive presence), and facilitators’ course design (teaching presence) were all associated with the poor participation and satisfaction rates. Also, by explicitly conveying that participation was not mandatory, participants may have been less inclined to take part in the discussions, particularly since the seminar was not associated with any tangible motivation, grades, or credit. Fusco et al. (2011) explain, “In a situation where PD [professional development] seminars are provided but no credit is offered, it is especially important to understand how to motivate participation” (p. 147). The researchers further recommend that anyone planning to develop a web seminar consider using the community of inquiry framework to guide the development.

In a multi-case study ground in social learning theory and informed by Lave and Wenger’s concept of communities of practice, Booth (2012) explored how knowledge construction and trust are established within K-12 online communities of practice. Although this study’s purpose was to investigate socialization within communities of practice, the inquiry is of particular interest here because much like Global Conversations in Literacy Research web seminars, one of the online communities of practice occasionally held webinars (as one of the various social learning

mediums) featuring national experts in educational policy. Interaction in the webinars was encouraged by allowing participants to submit questions to the speakers before the webinar took place. While the study confirmed Conrad's (2005) earlier assertion of the importance of socialization and trust on a community's knowledge construction, it also illuminates two important areas for web seminars. First, social learning mediums, such as web seminars, emerged as one of five indicators of effective knowledge development and trust in a learning community, in this case, a community of practice. Second, web seminars can operate as a function of a larger learning network/community.

Summary

The literature discussed in this review illustrates how Web 2.0 technologies have enabled online teacher professional development options like asynchronous/synchronous discussion boards, blogs, wikis, and teacher learning networks/communities as alternatives to the one-off type of professional development. The literature presented here also highlights the possibilities that technology-integrated teaching and learning affords. As evidenced in my review of the literature, research has clearly established (a) an increasing and positive use of technology-mediated communication as a medium through which instruction is delivered and interaction occurs; (b) the importance of learning networks/communities in teacher professional development as nested within other learning venues since they encourage collegiality, community-building, support, and transformative learning among like-minded individuals; and (c) that the few studies about the use of web seminars (or webinars) in teacher education are primarily situated as stand-alone courses. In other words, the seminars themselves were the course or the professional development venue, but not used simultaneously.

Need for the Study

Research into online learning has shown computer-mediated communication as an important contributor to collaboration within online spaces (Bold, 2006; Brown, 2010; Carey, 1999; Chen et al., 2009; Schallert et al., 2009). Social networking tools and online learning networks particularly provide fertile spaces for teacher learning since they can provide just-in-time, convenient learning, affordable access, and ongoing situated learning and support from other teachers (Dede et al., 2006). In addition, many of the characteristics that researchers have identified as effective teacher professional development may be realized within online spaces: learning that is ongoing, sustained, collaborative, and transformative (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Findings from past research suggested that online teacher professional development situated within the context of a network of learners can be effective formats for supporting teachers' knowledge co-construction, socialization, and efficacy through collaboration with like-minded others (Booth, 2012; Fisher, 2009; Laferrière, 2007; Neisz, 2010).

However, my review of the extant literature identified few studies in which web seminars were specifically studied as a component of teacher education courses. All of the studies about seminars conducted online were situated within the context of a stand-alone class or as a separate, distinct professional development venue. That is, the seminar participants were limited to those students enrolled in the course, or more like the typical online class, rather than a component integrated into the broader course structure. Further, even though a portion of the literature was practitioner-based (Carey, 1999; Grant, 2009; Montgomery, 2010; & Morrison, 2012), it did lend insight into the role of web seminars and how they may be designed for teaching and learning. Sill, other literature merely identified web seminars as a useful form of teacher professional development, provided a brief, but general description of their characteristics, and/or stated

specific resources for locating them (Blackiston, 2011; Cox, 2011; Foote, 2013; Lorenzetti, 2008; Porterfield, 2013).

While the cited literature adds a practical element that helps us understand web seminars as a potential teacher professional development venue, it leaves unanswered deeper pedagogical considerations and reasons behind how, why, and the possible value of teacher educators integrating extrinsic, independent teacher professional development web seminars, such as GCLR, within their stand-alone literacy courses. Zhao, Pugh, Sheldon, and Byers (2002) argue that past research has relatively ignored “the messy process through which teachers struggle to negotiate a foreign and potentially disruptive innovation into their familiar environment” (p. 483). Yates (2014) suggests one reason for this paucity of research is because with such rapid advancement, researchers have dedicated their time to studying the new technology rather than the instructional implementation that goes along with it. Mishra and Koehler (2006) further posit,

A conceptually based theoretical framework about the relationship between technology and teaching can transform the conceptualization and the practice of teacher education, teacher training, and teachers’ professional development. It can also have a significant impact on the kinds of research questions that we explore. (1019)

More research is warranted and needed that bridges the gap between studying a technology’s format and the more nuanced factors associated with its purposeful use as an instructional medium for the professional development of teachers and those studying to be teachers. Research that addresses how and why literacy teacher educators integrate an innovative teacher development web seminar, such as GCLR, into their courses and its potential value for the development of teacher candidates and in-service teachers is timely.

Potential Impact of the Study

The current study has the potential to inform language and literacy research in several ways. First, this study advanced language and literacy scholarship by furthering our understanding of how teacher educators incorporate various aspects of technology (such as computer-mediated technology), online teacher professional development, and web seminars. Also, knowledge about the affordances and constraints of blending web seminars with teacher education courses informed language and literacy research and practice by illustrating how best to organize such learning. This inquiry adds to the scholarship surrounding teacher professional development by providing insight into how teacher educators harness evolving technologies in the preparation and instruction of teachers and those studying to be teachers. Finally, studying the integration of a professional development web seminar, GCLR, that is ground in critical literacy offered promise for bringing to the forefront within teacher education courses the importance of addressing language and literacy issues that often go uncontested. Whose language takes principality, whose voice gets heard, whose opinions matter, and which mode and medium of communication is privileged over others all exemplify important critical literacy issues that speak to access, domination, design, and diversity as they pertain to the power inherent in language (Janks, 2000).

Conclusion

My review of the literature indicated that computer-mediated communication tools are an effective means for fostering rich conversations, an important aspect of effective online learning, namely in the form of online teacher professional development. Also, past research has shown that online teacher professional development can be an effective avenue for teacher professional development by providing opportunities for collaborative, ongoing, and transformational learning. While my review of the literature identified studies related to the use and value of computer-

mediated communication technology (i.e., social networking tools) in online teacher professional development, none specifically investigated online web seminars as an integrated component of teacher education courses. This absence of research indicates a gap in the current literature and the need for my study, which seeks to understand how and why teacher educators incorporate web seminars such as GCLR, and the value of doing so, into their teacher preparation courses. Therefore, this study has the potential to positively inform language and literacy scholarship, research, and practice about the instructional value of incorporating a series of critical literacy web seminars into teacher education literacy courses, how teacher educators integrate them, and the pedagogical reasons for doing so.

In the following chapter, I present the methodology that I used for this study, which investigated teacher educators' use of a free and open access web seminar, GCLR, whose goal is to disseminate cutting edge literacy research and improve literacy practices, within their language and literacy teacher education courses. I begin with an overview of qualitative research and provide the rationale for designing an interview study, followed by my positioning and assumptions as a researcher. I then move into an explanation of the study's timeline and rationale of the methods and procedures for data collection and analysis that I used. I conclude with measures that I took to ensure the study's authenticity and trustworthiness.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

For this study, I used a qualitative approach to understand teacher educators' use of an open access professional development web seminar, situated around critical literacy research and practice, within their language and literacy teacher education courses. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) define qualitative research as “a situated activity that locates the observer in the world” (p. 3). From this worldview, knowledge develops in and through our social interactions with others, and rather than remaining constant, knowledge is ever-changing and evolving (Crotty, 2011; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 2009; Schwandt, 2000). Distinguishable from positivist research that is concerned with objective reality, then, qualitative research embodies naturalistic features which allow the researcher to study participants within the context of their natural environments, and in so doing, to interpret the meanings that participants assign to their own experiences (Bogdan & Biklen, 2011; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). One goal of the qualitative researcher, then, is to understand phenomena from the participant's perspective, which is a culmination of his/ her lived experiences gained through social interactions with others.

Researchers choose data collection methods that can best help them discern the meanings that individuals assign to their life-worlds (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Shulman (1981) states, “We must first understand our problem, and decide what questions we are asking, then select the mode of *disciplined inquiry* (italics in original) most appropriate to those questions” (p. 12). Therefore, because I sought to understand phenomena based on my participants' perspectives and co-constructed experiences, I designed a qualitative interview study to address this inquiry's research questions: a) Why do teacher educators use online professional development web seminars within their courses? (b) How do teacher educators use online professional development web seminars

within their courses, especially those presented by GCLR? and (c)What value do teacher educators see in working with the web seminars in their classes, especially those presented by GCLR? In the proceeding sections, I discuss my rationale for using an interview study, my role and assumptions as a researcher, data collection methods and analysis, and considerations for ensuring trustworthiness of my proposed study.

Rationale for Using an Interview Study

Merriam (2009) suggests that an interview approach is appropriate for studies in which direct observation of the phenomena studied is impossible, particularly in relation to behavior, emotions and individuals' perspectives. Because participants' emic perspectives cannot be ascertained through direct observation, an interview study was an appropriate choice for this study to understand how and why teacher educators use online professional development web seminars as a component of the literacy courses that they teach and the value of doing so. Schwandt (2000) argues that "understanding is participative, conversational, and dialogic" (p. 195). By engaging in conversation with the participants, therefore, I was able to inquire about their understanding of the cultural and social design of the web seminars in relation to how and why they used them as an instructional medium integrated within their literacy courses.

Engaging in dialogue during each interview also allowed me to capture the perspectives of my participants, ensuring that I represented their thoughts, ideas, and voice and not my own. Bogdan and Biklen (2011) explain, "The interview is used to gather descriptive data in the subjects' own words so that the researcher can develop insights on how subjects interpret some piece of the world" (p. 103). As this study's main method for data collection, the interviews became a valuable source that allowed me to gain personal insights from the teacher educators' perspectives about their students' reactions to the web seminars. Having the participants' personal

accounts, therefore, I was able to gather rich, thick data that provided a frame of reference of the teacher educators' experiences and perceptions from which I drew my interpretations (Patton, 2002). From these descriptions, I then extracted excerpts of the participants' own words as support of generalizations made from the study's findings.

Finally, using an interview design complemented critical situated learning, this study's theoretical framework, which supports having multiple and varied voices and ideas heard. Through participant interviews, I was able to capture data that reflected and was representative of participants' views throughout the study, rather than my own. Such a critical stance embodied a humanistic spirit and my personal belief that our research can and should have a meaning outside ourselves, as Schwandt (2000) states, "Social inquiry is a practice, not just a way of knowing" (p. 203). As a researcher, therefore, I brought particular assumptions to this study that shaped my interpretations of the data. Roulston (2010) underscored the importance of researchers having a clear understanding of the study's epistemological and theoretical assumptions when designing an interview study so as to make certain that the interview questions align with the theoretical propositions. In the next section, therefore, I outline these assumptions and my role as a researcher.

Positioning of the Researcher

How we view the world and our surroundings influence what we know and how we come to understand it. Informed by my past teaching and learning experiences, I hold a social constructivist view that knowledge results "through the interaction of the creative and interpretive work of the mind with the physical/temporal world" (Paul, 2005, p. 46). Thus, consistent with a constructionist epistemology (Schwandt, 2000), I believe that we co-construct knowledge through our social interactions, to include using various modes and mediums of communication. Schwandt (2000) argues that "we invent concepts, models, and schemes to make sense of experience, and we

continually test and modify these constructions in the light of new experiences (p. 197). Congruent with sociocultural theory, therefore, I believe that our experiences with other people and environments directly influence what we learn and how we come to understand it.

I also hold that every new experience adds to our current understandings, thereby opening possibilities for transforming our worldview. I add to this a critical stance that access to knowledge, opinions, and ways of seeing and being in the world are often privileged and that whose voices get heard and whose do not is a social justice issue (Janks 2000). Likewise, the power inherent in language often results in language and communication that are valued over others. In support of my position of learning as a social and cultural endeavor, Anderson and Kanuka (2003) state, “Modern learning theory stresses the value of multiple perspectives, of working with peers on collaborative and cooperative tasks, of searching and constructing information artifacts, and of exploring and learning in multicultural communities” (p. 8). The potential, then, for reaching outside our traditional comfort zones to communicate with and co-construct knowledge with distant others increases when learning is contextually situated within online spaces, particularly when using synchronous tools that provide real-time communication. My theoretical positioning, therefore, is intimately tied to the assumptions that I hold as a researcher. In the next section, I outline my assumptions as a researcher and how my theoretical positioning and lived experiences influences these.

Assumptions of the Researcher

Paul (2005) explains, “Whether or not some knowledge makes sense depends on the assumptions one holds about knowledge” (p. 48). My experiences as a doctoral student working with GCLR, pre/in-service teacher educator, and classroom teachers have informed my assumptions as a researcher. I recognize that my beliefs, in part based on these experiences,

inevitably provide me with an insider's view. Such an intimate view, according to Schwandt (2000), is sometimes necessary "in order to understand the intersubjective meanings of human action" (Schwandt, 2000, p. 193). That I share some of the same views about literacy as did my participants raised the potential that I might not remain neutral in my interpretation of the data. Reflecting upon and making my subjectivities known has made transparent the lens from which I have interpreted the data and through which others may read and critique my research. Schwandt (2000) argues that "understanding requires the engagement in one's biases" (p. 195). In what follows, then, I detail three main assumptions that I hold as a researcher.

First, I believe that whether in face-to-face, online, or hybrid spaces, socially situated, contextual learning can effectively occur. As a doctoral student in the language and literacy program at GSU, three and a half years ago I began working with Dr. Peggy Albers as a GCLR assistant researcher, co-moderator, and as a participant of the web seminars. The idea of offering open-access web seminars to anyone in the world with an Internet connection fascinated me. Intrigued by the promise of such global sharing, I began considering (along with others who were working with the project) the affordances and constraints of such global knowledge sharing using synchronous communication tools and how this might lead to new understandings about critical literacy, particularly my own.

Working with the larger GCLR project for several years now, I have established an emic view of how the web seminars function and the interaction that occurs (i.e., public chat, private chat, presenter's use of audio/video). In my role as a GCLR assistant researcher, I learned first-hand how social interactions occur among seminar participants within an online space and the kinds of topics that arise through these conversations. This knowledge has shaped how I understand the context of my study within a synchronous online space that is supported by a

learning platform. Also, participating in the seminars has influenced my position that access to quality literacy professional development should be made available to anyone who wants to participate and that teachers should have a voice in choosing their own professional development and its medium and mode of delivery. While I support online learning, I also recognize that online spaces encompass a discourse and social presence that are different from traditional face-to-face environments. For example, non-linguistic cues (i.e., facial expressions, gestures, intonation, etc.) can impact the understandings that learners co-construct as they exchange thoughts, ideas, and opinions, as well as the interpretations of researchers conducting research in online spaces (Anderson & Kanuka, 2003).

Next, I believe that effective teacher education preparation classes can provide pre- and in-service teachers with real-world, situated experiences and exemplars that help them to connect the theories, strategies, and rationales that they learn in their coursework with classroom practices. Further, my past work as a university instructor and supervisor of pre- and in-service teachers allowed me to understand the nuances of being a teacher education instructor. For example, I have experience developing courses, syllabi, and coursework and understand that there are mandated guidelines that must be followed. I further understand the concern that many teacher educators share with how to make instructional theories less abstract so that students can make meaning of and connect and apply such theoretical underpinning to practice. I have experienced the frustration of trying to create authentic teaching experiences for pre/in-service teachers, particularly in today's culture of mandated curriculum and institutional hierarchies. My perspectives about learning as a co-constructed, contextually situated, and social endeavor has influenced my belief that we, novice and experienced teachers, can learn from each other through collaborative, dialogic exchanges in which we share ideas, ask questions, and provide professional support. Collaborating with other

teachers can open new paths to understanding, create camaraderie and support, and help teachers develop a sense of identity as a professional educator.

A third assumption that I hold reflects my belief that ongoing, sustained professional development is essential for shaping knowledge and classroom research and practice. As a researcher interested in critical literacy, I advocate that teachers have access to affordable professional development and be given opportunities to self-select professional learning opportunities that meet their needs, even when those choices differ from those that school administrators and those in positions of authority deem appropriate. Further, during the twenty-two years that I spent as a former middle and secondary classroom teacher, I have felt the tug-o-war of trying to find time for professional development amid the extra responsibilities that teachers take on, such as committee work, parent-teacher conferences, and moderating extra-curricular school activities. I also know what it is like to feel torn between my personal beliefs about teaching and learning and trying to remain within the lines of imposed educational mandates, which often result in teachers not having a voice, fearing to have a voice, or not having that voice recognized. Further, as part of ongoing professional development, I encourage giving teachers a voice to share ideas, express opinions, question educational decisions, and offer suggestions for improving the educational situations that affect their roles as classroom teachers and students enrolled in teacher education classes. I further believe that teachers who respectfully express their opinions should not have to fear redress from those in positions of authority. Rather, they should be made stakeholders in shaping educational policy and practice. My work, thus, as a former classroom teacher has allowed me to understand, first hand, the frustrations and challenges that teachers often confront.

In summary, my work as a GCLR assistant researcher affords me an intimate perspective about online teacher professional development. And, my experience as a classroom teacher and a

university instructor/supervisor gives me an advantage as an insider, capable of knowing first-hand what each experiences in their day-to-day jobs. It also allows me to establish entry into the field, which I discuss in the next section.

Establishing Entry into the Field

Because this study occurred within the context of an open-access web seminar in which anyone may participate by clicking on the Blackboard Collaborate link, I did not experience any difficulties gaining entry to the study site. I also was able to recruit participants for this study by reaching out to potential volunteers whom, through my work as a GCLR assistant researcher, I recognized as teacher educators who regular attended GCLR web seminars. My peers were also able to suggest a few of their teacher educator colleagues as potential volunteers.

As for conducting interviews with participants who are geographically distanced, advancements in Internet technology communication platforms such as Skype, Google hangout, and Blackboard Collaborate have made interviewing participants from a distance very accessible. Because I had a presence in GCLR web seminars as a co-moderator and host over the past three years, those who regularly participate in GCLR web seminars were likely familiar with me, which should help in developing rapport with my study's participants. I believed that the common interest that we shared with GCLR web seminars and literacy in general helped me develop trust during participant interviews. Finally, virtual interviews held the affordance of easy scheduling/rescheduling and proved cost-effective since the participants were physically distant from me and each other.

Research Design

A study's design guides the research process as qualitative researchers attempt to understand phenomena using interviews, observations, and reflective methods, which allow them

to gather rich, thick data. Because I am interested in understanding from my participants' viewpoint why and how they use professional development web seminars such as GCLR and the value of doing so, I framed this study within an interpretivist design. Interpretivism is apt for this study since it allows for the inductive, interpretive nature of qualitative inquiry also means that the design often unfolds during the research process (Bogdan & Biklen, 2011; Patton, 2002). This qualitative study occurred during a ten-week timeframe beginning September 2014 and lasting through November 2014. While the study is primarily designed using participant interviews, I also incorporated documents as artifacts. Merriam (2009) uses the term *documents* to describe a broad category of data collection methods distinct from interviews and field observations, to include written, semantic, visual, and tangible items (i.e., official records, videos, street signs, photographs, etc.). An *artifact* is a particular type of document located in the physical world to communicate information (i.e., legal letters, personal journal entries, articles, etc.). I used the participants' course syllabi as artifacts to complement and support the interview data. From these artifacts, I learned about the literacy topics covered in a particular class, the projects and readings assigned, and a general sense how the course was designed. In the following sections, I outline the data collection and analysis procedures that I followed to conduct this study and how I addressed the study's authenticity.

Purposeful Selection

The aim of qualitative research is to understand phenomena by studying participants within particular contexts of their natural surroundings. It is prudent and desirable, therefore, for qualitative researchers to select participants whom they expect will provide the most insight about the phenomena under study within the study's context (Patton, 2002). Because I studied phenomena related to participants who held specific characteristics as teacher educators, I used

purposeful selection to recruit the volunteers for my study. Specifically, I used snowballing and convenience sampling, particular types of purposeful selection methods that allowed me to quickly and easily gather volunteers who possessed the necessary participation criteria for this study (Merriam, 2009). In the next section, I outline the criteria that I used to select participants for this study.

Participants

Three teacher educators who attend Global Conversations in Literacy Research web seminars were recruited for this study. These three participants provided insight and in-depth understand of the implications of teacher educators' use of an open access online professional development web seminar, Global Conversations in Literacy Research (GCLR), as a component of the language and literacy teacher education courses that they teach. Two of these participants each taught two literacy courses and the other participant taught only one. While I did reach out to additional possible participants, only three volunteered for the study. Recruiting three participants was a manageable number that allowed me as a researcher to spend sufficient time with each participant in order to gather a rich understanding from each's perspective across time. Also, having three participants gave me a safeguard against member attrition in case a participant dropped out of the study.

The criteria for purposeful selection included participants who (a) taught one or more literacy-related teacher education course at a college or university, (b) integrated GCLR web seminars as a component of their course design, and (c) as part of criteria b had students who attend GCLR web seminars. I used three particular resources to obtain participants for the study. First, via email, I reached out to colleagues who fit the criterion, especially those with whom I have a professional affiliation. One teacher educator agreed to participate in the study. Second, I

asked my colleagues if they knew of potential study participants and requested that they give my contact information to them. In this way, if interested, the contact could initiate communication with me. One colleague provided a recommendation but not a contact email, so I did a quick search and found the potential volunteer's professional email and sent a request to participate. She replied to email a few days later, agreeing to take part in the study. Next, I reached out to GCLR attendees whom I recognized from their attendance at past web seminars with their students. I knew these attendees were teacher educators because during seminars, the moderators and host ask those participants to identify if they are part of a university cohort. I identified three potential candidates, located their professional email address via an Internet search, and sent them an email inviting them to participate. Of the three emails that I sent, one responded. At this point, I had three participants volunteer for the study, so I sent each one a recruitment email (See Appendix A).

I also attempted to select participants who instructed teachers who are at various levels in their respective teacher education programs (i.e., pre-service, in-service, doctoral students who expect to be future teacher educators). The goal was to achieve maximum variation through diversity of participants (Merriam, 2009), which I thought could yield a significantly broader perspective and deeper understanding of how teacher educators used online professional development web seminars within their courses. Also, I selected participants who had varying levels of experience as teacher educators, considering that such criteria might be useful for developing finer understandings related to my study's findings. In the following sections, I describe the three participants who volunteered for this study, providing background about their teaching experience, where they currently teach, and the courses they were teaching during this study's data collection. I assigned each of them a pseudonym to maintain their anonymity. All

three are females of varying ages and backgrounds who worked at urban universities at the time of this study.

Geena.

“I think I bring a lot of experiences to the, to my teaching, but I’m always learning something new, too” (Geena, initial interview, September 29, 2014).

Of the three participants in this study, Geena had spent the past fifteen years as a teacher educator, the most of all three participants. . She is witty and focused in speech and tone. Her voice exudes confidence, and she knows her stuff when it comes to literacy and teacher education; yet, she never makes you feel less than. As evidenced from her quote above, she is humble and quick to acknowledge that despite her more than twenty-five years of experience as a teacher/teacher educator, she is open to learning new things. Based on my time spent with her across our three interviews, I describe her as having an open disposition toward her own learning and that of her teacher candidates.

Geena’s past experience as a classroom teacher included teaching every grade, K-5, except first grade. She taught in two different public school systems, one located in the southeastern part of the US and another in the western region. Geena described the student population of both schools as traditionally underserved. One-hundred percent of the student body of the school located in the Southeast was African American, while one-hundred percent of students in the other school were of Hispanic descent. Geena also described herself as monolingual, but noted that she had worked with English language learners and bilingual students when she taught kindergarten, relying on the teaching assistant for translation.

Currently a full professor at an urban university in the southeastern part of the United States, Geena had taught a wide variety of undergraduate and graduate literacy courses. These

included courses in pedagogy, methods, assessment, and urban literacy. She described her beliefs about teaching and learning from a social critical stance. In the following excerpt, Geena explains her perspective:

I operate from what I call a social critical perspective. So, I really embrace the idea that learning is a social endeavor.... I really value collaboration and working with others and really try to impart with students or with colleagues that we really need each other to advance any sort of idea or learning And, the critical suggests just that it's really important that we not just take things at face value... and we should help kids, in particular, think about how important it is to, uh, not confront, but to address, what are socially significant topics. So, things like homelessness, race, gender, poverty. (initial interview, October 7, 2014)

Consistent with her social critical beliefs, Geena further thought that learning should be inquiry-based, authentic, and situated in students' interests.

Over the past five years, Geena has worked only with graduate students and teaches courses at the Master's and Ph.D. level. At the time of this study, Geena taught two Master's level urban literacy courses, one in school supervision and the other about literacy theory and pedagogy. She integrated GCLR web seminars into both of these courses, which were the focus of this study. When I asked her how long she had been integrating GCLR web seminars in her literacy courses, she was uncertain exactly but estimated for at least two years and perhaps, maybe longer.

Grace.

“There is not much that is more important than returning to assumptions and testing them and pushing them and wondering if they're still relevant” (Grace, mid-point interview, November 4, 2014).

Grace is a second participant in this study. Articulate, friendly, and knowledgeable, she eagerly offers her perspectives about literacy and learning. The tone of her voice puts one at ease but also makes one want to listen. From my perspective, Grace thinks deeply and passionately about literacy and teacher development.

Grace's teaching experience includes working as a middle school language arts teacher, former high school English teacher, reading specialist, and assistant professor at an urban university in the South. She spent four years teaching at the middle-school level prior to working as a high school reading specialist. While working as a reading specialist, she began her Ph.D. program. She took a year away from the high school setting to work as a research assistant at the university where she pursued her doctorate before heading back to the high school classroom where she spent a few more years teaching language arts. Wanting to focus more on her Ph.D. and desiring flexibility in her schedule (since she now had a child), Grace left the classroom to work part-time at the university where she was pursuing her degree. She taught a few elementary education courses and described the situation as "ironic because I never actually taught children under the age of twelve" (Grace, initial interview, October 8, 2014). Grace also gained experience as a university supervisor by conducting field observations of teacher candidates. She also taught a basic skills literacy course in another department in the college. In total, Grace had worked at this university for a total of two years as a part-time instructor and three years as a full-time instructor. She has consistently taught at least one literacy-related course while a full-time instructor and has worked with pre-/in-service teachers on site in schools where they were teaching. Other early childhood courses that she has taught include those related to classroom management, pedagogy, and methods.

Similar to Geena, Grace also ascribed to a socio-cultural and critical literacy perspective of learning, encouraging collaboration and self-reflective practices. She ascribed to the idea of learning as on-going, authentic, purposeful, and enjoyable. She explained her view of learning in the following:

It's more like a horticultural model that we all have talents that we can nurture and we all take a different amount of time. We all need different kinds of experiences, but that at the end of the day, as long as it's rooted in what is relevant and what is meaningful, and what helps, learning can't help but happen. (Grace, initial interview, October 8, 2014)

At the time of this inquiry, Grace taught five early childhood courses, two in which she integrated GCLR web seminars. One was with pre-service teachers enrolled in a face-to-face digital composing class, and the second was a literacy development class, delivered as a hybrid model. This latter course was part of a master's program, whereby students who already held an undergraduate degree worked toward initial teacher licensure while simultaneously working as full-time classroom teachers.

Lin.

"I go back to my student population. They come from very different backgrounds. So again, my purpose is I want to create a safe environment for everyone" (Lin, initial interview, October 2, 2014).

Professional, compassionate, and intellectual, Lin is a third participant in this inquiry. Her voice exudes a friendly tone and quiet eagerness. And from my interviews with her, she seemed to always place her students at the forefront of her teaching. Lin taught first grade in her native country, Taiwan, for several years before coming to the US to pursue her Master's degree and

Ph.D. She is a qualified reading specialist and although she speaks English as a second language, she is fluent and articulate.

At the time of this study, Lin was an assistant professor at an urban university located in the upper northern United States. This was the third university where she had taught. Prior to her current position, she had taught at two different universities, for a total of five years. These two universities were located in a state adjacent to the one in which she currently taught. In this most recent position, she taught mainly urban literacy foundations and methods courses in early childhood education. Students of color comprised forty percent of the total population enrolled in the early childhood program. Of the students whom Lin taught, about seventy percent came from diverse social, cultural, linguistic, and learning backgrounds.

Much like Geena and Grace, Lin described her teaching disposition as socio-culturally and critically-rooted. She believed in a constructivist approach to learning in which students develop their own knowledge through critical inquiry and collaboration, namely discussion. Lin explained her beliefs in the following way: “I would say an interactive learning environment, letting my students construct their own knowledge, and focusing on diversity and multicultural and social justice issues is something that I emphasize in my classroom” (initial interview, October 20, 2014).

During this study, Grace integrated GCLR web seminars into a first-year literacy foundations course. According to Lin, the students in this pre-service teacher education course come from diverse socio-economic, cultural, and language backgrounds. Although they did not possess their teaching licenses, a large portion of her students worked in educated-related settings. The students met face-to-face for instruction, and this was their first reading course in their program of study. Lin had integrated the GCLR web seminars into her literacy teacher education

Data Management									X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X						
Data Transcription										X	X	X	X	X									
Data Coding/Anal.										X	X	X	X	X	X								
Preliminary Report														X									
Revisions															X	X							
Diss. Defense																		X					
Revisions																	X	X	X				
Graduate																							X

Because data collection and analysis were ongoing and followed a recursive process, transcription ensued soon after I conducted each interview. I transcribed the first set of participant interviews but enlisted the assistance of a transcriptionist whom I paid to transcribe the second and third sets of interviews. All transcriptions were completed by the end of November. I read and reread the initial interview transcript and began identifying possible themes, assigning codes, notating memos, etc. I did this with each of the interviews, returning to subsequent interviews during this iterative process, with a plan to complete data analysis by early 2015.

Context and Setting of the Research

The setting for this study was a virtual environment in which GCLR web seminars were presented using Blackboard Collaborate, an Internet learning platform that uses Web 2.0 technologies to synchronously bring people together across time and space in a single location. Up to one thousand people may participate live at any one time in a Blackboard session. As a learning venue, the platform fosters collaboration and interaction through the application of its many tools, to include the following: written chat, audio, video, whiteboard, break-out rooms, polling options, timer, and emoticons. The Blackboard space is often referred to as a *room*, which is the equivalent of a virtual classroom. One or more room moderators enables/disables the tools to be used for each learning session.

Supported by Georgia State University and operated by its Information Systems and Technology department (IS&T), faculty and students who want to reserve a Blackboard Collaborate room may do so by completing a request form and submitting it electronically to the IS&T department. The technology department then sends an email notice with a link to the person reserving the room. That person can then share the link with others who may join the Blackboard Collaborate session by clicking the link. Through the university, Dr. Peggy Albers (GCLR's founder) secured a permanent link to a Blackboard Collaborate room in which all of the GCLR web seminars were held. This same link was shared with others across various listserves, Facebook, Twitter, and the GCLR website. With a click of the Blackboard Collaborate link, participants may enter the room anytime within 90 minutes prior to the session's start and anytime thereafter until the end of the presentation.

Georgia State University language and literacy doctoral students volunteered as hosts for each seminar and logged into the Blackboard Collaborate room 45 to 60 minutes prior to the seminar's start. The host's main task was to welcome participants into the space, explain the GCLR project at the beginning of each seminar, and introduce the guest speaker. Then, at the end of the seminar, the host thanked the speaker on behalf of GCLR, asked participants to type one comment into the chat box about their web seminar experience, provided the names of upcoming speakers and the dates of their presentations, and closed the seminar. For both the introduction and conclusion, the host referred to PowerPoint slides that the GCLR team referred to as *front/back slides*. The presenters provided their own PowerPoint that a GCLR moderator integrated with the front/back slides and uploaded prior to the beginning of each presentation. Dr. Peggy Albers moderated each web seminar with eight co-moderators, who were language and literacy doctoral

students and GCLR research assistants. Each presentation lasted 60 minutes, or one hour from the time the host introduced GCLR and the speaker until the host's concluding remarks.

Interaction occurred within the web seminars among moderators, participants, and presenters using Blackboard Collaborate communication tools, such as chat, audio, video, and semiotics (i.e., hand-raise, star, hand-clap, emoticons, etc.). These and other tools afforded collaborative, mediated communication among hosts, moderators, speakers, and participants, which was vital for situated learning to occur. Moderators, hosts, participants, and presenters, for example, used the chat feature to send messages back and forth to each other. By placing the cursor in the chat box, one could type a group comment or question and then send the message to the everyone signed into the Blackboard session by clicking the enter button on the computer. Private chat messages could also be sent to one or more individual attendees by clicking on a displayed attendee's name and then following the same procedures as with sending group messages. Only the sender, receiver, and the moderators had access to these private messages. Most of the chat messages at the beginning of each web seminar were social in nature and used mainly to welcome participants into the Blackboard Collaborate space and the GCLR presentation, much like when attendees chat back and forth while waiting for a face-to-face conference to begin. Participants who logged into the Blackboard space could remain anonymous simply by using a pseudonym, which could reduce any tension they might otherwise feel about posting a comment or question. Using the chat feature also supported more equitable opportunities for participants to share their thoughts, ideas, and questions and therefore increase the chance of having their ideas and voices heard. A constraint, however, was that the content of the postings was at the discretion of the participant typing the message, which decreased the ability to monitor and stop potentially

offensive/unprofessional comments prior to them being sent to the entire group. Although such instances rarely occurred during GCLR web seminars, the potential nevertheless existed.

The Blackboard interface also afforded moderators, hosts, and presenters the opportunity to communicate orally using the microphone tool that they could turn on and off. The microphone was not enabled for participant use in order to facilitate ease of collaboration among the large number of web seminar participants, which not unusually sometimes exceeded one hundred in number. Presenters most often used the built-in video feature, which broadcasted a headshot of them on a small screen within the online space for all to see. The Blackboard Collaborate platform supported uploading slides in the form of a viewable PowerPoint that presenters also reference during their presentations.

Once the speaker began his/her presentation, participants' chat messages mainly focused on the presenter's topic, a participant's related experience, participant viewpoints about the presentation topic in relation to other goings on in literacy and education in general (i.e., standardized testing, cultural/language diversity, Common Core Standards, etc.), and practical application of an instructional strategy to the classroom. Web seminar participants also asked questions of the presenter and at times challenged him/her on a particular point, sometimes engaging in professional argument and debate over an issue raised by the speaker or another participant. Also, in an earlier GCLR study, Albers, Pace, and Brown (2013) identified instances of participants partaking in what they termed discursive asides, or clusters of various chat conversations occurring simultaneously throughout the web seminar. That is, through chat, participants could take up topics that mattered to them, moving seamlessly in and out of conversations. Chat's linear characteristic, however, meant that these conversations often got

interrupted by ongoing postings, making following the various conversations and the chat as a whole sometimes difficult.

At the conclusion of each web seminar, the host asked participants to type one thought, comment, or question into the chat box about the presentation itself, the web seminar format, or the larger GCLR project. At this time, participants were also asked to type their email addresses into the chat box if they would like to volunteer to participate in an interview for GCLRs ongoing, longitudinal study. Once all participants logged out of the Blackboard Collaborate space (or were removed by a moderator), the GCLR team remained online for an interview session with the featured speaker, followed by a short debriefing session among the GCLR team. In these debriefing sessions, the team discussed such topics as what we thought went well, any glitches that may have occurred and possible solutions, and any moments that stood out as particularly salient. Afterward, the GCLR team ended the session and logged out of the room. Blackboard automatically generated a recording of each web seminar, which a team member immediately uploaded to the GCLR YouTube archives (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCay7UB8Mm5SpRnPy6Mx15Gg>).

In relation to my study, the participants used the September, October, and November GCLR web seminars as a component of their literacy teacher education courses. Table 2 located below indicates the dates/times, speaker, and title of each web seminar.

Table 2

GCLR Web Seminar Dates, Times, Speakers, and Presentation Titles

Date/Time (Eastern)	Speaker	Presentation Title
September 14 7 p.m.	Dr. David Kirkland	<i>A Song of the Smoke: Critical Thoughts on the Literacies of Young Black Men</i>
October 12 7 p.m.	Dr. Richard Beach	<i>How Affordances of Digital Tool Use Foster Critical Literacy</i>

November 9 7 p.m.	Dr. David Berliner	<i>Education, Politics and Literacy</i>
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Data Collection and Management

Data collection for the current study occurred from September 2014 through November 2014 and lasted for ten weeks. Although I used semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method, I also incorporated documents in the form of participants' course syllabi and email correspondence as a data source to complement and support the interview data. Roulston (2010) recommends that researchers designing interview studies incorporate other methods of data collection (e.g., documents, video, photographs) along with their participants' interviews since "portrayals of what is going on can be enhanced through the inclusion of details drawn from other data sources" (p. 84). In the following sections, I outline my rationale for using the above named data collection methods and detail the procedures that I followed for data collection.

Prior to any data collection I obtained an electronic informed consent (see Appendix B) via email from each participant, as approved by my IRB. I created a folder labeled "Dissertation" within my Georgia State University student email where I placed each participant's electronic consent. I also collected and placed in this folder all incoming and outgoing email correspondence from each participant. I created a separate folder on my password-protected computer in which I placed documents such as each participant's course syllabi, all digitally recorded participant interviews, and transcripts of each interview. I backed up all files using a flash drive that I placed in a file folder labeled "Dissertation Research" that I stored in a locked file drawer. This procedure aligned with the overall data management procedures outlined at the end of the "Data Collection and Management" section further located in this chapter.

Semi-Structured Participant Interviews

For this inquiry, I used semi-structured interviews because I was interested in capturing data that was reflective of the participants' worldview (Bogdan & Biklen, 2011; Merriam, 2009). Using interviews as a data collection method allowed me to gather information about similar topics from each of the study participants but to do so flexibly, without adherence to a rigid protocol of asking the exact questions in the same order or manner to each participant. This flexibility afforded broader parameters so that I could capture the participants' perspectives, their understandings, thoughts, and experiences in relation to the study's research questions, which is the primary goal of conducting interview studies (Bogdan & Biklen, 2011). Furthermore, Patton (2002) suggests that such "design flexibility stems from the open-ended naturalistic inquiry as well as pragmatic considerations" (p. 44). Thus, while I used an interview guide (see Appendix C, D, E) for each of the three interviews to focus my questions on specific topics related to my research questions, at the same time I allowed leeway for participants to respond openly and to stake themselves as co-constructors of the data alongside me, the researcher (Roulston, 2010).

During the first interview, I asked some questions from the interview guide that elicited general information pertaining to participants' experience, such as number of years spent teaching, types of courses taught and their levels, and which literacy courses they taught. To help me get a sense of their experiences with online teacher professional development, I included a few questions that focused on the teacher educators' and their students' participation in past web seminars. For example, I asked each participant, "How do you describe your beliefs about teaching and learning?" and "What are your personal experiences using online venues as a form of teacher professional development and support?" (see Appendix C for Initial Interview Guide). I also posed follow-up questions that allowed me the latitude to engage in an in-depth conversation with each

participant about her unique perspectives related to her experiences incorporating GCLR web seminars. For instance, during the initial interview, I asked Geena (participant 1) a question that I asked all three participants: “How and why did you begin using these seminars in your courses? Based on Geena’s response, I then asked, “You said that you thought it was good for students to hear the diversity of education across the world. Why would you say that’s important” (initial interview, September 29, 2014). Because I based this question on the participant’s previous response, I did not ask the other two participants this question since it did not relate to them. Bogdan and Biklin (2011) explain, “In keeping with the qualitative tradition of attempting to capture the subjects’ own words and letting the analysis emerge, interview schedules and observation guides ... are flexible enough for the observer to note and collect data on unexpected dimensions of the subject” (p. 79). Therefore, I allowed the interview to unfold generatively while also having a set of prepared questions to guide the process as needed.

Subsequently, for the second and third interviews (see Appendix D and E), I tailored my questions based on participants’ responses in previous interviews, information that I wanted to know more about, and areas where I needed more clarification. In support of my approach to the interviews, Glaser & Strauss (1967) posit that “questions guide the collection of data to fill in gaps and to extend theory—and this also is an integrative strategy” (p. 109). Individualizing the questions also allowed me to gather more finely-grained data representative of the participants’ perspectives. In support of my approach, Bogdan and Biklen (2011) state, “The interview is used to gather descriptive data in the subjects’ own words so that the researcher can develop insights on how subjects interpret some piece of the world” (p. 103). Further, individualizing the questions helped me to capture my participants’ voices both in words and with fidelity to their meaning, or as Patton (2002) explains in the following: “Direct quotations are a basic source of raw data in

qualitative inquiry, revealing respondents' depth of emotion, the ways they have organized their world, their thoughts about what is happening, their experiences, and their basic perceptions" (p. 21). Collecting data using semi-structured interviews, thus, offered me the best approach for gathering descriptive data from each participant's individual perspective and then have substantive data from which I conducted my analysis and wrote up the study.

Because I interviewed participants who did not live in close proximity to me or each other, I conducted the semi-structured interviews using a virtual platform. I initially intended to interview all three participants using Blackboard Collaborate, an online learning platform available to students through Georgia State University that supports real-time, synchronous interactions. I chose this medium for the interviews because of its audio and video capabilities that enable the interviewer and interviewee to communicate simultaneously during the live interview and because it provides audio files to which I can return again and study multiple times. The Blackboard medium worked well for my interviews for two participants. However, due to technological difficulties that one participant had connecting to Blackboard Collaborate, she and I agreed that Skype would work best for our interviews. I used a small hand-held digital recorder as a back-up to the built-in recording system that Blackboard Collaborate uses. Since Blackboard automatically generates recordings of its sessions, the Georgia State University technology department responsible for scheduling the Blackboard sessions sent me a link via my university student email account that I used to access the recordings. Therefore, I had two sets of recordings for each interview with Geena and Lin, one via Blackboard and one from my own digital audio recording. For the Skype interviews with Grace, I used only my hand-held recorder. I followed the below procedures for data collection using participant interviews:

1. Arranged a time/date via email correspondence to conduct a semi-structured interview that was convenient for the participant.
2. Once the date was scheduled, secured a Blackboard Collaborate virtual “room” and sent the participant the link to access the site.
3. E-mailed the participant a reminder one or two days prior to the date of the interview.
4. Conducted digitally-recorded interviews using Blackboard Collaborate and transcribed them as soon as possible after each interview or had them transcribed.
5. Named each audio file and corresponding transcript by using a protocol that corresponded to each participant’s assigned identification code. For example, Fa14_P1_M_10.27.14 (Fall 2014_Participant 1_Midterm interview_Date of interview). This naming protocol safeguarded participants’ privacy and anonymity.
6. Repeated steps 1-5 for subsequent interviews.

Documents

Many types of documents can serve as artifacts in qualitative research. Merriam (2009) suggests that documents have been underused by qualitative researchers but are a viable method for obtaining data, especially when the inquiry pertains to education. For this inquiry, I used the course syllabi that each participant provided for the courses in which they incorporate GCLR web seminars and email correspondence. While I did not specifically analyze the syllabi, these documents aided my overall understanding of the purpose, objectives, and goals of each literacy course the participants taught and how these syllabi were/were not related to the instructors’ use of GCLR web seminars. For purposes of anonymity, I chose not to include these in the appendices

I further used the syllabi as a source to help me gain clarity about how the teacher educators structured their literacy courses, respective of the theoretical positions and pedagogy as

literacy educators that they shared during our interviews. In this way, the documents, preserved as written text, served as artifacts to ground the participants' "particular visions of the world and the things and events within that world", as discussed during their interviews (Prior, 2013, p. 67). As an artifact, the course syllabi also provided written records that supported data that I had gathered during participant interviews (Merriam, 2009; Prior, 2003). Reviewing the documents, I also gathered pragmatic data regarding information that the participants chose to include about the speaker, topic, and date/time of the seminar(s). At other times, I used the syllabi as prompts to guide the interview questions. Prior (2003) supported the use of documents as a method to "both mediate and structure episodes of social interaction" (p. 67). For example, to reference one of the documents during an interview, I read a specific excerpt aloud or directed participants to a specific excerpt in the syllabus, posed a question, and then allowed the participant to respond. For example, during Lin's initial interview, I asked her to refer to page three of her course syllabus where she included information that explained how students were to conduct themselves during class discussions:

Christi: On page three of your syllabus,

Lin: Okay, hold on a second (slight laugh), I have to go back to page three.

Christi: Under learning environment that talks about considering multiple perspectives ... "using appropriate language in the learning environment" ... How are you using that terminology?

Lin: I go back to my student population. They come from very different backgrounds. So, my purpose is I want to create a, safe environment for everyone. (initial interview, October 2, 2014)

The above excerpt provides an example of how I used the course syllabi as a prompt to frame questions and elicit information during our conversation.

To maintain security of the documents, I took the following measures to collect and store the course syllabi:

1. Requested participants forward relevant electronic copies of their course syllabi to me via email once they provided their electronic signature giving their consent to participate in the study.
2. Placed the syllabi in the corresponding subfolder that I created within the folder labeled *Dissertation* on my password-protected computer.
3. Printed a hard copy of each syllabus and placed it in the file folder labeled *Dissertation Research* that was stored in a locked drawer.
4. Assigned a naming protocol to each syllabus: F2014_document_P1_ syllabus (Fall 2014_data source is a document_document is a course syllabus).
5. Followed up with study participants during their semi-structured interviews, as needed throughout the course of the study.

Data Management

To manage the collected data, I placed all audio recordings, interview transcripts, and documents (i.e., course syllabi) in a secure folder on my password protected computer designated for dissertation data. Within this secure folder, I designated and separately labeled subfolders for each participant, in which I placed any audio recordings, transcripts, and documents pertaining to that particular participant. With today's convenience and acceptability of working with digital files, rather than print hard copies of transcripts, I backed up all files using a flash drive that I placed in a file folder labeled *Dissertation Research* that I stored in a locked file drawer. To ensure

participant anonymity, I referred to participants in written or presented work by using a pseudonym or according to an assigned identification code such as F2014_P1_1_ (Fall 2014_Participant 1_Initial Interview). As mentioned in the previous data collection sub-sections, I assigned a naming protocol to all digitally recorded interviews, interview transcripts, and documents.

To help me organize and keep track of the data, I used a free, downloadable software program known as *R* (<http://www.r-project.org/>). This software developed out of The R Project for Statistical Computing and is now housed under the R Foundation, a non-profit open-access software organization. R itself is a specific type of computer language used in an “integrated suite of software facilities for data manipulation, calculation and graphical display” (<http://www.r-project.org/>, para. 5). The R program offers a variety of packages for organizing and analyzing both qualitative (i.e., textual analysis) and quantitative data (i.e., basic statistical functions, such as mean, probability, variance; nonlinear and linear regression modeling; survey/classification analysis, etc.).

I used the RQDA package, which is specifically designed for organizing, coding, and preliminary analysis of textual data. Because I had some familiarity with using R on prior research projects, I chose to use it for this study in lieu of other similar software. I was able to upload files of interview transcripts from my computer to R, use the program tools, and then save my work to my laptop. R offers several features, which allow the user to establish and assign codes, write researcher memos, maintain a journal of my data analysis process, and generate preliminary interpretations as I analyzed within and across data sets. For instance, the *Code* tool allowed me to create and keep track of codes, merge codes, display the code frequency from least to most used, and multiple coded pieces of text, among others. Also, using the *Code Categories* tool helped me

sort the codes into categories and sub-categories, which R could then plot onto a graph. This visual representation helped me see the relationship among categories, of particular codes and a code category, subcategories to categories, and the overlap of codes between/among categories, allowing me to observe overarching themes that developed. I then checked preliminary themes against the data to ensure support for the findings.

Data Analysis

This study followed the constant comparative method of data analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Merriam, 2009), a recursive process of coding and comparing subsequent data sets to previously coded ones. The constant comparative method aligned well with the data methods for this study since the process involved looking at multiple layers of analysis within and across data sets. That is, as I identified themes and made generalizations from the data, I constantly compared these to subsequent data sets in a recursive process from which I as researcher was then able to apply my interpretations. Furthermore, I treated the teacher educators' syllabi as artifacts, using their contents to substantiate and support my analysis of the interview data and to gain general insight about each literacy course that the participants' instructed.

I began the data analysis process by making researcher comments in the margins as I read and reread the first interview transcript (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The below screenshot (Figure 2) from my initial interview with Geena, a participant, provides an example of how I applied researcher comments throughout the data analysis process to each of the nine transcripts. The dialogue on the left is Geena's comment (i.e., I) and the bracketed comments to the right in blue represent my researcher comment. I then assigned codes to the transcript, followed by applying

719	I: And, because it's international, that's even	[access to diverse, global ways of
720	<u>better</u> . So we can hear what's going on in	thinking about critical literacy issues]
721	Australia. We can hear what's going on in the UK.	

Figure 2. Screenshot of initial interview transcript with researcher comments.

the generated codes to the second and subsequent transcripts where applicable and added new codes where necessary. As I continually returned to previously coded transcripts, I also looked for recurrent patterns and annotated similarities and differences between and across the data sets (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Merriam, 2009). In this way, I was continuously comparing subsequently coded transcripts with previous ones, editing and revising the preliminary codes where necessary, and noting recurring patterns and themes. I then categorized the codes, collapsing similar codes where able and removing ones that didn't belong or were no longer relevant. For instance, I merged the codes *years as a teacher educator*, *classroom teaching experience*, *experience in high needs/social, cultural economically diverse environment* and renamed the new code *teaching experience*. Also, I deleted a few codes, such as *number of students attending seminar* and *permissions regarding intellectual copyright* since the information included under the code was not relevant. Once I established the final set of codes, I applied them across the transcripts to the point of saturation. Afterward, I then used the "code categories" function in *R* to sort the codes into categories. I used some of the codes themselves as the name of a particular category. For instance, the code *Access* became the name of a category under which I placed the codes *GCLR offers broader perspectives*, *GCLR offers cutting-edge research*, and *GCLR offers lived experiences of the presenters* (among others). Also, because I used my research questions to help guide my coding of the data, I had developed the code *How teacher educators incorporate GCLR web seminars*, which I then shortened to *How TEs integrate GCLR* and used as the name of a category.

Still, I named other categories based on the types of codes that I assigned to a particular category. That is, I named one category *Reflection*, and then assigned codes such as *reflective practitioner*, *Student reflections on web seminars*, and *TE reflections on web seminars*. For clarity and the ease of reading, I have outlined below these steps that I followed in the iterative process of data analysis:

- Read the data set to get a feel for the data and to identify possible themes.
- Assigned initial codes with the identified preliminary themes in mind.
- Compared coded transcript/themes to previous ones, editing/revising the preliminary codes as needed.
- Repeated steps 1-3 until all transcripts had been coded.
- Established refined codes by merging similar ones and removing less useful ones.
- Organized the clarified codes into categories and subcategories.
- Applied the refined codes across all transcripts to the point of saturation.
- Made generalizations in relation to the research questions and related concepts.
- Compared interpretations against the data to ensure that the data supported the findings (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

As I coded and compared the data throughout the process, I also wrote memos pertaining to specific “chunks” of coded data in which, again, I noted similarities and differences, connections within and across data sets, and emerging themes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). I used the Annotation tool in *R* to write and store these memos. I also noted my understandings about how particular aspects of the data were potentially connected for each participant and how this compared and contrasted with responses from the other two participants. Figure 3 below, for example, illustrates a screenshot of an excerpt from Grace’s final coded interview transcript and a memo that I later

wrote. In the memo, taken from my annotations in the R program, I noted that Grace's comment on the coded transcript compared in similarity to a comment that Geena had made during an earlier interview. I then noted how all three participants had also conveyed that they wanted their teacher candidates to think critically about literacy, rather than go along with preconceived or prescriptive notions of teaching and learning. Based on the above stated similarities and all three participants' comments that GCLR web seminars offered a variety of perspectives about literacy (previously stated by all three participants), I interpreted that one reason why the participants integrated the GCLR web seminars into their courses was to provide their teacher candidates with a variety of perspectives about literacy to help them think less narrowly about literacy. Finally, the below screenshot also shows the annotated memo, dated and time stamped according to when I wrote it (i.e., Mon Dec 29 13:37:23 2014), in relation to the date on which the interview occurred (i.e., 11.14.14). Although the memos appear on the initial interview transcripts in relation to previously coded data, the date/time stamp of when I wrote the memo illustrates how I continually returned to previously coded transcripts and how I made connections and established themes throughout the recursive data collection/ analysis process.

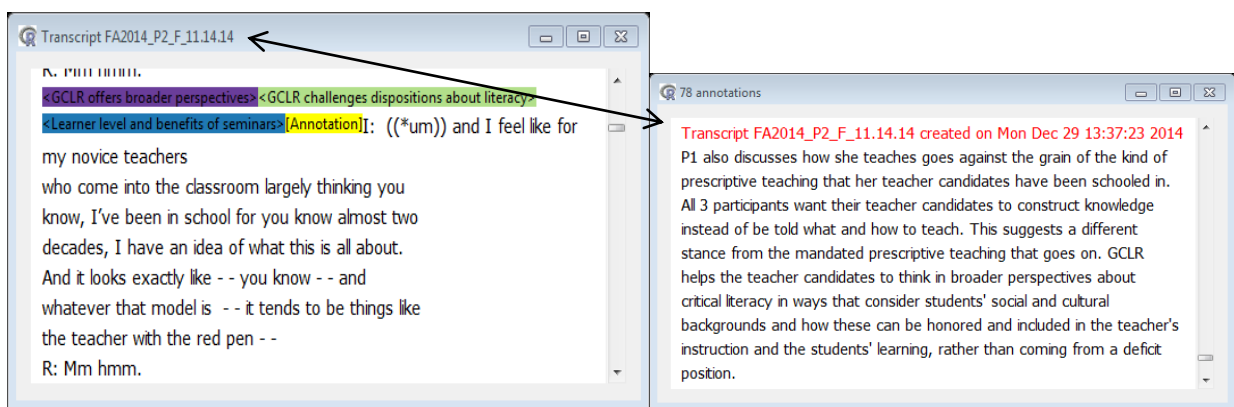


Figure 3. Screenshot of Grace's final coded transcript with annotated memo.

Once I had completed the initial coding of all transcripts, I used the *Journal* tool in R to briefly note reflections on the data analysis process that I followed, decisions I made, and broader

connections that emerged as I continued to compare the data. Figure 4 (see p. 87) shows a screenshot of an excerpt taken from my journal that I wrote on December 29 at approximately 10:40 a.m. (i.e., 10:40:39). I describe how I compared Geena's (P1) final interview transcript to those of the other two participant final interviews and then across all interviews.

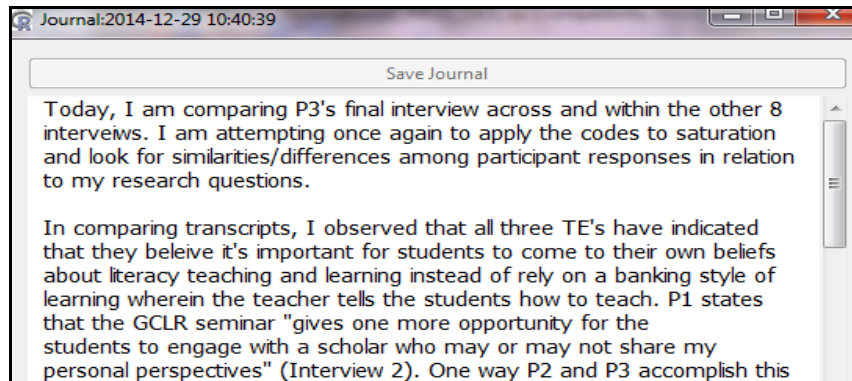


Figure 4. Screenshot of partial journal entry in R detailing my data analysis process.

While I did not use the journal extensively throughout the entire data analysis process, it mostly served as a place to contain written accounts of the connections that I drew across participants, the data, and the various examples to support those connections. I later used these connections to assist me in developing identifiable themes upon which I based my interpretations of the data. Having the examples in a single place also helped with data organization and with the write-up of the study.

Authenticity of the Study

Researchers using a qualitative design must take steps to establish credibility and trustworthiness since the researcher's interpretations play a key role in shaping the study's findings. Shulman (1981) underscores that a researcher's work is susceptible to and must pass rigorous critique by one's peers in order to substantiate its trustworthiness. An important component of passing such rigor is the authenticity of the research design, which includes

attending to the study's trustworthiness as established through data collection and analysis procedures. To establish authenticity in this study, I provided transparency of my subjectivities as a researcher, data triangulation, member checking, and peer review. In the following sections, I explain how I applied these strategies to establish trustworthiness and credibility in this study.

Transparency

Merriam (2009) suggests that the researcher make transparent her theoretical views and beliefs in order to reveal potential subjectivities and assumptions that may impact the study. By reflecting on my personal theoretical and conceptual views about teaching and learning, my close working relationship with GCLR, and my past experiences as a teacher educator and classroom teacher, I identified and made known subjectivities that could influence my interpretation of the data. Second, by revealing these subjectivities, I gave readers of my study a better lens through which to understand my data interpretations (Merriam, 2009). Further, by disclosing that I have worked with the larger GCLR project for over three years, I have made known my insider knowledge and perspectives about the project itself and how these have shaped who I am as a researcher studying professional development in online spaces.

Member Checks

Roulston (2010) argues, "How researchers go about representing findings to others is integral to the demonstration of quality" (p. 85). Therefore, to insure that I had represented the participants' perspectives with fidelity, I also conducted member checks (Roulston, 2010). First, after I transcribed each interview, I emailed it to the participant, asking her to review it for accuracy. I also invited participants to add any additional comments they may have thought of after the interview and to make corrections if they identified any errors in the content or the way I transcribed their responses. I asked the three participants to make these notations on the transcript

itself, using the *Track Changes* feature of the Microsoft Word program and then to email the document back to me. Despite numerous requests, none of the participants provided feedback on the transcripts themselves or emailed them back to me. One participant, Geena, sent me an email message after reviewing the initial interview transcript and another after reviewing the final interview transcript. Both times Geena stated that she did not see any discrepancies with any of the three transcripts. Although, in the second email, Geena added a few thoughts about how she had incorporated the seminars. Below is an excerpt from that email:

Hi Christi.... Thank you for the transcripts. It is amazing at how many false starts (um) and ramblings I have when I see it on paper. I don't think I have anything to add to the transcripts.... I think the result of your questions has pushed me to be more intentional with the seminars as PD or as course learning. (2014, December 19)

A second participant, Grace, sent me an email after she had read through her first interview transcript, indicating that she saw no discrepancies, but after repeated attempts, I did not receive further correspondence about her second or third interview transcript. The third participant, Lin, agreed to review the transcripts, but I did not receive any feedback from her.

A second way that I conducted member checks was by emailing a copy of my findings to each participant. I asked each to check the authenticity of my interpretations to make sure that I had represented their thoughts and ideas with fidelity. I invited them to provide their written feedback about any discrepancies or concerns they might have had with the findings, as I wanted to insure that as a researcher my analysis accurately depicted the participants' intended meanings of data gathered from our three interviews. Geena and Lin both responded that they agreed with how I represented their voices, as well as my analysis and interpretations of the data. Grace used the Microsoft *Word* Track Changes tool to provide feedback about the findings that related to her. I

carefully reviewed all of her comments, reflecting on the feedback in relation to my original interpretations. I then revised where needed to reflect those points that Grace clarified through her feedback.

Data Triangulation

By designing this interview study to include three interviews from each of the three participants (nine total interviews), I used *data triangulation* to establish authenticity (Roulston, 2013). Roulston (2010) argues, “In interview studies, data triangulation in the form of multiple interviews over a period of time can be used to check the researcher’s understandings of participants’ views and compare these to preliminary analyses and findings gleaned from earlier interviews” (p. 84). In this study, I was able to confirm participants’ responses by comparing their answers to a question that I asked during the initial interview with their responses in subsequent interviews. Depending on whether or not the responses shifted or remained the same, I either asked for clarification to account for the difference, or I confirmed the consistency of the data across time. Roulston (2010) further explains, “Multiple interviews allow researchers to trace the changes in views and perspectives reported by participants over time, rather than focusing on singular snapshots of particular points over time” (p. 87). For instance, Lin explained during the initial interview that sometimes her students had difficulty understanding the content of a particular speaker’s presentation and were reluctant to participate in the chat. This same idea of the web seminar content presenting a challenge for some students came through in the mid-point interview in which Lin stated, “Some of my students at first feel like ‘Oh, I cannot keep up with the content of the presentation—the content, it seems a little bit too difficult” (mid-point interview, lines 291-294). Yet, in the final interview, Lin indicated that she observed her students using the chat feature. Lin stated, “And so I saw my students asking questions, or I saw my students answering someone

else's question.... Like I said, at the beginning, they kind of felt like, *Wow*, not quite sure if they could understand the content” (final interview, lines 356-358; 359-362). The above excerpts illustrate one example of how I used the triangulation of data in that this participant’s responses remained consistent across the interviews.

I also used the participants’ course syllabi as artifacts to add to the authenticity of the study, or what Roulston (2013) refers to as “*methodological triangulation*” (italics in original, p. 84). Using the participants’ syllabi as a secondary data source, I checked the accuracy of comments they made during the interviews against what they had written in their course syllabi, which is considered an official document of record at each participant’s university. Roulston (2013) recommends methodological triangulation as a strategy to improve a study’s authenticity stating that “it is often used by researchers to show that they have not merely relied on claims made within interview settings to generate assertions” (p. 84). For example, I compared interviewee responses concerning topics such as assignments in relation to the GCLR web seminars, the number of seminars students were expected to attend, and the course topics against the information documented in the course syllabi. In this sense, the artifacts lent support for the interview data.

Peer Review

As a fourth strategy to improve the study’s authenticity, I used peer review (Merriam, 2009). That is, I asked one of my doctoral student peers to review my analysis of the data and to provide feedback as a way to check that my interpretations were sufficiently supported by the data. My peer reviewer has worked with the GCLR team for several years and has experience with data collection and analysis with the GCLR project and in other areas as well. I believed her experience as a researcher and a GCLR team member made her a respected choice to review this study. We met virtually to review my data and findings.

Complexities of the Study

While I took measures to strengthen this study's authenticity and trustworthiness, I recognize that there are limitations to this inquiry. First, I acknowledge the power inherent in my role as a researcher that what I wrote would be replete with decisions of power about what to include or not include. Second, although I spent much time analyzing the data and making sure that I provided substantial, descriptive data to support my findings (Bogdan & Biklen, 2011), the interpretive nature of qualitative research means that "objective reality can never be captured. We know a thing only through its representations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2002, p. 5). A third limitation to this study is the potential effect that my subjectivities may have had on the data. While I have made every attempt to be as transparent as possible, I recognize that I cannot fully separate from my research my close association with the GCLR project, my personal theoretical stance, and my dispositions about teaching and learning. These experiences have shaped who I am today and undoubtedly will shape my future growth. So, to the extent that my work with GCLR, personal beliefs, and experiences may be seen as "limitations", they nevertheless also form the lens through which I view the world and my research. Finally, while this study's write-up was partial at best and cannot capture the whole of the data (Roulston, 2010), I assert that I was truthful to the essence of the study's findings and reported these results with fidelity and ethical integrity.

Summary

For this interview study, I used a qualitative design ground in critical situated learning, a combination of social learning theory (Brown et al., 1989) and critical literacy (Janks, 2000). Participants for my study included three literacy teacher educators who instructed undergraduate and graduate literacy teacher education courses and whose students attended GCLR web seminars as a component of their courses. This study occurred over a ten-week period and included data

gathered from three sets of interviews: initial, mid-point, and follow-up. Each interview took place after each of three consecutive GCLR web seminars held in September, October, and November. Semi-structured interviews served as the data collection method, with participants' course syllabi used to complement and support findings.

Data interpretation followed the constant comparative method (Glaser & Straus, 1967), an iterative process of collecting, coding, and comparing data sets to arrive at themes related to the study's research questions and the existing literature. Finally, I put in place specific measures, such as transparency, member checks, triangulation, and peer review to improve the study's trustworthiness. In the following chapter, I outline relevant themes that the data generated and report the findings from this qualitative interview study, which sought to understand teacher educators' integration of a critical literacy web seminar, GCLR, into their literacy courses.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

“And so it really is cutting edge, as close as we can get ... short of going to Stanford, or going you know, all over the world” (Grace, mid-point interview, October 23, 2014).

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative interview study was to understand teacher educators’ use of an open access online teacher professional development web seminar, Global Conversations in Literacy Research (GCLR), as a component of their language and literacy teacher education courses. Specifically, I wanted to know more about how and why teacher educators integrated extrinsic and independent professional development web seminars into their literacy teacher education courses and the value, if any, of doing so. The three participants of this study— Geena, Grace, and Lin— had attended GCLR web seminars for at least the past three or more years. They all taught at least one literacy teacher education course, and as a component of those courses, required their pre-/in-service teachers to attend individual web seminars within the 2014-2015 GCLR web seminar series. Each volunteer agreed to participate in three virtual semi-structured interviews from September 2014 - November 2014 (for a total of nine), during which I gathered data for this inquiry. In this chapter, I present findings for this study related to each of the following three research questions: (a) Why do literacy teacher educators use online professional development web seminars within their courses? (b) How do literacy teacher educators use online professional development web seminars within their courses, especially those presented by GCLR? and (c) What value do literacy teacher educators see in working with the web seminars in their classes, especially those presented by GCLR?

Based on data gathered from participant interview transcripts and supported by their course syllabi, the following themes emerged from this study:

1. Past experiences and open access led to web seminar integration.
2. Purpose and intent of use related to how web seminar integration occurred.
3. Specific instructional practices fostered authentic professional development.
4. Web seminars offered authentic and situated online professional development.
5. Professionalism emerged and offered access to a community of learners.

As I worked through the data analysis process, I found that the lines often blurred between why the participants used the web seminars and their value for using them. Similarly, how they used the web seminars often related to the value the participants saw for incorporating them. Because data analysis is a reciprocal process, these moments when the data overlapped could not be arbitrarily separated in that they blended and merged.

I organized this chapter into sections and subsections according to each of the five themes that emerged. Within each subsection, I presented supporting data, choosing to separate it according to each participant. I chose to present the data this way because I wanted the voices of these three teacher educators who so willingly and openly participated in this study to be at the forefront. Such a huge impetus for this study came from my desire for teachers and teacher educators to have a space to share their ideas, opinions, and wonderings, so I believed that presenting the findings in this manner most effectively allowed their individual lived experiences to be honored and heard.

I have taken care to insure that I represented these participants with fidelity to the best of my ability. It is their thoughts, ideas, words, and perspectives that I based my analysis of the data and from which this study's findings emerged. Table 3 located below provides an overview of the

three GCLR web seminars that occurred during this study's data collection phase from which the participants and their students chose to attend. In the following sections, I present findings in support of the five themes that emerged from the data.

Table 3

GCLR Web Seminar Descriptions: September, October, and November 2014

Speaker	Topic	Date
Dr. David Kirkland	Literacies of Young Black Males	September 14, 2014
Dr. Richard Beach	Affordances of Digital Tools to Foster Critical Literacy	October 12, 2014
Dr. David Berliner	Politics in Education and Their Relation to Literacy	November 9, 2014

Past Experiences and Open Access Led to Web Seminar Integration

“I think the web seminar provides all students different perspectives and provides a rich learning environment outside of our traditional classroom” (Lin, mid-point interview, November 4, 2014).

This study's first finding suggested that teacher educators' decisions to use professional development web seminars related to their past experiences/connections with GCLR and a desire for their teacher education students to have access to literacy experts and broader literacy perspectives. Data for this finding is presented as it related to this study's first research question: “Why do literacy teacher educators use online professional development web seminars within their courses?”

During each initial interview following the September GCLR web seminar with Dr. David Kirkland, I asked all three participants— Geena, Grace, and Lin—why they incorporated the seminars into their literacy teacher education courses. Similarly, each of their reasons related to

their personal experiences attending the seminars and/or their past connections with the GCLR project. Yet, these experiences were different for each participant.

Teacher Educators' Past Experiences and Connections with Web Seminars

Geena. During our first interview, I asked Geena why she used the GCLR web seminars in her literacy teacher education courses. Geena candidly told me that she used the web seminars because she wanted to support her colleague and friend, the founder of GCLR. She explained, "I think it's an amazing project that she's put together. And, so one way to support her was to make sure that my students had access and knew about these sessions going on" (Geena, initial interview, September 29, 2014). Geena further added, "It worked really well the first couple of times I did it. And then students seemed to like them, and so, then it just becomes part of the syllabus and part of an expectation" (initial interview, September 29, 2014). A closer observation of Geena's course syllabi lent further understanding about her use of the web seminars as a way to support her friend and colleague.

Within each of her course syllabi, Geena listed the GCLR web seminars for that particular semester. She also listed each speaker's name, dates/times of his/her presentation, presentation title, and university affiliation. Alongside the speakers' information, she included explicit written directions for how to access the web seminars by using the provided hyperlink to log onto the Blackboard Collaborate platform, which hosted the seminars. Interestingly, Geena also listed the GCLR project's overall goals, project founder, and a link to the GCLR website. This detailed explanation in her syllabi about the GCLR project and how her students could access the web seminars supported Geena's previous statement that one reason she used the seminars was because she wanted to support her friend and colleague. That is, beyond providing valuable information for her students, promoting the seminars within these documents also allowed Geena to support her

colleague by “mak[ing] sure that my students had access and knew about these sessions going on” (Geena, initial interview, September 29, 2014).

While supporting her friend and peer clearly motivated Geena to include the seminars in her courses, she also included them because of her own experience attending them. That is, Geena held a personal affinity for the seminars as a valuable language and literacy professional development venue. Geena noted, “I think it's a fantastic platform and that it really does allow for opportunities to hear some of the latest thinking” (final interview, September 29, 2014). She genuinely believed in the GCLR project and had participated in approximately eighty percent of the web seminars over the past several years. Also, Geena stated a desire for her literacy teacher education students to share her enthusiasm for the web seminars. She commented, “I want my students, I suppose, to have that same kind of sort of excitement around it that I have” (initial interview, September 29, 2014). Geena’s above comments, taken from the transcripts of her initial and final interview, suggested that she included the seminars in her literacy courses not just to support her colleague, but also because of her personal conviction about the GCLR project and personal experiences attending the web seminars.

Grace. In terms of why Grace used the web seminars, from the onset of our first interview, she talked about how the Early Childhood department had changed their Master’s degree program to a hybrid model. Because the face-to-face time had been reduced by fifty percent, she decided to add the September, October, and November web seminars to her master’s graduate literacy course. Since the course only met face-to-face for half of the classes, Grace believed that adding the seminars as a course requirement “would actually be a really great way to get in more supported content time” (initial interview, October 2, 2014).

During our second interview, Grace talked more about her own participation in the GCLR web seminars when she was a doctoral student. She told me about the impact that the seminars had on her as a doctoral student, helping her to think more critically about literacy. She said, “I feel like this is one way I can kind of pass that on for my students, of having opportunities to wonder and question” (mid-point interview, October 23, 2014). Based on Grace’s above comment, I understood that her experiences as a literacy doctoral student attending the web seminars had influenced her decision to integrate them into her own literacy courses.

By our final interview, Grace revealed a deeper, more personal connection that she felt with the GCLR web seminars during her doctoral program. In the following excerpt, she passionately shared her truth about the seminars:

I think I keep, and maybe this is just because the webinars have been a part of my life during a huge identity pivot, I still approach them as a student. And I still approach them with a sense of I [am] so very much here to learn even though I know I’m logging in with students that I’m assessing because they’re there. (Grace, final interview, November 14, 2014)

Grace continued her explanation of her experiences as a doctoral student who attended the web seminars:

I was in [name of professor] doctoral courses and these webinars were things that kept popping up and I had a chance to even assist with some and so it’s kind of a heritage thing at this point. But, at the same time, I think that that sense of being connected to something bigger is really helpful for them [the students]. (final interview, November 14, 2014)

Based on data in the above excerpt, I understood Grace to mean that introducing her teacher candidates to the GCLR web seminars modeled for them what her professor had modeled for her.

Because she found value in attending them as a doctoral student, she also wanted her students to have a similar opportunity.

Parsed from across her three interview transcripts, Grace's responses suggested that she integrated the web seminars into her literacy courses as a way to build upon the existing content. Now a literacy teacher educator in her own right, Grace integrated the web seminars with the hope that they would serve her teacher candidates as a valuable resource in much the way they did her when she was a student engaged in her doctoral coursework. Today she continues to view the web seminars as providing opportunities to think and wonder and values the learning processes from the perspective of both student and instructor.

Lin. As did Grace, Lin also began attending the GCLR web seminars while in her doctoral program. She first learned about them in 2011 as a result of a discussion with her advisor. Not until she secured a university teaching position, though, did Lin first use the seminars in her teacher education courses. According to Lin, "My initial thought is, 'Wow, I love it. Why not just share the information, but also incorporate it in my class'" (initial interview, October 2, 2014). Her strong enthusiasm for the GCLR web seminars was why Lin first used them in her courses. She stated, "Personally, I love to attend the web seminar (laughs), and I just thought it's a wonderful experience" (Lin, initial interview, October 2, 2014). Lin then noted that her students' positive reactions to the seminars had compelled her to continue using them over the past three years.

Another reason Lin gave for choosing to use the web seminars had to do with providing optional ways to encourage her students' critical thinking. Lin stated, "As an instructor, I needed to find a different way to promote my students' higher level thinking" (Lin, initial interview, October 2, 2014). Lin very much opposed the banking model of education and saw the web seminars as an avenue to develop her students' critical thinking. She believed that "learning should be a process

that I encourage my students to construct their own knowledge” (Lin, initial interview, October 2, 2014). Therefore, because Lin believed that the GCLR web seminars promoted her students to think more deeply and critically about literacy, she included them in her literacy courses.

Based on data taken from each of the three participant interview transcripts, their responses suggested that their personal past experiences with GCLR web seminars contributed to their decision to include the presentations in their literacy courses. Geena's and Grace's past personal connections to the GCLR founder and the connectedness that they felt with GCLR as a way to engage in current thinking in literacy reflected why they chose to integrate the web seminars into their literacy teacher education courses. In particular, based on Grace and Lin's description, their past experiences attending the seminars as doctoral students seemed to impact why they chose to also include them in their courses, now as teacher educators. In the next section, I discuss open access to these scholars in relation to the participants' decision to incorporate the web seminars into their literacy courses.

Open Access to Renowned Literacy Scholars

During our conversations, Geena, Grace, and Lin also shared that they included the web seminars in their literacy courses because the presentations offered their students (i.e., pre-/in-service teachers) open access to some of the world's top literacy scholars that otherwise would not be possible in their stand-alone courses. From their own experiences attending the web seminars, the participants knew that GCLR hosted world-renowned scholars in the field of literacy through open access. The following participants' comments, taken from across the nine interviews, supported open access to world renowned literacy scholars as a second factor related to why the teacher educators used the GCLR web seminars in their courses.

Geena. Over and over again, Geena consistently told me that she added the seminars to her courses so that her teacher candidates who were studying literacy could have access to “world-renowned” scholars who presented “cutting-edge research” in the field of literacy (initial interview, September 29, 2014). During our September interview, I asked Geena what purpose the GCLR web seminars served in her literacy courses:

The purpose is certainly to enable students to have greater access to scholars that are worldwide and to really see that these scholars are people that are really accessible and are folks that are really trying to think about literacy in new ways. (initial interview, September 29, 2014)

She further explained that this access allowed her students to connect, directly, with these top thinkers who ordinarily, “We wouldn’t have sitting in our classes” (Geena, mid-point interview, October 27, 2014). Geena’s response also supported her beliefs that students should be given opportunities to work from a variety of texts, to include all modes and mediums, such as print, audio, video, and multimodal. The following excerpt taken from our initial interview illustrated Geena’s dispositions about literacy instruction:

I would suggest that we read a bunch of different kinds of texts and that we watch a bunch of different kinds of YouTube videos and that we invite people in that have had experience, and so that we’re not just relying on one source. (initial interview, September 29, 2014)

Therefore, taken together, Geena’s comments supported that she incorporated the GCLR web seminars because they provided her in-service teachers access to top literacy scholars. And, because they occurred electronically through the Internet, the seminars themselves offered more than one “source”, thus supporting Geena’s belief that literacy instruction should include multiple

texts and text types. Specifically, the web seminars represented several text types: print, audio, video and multimodal.

Grace. Similar to Geena's response, Grace saw the web seminars as an avenue that gave her students access to literacy scholars and their work. She compared the seminars to "a fly-by, or like a drive-by aha moment" in which her teacher candidates "have one hour of access to a mind that thinks deeply about a particular subject that is important enough for them to be assigned to that webinar" (initial interview, October 2, 2014). During the mid-point interview, Grace again identified providing her students global access to the most current literacy research and scholars as a reason why she used the web seminars in her courses:

I feel like being so close to the research, I've heard folks talk in these webinars about studies they're just wrapping up, which means they're not going to be in the literature for a couple years, you know? It takes so long, and so it really is cutting edge, as close as we can get, I feel like, short of going to Stanford, or going you know, all over the world. (mid-point interview, October 23, 2014)

Grace's above responses supported that she saw the GCLR web seminars as a way to put her students in touch with literacy experts and their most current research.

Lin. Because they provided her students open access "to meet wonderful key note speakers all around the world", explained why Lin used the web seminars in her literacy teacher education courses (initial interview, October 2, 2014). Beyond access to world-renowned literacy scholars, Lin also commented that the GCLR web seminars also gave her students open access to professional development opportunities that her students otherwise would not have.

Lin explained that she taught mostly non-traditional urban students who lived and worked in the surrounding area and that many worked several jobs to support themselves and to put

themselves through college. She also said that providing her students access to professional development was a social justice issue that she felt passionately about addressing. In the below excerpt, Lin explained the importance of her students having access to the GCLR web seminars:

I think this web seminar really ties back to again, my ideology that I want to provide them different learning opportunities. And again, for me, it's about social justice. It's about providing an opportunity for my students who come from disadvantaged backgrounds or those who are nontraditional students. (final interview, November 18, 2014)

Therefore, Lin saw the GCLR web seminars as a way to narrow the gap by offering equitable access to professional development for anyone with a connection to the Internet. Numerous times throughout our interviews, Lin mentioned her students' appreciation for the open invitation to attend the GCLR web seminars, since they did not have affordable or nearby access to professional development opportunities. Lin, thus, used the web seminars in her courses because they provided her students with open access to globally recognized literacy scholars and professional development that they otherwise would not have an opportunity to pursue.

According to participant interview transcripts, therefore, a second reason why Geena, Grace, and Lin integrated the GCLR web seminars into their courses was to give their teacher candidates access to world-renowned literacy scholars and their cutting-edge research. Also, offering the seminars through open access provided the pre-/in-service teachers a means to engage in professional development that they otherwise might not have.

Open Access to Broader, Diverse Perspectives about Literacy

A third factor related to why Geena, Grace, and Lin used the GCLR web seminars in their courses emerged from the data and indicated that participants included the GCLR web seminars in their courses as a way to provide access to broader, diverse perspectives for thinking about

language and literacy. Again, because of their own experiences with GCLR web seminars, the participants knew that the speakers' topics addressed issues pertaining to critical literacy, which often go uncontested over other more privileged discourses. And, since all three participants believed in the importance of having a variety of ways to think about literacy, the seminars aligned with their own dispositions as literacy teacher educators. Geena, Grace, and Lin, therefore, viewed the presentations as a resource that offered their teacher candidates a variety of perspectives to think about literacy, which paralleled the participants' own convictions and a belief they wanted to foster among the students they instructed. Data from participant interviews that occurred after the September, October, and November web seminars supported this understanding about why the participants incorporated the GCLR web seminars into their literacy courses. I present this data as it pertains to each participant.

Geena. As a literacy educator, Geena firmly believed in offering her students access to diverse perspectives to think about literacy. During our initial interview, Geena stated, "The speakers for GCLR are bringing a variety of perspectives" and "are really trying to think about literacy in new ways" (initial interview, September 29, 2014). This comment suggests that Geena saw GCLR web seminars as one vehicle to serve the purpose of providing access to a variety of ways to think about literacy. During the mid-point interview Geena also expressed,

I believe that it's important for students to have a breadth of perspectives. The speakers for GCLR are bringing a variety of perspectives, and so it just gives one more opportunity for the students to engage with a scholar who may or may not share my personal perspectives. And I may not have a direct reading from that person, but it just gives a broader view.

(mid-point interview, October 27, 2014)

Geena further expressed a desire for her students to have a global awareness about literacy and to realize that people around the world shared similar concerns about literacy and education. She conveyed this passion in the following excerpt:

I want students to recognize that some of the issues that we're facing here in the US are some of the same issues going on in other countries such as the UK and Australia. We're struggling with national mandates, and what sort of impact is it having on their learners? Is it the same that we're having here? (Geena, initial interview, September 29, 2014)

I understood Geena's comment to suggest that the GCLR web seminars could help her students have a broader view of literacy by observing that teachers around the world share similar concerns. Although we are geographically distanced, we share a common interest in these concerns.

Grace. Data from Grace's interviews suggested that she, too, incorporated the GCLR web seminars because they provided her teacher candidates access to diverse perspectives about literacy. For instance, during our initial interview, she told me the story about how teacher candidates' from one of her previous classes reacted after they had attended a GCLR web seminar last year with Dr. Joyce King. In the following excerpt, taken from our initial interview, Grace takes on the persona of one of her students as she passionately described her class's reaction to the web seminar:

My students came to class on fire.... If you know anything about Joyce King's work, she really calls us on the carpet, even about the language we use. That we misuse it without question, and all of the sudden, we're realizing we might be culpable for being parts of larger structures of inequities. So my students come in and they're like, "What? How have I not even thought about the way I use the word black ... in my classroom? And it's, you

know, a hundred percent African American at my school, and we talk about things as being black and white all the time and black's always the bad". (Grace, initial interview, October 2, 2014)

Grace believed that attending the web seminars helped her students reflect on their own practices as teachers because they were able to experience a broader, diverse view of language as a result of attending presentations such as Dr. King's. Like Geena, she further explained that the GCLR web seminars helped her students realize that beyond their "little tiny classroom in [university] ... that there are people in [other states] and people in [other countries] and people in [other states] who are also thinking about similar ideas" (Grace, final interview, November 14, 2014). These above data excerpts suggest that Grace, like Geena, integrated the web seminars into her literacy teacher education courses because she believed they gave her students a broader landscape in which to view literacy, which also supported her own pedagogical beliefs.

Lin. Lin's response to why she used the web seminars in her courses was similar to those that Geena and Grace provided. For example, she commented that the web seminars offered her students "different perspectives and provide a rich learning environment outside of our traditional classroom" (Lin, mid-point interview, November 4, 2014). Lin also mentioned that attending the seminars helped her teacher candidates understand that those located around the world encounter similar issues as those here in the US. As support, Lin explained that when her pre-service teachers "listen to a web seminar from someone in Canada, they realize students from a different part of world, they all face the same issue about, for example, the achievement gap or poverty issues or language barriers or second language learning" (final interview, November 18, 2014). This comment mirrored Geena's and Grace's explanation of how the GCLR web seminars give their students a more complex view of literacy as experienced in a myriad of contexts.

Based on the above data excerpted from participant interview transcripts, Geena, Grace, and Lin also incorporated the GCLR web seminars as a component of their literacy courses as a way to offer their students a broader view of literacy, which also very much aligned with their personal dispositions. They further thought the seminars provided opportunities for their students to develop a more global understanding of the issues with which teachers in other countries grappled, some of which teachers in the US also struggled.

Summary

This study's first finding suggested that participants' past experiences and connections with web seminars are important in making decisions about integration of GCLR web seminars into teacher education courses. From their own participation in the web seminars, Geena, Grace, and Lin also knew that the presenters were globally renowned literacy scholars whose topics offered broader, critical perspectives to consider literacy and literacy-related issues. Because the GCLR web seminars were offered through open access, the participants saw these presentations as a viable means for their students to gain access to these scholars and a variety of ways to view literacy. In the next section, I present findings in response to this study's second research question concerning how teacher educators incorporate web seminars, especially those like GCLR, into their literacy courses.

Purpose and Intent of Use Related to How Web Seminar Integration Occurred

“Because, usually, the conversations of these webinars are outside of the box, there's not typically a webinar on phonemic awareness. It's always something pushing the limits more than that. And so it's really nice to have that backup and to provide the students with, again, that deeper connection” (Grace, mid-point interview, October 23, 2014).

The second finding that emerged from my analysis of the data suggested that the following factors related to how teacher educators integrated the GCLR web seminars into their literacy courses: experience using instructional technology, purposeful planning, and the role assigned to the web seminars related to how they used the web seminars in their literacy courses. Additionally, participants who used technology as an instructional tool in their own teaching and learning seemed to integrate the web seminars with greater intention. I present this data as it related to (a) Participants' experience using technology as a tool for learning, (b) Course requirements for web seminars, and (c) Role of web seminars in literacy courses.

Participants' Experience Using Technology as a Tool for Learning

Since web seminars involve using technology to extend learning, I wanted to understand the extent to which the participants used technology. I, thus, asked each of them about their personal experiences using online venues as a platform for teacher professional development. Their responses to questions about their teaching dispositions lent further understanding about their beliefs about technology as a pedagogical approach to learning.

Geena. During our initial interview, I asked Geena about her personal experiences using online venues as a form of teacher professional development and support. She replied that she rarely used technology in her teaching practices. Geena remarked,

They're actually pretty limited. I haven't been somebody who has done a lot of using YouTube videos, for example, to do a lot of my teaching, or having students watch, you know, some sort of online lecture, or something like that. So, my experiences are pretty limited to like the Global Conversations work. And, that's about it.... For me, as an educator, I haven't used a lot of the technology that is available, in my own teaching.
(initial interview, September 29, 2014)

When I noted Geena's technology requirement in projects in both of her course syllabi, she stated, "I'm pushing the students and I'm pushing myself" (Geena, initial interview, September 29, 2014). This data gathered from our initial interview transcripts and supported by Geena's course syllabi, suggested that she rarely used technology as a pedagogical tool in her own teaching and approached its instructional application as something that did not come naturally for her to use since she state that she was "pushing" herself to include more. Yet, her statement suggested that she did have the goal of increasing this use and even incorporated it as part of students' assignments. In particular, in her hybrid course, one of the course assignments required her graduate students to work with an elementary school aged child to create a digital story. When Geena explained the project, she said, "I don't really have examples because I don't really know what it's going to be, and so we're taking some risks with trying some things out" (initial interview, September 29, 2014). Based on her willingness to incorporate technology and her desire to improve her use of it in her own instructional practices suggests that Geena saw the value of its use. Her personal use of technology as a direct instructional practice to further her students' inquiry and understanding, though, was limited.

In terms of her own professional development, Geena had attended at least 80% of the GCLR web seminars since their inception and thought they were "good professional development opportunities because ... sometimes they're scholars that I'm familiar with, and sometimes they're scholars that I'm not. And so, I really see that as an opportunity to hear and learn from somebody else" (initial interview, September 29, 2014). Geena also mentioned that accessing online videos and websites for her own use helped with her own teaching and research and that she was "very familiar with using different platforms" (initial interview, September 29, 2014). Despite her limited use of instructional technology to extend student learning in the courses that she teaches,

Geena nevertheless promoted her students' use of it, suggesting that she saw the value of technology-integrated instruction but did not take it up as an instructional practice in her own teaching.

Grace. Similar to Geena, Grace held a positive disposition toward technology and also assigned student projects that required their use of technology; however, different from Geena, Grace used technology as an instructional approach to support student inquiry and learning. During our initial interview, I inquired about Grace's use of technology as a pedagogical tool. I began by reading the following quote from one of her course syllabi: "Technology is viewed as a tool for both learning and teaching in the area of literacy. The instructor, during class presentations and through planned seminars, will model this belief" (Grace, course syllabus, Fall 2014). I then asked Grace to explain how the quote, if at all, related to her course assignment for the web seminars. In her response, she elaborated, "I feel like through our courses or sessions that we meet weekly, I feel like I'm constantly trying to model for them how, of course, we learn using technology" (Grace, initial interview, October 2, 2014). Grace further explained that she used online tools, such as Wordle to help organize their discussions. In the following comments excerpted from the initial interview transcript, Grace further explained how she viewed and used technology as pedagogical tool:

It's a tool to guide our discussion and to notice things about how we're talking In terms of the planned seminar, I feel like with the new edTPA [educator Teacher Performance Assessment] ... one of the expectations is that Colleges of Education begin training teachers of all age ranges how to teach using online modes. And so I feel like having this seminar ... it shows them, you know, you don't have to be the only purveyor of knowledge in a class. So rather, finding spaces where people can come together and where

experts are talking about what they know best and having an online space to offer up a question or offer up something that you notice. But all of that helps, as well as learning.
(initial interview, October 2, 2014)

Grace's above comments suggested that she felt at ease using technology in her instruction and firmly believed in its value as a tool for learning. Also, by sharing the learning process with others through online interaction, as in the GCLR web seminars, Geena believed allows her students to observe, first-hand, how learning occurs through a shared process. In this way, the teacher is not the only knowledge producer but that learning can be a shared endeavor alongside students.

Lin. In regard to Lin's experience using technology, like Geena and Grace, she stated during our initial interview that as part of her teaching disposition, "I like to incorporate technology in my classroom, so for example, having my students attend the web seminar is one way for me to provide them the opportunity for professional development" (initial interview, October 2, 2014). Lin also noted how in her former teaching position at [another state university], she incorporated the iPad and had her students create a SMART board lesson. She further explained that she integrated the D2L learning platform that the university supported into her face-to-face course, specifically the discussion tool. As an example, Lin stated, "When we talk about literacy on D2L ... one of the discussions, I ask the students to go online and find different literacy-related web sites for children and critique and analyze those web sites" (initial interview, October 2, 2014). Based on the above data excerpts, Lin held an affinity for technology and enjoyed incorporating activities into her courses in which students used that technology.

My analysis of the initial interview transcripts suggested that the three participants held a positive disposition toward technology as an instructional tool for inquiry and to further students' knowledge. All participants used technology to attend GCLR web seminars and required them or

offered extra credit for their students to attend them. That Geena, Grace, and Lin required their students to attend the GCLR web seminars suggested that they supported teacher professional development using online platforms, such as GCLR, to extend learning. All participants also incorporated assignments that required their students to use technology to extend learning. Geena shared that she had limited experience using technology pedagogically; yet, she recognized this as an area for self-improvement. Lin enjoyed using technology in her instruction but did not use it to the same extent as Grace.

Purposeful Planning in the Use of Web Seminars

To better understand how the participants incorporated the GCLR web seminars into their literacy courses, I inquired about the expectations they had established for their teacher candidates in relation to the seminars. Data gathered from the participants' semi-structured interview transcripts and their course syllabi provided understanding regarding how many and which seminars their students attended, coursework associated with the seminars, and the rationale behind these course expectations.

Geena. During our initial interview, Geena conveyed that she used the GCLR web seminars in her two graduate level literacy courses that she taught. Because I had read her syllabi prior to our first interview, I was familiar with the student expectations that Geena had laid out for her in-service teachers. As stated in her syllabi, she required the students to attend one out of the three seminars that GCLR offered during that semester (i.e., the September, October, November web seminars). Geena said that she encouraged students in both classes to attend all three seminars with the motivation that they could earn bonus points if they attended and submitted a reflection for a second seminar or all three of them. In the following conversation between Geena and me, she explained her rationale for requiring the one seminar:

Christi: I looked over at the syllabus and I noticed that, let's see, you ask them to attend one [web seminar]. Can you talk more about that? What was the assignment?

Geena: Yeah, I ...required [students] to attend one of the three [seminars] in the semester, and they have to do a reflective writing on it. And, the other two are open for bonus points. So, part of that is I have a little bit of reservation in requiring students to attend something on a Sunday night.

Christi: Tell me more.

Geena: And so, I don't want to make it that they have to attend all three. And, I figured if they attend one, they're probably going to attend two, and they might attend three. (Geena, initial interview, September 29, 2014)

As supported by the above excerpt, Geena struggled with the idea of requiring her students to attend a course-required web seminar, especially on a Sunday. This uneasiness, in part, factored into her decision to assign only one seminar and then to allow students to choose the one they would like to attend.

I then asked Geena a follow-up question concerning her thoughts about if the seminars were held on a different day. The following conversation ensued:

Christi: Okay, and so let's just say, what if they were on a different night? What if they were on a weekday? How would you feel about requiring them to do it? Because in a sense, I guess in one way, you're not requiring them to attend all of them, so you're requiring them to attend one, correct? Is that right?

Geena: I think it's just hard to have an expectation that you are available on a Sunday evening. We should think a little bit outside the bounds of the time commitment,

and so that's why I like, I value them enough to say, "You have to go to one. So, you can pick one of the three". (Geena, initial interview, September 29, 2014)

In addition, Geena added that she believed offering the extra points enticed her teacher candidates to attend more than one web seminar. I then asked to what extent she believed her students attended the seminars because of their own curiosity or desire versus just wanting to receive extra points. Geena explained her rationale in the below excerpt:

I think it's probably both.... You know, my thinking is that they have to go to one, and if they choose to only go to the last one, then they've missed out on some really good work. And, those are decisions that as adults they get to make.... I wouldn't be surprised if I said to them, "If these were only an option for you and no grade was attached and no bonus points were attached, you know, would you attend?" Probably fewer would answer "yes" than saying, "Hey, you're going to get a grade for one and you get bonus points for the others, will you attend?" They're going to say "yes" (Geena, initial interview, September 29, 2014).

Geena seems to intimate that as adults her students can choose whether or not they attend the web seminars. She also thought that offering extra credit points might motivate them to attend other presentations.

Although Geena required her teacher candidates to attend one seminar, she also gave them choices about which one they attended and whether or not they wanted to attend more than one. Incorporating choice illustrated a redistribution of power from Geena as the instructor and traditionally conceived authority figure to her students, which also aligned with her self-described social critical disposition. Further, Geena predicted that if students enjoyed one seminar, they would attend others because they were interesting. For her, then, Geena understands the

importance of professional development that not only is enjoyable, but relevant to her students' interests, so much so that her students might then "probably... attend" another (Geena, initial interview, September 29, 2014).

Grace. As with Geena, I also had read Grace's syllabi prior to our initial interview. From this document, I knew that Grace required her students in this graduate course to attend all three web seminars that GCLR offered that semester (i.e., September, October, November). Yet, she required her undergraduate students to attend only the September seminar. Therefore, during our initial interview, I asked Grace whether her integration of the web seminars varied by class. She replied, "It does vary by class. In terms of last year, I believe my language and literacy people in the M.A.T [Master of Art in Teaching] ... only went to one webinar, and it was the one with Joyce King" (Grace, initial interview, October 2, 2014).

Grace further told me that she decided to incorporate all three GCLR web seminars because the topics correlated well with the course content on those particular dates (initial interview, October 2, 2014). In the following conversation, Grace explained her rationale for determining how many and which seminars to include in her literacy courses:

Christi: Why did you choose to include three web seminars in the M.A.T. course and only one in the other course?

Grace: Right. I felt that really the appropriateness of topics, you know, I honestly, when I opened up the Global Conversations web page when I was writing my syllabi, I was really just looking for one stand out one for my Master's folks to say, "You know, we'll try this out. Enjoy it. It'll be great". But then I looked at the topics. I was like, "Wow, well these fit in not just in terms of topics, but even the timing is really fantastic. And so I hemmed and hawed a little bit about that,

and figured, again because we're doing a hybrid model, it definitely wouldn't hurt for them to have additional possibilities since we're not meeting for class regularly that they might really enjoy having additional opportunities to sit and hear an expert wax poetic on these really fantastic topics. (initial interview, October 2, 2014)

Further into our conversation, Grace explained how she made the decision, in comparison to her graduate literacy course, to include only one web seminar because the October presentation with Dr. Richard Beach tied in well with the topic for that week on parallel pedagogies. She also stated, "Being undergrad, I didn't want to demand too much of their time in attendance outside of class (initial interview, October 2, 2014). Then, during our mid-point interview, Grace noted that she thought by having the experience of attending a seminar as part of their coursework might help her students recognize "it's not a big deal, it's not anything scary, how accessible it is, and how thoughtful they are and to really kind of encourage some new ideas" (mid-point interview, October 23, 2014). I understood Grace's comment to mean that having the experience of attending even a single web seminar might then encourage her students to want to seek out web seminars as a professional development venue in the future.

The above data suggested that Grace considered how the web seminars pedagogically connected to the goals, content, and outcomes associated with both of her literacy courses. First, she took time to consult the GCLR website to correlate the seminar topics and dates with her course topics and dates. In this way, she determined how each seminar best fit, pedagogically, within each course's content and when those would be best used. Second, the above-mentioned decisions guided the number of seminars that she required her students to attend. Similar to Geena's rationale, Grace also assigned her undergraduate students only one web seminar.

Interestingly, Geena's decision affected graduate students enrolled in the hybrid and asynchronous courses, while Grace's decision applied only to her undergraduate students who met totally face-to-face. For Grace, the data suggested that her rationale for the number of assigned web seminars was also reflective of the course's mode of delivery (i.e., hybrid or asynchronous vs. face to face) and level (i.e., graduate vs. undergraduate). Third, Grace embedded the required web seminar reflections within the other course reflections, assessing them according to the same template and similar criteria, which suggested that Grace viewed the web seminars as integral to her courses as the other required reflections. Whereas Geena gave her students a choice of which one seminar they would like to attend, Grace intentionally assigned her students certain ones, which she aligned with specific course content that she would be covering at the time of a specific web seminar.

Lin. From the onset of our first interview, Lin explained that she required her students to attend one GCLR web seminar during the semester but also encouraged them to attend the others. Like Geena and Grace, she, too, assigned them to write and submit a reflection after the web seminar that they chose to attend. She explained her rationale in the following conversation that ensued between us:

Christi: I noticed in your syllabus, it looks like students get to choose which seminar to attend.

Lin: Yes, at first I thought, if I'm ever teaching a graduate level course, I'll require my students to attend every web seminar. But since it's undergrad level, I decided to let my students only select one. But also, I encourage them to attend more than just one. (Lin, initial interview, October 2, 2014)

Although Lin encouraged her students to attend more than one web seminar, unlike Geena, she did not state during the interviews or in her course syllabus that students could earn extra credit points

for attending the others. Like Grace, though, Lin also assigned only one web seminar to her undergraduate students who met totally face to face.

Several times throughout the course of the three interviews, Lin reiterated her expectations, adding during the mid-point interview that since she gave students a choice of which seminar to attend “that serves their interest, they also check out the schedule and see our weekly topic to see how it relates to the scheduled seminar before deciding which one to attend” (mid-point interview, November 4, 2014). This comment indicated that Lin’s students had the freedom to choose the professional development web seminar that best met their learning needs and interests. Although students had to attend one seminar, giving them a choice, as did Geena, decreased the power associated with the requirement. Also, during our final interview, Lin stated, “Most of my students actually attend more than one web seminar” (final interview, November 18, 2014). I understood this statement to mean that although the students were required to attend one web seminar, their experience often led them to attend others.

In summary, my analysis of the data suggested that participants’ beliefs about requiring time outside of their designated course related to how many seminars they assigned their students. Geena, for instance, felt uneasy about “requiring students to attend something on a Sunday night” (initial interview, September 29, 2014) since it was outside the traditionally scheduled times/days that a class normally met, even in respect to students taking a hybrid or asynchronously-delivered course. In contrast, Grace thought attending all three web seminars allowed her graduate students who met in the hybrid course “more supported content time” (initial interview, October 2, 2014). In their face-to-face courses, Grace and Lin both required students to attend only one web seminar. This suggested that they did not want to add more out-of-class time to a course that already met completely face-to-face and in consideration of the students’ level of expertise as pre-service

teachers. Also, to align the presentation topics with the course content, Grace determined which web seminars her students would attend, while Geena and Lin allowed their students to self-select theirs. Lin stated that providing a choice gave her students a chance to self-select the one that best fit their needs and interests. Finally, the participants' beliefs about requiring out of class time spent attending the GCLR web seminars influenced their rationale for how many, and in Grace's case, which seminars they required their students to attend.

Role of Web Seminars in Literacy Courses

To learn more about how the participants used the web seminars, I inquired about the role that the web seminars served in their literacy teacher education courses and how they integrated the web seminars. I wanted to understand their use of the seminars in relation to their personal dispositions about teaching and learning and the overall focus, goals, content, and instruction of their courses.

Geena. Across our three interviews, Geena consistently expressed that she viewed the web seminars serving more of a secondary role in her courses, rather than an essential component. For instance, she did not deliberately match the speakers or the topics with her course goals, content, instruction, or outcomes. How Geena used the GCLR web seminars in her literacy teacher education courses became clearer during our conversations throughout the interview process. For instance, during our initial interview, I asked Geena about the connection between the web seminars and the two literacy courses that she taught:

Christi: How does student attendance at the web seminars fit in with the focus of your course, the goals, I mean that sort of thing?

Geena: Yeah, for the theory course, literacy development, I mean that's such a broad survey course to begin with that anybody who's talking in Global Conversations

fits into that because there's whatever the speaker's talking about is theoretically related and strong to literacy development. And so, that to me is a real natural connection. For the other course, and for other courses that I've taught, it doesn't necessarily have a one-to-one matching, but I figured it doesn't hurt to have it in the course. (initial interview, September 29, 2014)

Geena's above comments suggested that she did not purposely tie the web seminar topics to the goals, content, instruction, or outcomes of the literacy courses that she taught; however, that did not mean that she did not see worth of including them. In fact, Geena acknowledged, "So, it's not like there's a one-to-one matching of 'Oh, it's going to meet this standard, or it's going to meet this objective'" (initial interview, September 29, 2014). Instead, she explained that "It's more the idea that people are out there doing some really cool work, and we need to pay attention to it" (Geena, initial interview, September 29, 2014). Geena's above comment suggested that she included the web seminars in her courses because she believed they were a valuable resource, despite whether or not their content aligned with the course objectives or required teacher education standards. As support, when I asked how her beliefs aligned with the standards, she explained,

I'm disheartened by the rigidity that many of our classroom teachers are currently facing, and I think what happens is we get kind of lost in the standards. So, if we put the standards off to the side, and we actually engage in meaningful, authentic learning that is inquiry oriented and learner-centered, if we do that first, and then we think about going back to the standards and looking at the standards, I'm pretty convinced that we will meet most of the standards that teachers are expected to follow. (initial interview, September 29, 2014)

These remarks provided further support for her assigned role of the GCLR web seminars in her courses. Geena's thoughts about mandated instructional standards also suggested to me that she

recognized that the web seminars might not directly fulfill her courses' standards, but that did not make attending the presentations less valuable in her mind.

Also, Geena talked about how the seminars connected with her courses. She gave an example from the previous year's seminar with Dr. Brian Street, stating, "Last year when Peggy had Brian Street and we had just talked about, kind of his ideological ... models of literacy practices, so that was a really nice connection for the students" (initial interview, September 29, 2014). In terms of the current semester, Geena explained that she thought the upcoming October 12 web seminar, "The Affordances of Digital Tool Use" with Dr. Richard Beach, "will fit in really nicely with my students who are doing their multimodal project" (initial interview, September 29, 2014). She added, though, that she thought whether or not the GCLR web seminar topics tied into a given course's content mattered. Geena explained, "It just really is dependent on the topic and the course in which it is happening. ... from a student's perspective, they might not see as much value if it's not directly related to the courses they're currently in" (mid-point interview, October 27, 2014). In essence, the web seminars were not something that she purposefully attempted to tie into her literacy teacher education coursework. Rather, Geena viewed the seminars as "opportunities and invitations for students to get some more information" but not necessarily an intentionally integrated course component (initial interview, September 2014).

Responses taken from the mid-point and final interview transcripts further supported Geena's previously stated perspective about how she used the web seminars in her literacy courses. For example, during the mid-point interview, I specifically asked Geena what she thought was the role of GCLR web seminars in her courses. Geena replied,

I would say the role of GCLR in my courses is to offer students more access and more opportunities to engage in the discourse of the field. So ... I see it not as primary to the

coursework that we're doing, but it's supplementary. (mid-point interview, October 27, 2014)

During our third and final interview together, Geena again candidly stated that she treated the web seminars as “an add-on in the classroom” (final interview, November 17, 2014).

Comments across all three interview transcripts indicated that the GCLR web seminars served an ancillary role in Geena's courses, much like an extension to the overall goals, content, instruction, or outcomes associated with the literacy courses. Also, including the web seminars in her courses even though the topics did not always align illustrated Geena stepping beyond prescribed teacher education standards to offer her students a broader view of literacy.

Grace. I did not directly ask Grace what role the web seminars served in her courses because she had already stated, during our initial interview, how she had coordinated the presentations with specific topics in her courses. From the onset of our initial interview, Grace excitedly commented, “The topics for this semester really fit in nicely with larger conversations for the class” (initial interview, October 2, 2014). Information contained in her course syllabi supported the above comment. For example, in her graduate course syllabus, the scheduled topic for the September 13 face-to-face class focused on the theme “Critical Understandings of What it Means to be Literate”, which addressed culturally relevant pedagogy. Likewise, the September 14 web seminar with Dr. David Kirkland entitled “A Song of Smoke: Critical Thoughts on the Literacies of Young Black Men” also addressed culturally relevant pedagogy. Additionally, in the undergraduate course, Grace embedded the October 12 web seminar with Dr. Richard Beach during the time frame which she planned to address parallel pedagogies on October 6, 13, and 20. She stated, with us ... shifting into parallel pedagogies next week, the timing is going to be perfect on that, and it's a really ideal situation” (Grace, initial interview, October 2, 2014). Grace's syllabi,

which indicated how she aligned the course topics and scheduled instruction dates with the required web seminars, illustrated that she intentionally planned how she used the web seminars in her literacy courses to support the course curriculum.

During our mid-point interview, Grace also noted that the web seminars played a dual role in her courses. As previously noted, they were integral to particular topics that she addressed in each of the literacy courses. The web seminars, however, also served as an authentic, situated learning experience for how to participate in professional development. Taking on the voice of a student, Grace explained her thoughts about this role:

By me being out of the picture, it kind of forces them to baby-step into, “Okay well, I’m here kind of by myself, but now I have that support and I’m finding my way around. I’m learning this technology. I’m listening to other participants who are kind of like me because they’re in the classroom and they’re thinking about kids and they have similar questions”. (mid-point interview, October 23, 2014)

Grace continued the conversation, explaining that “there’s professional development”, which she described as the top-down school district delivered approach, “and then there’s *PRO-FESS-ION-AL-DE-VEL-OP-MENT* [spoken in a low, slow, humorous tone]”, which is inquiry-based and considers teachers’ needs (Grace, mid-point interview, October 23, 2014). Grace further stated that she wanted her students to recognize and be able to seek out the kind of professional development that focused on their specific needs and interests as teachers, as opposed to some types which were more formulaic and generally aimed toward faculties in schools and entire school districts. She described this more generic approach to professional development in the following excerpt:

There’s the stuff that comes pre-packaged in schools, and they’re delivered by an administration or by somebody who gets paid thousands of dollars by an administration.

And that kind of professional development, in my mind, is very much scripted, and it's not very interested in teachers' questions about their practice or teachers' questions about what's new or what their children might be able to engage in or those kinds of things.

(Grace, mid-point interview, October 23, 2014)

I understood Grace's above comment to be characteristic of some top-down approaches: chosen for teachers instead of by/with teachers, general and unspecific to teachers' specific needs, and which served the interests of those in authority more so than teachers themselves. Yet, by integrating the web seminars, Grace believed she was providing her students an opportunity to experience first-hand how to participate in professional development that "is inquiry-based and considers teachers' needs (Grace, mid-point interview, October 23, 2014).

Grace's beliefs about professional development seemed to align with her sociocultural, critically-grounded dispositions about teaching and learning. She explained this disposition in the following:

It's kind of messed up that formal constructs of schooling tend to subscribe to the idea that learning is hard.... I very much disagree with that. I believe that learning is effortless in the majority of contexts. I believe that if it's relevant, if it's authentic, if it's grounded in things that are useful or that matter personally, I believe that it is a joyful thing. And I think that it's a very organic thing. I am frustrated by industrial understandings of teaching and learning. You know, this idea that we're all on this conveyer belt and we should all be finished at the same time and we should all be flawless....I believe it's more like a horticultural model. (Grace, initial interview, October 2, 2014)

A comparison of Grace's above stated beliefs about learning and the tension she felt appear to be similar to her disposition about meaningful teacher professional learning. Further, that she chose to

integrate the web seminars into her two literacy courses, although they were not part of the required standards for either of her two literacy courses, is suggestive of how she negotiated the tension she felt about top-down approaches to learning, both for students in the classroom and for pre-/in-service professional development.

The above excerpts taken from the mid-point interview transcript suggest that the GCLR web seminars served two distinct roles in Grace's literacy courses: to support her course curriculum and to serve as an exemplar to her students of meaningful professional development as opposed to some mandated professional development that is often prescribed and not very personalized. Data from Grace's initial and mid-point interviews and supported by her course syllabi illustrated three ways that she integrated the web seminars with pedagogical intent to support her teacher candidates' learning. First, Grace purposefully considered how each web seminar that she integrated pedagogically connected to the content of each course. For example, she intentionally integrated the web seminars in consideration of how specific seminar topics/presentation dates aligned with her course content and the scheduled days that she would be addressing those topics. Second, Grace considered each course's delivery mode (i.e., face-to-face and hybrid) and the students' level of experience (i.e., undergraduate pre-service teachers and graduate in-service teachers) in her decision about how many web seminars she required students to attend. Third, she integrated the web seminar assignments as a component of other standing assignments. For instance, Grace had students in both classes respond to the web seminars in the same assignment and in the same way they responded to their other course readings. Analysis of interview transcripts, therefore, indicated that the GCLR web seminar presentations played an integral role in Grace's courses. Information listed in her course syllabi supported this data from the transcripts in terms of how the seminar topics linked with particular course topics, the dates of

face-to-face meetings in relation to GCLR web seminars, how many and which web seminars she required students to attend, and how she embedded the required reflection within other course assignments. Further, integrating the seminars seemed a way for Grace to negotiate the tension she felt about “industrial understandings of teaching and learning” since they provided opportunities for her and her students to engage in critical literacy topics that the standardized curriculum may not have addressed (initial interview, October 2, 2014).

Lin. During our mid-point interview, I asked Lin what role the GCLR web seminars served in her literacy teacher education course. She stated, “Like I addressed in our first interview, I try to use our web seminar as another resource, additional resource to our in-class topic” (mid-point interview, November 4, 2014). Lin also explained that since her course was the first literacy course that students took in their teacher preparation program, they had “just started learning about the theory ... to understand what literacy looks like, what it means to be a reader, so sometimes it really requires more scaffolding” (mid-point interview, November 4, 2014). These comments suggested that as pre-service teachers learning about literacy for the first time, Lin had to provide a bridge between the literacy theory and classroom practice; thus, the seminars served a support role, just as they did for Geena, alongside the regular course content.

During our final interview, I asked Lin whether or not she intentionally linked the web seminar speakers with the topics that she addressed in her literacy course syllabus. She responded that she did not purposefully try to coordinate the speakers’ topics with her course content because as the initial reading course that pre-service teachers take, the content was quite structured according to state requirements. Lin explained the following:

In some ways I don’t see the flexibility that I can kind of connect the web seminar to my course content. As a foundational course, we do have the state guidelines that ... I have to

cover in this particular course. So in terms of the syllabus, I did not try to align our syllabus, our content, with the web seminar” (Lin, final interview, November 18, 2014).

As supported by Lin’s above comments, as a result of the strict teacher education mandates in [state], the state where she is a teacher educator, she did not intentionally integrate the seminars with her course content. Data gathered from the final interview, Lin voiced the following opinion:

Personally, I think I will still require my students to attend the web seminar. It doesn’t matter if we have more statements or there is another, different format of TPA coming out ... The knowledge from the textbook or the knowledge that’s required by the state only provides you certain perspectives of literacy learning or literacy instruction

Yes, there’s always a top-down approach. There are always statements that the students need to obtain that certain type of knowledge. Again, whose knowledge is honored, or whose voice should be heard? (final interview, November 18, 2014)

In the above two data excerpts, Lin explained how she used the GCLR web seminars as a resource in her literacy course. While she did not purposely attempt to connect the web seminar topics with her course topics, she nevertheless believed they provided her students a wider landscape of literacy and literacy instruction. Like Geena, the fact that she incorporated the seminars in spite of the course’s strict structure and required standards illustrated Lin “going against the grain” of the status quo.

In relation, though, to how GCLR web seminar topics meshed with Lin’s course content and standards, she commented, “Sometimes I can really see how ... my course content and the web seminar flow together or intertwine or really provide a best learning experience for my students” (Lin, mid-point interview, November 4, 2014). She mentioned that, for example, Dr.

Richard Beach's seminar, "How Affordances of Digital Tool Use Foster Critical Literacy", complemented her course topic on new literacies. At other times, though, the seminar topic had no direct relationship to the course. For instance, in the November seminar, Dr. David Berliner's presentation addressed the politics associated with education and critical literacy, while Lin's course topic for the current week concerned reading fluency and vocabulary. Lin explained this dynamic during our final interview:

The third web seminar was about politics and education. I remember when we had our in-class discussion; it didn't really tie into our topic ... of the week [which] was fluency and vocabulary.... But at the same time, because the topic we talked about was the poverty rate and we talked about the achievement gap, and I think some audience [members] also asked about teacher performance assessment. So assessment also tied into my students' coursework. So in general, they were able to apply the information from the web seminar to overall the education coursework here at [University]. But it's not necessarily tied into my reading course. (final interview, November 18, 2014)

Therefore, while the web seminar topic did not succinctly fall in line with her course's curricular focus, Lin nevertheless found a way to connect the information to her students' learning. For instance, Lin told me that her students related the content of the November web seminar with Dr. David Berliner to the content in a literacy education foundation course, which was another course in their teacher education program.

Lin used the GCLR web seminars in ways that also very much aligned with her critical social constructivist disposition toward learning. She described her beliefs during our initial interview when she stated, "I encourage my students to construct their own knowledge.... I love to have a meaningful dialogue, meaningful conversation, organic conversation with my students (Lin,

initial interview, October 2, 2014). That is, the students explained their constructed understanding of the speaker's message, thought critically about how the information related to their literacy teacher education course, and considered ways they might apply the information in their future instructional practices with students. Then, during the final interview, I asked Lin about her personal teaching disposition in relation to the GCLR web seminar topics because I wanted to know how she thought her beliefs either supported or opposed the theoretical framework of the larger GCLR project. The following conversation between Lin and me ensued:

Christi: You know, in the first interview, we talked extensively about your position and your perspectives on learning and pedagogy. Do you see that perspective in relation to these seminars?

Lin: I prefer to facilitate our in-class discussion with my students. They have to construct the knowledge and what they get out of the web seminar is very different than their peers. So that's why every time after our web seminar, we have that debriefing section in class and talk about why these particular subjects or these topics matter to our urban school students. We always bring it back to our urban students and really tie [the seminar] back to our school's mission and vision in terms of being an urban educator. (Lin, final interview, November 18, 2014)

Therefore, Lin's stated social constructivist and critical views about learning supported how she incorporated the GCLR web seminars through learner-centered class discussions.

Summary

Data excerpted from the participants' interview transcripts, and in specific instances supported by their course syllabi, suggested this study's second finding: Participants used GCLR

web seminars in relation to the pedagogical purpose and intent for their use in their courses. How the participants used the web seminars aligned in some ways with their personal teaching dispositions and served a particular role in each participant's courses. For Geena and Lin who did not intentionally connect the presentation topics with their course topics, the web seminars served a supplemental role, almost like an extension activity. Grace, on the other hand, very methodically determined which presentations paralleled the content in both her graduate and undergraduate courses, creating a course calendar that correlated with the specific dates of those particular web seminars. Further, for the participants, the web seminar requirement was a way to introduce their students to online professional development with the thinking that if their students attended one seminar, they might want to attend others.

Specific Instructional Practices Fostered Authentic Professional Development

"It's just a great web seminar that really facilitated our in-class discussion as well. So we spent like about an hour of our in-class time and did think-pair-share and talked about the resources that he presented at the web seminar" (Lin, mid-point interview, November 4, 2014).

Interview data suggested that participants' specific instructional practices used to integrate the web seminars fostered authentic professional development. These practices included discussion, written reflection, and archived seminars as a resource to support literacy learning with their students. All three participants used discussion to engage their students in conversations after the web seminars. However, the frequency and extent to which the teacher educators incorporated these conversations varied. Geena, Grace, and Lin all also required their students to submit reflections after attending the web seminars.

Geena. During our initial interview, I asked Geena about her use of post-seminar discussions. In response, she explained that she usually did not spend much time discussing the

web seminars with her in-service teachers. Geena commented that not meeting face-to-face each week with students in the hybrid course and not at all in the asynchronously delivered course somewhat factored into why she didn't always include focused discussions about the web seminars during her classes. Geena explained how she viewed the situation:

A part of it—because I don't see the students every week—so it's like Global Conversations happened, and then I don't see the students for a couple of weeks. It feels like, yeah, something that we, I might not get to. It just kind of depends. (initial interview, September 29, 2014)

When Geena did incorporate discussions, she described them in this way: “It might be that somebody had made a statement in their reflection and I just bring it up to the class and then we talk about it and move on” or she might have a brief conversation with the individual student in the moments prior to the start of class (Geena, initial interview, September 29, 2014). Geena also stated that discussions were “a more generative opportunity,” not necessarily a planned interaction (initial interview, September 29, 2014). This data from the initial interview suggested that for Geena, discussion with her students after the web seminars did not occur as a planned event; yet, she also did not prevent discussion, allowing it to occur organically. Therefore, Geena's use of discussion as a tool to integrate the web seminars further confirmed her previously stated use of the web seminars as a resource but not an integral part of her literacy courses.

Along with attending at least one web seminar, Geena also assigned her students to write a reflection about the seminar that they chose to attend. When I inquired about her beliefs regarding reflection, Geena noted that she supported having her students reflect and hoped that if they valued it, perhaps they would engage their own students in the same practice. Unlike other assignments though with a higher point value and which included an associated assessment rubric, the web

seminar assignment did not contain a description of the criteria students were to include in the reflection nor how they would be assessed. According to Geena's course syllabi, attending the web seminar and writing the reflection counted for ten points out of the overall possible 334 points in the theory course and 285 points in the supervision course that students could earn toward their semester grades. Taken together, data gathered from Geena's initial interview transcript and supported by her course syllabi suggested that the web seminars served a less significant role in her courses in comparison to the other course components, which supported her earlier stated role of the web seminars as a supplemental resource for her course.

When I asked Geena if she ever used the archived GCLR web seminars, she explained that she had not, but she understood that she and her students could access them. She stated, "There've been some really great sessions that they [her students] can go back and listen to. But, I've never done the archiving [option]" (Geena, initial interview, September 29, 2014). During our final interview, I again brought up the topic of the archives, asking if she knew if any of her students had viewed any of the past web seminars. Geena mentioned that she tried to locate the archived seminars on the GCLR website but did not see the current season's posted. She responded, "I know that a couple of them [the students] wanted to but this particular season isn't archived yet" (final interview, November 17). I then explained that the live seminars go into the archives on the GCLR YouTube channel and how to access them but that she could also link to them from the website. Geena's responses suggested that she was unclear how to access the archives and that the web seminars were available so soon after the live presentations.

Grace. During our initial interview, Grace explained that in the past, she had made time for her discussion after each web seminar that she required her students to attend. Because of the decreased face time in her hybrid graduate course, she explained that she did not have a scheduled

discussion. She did, however, explain how students brought up information from the web seminars organically amidst other conversations. For example, Grace spoke about how much her graduate students enjoyed the September web seminar with Dr. David Kirkland. She commented that they had excitedly and repeatedly mentioned some of the ideas from his presentation in relation to their other in-class discussions. Grace described these kinds of conversations and how they occurred during their in-class meetings.

Christi: When your students come in and they're talking about it ... do you intentionally have a conversation, or is that just built into your coursework?

Grace: Normally what we do is we would have intentional conversation about it, and you know, that's what we did last year with the Joyce King thing. Unfortunately, with this hybrid model we're doing, I'm actually not a fan of it because between visits, there's so much that they need, and experience and teach in their classroom, that by the time we meet, it's almost a sense of "Well, where do we begin? But, because our meetings are so few and far between, we didn't have a planned time for conversation about David Kirkland's discussion. However, it came up organically, I think probably about four or five times when we were talking about language development and non-standard language and you know, how do we make sure we're not excluding children by saying, "Oh, we can't say that. You can't talk like that". Um, and over and over, folks were pointing out, "Just like David Kirkland said, about the red, red pen!"

Christi: Even after they had attended the web seminar, I mean like weeks after...

Grace: Yes.

Christi: that in other conversations about other things your students would bring up David Kirkland and his ideas?

Grace: Yes.... Cause let's see that webinar was September 14th and I met with them next on September 29th. And they were still going strong, bringing it up, excited to talk about him. (Grace, initial interview, October 2, 2014)

Like Geena who also taught a hybrid course, Grace also felt constrained that she did not have more face time with her students in the graduate course. At this point during the interviews, students in her undergraduate, face-to-face class had not yet attended their assigned October web seminar, as previously noted.

Reflection held an important place in Grace's course. As part of the requirement for attending the web seminars, students in Grace's graduate course had to write a "Critical Reflection" about "key ideas, especially important quotations, questions they pose to the audience or even a response from an audience member" (Grace, course syllabus, Fall 2014, p. 5). Students used the same template for their web seminar reflection that counted fifteen percent of the overall course grade, with five percent allocated for the three web seminars.

When I asked Grace her beliefs about using reflection, she stated, "There's nothing more productive to the project than trying to live out our intentions than reflection, I feel like, especially when it comes to teaching" (initial interview, October 2, 2014). Grace's view of reflection and her response aligned with her beliefs as a teacher educator preparing future teachers. She explained, "I think that even offering them [the teacher candidates] permission to re-examine themselves and re-examine things that have largely gone unquestioned around them" (Grace, initial interview, October 2, 2014). Grace believed in the importance of giving her students the freedom to explore and to discern the best approach to support students in their learning, without the fear that

sometimes gets generated when one doesn't follow established norms or views. Grace thought providing students with opportunities to reflect allowed them to imagine diverse possibilities. Grace further explained her position about asking her students to reflect in the following excerpt:

And even if they give me an answer that I'm very much not comfortable with, it still allows for dialogue, and they still have to articulate the assumptions that they've just been going along with. And again, that's a lot of freedom but it's also uncomfortable in terms of, "Wow, I've been doing something very unintentionally and unquestioned, and "Yeek, maybe I shouldn't". (initial interview, October 2, 2014)

Grace's use of reflection in relation to the web seminars illustrated how she lived out her strong conviction about the value of reflection.

In her undergraduate course, Grace required her pre-service teachers to write a reflection based on their attendance at the October 14 web seminar with Dr. Richard Beach. Similar to her graduate course, Grace integrated this reflection into one of her broader assignments, which she referred to as Collaborative STCs (square, triangle, circle) in which a group of five students collaborated using a Google Doc to write their reflections "in response to the assigned academic readings" (Grace, course syllabus, Fall 2014, p. 9). When crafting their reflections, students used the prompts located in their course syllabus, which corresponded with each letter in the assignment name, *STC* respectively. For example, the letter *S* stood for the word *Square*. The syllabus prompt for this letter stated, "What "squared" with your thinking? That is, what ideas did you encounter in the reading that were consistent with what you already know and/or believe about teaching?" (Grace, course syllabus, Fall 2014, p.9). The *Triangle* (i.e., *T*) prompt asked about new learning gained, and the *Circle* (i.e., *C*) prompted students to critically think about how they might apply this new learning, questions they had, and anything disconcerting. The Collaborative STCs activity

counted for twenty percent of the students' overall course grade. These reflections then served to help her students consider aspects of the web seminar that were meaningful to them and then to reflect about their significance. Grace then used the students' comments to gauge their thinking and understanding in order to plan future instruction.

During our initial interview, Grace explained how she planned to use the October 14 web seminar with her undergraduate class by having them complete this collaborative response:

I'm having them respond by creating a collaborative group response using a Google doc. And so as they're listening, they're going to have their Google doc open, and they're going to jot down salient ideas and kind of respond to each other's quotes and respond to each other's explications of what really stood out to them. And it'll all be going on, on the right, or you know, on one side of their screen, while the webinar is on the other side. So, they're having a chance to, in real time, respond to each other in response to the content. I've never done this before.... I really hope it works.

Christi: So... there's conversation taking place during the webinar in that platform. But then you've got your own students also taking place in almost like a little affinity group on the side?

Grace: Exactly.

Christi: Now, are these small groups, or is everybody in your class exchanging ideas on this Google doc?

Grace: Well, they respond to weekly readings in this way. And so they have an established group of five. And I have six groups cause it's a class of thirty.

I followed-up with Grace in our October mid-point interview to see how her planned activity went.

She told me that since it was the first web seminar that they had attended, some students found the experience challenging. Others really enjoyed it. Grace explained,

This was the first time these particular students have ever been on a webinar. So it was a little bit of a train wreck logistically for a minute there on Sunday, and I had quite a few students who were emailing me frantically like “What do I do? What do I do?” There were a few that it got so late that I was—I had to just say, “You know what? It’s already 7:40 p.m. You know, why don’t we just call it a night, and it will be recorded and on YouTube for you to return to within you know the next day or two.” And I think it was up even before then. And so they got to view it. But the ones who were present, they thought it was pretty cool. (mid-point interview, October 23, 2014)

Although Grace’s planned collaborative response activity did not work out quite the way she had intended, she saw her students struggle with the activity, not because they didn’t understand how to complete it; rather, their complications and perhaps inexperience with the technology hindered their efforts. Nevertheless, Grace’s attempts highlighted her intention to create meaningful and purposeful learning for her teacher candidates by how she integrated the web seminar with her course topics and in consideration of other course assignments. Also, suggesting that her students access the archived web seminar from the GCLR YouTube channel provided an alternative approach for those learners who needed it.

Grace also required the students in her master’s level course to attend the GCLR web seminar with Dr. Beach; however, their lack of zeal surprised her since, as she stated, “We’re talking about their practice in that very responsive, reflective kind of way” (Grace, mid-point interview, October 23, 2014). Upon reflection in our conversation, Grace surmised that she had not addressed the topic of digital literacies with her in-service teachers in that class and suggested this

lack of attention could plausibly explain her students' seemingly low interest. She stated, "In hindsight, I realized honestly we haven't talked a lot about digital composing or teaching with digital tools in that particular course" (Grace, mid-point interview, October 23, 2014). In comparison, the overarching focus and design of Grace's undergraduate course specifically addressed pre-service teachers' use of 21st-century technologies within literacy instruction. That the teacher candidates in Grace's undergraduate literacy class who spent more time discussing and learning about how to integrate digital technology displayed a more positive reaction to Dr. Beach's web seminar suggested that the intentional, purposeful integration of the web seminar with the course content mattered in terms of the teacher candidates' interest, application of concepts, and changes in their thinking about literacy.

Like Geena, Grace also had never used the archived web seminars. She stated, "I keep forgetting they're there, to be totally honest" (Grace, initial interview, October 2, 2014). Grace did, however, comment that a few of her students were upset about not being able to attend the October web seminars, and so she recommended that they access the archives, explaining to her students, "I understand they go in relatively quickly these days into the archives" (initial interview, October 2, 2014).

Lin. While Geena and Grace sometimes used discussion, Lin engaged her students in conversation about the web seminars in the class immediately following each presentation. Lin explained, "Basically, how I structured our in-class discussion will be kind of a debriefing and talking about what the main topic was, and then we ... talk about how the information can be applied in their [the teacher candidates'] classroom situation" (final interview, November 18, 2014).

Lin used the web seminars as a prompt for in-class Socratic-style discussions about literacy. She explained that Dr. Beach's presentation on digital writing paralleled their course topic that week, which was on new literacies, as well as connected to Dr. David Kirkland's topic from the previous web seminar. So, during the week following Dr. Beach's seminar, Lin engaged her students in a think-pair-share activity in which the teacher candidates who attended the web seminar gave their partner, who did not attend, a summary of the information presented. They also discussed the downloadable handout that Dr. Beach made available to all GCLR participants, some of the resources that the speaker presented, and how they might apply these with the students in the classrooms in which they were currently working or observing. Lin recounts Dr. Beach's web seminar:

And so it's just a great web seminar that really facilitated our in-class discussion as well. So we spent like about an hour of our in-class time and did think-pair-share and talked about the resources that he presented at the web seminar and how in current public school it was our current practice, and what the classroom teachers are doing in the classroom where my students are observing, and in the future, how they can utilize those digital tools in the classrooms (Lin, mid-point interview, November 4, 2014).

Lin further explained that her students felt a particular connection with Dr. Beach's presentation since he was familiar with their city's recent initiative to integrate digital technology into the public school system by providing students with iPads, which is also where Lin's students did their student teacher observations. That the web seminar speaker situated his presentation on a topic that directly applied to Lin's teacher candidates' current experiences and what they were learning in their literacy teacher education course, they were able to connect his presentation to their real-world teaching experiences. For instance, Lin mentioned that her teacher candidates

"made the connection" that since all of the students will have access to iPads, "By using the digital device, students can work on their math problems, or like, for example, practice their sight words" (Lin, mid-point interview, November 4, 2014). In essence, Lin's students thought critically about how they might incorporate technology (i.e., the iPad) to extend or enhance student learning.

During the final interview, knowing that Lin gave her students a choice of which of the three seminars they wanted to attend, I inquired about how the students who didn't attend a particular seminar engaged in the face-to-face conversations and activities involving the seminars, Lin explained, "At the beginning of our conversation, I usually ask my students, those who attended the seminar, to give us a quick summary of the particular topic and give us some highlights or if they have any aha moments" (final interview, November 18, 2014). In this way, the students who attended the web seminar led the conversation, giving an overview of the speaker's presentation and how the information connects with their literacy course and how it might be applied to the classroom setting.

Also, while Lin didn't use the archived web seminars in her course, during the first interview, she mentioned to her teacher candidates know that they existed and demonstrated how to access the archives from the GCLR YouTube channel. As a result of the in-class debriefs, some of the students who did not attend the live presentation accessed watched the archived video of that particular seminar, which somewhat surprised Lin:

So actually the interesting thing is after these three different web seminars and after our in-class discussion, I did have a couple of students who did not attend the web seminar and decided to go back and find the You Tube video and watch it because the in-class discussion—they thought it's very interesting or they thought the topic is very appealing to them. (final interview, November 18, 2014)

Lin further explained that she also had students whose “work schedule or family responsibility” prevented them from attending a live web seminar “decided to go online and watch the archived one” (final interview, November 18, 2014). Because of this extended open access to the archives, she felt like GCLR web seminars served as a valuable resource.

Also during the final interview, Lin shared that while she knew she needed to prepare her students for their licensing exam, she believed the post-class discussions about the web seminars gave her and her students a chance to engage in authentic learning. She expressed her feelings in the below excerpt:

Sometimes I feel like I need to teach for the test. But at the same time, when I ask them to attend the web seminar and when we have the conversation in class, I think that's organic conversation and that's an authentic learning experience for my students. (Lin, final interview, November 18, 2014)

Lin's comment suggested that she sometimes felt torn about making sure she covered the required curriculum for her course. Yet, she addressed this tension, as previously stated, by recognizing that “there's always a top-down approach” (Lin, final interview, November 17, 2014). Incorporating the web seminars and then having follow-up discussions in class was one way Lin made sure she provided her pre-service teachers with knowledge beyond the narrowly prescribed curriculum.

Like Geena and Grace, Lin also expected her students to submit a post-seminar reflection. Lin explained that the purpose of the reflection “is [that] I want them to be able to not only grasp the main concept from the talk, but also they should be able to relate it to our course content and their own teaching experience” (initial interview, October 2, 2014). Lin also explained that she did not want to narrow the requirements for the reflection because as undergraduate students taking their first literacy education course, her pre-service teachers sometimes found some of the topics a

little too advanced” (Lin, initial interview, October 2, 2014). Yet, she optimistically conveyed that because her students work in urban settings, observe in urban classrooms, and have personal experiences as the traditionally marginalized “other”, they often find the web seminars very relatable. Lin referred to this insight as an “ah ha” moment”.

Lin supported the concept of reflection and thought her students should be reflective practitioners. She said, “After the web seminar, they should be able to sit down and really think about what they got from the one hour talk ... and how that experience affects their future career” (Lin, initial interview, October 2, 2014). During our final interview, Lin commented that she also used the reflection as an assessment of her students’ learning that allowed her to see their growth as developing teachers. She explained the following:

One way that I assess their knowledge is through their reflection and how they can apply the information in urban schools. So that's the part I see that my students are not only being a reflective teacher, but also seeing things from different perspectives and different lenses. (Lin, final interview, November 18, 2014)

Lin’s comment intimated that through the reflections, her students articulated new understandings gleaned from the web seminars that may also result in a shift in their broader thinking about literacy.

All three participants included discussion about the web seminars, yet they did so to varying degrees. Both Geena and Grace stated that the hybrid format reduced the amount of face-to-face time, making circumstances difficult to build planned discussions about the web seminars into their instruction. Grace, however, noted that she did use discussion in the past when teaching face-to-face. Of the three participants, Lin made discussion about the seminars a planned activity, integrating it into her regular class instruction, even when the presentation topic did not always

align with her course content. All participants believed in the value of reflection and included it as a post-seminar assignment. Geena's comments supported her earlier stated role of the web seminars as a supplement to the regular course content, while Grace purposefully planned instruction around the seminar topics and made them integral to her courses. Although the seminars served a supplement role to Lin, her use of discussion and reflection suggested that to some extent, she integrated the web seminars into her course with purpose and intent.

Summary

Based on my analysis of the data, this study's third finding suggested that teacher educators used specific instructional practices with web seminars for authentic professional development. All three participants used discussion to varying degrees, but Lin used it more consistently, as a planned part of her instruction. Geena, Grace, and Lin also all incorporated reflection as a pedagogical tool to help their students critically think about the information that the speaker presented, with the goal of developing first-hand insights about particular literacy topics, how these topics related to their own beliefs about literacy teaching and learning, and connections to the students in their own classrooms. Further, the web seminars served as a way for the participants to push against the grain of mandated curriculum, standards, and privileged notions of literacy and professional development.

Web Seminars Offered Authentic and Situated Online Professional Development

“And I think that is the real value of the platform that is being used. So it's not just a video of a scholar talking, but because it's real time, it gives a sense of one, immediacy, and two, it allows for genuine questions to be asked” (Geena, mid-point interview, October 27, 2014).

This study's third finding suggested that participants valued integrating web seminars in their courses. This finding related to the following: (a) Web seminars as texts allow for authentic,

situated learning; (b) Reflection on web seminars allows for critical praxis; (c) Web seminars as a platform for online teacher professional development; and (d) Web seminars generate professionalism in student participants and opens access to a language and literacy community of learners.

Web Seminars as Authentic Texts Allowed for Situated Learning

Geena, Grace, and Lin all spoke about how the GCLR web seminars created authentic, situated learning experiences for their students. For example, each expressed that seeing and hearing the speakers in real-time made the learning experience much more authentic. They also mentioned that the speakers spoke about literacy theory and research situated within the context of real classrooms and applicable to authentic practice, which helped the teacher candidates understand the content on a deeper level than had they simply read a text or watched a video.

Geena. The ability to be present in real time and hear world-renowned literacy scholars was valuable to integrating the web seminars:

Well, from my perspective ... I see it as an avenue to expose students to a range of scholars who are currently working in the field, to have access to them in a way that they wouldn't necessarily have access because sometimes when you hear somebody speak, it's a lot different than if you're just reading an article that they wrote. So I see a lot of value for just broadening out who students have access to. (Geena, mid-point interview, October 27, 2014)

She further noted the value of her students accessing literacy scholarship through texts that are not articles,

So it's accessing a different form of communication, and so, you know, students are inundated with articles that they have to read and chapters from books that they have to

read. But, when you have the opportunity to hear somebody through a web seminar or in a podcast, it gives a different—I think you maybe attend to the information a little differently. I’m not saying it’s better or worse. I’m just saying I think it’s different and you may hold on to the ideas a little bit longer.... I think the visual aspect makes it different and the [interactiveness] of it makes it different” (mid-point interview, October 27, 2014).

Geena believed the synchronous nature of the web seminars, in which her students could hear and view the speaker and his presentation, had the potential to create an authentic learning experience. Further, that the web seminar’s communication mode (i.e., listening and viewing) differed from students’ general mode of reading print text could affect their knowledge construction (i.e., reading print text) based on how attuned they were to the presenter’s voice and video.

Grace. In particular, Grace mentioned the impact that Dr. David Kirkland’s web seminar had on her master’s students. In this web seminar, Dr. Kirkland showed a slide of a black male’s poem whose teacher had used a red pen to mark what she considered errors in Standard English. Dr. Kirkland simultaneously read the poem aloud in its originally written form, which was the student’s cultural discourse. Grace explained the teacher candidates’ reaction:

“Wow”, I feel like I get it now”. And I think when they have that human voice and they have the human experiences that they can listen to, there’s just something about that, that makes ... all of the content more human and livable, you know. I think there’s something very different about reading about what I can do to be better at this, that, or the other, verses hearing someone talk about it. (initial interview, October 2, 2014)

Interestingly, prior to attending Dr. Kirkland’s web seminar, Grace mentioned that her students had read several texts related to “experiences of minority students in curricula that are largely designed

for the white, mainstream, middle class society” (Grace, initial interview, October 2, 2014). Based on Grace’s response, the web seminar experience positively impacted the teacher candidates’ learning since it solidified their understanding of a topic she had addressed in her course and about which students had read, prior to the web seminar. That Grace’s students left the web seminar with a clearer understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy than before they attended seemed to support Geena’s earlier comment that maybe the web seminar’s oral communication mode helps learners to better focus on the material.

Grace also mentioned that her students valued hearing literacy scholars speak about their work and in relation to their own lived experiences which gave her students a stronger level of understanding about a topic. She explained, “So having that different perspective and that different voice and that different way of saying very similar conclusions that we talk about together, I think helps my students make connections with the material for our courses much more deeply” (Grace, mid-point interview, October 23, 2014). In terms of value of the web seminar, Grace noted that her students “came back with this fire in their bellies” after attending Dr. Kirkland’s presentation (November 14, 2014). She responded, “I think there's so much value in hearing thought leaders talk about their ideas in their own voices” (Grace, final interview, November 14, 2014). She again pointed out the web seminar with Dr. David Kirkland, explaining that she felt like by attending the web seminar, her teacher candidates got a glimpse of the lived experiences of the speaker, as suggested by her comment below.

But it was hearing somebody else’s voice, I think, and hearing this poetry of his particular way of viewing things that’s different from how I put my ideas in language on that issue, simply because I haven’t lived that issue the way he has. (final interview, November 14, 2014)

Grace further stated, “I think just the very personal nature of it is so valuable because I could very well have my students simply read one extra article here, one extra article there. And they would get the ideas, but hearing the person behind it ... (final interview, November 14, 2014).

Grace’s understanding of her students’ reaction to Dr. Kirkland’s presentation was indicative that the web seminar gave her teacher candidates a broader understanding of the power of language and suggested how the teacher, as a figure of authority, had the power to decide whose language and voice would be heard in the classroom (Janks, 2000). Again, just as Geena pointed out, Grace also thought that hearing the presenter’s voice helped the teacher candidates to fully connect with the speaker’s ideas. Also, by hearing the scholars speak their own truths, or discuss literacy through their own lived experiences, made participating in the web seminar, much more authentic for the students. Thus, it resonated more profoundly with them.

Lin. Similar to Geena’s and Grace’s responses about the aesthetic quality of viewing and listening to the speakers, Lin explained that many of her pre-service teachers had experienced a moment of clarity as a result of hearing Dr. David Kirkland’s web seminar. For her students, Dr. Kirkland delivered a very poignant presentation about the need to develop a culturally relevant pedagogy. Lin noted that his web seminar helped the students reflect about the power of language:

The first web seminar, there was an eye-opening experience for many of my students because they talked about different language and the power of language. Whose language is the dominant culture or dominant discourses. So it really helped the students re-examine their belief and practice. (Lin, final interview, November 18, 2014)

While Lin did not say that the web seminar impacted her students any differently than, say, reading a print text or watching a video about culturally relevant pedagogy, that his presentation caused the students to rethink their initial dispositions suggests that the web seminar as an authentic text

situated within the scholar's lived experience had an impact on their thinking. That is, students' newly constructed understanding seemed to result from the aesthetic experience of Dr. Kirkland's raw explication of the association of language and power.

Lin also noted that students related to Dr. David Berliner, the third web seminar presenter. She said that his language and demeanor made him very relatable for the students, dispelling their generalized view of scholars as, perhaps dissociative. Lin explained,

My students were really engaged in our third web seminar and also surprised by the language that the presenter was using. They told me it was the first time that they attended a professional opportunity and heard a speaker use the word "stupid"... But at the same time, it shows you the presenter, his personality, and why this issue is so important to him. So it's just general feedback that students actually don't feel the distance. (final interview, November 18, 2014)

Lin's above response suggested that her students felt comfortable in the presence of such a well-known literacy scholar and that by hearing him talk, the students saw his humanity, which decreased the distance often present between an expert in the field and a novice.

Lin's responses concerning how her students responded to Dr. Kirkland's and Dr. Berliner's presentations highlights how the web seminars as authentic texts provided a type of learning situated through their life-worlds. From Lin's comments, I surmised that the seminars resonated with her students because they imbued a personal nature, established by the presenters' authenticity.

To summarize, based on transcript excerpts from across the interviews, Geena, Grace, and Lin's comments suggested that attending the web seminars and hearing the scholar's voice and/or viewing the web seminar presentation seemed to help students better grasp the topic or concept

because their learning was authentically situated within the speaker's real experiences. This was something that the participants could not offer in their courses alone. Further, disrupting the notion of the scholar (as perceived by Lin) seemed to reduce the distance they felt and helped them better relate to his presentation.

Reflection on Web Seminars as Critical Praxis

In terms of value, Geena, Grace, and Lin all three identified GCLR web seminars as having the potential to encourage alternative perspectives about literacy through reflection, which can be an initial step toward transformation and critical praxis. Each participant, however, explained this differently. This value also related to why the participants used the web seminars in their courses, which was to offer their pre-/in-service teachers access to broader perspectives about literacy.

Geena. While Geena did not state specific instances of students experiencing a shift in thinking as a result of attending the web seminar, she did see the potential. Geena supported the idea of teachers as reflective practitioners as she explained in the following excerpt:

Well, because [reflection] allows for you to reconsider an act or a position, and it allows deeper concentration of whatever is going on, whether it was reflecting on a lesson or reflecting on some learning. It's an opportunity to kind of step back and take another look at what just happened. (mid-point interview, October 27, 2014)

Across the three interviews, I asked Geena if she could share some of her students' overall reactions or what they took away from the web seminars. Since she gave students until the end of the semester to submit their reflections by the end of the semester, Geena told me that she had not yet assessed them; therefore, she wasn't quite sure of their overall reactions or connections they might have made. Since Geena told me that students submit their reflections online using Desire2Learn, the university's platform, as a follow-up question, I asked if the students were able

to read one another's reflections. She indicated that the students did not share them with each other.

During our final interview, however, Geena commented that the meaning that students took away from the web seminar depended on the topic and how it related to the course content. In the below excerpt Geena expounds on this idea:

Like when you're teaching, you don't know what's going to resonate with students and what's not going to resonate with them. You have ideas about what you want to cover, but they come in with their own agendas too. The one thing that you said might lead them on a particular path or the one web seminar that they attend might lead them on a particular path, but you never can be sure what's going to resonate. (final interview, November 17, 2014)

Geena also thought that when the web seminar topics were applicable to students' own teaching situations, those presentations might invoke more of a shift. She provided the following example, based on the third web seminar with Dr. David Berliner:

For example, the reason I think Berliner was so successful is because he was very clear in his message and he resonated with anybody who was listening in on that webinar. So, I feel like the students walk away from that sharing some of that information the next day in their schools because everybody can think and talk about the relationship between poverty and school. And people who are currently working in classrooms know that relationship intimately—but policymakers, district people—nobody's talking about it in the way that he was talking about it. And so I feel like those are the kinds of seminars that really kind of are, you know, somewhat more transformative for the person listening. (Geena, final interview, November 14, 2014)

Incidentally, Geena emailed me approximately one month later, sharing a general statement about her students' reflections. Below is an excerpt taken from that email:

From my memory, the students shared some of their learning from the seminar, how they thought it was important, happy that they attended.... I think the result of your questions has pushed me to be more intentional with the seminars as PD or as course learning. I will likely be more directive with the students in terms of what to focus on as well as provide additional readings to prepare the students for the speaker. This I think was made apparent as we talked.... My students didn't have enough background to fully engage or appreciate the speaker. (Geena, email correspondence, December 19, 2014)

These comments suggest that by virtue of engaging in the interview questions, which prompted her to articulate her own stance to herself and to me, Geena seemed to have her own transformation as a reflective practitioner. She thought she needed to be more purposeful in how she used the web seminars, which in her opinion would better support student learning.

Geena's comments, taken as data from interview transcripts and her email correspondence, suggested that she saw the potential of the web seminars to affect a change in thinking. While she did not observe any of her students' displaying such a shift, she did, however, acknowledge that particular topics likely resonated or not depending on their applicability to her students' current teaching situation. Further, that she herself experienced a moment of clarity about how she used the web seminars suggests the importance of reflection also for teacher educators who integrate professional development venues into their courses, such as GCLR web seminars.

Grace. Reflection held an important position in Grace's literacy courses. She identified several instances in which her students explained a shift in their understandings about literacy that resulted from their web seminar experience. According to Grace, the student reflections gave her

“the privilege of witnessing their [the students’] thinking within ‘Ah ha!’ moments in their own transformation into an educator” (initial interview, October 2, 2014). I asked her to share with me some of those “ah ha” moments that impacted her. In particular, Grace noted a shift in thinking about digital technology that many of her pre-service teachers discussed in their reflections after attending Dr. Beach’s web seminar that focused on digital composing. She stated “I think my big takeaway after reading their reflections was I felt like their response to Dr. Beach’s web seminar seemed to have more of a dispositional shift than others of their responses” (Grace, mid-point interview, October 23, 2014). That these comments came from students in an undergraduate course in which the course itself was designed and specifically focused on 21st century literacy pedagogy and practice and was similar to Dr. Beach’s presentation topic. This correlation of course and web seminar topic again implies the importance of intentional and purposeful integration of web seminars into teacher education literacy courses for optimal professional development.

During our conversations, Grace identified several instances in which her students shared in their reflections a change in thinking about literacy, which she attributed to her students’ attendance at a web seminar. She told a story about one of her teacher candidates who did not see the value of using technology in everyday life, much less as an instructional tool for teaching literacy. Grace explained that his fear of technology and limited knowledge about it prevented him from using his cell phone, even after Grace showed him how to operate it. Grace told this story to give a clear understanding of this student’s reluctance to be open to using technology, explaining, “You know, so he’s there, at that level. And he has been one of my students who really has been like, ‘You know, I just don’t get why we can’t keep using paper and pencil’” (Grace, mid-point interview, October 23, 2014). However, after attending the GCLR web seminar in which Dr. Richard Beach addressed using digital technology for teaching and learning, Grace explained that

this teacher candidate began to show a shift in his thinking about using technology as an instructional tool:

And in his response to Dr. Beach, he finally was kind of conceding some points. He's like, 'Okay. I can see how this could help with collaboration. And I can see the benefits of being able to think together and write together and using the structures that Dr. Beach talked about'. So it, for me, I kind of was like, 'Well yay! That's important'. I mean ... just to have a dispositional shift like that is my big goal. (Grace, mid-point interview, October 23, 2014)

Grace recognized that although this student's thinking had slightly transformed, she nevertheless saw it as a change that resulted from attending Dr. Beach's web seminar.

When I asked her about other "ah ha" moments, Grace shared a breakthrough that some of her students had about using digital technology to teach literacy skills:

I saw several students have kind of an "Ah ha!" of realizing that we can accomplish with digital tools the things that we are trying to accomplish with paper and pencil. You know, that just because the format is different doesn't mean we can't teach ... what it means to be a writer and what it means to be a reader. (Grace, mid-point interview, October 23, 2014)

Grace indicated that she especially found these student reactions legitimizing because many of her students throughout the semester had not seen the instructional value of using digital technologies.

Based on Grace's observation of her students' reflections, she conveyed their enthusiasm about using the digital technology strategies that Dr. Beach presented. She further commented that overall the students made two major connections. First, they realized that they could integrate literacy strategies into any subject "to help them [their students] communicate in ways that

enhances their learning” (Grace, mid-point interview, October 23, 2014). Second, because the digital literacy strategies fostered collaboration and student inquiry, the students recognized such approaches as a redistribution of power from the teacher as the sole knowledge producer to the students as collaborators in their own learning “in a way that just me [the teacher educator] being the sole knowledge-keeper is not going to do” (Grace, mid-point interview, October 23, 2014).

That is, some of the teacher candidates came to understand the value of students constructing their own knowledge, unlike in a banking or deficit approach (Freire, 1970/1996). Grace stated,

It's really exciting when you see their enthusiasm about those kinds of ideas, and for them to be able to name it and say, “This is actually a really a big shift in power in the classroom and who is a knower in the classroom”. And for them to be able to take on that kind of language is really exciting to me. (Grace, mid-point interview, October 23, 2014)

The above excerpt suggests the potential of GCLR web seminar presentations to encourage students’ critical thinking and reflection, which could then lead to a shift in their understanding about literacy.

Lin. Like Geena and Grace, Lin also conveyed the importance that she thought reflection held. Lin spoke about the web seminars in relation to her students developing broader perspectives that helped shape their own dispositions toward literacy and literacy instruction. She explained that she used the required web seminar reflection that her pre-service teachers submitted as an assessment of their understanding and application of the information learned from the web seminar:

I assess their knowledge through their reflection and how they can apply the information in urban schools. So that's the part I see that my students are not only being a reflective teacher, but also seeing things from different perspective and different lenses. (final interview, November 18, 2014)

Lin further stated that the web seminars gave her students a broader range of perspectives to think about literacy “outside this small university” and that “by asking my students’ opinion of the web seminar and being able to have a more holistic view of literacy instruction, I think that’s something—for me, it’s reflection” (final interview, November 18, 2014).

Also, Lin talked about the web seminars’ potential to affect a shift in thinking, especially about a US-centric way of knowing, “I want students to have a broader sense of literacy development across the world, not just here in the US” (Lin, final interview, November 18, 2014). For Lin, it was important that her students also develop a critical approach to teaching literacy as they prepare to become urban teachers:

Being a teacher in an urban setting, you have limited resources in your classroom.

Often times ... students come from a poverty community, so the web seminar really helps my students to see things from a critical lens and also develop their social justice stance... So, I think throughout the web seminar experience, they really examine their beliefs and practices in urban schools. Or, through these web seminars, they redefine their positionality in terms of being urban teachers. For them, it’s no longer teacher-centered... It’s about how they can facilitate their students. (final interview, November 18, 2014)

Lin stated that including the web seminars in her course helped students develop a more diverse literacy perspective. In turn, this broader view facilitated the pre-service teachers in developing their beliefs about literacy and literacy instruction, particularly in relation to becoming an urban teacher.

Based on data from participant interview transcripts, Geena, Grace, and Lin identified specific instances in which the GCLR web seminars led to a transformation in thinking. For Geena,

although she did not indicate transformative learning on the part of her in-service teachers, she did share her personal moment of clarity related to her pedagogical approach to incorporating the web seminars. Perhaps the very inability to identify specific moments in which her students had gained deeper understanding from their attendance at the web seminars, in part, led Geena to reconsider her pedagogical practice. On the other hand, Grace and Lin did identify specific incidences of their students' broader understanding of critical literacy issues. Similarly, both teacher educators pedagogically related the web seminar topics to their course content in ways that broadened their teacher candidates' knowledge and perspectives about literacy. Data in support of this shift transformative thinking, therefore, suggested that the teacher educators who intentionally linked their course content and instructional approaches with the web seminars noted specific incidences where their teacher candidates gained broader perspectives about literacy.

Web Seminars Afforded Important Online Teacher Professional Development

In response to the value of the web seminars in their literacy courses, the participants identified Blackboard Collaborate as having two significant values in terms of providing online professional development. First, they particularly mentioned the affordance of how their pre-/in-service teachers could use the chat box to ask the presenter, an expert literacy scholar, a question and then have him/her answer it on the spot. Second, the platform supported authentic, learner-centered professional development

Geena. As a value of the web seminar platform, Geena identified the ability to come together across time and space to provide her in-service teachers live access to internationally-recognized scholars in the field of literacy “that we wouldn’t have sitting in our classes” (mid-point interview, October 27, 2014) and “to hear some of the latest thinking from these folks” (final interview, November 17, 2014). She also noted that “it seems like the real value comes in, the real

difference between these sorts of seminars and a video that I get off the Annenberg Learning Site is that it's happening in real time" (Geena, mid-point interview, October 27, 2014).

Geena particularly named how the synchronous feature allowed students to post their questions and have the scholar respond to them live, at the end of the seminar:

I like the question and answer period, because I think people are asking some really important questions. But the presentation is important because the questions are coming from the presentation so it's not just a free-for-all of, you know, just random questions ... I think that's just what makes this a little different and a little bit more compelling and interesting in that it does allow for questions to be asked and answered in the moment.
(final interview, November 17, 2014)

Geena also viewed the platform's synchronous chat tool as a feature that allowed web seminar participants to observe other people's thinking about a particular literacy topic, since the chat comments were visible to everyone in the seminar:

So the chance to ask questions, real-time questions are important, and the opportunity that the participants have to kind of chat back and forth and do some of their out-loud thinking that other people can see, I think really changes the quality of the seminar. So you're not just watching a video, but it's really the real-time aspect that makes a difference. (Geena, mid-point interview, October 27, 2014)

The above comments indicated that Geena saw value for using the web seminars because the synchronous chat supported collaborative discourse exchanges among participants. Also, this feature afforded participants to view in-the-moment thinking of other web seminar participants', who most likely included pre-service and in-service teachers engaging in meaningful dialogue

about critical literacy issues. As a caveat, Geena thought that the web seminars provided valuable opportunities, but that the students had to take up these opportunities.

Geena further saw value in the platform as a venue that allowed her students to “gain a familiarity with doing professional development online and using online access as just another mode for learning something” (midpoint interview, October 27, 2014). In respect to this comment, she conveyed that while the teachers used technology and had access to it, they did not use it in their own classrooms “to extend knowledge” or “to investigate something” (Geena, mid-point interview, October 27, 2014). In terms of the web seminars, they gave students an example of how to integrate technology as an instruction tool in their own practice as classroom teachers. In the following excerpt, Geena explained her thinking:

So partly what the web seminars do [is] help students just use the technology – like oh, there’s this kind of platform that maybe they could use with a group of kids you know in another part of the country or across the globe or just get them familiar with this idea that we can do a lot of learning and sharing across platforms. (midpoint interview, October 27, 2014)

I understood Geena’s comment to suggest that the web seminars served as an exemplar for her students on two levels. First, the seminars modeled for her students how to participate in online teacher professional development. Second, they provided an exemplar of how to use technology as a tool for learning in their own practice as teachers.

In comparison to other online professional development venues, Geena again pointed to the real-time collaboration that the platform offered. For example, during the mid-point interview, she stated the following:

And I think that is the real value of the platform that is being used. So it's not just a video of a scholar talking, but because it's real time, it gives a sense of one, immediacy, and two, it allows for genuine questions to be asked. (Geena, mid-point interview, October 27, 2014)

Geena reiterated the platform's collaborative value during the final interview when she stated, "What's different about it I think, what makes it better is the interactive nature of it, so it's not just going to a YouTube channel and watching somebody talk" (final interview, November 17, 2014).

Grace. Similar to Geena, Grace also identified the platform's ability to make top scholars accessible to her students in real-time. She explained,

I think the format, at least as it's being used in organizations like the National Council of Teachers of English and Global Conversations, I think, is really building on the fact that we can collapse time and space so that we can intimately sit with these thought leaders and hear them talk for an hour". (Grace, final interview, November 14, 2014)

Like Geena, Grace explained how the web seminars differed from other professional learning venues. For instance, she noted that having such direct access to top leaders in their field through the web seminar very much differed from traditional school or district level teacher professional development. First, she said that due to cost, each school doesn't have its own expert from the field come in. Grace pointed, as well, to the prescriptive nature of traditional professional development, stating,

And so they have people trained at the publishers and quipped with "Okay, here's what you say. And when people say what about this? Then you say [this]". That is to my understanding, much more of how that works, and then the representatives from the publisher, the representatives from whatever program organization then goes to the schools

and that's who you have an opportunity to meet maybe. (final interview, November 14, 2014)

The above comment suggested that Grace valued the GCLR web seminar platform because it allowed people to come together in one space at the same time, provided her and her students live, direct access to the experts in the field of literacy.

Grace, too, pointed out that many of her students saw value in using the web seminars because they could pose questions in the chat box and observe the collaborative chat exchanges among the other participants:

There were some who were like, 'Wow, that is really cool. It is nice to be able to know I can type questions in and read other people's questions'. And when Dr. Beach would pause and kind of give folks an opportunity to reflect together, they were really struck by that.

(mid-point interview, October 23, 2014)

As a platform that fostered collaborative learning through discourse exchanges and "pauses" using the synchronous chat tool, Grace thought her students gained a greater appreciation for using digital technology as a pedagogical tool:

Watching other people respond, and you know, I think that was kind of important with the Richard Beach one again. I think it was really helpful to my undergraduates to see some of the comments from participants because I feel like so much of my work with them this semester has simply been to legitimize digital literacies. And now here's a webinar on digital literacies. (Grace, final interview, November 14, 2014)

Grace further explained that having her students attend the web seminar with Dr. Beach who spoke on digital literacies also helped her feel more validated as a teacher educator. She explained this dynamic in the following:

I feel like I want them to gain a further sense of legitimacy of what we were talking about in class, like it's not just Dr. [Carl] [slight laugh]. And I think maybe that's some of my self-consciousness of just being such a young academic and a young professor and I have students who are older than me all the time. And so maybe part of it for me is I want them to realize it's not just some young lady's ideas about things, that this is a legitimate thing. (Grace, mid-point interview, October 23, 2014)

As a valuable asset to her literacy courses, Grace also stated that she viewed the web seminars as an exemplar of authentic, meaningful professional development for her students. She wanted her teacher candidates to recognize GCLR web seminars as “a vehicle to engage in that level of meaningful, personal, inquiry-based teacher development beyond graduation” (mid-point interview, October 23, 2014). She also commented,

I feel like it models something that I hope that they will continue to do once they're out of our program, which is to locate communities like this, if not this particular one, that is centered around interests and curiosities and inquiry related to their teaching with thought leaders. (final interview, November 14, 2014)

Grace opposed a one-size fits all teacher professional development because she did not think its purposes served teachers in a way that fostered inquiry. She explained her views in the following excerpt taken from her final interview transcript:

There's the stuff that comes pre-packaged in schools, and they're delivered by an administration or by somebody who gets paid thousands of dollars by an administration. And that kind of professional development, in my mind, is very much scripted, and it's not very interested in teachers' questions about their practice or teachers' questions about

what's new or what their children might be able to engage in, or those kinds of things.

(Grace, mid-point interview)

Grace further pointed to the web seminars as an exemplar of teacher-centered professional development for her students. By integrating the seminars into her literacy courses, Grace provided a situated learning experience for her students wherein they participated in live, authentic professional learning. She explained her thinking in the following:

Looking at these pre-service and in-service teachers more holistically, I feel like it's also incredibly important for them to simply have some idea of what it [meaningful professional development] looks like once they're outside of the walls of the academy... to be able to know how they might reach out to communities of thinkers to ask questions and to get answers for their own practice down the road. (mid-point interview, November 14, 2014)

Data analyzed from Grace's mid-point and final interview transcripts suggests that to her, integrating the GCLR web seminars as a course component was valuable. She believed they provided her teacher candidates a model of meaningful and purposeful professional development situated around course concepts. Grace also found the validation she had been seeking from her students as a result of attending the web seminar with Dr. Richard Beach, a world-renowned literacy scholar, who spoke in support of digital literacies. Integrating and requiring students to attend assigned seminars became a type of situated learning activity whereby students authentically gained experience by participating in real-time professional development.

Lin. Just as Geena and Grace, Lin also identified the web seminar platform's ability to provide live access to literacy scholars. During our mid-point interview, I asked Lin what the web seminars offered in terms of professional development that could not be accomplished in her course alone. She identified access to "keynote speakers from our literacy discipline" and diverse

literacy perspectives (Lin, mid-point interview, November 4, 2014). Lin further explained her thoughts in the below excerpt:

First of all, we don't have the luxury to attend those conferences that require you to travel from state to state, or we don't have that luxury for all our students to attend the conference or seminars without paying a registration fee Also, it provides different perspectives and a rich learning environment outside of our traditional classroom. (mid-point interview, November 4, 2014)

During our final interview, she again mentioned the value of having the seminars available to her students.

Like Geena and Grace, Lin also shared that her students enjoyed the synchronous chat of the live web seminars. Specifically, she conveyed that her students reacted with interest to the other web seminar participants' comments and often identified something that another participant wrote, often mentioning it in their post-seminar reflections. Lin stated, "They were so fascinated by other participants, that they were able to use their own teaching experience and provide samples [like], 'Oh, this is how I incorporate this information in my class or oh, there's another way you can do it'" (initial interview, October 2, 2014).

Lin continued by describing how she viewed the web seminars as an alternative platform to traditional professional development:

It's user-friendly, student-centered, and I think it's very different than other traditional learning formats. Like for example, you go to a workshop or go to a conference, it's very structured in some way, but these web seminars, they provide some kind of flexibility to many of my students. Most are non-traditional students they have family, they have kids, they have their full-time jobs. Actually, Sunday night is probably the only time they can

catch up with their homework, or for example, have this professional development opportunity. So those are the unique features that other conference or other type of learning experience cannot offer. (Lin, mid-point interview, November 4, 2014)

Based on the above excerpt, Lin saw the value of the web seminars' online platform for providing access to professional development at a time convenient for her students who, as non-traditional students, found Sunday evenings a convenient time to engage in professional development.

Finally, Lin expressed her feelings about GCLR web seminars as a platform for professional development unlike traditional outlets. She especially saw it as a professional development venue that supported her students, more than seventy percent of which came from socio-economically, culturally-linguistic, and academically challenged backgrounds, "I think there are so many different ways that these web seminars or GCLR really reach out to students coming from disadvantaged backgrounds and really make the resources available for everyone" (Lin, mid-point interview, November 4, 2014). For example, she noted how the PowerPoint slides that the speaker used during the presentation made following and comprehending the presentation much easier for her students. Lin also pointed to the handouts that presenters sometimes made available to participants and the ancillary resources on the GCLR website, such as each speaker's biography, presentation overview, and short bibliography of authored texts, many of which have direct links. She named the archived web seminars as a resource for her students who had documented learning challenges, one with dyslexia and to another, who was an English Language Learner and spoke Russian as his/her first language. Lin reiterated, "How this web seminar is structured in some ways really promotes or enhances their [students'] learning" (mid-point interview, November 4, 2014). Lin continued,

So again, there's always different ways for my students to develop their own professional knowledge or their discourses, but the web seminar provides them a different platform.

And to see that in class, when we talk about deficit thinking, or when we talk about critical thinking, critical pedagogy, or when we talk about educational equality or the issue of race in the web seminar, they were able to make the connection and relate themselves to this particular group. (mid-point interview, November 4, 2014)

Lin's above comment seems to iterate that she viewed the GCLR web seminars as a professional development venue with the following characteristics: accessible, cost-effective, convenient, and learner-centered. For example, Lin noted that GCLR web seminars not only offered professional development that was accessible to her students. Further, web seminars helped her students more fully understand the power of particular discourses often being privileged over others since they identified themselves as the "other." That is, the web seminar project itself, served as an exemplar for Lin's students for how to enact social justice.

Summary

As literacy teacher educators, Geena, Grace, and Lin saw the web seminar platform as a valuable asset in their courses because it gave their teacher education students the following professional development opportunities: live access to world-renowned literacy scholars, dialogic collaboration with participants via live chat, and an alternative approach to teacher professional development. The real value for Lin was that the web seminar platform gave her pre-service teacher educators access to professional development opportunities that they otherwise would not have. The online platform gives teacher candidates access to other viewpoints, to learn from experts in the field, and to connect with others interested in literacy. Global access to literacy experts and other participants, which also included other pre-/in-service teachers, would not be

possible in the class alone. Based on the participants' responses, they found value in integrating professional development web seminars into their stand-alone literacy courses.

Professionalism Emerged and Offered Access to a Community of Learners

“To me it's not even all about the content. It's about the form. It's the professionalization. It's the ability to spontaneously pull together with a group of like-minded thinkers and wonderers for a little while” (Grace, final interview, November 14, 2014).

The fifth finding suggested that the participants saw the web seminars as a means to generate professionalism in students and open access to a language and literacy community of learners. Various comments that Geena, Grace, and Lin made throughout the interviews suggested that they viewed the web seminars in relation to the concept of community. All participants also noted the particular discourse used in the web seminars in relation to their students' learning. Grace and Lin, in particular, identified specific social practices that they saw as representative of a community including a sense of belonging, shared discourse, and social practices.

Geena. Early into our interviews, Geena mentioned her desire for students “to feel like they're connected, they have some sort of a relationship and are connected with these ... amazing scholars” (Geena, initial interview, September 29, 2014). Geena's comment suggested that she saw her students' participation in the GCLR web seminars as a way to become a part of a larger group of like-minded individuals and within the context of a relationship involving the larger language and literacy community. She also noted, “I want them to feel like they are, you know, in the know of what's going on in the field that is not necessarily being shared with them at the district level or the school level” (Geena, final interview, November 17, 2014). For Geena, by attending the GCLR web seminars, her students would be connected to literacy-related topics beyond narrow, privileged understandings.

Learning to use the discourse of the field, Geena stated, was another way she saw the web seminars as a way to professionalize her teacher candidates. As previously mentioned in this chapter, Geena noted that the role of the seminars was to provide “more opportunities to engage in the discourse of the field” (mid-point interview, October 27, 2014). Then during our final interview, she reiterated that “just listening to the language that the scholar is using” helps students pick up the discourse (final interview, November 17, 2014). I again brought up the topic about discourse because I wanted to understand why Geena felt so passionately about her students using the language of the field:

Christi: You mentioned last time that one of the values of these web seminars for your students you thought was that it introduces them to the discourse of the field.

Geena: Right.

Christi: Why is that important, do you think?

Geena: Because I'm highly committed to the idea that I want my students to be really smart in the classrooms that they're working in. I want them to be theoretically grounded, and I want them to be knowledgeable about current tensions or issues—particularly my masters students—to really expose them to what researchers in the field are saying and thinking because often, if they are classroom teachers, they're not getting that sort of language or that sort of talk. (final interview, November 17, 2014)

She further explained that using the academic language of the field professionalized the teaching field as a whole:

I want the teacher candidates to operate in academic language. I want them to be in the researcher's mindset. That's important to me because I think it pushes the field forward, the

field meaning the educational field in general. So if I'm trying to argue against, I suppose, some of the statistics and some of the pervasive ideas that teachers are not very smart, that if you're not doing well in college you go into the teacher education program, and I really want to argue against that (Geena, November 17, 2014).

I understood Geena to mean that by learning the academic discourse teachers then have a way of thinking about and theorizing particular aspects of educational practice that positions them as legitimate and knowledgeable about their profession. In addition, she felt strongly that the ability to use this particular discourse added credibility to teachers' arguments against status quo notions of teaching and learning.

Geena also thought "teachers get sucked into prescriptive programs so readily because they don't have a way to talk about the theory that they think actually makes more sense" (final interview, November 17, 2014). In other words, using the discourse of the field provided a way for teachers to discuss alternative literacy practices that may be more theoretically appropriate.

Grace. Grace also wanted her teacher education students to feel a sense of belonging to a group dedicated to literacy outside of her classroom. She stated, "I can't offer an international community of people" (final interview, November 14, 2014). She further explained, "I think simply even just having that initial entrée into the spontaneous web-based seminar is just really helpful for helping them imagine how they're going to reach out and sustain community in their own professional life" (Grace, final interview, November 14, 2014). This comment suggested Grace's desire for her students to develop a sense of the larger language and literacy community and to develop a connection, as Geena had iterated, with experts in the field of literacy.

When we met for the final interview, I asked Grace if she saw a sense of a collaboration or community. She responded, "Oh, yeah, absolutely! And what's interesting is I feel like that's

entirely what it is” (Grace, final interview, November 14, 2014). Grace also highlighted the global aspect that the seminars afforded her students:

And so I think the webinars allow them to kind of revel in that professionalization and that legitimacy of being part of a larger group. You know, that we're in our little tiny classroom at [our university] doing their MAT but that there are people in Ohio and people in New Zealand and people in New York who are also thinking about similar ideas because I just saw them on the map at this webinar. (final interview, November 14, 2014)

Based on the above excerpt, Grace saw the value of the web seminars of affording her students a chance to experience what it’s like to be part of a professional group.

Further, Grace’s idea of the web seminars as an “initial entrée” intimated the notion of learning how to participate in a community (final interview, November 14, 2014). Grace explained that she thought the web seminars created possibilities for participants to collaborate with other like-minded individuals. She said, “I feel like it helps them imagine ways of connecting with other teachers since ... one of the first things in every webinar is click on where you are in the world while you’re viewing this” (Grace, mid-point interview, November 4, 2014).

Like Geena, Grace also thought the web seminars connected her pre-/in-service teachers to the academic language of the field. In particular, Grace mentioned that she observed some of her students using critical literacy discourse in their written reflections. For example, in response to Dr. Beach’s seminar, some students showed growth in their understanding of digital literacies, which they illustrated by using the academic language of the field. Grace stated,

It's really exciting when you see their enthusiasm about those kinds of ideas, and for them to be able to name it and say, “This is actually a really a big shift in power in the classroom

and who is a knower in the classroom”. And for them to be able to take on that kind of language is really exciting to me. (mid-point interview, October 23, 2014)

Grace’s above statement illustrated that after participating in the web seminars, the teacher candidates took on critical literacy discourse to reflect about their newfound understanding of using technology as a digital tool in the classroom. Second, the students applied this academic language as they described their own transformation in thinking about the power in classrooms residing with the teacher and that some literacies get privileged over others in classrooms, in this case, other text formats over digital literacy.

Again during our final interview, Grace had taken up the idea of the web seminars as a way for her students to learn how to engage in professional development. Within the scope of this conversation, she also mentioned that even beyond the web seminars as a model of professional development, by participating in the presentations, students could “listen to the discourse of how people talk about their ideas in a professional, academic kind of setting” (Grace, final interview, November 14, 2014). For Grace, the web seminars provided an avenue to professionalize teacher candidates into the language and literacy field. And, they learned this by observing the more experienced participants, which reflected the idea of the GCLR web seminars as a community where novice teachers could step in and learn from experts in their field, as they simultaneously engaged in professional development.

Lin. From the onset of our first interview, Lin used the word “community” to describe the GCLR web seminar gatherings (initial interview, October 2, 2014), as when she stated, “In order for me and my students to have professional development opportunities, the web seminar provides us a different platform to be connected to the community” (mid-point interview, November 4, 2014). In the following excerpt, Lin expounded on her understanding of *community*:

So in our previous interview, we talked about community in different formats — like community in the school or community at the, when they attend the web seminar, there's conversation between the participants and it's another way that the students see other in-service teachers, other pre-service teachers, or other scholars. They are involved in the conversation in that particular web seminar. (final interview, November 18, 2014)

She also explained that her students who attended the September web seminar had commented that they felt like the participants already knew each other since they shared greetings with each other. And, the participants seemed to know the names of the other participants. Lin said, “So, you not only obtain the information, but also you got to know other people” (mid-point interview, November 4, 2014). These comments supported Lin’s previous statements made during her mid-point interview in that the discursive interactions that occurred among novice and more experienced teachers and the presenter were suggestive of the apprenticeship that often occurs within learning networks such as communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

As for the academic language of the field, Lin noted how the web seminars were “about a very specific discourse, and oftentimes, we use our own language” (mid-point interview, November 4, 2014). These comments intimated an image of a literacy community with a distinct academic language. She further explained that at first because her pre-service teachers did not know the language of the literacy field very well, her students struggled with understanding the content. During our final interview, Lin stated, “At the beginning ... they’re not quite sure if they can understand the content, but after these three different web seminars, some of my students actually attend all three of them, they feel very comfortable about the information presented” (final interview, November 18, 2014). This comment suggests that as Lin’s students gained experience

participating in the web seminars, their understanding of the content did as well, perhaps because they became more familiar with the discourse.

Because of the social exchanges that occurred during the web seminars, Lin viewed the participants as a community. She explained,

One thing I notice is that first of all, it's very user-friendly. It's a professional group, but at the same time it seems like it provides a very welcoming environment for the audience to ask questions, not only to address to a keynote speaker, but you can tell, the audience, they were able to provide two-way communication to each other. Some people said, "Hey, yeah, I thought about the same question. How about x, y, and z? That's what I'm doing in my classroom. Does it work for you?" So you do see the audience, they communicate back and forth. And sometimes, for my students when they make those comments, when they [the audience] pose those questions, they actually think those are valuable to their own experience. And the other thing is, like I said, it's a welcoming environment not only because of the topic or the keynote speaker and the participants. Also, I think of the web seminar organizer, I think at the beginning, when you asked people [to point] to a key point where you come from, that's another way to help your audience feel that, okay, they are connected, or they feel like they are part of the community, or they are a part of the group. So again, those little, like tiny little gestures, help your audience feel like it's not [] environment because you know it is, it's about literacy, it's about a very specific discourse.

(mid-point interview, November 4, 2014)

Based on data taken from Lin's interview transcripts, I understood her to perceive the GCLR web seminars as a community of learners for several reasons: established social norms, use of a shared discourse, and interaction and collaboration through reciprocal discourse exchanged as chat

messages. Further, students who attended more than one web seminar became more comfortable “after these three different web seminars... they [the students] feel very comfortable about the information presented” (final interview, November 18, 2014).

Summary

Data excerpted from the interview transcripts of all three participants indicated that they thought the GCLR web seminars provided a platform to professionalize their pre-/in-service teachers by giving them a space to learn to use the academic language of their field and to experience engaging in authentic professional development. They also viewed the seminar gatherings as a type of learning community for several reasons. First, Geena, Grace, and Lin recognized the space as a community of professionals who shared a common interest in literacy. Second, web seminar participants used a particular academic language that identified them as a group who shared a common language. Third, they described the web seminar space as a comfortable, friendly environment in which participants could exchange ideas and ask questions.

Summary of Key Ideas

From data collected across initial, mid-point, and final interview transcripts and supported in part by the participants’ course syllabi, four key findings emerged. First, participants’ past experiences and connections with web seminars are important in making decisions about integration of GCLR web seminars into teacher education courses. The participants’ desire for their students to have access to world-renowned literacy scholars and broader perspectives to consider literacy also factored into this decision. Second, how participants used GCLR web seminars related to the purpose and role they served in the literacy courses. Participants who intentionally connected the web seminar topics to their course content and instruction identified specific instances in which their students reported a shift in consciousness about critical literacy

issues. Third, participants used specific instructional practices with web seminars for authentic professional development. These included discussion and reflection. Finally, teacher educators value integrating web seminars. As texts, they allowed for authentic, situated learning. They also provided opportunities for critical praxis, a platform for online teacher professional development, and a platform to generate professionalism in students and open access to a language and literacy community of learners.

In the next chapter, I discuss this study's four findings in relation to the research questions. I also provide implications for practice about integrating professional development web seminars into teacher education courses. I conclude by identifying complexities of the study and considerations for future research.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This study sought to answer the following questions: (a) Why do literacy teacher educators use online professional development web seminars within their courses? (b) How do literacy teacher educators use online professional development web seminars within their courses, especially those presented by GCLR? and (c) What value do literacy teacher educators see in working with the web seminars in their classes, especially those presented by GCLR?

From data analysis of participants' semi-structured interviews and supported by their course syllabi, five findings emerged in relation to teacher educators' use of professional development web seminars, especially those such as GCLR:

1. Past experiences and open access led to web seminar integration.
2. Purpose and intent of use related to how web seminar integration occurred.
3. Specific instructional practices fostered authentic professional development.
4. Web seminars offered authentic and situated online professional development.
5. Professionalism emerged and offered access to a community of learners.

In the following sections, I discuss the role of online professional development guided by this study's research questions and through the lens of critical situated learning.

Open Access Is Critical When Integrating Web Seminars

Researchers have illuminated that teacher educators are often torn because they feel stifled from using what they believe are best practices for supporting the development of their student teachers in lieu of mandated standards and curricula (Cabaroglu & Tillema, 2011; Grossman, 2005, Loughran & Russell, 2002; Tillema & Kremer-Hayon, 2005). To help teacher educators negotiate these tensions, today's professional development need not be limited solely to university

preparation programs or delivered only in the context of stand-alone professional development venues. Rather, extrinsic professional development may be integrated as a component of teacher education courses, making it a new approach to blended learning, which eliminates the either-or thinking that situates traditional professional development. Examining professional development web seminars through the concept of open access helps explain why participants integrated the web seminars in their stand-alone teacher education courses in relation to (a) their own experiences with GCLR, (b) a desire for their students to be connected to world-renowned literacy scholars, and (c) wanting their students to have broader perspectives from which to consider literacy.

From their own past experiences and connections with GCLR, Geena, Grace, and Lin determined to integrate the web seminars because they provided open access to globally-recognized literacy experts who shared a variety of perspectives about literacy. All three participants, for example, had attended the web seminars over a period of several years and had gained a familiarity with the overall GCLR project, becoming vested in it as an effective online professional development venue. Their own social and cultural experiences as web seminar participants, in part, supported why they chose to integrate the web seminars (Brown et al., 1989). In particular, Geena's allegiance to her friend, the founder of the GCLR project was significant in why she incorporated the web seminars in her courses. Both Grace and Lin shared a fondness for the web seminars, starting from when they were doctoral students. That the teacher educators supported the GCLR web seminars with such fidelity could be a contributing factor to how effective professional development emerges and sustains itself.

Through open and live access, the web seminars afforded the participants an opportunity to connect their students to literacy scholars that otherwise would have been impossible in the teacher education courses alone. All three participants required their students to attend at least one GCLR

web seminar. Geena and Lin, though, gave their students a choice of which seminar they would like to attend, which past research has highlighted as an affordance of online professional development since teachers choose the learning that fits their needs (Foote, 2013). That the participants in this study required their students to attend the web seminars opens the possibility that their experience, if a positive one, could lead them to attend future professional development web seminars (Brooks, 2012). Providing favorable professional development experiences, such as GCLR web seminars that afford open access, the opportunity to collaborate with literacy experts and other pre-and in-service teachers, and a space to raise a question or voice a concern, create favorable conditions that may encourage teachers to want to engage in professional development.

On the other hand, the fact that Grace selected the web seminars for her students also provides important pedagogical considerations for how teacher educators integrate professional development web seminars. Choosing which seminars students would attend allowed her to purposefully plan instruction situated around specific GCLR web seminar topics and dates. Simultaneously creating classroom learning opportunities that coincided with the live presentations in which scholars presented their lived experiences made conditions fruitful for authentic, situated learning. Latta and Kim (2010) argue, “Investing in lived curriculum entails purposefully creating contexts for professional learning. Teacher educators must assume leadership roles for supporting and advocating for the learning contexts that best enable lived curriculum within the particularities of given contexts” (p. 693). How Grace integrated the web seminars is characteristic of situated learning, that is, knowledge co-constructed through interaction within specific embedded activity (Borko, 2004; Brown et al., 1989; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Putnam & Borko, 2000).

Third, participants incorporated the open access web seminars within their courses, with the intent that the presentations would provide an avenue for their students to think more broadly

about literacy beyond that of prescribed curriculum and some one-size-fits-all mandated professional development. Since language, knowledge, and access are often privileged and speak to issues of power and dominance (Janks, 2000), having the live, open access GCLR web seminars as a space to learn from global literacy experts and others diversely located around the world challenges standardized practice about whose language and whose knowledge count. Yost, Sentner, & Forlenza-Bailey (2000) recommend that instructors of teacher education preparation programs prepare pre-service teachers to link educational ideology with experience in a way that encourages a broader view of the social implications inherent in establishing alternative ways of acting. Used within the context of their teacher education courses, the synchronous, open access web seminars served as a valuable resource that helped the participants bridge the gap between industrial notions of literacy by introducing pre/in-service teachers to an alternative professional development format that provided a space to consider dominant district/school level approaches. That Geena, Grace, and Lin integrated the web seminars to give their students access to world-renowned scholars who offered broader perspectives to think about literacy speaks to their desire to go against such dominant understandings (Janks, 2000). From a critical perspective, the reasons why Geena, Grace, and Lin integrated the web seminars speaks to their way of negotiating those tensions they felt about status quo ways of seeing and being as teachers (Freire, 1970/1996). Pushing against the grain and including the web seminars in their courses gave participants a way to disrupt mandated notions of teaching and learning. Further, indirectly, integrating the web seminars gave the three participants a voice about which topics their students would learn and a way to offer a variety of perspectives to consider literacy beyond those of the mainstream.

Knowledge of Technology Affords Significant Online Professional Development

In the past several decades, huge innovations have emerged as a result of technology development. All groups, young and old, are becoming technologically literate as a result of a range of experiences. Children have inspired their parents/grandparents to get smart phones to Facetime and Skype, while younger children are learning to read, write, and respond through touch and swipe technologies. Growing up with video games, surfing the Net, social networking, and other digital tools, today's generations, both old and new, think and learn differently. The tools of technology today are much more sophisticated than for previous generations of learners, but today's access and convenience of learning on demand allows all learners to be more comfortable using the newer technologies.

The educational-technological reformation has created tensions for other educators, many of whom were not brought up with or have not learned how to use the tools of technology (O'Brien, Aguinaga, & Hartshorne, 2011). O'Brien, Aguinaga, and Harshone (2011) state, "Many teacher educators involved in this transition may feel bombarded by the trends toward web-based learning" (p. 33). The first tenet of critical situated learning suggests that knowledge construction and learning result from and through our social and cultural interactions with others (Brown et al., 1989). From this lens, then, literacy teacher educators' own experiences as students, both prior to and during their teacher preparation coursework, most likely influenced their views toward technology and technology integration and the rationale for why they use technology mediums such as blogs, wikis, discussion boards, and web seminars in their preparation of teacher candidates and in-service teachers.

We must consider, therefore, that teacher educators whose experiences did not include a repertoire of more recent technological approaches may have a sharper learning trajectory (Brown,

2000). Understanding the participants' past experiences helps explain how they used a teacher professional development web seminar, such as GCLR, in several ways: (a) familiarity with technology supports integration into practice; (b) understanding that technology fits the learning of their students; and (c) ensuring that they also participated in working with technology as a part of professional development .

Grace and Lin, who illustrated more experience and felt at ease using technology-based instruction reported specific instances and/or examples of that use. Geena self-identified as rarely using technology as an instructional medium in her courses and named the GCLR web seminars as the only technology-integrated instruction she incorporated. Yet, she had the most combined experience as a teacher and teacher educator in comparison to Grace and Lin. In consideration of Lortie's (2002) *apprenticeship-of-observation* the idea that "we tend to teach the way we were taught", might be suggestive that perhaps the generation of classroom teachers and teacher educators whom taught Geena also did not pedagogically integrate technology. It would reason then, that perhaps Geena's familiarity and ease of using it as a mode of instruction might be different from the other two participants in this study who had more instructional technology experience and who shared a favorable disposition toward it. As Brown (2000) posited, teacher educators with less experience using technology in their teaching may have a greater learning curve than their technology-savvy counterparts, while at the same time they may very well have more experience as teacher educators. Interestingly, Geena also recognized that her in-service teachers, similar to herself, did not integrate technology with pedagogical intent. That is, her students' instructional application of technology mirrored Geena's own use of it in her courses. For teacher educators, then, understanding how and why they use particular technology underscores its significance for the teaching and learning that is intended to occur. It also helps us consider which

and whose purposes technology serves in the preparation and professional development of teachers (Janks, 2000).

The second factor related to explaining how teacher educators used the GCLR web seminars involved understanding how technology fit the learning of their students. Research confirms that for technology-integrated instruction to render the most benefits, it must be purposefully and pedagogically linked to the learning that is intended to occur (Freidhoff, 2008; Jelfs & Colbourn, 2002; Koehler & Mishra, 2008; Koehler, Mishra, & Yahya, 2007; Mishra & Koehler, 2006). Latta and Kim (2010) studied graduate level in-service teachers' perspectives about the theory and application of lived curriculum, or instructional "practices as concomitantly situated, thoughtful, and intentional" (p.680). They described these three aspects of a lived curriculum:

Situating entails deliberately attending to the particulars of students, contexts, and subject matter. Thoughtfulness entails attending to the creation of learning deemed fitting for the given particularities. Intentionality entails assuming and seeking relatedness and connectedness among teacher/student/subject matter (p. 680).

The concept of a lived curriculum applies to how participants in this study used the web seminars. By providing access to world-recognized literacy scholars and broad perspectives about literacy, all three participants gave their pre-/in-service teachers a space, authentically situated within GCLR web seminars, where they could consider alternative literacy perspectives. The web seminars' intended role within their courses also related to the thoughtfulness in how the participants used them. Geena and Lin, for example, used the web seminars as a supplement to their regular course content and did not intentionally tie the web seminar topics to their course content. Lin thought that the literacy course she taught was very structured according to the teacher

education standards that her pre-service teachers needed to know to be able to pass their licensing test. She conveyed that the set course structure left her little room to vary from it too much. Yet, she always made time in class to discuss each web seminar, even though not all of her students attended all of the seminars. On the other hand, Grace methodically and intentionally thought about which web seminar topics corresponded with particular course content and how the seminar dates correlated with the days she would be covering that particular topic during class. For example, she made her course syllabus to intentionally connect specific web seminars with the topics and dates she would be covering that material in class. How the teacher educators in this study used the web seminars in their courses, therefore, reflected the pedagogical considerations they applied for their use and their assigned role in their literacy courses. Based on Latta and Kim's understanding of a lived curriculum, Grace illustrated thoughtfulness and intentionality to how she would integrate the GCLR web seminars into her literacy teacher education courses, followed by Lin, and then Geena. Similarly, Grace and Lin who more purposefully integrated the web seminars also identified greater instances of student learning and shift in consciousness (Freire, 1970/1996).

By incorporating the web seminars, however, each teacher educator traversed the tensions of a dominant discourse (Janks, 2000). That is, Geena and Lin both integrated the web seminars as a supplemental component to their courses, using them more as a resource for their students. By reflecting on her practice, Geena experienced a shift in her own thinking, deciding that she wanted to take a more intentional approach the next time she incorporated the web seminars to make them a more "integral part of the course and the content" (final interview, November 17, 2014). On the other hand, by using the web seminars as a course supplement, Lin negotiated the tension she felt from a curriculum that she described as "a top-down approach" (final interview, November 17,

2014). She did this by providing in-class discussions in which she allowed her students to make connections between her course content and the more diverse perspectives presented during the web seminars (Janks, 2000). Grace explained that she began to feel more validated as a teacher educator as a result of her students attending the October web seminar on digital literacies. She thought that hearing a world-renowned literacy expert acknowledge digital literacies as legitimate not only helped her students see them as a viable form of literacy, but also “to realize it’s not just some young lady’s ideas about things” (Grace, mid-point interview, 2014).

Third, ensuring that they also participated in working with technology as a part of professional development, the participants in this study attended the web seminars with their students. As an online entity, Geena, Grace, and Lin could participate alongside their students in authentic, situated professional learning (Brown, et al., 1989) without having to be in the same physical space. This co-participation also decreased the distance between the teacher as knowledge producer and the student as consumer (Janks, 2000). In this way, the students became knowledge producers in collaboration with their instructors. With the teacher educators also attending the web seminars, they could lend support to their students in instances of technological difficulty, if students had a question, or even by collaborating with them using the chat tool.

Affordances and Constraints of Web Seminars Inform Teacher Professional Development

Past research has documented the value of computer-mediated communication on learning (Dede, 2004; Gray & Smyth, 2012; Kabilan, Adlina, & Embi, 2011; Ribeiro et al., 2011; Schlager & Fusco, 2003; Teng, Chen, & Leo, 2012). Further, critical situated learning, a tenet of this study’s theoretical framework, posits that learning occurs through social and cultural interactions with others (Brown, et al, 1989). This tenet applies to the affordances and constraints that participants

saw for using GCLR web seminars as a platform for collaborative online teacher professional development.

First, the participants recognized the platform's ability to synchronously connect across time and space to provide their students not only live, open access to well-known literacy scholars, but also to professional development. While all of the participants viewed this as an affordance, Lin particularly saw the open access web seminars serving a social justice purpose for her students who, because of their socially and culturally diverse backgrounds and as non-traditional students would not be able to participate in professional development due to unaffordable registration and travel fees. Yet, through open access, they could attend the web seminars without incurring a cost, unlike other professional development venues. As a platform for online professional development, then, GCLR web seminars challenge status quo thinking about who gains access (Janks, 2000).

The web seminars also provided space for authentic, situated learning (Brown et al., 1989) through which their students might experience diverse cultural and social ways of reading and writing the world that are necessary for changing consciousness (Freire, 1970/1996; Janks, 2000), this study's fifth tenet of critical situated learning. Geena and Grace, for example, suggested that viewing and listening to the speakers helped their students attend to the content in ways that solely reading an article about the topic could not accomplish. Grace also thought hearing the speakers discuss their research, situated in their own lived experiences, helped her students better relate the topic to the course content. She also identified several examples of her students' reported shift in consciousness concerning dominant Discourses (Freire, 1970/1996; Janks, 2000) that she attributed to the aesthetic experience of hearing the scholars talk about their personal experiences. Lin thought that the web seminar platform helped her students bridge the distance between the scholars as experts and her students as novices, simply by hearing them use colloquial terms, rather than

solely the academic language of the field. In this way, she thought her students saw their authenticity, their humanity. Therefore, as diverse texts, participants saw the affordance of the web seminars because they offered opportunities for their students to have access to globally recognized literacy experts whom they would not have available in their classrooms alone (Janks, 2000).

Third, as social and cultural spaces, web seminars fostered conditions for collaborative learning through interactive, dialogic chat exchanges. This speaks to this study's critical situated learning tenet that learning, socially and culturally situated, occurs through collaboration (Brown et al., 1989). All three participants noted that the web seminar tools provided opportunities for collaborative discourse exchanges through its synchronous chat feature. The assumption of knowledge co-construction within web seminars also underscores learning as a democratic, collaborative act (Vygotsky, 1978). In their study of synchronous chat messages, Chen et al. (2009) found that teacher participants positively viewed synchronous chat as an affordance to engage in inquiry, knowledge-construction, and exchange practical classroom teaching strategies. Geena especially noted the value of the chat feature for allowing her students to post a question to the speaker and receive an in-the-moment reply. She also thought the live interactions made them different from other online venues such as TED Talks or podcasts. In support of Geena's thinking, Montgomery (2010) also identified the value of synchronous interaction, as opposed to pre-recorded venues in her use of an embedded librarianship. Similarly, in his study of synchronous chat messages Carey (1999) observed high levels of interaction among students in their use of the learning platform's asynchronous discussion board. The researchers compared the virtual seminar to a "community of scholars" (p. 377) in which students exchanged comments, feedback, raised questions, and even challenged opposing viewpoints. In much the same way as in Chen et al.'s

study, the GCLR web seminars provided the participants in this study and their students with opportunities to have their voices heard in several ways. First, as situated texts, the chat fostered discourse exchanges with moderators, the speaker, and/or other participants. Second, because the chat occurred synchronously, multiple conversations could occur simultaneously while the keynote speaker delivered his/her presentation. Although Geena, Grace, and Lin indicated little use of the chat by their students, the web seminar format provided a space and made opportunities available to give voice to ideas, concerns, and questions should they choose to use it. An important distinction here underscores this study's second tenet of critical situated learning that learning can still occur through legitimate peripheral participation, even if that participation occurs as direct observation of more experienced participants (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

As an integrated component of stand-alone university courses, the GCLR web seminars used in this study created unique learning opportunities that could not be accomplished through other online learning venues, namely Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). Unlike MOOCs which also purport to offer open access, just-in-time learning, learner choice, and interaction (see Kelly, 2014), the web seminars themselves did not carry the required enrollment criteria, completion and submission of learning materials, or learner assessment (see Kelly, 2014). Not having to contend with these requirements provided opportunities for the teacher educators in this study to take advantage (if they chose to do so) of all the affordances that open-access synchronous learning offers but in a way that very specifically related to their particular course content, instruction, and student learning. In this sense, they could customize instruction in order to create the kind of authentic, inquiry-based learning they all three characterized as meaningful.

Along with the affordances, Geena, Grace, and Lin also identified a few limitations of incorporating the web seminars. Both Geena and Grace thought that incorporating the seminars

into their hybrid courses and in Geena's case also her asynchronous course, presented somewhat of a challenge because of their reduced face-to-face classroom time. For Geena, seminars held on Sunday evenings were also at issue. Because she did not have face-to-face contact with students in her asynchronous course, Geena found that she forgot to remind them about the web seminars altogether. Grace mentioned that since she had so much other material to cover in her hybrid course, finding time to discuss the seminars with her students was difficult since they did not always meet. Also, all three participants thought that the web seminar topics could sometimes be challenging for students to understand without some scaffolding. Lin especially thought that her undergraduate students who were taking their first literacy course were just beginning to learn the discourse of the field and needed help understanding what the speaker was saying. She did say, however, that as the semester progressed, especially if the students attended more than one seminar, their understanding improved.

Web Seminars Offer an Entrée Into the Teaching Profession

Professional development has traditionally been linked to learning how to implement particular instructional or behavioral approaches to enhance practice. The idea of professional development, though, also includes the professionalization of pre-service and practicing teachers into the field of teaching. The literature contains research about many types of learning communities (see Brown & Duguid, 1991; Garrison et al., 2000; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Laferrière et al., 2008; Lee & Shari, 2012; Niesz, 2010; Sing & Khine, 2006; Wanstreet & Stein, 2011). This study's theoretical tenet that knowledge production is embedded in the activity in which it is constructed through the process of cognitive apprenticeship (Borko, 2004; Brown et al., 1989; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Putnam & Borko, 2000) provides understanding about how the participants in this study viewed GCLR web seminars as a space to professionalize their pre-/in-service

teachers. In relation to online learning, the assumption of knowledge co-construction within web seminars underscores learning as a collaborative act, which is also the cornerstone of online learning communities.

Through cognitive apprenticeship (Borko, 2004; Brown et al., 1989; Lave & Wenger, 1991; and Putnam & Borko, 2000), communities of practice work from a bottom up premise that fosters inquiry and professional practice, unlike top down approaches where members must adhere to preconceived structures and procedures. This bottom up, apprentice-style approach is said to be the basis for legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991, Lee & Shari, 2012; Li et al., 2009) whereby newer members learn from the more experienced community members. As newer members participate in the community, they gain experience and knowledge by modeling the socialization and social practices of veteran members.

As socially situated learning entities that foster authentic, collaborative learning (Brown et al., 1989), the participants in this study identified the value of GCLR web seminars as a particular kind of learning community that connected them and their students to globally recognized scholars and diverse literacy perspectives (Janks, 2000). Specifically, Geena, Grace, and Lin identified the GCLR web seminars as a platform that supported such professionalization of their students 1) by introducing them to a language and literacy community, 2) learning the discourse of the field through cognitive apprenticeship, and 3) providing an exemplar of meaningful professional development situated around inquiry and collaboration.

Geena, Grace, and Lin associated the GCLR web seminars with a collaborative community through which their teacher education students could feel connected, or a sense of belonging, to the larger language and literacy community. GCLR web seminars as a space that fosters skill-building and collegiality supports Wenger et al.'s (2002) conceptualization of communities of practice as a

space “where practitioners can connect across organizational and geographic boundaries and focus on professional development rather than merely the application of expertise to meet a specific goal” (p. 20). Geena, for example, wanted her in-service teachers to feel like they were professionally connected to the expert literacy scholars from around the world who presented the GCLR web seminars. Grace thought that attending the web seminars gave her students an “entrée” or opportunity to experience first-hand how to seek out and participate in a community of likeminded individuals not only as a resource for continual learning but also as a means of professional support (final interview, November 14, 2014). And, she thought that giving students a chance to participate in a professional literacy community as pre-service and novice teachers validated for them a sense of belonging to the broader language and literacy community. Similarly, Lin believed that participating in the web seminars gave her students an idea of what to expect as future teachers becoming part of a professional community, especially one dedicated to literacy. In this way, Geena, Grace, and Lin used the GCLR web seminars as a way to connect their students with expert scholars and other pre-service and in-service teachers.

Geena, Grace, and Lin also identified the web seminars as valuable for helping their teacher candidates learn the professional discourse of the language and literacy field. According to Li et al. (2009), communities of practice are fertile environments for knowledge sharing because they offer a safe space for members to learn through watching and engaging in dialogue with more competent members. Through cognitive apprenticeship, for example, Geena and Grace both believed that just listening to scholars’ academic language helped their students pick up the language and literacy discourse. Geena felt very passionate about the professionalization of her in-service teachers in learning to use this academic discourse so that they could speak knowledgeably and theoretically about important critical literacy issues. Grace also wanted her students to have a strong sense of

professionalization and also saw the web seminars as a space where her students could learn from hearing how the speakers articulated their ideas. Observing the participant interaction in the web seminars, Lin thought gave her pre-service teachers the opportunity to see how professional discourse occurs through discursive chat exchanges.

The participants in this study further identified GCLR web seminars as providing an alternative approach to professional development. Grace thought that unlike traditional top-down approaches, the web seminars were an exemplar for authentic professional learning that supports inquiry. This suggests that GCLR web seminars themselves may be seen as providing a form of cognitive apprenticeship for teacher education students, helping to cultivate in them the concept of professional development as authentic, situated, and collaborative (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Such a format challenges the dominant discourses of traditional top-down approaches to professional development and supports diverse ways of seeing and acting (Janks, 2000). Because of their transformational nature, professional learning networks are also poised to take up opposing discourses from those held by the status quo, such as access, domination, diversity, and design associated with critical literacy (Janks, 2000), thereby addressing the inequities that often occur within socially situated interaction (Bartholomae, 1985/2011; Janks, 2000). In this way, participants may take up topics that matter to them and have their voices heard in ways that they may not want or be able to do within their own schools and institutions for fear of redress or isolation (Fisher, 2009; Neisz, 2010). Geena, for instance, thought the web seminar content provided knowledge about critical literacy issues that school and district officials might not provide her in-service teachers, suggesting GCLR web seminars as a space where her in-service teachers can learn about literacy issues beyond those that their local schools might privilege (Janks, 2000). Finally, as a socially situated, collaborative space, GCLR web seminars support

diverse perspectives and allow for in the moment reflections with literacy experts and other participants, many of whom are teacher educators and in-service and pre-service teachers.

Web Seminars Represent Innovative Professional Development

While all three participants in this study valued GCLR web seminars, it is important to note that Grace and Lin both “grew up” with GCLR as a site for professional development. They started participating in these seminars as graduate students, who then subsequently integrated them into their own teaching with an eye toward their own students’ continued participation in them. Isn’t this the kind of transformation that as teacher educators we want to see in junior scholars and teacher educators?

When one considers professional development, we think of it as on-going, continuous, and life-long learning. For Lin and Grace, GCLR web seminars were not just the *nouveau* in professional development but represented the current ways of learning in teacher education by seeking out and integrating texts that employ Web 2.0 tools for professional development. Like children today growing up with iPads as the new reading and writing tool, so too, do Grace and Lin represent the “technologically innovative teacher educator”—one who pursues and supports professional development that carries with it all of the potential that Web 2.0 tools offer. That is, those in current teacher education programs are apprenticed into what *on-going* professional development means: web seminars that are sustained, focused, and interactive. Because they allow participants to cross traditional university-professional development boundaries, web seminars integrated into teacher education courses create an innovative approach to professional development. Albers et al. (2015) refer to such “web seminars as the new f2f” (p. 14).

First, situated within contemporary contexts, web seminars become hubs of inquiry where participants from across the globe can unite for immediate conversations and problem-solve real

solutions about education. The ability to interact in real-time with keynote speakers and other participants foster immediate, in-the-moment conversations, which Geena, Grace, and Lin identified as affordances and opens pathways to the formation of a new online community of learners. Also, because they allow participants to cut across time and place boundaries inherent with face-to-face professional development, web seminars can bring together people from across the globe to engage in discourse about local, national, and international issues in education (Angay-Crowder et al., 2014).

Access to these web seminars through archival means suggests that professional development is not a “one-stop” shop for content delivery or the latest fad in education, but has the potential to encourage young teachers and teacher educators alike about what it means to do professional development today and in the future. First, they may choose from among presentations/topics that matter to them and that meet their individual needs and interests, web seminars offer broader options for professional development beyond those offered by schools and school districts alone. Second, because the entire series of web seminars may be returned to over and over again, these archives can allow for on-going, sustained learning that the literature recommends as effective professional development (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Finally, the availability of the archives provides teacher educators the opportunity to select those speakers and topics from among past presentations that best support their course content and instruction. In turn, this could lead to more purposeful and intentional use of the web seminars for teaching and learning within teacher education courses.

Concluding Thoughts

We live in an era in which virtual technologies are continually changing the nature of our work, communication, and socializing/socialization practices (Gounari, 2009). Likewise, web-

based learning and the use of various technology mediums (i.e., wikis, blogs, synchronous chat, etc.) are shifting how teaching and learning occur in colleges and universities (O'Brien, Aguinaga, & Hartshorne, 2011), as well as the pedagogy of teaching and learning in a digital age (Gounari, 2009). Social networking tools have transformed the way we communicate by removing time and place barriers that once kept us confined within a single space. Where teacher educators once arranged field trips or invited expert guest speakers into their face-to-face courses, online platforms now make attending an online conference, virtual field trip, and teacher professional development possible. Using synchronous communication tools, such as video, voice, and written chat, teacher educators can integrate computer mediated instruction, choosing from among a variety of online venues that complement the teaching and learning that occurs within their courses. Professional development web seminars, such as GCLR, provide teacher educators and their students the opportunity to collaboratively engage with each other, expert literacy scholars, and a variety of other professionals who, from across the globe, also specialize in their area of study. Finally, integrating professional development web seminars into their courses exemplifies how, as a socially situated learning entity, a series of web seminars functioning as a professional learning community can co-exist within an established classroom learning community. Subsequently, also, when teacher educators cross classroom borders, physical or virtual, to attend GCLR web seminars with a cohort of their students, it is plausible to consider the teacher educator's class functioning as a community embedded within the larger GCLR web seminar community of learners.

Implications for Practice

As authentic, socially situated learning entities, professional development web seminars, such as GCLR, can be embedded within teacher education courses to create favorable conditions for knowledge co-construction and inquiry by using computer mediated-communication tools,

such as audio, video, and chat. Several recommendations for optimal integration are discussed. First, using professional development web seminars offer an effective way to provide live, direct access to experts who would normally be accessible only through written texts or pre-recorded mediums. Also, incorporating professional development web seminars can familiarize pre-service and in-service teachers with the norms and practices of participating in professional development, especially bottom-up approaches like web seminars that give teachers an opportunity to have a voice and have that voice heard. Such seminars can also introduce teachers and those studying to be teachers to the academic discourse of their field and how to collaborate with experts and peers. Based on the participants in this study, it is recommended that teacher educators who integrate professional development web seminars into their courses first consider the seminar's intended role in the course and then determine how the seminars can be purposefully integrated with the existing course curriculum through planning, scaffolding, and instruction in order to create optimal learning conditions. Teacher educators might consider using web seminars as a supplement to their course's existing curriculum as a way to offer students a variety of perspectives to consider literacy that are critical to educating a diverse society and that the standing curriculum may otherwise not address. Finally, integrating web seminars like GCLR into a course's existing curriculum opens possibilities for teacher educators to tailor teaching and learning beyond even recently conceived ways of using technology-integrated instruction. The rapid speed at which technology and, therefore, how we learn evolve requires that we, as teacher educators, continually re-imagine professional development in order to prepare and offer the kind of support which teachers and those studying to be teachers need for 21st century learning environments.

Complexities of the Study

This study's findings were made complex by several factors. First, the context of the study focused on a specific web seminar series, Global Conversations in Literacy Research (GCLR). Therefore, the results may not be readily applicable to other types of online seminars, such as those directed toward the dissemination of information or those theoretically ground in a framework other than that of GCLR. Second, this study occurred within a limited timeframe. Extending the data collection phase to include all seven GCLR web seminars would yield substantially more data that could then provide richer understandings for why and how teacher educators use web seminar in their literacy teacher education courses and the value of doing so. Finally, while I have attempted to be transparent, my role with the larger GCLR project opens the possibility that this connection could have inadvertently influenced my interpretation of this study's findings. I realize that I cannot separate myself from my personal beliefs and past experiences. While there are certainly complexities to this study, considerations for future research open possibilities for greater understanding about using a professional development web seminar as a component of teacher educators' literacy courses.

Implications for Future Research

Using computer-mediated communication, people can now transcend space and time to communicate, share ideas, construct knowledge, and forge relationships in ways impossible in traditional distance learning and face-to-face venues (King, 2001; LaJoie et al., 2006). This study's findings illuminated that the participants' decision to use professional development web seminars in their courses related to their past experiences and connections with GCLR and their desire to offer their students access to global literacy experts and a broader lens through which to view literacy. Also, how participants incorporated the web seminars related to the purpose they served in

the literacy courses. Finally, the participants saw value in using the web seminars because they offered authentic, situated learning, and a platform for collaboration and professionalization of their pre-/in-service teachers.

Given that all three participants in this study used reflection as a tool for their teacher candidates to critically think about the web seminars, future studies might examine more deeply how web seminars impact teacher candidates' thinking about literacy theory and classroom practices. Further, a narrative inquiry addressing students' personal reflections about participating in the web seminars could add another dimension to our understanding of how online teacher professional development can best be used to affect teaching and learning. Latta and Kim (2010) suggest narrative as a method "to reflexively examine the consequences of lived theory/practice relations, alongside the input of other educators, valued as productive for everyone's professional growth" (p. 685). Finally, a follow-up study that examines how, if any, the participants in this study changed how they implemented the web seminars might yield further understanding about effective practices for integrating teacher professional development web seminars into literacy courses.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Participant Letter of Invitation

(Date)

Dear (Participant),

My name is Christi Pace and I am a language and literacy doctoral student at Georgia State University who is currently preparing a research proposal for my dissertation. I invite you to participate in a forthcoming study concerning how teacher educators incorporate GCLR web seminars as a component of the courses they teach. Your participation is valuable for understanding how teacher educators use venues such as GCLR web seminars as a forum for online teacher professional development. Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following questions: a) How do teacher educators use online professional development web seminars within their courses, especially those presented by GCLR? (b) What are the affordances/ constraints of incorporating sustained professional development web seminars within teacher education courses? and (c) What issues about literacy (knowledge, consciousness, theory) do teacher educators see taken up or not by their students who participate in the sustained online professional development web seminars?

Your participation will involve attending the September, October, and November GCLR web seminars with your students and three brief interviews-- an initial interview prior to the September web seminar, one mid-point (October), and a final interview. If you agree to participate, you will receive a letter of informed consent prior to the study's start. All information you provide as a participant will remain confidential. Thank you for your consideration in volunteering to participate in this important study. I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Christi L. Pace

APPENDIX B

Letter of Informed Consent

Georgia State University

Department of Education, MSIT

Title: Embedded Professional Development: A Study of a Web Seminar Series as a
Component of Teacher Education Coursework

Principal Investigator: Dr. Peggy Albers, professor of Language and Literacy

Student Principal Investigator: Christi L. Pace, doctoral student

Dear Participant:

Please read this Consent Form. If you agree to participate in this research study and be digitally recorded, please reply to the email and write “I consent to participate in this study and be digitally recorded.” If you choose not to participate, please reply to the email and write “I do not consent to participate in this study.” Please include your full name under your consent or do not consent statement.

I. Purpose:

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this qualitative study is to understand teacher educators’ use of an open access online professional development web seminar, Global Conversations in Literacy Research (GCLR), as a component of the language and literacy teacher education courses that they teach. GCLR is a series of one hour web seminars whose goal is to disseminate cutting-edge literacy research and improve literacy practices. The current study seeks to answer the following questions: a) How do teacher educators use online professional development web seminars within their courses, especially those presented by GCLR? (b) How do teacher educators use online professional

development web seminars within their courses, especially those presented by GCLR? and (c) What value do teacher educators see in working with the web seminars in their classes, especially those presented by GCLR? You are invited to participate because you have attended at least one GCLR web seminar with the teacher education students that you teach. A total of up to 5 participants will be recruited for this study. Participation will require no more than 6 hours of your time. All data collection will occur between September 2014 and November 2015.

II. Procedures:

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in up to 3 web seminars (September, October, November). Each seminar will last one hour each. You will also be asked to participate in 3 digitally-recorded interviews which will be transcribed. Each interview will take no more than 30 minutes of your time. To member check, I will invite you to review each of the transcripts for accuracy. I anticipate that this review will take approximately 30 minutes of your time (total 6 hours). You will incur no costs for these interviews. You will not be compensated for these interviews.

III. Risks:

In this study, you will not have any more risks than you would in a normal day of life.

IV. Benefits:

Participation in this study may not benefit you personally. Overall, I hope to gain information about the affordances and constraints of online platforms for literacy in teacher development.

V. Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal:

Participation in research is voluntary. You do not have to be in this study. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. You may skip questions or stop participating at any time. Whatever you decide, you will not suffer any negative consequences.

VI. Confidentiality:

I will keep your records private to the extent allowed by law. Only the student PI will have access to the information you provide. Information may also be shared with those who make sure the study is done correctly (GSU Institutional Review Board, the Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP) and doctoral committee members). I will use codes to identify your information (e.g., F2014_P1_Oct [Fall 2014_Participant 1_October Interview]) rather than your name on records. The information you provide will be stored on a secure, password-protected computer. The code sheet to identify research participants will be stored separately from the data to ensure privacy on a secure, password-protected computer. This code sheet will be destroyed at the end of the study. Your name and other facts that might point to you will not appear when I present this study or publish its results. The findings will be summarized and reported in group form. You will not be identified personally.

VII. Contact Persons:

Contact Christi L. Pace (Student PI) at 706-830- 7558, cpace4@student.gsu.edu or Dr. Peggy Albers (PI) if you have questions about this study. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this research study, you may contact Susan Vogtner in the Office of Research Integrity at 404-413-3513 or svogtner1@gsu.edu.

Christi L. Pace, Ed.S. (Student PI)

Dr. Peggy Albers (PI)

Doctoral Student, Language and Literacy

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VIII. Copy of Consent Form to Subject:

Please keep this email as documentation of your consent.

APPENDIX C

Initial Participant Semi-structured Interview Guide

1. Tell me about your teaching background (years of experience, subject area, level of students)?
2. How do you describe your beliefs about teaching and learning?
3. What are your personal experiences using online venues such as GCLR as a forum for teacher professional development and support?
4. How and why did you begin using GCLR web seminar in your courses and does it vary by class?
5. Looking at your course syllabus, describe how you incorporate the web seminars into your course(s)?

APPENDIX D

Mid-point Participant Semi-structured Interview Guide

Geena's Mid-point Interview Guide:

1. Tell me about the ways you and your students participated during the last GCLR web seminar with David Berliner and within your class(s)?
2. What was the role of GCLR in your course(es) more broadly.
 - a. During our first conversation when we were talking about your teaching and learning disposition, you said, "There's not like there's right or a wrong, but that we need to help our students understand that we can take a variety of perspectives on various issues". In what ways, if any, does this belief relate pedagogically to why you incorporate GCLR seminars into your courses? How so? Can you give me an example?
 - b. You also stated, "I would suggest that reading many kinds of texts, watching different kinds of Youtube videos, and inviting people in that have had experience, so that we're not just relying on one source to help us understand the idea, but we're cutting across a variety of sources so that we get a lot of different perspectives that we give kids the opportunity to kind of work through those different perspectives and figure out the kind of stance that they want to take". How do you see or not see this pedagogical belief in relation to your courses and more broadly in relation to GCLR?
 - c. You also mentioned that you use student reflections. What kinds of "aha" moments, if any, have your students shared with you?
3. What type of engagement with the GCLR content did you notice from your students during and after the seminar?
4. What purpose(s) and value do you see the web seminars serving for you as a teacher educator and your students as teacher candidates?
 - a. What do you hope your students gain from attending the seminars?
 - b. What do the seminars do or offer in terms of TPD/teacher education that's different or that could not be accomplished in your classes alone?
 - c. In the first interview, you say that you encourage your students to be "reflective practitioners". Why is that important to you?

5. Whose student voices and ideas did you see represented during the GCLR web seminar(s)? How does this compare to those represented in your face-to-face class sessions?

Grace’s Mid-point Interview Guide:

1. Tell me about the ways you and your students participated during the last GCLR web seminar with David Berliner and within your class(s)?
2. What was the role of GCLR in your course(es) more broadly.
 - a. During our first conversation, you mentioned that your students attending the GCLR web seminars would actually be a really great way to get in more supported content time”. I was curious if the time students spend participating in the seminars counts as clock hours for your courses?
 - b. When I asked you about your disposition toward teaching and learning, you mentioned that you “believe that learning is “joyful” when it’s “relevant”, “meaningful”, authentic”, “and grounded in things that are useful or that matter personally”. In what ways do you see these beliefs in relation to your choice to incorporate GCLR web seminars as part of your courses? How so?
 - c. You also mentioned that you value student reflections as a pedagogical tool. You say, “I get the privilege of witnessing their thinking within Aha moments in their own transformation into an educator”. You also liken the web seminars to” a, a drive-by aha moment”. And since you have your students reflect on the web seminars, what are some of those “aha” moments that your students have shared with you.
3. What type of engagement with the GCLR content did you notice from your students during and after the seminar?
4. What purpose(s) and value do you see the web seminars serving for you as a Teacher Educator and your students as teacher candidates?
 - a. What do you hope your students gain from attending the seminars?
 - b. What do the seminars do or offer in terms of TPD/teacher education that’s different or that could not be accomplished in your classes alone?
5. Whose student voices and ideas did you see represented during the GCLR web seminar(s)? How does this compare to those represented in your face-to-face class sessions?

Lin's Mid-point Interview Guide:

1. Tell me about the ways you and your students participated during the last GCLR web seminar with David Berliner and within your class(s)?
2. What was the role of GCLR in your courses more broadly?
 - a. What are your thoughts about requiring student to attend the seminars on a Sunday evening, a day not typically considered a class day?
 - b. What kind of things do your students state about their experiences attending the seminars?
3. What type of engagement with the GCLR content did you notice from your students during and after the seminar?
 - a. In our first interview, you stated that having students attend the web seminars is a good way to “meet the community”. How so?
4. What purpose(s) and value do you see the web seminars serving for you as a Teacher Educator and your students as teacher candidates?
 - a. What do you hope your students gain from attending the seminars?
 - b. What do the seminars do or offer in terms of TPD/teacher education that's different or that could not be accomplished in your classes alone?
 - c. I know that you deal with non-traditional students. And so given the socio-cultural background of them, how do you see if at all, that affecting their experience with the seminars?
5. Whose student voices and ideas did you see represented during the GCLR web seminar(s)? How does this compare to those represented in your face-to-face class sessions?

Appendix E

Final Semi-structured Participant Interview Guide

Geena's Final Interview Guide:

1. Last time we spoke, you decided to encourage your students to participate in the chat. How did that go? Whose voices did you observe during this last seminar with David Berliner?
2. What kinds of topics did your students take up in their reflections? What ways, if any, have you seen your students applying ideas gleaned from the seminars?
3. How do you view GCLR web seminars as a platform for online teacher professional development (or not), for both you and the teacher candidates?
4. What have you, as a researcher and teacher educator, taken away from your participation? What do you think your students took away from participation? What makes you say that?
5. In reflecting about how you incorporated the GCLR web seminar(s) into your class(es), what changes, if any, would you make to your course curriculum, design, practices, etc., next time you plan for this course? Why?

Grace's Final Interview Guide:

1. You said that the seminars could be considered an informal type of PD. How else would you describe them in comparison to traditional PD types that you had characterized as “scripted, no follow-up, formal”?
2. I would like to read you a quote from our second interview and then get your feedback: “I think that what’s striking to me about the topics is they’re simultaneously topics that novice teachers and veteran teachers would benefit from. Can you tell me more about that?”
3. How do you view GCLR web seminars as a platform for online teacher professional development (or not), for both you and the teacher candidates?

4. What purpose and value do you see the web seminars serving for you and the teacher education candidates in your course(es)?
5. What have you, as a researcher and teacher educator, taken away from your participation? What do you think your students took away from participation? What makes you say that?
5. In reflecting about how you incorporated the GCLR web seminar(s) into your class(es), what changes, if any, would you make to your course curriculum, design, practices, etc., next time you plan for this course? Why?
6. In our last interview, you told me that some of your students were eager to try out some of the ideas that they learned about from the seminars. In your students' reflections, other assignments, and teaching, how have you observed them incorporating or applying any of the information from the web seminars?

Lin's Final Interview Guide:

1. Last time we spoke, you mentioned that you and your students spent about an hour engaging about the web seminar with Dr. Richard Beach and discussing ways to incorporate his ideas into their own classrooms. Since your students get to choose which seminar they want to attend, how do students who did not attend the particular web seminar engage in the activities?
2. What kinds of topics did your students take up in their reflections? What ways, if any, have you seen your students applying ideas gleaned from the seminars?
3. Also during our second interview, you mentioned that the web seminars are an "additional component" for your course. How so in comparison to other components of your course?
4. How do you view GCLR web seminars as a platform for online teacher professional development (or not), for both you and the teacher candidates?
5. What have you, as a researcher and teacher educator, taken away from your participation?

What do you think your students took away from participation? What makes you say that?

6. In reflecting about how you incorporated the GCLR web seminar(s) into your class(es), what changes, if any, would you make to your course curriculum, design, practices, etc., next time you plan for this course? Why?