

Do Literacy Specialists See Themselves as Leaders of Social Justice Practices?

A Case Study of the Literacy Education Program Graduates

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Abstract

This collective case study examined the relationship between literacy specialists' conceptualization of what it means to become literate and the development of a sense of social responsibility. Surveys, interviews, classroom observations, and curriculum materials were collected and analyzed in order to identify and describe the literacy specialists' knowledge of and attitude towards teaching literacy and the role social justice principles and practices in their professional work. Results from the study showed that the participants described becoming literate as a multidimensional process. In addition, they see a relationship between developing as a literate person and developing a sense of social consciousness. However, the literacy teachers' thoughts and attitudes did not align with their pedagogical actions. Literacy professionals were most likely to utilize practices which fostered the linguistic and cognitive dimensions of literacy. Less routine were practices which developed students abilities to understand literacy as social practice. As a result, opportunities were limited for students to engage in activities designed to foster their social consciousness as well as their abilities to engage in critical and caring dialogue and reflection.

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Introduction

I have been teaching masters level candidates in literacy education at Nazareth College, in Rochester New York, for the past 16 years. I began my work as a teacher educator during a time of significant change in our profession. In 2003, the teacher certification for the Masters in Reading Education in New York State was changed to a Masters in Literacy Education. This was not a simple title change. Instead, this was evidence of the significant shift taking place in the profession at large. To be a proficient reader was no longer the primary marker of a literate person. Instead, a literate person was now conceived as one who had knowledge and abilities to effectively read, write and communicate for a variety of purposes in any number of social contexts.

Another significant marker of time of transformation was the changes taking place within the International Reading Association (IRA). Members of the organization from across the globe began a discussion of the appropriateness of giving reading a superior status in their professional policies and practices. In January of 2015, the International Reading Association, the organization officially changed its title to the International Literacy Association. Marcie Craig Post, the executive director of the ILA, wrote a piece to the ILA community providing a rationale for this decision:

reading is one important part of literacy, but ILA's expanding vision focuses on how literacy transforms lives ... ILA is about leading and leadership – not following. ILA is about setting the standard for teaching literacy and serving as an unfailing advocate of literacy educators who strive to effectively teach students worldwide, so they can be and will continue to become engaged, contributing global citizens. That is our focus. We are ILA, and this the future of literacy. (Post, 2015, pp. 1-5)

Post's description is significant, not only because of the acknowledgement of a more holistic view of literacy, but also because of the responsibility placed on teachers of literacy to see themselves as

leaders – leaders who are committed to preparing students who “can and will continue to become engaged, contributing global citizens.”

In 2008 I co-authored a paper theorizing that literacy teachers are uniquely positioned to be leaders of social responsibility and social justice¹. In this work, we proposed that literacy teachers, by the very nature of their professional content, are responsible for helping students understand how they can use their literacy to be transformational in their own lives. We also made the case “literacy teachers are responsible for developing students’ use of language to empower and transform themselves and to participate within various social communities or discourses” (Jones, Webb, Newmann, 2008, p. 9). The focus of our work reflects the tenor of the mission of the newly minted International Literacy Association. Teachers of literacy have a key role to play in the development of students’ abilities to engage in critical and caring reflection about what is read and written. In the paper we made the claim that “to meet the challenges of developing students’ abilities to fully participate as active citizens in a democracy, literacy educators utilize a *pedagogy of possibility* in order to develop students’ *epistemic literacy* and *sense of social responsibility*” (Jones, Webb, Newmann, p. 10). However, in spite of these transformative claims, what is not well documented are the ways K-12 professionals with a masters in literacy approach this work and how they see their own knowledge of literacy education influencing their professional endeavors.

Significance of Proposed Research

There is a robust body of work focused on the preparation and pedagogical practices of middle school or high school English teachers the ways these teachers utilize their knowledge and skills about literacy in teaching English/language arts (see Grossman, 1991a, 1991b; Langer, 1987; Ritchie & Wilson, 1993; Sieber, Draper, Barney, et al. 2016; Vacca, 1998). In addition, there is an established line of research which has investigated the ways content area teachers beyond those teaching English Language Arts can successfully prepare their students’ to be successful in content

¹ Jones, L.C., Webb, P.T. & Neumann, M. (2008). Claiming the contentious: Literacy teachers as leaders of social justice principles and practices. *Issues in Teacher Education*, 17(1), 7-15.

area reading and writing (Alverman & Moore, 1991; Billmeyer, 2010; Fisher & Frey, 2008; Ruddell, 1997; Vacca & Vacca, 2002), Most recently, researchers in the field have looked specifically at the intersection of secondary English language arts education, critical literacy, and social justice (Alsup & Miller, 2014; Langer, 1991; Miller, 2014; Morrell & Scherff, 2015; Yagelski, 2000).

This work is essential and not to be underappreciated. And yet, there have been few studies dedicated to examining the knowledge and skills of teachers who actively pursued an advanced teacher certification in literacy education. The question remains unanswered: do teachers who have obtained a masters in literacy education believe they are responsible for leading the efforts of teaching students “so they can be and will continue to become engaged, contributing global citizens?” Do they see their work as critical and transformative in nature? The purpose of this study was to learn more about the professional experiences of teachers who have obtained a masters in literacy education and the ways the professional knowledge the gained in their teacher education program influences their professional practice.

Definition of Term: Literacy Specialist/Literacy Teacher

In New York State, an advanced degree in literacy education is granted through the successful completion of certification requirements in Literacy Education Teacher Education Program with a focus on Birth-Grade 6 or Grades 5-12. Nazareth College advertises on their college website that these programs are ideal for “teachers who want additional certification to become a literacy specialist and/or improve their instructional skills and/or to become professionally certified.” (Nazareth College, *Graduate Education*). In addition, the website notes that those who complete this degree are eligible to pursue career choices as

- Literacy specialist
- Classroom teacher (PreK-grade 6) with strong ability to support all students’ literacy growth

- Content area teacher (grades 7-12) able to address students' reading and writing needs, to increase their ability to learn course content
- Literacy coach
- Community college teacher

In our preparation program, we work simultaneously to prepare professionals who are would be competent and qualified to work as classroom teachers, intervention specialists and/or literacy coaches.

The professional content of the program is aligned with the professional standards outlined by the *International Literacy Association*. A literacy specialist is expected to have gained professional knowledge and abilities in six areas of professional practice: foundational knowledge, curriculum and instruction, assessment and evaluation, diversity, literate environment, and professional learning and leadership (International Reading Association, 2010). While the majority of graduates of our program secure positions as classroom teachers or literacy intervention specialists, it is important to recognize that these professionals are also charged with the responsibility of “self-assessing and reflection on their own roles as effective literacy leaders and learners” and to “engage in collaborative decision making with and advocate on behalf of teachers students, families and communities” (International Literacy Association, 2016, p.5).

In order to reflect the tenants of the ILA as well as to represent the wide range of responsibilities a teacher with a Masters in Literacy Education are qualified to hold, the terms “literacy specialist” and “literacy teacher” are used interchangeably to identify all participants in this study. These descriptors are used to indicate the advanced professional training they received as a part of their masters degree program and that their professional knowledge is distinct from those pursuing a master’s degree in early childhood education, childhood education or adolescent education. However, when appropriate, additional descriptions are given to identify their specific job titles in the schools they work.

Research Questions

In order to describe the way K-12 professional with a Masters in Literacy Education approach their professional work, the study examined the thoughts, feelings, and pedagogical actions of recent alumni from the Nazareth College graduate teacher education program. In addition, this study examined how closely aligned the literacy specialists' thoughts, feelings, and actions were. Particular attention was paid to the literacy teachers' conceptualization of the relationship between teaching literacy and social responsibility. An additional interest of this research project was the question of whether or not these professionals recognized their work as social justice practices. There were four major research questions guiding this study:

1. What are literacy specialists' understanding of and attitudes towards literacy? How do they define being literate?
2. How closely aligned are the literacy specialists' beliefs about becoming literate with the principles and practices of a social responsibility and social justice?
3. How closely aligned are the literacy specialists' thoughts, feelings, and professional actions regarding becoming literate and teaching literacy?
4. To what extent does an advanced teacher certification program in literacy education influence teachers' understanding of the what it means to be literate and the relationships between teaching literacy and being a leader of social justice principles and practices?

Review of Literature

The roots of this study are found in the intersection of three areas of professional inquiry: literacy education, teaching for social justice, and teacher reflection. In order to provide the necessary background, this review includes selected works that highlight important concepts in these three major areas.

A Multidimensional Approach to Literacy Instruction

As has already been noted in the introduction of this work, the field of literacy education and research continues to be an area of rich and complex study. The models of literacy development today do not embrace a single disciplinary perspective. Instead, any description of the literate person includes reference to a set of interrelated aspects or dimensions that the individual uses in order to effectively read and write.

Today's models of literacy acknowledge the rule-governed nature of language as well as the lexical, morphological and syntactic features of texts. Pioneers, such as Noam Chomsky (1959, 1965) argued that language learning was not like other learning because it involved a separate mental faculty he defined as a language-acquisition device (LAD). In addition, today's predominant theories of language and literacy development also draw upon the work of the sociolinguists (e.g., Cazden, 1988; Halliday, 1973; Hymes, 1968, 1974; John, 1972; Lindfors, 1980) who demonstrated that language is first, and foremost, a social phenomena and therefore cannot be understood or comprehended unless one takes into account the context in which the language is being used.

At the same time, a theoretical model of literacy is not complete unless it also recognizes the ways in which the literate person constructs an understanding using written language. The level of sophistication of a person's schema (Piaget, 1952; Rummelhart, 1980, 1984) or background knowledge of a particular topic as well as one's understanding of how texts are constructed heavily influence how well one can use reading and writing to construct meaning. At the same time, one's literacy development occurs in a continuous process along with knowledge construction (Bruner, 1966; Vygotsky, 1978).

To prepare literacy specialists at Nazareth College, the students develop an understanding of this complex model of literacy through a careful study of Kucer's (2014) work, *Dimensions of Literacy: A Conceptual Base for Teaching Reading and Writing in School Settings*. Kucer's model illustrates the development of a literate person through four interrelated dimensions: the linguistic dimension, the cognitive dimension, the sociocultural dimension and the developmental dimension

(see Figure 1.1). This robust conceptualization of literacy highlights the sophisticated knowledge and strategies the individual must control in order to successfully compose and comprehend texts. In addition, this model purposefully recognizes the needs to approach literacy instruction from a multidisciplinary perspective.). “If literacy education is to be effective, it is important that literacies be conceived as dynamic, interconnected and multidimensional in nature” (Kucer, p. 5).

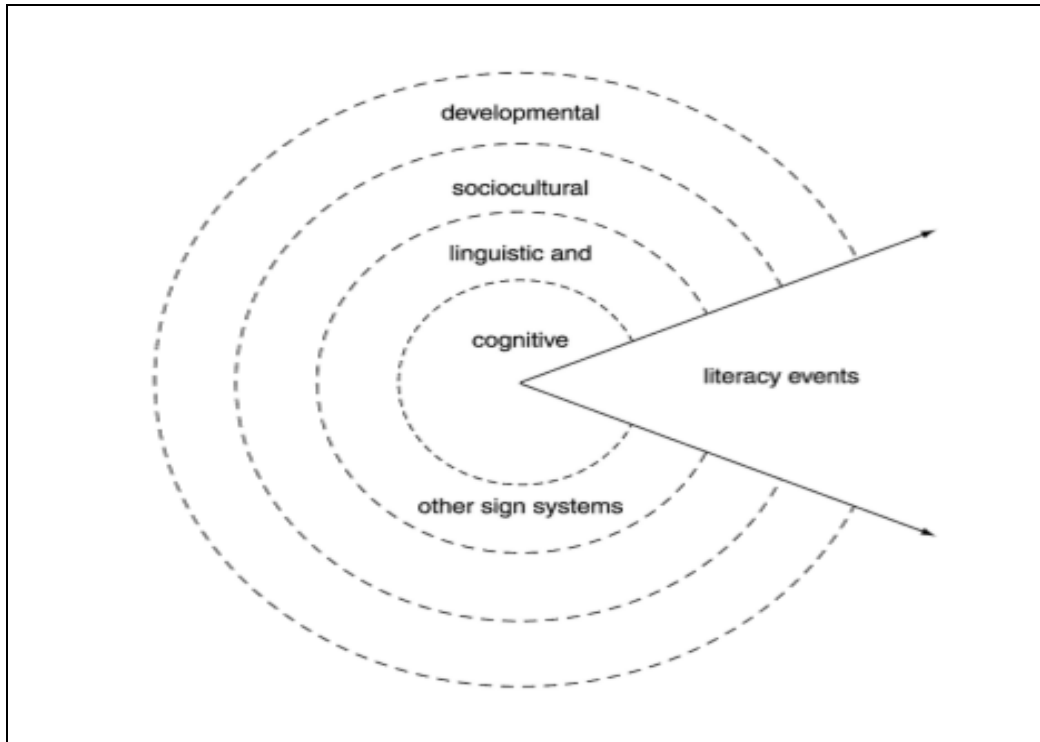


Figure 1. Kucer’s (2014) Dimensions of literacy²

Literacy specialists cannot be prepared to teach students effectively if they only have a well-developed understanding of the linguistic systems such as graphophonics, syntax, and semantics. Nor can literacy specialists serve their students well if they design instruction that focuses solely on developing cognitive and metacognitive strategies. Literacy specialists must be able to recognize the interdependency of these dimensions. At the same time, a person’s literacy development continues throughout the course of his or her life. The first time an individual encounters a

² Kucer notes this model was adapted from an earlier work he co-authored: Kucer, S.B., Silva, C., & Delgado-Larocco, E. (1995). *Curricular conversations: Themes in multilingual and monolingual classrooms* (p. 59). York, ME: Stenhouse.

particular literacy context, he or she will most likely be limited due to a lack of knowledge and abilities. However, over time an individual is able to develop a more sophisticated knowledge of how to “effectively and efficiently apply this knowledge of written language in wide range of contexts” (Kucer, p. 287).

Finally, literacy specialists must be mindful of “the multiple ways in which reading, writing and language interrelate with the workings of power and desire in social life” (Gee, 1990, p. 27). To aid the literacy education students’ understanding of the sociocultural and developmental dimensions of literacy they must also develop a sophisticated understanding of the relationship between language and power. In the field of literacy education, there is a well-established branch of research dedicated to examining the relationship between language and power (Behrman, 2006; Delpit, 1995; Freire, 1970; Gay, 1995, 2000; Gee, 1990, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Morrell, 2008; Yagelski, 2000). Researchers from this area stress the position that as students are taught to read and write, they have the potential to also develop the knowledge and abilities necessary to better understand their world and to participate in the remaking of their realities. As Wells and Chang-Wells (1992) assert, “to be literate is to have the disposition to engage appropriately with texts of different types in order to empower action, thinking and feeling in the context of purposeful social activity” (p. 147). It is this facet of literacy instruction which intersects with the field of social responsibility and social justice.

Teaching Literacy as a Social Justice Practice

Teaching for social justice is not a widely accepted standard. In fact, in 2006, the National Council of Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) removed social justice as specific criteria for assessing teacher candidates. NCATE stated that the reason why they removed this term was this terms was because social justice was not the only way to describe the dispositions expected of teacher candidates. In fact, as Alsup and Miller (2014) note “NCATE, claimed that the words *social justice* themselves were unnecessary because they could be assumed under the revision of Unit

Standard 4 ... which emphasizes the importance of addressing diversity with cultural and linguistic awareness in the classroom” (Alsup & Miller, 2014, p. 197).

While it is certainly important that literacy teachers develop a disposition which recognizes the importance of addressing cultural and linguistic diversity when designing quality literacy instruction, this effort would seem incomplete if the teacher was not also mindful of the limitations of language and the importance of taking action when the literacy being used appears to oppress rather than empower the learners. Morrell (2008) asserts that “allowing students to make sense of the ideological nature of language in the U.S. could go along way to promote navigational strategies and cross-cultural understanding while also increasing language and literacy skills” (p. 87).

For the purposes of this work, teaching literacy with a social justice orientation requires the professional to have a well developed understanding of Kucer’s sociocultural dimension (2014) and, at the same time it also embraces Wells and Chang-Wells notion that the literate person must have the disposition to engage appropriately with texts in order to empower action. This does not mean that teachers show promote a strictly social application of literacy, but instead the literacy specialist should teach students the linguistic and cognitive aspects of literacy as related to the literacy practices of a particular community or social group. As a part of this work, literacy specialists should make a conscious and reflexive effort to identify curriculum materials and instructional practices which are intended to empower and transform the students’ conceptions of themselves and their place in their discourse communities. Teaching literacy for social justice requires the teacher to develop classroom routines and activities which are not “a paternal campaign of clever teaches against defenseless students. Rather, it is a process driven and justified by mutuality” (Shor, 1999, para. 32).

To accomplish these goals, literacy teachers need to provide opportunities for students to gain awareness of the social, cultural and political dimensions of language. In addition, students need to develop the ability to consider diverse perspectives and engage in critical and caring

reflection as they endeavor to construct meaning as they read and write. This approach to teaching literacy with a social justice orientation reflects the works of Paulo Freire (1970/1993, 1985). Freire argued for an understanding of language and literacy instruction that led to liberation and humanization of all those who use it. In short, becoming literate involves transformation. He suggests that one of the key components of creating a free society that enacts democratic principles is that all individuals in the society must learn how to use language in a manner that allows them not only to use the language to communicate with one another but also as a means to critique the language itself and be able to transform the language so that it is more reflective of the democratic ideals of the society in which it is used. In short, by *learning how to read the word, they have the ability to learn how to critically read the world* (Freire, 1985, Freire & Macedo, 1987).

Theorists from the field of multicultural education also suggest that ‘what is read and what is written’ makes a difference in students’ sense of self-identity and empowerment (Au, 2000; Banks, 1994, 1999; Gay, 1986, 1995, 2000). Banks (1994, 1999) asserts that one way to ensure that the students are being transformed in an empowering and humanizing manner is to integrate cultural content into the school and university curriculum. He calls this a transformation approach to teaching and learning:

The *transformation approach* changes the canon, paradigms, and basic assumptions of the curriculum and enables students to view concepts, issues, themes and problems from different perspectives and points of view. Major goals of this approach include helping students to understand concepts, events, and people from diverse ethnic and cultural perspectives and to understand knowledge as a social construction. ... Important aims of the transformation approach are to teach students to think critically and to develop the skills to formulate, document, and justify their conclusions and generalizations. (Banks, 1999, pp. 31-32).

When literacy education is undertaken from this position of transformation or social justice, there is greater opportunity for students to become engaged in a manner that develops a sense of critical connectedness and hope rather than leading to a sense of isolation or inferiority. Banks writes, “Major goals of a transformative curriculum that fosters multicultural literacy should be to help students *to know, to care, and to act* in way that will develop and foster a democratic and just society in which all groups experience cultural democracy and cultural empowerment” (p. 33, *emphasis in original*).

Specifically in the context of the literacy classroom, these critical literacy theorists argue that power manifests itself through interactions with the acts of teaching and learning to read and write--acts which lead to transformation. As Yagelski (2000) asserts, “literacy represents a kind of power to participate in extraordinarily complex ways in the social, cultural, and political discourses that shape people’s lives” (p. 6). However, becoming literate can be a double-edged sword. Becoming literate in the discourse of a particular community can lead to isolation as well as liberation. For example, even when the curriculum goals appear to recognize Gee’s (1992) assertion that all individuals are literate because they all have a primary discourse, children whose primary discourse is unlike the discourse being taught in school sometimes experience sensations of loss and isolation as they struggle to develop their repertoire of discourses (for examples of such phenomena see: Delpit, 1995; Heath, 1992; Rodriguez, 1981; Stuckey, 1991; Villanueva, 1993).

While the road to becoming literate certainly can be fraught with moments of confusion, disappointment or defeat, literacy teachers can work to make sure students are not left to drown in these overwhelming literacy events. Simon (1992) argued “empowerment literally means to give ability to, to permit or enable” (p. 143). He suggests that teachers of literacy must conceptualize their work as a ‘pedagogy of possibility’ which provides students with opportunities to “draw upon their own cultural resources” as a means of developing their understanding about their world and the language that they use to define it. Behrman (2006) identified six distinct categories of

classroom practices designed to teach students about language, power, and text: “reading supplementary texts, reading multiple texts, reading from a resistant perspective, producing counter-texts, conducting student-choice research projects, and taking social action” (p. 482). All these classroom practices enable students to develop an informed and socially conscious understanding of themselves and their world. Gee (2001) would describe this level of engagement as an effort to becoming “powerfully literate.”

Another set of useful practices for teaching critical literacy and developing students’ social consciousness can be found in Berman’s (1997) framework for developing children’s consciousness and sense of social responsibility. He defined being socially responsible in the following manner:

Understanding that the individual is rooted within a larger social network, within interlocking communities that range from the local to the global... Creating relationships with others and with society that are framed by the ethical considerations of justice and care...Acting with integrity...seeing one’s daily actions within a larger social context [and] living in ways that are consistent with one’s values (pp. 12-14).

To develop this social responsibility, Berman suggests teachers must provide opportunities to engage in perspective taking and perspective-taking dialogue. These can be accomplished through the composition of student created texts, such as counter-texts, student-choice research projects and I-Search research projects all provide developing readers and writers with opportunities to engage in rich and purposeful literacy-learning tasks that “provide students with avenues to construct their understandings...and endorse the students’ expressions of their experience” (Behrman, 2006, p. 484).

In addition, Berman advocates for providing opportunities for students to engage in critical and caring reflection in a way that develops one’s empathy and to develop “perspective taking abilities which move from self or authority to self *and* other to the group to society to the coordination of these multiple perspectives” (Berman, p. 95). When engaging with texts in this

way, they are also accomplishing Kucer's goal of "effectively, efficiently and simultaneously controlling the dimensions of written language in a transactive fashion" (Kucer, 2014, p. 5). students are inherently interacting with complex ideas in multiple ways and reflecting in ways that involve empathizing with others.

Findings from other research projects (Foster, 1995; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Mercado, 1993; Miller, 2010, 2015; Shor, 1992, 1999; Tarlow, 1996) also confirm the important role that social responsibility and the principles of social justice play in the context of teaching and learning literacy. Miller (2015) completed a two year study which examined how English education preservice teachers came to understand their dispositions related to social justice. Miller found when teacher education candidates are given opportunities to develop dispositions of social justice, they can be empowered to enact social justice in their future professional endeavors. Miller suggests however, "it would benefit our professional to embed social justice discourse into policies and into practice" (pp. 119-120).

While the initial studies examining teachers' social consciousness indicate promise, the research in this areas is still somewhat new. In addition, much of the work has focused on secondary English education, but has not included the efforts of those who pursue an advanced teacher certification as a literacy specialist. Before turning to the discussion of the study included in this work, it is important to first briefly acknowledge the established body of research regarding the role of teacher knowledge and teacher reflection.

Literacy Specialists' as Critically Reflective Practitioners

The historical roots of the term 'reflective practitioner' can be traced back at least as far as John Dewey. In *How We Think*, Dewey (1933) distinguished between teaching practices which are routine and those that are reflective. According to Dewey, routine actions are grounded in taken-for-granted assumptions about the nature of reality. Schools embody collective visions about the nature of teaching and learning in which the goals, means and evaluation of education are defined

in a particular way and grounded in the authority of tradition. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, practitioners' impulses are guided by these unexamined constructs. These taken-for-granted assumptions give rise to unexamined, unreflective actions as practitioners fail to acknowledge the multiple competing visions of reality which may be operating within their classrooms. By automatically accepting the commonly held assumptions undergirding their practice, teachers become the agents of the institution and fail to either consider opposing perspectives or experiment with alternative practices.

In contrast, Dewey claims reflective teachers are active, critical, and persistent in their consideration of collectively held taken-for-granted assumptions. Such teachers constantly interrogate both their practice and its consequences as well as the beliefs upon which their practice is built. This reflective process cannot be reduced to a set of procedures or steps, but instead is holistic, a way of being a teacher which enables practitioners to face and respond to demands of their practice.

Donald Schön (1982) adds to Dewey's concept of reflection by distinguishing between two distinct types: reflection-on-action and reflection-in action. Reflection-on-action precedes practice, and involves both those myriad deliberations in which teachers engage as they craft their lessons and their immediate responses following a teaching act. Often, however, despite well-crafted lesson plans and skillful instruction, practitioners are called upon to pause, reflect, and readjust their teaching strategies during their teaching because of unanticipated student responses or unintended outcomes. This on-the spot-adjustment is what Schön calls reflection-in-action and demands that practitioners engage in critical processes of deliberation and decision-making while simultaneously teaching.

Lee Shulman (1986, 1987) was one of the first to give a comprehensive look at what a teacher should know about teaching and how the teacher made sense of these different domains of knowledge through reflective practice. In his work, Shulman argues for a knowledge base or

capacity to teach that centers around the following concerns: *content knowledge*, *general pedagogical knowledge* (understanding of the overarching principles of teaching), *curriculum knowledge* (understanding of the materials and tools used in teaching), *pedagogical content knowledge* (understanding of “that special amalgam of content and pedagogy that is uniquely the province of teachers”), *knowledge of learners and their characteristics*, *knowledge of educational contexts*, (understanding the nature or culture of the classroom, the school, the community, and larger social context in which the teacher works), and *knowledge of educational ends, purposes, and values, and their philosophical and historical grounds* (Shulman, 1987).

Particular to the knowledge base of English/language arts teachers, in a study Grossman and Richert (1988) conducted, they found that a high school English teachers’ knowledge base did include the domains of knowledge represented in Shulman’s work. For example, in their two year study with introductory teachers, they found that one overarching element of pedagogical content knowledge for secondary literacy teachers is “an awareness of the ways of conceptualizing the subject matter. In literature, this might include an awareness of the conception of the study of literature as a vehicle for personal response and exploration and an alternative conception and the study of literature as a chronological approach to particular texts and authors” (p. 54). In a later work, Grossman (1990) combines Shulman’s categories into four domains of knowledge: “general pedagogical knowledge, subject matter knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and knowledge of context” (p. 5). In both models of professional knowledge, the authors agree that the knowledge bases do not work in isolation from one another, but rather as an iterative process that teachers draw upon as they made decisions about their daily work.

However, reflection involves more than the rationale dimension of knowing. Banks (1999) states, “Knowledge alone will not help students to develop an empathetic, caring commitment to human and democratic change” (p. 33). The difficulties or uncertainty which confront practitioners when their theory and practice are inadequate or contradicted by experience. Teachers must step

back to reflect and analyze these discontinuities, either in the midst of or in response to experience. This reflective response goes beyond rational problem solving and engages less logical human capacities such as intuition, emotion, and passion. Gay (2000) asserts, “when combined with pedagogical competence, caring becomes a powerful ideological and praxis pillar of culturally responsive pedagogy for students” (p. 76). Therefore, any description of a literacy specialists’ knowledge base must also consider the influence of the heart as well as the head in knowledge construction.

Empathy or empathic understanding has been defined as “a shared emotional response between observer and subject” (Hamburg, 1994, p. 8) and as a kind of knowing that “takes in the whole person, not just intellect but heart too, it touches the emotional and instinctual and social dimensions of the person” (Green, 1986, p. 4). Specifically in the field of literacy education, recognizing both the affective and cognitive dimensions of student learning or knowing has already been recognized an integral component of teaching reading and writing (e.g., Beane, 1990; Messick & Reynolds, 1991; Mizokawa & Hansen-Krening, 2000; Rosenblatt, 1938/1976). For example, Mizokawa and Hansen-Krening (2000) asserts that by examining what the authors call the “ABCs of human experience” (i.e., “A” for affect, “B” for behavior or action, and “C” for cognition), teachers can learn more about how their students interact or engage with texts. In their study, working with graduate level teacher education students, they report “simultaneous attention to the ABCs will guarantee both growing mastery within these domains and opportunities for the teacher to assess growth” (pp. 77-78). There are others in the educational field who will go so far as to say that separating cognitive knowledge from affective knowledge is “practical mischief” (Eisner, 1994). As one creates and constructs understanding of what is read and written, one engages in a process that integrates one’s feelings and thoughts about the major ideas and concepts.

Perhaps most prevalent in the discussion of the role of affect in education is the work of Noddings (1984, 1992, 1996). Noddings (1984) argues that the best way to educate students--of

any age and background--is by investing in their emotional welfare. She suggests teachers needs to work at going beyond “aesthetic caring” which she defines as “caring about things and ideas” to “an ethic of caring” which involves a committed on the parts of both the teachers and the students to “be open to each other” (p. 104). Noddings suggests that it is this commitment to caring, this commitment to humanness of the other, that is critical for engaging all students in their educational endeavors. At the same time, one cannot overemphasize the point that to say “I care” is not a simple thing. Geneva Gay (2000) suggests,

there is much more to interpersonal caring than teachers merely exhibiting feelings of kindness, gentleness, and benevolence toward students, or expressing some generalized sentiments of concern. ... A most effective way to be uncaring and unconcerned is to tolerate and/or facilitate academic apathy, disengagement, and failure. ... Thus, caring in education has dimensions of emotion, intellect, faith, ethics, action and accountability.” (Gay, p. 48)

To fully understand a literacy teacher’s perception of their professional work, the presence of both a cognitive and an affective dimension of knowing must be taken into account.

However, the question remains, to what degree does a literacy specialists cognitive and affective understanding of what it means to be literate influence the way they approach the teaching of literacy? Furthermore, in what ways do these professionals view literacy development as transformational and how does this influence their work?

It is this last question that is particularly intriguing. Teaching students to read, write and communicate not only mean teaching students to be strategic uses of the language, but also to understand the literacy practices of the social communities. At the same time, teachers who pursue a masters in literacy education do not all work in schools in the same capacity. Some work as elementary education teachers, some work as middle school or high school language arts teachers. Still others work as literacy intervention specialists or A.I.S. teachers, whose primary responsibilities are assisting students who have been identified as having serious challenges with

literacy development. And finally, there are those that serve as literacy coaches, peer mentors who provide support as classroom teachers work to make changes to their instructional practices.

Shulman (1987) suggested that all teachers “engage in teaching to achieve educational purposes, to accomplish ends having to do with student literacy, student freedom to use and enjoy, student responsibility to care and care for, to believe and respect, to inquire and discover, to develop understandings skills and values needed to function in a free and just society” (p. 14).

Literacy specialists have a key role in meeting these responsibilities. Hence, in spite of their varied professional responsibilities, it is important to develop a clearer description of the ways a literacy specialists’ professional knowledge influence their work? Furthermore, in what ways do these professionals see their work related to the purposes and ends that Shulman described? In other words, to what extent, do literacy specialists see teaching literacy as related to the principles and practices of social responsibility and social justice?

Conceptual Framework

The assumptions underlying my conceptual framework are derived from the theories and research on literacy and literacy instruction as well as teacher knowledge and teacher practice. The assumptions of this research study are as follows: 1) through advanced study in a graduate literacy education teacher certification program, literacy specialists have developed deep and principled knowledge of and attitudes regarding what it means to be literate and how it should be taught, 2) literacy specialists’ affective and cognitive dimensions of knowing shape their teaching practices as literacy specialists, 3) through advanced study in a graduate literacy education teacher certification program, literacy specialists have developed an awareness of the relationship between literacy development and transformation, and 4) literacy teachers’ professional practices and routines will be more transformational in nature when their own pedagogical content knowledge includes an understanding of the principles of social responsibility and transformational leadership.

The primary unit of analysis is the inter-relationship between the literacy specialist's thoughts, feelings, and actions as they endeavor to improve the literacy abilities of their students and/or colleagues. The nature of professional understandings and the way these thoughts and feelings (A, C) influence their pedagogical actions are represented in Figure 1.2.

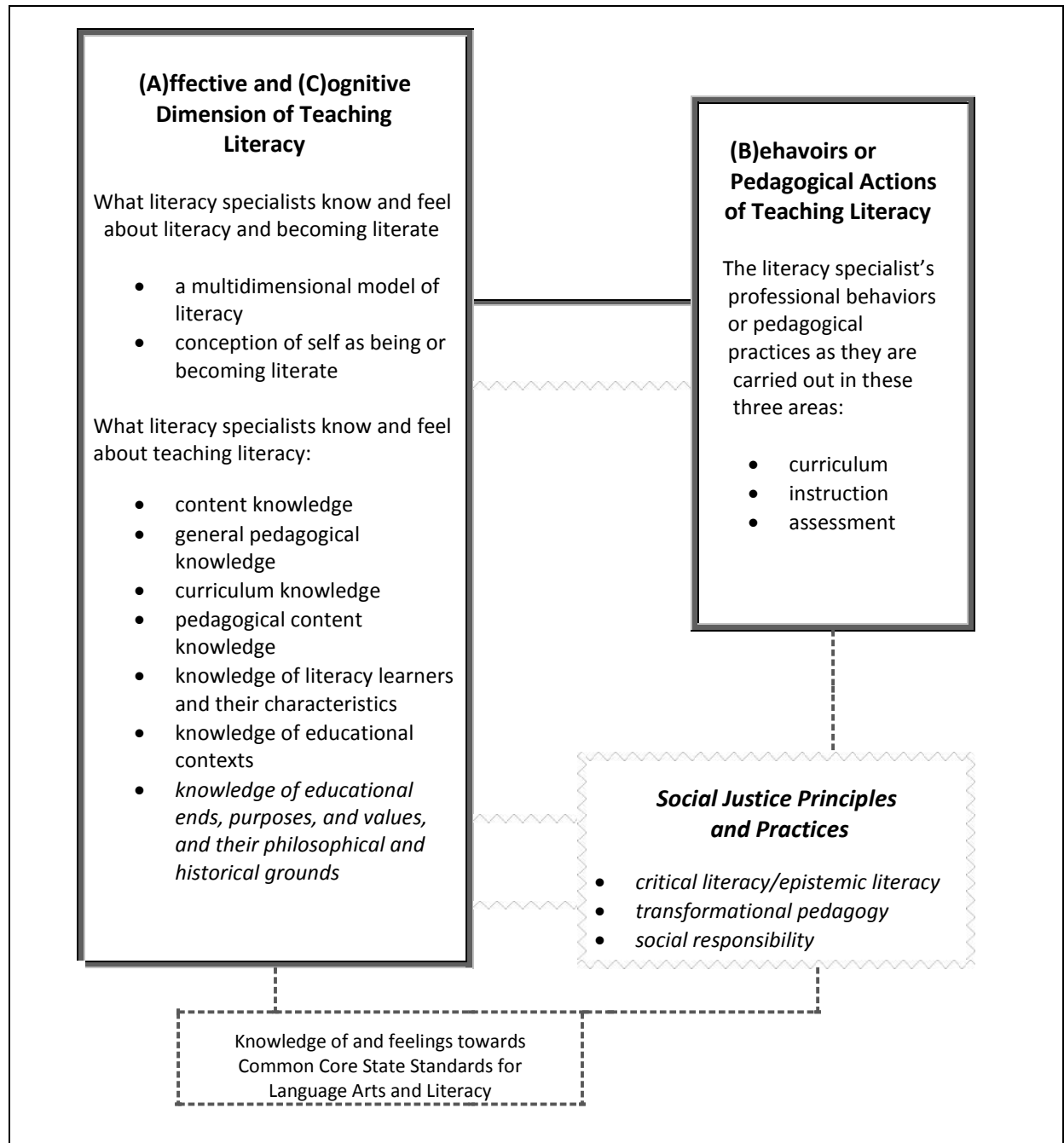


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework.

As a particular area of interest was the ways in which these experiences of the literacy specialist could be described as reflecting principles and practices of social justice, the reader will note that there is a wavy line around the box which identifies social justice practices as including attention to critical literacy, transformative pedagogy, and social responsibility. There is also a corresponding line connecting to the boxes representing the literacy specialists' knowledge, attitudes and professional behaviors. There are no arrows used to designate direct relationships or a set of procedural steps a reflective practitioner would undertake when engaging in their professional work. This was done purposefully to indicate the possibility that sometimes these relationships are neither congruent nor uni-directional. It is the nature of these relationships that are described in the findings section of this study.

The reader will note that there is a dotted line around a box in Figure 1.2 which identifies the Common Core State Standards for Language Arts and Literacy Initiative (2016). However, the Common Core State Standards are not a primary focus of this study. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) represent an additional educational structure that may or may not directly influence school culture and contexts for learning. The standards, by their very nature, provide explicit and implicit messages the regarding the nature of literacy. At the same time the goals of the standards for literacy development may be a part of the classroom culture, but they may not be a part of the literacy specialist's conceptualization of literacy. Therefore, the dotted lines signify the potential influence of the CCSS in relationship to the other identified domains of knowledge that the literacy specialist is considering when designing instruction.

Research Methods

Research Design

A collective case study (Stake, 1994) was designed in order to identify and describe the experience of practicing K-12 professionals who have obtained a Masters degree in Literacy Education. Creswell (1998) states, "conducting the case study provides a picture to help inform our

practice or to see unexplored details of the case” (p. 95). The unit of analysis for this study is the inter-relationship between the literacy specialist’s thoughts, feelings, and actions—both as a teacher of literacy and as a leader of social justice practices. By designing the study in this way, I was able to bind the case by focusing on the experience of those who earned a degree in Literacy Education from the same institution. At the same time, I was able to focus on the experience and the “literacy thinking” of K-12 professionals who have earned a degree as a NYS Literacy Specialist. As a result, I was able to conduct a case study that “would provide unexplored details” of how the teachers utilized this specialized content knowledge in their daily professional practices. An expectation I held was that studying the experience of multiple participants in a collective case study “will lead to better understanding, perhaps better theorizing about a still larger collective” (Stake, p. 237).

As has been stated previously, a unique quality of this particular group of professionals is the fact that they pursued an advanced degree that can serve professionals in a number of ways. Professionals in New York State with a professional certification as a Literacy Specialist B-6 or 5-12 can serve as a classroom teacher, a reading/literacy intervention specialists, a secondary content area teacher or a literacy coach. A goal of this study is to gain insight into the various roles and responsibilities a teacher who has the professional training as a literacy specialist, even if he or she is not hired to serve primarily as a literacy/reading teacher. In order to capture the ways those who have specialized knowledge of literacy development, efforts were made to identify the particular ways these individuals conceptualize their work. In addition, efforts were also made to also examine the ways the participants conceptualize the relationship between teaching literacy and social responsibility in their work.

Selection of Participants

The design of this study required the selection of participants to be “*purposive* rather than random” (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014, *emphasis in original*). Potential participants needed to come from the alumni pool who had completed their graduate school education after 2003 when

the new NYS regulations had been fully implemented. An email invitation to learn about the study was sent to a list of alumni who had graduated from the Literacy Program between 2004-2014. Thirty-five alumni requested more information about the study and agreed to complete an initial survey which provided information about their current professional endeavors.

From the initial responses, thirteen participants were invited to participate in the full study. The participants were invited to participate based on the following criteria (1) currently working as a K-12 teacher, literacy specialist, or literacy coach in Monroe County or one of the neighboring counties; (2) expressed a belief that to teaching literacy should include developing students' social responsibility and critical literacy; (3) expressed a belief the Masters in Literacy Education prepared them to develop students' social responsibility and critical literacy; and (4) expressed a belief that the work of a teacher can be described as the work of a leader. Unfortunately, during the initial round of data collection, four of the teachers dropped out of the study due to a variety of circumstances, health issues, job responsibility change. There were nine teachers who completed all phases of the research project. It is the data from observations and interviews with these nine teachers which is outlined in the findings of this study.

Description of Participants

The participants in this study all completed the certification requirements for masters degree with a concentration in Literacy Education, Birth-Grade 6 or Literacy Education, Grade 5-12. All participants received their Masters Degree between 2006-2014. All participants work in public schools in either Livingston County, Monroe County, Onondaga County, or Ontario County. Of all the participants, only two worked in the same school – one as a reading specialist and one as a sixth grade classroom teacher. A brief description of each of the participants is included below.

Literacy specialists working as classroom teachers. There were four classroom teachers who participated in this study.

Jackson, the senior high school ELA teacher. Jackson completed his Masters in Literacy Education in 2006. At the time of this study, he had been working as a high school classroom teacher for 10 years. His primary responsibility was to teach two sections of an A.P. eleventh grade English class, one section of an eleventh grade Regents English class, and two sections of a twelfth grade American Fiction class. In a given year, he teaches over 125 students.

Aisha, the sixth grade ELA teacher. Aisha completed her Masters in Literacy in 2014. She works as a sixth grade ELA teacher in a K-6 elementary school in an urban setting. She started working as a classroom teacher in this building in 2012. Her primary responsibilities are to teach two sections of English Language Arts. In a given year, she will teach 30-40 students.

Allison, the fifth grade ELA teacher. Allison completed her Masters in Literacy Education in 2011. At the time of this study, she had been working for eight years as a fifth classroom teacher in a suburban district. Her primary responsibility was to teach English Language Arts curriculum, however her instructional focus would shift throughout the day. For example, she would teach two sections of reading instruction to homogeneously grouped students. One set of students are identified as struggling readers or reading below grade level. The other group includes students who have scored either a 3 or a 4 on the New York State test. In addition to these classes, she also taught two sections of ELA which are run using an 80-minute block class. In a given year, she teaches approximately 60-75 students.

Christy, the first grade classroom teacher. Christy completed her Masters in Literacy Education in 2013. Upon completion of her degree, she accepted a position as a first grade classroom teacher in a rural district. In a given year, she will provide instruction for 20-25 students. She also works closely with support-service teachers (e.g., speech pathologist and reading intervention specialist) to provide additional accommodations for her students.

Literacy specialists working as elementary-level intervention teachers. Four participants work as literacy/reading teachers or literacy intervention specialists.

Grace, the K-1 literacy/reading specialist. Grace completed her Masters in Literacy Education in 2011. At the time of this study, she had been working in her K-1 building, in a suburban district for seven years. Starting in the fall, she had switched positions in her building from the role of a classroom teacher to the role of the reading specialist. She believed she had finally landed her dream job. Her primary responsibilities were to provide instructional support for students in first grade who had been identified as reading significantly below grade level. At the time of the study, her caseload included conducting small group remediation sessions outside of the classroom as well as serving as a support teacher during classroom instruction for 48 students.

Jenny, the K-6 literacy/reading intervention specialist. Upon receiving her Masters in Literacy Education in 2012, Jenny has worked as an intervention specialist for the last three years in an urban K-6 elementary school. Her primary responsibilities are to assess students' reading abilities and to provide targeted instruction to help improve students' reading levels through small group instruction. In a given year, she will provide instruction for 30-40 students, ranging from first grade to eighth grade.

Literacy specialists working as secondary level intervention teachers. There were also two senior high level support teachers, one who taught a study skills course for four sections of eighth graders and one teacher who served as a push-in special education teacher as well as taught an additional A.I.S. course for ninth grade students.

Maureen, the ninth grade remedial reading teacher. Maureen completed her Masters in Literacy in 2010. During the time of the study, Maureen's primary responsibility was to serve as the remedial reading teacher for ninth graders. The students she was assigned to teach were attending a specialized school-within-the school. The students were selected for this program because their performance on prior benchmarking assessment indicated they were reading and writing below grade level. Additionally, students are also selected for this program due to behavior recommendations, attendance patterns, or identified special education needs for a smaller learning

environment. In addition, if students are not meeting with success in the regular setting high school, students and their guardians can make a request to join the program.

Over the course of the year, she would work with 30-40 students, many who she saw multiple times during the instructional day. For example, she would push-in to content area classes, such as ninth grade English and Social Studies where she would serve as the literacy specialist support teacher. At other times, she worked as the primary classroom teacher for an Experiential Learning course, which was designed to work on improving reading comprehension abilities as well as writing abilities using an environmental issue-based curriculum. Finally, she worked with all of the ninth graders in this program every day during Learning Lab, which was an instructional period dedicated to reviewing course content, providing 1:1 help to students as well as providing literacy/AIS services.

Taylor, the secondary level literacy specialist. Taylor completed his Masters in Literacy Education in 2014. At the time of this study, he had just started working in a suburban district as an intervention teacher for ninth graders. His primary responsibility was to teach six sections of a Literacy Learning Lab class designed to support students' strategic reading and writing development as well as to prepare them for the increased rigor of a high school curriculum. Each of the class sections contained 10-12 students.

Literacy specialist as the district level literacy coach. Finally, there was one participant who was serving as the literacy coach for teachers both the elementary and secondary teachers in the district.

Carter, the 7-12 literacy coach. Carter completed his Masters in Literacy Education in 2009. Upon completing his degree, he took a position in a suburban district as a special education teacher and reading intervention teacher. In 2012, he was asked to become the Literacy Coach for the 7-12 grade teachers and students in the district. His duties included co-teaching content area classes, in which his responsibility was to teach reading strategies. In addition, he was responsible

for consulting with teachers and staff across the district regarding issues of curriculum planning, large scale writing assessment practices, and developing plans for improvement in response to state wide assessment results. He also designed and delivered professional development workshops for teachers on topics such as Cognitive Coaching, Habits of Mind, and Adaptive Schools.

Collection of Data

As stated earlier, the unit of analysis for this study is the inter-relationship between the literacy specialist's thoughts, feelings, and actions—both as a teacher of literacy and as a leader of social justice practices. To answer the research questions, data was collected and analyzed from questionnaires, interviews, professional observations, field notes, and research memos. The design also included collecting artifacts such as curriculum materials, lesson plans and student handouts. The collection of this extensive data set allowed for a rich description of the experience of the literacy specialist. The individual sources are described in the following paragraphs.

Literacy Specialist Questionnaire. An introductory questionnaire was distributed to all literacy specialists who expressed an interest in participating in the study. The questionnaire was used to gather descriptive information on the literacy specialists' professional background, including years of teaching experience and professional roles and responsibilities. The questionnaire was also used to gather descriptive information on the teachers' conceptualization of literacy and their beliefs and attitudes regarding the curricular and instructional responsibilities of teaching literacy. In order to develop an initial understanding what connections literacy specialists recognized between teaching literacy and social justice, nine prompts were included in the questionnaire. Responses to the prompts were further reviewed during the initial interview with the participants.

9. I believe the goals of the CCLS for LA & Literacy match my definition of "a literate person"...
10. I believe the goals of the CCLS for LA & Literacy should be designed to promote freedom of thought...
11. I believe the goals of the CCLS for LA & Literacy are designed to promote freedom of thought ...

12. I believe the goals of the CCLS for LA & Literacy should be designed to encourage diverse perspectives ...
13. I believe the goals of the CCLS for LA & Literacy are designed to encourage diverse perspectives ...
14. I believe the goals of the CCLS for LA & Literacy should be designed to encourage critical and caring reflection along with productive dialogue...
15. I believe the goals of the CCLS for LA & Literacy are designed to encourage critical and caring reflection along with productive dialogue...
16. I believe the CCLS for LA & Literacy goals should require students to master the social, cultural, and political dimensions of language...
17. I believe the goals of the CCLS for LA & Literacy do require students to master the social, cultural, and political dimensions of language...

Table 1. Literacy – Social Justice Connection Prompts

Semi-structured interviews with teacher-participants. A minimum of three teacher-participant interviews were conducted with all research participants. These interviews were conducted between January-December 2015. All interviews followed McCracken’s (1988) protocol for conducting face-to-face interviews. The interviews were semi-structured in order to ensure that all relevant issues are covered, but in a manner that additional themes could be addressed and further explored if they happened to arise (Marton, 1981; Marton & Booth, 1997; McCracken, 1988). Marton and Booth (1997) assert, “an individual’s awareness that existed in some latent form [can] be brought to a reflected or thematized state through the researcher’s interventions during the course of an interview” (pp. 130-131).

The first interview focused on the participant’s understanding of and attitudes towards literacy, the relationship between teaching literacy and social responsibility, teaching literacy as transformational teacher leadership and to what extent did their work in masters degree program focused on literacy education prepare them for these endeavors. The second and third type of interview were designed as a “pre-observation” and “post-observation” interview and focused on the professional work that was to be observed. If the participant was working as a classroom teacher or as an literacy/reading intervention specialist, then during the interview questions were posed to clarify the pedagogical decisions they had made in preparation for the lesson. The participants were also asked to discuss the connections between their rationales for the curricular

decisions they made and their beliefs regarding the transformational nature of literacy. On the other hand, if the participant was serving the role of literacy coach then questions were asked in order to clarify the pedagogical decisions made in preparation for the professional development activity and what aspects of their graduate coursework influenced their decision making. A fourth and concluding interview was used as an opportunity to allow participants to review the transcripts of the interviews for accuracy and clarity. This interview was also used to clarify or illuminate recurrent themes found during the data collection and analysis. In addition it provided the participants an opportunity to reflect on this experience as a whole.

Observation field notes of literacy specialists. Observations of the literacy specialist in action were conducted in order to gather descriptive information on the ways the participants' beliefs about teaching literacy and leadership aligned with their actual professional practices. The observations were used in the triangulation of the data gathered from the teacher interviews. Observational field notes were recorded and typed into a secure computer file. The field notes were recorded according to an observational protocol that includes both descriptive and reflective notes (Creswell, 1998). Observations were documented in a field notebook and later typed into a MSWord™ document. Summary notes from all classroom observations and interviews were also saved as individual PDF™ documents.

Curriculum and assessment materials, including targeted Common Core Learning Standards. The literacy specialists' curriculum materials including: lesson plans, including targeted Common Core Learning Standards, student assignments, readings, student handouts were also collected for analysis. The materials were collected in order to examine what the explicit and implicit messages the materials contain regarding the transformational nature of literacy. These materials also helped explain the professional's definition of literacy and how these materials characterize the participant's experiences of teaching and learning literacy.

Data Analysis

All data were analyzed in order to determine the “lived experiences” of literacy specialist--specifically, the relationship between the teachers’ thoughts, feelings and actions. The various data sources were analyzed according to Merriam’s (1988) case study methodology in order to develop rich description of the social unit of analysis (the phenomenon of being a teacher of literacy). In order to adequately describe the phenomena, the interview data were analyzed according to the five stages suggested by McCracken (1988). Triangulation of the data was achieved as a result of collecting data from various sources.

Conducting qualitative research is a arduous task. As McCracken (1988) asserts, “every qualitative interview is potentially, a Pandora’s box. Every qualitative researcher is, potentially, the hapless victim of a shapeless inquiry. The scholar who does not control [her] data will surely sink without a trace” (p. 22). Therefore, the data collection and analysis of this study was carefully ordered and structured in order to avoid drowning in the mire of interview transcripts and analytic memos. It was only after careful analysis and confirmation of the interthemes which emerged from the data that empirical statements were made concerning the literacy specialists’ thoughts, feelings and actions regarding what it means to be literate and the relationship between teaching literacy and the role of social justice principles and practices as a part of the professional work.

Findings and Discussion

As a result of careful validation of the evidence, five assertions are presented which summarize the findings of this study. Erickson (1986) suggests that findings in qualitative research are best defined as empirical assertions “generated by reviewing data corpus” in order to “establish an evidentiary warrant” (p. 146). The assertions directly answer the major research questions at the beginning of this work. Excerpts from the data set are provided to illustrate the significance of the findings.

- Assertion 1. Literacy specialists conceptualize literacy as multidimensional.

- Assertion 1a. Literacy specialists believe their masters in literacy education provided them with essential knowledge which is distinctive from other K-12 professionals and essential to designing effective literacy instruction.
- Assertion 2. Literacy specialists recognize literacy development fosters a sense of connectedness with other members of their community-ies.
 - Assertion 2a. Literacy specialists recognize becoming literate is a power-laden phenomenon.
 - Assertion 2b. Literacy specialists believe teachers should use social justice practices in order to facilitate transformational sense of literacy.
- Assertion 3. At times, literacy specialists' teaching practices do not align with their conceptualization of literacy development.
 - Assertion 3a. Literacy specialists routinely design literacy instruction which appropriately addresses the linguistic, and cognitive dimensions of literacy development.
 - Assertion 3b. Literacy specialists rarely design literacy instruction which addresses the sociocultural dimensions of literacy development; literacy instruction provides a limited sense of connectedness and empowerment.
- Assertion 4. Literacy specialists are not prepared to be leaders of social justice principles and practices.
 - Assertion 4a. Literacy specialists rarely design literacy instruction which reflects the principles and practices of social justice.
 - Assertion 4b. Literacy specialists recognize they have limited knowledge of how to use the principles and practices of social justice in their professional work.

The assertions directly answer the major research questions posed at the beginning of this work.

Assertions 1-2 address the research questions: (1) What are literacy specialists' understanding of

and attitudes towards literacy? How do they define being literate? (2) How closely aligned are the literacy specialists' beliefs about becoming literate with the principles and practices of a social responsibility and social justice? Assertion 3 addresses the question (3) How closely aligned are the literacy specialists' thoughts, feelings, and professional actions regarding becoming literate and teaching literacy? Finally, assertion 4 addresses question 4, to what extent does an advanced teacher certification program in literacy education influence teachers' understanding of the what it means to be literate and the relationships between teaching literacy and being a leader of social justice principles and practices?

Defining the Literacy Experience

Assertion 1: Literacy specialists conceptualize literacy as multidimensional.

The participants in this study described becoming literate as a developmental process which includes attention to the linguistic, cognitive and sociocultural dimensions of written language. The participants acknowledged that being literate includes an ability to effectively utilize the fundamental strategies and skills of creating and constructing texts, as well as developing an appreciation for and attention to the nuances regarding how texts are used in a variety of social contexts. To this end, the participants defined literacy as a state of being or becoming literate which included:

1. A life-long learning process of becoming able to effectively and efficiently use a range of multimodal systems (i.e., linguistic and other sign systems).
2. Using cognitive processes and strategies to create and construct meaning.
3. Using literacy to identify with and/or connect with a variety of audiences for a variety of purposes.
4. Having an appreciation for literacy and a desire to learn to use reading writing and communication for a variety of purposes.

The literacy teachers' descriptions were drawn from both their professional knowledge regarding subject matter and pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987; Grossman, 1990). For example, in naming the set of abilities or skills, many of the participants identified the major language arts content areas of reading, writing, and communication. In addition, many of the participants specifically added the qualifier of being able to read, write, and communicate "for a variety of purposes and audiences." This is a key phrase that is emphasized in both the Common Core State Standards as well as Kucer's (2014) definition of literacy. In addition, all of their descriptions of literacy acknowledge the impact of the digital age and the ways of using these new technologies for information and communication. The participants' descriptions are illustrated in Table 1.4.

Aisha	A person that is able to <i>communicate effectively</i> through different modes, whether <i>written, verbal</i> . Before I just thought it was reading and writing. But now I understand it is also being <i>able to understand, comprehend</i> what someone is saying to you or what is being presented to you or what you are saying or writing to someone else. ... I don't think there is ever a time when you can say, "you are literate, that's it." <i>It's going to continue to happen throughout your life.</i>
Allison	The literate person is someone who <i>reads, writes</i> , but <i>also</i> views, listens, and speaks in a way that can be <i>comprehended. By various audiences</i> . It's someone who is also able to <i>recognize they're, what they're bringing</i> to what they are reading, writing, listening, speaking. ... what is that called, <i>transactional?</i> The <i>give and take</i> of those different parts of being literate.
Carter	A literate person is someone who operates at various capacities across those four modes of what literacy is. <i>Reading, writing, speaking and listening</i> . And I believe being a literate person, using those abilities as a tool to learn and become more literate. You know, there is always new perspectives, <i>and the individual needs to use his literate abilities</i> in order to <i>learn</i> in those new situations. If you have stepped out of your house, if you have interacted with the world in some way, you <i>have opened up opportunities</i> to interact with that text in a new way.
Christy	To be a literate person, means to me, <i>to be able to interpret</i> your environment. To be able to <i>communicate with people IN</i> your environment. I would also put something in there about being <i>effectively able to do it</i> , not just being able to do it, but being able to do it WELL. I think you <i>NEVER</i> stop learning <i>how to be a literate person. Or learning the literacy</i> around you.
Grace	Your ability to understand <i>not only written language</i> but also <i>spoken</i> language. And, not just <i>texts</i> . We talk a lot about environmental texts. And the ability <i>to communicate</i> and to <i>understand</i> how others are communicating with you. ... I think it's <i>so important</i> especially today with all the changes in technology and in <i>our world</i> you <i>HAVE</i> to be continually <i>learning and becoming literate</i> . Because it's constantly changing.
Jackson	A literate person is somebody who can read, write, listen, think, in order to function in

	society as a whole, but also in <i>whatever they deem to be their niche</i> or their job or...you know, and that person may be literate in a way that I am not. ...I think they need to open their minds that there <i>isn't always a yes or no answer</i> .
Jenny	Well, it's <i>multidimensional</i> You know, being able to <i>read</i> . Being able to express yourself through <i>writing</i> . Being able to <i>speak and listen</i> ... those are all...I think you need all of those in <i>order to be literate in our society</i> . And I also believe that <i>technology is becoming more and more of a way of life</i> . But also, it is important to be a literate person because we are asked to read, write, listen, <i>speak in every part of our lives</i> . It doesn't have to be educational, literacy is involved if you are buying something at the store or with just another person on the street.
Maureen	The literate person is someone, who is literate in many different ways. Of course, the traditional would be <i>reading and writing</i> . But also, <i>now</i> , in the twenty-first century there are so many <i>different</i> types of literacy. I'm thinking probably <i>navigate through</i> different mediums whether it's a <i>video</i> , a blog or <i>directions</i> or even <i>INSTAGRAM</i> , posting pictures. in the world that we live in today, there's just <i>literature</i> and digital and old school texts <i>everywhere</i> . So, in order to <i>interact</i> with others and to <i>collaborate</i> and to have <i>thoughtful discussions</i> and be <i>informed</i> in the world, it's important to be a literate person.
Taylor	To me, being literate means, the ability to <i>read and write to gain information</i> and how you use that information...including you <i>have</i> to have the ability to be a <i>critical thinker</i> . And I even tell the kids, when I teach them a <i>strategy</i> , "You're, you can <i>use this outside of school</i> So being able to take your ideas out of your head put them on <i>paper or text or video or music or being able to express your ideas in multiple and different ways</i> , I think that's an integral part of being literate nowadays.

Table 2. Multimodal and Multidimensional Definition of Literacy³

Many of the literacy specialists also referenced the relationship between language use and 'context' and 'culture' when describing the literate individual. However, these explanations were less likely to be directly linked to the theorists the literacy specialists studied in their masters program (e.g, Au, 2000; Delpit, 1995; Gee, 2001; Kucer, 2014). Instead, they used examples from their own personal literacy experiences or using descriptions of working with their students. Jenny stated,

"I think being a young, white, female coming into this population I had to learn a lot about this culture. And a lot of times they would say, 'well I say it to my Mom.' And I would have to say, okay. But there is a fine line here because I don't want to disrespect their culture, ... So, especially in the sixth grade they are teaching them home language and education

³ Italics in transcript denotes *emphatic delivery*.

language. These are terms that the some of the sixth grade teachers are using. And I think giving them times to converse or express themselves in both languages or discourses is important. At the same time, I do believe that being a literate person or a productive person in society, the way that you speak to someone or the how you reflect on what you are saying is important and it is a part of being a literate person” (Jenny, initial interview).

Grace also noted how the linguistic and cultural diversity of her school community influenced her awareness of the sociocultural dimension of literacy development.

“Well in my school, it is described as a suburban community, but I didn’t realize until the last couple of years *how* rural it is? ... I worked with families who absolutely were *not* literate in English, but *were* in Spanish, in their native language. And. I could *absolutely see the difference* when working with those_students... not that they weren’t literate at all? But, their need for English language was different...” (Grace, initial interview).

In addition to recognizing the influence of the needs and experiences of a community on the individual’s literacy practices, the participants in this study also recognized that becoming literate is also affected by one’s desire to be literate. The participants in this study all spoke of the idea that literacy is something that you have to want. For example, Taylor pressed the point that being literate wasn’t just about having the knowledge and skills to be literate. He emphasized the importance of one’s level of engagement in their literacy practices: “I think there is a link between being literate and developing an appreciation for reading because being literate is just, not reading because you *have* to but because you *want to*. Because you *want to* be told a story or you want to quote-unquote *escape* from reality. ...Or you want to experience a *different* part of life” (Taylor, post observation interview 1, *emphasis noted in transcript*).

Jackson too stressed the importance of attending to one’s feelings about what is read and written. “Yeah. You have to care. You have to have empathy for people, which a lot of them....don’t (hesitating). I wouldn’t say a lot of them, but some of them don’t have empathy for others. And I

mean the literature that we do during eleventh grade actually does help them see that. Because a lot of the literature requires the reader to have empathy.” (Jackson, post interview 2). Becoming literate to these literacy specialists means not only to develop the abilities to use language effectively, but also to have an invested interest in the literacy events. In effect, it requires what Garner and Alexander (1991) called a synthesis of “skill, will, and thrill.”

These findings suggest that literacy specialist have an expanded view of literacy. They do not see the literate person simply as someone who can read well. Instead, they define the literate person as one who is capable of reading, writing, and communicating with a variety of audiences, in a variety of forms, for a variety of purposes. In addition, becoming literate is an active process. The literacy learner uses literacy to create or construct new knowledge as well as a means to identify his or her membership within a particular social group. Finally, the participants in this study advocated for a description of literacy development that will continue through the course of one’s life, provided the individual has both the willingness and desire to engage oneself in these endeavors.

Assertion 2: Literacy specialists recognize becoming literate fosters a sense of connectedness and empowerment.

One of the goals of this research project was to examine the participants’ conceptualizations of literacy in order to determine whether or not their understandings reflected a belief that becoming literate provides the individual with the ability to empower and transform themselves and to participate within various social communities or discourses. In answer to this question, a theme distinctly emerged which confirmed that the teachers *do* recognize the transformative power that undergirds the literacy experience.

Assertion 2a. Becoming literate is a power-laden phenomenon. The participants see literacy as a gateway to social, cultural, and political power. In their descriptions, the potential for both intrinsic and extrinsic empowerment that becoming and being literate manifested was

unmistakable. Some saw power as intrinsic: the power to use language to be creative, imaginative, to change one's mind, or to define one's social identity(ies). Others saw more extrinsic aspects of power: power to act, power to participate in social action, power to get a job, power to engage with others. As Carter noted, "literacy is empowering because it enhances your ability to contribute to society and your community"(initial interview). Still others saw empowerment directly related to one's growing sophistication or control of language. Christy noted that for her students, what is more empowering is when they see their new knowledge come alive in print. She says, "when we have finished a unit and we bind their books and so it *looks* like a book, it's not just stapled pieces of paper? And they feel like their work is important to the class, but also it's valued enough that we would do something special to it, to put it in the library, like a book (Christy, PreObservation Interview 2).

Like Christy, Grace also works with beginning readers and writers. She also noted how empowering the learning can be for her students. "They were excited to be *re-reading*. Which can often be a struggle. You know, 'I already read that, I don't want to read it again.' So, but they were excited to be doing that. And then, the minute I opened the new text and they saw that they knew *every* single word on the *page*" (Grace, Post Observation Interview 1, emphasis in transcript). At the same time, Grace noted that this process can be overwhelming or feel oppressive at times. She says, "Because, it is a *VULNERABLE experience* for them. Even at *this age*. They *KNOW*. They know when they aren't making progress at the same speed as their friends. They catch on and they see it and they feel it" (Grace, Post Observation Interview 1⁴).

Jackson also noted that for his students, becoming literate can be isolating because it causes a sense of separation from one's family or primary discourse community. He says, "For some families becoming fully literate is not a priority and it can be oppressive to them. The family sees it oppressive because they see the kid changing in ways that is different from them. Is this a bad

⁴ Upper case letters in transcript indicate noticeably loud volume.

thing? From the family’s perspective? Maybe. Yes. From my perspective? No. Because I’m trying to help the student...gain an awareness of the world around him and to be able to interact with people about many multifaceted things” (Jackson, Initial Interview).

The participants’ descriptions echo Simon’s (1992) assertion that literacy is inherently connected with empowerment. Having the ability to use language to communicate in the social communities in which one exists provides the individual with opportunities to “draw upon their own cultural resources” as a means of developing their understanding about their world and the language that they use to define it (Simon, 1992). In addition, the participants’ descriptions reflect Yagelski’s assertion that literacy “represents a kind of power to participate in extraordinarily complex ways in the social, cultural, and political discourses that shape people’s lives” (p. 6).

Assertion 2b. Literacy specialists believe teachers should use social justice practices in order to facilitate transformational sense of literacy. The participants in the study also confirmed their awareness of the sociocultural dimension of literacy with an emphasis on the relationship between the individual’s literacy development and the influence of those who teach them. They recognized that an individual’s sense of connectedness to others in their discourse communities was dependent upon how inclusive their mentors or teachers were in guiding their literacy development. In their responses to the initial questionnaire as well as repeatedly during each interview, the participants consistently stated that in order to facilitate a transformational sense of literacy, literacy instruction should include attention to social justice practices “almost always” (AA) or “in every instance” (EI).

	Aisha	Allison	Carter	Christy	Grace	Jackson	Jenny	Maureen	Taylor
10. I believe the goals of the CCLS for LA & Literacy should be designed to promote freedom of thought...	EI	AA	EI	AA	AA	EI	AA	EI	AA
11. I believe the goals of the CCLS for LA & Literacy are designed to promote freedom of thought ...	R	S	S	S	U	S	S	R	U
12. I believe the goals of the CCLS for LA & Literacy should be designed to encourage diverse perspectives ...	EI	AA	EI	EI	AA	EI	AA	EI	EI
13. I believe the goals of the CCLS for LA & Literacy are designed to encourage diverse perspectives ...	S	S	S	S	U	S	S	R	U

14. I believe the goals of the CCLS for LA & Literacy should be designed to encourage critical and caring reflection along with productive dialogue...	AA	AA	EI	AA	AA	EI	AA	EI	AA
15. I believe the goals of the CCLS for LA & Literacy are designed to encourage critical and caring reflection along with productive dialogue...	S	S	S	S	U	U	S	S	U

Table 3. Using Social Justice Principles in Literacy Instruction

They described the knowledge and abilities of the literate person as one who should value freedom of thought, critical thinking and the consideration of diverse perspectives. In addition, the literate person should be capable of engaging dialogue with others that reflects an ability to engage in critical and caring reflection. However, in spite of this resounding belief that literacy teachers have a responsibility to design instruction that has the potential to enhance students' sense of social responsibility, the results of this study indicated that the participants' beliefs did not always align with their professional planning and action.

The Experience of Teaching Literacy

Assertion 3. At times, literacy specialists' teaching practices do not align with their conceptualization of literacy development.

This assertion did not come as much of a surprise. Rarely in life do all things come together in perfect alignment. And yet, even though all of the aspects of the literacy specialists' actions did not align with their professional knowledge, there was evidence of some congruency. Literacy professionals were most likely to utilize practices which fostered a deep and principled understanding of the linguistic and cognitive dimensions of literacy. Less routine were practices which developed students abilities to understand literacy as social practice. As a result, opportunities were limited for students to engage in activities designed to foster their social consciousness as well as their abilities to engage in critical and caring dialogue and reflection. The evidence indicating moments of alignment as well as when knowledge and actions were not aligned are described in the discussion that follows.

Assertion 3a. Literacy specialists routinely design instruction which appropriately addresses the linguistic, and cognitive dimensions of literacy development. Across the K-12 continuum and content areas, teacher consistently included instructional activities which focused on developing students' use of their mind as well as use of the "code." The major components of these lessons at the different grade levels are summarized in the table that follows (Table 4).

<p style="text-align: center;">Elementary Intervention Specialist (Grade 1)</p> <p>Guided Reading (small group/leveled text)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phonics/Word Work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ "I can see patterns or parts in words" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Writing word/parts ▪ Magnetic letters; Word bags • Decoding/Comprehension Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reread/Prepare <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reread text; complete RR ▪ Introduce/preview new text ○ Read/Assist ○ Reinforce effective decoding strategies; use of visual, syntactic, semantic cues • Discuss/Respond <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ "This book reminds me of _____" • Writing About Reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ "I can write with good spacing" or "Write one thing about...." 	<p style="text-align: center;">Elementary Classroom Teacher (Grade 1)</p> <p>Guided Reading (small group/leveled texts)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word Study • Whisper Reading • Decoding/Comprehension Strategy Instruction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Use of three cueing system ○ Inferencing <p>Whole Class Reading (e.g. poems)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reading, highlighting, looking for patterns, sight words, rhyming words <p>ELA Centers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Spelling station, "Mix and Fix" ○ Independent Reading station <p>Writing Projects (animal research reports)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Text features (Title, Table of Contents) ○ Main topic, facts about topic, closing statement
<p style="text-align: center;">Elementary Intervention Specialist (Grades 4-6)</p> <p>Guided Reading (small group/leveled text)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehension Strategy Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Before Reading (Reread/Prepare) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review what has been read ▪ Preview new reading (chapter) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teacher guides ▪ Vocabulary/Word Work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Find word in passage; write down sentence ○ During Reading (Read/Assist) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reinforce strategic reading ▪ Use "questions to think about" ○ After Reading (Discuss/Respond) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teacher leads review of reading using "questions to think about" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Literal level ▪ Inferential level ▪ <i>Writing about Reading</i> **rarely included. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Secondary Intervention Specialist (Grade 9)</p> <p>Guided Reading (whole class)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehension Strategy Development - close reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Before Reading (Prepare) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Activate Background Knowledge (content) ▪ Preview new text (reading, video) ○ During Reading (Assist) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use writing to record thinking in notebooks; reinforcing strategic comprehension <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Uclose reading/viewing ▪ Text features; topic; key details ▪ Teacher checks in with individual student ▪ Teacher provides questions to guide independent reading ○ After Reading (Discuss/Respond) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Answer teacher prepared questions

Secondary Classroom Teacher (Grade 11)	Secondary Literacy Coach (Grade 11/Chemistry Class)
<p>Literacy Development Through Reading Literature (whole class)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before Reading/Review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reading Quiz (literal level comprehension) ○ Review quiz to activate background knowledge (content) ○ Distributes character development handout <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teacher guides students work (I-R-E pattern) • During Reading (Assist students' independent practice) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Independent reading/silent reading ○ Distributes a reading guide to reinforce strategic comprehension <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Character development ▪ Author's craft: symbolism ○ Teacher checks in with students to verify • After Reading (<i>Discuss/Respond</i>) -- <i>if time</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Answer teacher prepared questions about content and literary elements</i> 	<p>Literacy Development Through Content Learning (whole class)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before Reading/Warm-Up Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Activating Content Knowledge (Law of Conservation) ○ Activating Content Literacy Knowledge (Determine, Identify, Distinguish) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "What can I do when I come across an unfamiliar word...." ▪ Partner share/Four hands • During Reading- pair reading/silent reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Student A: reads to highlight unfamiliar words (3-5 Para) ○ Student B: reads to paraphrase main idea • After Reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A&B Discuss unfamiliar words and write definitions in margins ○ Teachers pass out another version of text with <u>glossary</u> ○ Whole class discussion of content (main idea of text) ○ Whole class debrief of strategy practice

Table 4. Commonalities Across K-12 Literacy Instruction

All lessons observed followed the design and pacing of a guided reading lesson. All lessons included a scaffolded structure which attended to the students' literacy development before, during and after reading. At the same time, the objectives would be set according to the specific needs of the students and would involve a balance between isolated word learning and conceptual development and using reading and writing for meaningful purposes. The lessons clearly and explicitly focused on developing and refining key mental strategies used to create and construct meaning. At the same time, consistent attention was given to the types of texts that the individual students were reading and the "multimodal systems through which meaning is conveyed" (Kucer, 2014). On the other hand, the teachers' focus on the individual students' development of these strategies often took precedence over collaborative or cooperative learning experiences in which the students would have equal opportunity to learn how to use their literacy as a member of a discourse community.

Assertion 3b. Literacy specialists rarely design literacy instruction which addresses the sociocultural dimensions of literacy development. As Kucer has explained, literacy is not just an individual practice but it is a social practice. To be literate, one must learn how to use literacy to “negotiate and critique their transactions with the world.” For students to develop this awareness and appreciation for the social nature of literacy, they must have opportunities to co-construct their knowledge of the text and in a manner where they are seen as voices of authority, equal to the teacher. When prompted to discuss this disconnect between their understanding of literacy development and how they were designing their instruction, four themes emerged.

Sometimes teachers put the onus on the students. Comments suggested that students weren’t cognitively ready for this type of learning. For example Grace said, “At this level, the focus for writing is usually dictated. Focused on spelling, *not thinking*” (Grace, Observation 2). Taylor asserted, “I think it’s just because of the age.They don’t really care too much about what’s going on outside of what’s impacting them.” (Taylor, Post Observation 1).

Other times, the participants suggested the CCLS modules or the required reading intervention program used were too restricting. For example, Christy noted she felt that the reading program she was required to use limited perspective-taking because of the explicit attention on text based meaning, “I feel bad when it’s a day when we’re using a lower level text because the discussion is really limited” (Christy, Post Observation 1). Jackson’s criticism of the requirements of the curriculum for his eleventh graders echoed Christy’s concerns for her first graders. He emphasized his concerns over the emphasis on tracking individual progress and how this limited his ability to design instructional activities where students could practice co-constructing knowledge about what was read. “We do have a whole class discussion, but it comes after they finish reading each story. We will also have a brief conversation, but after they take the reading quiz each day” (Jackson, Pre Obs 1).

Still other participants acknowledged it was because they still felt they were novices and they lacked either the confidence or the experience with utilizing these participatory methods as a part of their instruction which stopped them from making them a part of classroom routine. As Aisha admitted, “I’m still trying to figure out the best way to pose questions to get them to engage in discussion” (Aisha, Post Observation 1).

At the same time, while the instructional practices observed in this study rarely addressed the sociocultural dimension of literacy development, Aisha was the one teacher whose practice provided a glimpse into what this type of instruction could be how it could routinely contrast from the others’ model of instruction. To illustrate this shift in focus, it is best to compare and contrast both Allison’s fifth grade lessons and Aisha’s sixth grade literacy lessons. Both Aisha and Allison followed a similar framework to designing and delivering their lessons (see Table 5). Both teachers used a guided reading model to scaffold their instruction and included key moments of instructional tasks and information which was designed to guide and enhance students’ learning before, during and after reading.

Grade 5 Classroom Teachers (Allison)	Grade 6 Classroom Teachers (Aisha)
<p>Literacy Response Groups (small group/leveled texts)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before Reading: Read Aloud/Mini Lesson <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher - Guided Practice with Whole Class • Before/During Reading: Review of Group Routine <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Reading Group (Leveled) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Students read silently ▪ Students answer questions from reading packet ▪ Teacher circulates and Guides and Supports group with strategy instruction as warranted <p>Extended Writing About Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essay on what rights from UDHR were challenged 	<p>Literacy Response Groups (small group/leveled texts)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before Reading: Read Aloud/Mini Lesson <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Modeling Strategy Practice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Think Aloud • Before/During Reading: Review of Group Routine <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Student Led Group with “Club Captain” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Captain checks student reading progress ○ Captain leads comprehension check ○ Captain selects journal prompts ○ Teacher circulates and Guides and Supports Group with strategy instruction as warranted <p>Extended Writing About Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written and oral research reports on social issue

Table 5. Commonalities Across K-12 Literacy Instruction

However, the difference between the two lessons was the opportunities Aisha provided her students to serve as leaders of their own learning. Through the use of book clubs with a “club captain” she allowed the students to negotiate their own critical conversations regarding the group had read. Aisha would begin her lessons similar to Allison’s in that both would begin with a read aloud and then a mini-lesson which highlighted a particular reading strategy she wanted the students to practice during their small group discussions. On the other hand, while Allison circulated throughout the class to meet with groups and oversee their progress, in Aisha’s class the students selected a club captain for each lesson that was responsible for facilitating the group’s learning and to keep all peers engaged in the discussion at hand. When Aisha visited a group, she would ask the Club Captain to share a report based on the consensus of the group, rather than checking on the status of each individual. These subtle yet significant shifts in moving from a focus on the individual to the group, allowed Aisha’s students the possibility of transforming their understanding of how they can use literacy to think critically and to help each other develop the skills to formulate, document, and justify their conclusions about what they have read.

Assertion 3c. Literacy specialists’ actions may reflect some of the principles and practices of social justice, but it is seldom intentional. In spite of the dearth of attention to developing students’ understanding of literacy as a set of social practices used by a particular social group or community, there was some attention to the students’ development of a social consciousness. Though, this was neither consistent nor intentional. For example, in Jenny’s room where she met with her students, she had a poster hanging behind them which said “FAIR isn’t everyone getting the same thing. FAIR is everybody getting what they need to be successful.” When I asked her if she had put this up or if it was in the room when she started the year she said, “I had it in my first grade room, actually. I put it up at the beginning of the year. And we did briefly...someone had asked about it. (*) But I think it might be a good thing to come back to. (Jenny, post observation 2).

When teachers did engage in practices which had the potential to develop students' sense of social responsibility and social justice they most commonly utilized curriculum materials which raised questions about particular social injustices (historical or contemporary) and promoted characters from culturally diverse backgrounds and themes of diversity and inclusion. To revisit Aisha's and Allison's classes, both of these teachers purposefully selected reading materials for their students which included social issues which were relevant to young adults in the United States and across the globe. Allison designed her lessons using elements from one of the modules included in the New York State CCLS reading curriculum, Enhance New York. In this module, students were assigned to read the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Then, after developing an understanding of the UDHR, students were guided in reading a series of children's literature and young adult novels which focused on a time in history when children's rights were being effected. As Allison said in a pre-observation interview, "Well exposing kids to multicultural texts, *I think it is essential*. You know, I have *noticed my kids don't pick up these types of books on their own?* And so, reading these together and the exposure to the individuals in the books and the themes helps *broaden their horizons* as far as what is out there. *It increases their empathy*. I think it's important to help support students with that." (Allison, pre observation 1).

Aisha also saw the importance of exposing her students to wide range of texts and perspectives about the world. In addition to her book clubs, she had her students read an article each week about a current issue in the news. Aisha's purpose for this routine was very clear:

They write reflections. (laughs) Everything is a reflection. I do "the article of the week," where *I give them a news article every week JUST BECAUSE* I want them to *be aware of things*. And I want to get *THEIR PERSEPCTIVE* on the situation. So, they read the article, they analyze it, and then they write a reflection. And then, every Wednesday, we get in a circle and we have a conversation about the article and their reflections. And you should see, it just comes to life. And they are *developing their voice* in a way that is *productive*. In a

way that won't get them in trouble. But they are learning how to express themselves and to communicate effectively. (Aisha, final interview).

Maureen was another teacher who also made an effort to design literacy instruction around issues in her students' communities. She also encouraged them to think more critically about issues they were reading and discussing. "I try to give them topics that they can debate and can consider from multiple perspectives. You know hot topics that will *affect them in the future?*" (Maureen, Post Observation 2). In the end though, it was clear that the participants in this study did not see themselves as leaders of social justice principles and practices.

Assertion 4. Literacy specialists do not believe they are prepared to be instructional leaders of social justice principles and practices.

In this study, the data illustrated the participants did not see themselves as leaders of social justice principles and practices. In spite of this setback, what was encouraging is that the participants did see a relationship between developing students' social consciousness and literacy development. Furthermore, while they recognized they have limited knowledge, they expressed a clear desire to learn more.

Assertion 4a. Literacy specialists recognize they have limited knowledge of how to use the principles and practices of social justice in their professional work, but desire more.

The participants were quite clear. They want to aid students' abilities to engage in critical and caring reflection, to consider ideas from multiple perspectives, and to develop one's "perspective taking abilities which move from self or authority to self *and* other to the group to society to the coordination of these multiple perspectives" (Berman, p. 95). In their final interviews, the participants clearly expressed a desire for their teacher certification programs to include more attention to these aspects of literacy development. Table 6. illustrates their position, in their own words.

Allison	I don't remember using the terms "social responsibility" or "caring" throughout my time at Nazareth. I definitely think working with these terms would have helped me
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	to become more aware of what they means and the expectations.
Carter	Yeah. I think the idea that there is a relationship between literacy and empowerment would be a good theme for me to walk around with. I think I do it subtly, "yeah, this will help you in the real world." But, it would be good for me to be more explicit about it in my daily practice.
Grace	I think my passion, knowledge, and experiences helps me to be a leader, but I think it is always good to have more opportunities to learn more. I also think it would be great to connect with other alumni to find out how they are trying to accomplish these same goals.
Maureen	I want to create classrooms where students can learn how to engage in critical and caring reflection and dialogue, but I am not sure how to do that.

Table 6. What They Need From Teacher Preparation -- In Their Own Words

Implications and Concluding Remarks

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between the professional knowledge and actions of graduate from a masters degree program in literacy education in order to identify and describe the commonalties across their conceptualizations and their actions regarding the experiences of both being literate and of teaching students to be literate. Although it would be a mistake to make generalizations regarding all literacy teachers' conceptualizations of literacy, the results of this study do raise questions which call for additional analysis and action. For example, the findings demonstrated that professionals who complete an advanced degree in literacy education have a complex and principled understanding which reflects the current theoretical and evidence based foundations of reading, writing, communication and the roles of being a teacher of literacy.

Furthermore, the results of this study indicate there is more work to be done in both initial and additional teacher education programs. The data indicated that teacher education programs should consider increasing opportunities for students in initial teacher education programs to develop the theoretical and practical knowledge of teaching literacy. The teachers in this study did describe literacy as a transformational and sociocultural phenomenon. However, the teachers

seldom, if ever, explicitly included this aspect of literacy as a part of their language arts curriculum or instruction.

At the same time, teacher education programs should consider enhancing opportunities for students in advanced literacy education programs to develop additional practical knowledge of how to develop students' literacy abilities in a way which integrates the linguistic, cognitive, and sociocultural dimensions of literacy. Bigelow (1995) asserts,

What we teach has to matter. Students should understand how the information and analytic tools they're developing make a difference in their lives, that the aim of learning is not just a grade, simple curiosity, or 'because you'll need to know it later'" (Bigelow, p. 156).

It was not evident from data collected in this study literacy teachers knew how to routinely weave opportunities for students to see how literacy practices are related to social identities and discourse communities. Therefore, more work should be done to determine what additional preparation can be provided in teacher certification programs to better prepare teachers for this important work.

Finally, if a goal of teacher education is to prepare teachers to be leaders of social justice principles and practices, then teacher candidates must be provided more specific opportunities to develop this professional knowledge. At the same time, teacher educators should consider Shulman's (1987) final pillar of teacher knowledge and endeavor to be more explicit in acknowledging the purposes, values and goals of these pursuits.

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