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In this qualitative study, we examined preservice teachers' articulations of what it meant to teach literacy in urban settings and the roles that we as university instructors played in their under-standings of the terms *urban, literacy,* and *teacher*. We framed the study within extant studies of teacher education and research on metaphors. Data indicated that the participants metaphorically constructed literacy as an object that could be passed from teacher to student and that was often missing, hidden, or buried in urban settings. Implications of the study suggest that faculty members are one factor among several important influences in preservice teachers becoming profession-als, and the metaphors faculty use in teaching preservice teachers deserve careful consideration.

Each semester when we greet our preservice teachers in our methods courses, we welcome them into the ongoing journey of becoming a teacher. While we teach these preservice teachers in the content area of literacy and English education over several semesters and in two different depart-ments—elementary and secondary education—in all of our courses there are recurring themes: urban education, diversity, and continual learning. As professors of education in an urban research institution, we are committed to helping students become excellent teachers for students in urban and metropolitan schools; however, we find ourselves revisiting the concept *urban* in the context of our own practices as we teach future teachers. Indeed, in re-search meetings, we pondered our definitions for *urban*, surprising ourselves with how quickly in our talk the term could encompass disparate qualities: cosmopolitan, diverse, and enriched, as well as impoverished, crowded, and underfunded. The reality is that even as faculty we puzzle over the meaning of *urban* and question how the use of this word can lead to judgments that dismiss the value and potential of schools located in communities described

as such. Articulations of *urban* are knotty, complex, and value-laden, resisting simple definitions to fit sound bite–length explanations. Thus we wondered: How as teacher educators are we fostering understandings of urban and what it means to be a teacher, specifically a teacher of literacy, in an urban school? With this question, we embarked on a project to explore how preservice teachers write about their ideas on teaching literacy in urban settings.

In our study, we asked preservice teachers in our classes to spend a semester observing, studying, and investigating the teaching and learning of literacy in their preK–12 field placements. At three times during the semester (beginning, middle, and end), preservice teachers responded in writing to prompts that we developed around issues related to urban and literacy education. At the end of the semester, they constructed projects to represent their understandings of literacy in urban contexts. Our goal was to challenge them to "hold the mirror to the soul" (Palmer, 1998, p. 2) and to examine what they understood about teaching literacy in urban communities.

Two research questions framed our study:

1. What understandings of the terms *urban*, *teacher*, and *literacy* did preservice teachers articulate?

2. What roles did we, as university instructors, play in guiding preservice teachers' developing understandings of these terms related to teaching literacy to students in urban schools?

Literature Review

As teacher educators, we situate our instruction within a framework of critical literacy (Edelsky, 1994, 2006; Harste, 2003; Janks, 2000; Morrell, 2008) and culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) in which we strive to engage in practices that encourage the exploration of literacy instruction as power-laden and requiring attention to the differing needs of individual students. But we also recognize that we and the preservice teachers with whom we work are part of larger discourses that construct and circulate common assumptions about what it means to live, teach, and learn in urban communities. Those discourses involve, among other elements, the words used in the context of education and its many settings.

We drew on two primary bodies of literature to inform our understandings of this research. First, we looked at scholarship focused on teacher education in universities and the preparation of preservice teachers for urban schools, specifically literacy teachers. Second, to closely examine the writing preservice teachers used to articulate their understandings of

39

urban, *teaching*, and *literacy*, we relied on theories of metaphor developed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), recognizing that preservice teachers' word choices might tell us something about the discourses influencing their thinking about themselves and their work.

The Influence of Teacher Education on Preservice Teachers

Teacher education is an important enterprise that researchers have found contributes to the success and development of future teachers. Specifically, teacher education programs that provide for extensive opportunities to talk, write, and think about what it means to teach have lasting impact on the quality of teachers who populate U.S. classrooms (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Zeichner & Conklin, 2005). Darling-Hammond (2006) made the case that "there is substantial and growing evidence that teacher education matters for teacher effectiveness" (p. 6). She further discussed that preparation for teaching in a subject area, such as English language arts, along with course-based knowledge in that subject, were key factors in explaining differences among student achievements in reading and math. Likewise, in reviewing studies of teacher education programs, Zeichner and Conklin (2005) argued that not only do teacher education programs contribute in important ways to student outcomes, these programs also matter in the larger scheme of understanding teaching. However, they cautioned that it has been difficult in past studies to distinguish the effects of courses and programs from what prospective teachers bring to the table. These authors highlighted the entangled nature of preparation programs with the school field sites in which preservice teachers are also involved. Similarly, Schultz, Jones-Walker, and Chikkatur (2008) examined the tangled nature of a preparation program and described how preservice teachers negotiated three influences as they crafted their professional practices: (1) their own beliefs, (2) the content and foci of their teacher preparation programs, and (3) local school and district demands. These three influences intertwined in the development of understandings about teaching and in turn affected pedagogical practices.

Ravitch (2010) critiqued journalists and educational researchers who argued that traditional teacher certification programs did not have a role to play in producing effective teachers and that instead teacher preparation could be undertaken on a large scale by initiatives such as Teach for America (TFA). While acknowledging the value of TFA as a "worthy philanthropic effort" (p. 190), Ravitch maintained that because TFA members leave the profession at a higher rate than conventionally certified educators, teacher preparation programs in state universities will continue to be primary in the cultivation of strong teachers. She wrote:

Every state university and teacher-preparation program should ensure that their graduates have a strong foundation in the liberal arts and sciences and are deeply grounded in the subjects they plan to teach. . . . Simply knowing a lot about history or mathematics or reading theory is no guarantee that one can teach it well. On the other hand, too many teachers are immersed in pedagogy but are poorly educated in any subject matter. Teachers need both. . . . And teaching would be enhanced if schools of education stopped insisting on pedagogical conformity and recognized that there are many ways to be a successful teacher. (pp. 190–191)

> **Preservice teachers would be well-served by programs that value diversity of pedagogical thinking and that immerse them in both practical experiences . . . and content knowledge.**

Thus, according to Ravitch, the quality of university-based teacher preparation programs is critical in improving education and closing student achievement gaps. That said, preservice teachers would be well-served by programs that value diversity of pedagogical thinking and that immerse them in both practical experiences (classroom management, communication, collaboration) and content knowledge.

Preparing Teachers for Urban Schools

Studies of teacher education programs that prepare teachers to work in urban schools vary in how they define *urban*, but typically they use demographic details to identify such locations. For example, Hollins (2011) wrote that students in urban schools "tend to be from ethnic minority groups and include a higher percentage of low-income students" (p. 105), and Kress et al. (2005) classified urban classrooms as "contexts of disadvantage" and "contexts of social, cultural, ethnic, religious, and linguistic difference" (p. 5). Morrell (2008) illustrated two different urban high schools in California, one physically cramped with students enmeshed in a "culture of underachievement" as well as "a vibrant and ethnically diverse . . .culture of student activism" (pp. 16–17) and another set in a lush and open environment in which it appeared that two schools existed within one building—one school that "sent the wealthiest white and Asian-American students to the most prestigious universities throughout the country" and one school "for poor and working-class African-American and Latino students . . . replete with low test scores and low high school completion rates" (p. 19).

What is clear from these examples is that urban schools are places rich with diversities of languages and cultures as well as contested spaces where power relations create unequal conditions. Preservice teachers heading into these schools as professionals need experiences and knowledge to recognize and support the possibilities of these multicultural diversities. But contrast-

41

ing the diverse population of students in urban classrooms is the seemingly slow-changing majority of teachers in those schools who are white women from middle-class, suburban backgrounds (Zumwalt & Craig, 2008)—a reality present in the courses represented in our study as well.

A number of studies provided multiple views into the complexity of preparing excellent, professional teachers with the dispositions, content knowledge, and pedagogical knowledge to work in urban schools. Studies have examined preservice teachers' development of attitudes about teaching in urban school settings (Gilbert, 1997; Wolffe, 1996); their assumptions about urban schools and students (Hagiwara & Wray, 2009); their understanding of the demographic complexities within such settings (Sachs, 2004); and their talk about urban schools in relation to media representations of urban school settings (Hampton, Peng, & Ann, 2008).

Other studies and scholars have critiqued hegemonic structures—such as "whitened" curriculum, tracking, testing, and segregated schools—that facilitate deficit perspectives of students of which preservice teachers themselves may be a part (e.g., Ladson-Billings, 2000; Oakes, 2005; Orfield & Lee, 2004; Ravitch, 2010). Deficit perspectives of students contrast with an asset perspective, or "the assumption that urban students bring many resources to the school context and serve as a primary source of their teachers' learning about successful and effective education" (Stairs, Donnell, & Dunn, 2012, p. xiii), a view that reflects Moll, Amanti, Neff, and González's (1992) work on the *funds of knowledge* approach to teaching. Ladson-Billings (2000) further problematized the "discourse of deprivation" (p. 206) surrounding the preparation of teachers who will work in "urban schools populated by African American students" (p. 209), arguing that much educational research asserts a "culture neutral" position toward pedagogical practices that in actuality promotes the educational success of "mainstream students" (p. 207). Milner (2008) found that although teachers in urban settings used different pedagogical and curricular tools than their suburban counterparts, the differences did not mean that urban schools should be framed as deficient. Rather, he argued, counternarratives suggest a complex relationship between adversity and success for teachers in urban schools.

In reviewing the extant research on preparing teachers for diverse populations, Hollins and Guzman (2005) contended that studies "comparing the impact of different fieldwork settings suggest that candidates placed in urban community and school settings with diverse students acquire more complex understandings and awareness of cultural and experiential differences than do their peers placed in suburban settings" (p. 512). In their study of teacher candidates, Conaway, Browning, and Purdum-Cassidy (2007)

found that participation in urban field experiences resulted in a change of attitude about issues of concern to preservice teachers, including personal safety, cultural conflicts, and language barriers. After such experiences, preservice teachers made a commitment to positively impact the urban classrooms in which they worked.

There is a sobering note to make here, though. In a recent publication, Hollins (2012) argued that even with great preparation, preservice teachers transitioning full-time into the profession find the swell of mediocrity and low expectations in urban schools to be powerful. She posited that through collaborations that connect preparation programs with novice and seasoned professionals in schools, teachers may find means and support for "the pursuit of excellence in urban schools and communities" (p. 18). Connecting preservice teachers with field experiences with diverse populations of students is already embedded in programs that seek national accreditation from the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP, formerly known as NCATE). The standards set by the accreditation bodies support requirements for preservice teachers to have content knowledge from coursework, training in instruction, and practical experiences in field placement schools to become good teachers. Ravitch (2010) critiqued alternative programs like TFA that are not held to such standards because the programs are not held accountable for content knowledge, practical experience, and diversity of field experiences. Clearly, having field experiences in urban schools is important in the preparation programs for preservice teachers.

Preparing Literacy Teachers for Students in Urban Schools

We have noted that teacher education matters for the development and future of success of teachers in all schools (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Zeichner & Conklin, 2005) and urban schools in particular that serve diverse populations of students (Hollins & Guzman, 2005). But what has been researched about specifically preparing teachers of literacy in urban schools?

Kress and colleagues (2005) chose secondary English classes in urban schools to study, in part, because in contrast to science classrooms in which they argue the course content is relatively "known and stable" (p. 3), "the English classroom is about meaning, all meaning in the classroom is (at least potentially always) significant" and those meanings shift based on the personality and focus of the teacher, students, and texts. They found that in English

> the connection of curriculum to life is always present, whether in the attempt at teaching "literary sensibility", or in the link between the subject matter of a short story and the lives of young people debating, or even, in the current context of issues around literacy, where the matter becomes

43

one of "your forms of spoken or written English" seen in relation to "acceptable or standard forms of speech writing." (p. 172)

This study illustrated that teaching literacy, whether reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, or gesturing, is a matter that is deeply tied to understanding the connections that exist among humans and their contexts. If understanding the funds of knowledge that students bring to elementary and secondary classrooms matters for urban education (Moll et al., 1992), then literacy practices and English classes are great places to study those human connections.

In a longitudinal study Ball (2006) shed light on the global need for successful teachers in urban schools with multicultural populations and the potential impact of a single education course. The course she taught in several teacher education programs located in the United States and South Africa focused on "ways in which reading, writing, and multiple literacies can function in multilingual and multicultural classrooms" (p. 57). Ball then analyzed the narratives of teachers in these education programs to understand how their language indicated shifts from "parroting information presented to them" to adapting ideas for "their own practices, purposes, and intentions" (p. 130). She further demonstrated that a single teacher education course "can be structured to facilitate the development of teachers who have the attitudes, knowledge, skills, and dispositions to work effectively with students from racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse backgrounds" (p. 132). Ball's study made clear the potential for what is possible in teacher education programs for literacy teachers heading into urban schools. Our study potentially builds on the body of research encompassing teacher education for urban schools by examining preservice teacher reflections through a lens focused on metaphors.

Framing the Study: Metaphor in Written Language

We developed this study as an analysis of written reflections wherein students were explicitly asked to consider what it means to teach literacy in urban schools and communities. We built on the research showing that preservice teachers' understandings can be captured in reflections (Kyles & Olafson, 2008; Tidwell & Thompson, 2008) and that understandings or meanings for concepts are ongoing processes (Smagorinsky, 2001; Smagorinsky, Cook, & Johnson, 2003). Since their reflections were conveyed in written language, we necessarily attended closely to the words they chose to communicate their ideas.

According to Lakoff and Turner (1989), metaphors are "a matter of thought," so embedded in language that humans use them automatically without recognizing their presence (p. xi). Metaphor "suffuses our thoughts" (p. xi), saturating and coloring thinking so that it is not possible to separate metaphor and meaning. Rather than being a poetic device deployed in specific genres for specific purposes, metaphor is the very stuff of language and thinking: "Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 3).

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argued that to get at the concepts through which people perceive, think, and act in their lives, researchers should look to language and the metaphorical elements people employ. The metaphors people take up and use in their everyday language are culturally specific and context-embedded. For an example, Lakoff and Johnson discussed the metaphor of "argument is war" (p. 4), which structures how many cultures, including the United States, view and engage in argument. The argument-is-war metaphor can be seen in such language as *winning and losing arguments, argument as strategy, argument as attack and counterattack*, and with such specific and common statements like "Your claims are *indefensible*" and "His criticisms were *right on target*" (p. 4, emphasis in original). For instance, Lakoff and Johnson *maintain the position* that such ways of talking about argument are conventional in Western cultures, *supporting* the assertion that metaphor is not simply a strategic tool to be *deployed* for effect but the "very concept" of how people think about the term *argument* (p. 5). We undertook our study as a means for understanding how preservice teachers thought through ideas about teaching literacy in urban schools, so using metaphors served as a means to understand how *literacy*, *urban*, and *teacher* appeared in reflective writings. Indeed, if metaphorical concepts are the structures through which humans think, then examining preservice teachers' and our own choices of words could give insight into the ways in which the terms *literacy*, *teaching*, and *urban* functioned in our courses.

Researchers interested in metaphors have studied preservice teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning (Leavy, McSorley, & Boté, 2007; Mahlios & Maxson, 1998; Massengill Shaw & Mahlios, 2008), while others have investigated the metaphors that inservice teachers use, looking closely at recent graduates (Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011) and experienced teachers (Kasoutas & Malamitsa, 2009; Martínez, Sauleda, & Huber, 2001; Patchen & Crawford, 2011). It is important to note here that only Patchen and Crawford's study was located in or focused on teachers in urban schools—and they examined working teachers with one to 19 years of experience. Like the other studies,

they also found value in examining metaphors to understand and make explicit the complexities of teaching.

Of these studies, one provided a framework for studying metaphors about teaching and learning (Martínez et al., 2001). Martínez and colleagues analyzed metaphors generated from 50 experienced teachers working together in small groups and then compared those metaphors to the metaphors generated by 38 preservice teachers. Across both groups, the teaching metaphors could be characterized in three learning paradigms: behaviorist/empiricist, cognitivist/constructivist, and situative/socio-historic. Following from the work of Martínez et al., Leavy and colleagues (2007) then examined the metaphors of preservice teachers in Ireland and the United States; they found that metaphor was a useful means for exploring preservice teachers' understandings about what comprises teaching, including, for example, the roles of teacher, student, and administrator. While the participants in both Leavy et al. (2007) and Martínez et al. (2001) were focused on elementary education, Mahlios and Maxson (1998) studied 253 preservice teachers from both secondary and elementary programs. Like our study, the elementary participants were undergraduate students and the secondary participants were graduate students. Mahlios and Maxson explored the metaphors that participants identified with life, childhood, and teaching. They indicated that teacher educators and preservice teachers may use "conflicting analogic metaphors" (p. 239), which may offer one reason for preservice teachers not learning "salient program concepts and practices" (p. 239). Misalignment or misunderstanding of metaphors communicated among preservice teachers and teacher educators, then, is a real possibility and merits further research.

Carter (2009) made a compelling argument that the metaphors that suffuse media representations of teachers continue to support a cultural view of U.S. teachers as saviors and miracle workers who have no need of professional skills and knowledge or sufficient support in the forms of salary and administrative backing. These teachers, as portrayed with a deeply flawed Hollywood spotlight, are saints who have enough caring and determination to sacrifice anything and everything else in their lives in order to "make a difference." All teachers, as Carter argued, "are never free from metaphor" (p. 62). Furthermore, Carter urged teacher educators working with novices entering the profession to "interrogate the metaphor" of teachers and to "challenge the language that surrounds teaching as a profession" (p. 86).

We found two important pieces related to literacy metaphors: Scribner's (1984) three metaphors of literacy and Massengill Shaw and Mahlios's (2008) study of preservice teachers' metaphors of teaching and literacy.

Scribner (1984) argued that social expectations for literacy vary because people have "differing views about literacy's social purpose and values" (p. 8). From these viewpoints, then, Scribner categorized literacy as adaptation, power, and a state of grace/salvation. Scribner further argued that these metaphors have boundaries that are permeable and further suggested that an "ideal literacy is simultaneously adaptive, socially empowering, and self-enhancing" (p. 18), thus merging all of the qualities that the three metaphors attempt to retain as distinct and separate. Aside from Scribner's work, we found one other related empirical study of literacy metaphors. Massengill Shaw and Mahlios (2008) claimed their study was the first that "solicited pre-service teachers' metaphors of literacy" (p. 48). The researchers studied the metaphors written by participants in elementary education responding to the prompts "Teaching is ___" and "Literacy is ___." Their analysis found common metaphors for teachers as guides and nurturers, findings they connected with the work of Martínez et al. (2001) and that we find problematized in Carter's (2009) argument. Their literacy metaphor analysis yielded four metaphors: (a) literacy as "sequence of knowledge and skills"; (b) "parts that come together as a whole"; (c) "foundation of life"; and (d) "journey"—examples that further illustrate Scribner's (1984) three metaphors.

The extant research that uses metaphor to understand preservice teacher beliefs and the impact of teacher education has focused mainly on metaphors for teachers, students, and learning. Our study offers something new to the conversation by looking at the combination of the metaphors preservice teachers use to write about *literacy*, *urban*, and *teacher*, and our potential roles as teacher educators in the development of those metaphors. We submit that this is a unique contribution because no studies in our reviews of the research have delved into preservice teachers' metaphors for all three terms while simultaneously examining the content and vocabulary of methods courses.

Method

We conducted this semester-long study with 26 undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in elementary and secondary certification programs at a large metropolitan southeastern U.S. university. As the course instructors, we designed an inquiry project that involved preservice teachers in an ongoing study, reflection, and articulation of how they understood literacy in urban contexts. We used qualitative methods of data collection and analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) as we attempted to capture a series of snapshots of how preservice teachers wrote their ideas about teaching in urban communities.

47

Participants

The study participants included 17 secondary education graduate preservice teachers and nine elementary education undergraduate preservice teachers (*N*=26, 23 females, 3 males) in elementary education and English education initial certification programs. We recruited the participants from the methods courses that we taught. Faculty from our research team who were not the instructors of record for each of the courses explained the study and invited all of our preservice teachers to voluntarily participate by submitting their project work, which included three reflections throughout the semester. We taught 26 students in secondary education and 23 students in elementary education that semester; 65 percent and 39 percent, respectively, of the total students we taught volunteered to participate, resulting in a 53 percent overall participation rate. After students completed their projects, we waited until the semester was over and grades were posted to begin our analysis. This group of preservice teachers, then, was a convenience sample of people who were willing to help us study our teacher education programs.

The preservice teachers resembled other published descriptions of students who attend urban universities (Jacoby & Garland, 2004)—they represented a range of ages (20–50) and cultural and racial demographics: 12 white (11 European American and 1 Canadian), 9 African American, 3 Latino/Latina American, and 2 Asian American. They also had a variety of life experiences and roles; among them were parents, partners, singles, and caregivers of relatives. All participants were enrolled in methods courses and had taken several methods courses prior to this study; participants at the graduate level had substantial coursework or degrees at the undergraduate level in English. Graduate preservice teachers were in a full-time student teaching field placement, five days per week for approximately seven hours per day (about 500 hours spent in high schools), while undergraduate preservice teachers were in their field placement classrooms two days per week for a total of 16 hours (about 225 hours spent in elementary schools). While it may seem that this group of participants came to this study with more differences in experiences and educational attainment than similarities, we embraced this diversity to focus on the commonality of teaching literacy in urban schools (Mahlios & Maxson, 1998). All the participants were future teachers of literacy, whether that meant in a comprehensive classroom for grade 1 or an American literature classroom for grade 11. Likewise, we had an institutional aim to teach for diversity in urban contexts, and we selected this cross-section of preservice teachers to examine their articulations of *literacy*, *urban*, and *teacher*.

Overview of the Course Inquiry Projects

Our courses reflected a critical literacy stance toward teaching and learning. Critical literacy entails not only traditional definitions of reading and writing but also an examination of power structures operating through literacy practices (Edelsky, 1994, 2006; Harste, 2003; Janks, 2000; Luke & Freebody, 1997; Vasquez, 2004). According to Comber (2001), within a critical literacy framework, language is seen as a mechanism through which power is exercised and some groups are privileged over others. Our assignments—and our analysis of preservice teacher reflections—were based on viewing literacy from this perspective, even as we recognized that preservice teachers did not necessarily come into our programs espousing critical literacy viewpoints.

Over the course of the semester, all preservice teachers in our methods courses were asked to create an inquiry project that resulted in a text that reflected their concepts of teaching, learning, and living in urban settings. The project was informed by professional readings and resources that we required as part of the project. The undergraduate preservice teachers focused their inquiries on observing literacy practices in urban community settings, while the graduate preservice teachers focused their inquiries on teaching literacy in an urban high school. At three points across the semester—beginning, middle, and end—preservice teachers responded to questionnaires that asked them to reflect on their ongoing understandings about the concepts of *urban* and *literacy* and *teacher* in school or community settings.

Data Collection and Analysis

Our data collection consisted of gathering all 26 participating preservice teachers' projects and reflections, as well as printed course materials used in our two courses. In total, we reviewed 76 responses, reflecting three responses from each participant except for one graduate participant who completed only one response. We used syllabi, assignment descriptions, readings, and instructor materials to explore the perspectives that we shared with our preservice teachers. That is, we used the data in our instruction materials primarily as contextual information for understanding specific uses of the terms *urban*, *literacy*, and *teacher*.

We began data analysis with open coding of the participants' reflections. Our process involved an inductive coding process (Ezzy, 2002) in which we first perceived the data (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993) through independent readings of the students' work. With these independent readings, we drafted lists of key phrases and words that described the patterns we saw in the data.

49

We met several times to discuss the commonalities and divergence among these patterns, ultimately collapsing the independent lists into a single list of patterns to focus our attention and further analysis.

Three patterns persisted across all of the individual and group analyses: *literacy*, *teacher*, and *urban*. That is, we all agreed that we saw ideas about teacher, literacy, and urban throughout the data, across both groups. However, we also noted that while patterns related to these three terms were found across all participant reflections, they were similar but not the same. Therefore, we added course materials to the data analysis to review how we presented the project. We wanted to see what connections, if any, could be found between the words we used to present and teach in that semester and how preservice teachers wrote about their teacher preparation experiences. We read through the course syllabi and other course materials to list words and phrases we used. We did not limit our list to only the words describing this particular project because we recognized that language we used to position the course in general might affect preservice teachers' thinking about *literacy*, *urban*, and *teaching*. Appendix A lists the writing prompts we gave to the elementary and secondary preservice teachers and Appendix B is an abbreviated list of words used in course materials.

Our process continued with a back-and-forth procedure of individual and group analyses of the participants' data. That is, we continued to review the data (reflections from participants, course materials from faculty) independently and then came together to discuss our understandings. These sessions resulted in a decision to do a more focused and detailed analysis on four participants: Nell (from the elementary group), Miranda, Tasha, and Jeremy (from the secondary group; all names are pseudonyms). We chose these participants because they had the most extensive discussion involving teaching literacy in urban schools across all of their reflections, and we found them to be illustrative of the metaphorical patterns we found across all 26 participants' reflections. Analysis of these four participants' writing allowed us to examine the boundaries of the metaphors. Scribner (1984) examined three metaphors of literacy to argue that "any of the metaphors, taken by itself, gives us only a partial grasp of the many and varied utilities of literacy" (p. 8). Like Scribner, we recognize that the metaphors of literacy, teacher, and urban in this study are only a partial look at the complexities surrounding these aspects of education, but a detailed look into the metaphors of the four focal participants nonetheless informed how our preservice teachers understood their teacher education experiences. Demographic data about these four preservice teachers are listed in Table 1.

The next step was a written analysis toward a more nuanced impression of metaphors within the reflections of Jeremy, Miranda, Nell, and Tasha. Michelle and Teri (authors 1 and 2) took the lead at this point by writing lengthy analyses for all comments that related to *urban*, *teacher*, *literacy*, or any combination of the three. Our goal in this last phase was to use writing as a method of inquiry (Richardson, 2000) in which we wrote our way into understandings about preservice teacher articulations. For every phrase and sentence within the reflection data, we described, critiqued, and questioned the metaphors we saw these four participants using. To find the metaphors across the three groups of literacy, urban, and teacher, we looked to find examples of these terms verbatim in preservice teachers' writings. For literacy, we also looked for writing about related processes, including reading, writing, composing, listening, speaking, viewing, discussions, and literature. Likewise for urban metaphors, we attended to descriptions of demographics, diversity, and context. Finally, for teacher metaphors, we considered how preservice teachers wrote about themselves as nascent teachers, as well as reports of other teachers. After completing our written analysis of each reflection, we met to discuss, clarify, and modify our points within each reflection, and compose additional statements. We used this stage of the analysis as the means to examine the boundaries of the metaphors (Scribner, 1984) we found in the responses. With these metaphors in place, we then triangulated our analysis and determined that the metaphors used by the focal participants were consistent with those used across the entire group of 26 preservice teachers.

We used words straight from the participants' responses to describe and name the varieties of metaphors used for *literacy*, *teacher*, and *urban*. For example, Nell wrote of literacy as "practices" and Jeremy described literacy as a "barrier." We then extended those words to look at the metaphors they suggested; for example, when Miranda wrote that she needed to "find a way to inspire" her students, we tagged her writing as reflecting a navigator metaphor. Thus, drawing from the preservice teachers' written responses, we constructed the following prevailing metaphors: (1) literacy is an artifact that can be hidden from students, passed from teacher to stu-

Table 1. Demographic information for four focal participants.

Name	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Age	Program
Jeremy	Male	European American	30–40	Secondary English
Miranda	Female	European American	20–30	Secondary English
Nell	Female	European American	20–30	Elementary Language Arts
Tasha	Female	Latina American	20–30	Secondary English

51

dent, and changed over time, similar to Scribner's (1984) analysis of literacy as adaptation and power; (2) urban is a structural, dense space that can be close knit or stressful; and (3) teachers are navigators, mapmakers, and excavators who discover, uncover, find their own ways, and plot courses for their students, bringing light to students like the saints described in Carter's (2009) examination of teacher metaphors.

Findings

Our analysis of preservice teacher data showed that among the metaphorical understandings participants articulated were the following: of literacy as an object consisting of Standard American English tied to print representations; of urban students, schools, and families entrenched in structures of poverty and controlled environments that yielded responses of stress, apathy, and trauma; and of teachers as saviors and the bringers of light for students caught in the complexities of urban life. From our university instruction data analysis, we found that we positioned our preservice teachers as problem-seekers and problem-solvers, as well as gazers and observers of the problems we led them to find. For the sake of communicative ease, we divided the findings into two areas: the discourses of university faculty that aided in the shaping of meanings, and preservice teacher articulations of the meanings of the terms *literacy*, *urban*, and *teacher*. In the sections that follow, we further discuss literacy, urban, and teacher as separate categories with the understanding that they are instead interwoven and interconnected ideas in preservice teachers' writing.

University Faculty Roles in Shaping Preservice Teachers' Articulations

When we originally assigned our project, we had not given close thought to the metaphors the preservice students in our classes would use to describe themselves and their work. But as we analyzed responses from the entire group of 26 preservice teachers, we were struck by the intensity of the discussions and wondered what we could take from the metaphors they employed. More importantly, we pondered our own role in the development of those metaphors, how we—in the structure of the project itself and the words that we used in our courses—contributed to the words through which they expressed their experiences. In this section, we examine how we were implicit in the metaphorical constructs used by our students.

In considering how our preservice teachers expressed their ideas in their process of becoming teachers, we had to ask ourselves what metaphors,

52

what ideologies, we constructed in the activities we designed and the vo-cabulary we used in our spoken and written exchanges with them. To extend the question further, we needed to consider the educational influences pre-service teachers encountered in the texts they read as part of their teacher preparation work and in relationships with field placement supervisors and mentor teachers. In the data, there were multiple glimpses of how all of these educational influences affected preservice teachers' perceptions of urban and literacy and their own development of a professional identity. For example, one preservice teacher mentioned conversations with her mentor teacher and other teachers who believed that many of the students in their urban school had "very little desire to come to school and learn." In other examples, we found that participants related to readings assigned in prior semesters and by other faculty: "My readings from last summer . . . with Dr. Zoss, and this semester with Dr. McGrail and Ms. F have heavily influenced my selected area of research. I plan on reading anything I can squeeze in this semester." In other examples, we found preservice teachers drew upon their own experiences while growing up: "It is amazing to realize that by students playing simple games, [like] I use[d] to do when I was a kid, helps to foster their literacy development."

While these examples show preservice teachers drawing on experi-ences and texts that might support their developing ideas about literacy and students in urban settings, not everything they learned resulted in a neatly wrapped package of ideas. Experiences they had as a result of this project left some preservice teachers with concerned questions. A preservice teacher de-scribed the perceptions held by professors and teachers about K–12 students:

> These are not my perceptions, but the perceptions of many. I have heard them personally from teachers and even some of my professors. My field school is about 80% Hispanic, if not more. People often say that these children are never read to, that there is no parent involvement, that most of these students are blank canvases when they enter school. . . . How do teachers and schools expect these parents to collaborate with them when they don't take the time to get to know them and when they have these misconceptions?

In this quote, the preservice teacher demonstrated how she pushed back against a deficit perspective extended to her by some of the educators she encountered. She questioned these professional voices, challenging them to "take the time to get to know" students and to reevaluate their "misconcep-tions." This preservice teacher chose to use positive language and a positive outlook, refusing to take on the negative language she heard from some teachers and professors.

53

As we analyzed the preservice teachers' writings, we also questioned the discourses that we generated within our courses: What constructs, specifically, did we as instructors provide preservice teachers through which to consider their teaching in urban schools? Here vocabulary played a key role. In written documents related to the courses, we found that we used vocabulary that they in turn carried into their reflections. A striking example was the word *urban* itself. In the project descriptions for the secondary education preservice teachers, *urban* was explicitly named. In the writing prompt, we asked the secondary group, "What have you learned so far about literacy in urban school settings?" In contrast, we asked elementary education preservice teachers, "As you continue deeper into this project, what ideas are you developing about the literacy(ies) practiced in your field school community?" In the latter case, *urban* was replaced with *field school community*. In the reflective responses, the word *urban* was used 137 times across all secondary education preservice teachers and 0 times by their elementary education counterparts. *Community* was used 5 times in the secondary education data and 156 times in the elementary education data. In this way, preservice teachers used the vocabulary of their coursework to make sense of their observations. Each group took from the course materials a key term to use as a descriptor for the settings of their field experiences, a choice that played a role in shaping how they talked about the locations in which they taught.

> **What constructs, specifically, did we as instructors provide preservice teachers through which to consider their teaching in urban schools?**

Positioning Preservice Teachers as Problem Seekers and Problem Solvers

In analyzing the data, we found evidence that our choice of course vocabulary directed secondary preservice teachers to perform an iconic educational role—the problem seeker and problem solver. The metaphors we used in our courses stressed discovery and action. Our intent was for preservice teachers to seek a line of inquiry that might help them better understand some aspect of teaching; this was a project for finding something to think about, perhaps a thought problem or a practical problem to be thoroughly considered. For example, in the secondary program, we focused on problem posing from a Freirean (Freire, 2000) framework. That is, we told students in oral and written instructions to seek out a problem to investigate, and we did so under the assumption not that they would find something that needed fixing, rather that they might find some aspect of teaching, learning, and working with students that intrigued them to inquire further. Our aim, then, was to help

54

students choose something for themselves that they wanted to learn more about while they were involved in daily routines of teaching, planning, and developing relations with students.

Though our intentions may have been for preservice teachers to examine a particular idea in a school or community that was salient to their developing thinking, we also positioned them as problem seekers called on to ferret out a complication or obstacle that negatively affected the lives of students in urban settings. In the secondary education course syllabus, for example, we framed teachers as "critical inquirers"; further, in the description of the secondary group's inquiry projects, we charged them to "design an idea, a question, or a topic to *investigate* that involves literacy and urban education" (emphasis added). In course agendas on PowerPoint slides, we asked preservice teachers to be "problem solvers" who identified issues in urban classrooms and strategized ways to address them. Thus, we instructed preservice teachers to see urban environments as spaces that needed to be interrogated and—presumably—fixed.

We found references to problems and problematic spaces in multiple reflections across secondary preservice teachers' projects. Problems showed up in the descriptions of students: One participant noted that students "come from broken homes or difficult family situations," while another participant reflected on students facing negative consequences of "culture, poverty, homelessness, language and other obstacles students face while trying to get an education." The problems preservice teachers identified in these cases were aspects of schooling that they found compelling and merited attention. While these inquiries into the problems they found in schools were indeed important aspects to investigate, our concern was that the inquiries were focused on fixing something rather than examining the nuances of teaching and learning in the classroom—nuances that they could identify and continue to think about as novice teachers. While trying to take on poverty is a noble and wide-ranging goal, our aim was more specific for preservice teachers; we wanted them to look into the daily practices, curriculum, and learning environment qualities that could help them in their paths to becoming teachers.

One particular passage, though, drew our attention because it signaled a sense of despair on the part of a Latino/Latina secondary preservice teacher doing student teaching in a school where "Hispanic or Latino" students were the majority group enrolled (per the district website). The prompt we posed for the following response was "What have you learned so far about literacy in urban school settings?"

55

> I have learned a great deal about literacy in an urban school setting. I have learned never to engage in a battle of wills with my students. I have learned that every child needs multiple chances to succeed and learn. I have learned that these kids do not do homework consistently. I have learned to chase my students down in the hall to make sure I get something out of them. I have learned to take the best three out of five grades. I have learned that fathers sometimes rape daughters; mothers and/or fathers walk out; grandparents rule; an alarming number of our children are in correctional institutions; poor children do not relate to or see themselves as having any type of positive place in academia.

While the prompt focused on literacy, the response was a lyrical and visual depiction of an alarming and dangerous environment. The response showed evidence of how framing literacy in urban settings through a problem-posing lens can result in discussion focused only on problems. Moreover, it was hard to tell if literacy was embedded in this response because of the focus on the perceived conditions of students' lives. The writer used the repetitive stem "I have learned" to show a cinematic montage of scenes of the teacher chasing students down the hall, eschewing battles with students in favor of giving them "multiple chances to succeed and learn," listening to stories of homes in which family relations are strained by crime, abandonment, and imprisonment. The reader sees a teacher who has battled, is battling, and is retreating. The teacher role in this response was thus an assemblage of purposeful action and resignation, of battling and compromising. More to the point, the reflection, perhaps understandably, focused on the preservice teacher's perception without a critical eye turned on schools as reifying actors in dominant structures or on her view of families in urban communities as fraught with peril.

Contrasting those inquiry projects that found problems with students, there was evidence that preservice teachers also valued students' home lives and languages, as one participant described students' home languages as "the language that they learned to love, communicate in and associate with their homes and families. . . . Home languages therefore are assets." While the language of problems was present in the reflections of 53 percent of the secondary preservice teachers, they also found value in what their students could achieve and contribute to the classroom. Twelve of the 17 secondary preservice teachers used asset language to describe students, including remarks about them being "very good writers," "highly capable," and showed evidence of sharing "wonderful insight into how movies and music help them to understand the concepts in a Language Arts classroom." In the elementary preservice teacher reflections, the language of problematic

spaces was less frequent and more deflective. For example, one student wrote, "One perception that is amazingly outstanding is that even though the school is very diverse in student and teacher population, there is high parent involvement," a comment that could indicate the preservice teacher's expectation that she would not find parent involvement in an urban school setting. The difference in language here might also be attributed to the fact that elementary and secondary school settings are different, and educators are likely to view students in these settings differently. We also found that all of the elementary participants wrote positive comments about what the community, families, and language diversity contributed to the literacy development of children. While some preservice teachers identified home lives of students as potential barriers to school achievement because of poverty and family, others saw value in what students learned at home, especially in terms of language. The language of problems therefore did not represent the whole of what all the preservice teachers in the study had to write about their experiences with the inquiry project.

Positioning Preservice Teachers as Observers and Gazers

In the elementary group's project, the goal was for preservice teachers to notice and develop understandings of out-of-school literacies that would affect their view of urban education. The metaphor of "new" and "fresh eyes" was used in class discussions to suggest how the preservice teachers should approach their field school community for the project. Preservice teacher reflections indicated that they had taken up that metaphor to position themselves as observers and watchers; one participant referred to herself alternately as a "silent observer" and an "active participant," while another commented that she was an "'outsider'" (quotation marks in original). When asked to reflect on what format her project would take, one preservice teacher wrote, "I do know that it will be centered on the view of an outsider looking in with a twist of an educator's view as well," suggesting perhaps that she saw her role in this assignment as only partially that of an educator.

Here, an elementary preservice teacher showed her stance as inquirer thinking about literacy in an urban community by taking up the "new eyes" metaphor:

> After observing the [community's] social nuances and literacy practices with "new eyes", . . . my focus has shifted from noticing contrasts between two juxtaposed groups (upper crust whites and lower income blacks), to exploring the subtleties of a single group. The historical influences on the black literacy in [the city] . . . are particularly intriguing; the importance of

57

> song, rhythm, oral history, story-telling and speech patterns remain as evidence of the "Old South," African culture, and an intermingling of the two.

This participant located her observations of her field school community—her home turf with which she had an "intimate sense of its ins and outs"—from a distance. With her "new eyes," she negotiated a definition of literacy that embraced expressive community actions such as music and storytelling, but initially she did so with a curator's gaze—considering and critical, as if she mused through glass. Yet this European American participant refused to maintain a gazer-only stance and opted to begin conversations with African American members of the community in their yards and on their porches, acts that became the focal point of her project. She took the distancing role of observer that was handed to her by the language of the assignment and re-formed it so that she became an interactive participant in the community and in her project.

The examples here illustrated how vocabulary from teacher education courses played a role in the way preservice teachers framed their views of teaching literacy in urban schools. Our roles in these metaphors positioned preservice teachers as problem seekers and solvers who could distance themselves to be outsiders gazing into urban schools and communities.

Preservice Teachers' Articulations

In this section we turned our focus to the four focal participants to delve further into the metaphors we found in the response data. Clearly the language we used in our courses was playing out in the written responses, and we looked to the responses of Jeremy, Miranda, Nell, and Tasha to see how specifically the terms *literacy*, *urban*, and *teacher* were articulated.

Metaphors of Literacy

We begin with the term *literacy* because it seemed essential to what we were teaching in our courses: how to be literacy teachers in elementary and secondary schools. However, the preservice teachers we focused on in this study did not discuss literacy nearly as much as we expected. Given classroom discussions and course readings, we had anticipated that they would grapple with the notion of literacy and see it as an evolving construct and active social practice. Indeed, elementary preservice teacher Nell did just that when she wrote:

> This project is definitely prompting me to define literacy in a way that is different from my previous use of the word. Before I defined literacy as

reading and writing. In doing this project, I now realize that literacy encompasses so much more. I have learned that literacy is students engaging in conversation, students playing hopscotch, students playing basketball games, students reading restaurant specials on the way to school. . . . There are so many activities that can foster your literacy development. This project is opening my eyes to all those activities and different possibilities.

At the mid-point in the project, Nell supplied evidence of her changing notions of literacy. By "opening [her] eyes," she was coming to see literacy as an active, ongoing practice in development that was not limited to traditional constructs of reading and writing. She saw literacy-in-development in the ways children transacted with other people and objects in their community. Literacy for her, then, was becoming multifaceted and interconnected sets of practices—socially situated, and on the move. This framing of literacy reflected the qualities of "ideal literacy" that Scribner (1984) advocated, a literacy that is "simultaneously adaptive, socially empowering, and self-enhancing" (p. 18).

Nell's framing of literacy as active and her own conceptions of it as changeable contrasted with those of the secondary preservice teachers, who conveyed literacy as an object (although it is worth noting that at times Nell, too, used language that connoted literacy as a stable artifact). In their responses, all four of the focal preservice teachers positioned literacy as an object that was either present or absent, could be found or hidden, was given to students or withheld from them by the adults and conditions surrounding them. For example, Nell wrote of "digging into the community" to look "for any hint of literacy." Tasha saw academic English as a "lack" that impeded students' future life options. For both of them, literacy in its various forms was a solid substance that they could identify, recognize, locate, and pass on.

At the beginning of the project, Jeremy wrote, "The largest barrier to school success is literacy. And the largest barrier to literacy is apathy." In both sentences, literacy was an object, in this case a barrier behind a barrier. In his view, students were kept away from academic success by an unyielding blockade—this formidable mass known as literacy—which was in turn blocked by an equally sturdy bulk, apathy. Yet Jeremy saw a way for his students to maneuver around both obstacles: "I need to find some sort of 'hook' to draw them in to the world of the reader. I need to accomplish this through a vehicle of some sort." It is interesting to note here that Jeremy used a broader cultural metaphor circulated via media representations: "teaching-as-gimmick" as a means to engage students (Carter, 2009, p. 79).

By the midpoint of the semester, Jeremy decided that the "vehicle" would be poetry, an object, with "'flow,' combining the aesthetic experience

59

of envisionment and flow with the urban hip-hop influenced music that many students enjoy." Poetry, he wrote, would serve "as a conduit to encourage literacy at my school." So for Jeremy, literacy as a whole construct was an impediment for the students in his field placement, but poetry—with its watery flow—might provide a way around. Instead of the hook he evoked earlier in the semester, by the middle point he perceived poetry as the source of encouragement; rather than a lure or trick, it was now a conduit, a path of sorts that led students to literacy rather than snaring them.

In the preservice teachers' reflections, literacy was also sometimes treated as a Macguffin—in film and literature, the often ambiguous "thing" that characters pursue as a means to further the story's agenda—that participants cursorily used to get to an idea or topic they wanted to discuss. In her mid-semester reflection, Miranda only briefly focused on the topic of literacy, instead writing of her frustrations with educational research:

> [Educational studies] point out the weaknesses but offer no suggestions of how to change. To me, this seems unfinished. . . . When someone conducts a long study to find out what a big problem something is, then does nothing to help that problem, it is fruitless.

At this stage in the project, Miranda moved away from her inquiry (how to facilitate discussion in urban classrooms) to challenge the usefulness of much of the educational research she read.

Tasha reframed the entire literacy assignment as a way to get at her primary question, "the issue of student motivation in an urban school setting," which she saw as "the things that impede our students the most." She delineated her inquiry on motivation with the following questions:

1. Why do our students feel they do not have to do their homework?

2. Why do our students feel that it is ok, or even cool, to fail?

3. How do I make my students understand that they can have a future in an academic setting if that is what they want out of it?

4. How does a lack of understanding academic English affect a student's grades? What measures can I take to make sure my students are fluent in academic English by the time they leave my class?

Literacy, in the form of academic English, was the final question in her list; she wrote her way into the issue of literacy as the result of her primary concern, what she perceived as lack of motivation in the students in her field placement. Rather than the focus of her inquiry, literacy became the device that moved her through her investigation.

60

The ways in which the focal participants metaphorically constructed literacy was as an object that could be passed from teacher to student that was often missing, hidden, or buried in the urban settings they were observing. Again, these articulations of literacy fit with Scribner's (1984) discussion of popular metaphors of literacy for functional skills (adaptation), social power, and a state of grace (self-empowerment). In the preservice teachers' responses, literacy was metaphorically something that could be had, but was hidden within the urban landscape—a finding that was a trend beyond the focal participants as well. While the elementary preservice teachers wrote about family literacy practices and environmental print available in urban communities and the secondary preservice teachers wrote about reading and writing practices, all seemed keen to locate literacy within the urban setting for their projects. Like the focal participants' metaphors for literacy as an object, the trend across all the participants focused on finding literacy and seizing moments for learning when the literacy object was at hand. In the next section, we look more closely at the metaphors the participants used to write about the term *urban*.

Metaphors of Urban Settings

The four focal preservice teachers wrote about urban settings in ways that evoked metaphors of structures built within complex spaces. In their writings, most of the focal preservice teachers described or inferred urban settings that were densely populated, controlled by adults, and marked by poverty and broken homes. Students responded to these troubled spaces in a variety of ways, frequently characterized in the writings as responses of trauma, stress, apathy, and violence. However, not all discussions of urban settings were negative; Nell's account of an urban community showed a more optimistic view of the potential for learning in that community. She described the urban community she studied for her inquiry project:

> My field school community seems to be a real tight, close knit community. The school is surrounded by houses, condos, and a church . . . although I have not had a chance to spend a great amount of time, I have noticed, there are not many ties to literacy in the community. I am really hoping, when I look more closely, there are more kinds of literacies in the community I have overlooked.

Nell noticed the detail of density that typifies an urban definition of community. More than just an observation that the community includes a number of buildings (school, houses, condo, church), her statement showed an appreciation for the social ties found in that space. Like the close proximity of

buildings, she observed what seemed like shared interests among people. By using the phrase "real tight, close knit," she conveyed a sense of togetherness, taking up the common metaphor of social fabric in her description of the community. She acknowledged that she needed to spend more time in the community to better understand what she was seeing, specifically in terms of the possibilities for seeing literacies there. She was hopeful; she was willing to continue observing, open to the possibility that there was more to this community than she initially comprehended.

Jeremy's vision of urban settings focused on cultural structures he perceived organizing students' everyday lives, specifically their perception of what urban culture entailed. Working in a school located in a densely populated neighborhood with people living in poverty and in wealth, he questioned whether it could be labeled an urban school. For him, urban culture was an "influence," the impact of which he wanted to address in his inquiry. He wrote, "Does urban culture actually influence literacy, or is literacy more extensively influenced by apathy? . . . Is learning antithetical to the 'front' mandated by students immersed in their perception of urban culture? Is their perceived concept of urban culture actually accurate?" He acted on his questions by developing a unit on poetry, positing that students in urban schools were controlled and that his inquiry project would provide means for them to break free, if only temporarily, from those controls:

> This project speaks to literacy because it speaks; it offers a chance for the voices of students to be heard, autonomous and free from the controls of their regular day-to-day lives. These students badly need a chance to use their own voices.

Jeremy's use of "control," "autonomous and free," and "badly need[ing] a chance" portrayed students as seemingly caged into their daily existence. He created a picture of structures that were strong, well established, and persistently yielded power over the everyday life—not on some days, or one day, but every day—of students in his school. Importantly, power did exist for Jeremy's students in their voices, their oral expression, a further indication of how he saw literacy as a power to wield in this urban setting.

Miranda seemed keen to listen to her students. Her inquiry project focused on class discussions and "challenging myself to find a way to inspire and manage productive discussions in this classroom situation" that she described as

> a primarily urban setting; almost 95% of my students are African-American and many of them come from broken homes or difficult family situations.

They are, in general, hesitant to discuss anything in class—they seem to fear standing out or being wrong in front of everyone.

Miranda took the view that problematic familial and home structures in many of the students' lives were a given. In this conception, the urban classroom was a tangible space complicated by what was broken and difficult, interwoven with hesitancy, fear, a nonproductive silence, and students who were self-camouflaged. Although she did not overtly question the conditions that might lead to student hesitancy or how schooling itself might contribute to student reluctance or that her assumptions may have generalized too broadly across the spectrum of students she taught, Miranda challenged herself to find a way to break through the fear to create conditions that could lead to productive but controlled (managed) talk. Through her self-challenge, she positioned her teaching work as provisional—she may change in the process of finding a way—but the environment surrounding the urban classroom was fixed.

Tasha described the setting for her field experience, generalizing her comments to encompass the whole of students' experiences:

> The content of my composition deals with the daily mental inertia created by societal forces that impact student learning. These societal forces include poverty, boredom, stress, trauma from a negative family or immigration experience, mental illness . . . and physical or mental abuse of children as a result of parents or guardians succumbing to these stressors in life.

Her view of learning in an urban setting was of a stressful space filled with problems: poverty, boredom, trauma, mental illness, and abuse. The problem of poverty was at the forefront of Tasha's concerns. In one of her reflections, she wrote about a self-selected text for her inquiry project that influenced her thinking:

> The best book I ever read that explained poverty and why so much of the world is poor is titled *The Mystery of Capital* by Hernando de Soto. . . . I only needed to read the first chapter to really understand why so many people in the world are suffering. De Soto asserts that there are so many poor [people] in the world because they lack . . . ownership or capital . . . that leads to a vicious cycle of impoverishment. I see this cycle re-enacted in my students' lack of ownership in their work.

Tasha used the first chapter of an economist's book, coursework from another required course, to inform her view of her students' lives. From this reading, she linked student ownership of work and the invisible systems of wealth acquisition on a global scale, tying access to systems of wealth to lack

63

of student achievement in literacy. Sources that specifically addressed re-search with secondary students in U.S. cities were not part of her discussion; instead, her reflection entailed piecing together readings—some partial—to construct a response reflecting how she understood the factors related to teaching in urban schools.

The focal participants drew from their experiences in schools and communities as well as readings from courses at the university to construct their ideas about *urban*. As a metaphor of structure, *urban* stood out for them as something that enveloped and permeated the lives of their students, potentially providing a sense of comfort and community in the "close knit" neighborhoods and alternately a dense space of controlling factors of pov-erty and "broken homes." Earlier we discussed how the words *urban* and *community* were used differently across the entire group of elementary and secondary participants. While the elementary group used words related to families, communities, and children in their reflections, the secondary group wrote about students, parents, and urban schools. The trend in the data was that preservice teachers located the structures of urban communities, including relationships among people living in urban spaces, as potentially supportive or potentially stifling.

Metaphors of Teachers

Drawing from the work of Sumara and Luce-Kapler (1996) and Schultz et al. (2008), we assumed that when preservice teachers discussed their ideas about being teachers, they had strong working knowledge of what might constitute *teacher* prior to our courses. This working knowledge was informed by many experiences, including popular culture (Hampton et al., 2008) and the many years of their apprenticeship of observation as students (Lortie, 1975). In their reflective writings, we saw preservice teachers weaving several metaphors of teachers, primarily teachers as navigators, mapmakers, excavators—those who uncover and bring light to dark places—similar to the saints working miracles for schools in Carter's (2009) examination of teacher metaphors. For example, Nell was an excavator when she wrote about her "plan[s] on digging into the community . . . looking for any hint of literacy." Similarly, in seeing his poetry unit as a conduit, Jeremy became the mapmaker who guided his students in their own journey to voice. He wrote:

> I have a theory about Dewey's concepts of quality and experience. When students are truly engaged in their [creative work], when they have achieved what they call "flow," they have reached that point where they are "having an experience." Their work has quality, and is recognizable as such by their peers. This feeling is something that you cannot take away

64

from a person; it is real, and valid, and embraces the student's sense of self on a concrete, unshakeable level.

Jeremy understood his role as teacher to be the person who takes his own knowledge to craft directions that lead students to a new perception of self, a role that we called mapmaker. This new self was located in a place that is "concrete, unshakeable." It was a "real, and valid" and permanent landscape from which the student, once there, could not be dislodged.

Miranda, in her decision to focus on the discussions in her classroom, wrote that she wanted "to find a way to inspire and manage productive discussions." Miranda herself was what we termed the navigator, discovering the route by which to bring a light into the troubled terrain of her classroom discussions. When Miranda sought solutions for what she saw as a problem with the discussions—the hesitancy with which her students spoke in front of the class—she looked for research that could "encourage change for the better," expressing frustration with research that "conducts a long study to find out what a big problem something is, then does nothing to help that problem." Thus, she hunted for research that could name, complicate, question, or frame "the problem" of her classroom space. Being a teacher meant being someone who could help students navigate the terrain of literacy, complicated by urban conditions that she saw as negative influences. In her understanding of *teacher*, she could be the one to show students the way through discussions that she could both inspire and manage. By asking the right questions, she could light the way for students.

Tasha's writing of teacher also drew from the notion of educator as one who brings light, but more as a safe haven rather than a navigator:

> [S]ome children come to school to eat . . . ; there are children who sit in my office to stay out of trouble; some of my students sleep in class because they are forced to work the late shift in a job that helps to put food on their tables; some of my kids are terrified of la migra [immigration officials] and have a consistent loathing for anything that smells like an institution or power structure; and, finally, the most important lesson I have learned is that my classroom needs to be a shelter from the storm that rages in the lives of some of these children.

In this writing, the out-of-school environment was marked with hazards. Students came to school to find a place of rest and sustenance. In this statement, students resided in a middle space, in borderlands between two compromised regions—an outside space that was threatened by authority and problems and an inside space that had the "smell" of an institution. But even within the compromised space of the school, students could find

65

respite from the "storm that rages"—her classroom that she has helped them to find amid these complicated spaces. Tasha's writing was a good example of how metaphors of teacher were entangled with the urban school contexts as well as the literacy content. While Tasha's role in this space was to provide shelter, her writing pointed to the context of her teaching more than her role. Teaching in urban schools comes with challenges that have also shown up in the metaphors of experienced teachers writing about their teaching (Patchen & Crawford, 2011).

The focal participants wrote about teachers, themselves, as having important roles to play in the literacy education of students in urban schools—a trend that was present throughout the data from all participating preservice teachers. Like Dewey (1902/1976), these preservice teachers found that teachers play a vital role in bringing curriculum to life with students. These were teachers who could map out the terrain of structures in the urban environment, excavate a space for literacy learning in which community literacy and funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) could potentially be accessed, and navigate the way for students to find spaces for oral expression and educational experiences that could lead to quality work in literacy via writing and discussion.

In summary, we found that preservice teachers' articulations of *literacy*, *urban*, and *teacher* were sometimes optimistic and sometimes problematic. Furthermore, we found that our choices for language in the university classroom contributed to how preservice teachers framed urban education, sometimes in ways that we did not anticipate and would want to trouble.

Discussion

We titled this article "Knotty Articulations" because as we moved deeper into the data of preservice teachers' reflections and the language of our own teaching, we felt the increasing tug of tangled threads. The language used in the preservice teacher reflections indicated insightful and problematic observations that reflected negative and supportive views of teaching English language arts to students who live and attend schools in urban communities. But we also see how we reified assumptions embedded in the terms *literacy*, *urban*, and *teacher* for beginning career educators, prompting the need to continually revisit how we as teacher educators contribute to the entanglement. The evolution of becoming urban literacy teachers is thus not located merely in the experiences of preservice teachers but also in the courses, discussions, texts, and materials that teacher educators present to preservice teachers. As urban educators, we offered preservice teachers

specific language, actions, and practices with which to create their under-standings of teaching literacy in urban settings, but those threads held our own assumptions, thus complicating the understandings articulated in preservice teachers' reflections.

We made two important assumptions about our work as teacher educa-tors: (1) teaching is a journey in which change is possible (Britzman, 2003), and (2) writing can represent preservice teachers' ideas about what it means to teach literacy with students in urban schools and communities. In the first assumption, we identify with the journey of teaching as one of *becoming* (Britzman, 2003). To view preservice teachers as becoming teachers, we as-sume they are in a state of change, a state in which their paradigms can shift (Kuhn, 1996). In becoming teachers, Greene (1988) argued that they "need wide-awake involvements with the surrounding world, with other human beings, with the community at large" (p. 11). The role of teacher educators, alongside experiences in field placements of schools and communities, is then of great importance to guide preservice teachers in their processes of becoming teachers. Moreover, that role, as we conceive it, requires care and attention to difference (Holbrook, Moore, & Zoss, 2010).

While we recognize that change is possible in a state of becoming, we do not posit that change is a linear, automatic process. Teachers—preser-vice, inservice, and teacher educators—may resist change for a variety of reasons. For example, they may choose to teach in the way they were taught in methods courses (Smagorinsky & Whiting, 1995) or they may choose to teach according to their thousands of hours of experience as students (Lortie, 1975). Ellsworth (2005) conceptualized pedagogical spaces as productive en-vironments in which learners' "edges" are frayed to create new relationships and fresh, tentative understandings (p. 70). Engaged in the ongoing work of becoming an educator in the spaces of university and school classrooms, preservice teachers can fray their boundaries and articulate new possibilities.

Sumara (1996) made a compelling argument about reading events that we felt illustrated the experiences that preservice teachers have in becoming teachers: "If we imagine that we are a thread in a fabric of a complex web of intertextual experience, we are a thread that cannot remain the same for having been in the fabric" (p. 87). That is, in the fabric of a reading event the reader becomes someone different having read a text. Similarly, preservice teachers bring values, beliefs, and assumptions to their decision to teach (Pajares, 1993), yet through their experiences in university and preK–12 classrooms, they change; they cannot remain the same for having been in the fabric of these different spaces. Our goals in the study were to gain insight into what the preservice teachers wrote about their experiences and also

67

our roles in the fabric of their experiences. And, we assumed that what they wrote could indicate something about how their experiences contributed to their becoming as teachers.

The reflections that our preservice teachers composed were articulations of what teaching literacy in urban settings meant to them, though these articulations were provisional (Smagorinsky, 2001; Vygotsky, 1987). Smagorinsky (2001) argued that articulations of meaning can be shifted, redirected, and reshaped with time, experiences, changes in context, and development of other meanings. In our study, we had a chance to see how preservice teachers' ideas played out in writing while they were immersed in experiences involving university course work and fieldwork in urban communities and schools. Within these contexts, certain meanings could be sanctioned over others. For instance, when we posed the project to the secondary group as an inquiry into problem solving for teaching in urban schools, we created a context in which seeing problems in those urban schools was possible. In other words, because of the context we created as teacher educators, we sanctioned the idea that urban spaces could have problems and that preservice teachers could be designers for solutions. When we urged the elementary group to take new and fresh eyes to their field placement communities, we sanctioned the idea that the neighborhoods where they taught were objects to be observed and places to be pondered as opposed to inviting sites in which they could/should be active members.

Just as some meanings are possible in some contexts while other meanings are not, our use of language in our course meetings and materials influenced preservice teachers' articulations of what *literacy*, *urban*, and *teacher* meant to them. The language we used to teach courses within the elementary and secondary programs was not always the same, and we can see the differences in how our students used language, depending on their program, such as the references to *community* that dominated the elementary preservice teachers' written reflections while references to *urban* dominated in the secondary program. If context matters, then what we contributed to that context through words spoken and written in course materials and class sessions also matters. Namely, we were complicit in sanctioning certain kinds of understandings about *teacher*, *urban*, and *literacy*.

Furthermore, we reiterated a larger cultural discourse that lauded the teacher as problem poser, problem solver, and what Reyes and Rios (2003) termed "teacher as savior"—in short, preservice teachers were charged with the challenge "to rescue students from their inherent shortcomings" (p. 9). There is no shortage of "teacher as savior" images in popular culture, including Hillary Swank in *Freedom Writers* (Sher, Shamberg, & Lagravenese,

2007) and Matthew Perry in *The Ron Clark Story* (Burkons, Friend, Brockway, & Haines, 2006). One only has to consider early portraits of students in urban schools in *To Sir with Love* (Clavell, 1967) and more contemporary constructions like *Dangerous Minds* (Simpson, Bruckheimer, & Smith, 1995) to see images of poverty, broken homes, trauma, and stress—structures and responses echoed in preservice teachers' reflections (Carter, 2009). Schultz and colleagues (2008) argued that a host of influences can affect how preservice teachers negotiate, think about, and ultimately shape their practices as professionals. Thus, as we consider the popular media images of urban education available to students and the metaphors that we employed in our courses, we take into account the conditions we created whereby such images of teacher could be reified and performed.

In conducting this study, we found that we inadvertently helped to reify some notions about teaching in urban schools that are troubling. The vocabulary of our courses contributed to preservice teachers' concepts of *urban* as problematic and structured spaces, *teachers* as savior-like people who sometimes gaze from a distance, and *literacy* as a commodity that could be hidden and exchanged. Haraway (1991) argued researchers are never off the hook for roles played in the production of scholarship. That is, our project set students on a path for developing their ideas about teaching literacy in an urban setting. They have much work to do and so do we. Knowing and embracing this responsibility, we have the following future possibilities for our research and teaching.

Implications

We feel several factors point to the importance of this study. First, given the time and opportunity to engage in teaching in multiple settings, preservice teachers have opportunities to view students in urban settings from proactive and engaging perspectives. Second, constructing a teacher education course or program with objectives and assignments that allow preservice teachers the time, space, resources, and support to compose the type of self-reflections seen in this study could be important for education programs, a finding confirmed in studies of preservice teachers' reflections through writing (Ball, 2006; Kyles & Olafson, 2008; Tidwell & Thompson, 2008). An examination of such assignments through a self-reflective lens can also allow university professors to consider how their own assumptions, classroom materials, and language influence the articulations of preservice teachers on their way to becoming professional educators.

Like Hagiwara and Wray (2009), we find that the concept *urban* does

69

not have a solid definition, and neither *teacher* nor *literacy* is easily and summarily categorized. The language in some of the preservice teacher reflections indicated views, informed by cultural and societal discourses that see urban life as fraught with danger and negative conditions (Grant, 2002; Hampton et al., 2008). This view of urban life is one-sided and needs to be challenged. Yet as we read their reflections, we recognized that what they wrote was not the sum total of their ideas about teaching literacy in urban settings; this semester-long assignment was one among others in the course, and the course was one among others in their program. Their writing may be examples of how they were "doing school" at the college level (Pope, 2001), strategically using the language we presented them to answer the queries we posited. We also recognized that the language they used was provisional (Smagorinsky, 2001); as novice teachers, they were new to the discursive environments of professional education, and part of developing as a teacher is the adopting, adapting, and shedding of language as one gains experience.

As faculty committed to teacher education, we need to be explicit about helping our preservice teachers shift into different ways of thinking, observing, writing, and talking about students. We need to teach different ways of understanding *literacy, urban*, and *teacher*, perhaps through differ- ent lenses, so that preservice teachers might use multiple sets of new eyes to see the complexity and richness that exist in teaching in urban settings. In providing multiple lenses for understanding the interwoven relations among students, texts, and teachers, we could potentially facilitate and encourage preservice teachers to open lines of inquiry beyond what we initially frame for them in our courses. For example, we are now careful with the language we use in project descriptions—if we use terms such as *investigate*, we explain what we mean, both in oral and written language. That is, we explicitly talk about project investigations as opportunities to learn about the details in a community or school context, rather than simply finding a problem and seek- ing out a solution. In particular we ask questions: What does *urban* mean? What does it mean to teach literacy? What does it mean to be a teacher? We have also used this study and the urban literacy project across multiple se- mesters with new groups of elementary and secondary preservice teachers, thus giving them many more weeks to think, write, and view urban schools and communities, as well as opportunities to share their findings with peers along the way. In the elementary program, we have focused this project and subsequent, derivative assignments on teaching digital composition in urban schools, prompting preservice teachers to consider literacy in terms of multimodal composition and access, and teachers as co-learners with students. In the secondary program, we added readings to course syllabi that

70

focused specifically on research and practices for literacy teachers in urban settings (Fisher, 2007; Li, 2008; Michie, 2009; Morrell, 2008; Weinstein, 2009). In addition to the project used in this study, we also added two activities to the secondary program: composing visual essays and sound compositions for the term *urban*—answering the questions of what does "urban" look like and what does "urban" sound like. These audio and visual texts resulted in new and different ways of seeing, hearing, and reporting on what it means to teach and learn in urban contexts. In all instances, we remain vigilant about our own language, cognizant of the implications—and power—of their use.

Clift and Brady (2005) pointed out an important aspect of teaching and learning in teacher education:

> Although researchers report that methods courses and field experiences have an impact on prospective teachers' beliefs about content, learning, and teaching, it is difficult to predict what impact a specific course or experience may have; the impact is often different from what instructors or student teaching supervisors may imagine or wish. (p. 331)

The results of this project were not fully what we expected. Based on our evidence, we still have work to do to support preservice teachers as they understand literacy as more than just a thing that can be recognized, as more than just a reading or writing or speaking activity. Furthermore, this study provided us with means to reflect on what our potential impact could be on preservice teachers and the importance of the language we use and the opportunities we provide for learning about teaching literacy in urban schools.

Our preservice teachers took up the words we used in our courses and used them to read the community and school worlds of students; Freire (2000) showed that reading the word and the world is a powerful and power-laden activity. For our practices as educators committed to critical literacy (Edelsky, 1994, 2006; Harste, 2003; Janks, 2000; Morrell, 2008), we now choose words and texts carefully so that we frame our courses as opportunities for seeing literacy and teaching in urban settings through multiple frames and views. Like threads woven into a fabric, we, too, are no longer the same for having conducted this study. Our articulations of *urban*, as well as *teacher* and *literacy*, are still tangled and complex, but we understand these articulations differently, and in turn, we practice our teaching mindful of the explicit connections we bear to the tangled and complex nature of these terms.

Authors' Note

71

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73

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Appendix A: Reflective Response Prompts from the Elementary and Secondary Programs

Elementary Education Program

Digital Community Literacy Project

CHECK 1

Q1. What are your perceptions about your field school community? Based on your readings, our class discussions, and your own literacy memoir, what are the ideas about home and school literacies that you are bringing to this assignment?

Q2. At this initial point in the project, what is your vision for this project? Consider the following: format (what will it look like?), media (what media will you use?), and content (what elements will you include?).

Q3. What do you expect this project will teach you about literacy in community settings?

CHECK 2

Q1. As you continue deeper into this project, what ideas are you developing about the literacy(ies) practiced in your field school community?

Q2. Is this project prompting you to define *literacy* in a way that is different from your previous use of the word? Explain your answer fully.

Q3. As you gather artifacts, collect images, and write your observations, how are you thinking about the "look" of your project? What will it look like, what media might you use, and what elements will you include?

CHECK 3

Q1. What will your project look like? What kind of images are you going to use? What kind of software? Will it be linear or hyperlinked? Explain the thinking behind your decisions.

Q2. How have your observations influenced how you think of in-school and out-of-school literacies?

Q3. Will the creation of this digital project influence the use of digital media in your future classrooms? Do you see a possibility of integrating the creation of digital products into your teaching? Explain your answer.

Secondary Education Program

Initial Reflection for Media Composition

1. What is my vision for this composition? What format, media, and content am I going to use?

2. What tools will be used in this composition? Why do you think these tools are essential in creating this composition?

3. How will this composition speak to literacy in urban school settings?

4. How will you secure permissions for any work included or cited in this composition?

5. How has your self-selected professional reading informed your thinking about this composition?

Midpoint Reflection for Media Composition

1. Where are you now in your vision for this composition? Consider the following: (a) Format; (b) Media; and (c) Content.

2. What tools are you using to create this composition? What are the affordances and constraints in these tools? What tools might support your composition better?

3. What have you learned so far about literacy in urban school settings?

4. How are you securing/have secured permissions for any work included or cited in this composition?

    a. List sources you are including that do not violate copyright.

    b. List evidence for permissions.

5. How has your self-selected professional reading informed your thinking about this composition?

Final Reflection for Media Composition

1. How was your vision for this composition realized? What changes did you make from your original vision and why? What is your impression of the quality of your final composition? Consider the following: (a) Format; (b) Media; and (c) Content.

2. What tools did you use in creating this composition? Given the tools you had and the composition that you created, what other tools would have helped you achieve your vision?

3. What have you learned about literacy in urban school settings?

4. How did you secure permissions for any work included or cited in this composition?

    a. List sources you included that do not violate copyright.

    b. List evidence for permissions.

5. How did your self-selected professional readings inform your thinking about this composition?

Appendix B

Words and phrases used in course materials to describe preservice teacher projects

Elementary Education Program	Secondary Education Program
Community culture	Critical inquirers
Community literacies	Multicultural education
Practicing literacy	Culturally relevant pedagogy
Field school community	Design
Diverse populations	Investigate
Dominant language	Reflection
Parent/teacher collaboration	Disposition
Expanded definitions of literacy	Urban Issues
In- and out-of-school literacies	Student's growth (or lack thereof)
Literacies as social	Case study
Critical literacy	Nature of diversity
Exploring your own literacy practices	Problem solving
Looking with new eyes	Reflective practitioner
Surprise	In-school and out-of-school experiences with English language arts
Perceptions	Respect for and support of individual differences of ethnicity, race, language, culture, gender, and ability
Observations	

Michelle Zoss is an assistant professor of English education at Georgia State University. Her research investigates inservice English teachers' curriculum decisions for teaching students to communicate via writing and drawing, and preservice teachers' understandings of English language arts, visual arts, and aesthetics.

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Ewa McGrail is an associate professor of language and literacy at Georgia State University. In her research, McGrail examines digital writing and new media composition; copyright and media literacy; multiliteracies and multimodal as-

sessment; and technology use in teaching and learning. She also explores the experiences of students and educators from outgroups or who are otherwise not in the mainstream.

Peggy Albers is a professor of language and literacy at Georgia State University. Her research interests include visual discourse analysis, critical literacy, and professional development in online spaces.

2014 CEE Election Results

CEE Executive Committee (four-year terms)

Ken Lindblom, Stony Brook University, New York

Tonya Perry, University of Alabama at Birmingham

Anne Elrod Whitney, Pennsylvania State University, State College

2014–2015 CEE Nominating Committee

Mark Letcher, Purdue University Calumet, Hammond, Indiana, chair

Latrise Johnson, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa

Donna Pasternak, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee

Kia Jane Richmond, Northern Michigan University, Marquette

Kelly Sassi, North Dakota State University, Fargo

On the NCTE website, see additional 2014 election results and details on submitting nominations for the 2015 elections (http://www.ncte.org/volunteer/elections).

79