

Creative Inquiry: Five Preservice Teachers' Interpretations of Literacy

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(ABSTRACT)

This qualitative study examines how five preservice teachers use multiple forms of representation (photography, spoken discourse, and written reflection) to interpret literacy. Eisner (1994) defines multiple forms of representations as "the devices that humans use to make public, conceptions that are privately held"(39). By better understanding preservice teachers' interpretations of literacy through multiple forms, teacher educators can promote a more holistic view of the literate qualities that define students as literate beings.

Data included: individual and group interview transcripts, photographs, literacy autobiographies, literacy portfolios, journal entries, and other written reflections. Five collective themes emerged across the data: self and self esteem, literacy as a social act, the environment, and growth. From these themes *creative inquiry*, a framework for literacy inquiry evolved. Creative inquiry is a circular or spiral process of interpretation, hermeneutic in form, whereby interpretations return us to a new self. Although collective themes were revealed, the participants engaged with the multiple forms in undividual ways throughout the process of creative inquiry helping shape personal interpretations of literacy.

Acknowledgments

It takes more than one. I think sometimes to succeed it takes more than one.

Barb

Like Barb, I too, think it takes more than one. And in this case, it took five dedicated professionals and a supportive family who offered me wisdom from multiple perspectives, unique and varying lenses, support, and time. I feel very fortunate to have had such a thoughtful, knowledgeable, and gifted committee. With greatest respect, I thank all of you.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Although I knew what building I would be going to, I wasn't very familiar its location. Certainly I had no idea where I would park. Parking, being a very real challenge, was hampered this particular day by the fact that I had abandoned my vintage 1956 Metro in the back parking lot of my husband's office. She--the minute yellow and white wind up toy-- had decided to be obstinate. Upset by my lack of attention, she refused to crank. In a monumental effort, I gathered up my visuals and my book bag, secured a new vehicle, and made it to Williams Hall in time. Winding up the stairs breathlessly and down the hall anxiously, I found room 308. Welcoming as always, Susie Murphy helped me get set up my visual representations. Today I was a guest in her class of 26 preservice teachers. I had been invited to talk with them about my photographs. We spent the next hour sharing, writing, and looking. After setting up 20 photographs, I had the students select one that appealed to them. Then, I asked them to write a description of the photograph, an interpretation based on an emotional response or memory and, lastly, a literacy interpretation. The students looked at the photographs. Many got out of their seats to inspect them more closely. Quietly the students wrote. Afterwards, I asked them to share their interpretations. The next thirty minutes flew by as several students shared personal stories prompted by the photographs. Lisa chose to write about a photograph of a rocking chair (see Figure 1). Because permission for the use of photographs was only granted for use with scholarly journals and not the internet, photographs have been eliminated. However their title is noted in their former space. Photographs are included in hard copias, contact author for this information).

Rocking chair:

Description: peaceful, soothing, comfortable

Memory or emotion: Memories of Shrine Mont from the rocking chair putting together of quilts I've made. Given memories of my friend, Sam.

Literacy interpretation: Idea of reading stories from a rocking chair. Paired with a quilt, a story of its own and pieces of literacy coming together.

Figure 1. Photograph of Rocking Chair by Lynn

Rebecca selected a photograph of a candle because she was reminded of countless nights on the islands telling stories around a candle as they waited out the latest hurricane off the coast (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Photograph of candle by Lynn

She wrote:

I chose to name the photograph, *A Light in the Dark*. It reminds me of hurricane season in the islands where I grew up as a child. The electricity would be turned off and we would use lamps and candles. As children, we would sit in the darkness and in the glow of the lighted candles and make shadow characters on the wall. We would make up stories of these characters on the wall. It also reminds me of my growth in literacy as we use this oral means to tell stories

and to continue the oral tradition of story-telling--an aspect of life that is infused in our culture--art, music, dance forms.

I ended my presentation with the a powerful photograph, entitled, *Flowers For Mother Theresa* I had recently clipped from the local paper (see Figure 3). Experiencing the power of images, as found in language and text, I wanted to encourage students to expand their ideas about literacy and to consider other possible sense-making devices. In a collage of backgrounds, lived

Figure 3. Flowers For Mother Theresa by Associated Press

experiences, stories, and images, we had begun to inquire, to ask the question: What is literacy? I left the class inspired, remembering the passion behind teaching. Immersed in my dissertation for the past months, I had forgotten what it *felt* like to teach: the excitement and thrill, a rushed heartbeat, and the personal "attending to" that teaching invites. I remembered that there had been few experiences in my life that have moved me more than teaching: the confidence in a student's eyes as he or she created a work one could be proud of, the exhilaration of learning something new, and the heartbreak of a lonely child. The one that no one else will talk to. The one whose only source of comfort and security is the leather jacket he wears during late spring hot spells.

Teaching is an art form. An inspirational and creative endeavor. An endeavor that requires the passion of a creator and caregiver. This inquiry into five preservice teachers' interpretations of literacy promotes inquiry that is personal and artful. It highlights the use of multiple forms of representations (written reflection, photography, and spoken discourse) as important tools for inquiry, encouraging preservice teachers, teacher educators, and educators to imagine the possibilities of literacy as an art form.

Teaching is a process, a recursive shaping and sculpting of ourselves within our environment. It is a multifaceted process that involves a wealth of possibilities for us to act as artists in this world--passionate, perceptive, constructive, and productive. Our acts ultimately help form the ultimate masterpiece, our students. If we passionately invest in our craft then we not only give, but receive. The insights we draw from our students are invigorating, challenging, and valuable. It is from them that we often learn about ourselves. As a creative process, teaching runs the gamut--personal risk, struggle, and a constant striving to create a masterpiece.

Teaching as an art form is a personal endeavor to not only help others find understanding but to examine our own understanding as well. It is a look back at what makes up our past experiences, a look at what we are presently doing, and a look forward at what we want to accomplish. It is an examination of self, our acts, and how we can best represent ourselves as teachers.

Creating and recreating oneself as an educator is a lifelong pursuit and, in fact, it was my work as an art educator that led me to the interesting intersection that exists between literacy and the arts. It was not until graduate school that I made this connection. As a young student, school in the sixties and seventies had presented me with a less than a passionate picture of language. Language was devoid of creative spirit, dissected, and diagrammed. I wrote to satisfy grammatical examinations, alone, versus experiencing the rich and powerful form of expression, words could embody. Words were only words, not colors and textures to be tasted, tried on, and absorbed.

In contrast, my experiences with the visual arts provided me with personal and expressive forms of communication. As an art student, I was expected to express myself in my work. If I didn't do so, my work would be flat, passionless, and stale. I did not understand that I could apply the same passion to words. Art and language remained separated. I could be an artist, not a writer. Writers knew grammar and were highly

intelligent people, capable of speaking with long words, articulate orators, and perfect spellers. Artists on the other hand were free-spirited, emotional, and flighty.

I finished art school and became an art educator. As an itinerant teacher, I began my career moving from place to place. I was known as Miss Art Teacher. The years passed as did the hundreds of faces I taught from my art cart. I finally landed a position at a local middle school. Being full time at one school gave me the luxury to really get to know my students and to create, with the help of dedicated faculty and many energetic students, a strong program. After almost four years at the middle school, I felt the need to reenter school as a student. I had a lot of questions.

Returning to graduate school as a doctoral student in elementary education, I found literacy studies to be a comfortable, yet challenging place to be. I brought with me the tools of my trade--expression and creativity. My introduction to language arts hinted at the connection I so wanted to explore. Learning about Whole Language in doctoral classes helped me make the connection between language and the visual arts. Educators such as Calkins (1994), Atwell (1990), Harwayne (1992), and countless others helped me view language learning as a holistic process rather than a fragmented one. From this perspective, language becomes an art form--something to be shaped and created--and, most importantly, something that is personal, challenging and, yes, risky. Much like creating a painting with words.

Instead of feeling at odds with language, I became enamored with its creative and expressive nature. I wrote with the same passion I painted, often splattering words, commas, and sentences across a page. I wrote in sharp staccatos. Loving a short gasp or a winding idea. I fought to make this rhythmic kind of writing legible to others. Weaving pieces of myself in stories, I uncovered remnants of art elements--line, shapes, colors, texture--in between lines of text. I wrote and felt with an accompanying heartbeat. Like heavy paint on my palette knife, sometimes I wrote without regard for the accuracy, looking for something between reality and passion. I was often unable to keep up with my thoughts, lacking the words I needed. I sputtered and restarted, abusing commas, splicing, dicing, and occasionally nicking my finger in the process. There is nothing quite like a quick Exacto blade cut to remind you are human. Equally as creative, expressive, and inspiring as painting had been, I discovered language as an art form.

I imagined. I thought. I began to take notice of imagery in text and visual art forms. I listened to people as they spoke, describing images in their life. When I read books I took notice of descriptive imagery, metaphors, and other fascinating word plays. I became intrigued with the connections between language and visual forms, turning to story as an image-laden device of expression.

I continued to read book after book dealing with image, story, narrative, and multiple literacies. Excited by current literacy research celebrating the expanded conceptualizations of literacies (Flood and Lapp (1994; Short and Burke, 1996; Eisner, 1993; The New London Group, 1996; Greene, 1995), I set out to explore literacy within a broadened context. This exploration included multiple forms of representations for communication and expression. I felt that if language is indeed an art, then it can be explored in an artful manner.

Encouraging preservice teachers, as future teachers of literacy, to use multiple forms as a part of literacy inquiry opens up important considerations for literacy research. Such personal inquiries may impact their ideas about themselves as teachers in very important ways.

In order for educators to promote literacy for all students they must begin to explore their own understandings of literacy and recognize possible forms of literacy that may exist for their students (Short and Burke, 1996; Eisner, 1993; The New London Group, 1996; Flood and Lapp, 1994). As educators, understanding our own literacy intersects with the literacy of our students in the following way: "Numerous people in education are recognizing the importance of coming in touch with the patterns of their own self-formation

if they are to find connection points with other human beings whose memories may link with theirs at certain junctures and, perhaps, seem alien at others" (Greene, 1994, 14).

Understanding our personal "patterns of self formation" and how they connect with our students, highlights the need for educators to carefully examine language arts programs, taking note of traditional strategies used for teaching language.

Historically, language arts programs have been largely verbocentric, focusing more on "language" than on the "arts". Within this tradition, language has been seen as the dominant way of knowing, particularly in the context of schooling where oral or written language is thought to be necessary for acquiring knowledge (Leland and Harste, 1994, 337).

Short and Burke (1996) have called for educators to value alternative forms of representation or sign systems as tools for thinking and communicating in the schools and to look beyond reading and writing as modes of inquiry. They state: "We assume that the same universal processes of creating and sharing meaning underlie all sign systems, and so we can take what we know about language and use those understandings to comprehend other sign systems, and vice versa"(99). Leland and Harste (1994) describe a good language arts program as "one that expands the communication potential of all learners through the orchestration and use of multiple ways of knowing for purposes of ongoing interpretation and inquiry into the world"(339).

Fully understanding literacy demands an exploration of its multiple dimensions. Eisner (1994) defines multiple forms of representations as "the devices that humans use to make public, conceptions that are privately held. They are vehicles through which concepts that are visual, auditory, kinesthetic, olfactory, gustatory, and tactile are given public status"(39).

Literacy is not merely a function of language, it includes multiple forms of sense making. Literacy is not merely reading and writing, it is a means of "reading the world"(Eisner, 1984). Eisner (1984) proposes that reading is a general human activity connected with the way we construct understanding. It refers to the multiple ways we make sense of the world. Narrowing the definition of literacy to a single form limits both who is considered literate and the depth and breadth with which literacy can be explored. "Literacy, as I use the term, is the ability to encode or decode meaning in any of the forms of representation used in the culture to convey or express meaning. In this sense I believe, one of the major aims of education is the development of multiple forms of literacy" (Eisner, 1994, x).

If we say literacy is reading and writing and only examine reading and writing as literate forms then we shut off the possibility of examining other modes of sense making. Flood and Lapp (1994) broaden the definition of literacy to include "the ability to function competently in the communicative arts--which include the language arts as well as the visual arts of drama, art, film, video, and television" (1). The list Flood and Lapp (1994) refer to represent multiple literacies as other modes for "reading the world" (Eisner, 1984). As we begin to better understand what is meant by multiple literacies, it becomes important to understand why a need for such a shift in literacy understanding has developed. Ferdman (1990) reminds us that "because culture is in flux, so are the definitions and consequences of literacy" (187). Change must be a given entity in education and the definition of what it means to be literate must become a plastic medium, whose shape can be remolded, much like a ball of clay. The New London Group (1996) cites two driving forces behind the need for a new image of literacy, "multiplicity of communications

channels and increasing cultural and linguistic diversity in the world today" (60). Such forces demand a more comprehensive view of literacy than traditionally seen in schools. Multiplicity of communication channels points to the highly visual and stimulating world we live in, requiring educators to re-shape traditional images of literacy (Hortin,1994; The New London Group,1996; Flood and Lapp,1994; Eisner,1993). With the advent of increased media through technology, "images in our world today cannot be overstated. We are influenced, taught, and manipulated by all kinds of visual information, including television, computers, signs and symbols, advertisements, body language, and motion picture films" (Hortin,1994, 5). Literacy pedagogy must regard these changes as important guides for providing better education by realizing that students are constantly exposed to a variety of images through the proliferation of computer games, videos, television, and computers.

Hargreaves (1994) reminds educators that schools must be ready to provide similar stimulation in order to tap into students' post-modern ways of knowing:

Hi-tech visual images are a pervasive feature of young people's lives. Textbooks, worksheets, and overheads are a poor match for these other, more complex, instantaneous and sometimes spectacular forms of experience and learning. In this context, the disengagement of many students from their current curriculum and their teaching is not hard to understand. Teachers are having to compete more and more with this world and its surrounding culture of the image. This demands a lot of them in terms of technological awareness and pedagogical change (75).

Meeting the challenge of a visual world requires that we recreate our own personal images of literacy and offer students diverse opportunities for making sense of the world. Literacy pedagogy must embrace this change, react to it, and begin to recreate an understanding of literacy that includes multiple forms of representation.

Literacy pedagogy now must account for the burgeoning variety of text forms associated with information and multimedia technologies. This includes understanding and competent control of representational forms that are becoming increasingly significant in the overall communications environment, such as visual images and their relationship to the written word--for instance, visual design in desktop publishing or the interface of visual and linguistic meaning in multimedia (The New London Group,1996, 61).

This quote represents the wide variety of communicational forms and the formative role of literacy pedagogy, highlighting the significance of the relationship between text and image.

The New London Group (1996) points out that "the proliferation of communication channels and media, supports and extends cultural and subcultural diversity," thereby connecting culture and communication (60). The two go hand in hand as individuals communicate with one another through diverse means, oftentimes through visual communications.

In agreement with the diverse nature of society, multiple forms of literacy need to be available. Traditional literacy solely connected to language becomes insufficient for understanding how diverse peoples make sense of the world today. "Literacy pedagogy has traditionally meant teaching and learning to read and write in page-bound, official, standard

forms of the national language. Literacy pedagogy, in other words, has been a carefully restricted project--restricted to formalized, monolingual, monocultural and rule-governed forms of language" (Hanna, 1994, 60). We quickly recognize the exclusive nature of a literacy solely restricted to language and easily understand the need for diverse forms of literacy to meet the diverse needs of students in our classrooms. "American society uses the term diversity to refer to ethnic, cultural, racial, and gender groups, to multiculturalism and pluralism, to preferential treatment and quotas, and to other political agendas" (Hanna, 1994, 66). Hanna's (1994) definition reveals the complexity involved in creating curriculum that works to benefit most students. It also defines the need for valuing diverse ways of making meaning as important considerations in curriculum development. "If there are different ways to understand the world, and if there are different forms that make such understanding possible then it would seem to follow that any comprehensive effort to understand the processes and outcomes of schooling would profit from a pluralistic rather than a monolithic approach" (Eisner, 1993, 5).

Chapter 2

An Image of Inquiry

Figure 4. Migrant Mother, Florence Thompson and Her children. (Dorthea Lange, circa 1936)
There she sat in that lean-to-tent with her children huddled around her, and she seemed to know that my pictures might help her. And so she helped me. There was a sort of equality about it (Lange, 1985, 159).

Lange's photograph and her interpretation surrounding it offers parallel implications for inquiry, melting away that line that exists between those that hold the camera and those that hold the pose. It asks us as researchers to carefully consider our role, our methods, our representations and findings, and most of all, the well being of our participants. Thoughtful, not thoughtless, inquiry raises the question: how do we create inquiry that respects, reciprocates, and promotes the visions of our participants and at the same time answers our own questions?

Inquiry asks us, as qualitative researchers to engage in the art of inquiry and to go beyond viewing our study as an objective task. It asks us to see inquiry as a human endeavor surrounded by a complex myriad of experiences--our own and those of our participants. "The qualitative researcher is very much like an artist at various stages in the design process, in terms of situating and recontextualizing the research project within the shared experience of the researcher and the participants in the study" (Janesick, 1994, 210). As researchers we must be capable of tasting the subtleties of our craft making "connoisseur like" (Flinders, 1996) choices before, during, and after the process of inquiry.

Like an artist, we must engage in inquiry with a sensitivity to the needs of our participants rather than just our methodological principles or techniques.

Qualitative research...is carried out in ways that are sensitive to the nature of human and cultural social contexts, and is commonly guided by the ethic to remain loyal or true to the phenomena under study, rather than to any particular set of methodological techniques or principles (Altheide, and Johnson, 1994, 448).

With this in mind, we must be careful not to constrict research to fit only the needs of the researcher. Cameron, Frazier, Harvey, Rampton, and Richardson (1994) urge researchers to "think long and hard about the uses to which findings might be put, or the effects they might have contrary to the interests of subjects"(18). They promote 'empowering research' as "research on, for, and with participants" (22). Empowering research encourages researchers to consider three important ethical issues:

1. Persons are not objects and should not be treated as objects
2. Subjects have their own agendas and research should try to address them.
3. If knowledge is worth having, it is worth sharing (Cameron et al., 1994, 23).

Their ideas support concerns I had as well. As the creator of this qualitative inquiry into literacy, it was important that I represent the voices and images of my participants, allowing the research to reflect their line of inquiry as well as mine. Treating participants as objects separates them from the researcher and locates them somewhere outside inquiry. It reduces them to disempowered phenomenon to be examined, probed, and studied. In such a role, the researcher takes on that of an investigator--cold and detached.

An image of myself as a detached researcher did not appeal to me, prompting me to use the word, "inquiry" to describe my research. I did not want to set myself apart from the participants. Because I had been their instructor in the fall, we developed a familiar relationship. My role as their teacher was far from formal. They knew my passions, mannerisms, humor, and excitement. I, too, had developed an image of them. To suddenly

become the objective researcher would not have worked. In fact, it would have been unnatural and in my mind and the mind of many researchers unethical. Many qualitative researchers (Lincoln, 1997; Cameron, Frazier, Harvey, Rampton, and Richardson, 1994) reject the notion of "the researcher and the researched," recognizing such a separation as potentially "exploitive and damaging" (Cameron et al. 1994, 18). This is an important consideration, especially if the inquiry depends on a certain amount of trust and support.

I envisioned my research as a joint effort, but still recognized my personal interests. My interest in multiple forms of literacy had raised many questions for me. The overriding question was: how do preservice teachers interpret literacy through spoken discourse, written reflection, and photography? More specifically, I wondered: how might these preservice teachers use these forms to interpret literacy? What collective themes emerge as important elements of literacy? What does each form add to their understandings of literacy?

I recognized that this inquiry was not only about what I wanted to understand, but what the participants desired to understand as well. Lincoln refers to the relationship of mutual respect that exists between researchers and participants as reciprocity (Lincoln, 1996). I wanted to gain access to their thoughts, ideas, words, and images but not at the expense of their learning. I wanted my participants to grow personally and professionally from their inquiry. Much like the approach a thoughtful photographer must make, I wanted a gentle and ethical approach to personal spaces of my participants. Like a photographer, getting up close and personal with a subject is earned through trust.

I wanted my inquiry to take cues from the inquiry of my participants. I wanted their questions to inspire my questions and their interpretations to intersect my interpretations. Although I had outlined a proposal for research, I wanted their interpretations to drive my inquiry. Hammersly and Atkinson (1995) explain, "Research should have a characteristic 'funnel' structure, being progressively focused over its course. Over time the research problem needs to be developed or transformed, and eventually its scope is clarified and delimited, and its internal structure explored" (206).

So my research would benefit the participants, I needed to provide the necessary spaces for them to explore their questions. Part of providing the spaces means that enough options exist for them to make inquiry their own. Stimulating unique lines of inquiry requires researchers to provide the necessary spaces for creative inquiry. Necessary spaces, in plural, suggests a need for multiple forms through which one might inquire, realizing that multiple forms of representations provide choice needed for personal exploration.

The personal explorations of the participants resulted in multiple forms which were then considered data. It is the contention of this study, that as a research method, the use of multiple forms of data yields a more comprehensive representation of preservice teachers' interpretations of literacy. "Because different "lenses" or perspectives result from the use of different methods, often more than one method may be used within a project so the researcher can gain a more holistic view of the setting (Morse, 1994, 224). To rely only on written interpretations of literacy provide only one lens for preservice teachers to conceptualize literacy and as Eisner points out, "different forms of thinking lead to different kinds of meaning" (1993, 6).

Data Collection As The Collection of Forms

Data collection for this inquiry can be best described in two phases. The first phase took place in the Fall, running from September through December of 1996. A large amount of the data collected during this period resulted from class assignments required by my assessment course and Susie Murphy's reading course. Data represented in the first phase are: Literacy autobiographies, written reflections, photographs, literacy portfolios, and photographic essays. In addition, each of the five participants participated in two audio-taped interviews.

The second phase of inquiry ran from January of 1997 until early May of the same year. Data collected from this period include: field notes, researcher's journal, participants' journals, photographs, and transcripts from individual and group interviews.

With some hesitation, I use the word data. I find the word cold and sterile, unlike the warm and subjective nuances I want to represent. Garrison (1997) uses the term "sympathetic data" to describe data as subjective, interpretive, and emotionally influenced. Garrison rejects the notion of "hard data" claiming that,

All data are subject to emotionally influenced, theory-laden, and value-biased selection according to the logic of our needs, interests, and purposes. Emotional selective attention determines what we recognize, react to, and respond to: these are the "data" that form our knowledge. [Dewey] uses the word, sympathetic to highlight the importance of viewing data and data collection as emotional and intuitive whereby collecting data is more than physically collecting evidence (35).

Rejecting this notion as well, I consider data representations of understanding. Rather than view data as detached from the self and its acts, I view it as breathing, living, representations of human endeavors.

Analysis As Transformation

I remember years ago sitting high on my cold metal studio seat staring straight across at the metal armature that was to become a self portrait in clay. Created from a steel pipe connected to plywood, the armature provided the necessary framework for the form.

In my hand, I held a small mirror that reflected my face. I felt somewhat embarrassed about studying myself. On the floor, to my right slumped a plastic bag containing red modeling clay. I had everything I needed--the subject, the frame, and the material. Everything I needed to create a masterpiece was there.

I sat there stupefied, intimidated by the task before me. I began by reviewing possible approaches in my mind. I could start by carefully describing my features with clay--my long face, thin lips, and wavy short hair. I could use the laws of proportion artists use to place features correctly on the face---eyes halfway down the face approximately one eye apart, the top of the ears level with the eyes. And lastly, I could try and represent my character, capturing my personality.

Using the medium at hand, I began to add clay to the armature packing a dense support that would soon become the head. I then spread large areas with clay suggesting my features. I looked back and forth from the mirror to the sculpture to check my progress. Back and forth. Back and forth. A press of clay here. Some over there.

Then I stood up, backing away from the sculpture, taking in the whole picture. My view from a distance guided the future placement of clay. It provided another perspective of the sculpture. I had to avoid the danger of getting too close as to not see the larger flaws. I continued working, adjusting, describing my face with clay, transforming my medium.

Like data, I envision analysis as a highly interpretive act--a recursive process, holistic in nature. Like the recursive process of creating a self-portrait, it requires us to look carefully at ourselves as researchers, our subjects, and our methods of representation.

Just as a sculptor continues to add and shape clay on an armature, we must reshape and reapply our interpretations to data. The data collected in this study invited multiple vantage points causing data to slip through my fingers falling into its own constructions. What once looked sound and stable, often had to be moved, revisited, and reshaped.

Working with data as a medium for constructing interpretation can be described as a process of transformation whereby analysis is only one part of "what we do with data" (Wolcott, 1994, 10). Wolcott (1994) suggests that the transformation of data is a gradual emergence from a complex web of information we collect as researchers. Instead of looking at data as forms to be analyzed separately in a linear fashion, he describes the process as transformation. Transformation includes: description, analysis, and interpretation. Description highlights the ability of data to speak for themselves. Analysis is

treated as just one part of transformation. It is the careful and systematic approach to data whereby the researcher expands and extends data. And finally, interpretation is described as, "freewheeling, casual, unbounded, aesthetically satisfying, idealistic, generative, and impassioned" (Wolcott, 1994, 23). Interpretation pervades this work existing at the intuitive and aesthetic level as well as the cognitive.

The processes of transformation are well suited to this study for several reasons. First of all, each, work well across data forms and secondly highlighting data as genuinely rich, human representations. For instance, the textual data that resulted from written reflection and transcripts, were read and reread, coded, index and read again. Multiple narratives were constructed in the form of descriptive narratives throughout the study. Textual data was then compared and contrasted with photographs and other artifacts. Photographs were described in narrative accounts and then juxtaposed with text. Moving between text and image was constant throughout the inquiry. Moving from one data form to the other was guided by my interpretation and the interpretations of the participants.

Realizing that interpretation is a freewheeling, subjective matter was important to this research. In fact, it created one of my biggest tensions. Creating a work such as this one, finds both discovery and dismay in the very forms that express our intentions. Whether through language or image, we find road blocks, twists, and turns, dead ends, and slight openings. In an attempt to respect the integrity of this research, I teetered between passionate, intuitive, and expressive representation and the need to present an air tight case in a linear fashion. In many respects I attempt to do the impossible--to stick a square peg in a round hole. Therefore, I considered the medium of my square peg and my round hole. I thought of them as plastic, reshapeable, and malleable. I worked under the assumption that the mold could be re-created, shaped, and heated by the warm hands of a sculptor. I worked to reshape the square peg and the round hole with the hope of bringing the two together in a fuller shape compatible to both.

In a creative format, I found myself trying to strike a very delicate balance between interpreting too much or too little for the viewer/reader. It was very important that I not fall into the trap of quickly shutting down my analysis with a linear representation of a very recursive study.

In the following chapters, I invite you as a reader and a viewer to join myself and my participants in the creative exploration of literacy through the interpretation of multiple forms. Within the framework of creative inquiry, we will explore ourselves and others, our acts, and the forms we create.

Chapter 3

Self, Acts, and Form: Creative Inquiry Into Literacy

This inquiry into five preservice teachers' interpretations of literacy represents the process of creative inquiry as a meaningful and expressive mode for interpreting literacy. It is as much about how these five women use multiple forms of representations to interpret literacy as it is a representation of the process of creative inquiry.

Holistically, creative inquiry is a recursive process for growth that encourages personal reflection, engagement with multiple processes, and the creation of expressive representations as an empowering mode for recreating self--in this case, creating oneself as a teacher.

Figure 5: Diagram of Creative Inquiry

Creative inquiry is a circular or spiral process of interpretation, hermeneutic in form, whereby interpretations return us to a new self. One is, one does, one becomes (see Figure 5). Creative inquiry represents *self* as what we bring to inquiry, *acts* as those transactions with the world, and *form* as stabilized representations of understandings. The diagram above serves as a visual image for talking about creative inquiry.

I use these three elements--self, act, and form--to talk about creative inquiry as a highly complex process of interpretation, in which the unifying strand --the self-- moves along a spiral to interpret literacy in relationship to oneself, others, and the world.

In this study we follow the creative inquiry of five preservice teachers as they interpret multiple forms of representations as devices for imagining their future as teachers of literacy. This spherical representation of creative inquiry evolved from the words and images of the participants. As a group, four collective themes emerged: self and self image (literacy as personal), "together and with" (literacy as a social act), environment (objects and spaces), and "as a teacher" (growth). As important representations, the themes are interwoven throughout each element of inquiry. In self, we see the themes emerge as the participants explore the past bringing up literate images of family members, teachers, and environments that shaped their literate selves. In acts, we see them emerge as the participants bring self to a inquiry in transaction with others in their present environment. And finally, we see the themes emerge in the photographs and words of the participants as they are embodied in the forms they create.

These themes permeate the inquiry of all of the participants in some degree, yet some are highlighted in individual inquiries. As a group of potential teachers, the spiral can overlay their experiences and lead back to newly created selves "as teachers."

Creative Inquiry As A Process

As a process, creative inquiry begins with self. Self serves as a starting point for inquiry representing those entities an individual brings to exploration. Self is listed as a separate element only to denote a starting point for inquiry. It is not considered detached from acts or forms but is instead a common thread among them all. Rather than considering self separate, I view it as a point of entry into inquiry and all that follows--acts form, and growth.

The self one brings to inquiry is defined by past experiences and in this case, literate experiences or what I refer to as *literate images* (Bustle, 1997). Marie, Julie, Jessyca, Barb, and Sally bring to the inquiry backgrounds uniquely sculpted by past experiences: images of supportive teachers, fat crayons, second grade drawings, and stories. Through memories, they reconstruct individual literacy experiences that exist in their minds as mental pictures. These images reveal meaningful and valuable experiences that move inquiry forward. "It is individuality which produces all that we value, which creates progress, which in short, is change" (Ocvirk, Bone, Stinson, and Wigg, 1968, 1).

Creative inquiry highlights individuality realizing its powerful capacity for growth whether in ourselves or others.

Individuals transact with the world based on needs, passions, emotions, and interests of the self. Interests direct choices and shape actions: "The self reveals its nature in what it chooses" (Dewey, 1932, 291). In this inquiry the participants engage in acts by writing, speaking, and photographing literacy. What they choose to photograph or write about reflects unique interpretations of literacy with which their selves connect.

Continuing with creative inquiry, individuals are called upon to shape interests into interpretations and ideas. Interpretations are then stabilized in unique forms of representations. If the process of creative inquiry continues to engage the self at this point, then forms become representations of self. Dewey explains, "There is a circular arrangement. The self is not a mere means to producing consequences because the consequences enter into the formation of the self and the self enters into them" (1932, 286). How individuals interpret their literate selves in relationship to their past experiences, others, and their environment is captured in the forms they create. As a result, the form embodies the self. For example, the photographs Jennifer takes embody her self and represent the experiences she brings to inquiry. They capture her experiences before and after the taking of photographs, and as representations, the photographs become part of later interpretation. It is her engagement and transactions with experience that she takes to her work, both as an actor and an artist.

In summary, what we bring to our literacy inquiry as past literate images drives our present inquiry through action, and moves us through forms to future, possible understanding. Through an examination of self, we not only look back or inward, but forward and outward. In essence, we have completed a cycle of growth.

Creative Inquiry As A Kind of Inquiry.

Creative inquiry is a kind of inquiry that celebrates the intricate self--complex and creative. If the self is encouraged to explore, it can land in some of the most profound places. It is this wandering that distinguishes creative inquiry from what many consider to be inquiry.

Inquiry, like literacy, is an ambiguous term caught up in the politics of one's devotion--the theories or paradigms we worship. Inquiry may be defined within the churches of the positivists, the qualitative, the quantitative, the cognitive, the affective, and the list goes on. The dualisms are countless. Instead of finding strength within the structures of such historical manifestations, creative inquiry asks the inquirer to *create* a personal representation of inquiry--to, as Bruner describes, find "possible castles" (1986, 45). Creative inquiry encourages us to create our own structures for understanding so as to make the work of inquiry meaningful.

The word "inquiry" brings with it manifestations of its own. We need to consider the definition of inquiry and how it relates to creative inquiry. *Oxford* (1989) defines the verb *inquire* in the following ways: "1. to search into, seek information, or knowledge, investigate, examine. 2. to seek knowledge of (a thing) by putting a question: to ask about; to ask something (someone) of a to request to be told." There are a few aspects of this definition we must be careful about.

Creative inquiry does not seek truth or knowledge alone; it seeks personal understanding. Searching for truth makes the assumption that truth exists. Perhaps a truth lies in the eye of the beholder, for in fact, behold is the Greek word for theory. Perhaps we all have understandings not truths. Coles (1989) explains, "we hold something visual in our minds: presumably the theory is an enlargement of observation" (20). Perhaps when we inquire, we attempt to understand ourselves, others and our environment. When we inquire, the best we can do is understand.

If we see inquiry as a search for knowledge, we must ask, what is knowledge and whose knowledge do we seek. I am reminded of my countless visits to an outdated *World Book* as a young student. My inquiry consisted of two directives. I was to write a two page report and it was to be on a subject that had already been selected. I was not allowed to

decide how I would go about learning a defined historical event, period, or individual. I could not draw a timeline, or create an imagined family scrapbook, or research music from the period. The choice was not usually mine. Instead, research was usually limited to the world book where I struggled to use someone else's words to create a report.

The inquiry was not mine. It was not meaningful. I was told what and who was important, and my mode for inquiry was chosen for me. There was little room in my line of inquiry for my imagination or creativity. Imagining and creating understanding are what make creative inquiry so meaningful. It reminds us, as creators, to create the path that connects yourself to your inquiry. If allowed to create a personal line of inquiry--a path to sensemaking--inquiry becomes meaningful. The journey then becomes useful and purposeful.

Common conceptions of knowledge are reflected in educational institutions at all levels. Schools are often seen as dispensers of knowledge and, as Eisner points out, "what schools allow [students] to think about shapes, in ways perhaps more significant than we realize, the kinds of minds they come to own" (1993, 5).

Many schools believe their image of valuable knowledge is meaningful and valuable to their students and that the image they reflect is mirrored in students' lives. Unfortunately, there is distortion in this reflection; individual students that make up our schools are unique individuals who enter schools with personal thoughts, reflections, and images about what is valuable and meaningful to learn.

Most schools use prescribed knowledge measured by standardized, "normalized" tests as a guide for dispensing information, rather than considering an individual's capacity to construct knowledge according to what one values. Kohl (1994) writes about students who choose "not to learn" knowledge that disempowers them as unique individuals. An example of this is seen in the images of minorities portrayed throughout history. These images, regardless of form, send disempowering messages to students. Often the images schools create are destructive, inviting students into limiting visions that are void of possibility. We begin to understand the disempowering nature of knowledge solely dispensed and created by privileged individuals. This kind of knowledge is exclusive and allows images of success only to be reflected on those that are considered worthy and intelligent by pre-designed measures (Friere, 1978; Holm, Kaufman, and Farber 1995; Greene, 1988).

Because most standardized measures of knowledge are associated with verbal and mathematical skills, knowing becomes a function of literacy--a limiting image of literacy surrounded by the notion that language is the dominant measure of knowing. Leland and Harste point out, "Language has been seen as a dominant way of knowing, particularly in the context of schooling where oral or written language is thought to be the necessary precursor for acquiring knowledge" (1994, 337). If we assume language is the necessary precursor for knowledge then we dismiss all other ways of knowing and limit our image of what it means to be literate.

Looking at how schools define knowledge leads to a discussion of how schools commonly access knowledge. This brings us to inquiry. Most often students are considered knowledgeable if they are able to perform well on examinations. Tests define what it means to be intelligent, with intelligence largely defined as mathematical and verbal. Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences defines intelligence "as the ability to solve problems or to create products that are valued within one or more cultural settings..." (x). Gardner identifies seven intelligences: linguistic, logical, musical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal and intrapersonal. By reviewing this list we realize that most assessment strategies value linguistic and logical intelligence over others (Eisner, 1993; Gardner, 1983; Voss, 1996).

In attempts to connect a broadened notion of intelligence to literacy, many educators have begun to expand their notions of literacy to include multiple intelligences (Greene, 1994; Leland and Harste, 1994; Short and Burke, 1996; Bergoff, 1997; Eisner, 1993). Voss (1996) refers to many of the other literacies outlined by Gardner as literacies most

often invisible or hidden in the schools and looks toward "literacies to mean those understandings that allow an individual to make meaning in a symbol system--spoken or written words, art or music or wood or media"(14).

Creative Inquiry That Highlights the Qualitative Whole

"Intuition proceeds conception and goes deeper"
(Dewey, 1940/1984, 249).

Creative inquiry erases the false dualisms that exist between the rational and the irrational and supports what Dewey refers to as the qualitative whole whereby the affective, or background of thought feeds the rational, or foreground of thought (1925/1984). Holder's (1995) theory of natural emergentism recognizes both as important modes of understanding and values the emotive in learning. "Naturalistic emergentism offers a middleground between the extremes of cognitivism and irrationalism by showing how cognitive experience is emergent from and pervaded by noncognitive experience (i.e. emotions, habits, and imagination)"(176).

For Dewey, qualitative thought or the qualitative whole is that balance that exists between the background and the foreground of qualitative thought. The background of qualitative thought can be described as the precognitive or noncognitive elements of inquiry while the foreground of qualitative thought is concerned with cognitive entities such as ideas and concepts.

Creative inquiry highlights the background of qualitative thought or affective qualities such as such as need, affect, intuition, selective attention, imagination, and emotion. Dewey describes emotion as "the moving and cementing force. It selects what is congruous and dyes what is selected with its color, thereby giving qualitative unity to materials externally disparate and dissimilar. It thus provides unity in and through the varied parts of an experience"(1934, 42).

Intuition can be described as that wordless feeling; a holistic sensation we often feel and react to but can seldom express. We intuit a quality. We "sense" the need to take a photograph of a particular scene or we "sense" to help a student.

The word "intuition" has many meanings...It may be relatively dumb and inarticulate and yet penetrating; unexpressed in definite ideas which form reasons and justifications and yet profoundly right...Intuition precedes conception and goes deeper... Intuition, in short, signifies the realization of a pervasive quality such that it regulates the determination of relevant distinctions of whatever, whether in the way of terms or relations, becomes the accepted object of thought (Dewey, 1940/1984, 249).

Affective elements feed the foreground of qualitative thought, which is concerned with "ideas," "concepts," "categories," and "formal logic." The background of qualitative thought shapes cognitive realms in such discreet ways that often they can not be defined--the line between the affective and the cognitive blurred in interpretation. Our cognitive capabilities engage often without regard for precognitive influence. As a process of interpretation, we begin to make sense of the felt or intuitive qualities of our experiences, giving them form in meaningful ways.

Creative inquiry highlights qualitative thought, inviting both the affective and the cognitive into understanding. In this case, an understanding of literacy calls us to bring both the affective and the cognitive to inquiry considering literacy as a felt and conceptual act. It heralds feelings and intuitions as valuable entities, asking the participants to transform feelings or passions into interpretations or ideas. Literacy becomes an act of feeling, emotion, and passion as well as a conceptual mode for making ideas known. It is not enough to know the mechanics of language or photography; one must feel the passion of the act--writing, painting, singing or dancing.

Creative inquiry focuses largely on the often over shadowed background of thought celebrating it as the expressive seed of inquiry. Inquiry, as a creative process is supported largely by Dewey's (1934) theories of art and aesthetics. Rejecting any ultimate fine arts versus practical arts dualism, Dewey does not see art or aesthetics as removed from day to day life experiences but instead as an integral part of what we do.

Theories have accustomed us to draw rigid separations between the logical, strictly intellectual, operations which terminate in science, the emotional and imaginative processes which dominate poetry, music and to a lesser degree the plastic arts, and the practical doings which rule our daily life and which result in industry, business, and political affairs (Dewey, 1925, 104).

If art is experience, then how we experience the world can in fact be represented through aesthetic, experiences. "Aesthetics," a word commonly associated with beauty and the arts, instead represents qualitative experience as a process for understanding. Not unlike the masterful unity of a piece of art when the elements (line, shape, value, texture, form, and color) come together in unity to create an art form, aesthetics refers to inquiry as a passionate, colorful, and textured process where the expressive process yields a masterful experience. Masterpieces are not limited to the arts. They can take the form of stories, photographs, lessons we teach, or even relationships.

If we consider our day to day experiences as potentially aesthetic or artful then we become more perceptive to what is around us. We create what we imagine and act in perceptive ways. In fact, we begin to think like the artist--to inquire like the artist. We imagine. We create. "Imagination and creative action release possibilities and transform the commonplace instantly" (Garrison, 1997, 79). This is a valuable way to think about our lives. This is a valuable way to think about teaching.

If we are to experience inquiry in artful ways, we must perceive what is around us in a wide awake manner. Creative inquiry encourages the perception of all experience. "Perception is the gathering of information through our senses and the organizing of that information in order to create meaning. We rely on our senses to provide us with data: we rely on our experiences, thoughts, and values to organize, interpret, and explain what we see, hear, taste, touch, and smell" (Stern and Robinson, 1994, 32). To expand the sensibilities of perceptions, we must broaden our repertoire of sense making modes and explore multiple possibilities for understanding.

Our senses--all of them--become important modes for perceiving qualities in our experiences. "The senses are the organs through which the live creature participates directly in the ongoing of the world about him. In this participation the varied wonder and splendor of this world are made actual for him in the qualities he experiences"(Dewey, 1934, 22). Out of experience, as individuals, we perceive--not merely recognize--the qualities that define lived experiences. It is important to distinguish between recognition and perception. Perception requires the molding of experience into a form. "Recognition is perception arrested before it has a chance to develop freely...in recognition we fall back upon a stereotype, upon some previously formed scheme" (Dewey, 1934, 52). Falling back on stereotypes does not allow individuals to uniquely construct understanding into forms. Allowing individuals to create their own understanding based on unique perception and experience, creates new images about what it means to be intelligent, what it means to be creative, what it means to be literate, and what it means to be moral.

Perception is quite possibly one of the most underrated modes for understanding that exists. It informs the construction of our thoughts, delving deeply to our souls. It touches what we are most passionate about and then informs us on how to form our thinking, whether it is a decision about whether to select a multi-colored striped shirt over a plaid or whether to remove a child from a possibly threatening situation. It informs us only

after striking the senses with strong clarity, revealing that which is often most important and heartfelt. Perception becomes an extremely important tool for any creative act, whether it is the creation of a photograph, the creation of a story, or the creation of a relationship. It pulls from the unique experiences, needs, passions, and interests of individuals, thereby encouraging meaningful learning from which multiple forms of meaning making can be created.

Creative Inquiry As a Process For Growth

Creative inquiry is a process for growth. As inquirers, we grow in our understanding of ourselves, in our understanding of the world and others, and in our ability to represent understanding through form. "The growing, enlarging, liberated self goes forth to meet new demands and occasions, and readapts and remakes itself in the process. It welcomes untried situations. The necessity for choice between the interests of the old and of the forming, moving, self is recurrent" (Dewey, 1932, 309). Dewey highlights two important aspects of growth as found in creative inquiry--its fluidity and its temporality.

As a fluid process, creative inquiry is not static or linear. It is not meant to suggest a certain order to or a sharp distinction between the elements. In fact, it is best to think about interpretation as shifting, interwoven layers that are not always visible. For example, one cannot speak of Marie's photographs without speaking of her interaction with the camera, her processes for taking pictures, and those individuals or objects she chose to photograph.

The spiral configuration of creative inquiry represents a very non-linear process in which the discussion of one element always leads to another. Representing creative inquiry in a linear form offers a very challenging tension. To negotiate this tension, I had to make decisions about presentation. Because of the restrictions of language provided in this work, in chapter five I have included a visual and textual representation that I hope will provide a more holistic representation of the complexity and richness of creative inquiry. Using collage as a metaphor, I will use text and image to represent the individual inquiries of five unique selves.

Creative inquiry as a process for growth encompasses a distinct temporal quality as the self moves through time. The self exists across time reflecting on past experiences, engaging in present explorations, and looking toward the future as possible actors.

It seems to me that we live in what we experience as an interlude between the lived past and what we conceive to be some future possibility. Depending on our location and, in large degree, on our gender, class, and what is now called ethnic identity, we interpret our historical as well as our personal pasts contingently (Greene, 1997, 67).

These five participants bring with them unique pasts that drive inquiry in personal ways. Building on historical values and those that have influenced them as literate individuals, they act in the present by writing, photographing, and speaking their way to new interpretations of literacy. "The self develops and finds meaning in the context of relationship--between self and other selves, subject and object, individual and culture, and between aspects of the self, both across and within the time dimension" (Witherell, 1991, 90). There is growth as they look toward their future as teachers of literacy.

I now move to an examination of each of the elements of creative inquiry. Beginning with self, I will focus on the unique selves of each participant through the use of story as a powerful mode for exploring past lived experiences. I then look at how the participants incorporated self into present acts of photographing, speaking, and writing. And finally, using collage as a metaphor for literacy inquiry, I will represent the unique inquiry of each participant through the representation of their forms. It is the participants' transaction with these forms that move them forward to their future selves as teachers.

Chapter 4

Representations of Self: Reconstructing the Past, Pulling Up Images, Moving Forward in Inquiry

Self is a sea boundless and measureless
(Kahil Gibran, 1932, 54).

Creative inquiry is an invitation to explore the boundless self. A self not bound by the restrictions of a lived experience, a word, or an image. Not limited by select processes for sense making. Not restricted by the politics of knowing. The self can not be contained. There is always a past, a present, a future and countless interpretations.

I begin my discussion of creative inquiry with the self, focusing on those experiences that we bring to inquiry and continue to develop. By using the term "self" I do not want to imply that we exist in inquiry devoid of the rest of the world. Self in creative inquiry involves all that we experience. It is our transaction with the world that begins to define us as individuals. Creative inquiry is a personal exploration that invites the self on an endless journey to understand. At all phases the self engages in inquiry, whether through storying about one's past, the taking or looking at photographs, or the reflection of one's representations.

In this study, the participants seek to understand literacy. I seek to understand their interpretations. We each bring to the question, "What is literacy?" We bring to inquiry images from the past--mental pictures of what literacy means to us at this point. The question becomes tailor made only when we explore the question, "What does literacy mean to me?" Connecting one's self to our inquiry invites new reflection and meaningful exploration and the creation of new forms.

Each participant brings to this inquiry different lived experiences that define him or her as an individual--and in this case--a literate being. It is safe to say that Marie is different from Sally and Sally is different from Julie. No two persons are just alike. Much like the difficulty of capturing individuals in the creation of a painted portrait, the process of capturing not only the visual likeness of a person as well as the character of the individual becomes a very perceptive and technically challenging endeavor. No two faces are the same. There are subtle nuances--the slight dip in one eye, the stoic profile of a nose, or the fullness of a child's cheek-- that define faces as individual. An understanding of this represents the complexity of entering into a study of interpretations. It is however this same uniqueness that represents the endless nuances that embody inquiry as a human endeavor.

How Marie, Sally, Jessyca, Julie and Barb interpret literacy in their work clearly reveals personal aspects of themselves. I look at my own passions--those interests that continue to drive my work. I can return to documents as far back as 15 years to find evidence of them--aesthetics, creativity and expression. They are still there and continue to manifest themselves in new ways. Creative inquiry allows us to revisit and resculpt passions in a very vested and meaningful way.

Understanding our selves means looking back as well as forward. What we attend to and act upon in the present is so caught up in past lived experiences, that interpreting past experience is crucial to understanding self. One such examination requires us to revisit the past in ways that allow us to represent those images that we find most important. Making the past known requires us to pull up memories of those experiences that have been etched in our minds as meaningful--to recreate images of successes and failures as a way of better understanding our selves.

Beginning to understand the literate selves of my participants began when my inquiry and the inquiry of my participants intersected. Their exploration and my exploration became interwoven as we shared our understandings of literacy-- our thoughts and ideas pushed, pulled, stretched, and challenged. In this section, I invite you to join

myself and five others in literacy inquiry. This section shows the struggle all of the participants faced as they worked to bridge the past to the present as a means for moving thoughtfully into the future.

First Images

It was August of 1996 that I first met Marie, Sally, Barb, Jessyca, and Julie. They were five of nineteen students in my literacy assessment course that met every Friday morning in room 400 of Drayton Hall on the campus of Melton University. Since this was the first time that I had taught a course of this nature, I solicited the help of my advisor, Susie Murphy. Susie and I worked closely together throughout the fall. Her role as a mentor for these five young women and myself was very important. Not only did she supervise the preservice teachers in this model, but she taught a reading course which complemented my course. We kept in constant communication by writing letters to one another at the end of each week. This set of letters became my fieldnotes, providing me with a valuable place to reflect on my work. Every Friday afternoon following class I would sit down with my collection of cryptic notes and compose a letter to Susie in story form representing the activities of the class.

Susie also provided me with my first introduction to the students through a computer print out of their names and social security numbers, as well as photographs she had taken of them the semester before (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Marie, Sally Julie, Jessyca, and Barb, (left to right) by Susie

This was a welcomed relief for someone who has trouble remembering names. I tucked away my first artifacts-- textual and a visual images of my students.

The night before class I read over the names connecting them with the Xeroxed faces. It was helpful for me to at least have some idea of what each student looked like. There's nothing colder than a computer print out sheet--a long series of rows, letters, and numbers strung out one after the other.

In preparation for class, I created a syllabus outlining the general activities of the course. Despite feeling somewhat anxious, I had some strong convictions about the kinds of engagements I wanted these students to have. I knew I wanted them to experience a personal inquiry into literacy. Knowing the benefits of using expressive modes with students in the past, I constructed the course so that students were encouraged to use multiple forms of representations to represent their learning throughout the semester. The activities of the course required written reflections of literacy as well as visual images in the form of photographs. The representations created by the participants became important pieces of data in this study.

The first day of the semester arrived. The air was filled with fresh fall energy, the kind I remember as a child on the first day of school--a smell in the air I've never been quite able to describe in words. Anxious and excited, I arrived at the university early. I parked much too far away to be lugging a heavy black book bag on my shoulder. I made what was soon to become my traditional stop at the campus coffee shop, adding one cup of very hot coffee to my already ponderous load.

I made my way toward Drayton Hall. Marked by a tall tower of stone, its stately presence mimicked the academic presence of the university. People scurried around. I liked being part of such an active scene. My classroom space could be described as somewhat claustrophobic, located at the top of a long climb of stairs. Tables, which seated two people, were arranged in a "U" shape, and unused chairs and overburdened bookshelves lined the walls. At the front of the room was an overhead projector, a couple of tables, a television, and a dry erase board. The windows stretching across the outside wall, overlooked the oval drill field and the central administration building (See Figure 7). Sounds from below filtered in, as well as bees that regularly entered uninvited. When the room filled up with bodies, the space became compact and not easily moved through. I

prepared the room by opening a few windows and organizing my books and papers. Time passed quickly and before I knew it, the faces and names I had familiarized myself with the night before were filing in the door.

Figure 7. Window of room 400 by Julie

Barb and Marie entered first, talking and giggling shoulder to shoulder. Barb was slender and seemed tall, perhaps because of her light build. Lanky and fair her outgoing nature was evident. She had sandy brown hair that rippled loosely, falling just below her shoulders. Her wide eyes turned down slowly nestling gently on her cheeks as she smiled. Her stately nose balanced a host of expressions all seeming to happen at once. She talked with her entire body--expressive and bold with large movements.

Marie was also a tall young woman. She had long, thick dark hair that cascaded in curls down her back as she seemed to glide to her seat. There was a weightless grace to her movement. Her eyes were wide and bright surrounded by smooth, clear skin. She had a dynamic smile that poured across her face as she talked enthusiastically. Laughing often, she seemed to enjoy her conversation with Barb.

Sally slipped in the door and quietly found her seat. She was slight in build; short and diminutive in stature. Her face was round with rose-flushed cheeks, full lips and upturned nose. Her hair was thick and dark falling several inches down her back.

With a no-nonsense stride, Jessyca confidently and quickly entered the room finding a seat in the center of the room. She was average in height with curly light brown shoulder length hair. Her eyes squinted as she smiled, her high cheeks defined by her well sculpted dimples. She organized her space efficiently as she talked to her neighbor shoving her books aside as she readied her pencil.

Large-boned and average in height, Julie moved slowly in carrying an arm full of books. She had long thick black hair, straighter than the others, that fell heavily down her back. A few strands, cut shorter than the rest lightly framed her face. Her face was full and strong. Her nose was rounded, thinning to disappear into the line of her eye brows. She appeared more serious, smiling gently as she talked. Her dark eyes seemed pensive and soft.

The classroom was full. The noise subsided as the entire class settled down in expectation of my voice. I asked each student to jot down her definition of literacy on a piece of paper. They spent a very silent five minutes thinking and writing--varied looks on their faces. It was a tough question, yet it offered a starting point for inquiry that, for several students, would continue into the spring. These are the definitions written by the five students who became participants in the study.

Jessyca: I believe that literacy is the ability to read and write. I also think that it is the ability to appreciate reading and writing.

Julie: Literacy to me is more than just reading. It is listening and writing. It is a part of our lives. without having the many aspects that are encompassed in literacy, I believe it would be difficult to thrive or succeed in life. On a personal level, literacy to me is reading, for pleasure, something I cherish having the ability to do and appreciate it for me.

Barb: Literacy is....reading, writing, communicating, the ways we put thoughts into words, the way we look at and begin to understand what words mean and how to use them.

Sally: Literacy is not only reading and writing, but other ways that we communicate meaning to others.

Marie: Literacy is not only reading and writing, but is also pictures and things seen in everyday life. Literacy is partially a means of communicating.

Like others in the class, their responses ranged from broad notions of literacy such as communication to more traditional forms of literacy. I tucked their definitions in a Manila folder labeled "written reflections." I now had my first representation of their interpretations of literacy. A starting point. I now had words to go with the faces.

Our next class brought with it the remnants of Hurricane Fran off the coast. I woke to a torrential downpour, a child who did not have to go to school, and a husband who was out of town. I took care of these challenges with a phone call and a bright yellow raincoat. I made it to Drayton Hall with a half hour to spare and climbed four flights of stairs to Room 400.

Rain and wind battered the large windows setting the stage for what I thought would be a cozy atmosphere for sharing. I hoped that the weather would not keep the students away. Slowly they straggled in, wet and wind blown, wearing ball caps, sweats, or jeans--comfortable and relaxed.

Their assignment had been to bring in a literacy artifact to share with the class. As I looked across the classroom, I noticed books of all kinds. Many were old and worn picture books while others were more recent editions of what my son would refer to as "fat books without pictures". We began on the right side of the room. I shared the book, *My Many Colored Days* by Dr. Seuss (1996) explaining how I was struck by its vivid colors and pastel images. We continued with each person presenting their book and explaining why it was important to them. Many cradled or hugged their books talking about them as if they were treasures. Several giggled as they read excerpts from their favorite childhood story. Sally smiled as she read the following passage from *Charlotte's Web*, one of her favorite books:

Well, who taught a spider? A young spider knows how to spin a web without any instructions from anybody. Don't you regard that as a miracle?

I suppose so...I never looked at it that way before. Still, I don't understand how those words got into the web. I don't understand it, and I don't like what I can't understand (White,1952,45).

Shel Silverstein (1981), Dr. Seuss (Geisel,1996), Maurice Sendak (1963), *Winnie the Pooh* (Milne,1957), and *Charlotte's Web* (White,1952) were among the favorites. As we continued around the room many talked endearingly about the person who tirelessly read a book over and over again to them as a child. Several told stories about that special person who had given them the book as a gift. Many recreated mental images of themselves as young children tucked in their bed while their parents read to them. Several, like Julie, were captivated by a book's illustrations. She shared a dazzling book entitled, *The Rainbow Fish* (Phister, 1996). She was struck not only by its message of giving but by its imaginative and colorful illustrations. Talking as the book faced us, she slowly

turned the pages. The rainbow fish's shiny scales glittering in the sunlight. Like, Julie, Barb found the illustrations and imagination of Sendak's (1963) *Where The Wild Things Are* to be among her favorites. I too, remembered it as a book that captivated me; full of detailed monsters so carefully articulated with a pen.

We worked our way around the room, listening attentively to each person, occasionally distracted by a sudden gust of wind beating the window panes. Jessyca shared a devotional book entitled, *The Upper Room* (1997), speaking of its importance as a book she read daily. We continued, finally reaching Marie who was last to present. She began by sharing *her* story. Speaking clearly, with a caring feel to her voice, she described her work helping children with cancer at a camp the previous summer. What she experienced during her time with them was so powerful and touching she was moved to make sense of her personal struggle to understand the suffering and premature deaths of those she described as "precious children." Her sense making took the form of a poem she had created entitled *Fading Sun*.

Whenever someone special dies,
 God lets them paint the endless sky.
 He calls the young and precious first
 and gives them the colors of heaven and earth
 to create the sunset of their choice
 which becomes their silent voice
 proclaiming that they do live on:
 their love seen through a fading sun.

Later that year, in a letter, Marie sent her poem to the mother of a college student who had been murdered. Although Marie only knew the young man by name, they had attended the same high school. She had never met his mother but followed through with her desire to help, and took the risk of sharing her poem. Later, she received a letter back from the mother expressing the comfort it had brought her. We quietly listened as she spoke. Those that had gotten restless over the hour were now still. The class sat motionless. as the wind continued to tap the window.

Sitting at my computer that afternoon, I replayed the activities of the class over and over again in my head, extracting key observations. The varied stories and images each student portrayed as she shared her book captured my attention. I was especially intrigued by the reasons each gave for her choices. Some spoke of illustrations, while others cited sentimental, religious, or inspirational reasons. Not one chose a book because it had given them information. Instead, the representations had brought solace, comfort, guidance, pride or joy.

Through the activity, the students represented their past images of literacy--images of parents reading at bedtime, memorable illustrations, and struggles to understand. All of the images, as unique and personal mental pictures, represented meaningful literacy experiences that were relived through books or, in Marie's case, a poem.

The thoughtful and expressive nature of Marie's poem is but one glimpse of Marie's personal understanding of herself as a literate person. The fact that Marie chose this poem as an important representation of her literacy provides us one view into her literate image. Literate image is a term that describes the complex web of images that represent our personal literacy. Images are a complex composite of past and present lived experiences. From this complex web of experiences an individual can pick, pull, and select those images which best represent their understanding of literacy. These images may take the form of anything from mental images or stories of literacy experiences. Personal reflection on, and creative engagement with, such images allows an individual to construct a meaningful understanding of literacy so as to create possibilities of imagined future images.

The term, literate images intentionally brings together the words "literacy" and "image" inviting an expanded exploration of sense making devices as literate forms. Webster (1981) defines image in this way:

Image *vb* **imaged**; **imaging** *vt* **1**: to describe or portray in language in a vivid manner **2**: to call up a mental picture of: IMAGINE **3 a** : REFLECT, MIRROR **b** : to make appear: PROJECT **4a** : to create a representation of : *also*: to form an image of **b** : to represent symbolically *~vi*: to form an image (566).

This definition suggests that literacy is more than textual or visual. It is a definition of action, creation, and imagination. Marie's poem is an excellent example of one such form. It's was born from the affective, moving from an intuition and then through the creative process into a form to be shared.

As the weeks passed, the students continued to share their literate images. Marie, Barb, Jessyca, Julie and Sally responded to a written invitation for volunteers to participate in literacy research, entitled "Inquiry Into Literacy." Having discussed the inquiry individually and with the class as a whole, these five women agreed to participate. As a part of the larger group they were not unlike the rest of the class. Each were pre-service teachers in their fourth and final year at the university. All were Caucasian females from middle to upper socio-economic backgrounds. Their ages ranged from 20 - 22. At the time of this study they were fully engaged in an intense program of coursework at the university and student teaching at various elementary schools in the area. As part of their requirements, each student had two field placements during the academic year in a small city or county school system. One placement took place in the Fall of 1996 and the other in the Spring of 1997. In addition, the students spent their final year taking three academic courses in the Fall and three in the Spring. Out of the six courses, three focused on literacy, two in the Fall and one in the Spring. I taught the course, entitled, Reading and Language Assessment.

Like most in the program, they were strong, motivated students who displayed enthusiasm and interest, contributed to discussions, and desired to know more. As future teachers, they had an interest in exploring literacy. Their response to my call for volunteers represented their desire to know more. In their first interview, they were asked why they chose to participate. Their responses indicated that they, too, valued reflection and the benefit of working with others as an avenue for learning. They felt as if they had something (to use their words) to "gain" from the work. Sally responded in this way: " I think it's very helpful for me to talk with other people about what I am doing because I think it helps me to reflect on it a little more myself, and maybe to learn a little bit about why I do the things I do. So...I hope to gain that." Julie responded: "Well, I think I decided because knowing what my previous literacy experiences have been...I think I wanted this as much as you want to find out about how my experiences have been. I think I want to find out for myself where I am now compared to what I've gone through." These five women continued their literacy inquiry into the spring semester, working closely with myself and the others in the group.

It was now the third week of the semester. A fog hovered heavily over the campus as I made my way to Drayton Hall. All of the buildings were a non-descript gray. Somewhere in the wall of mist was the coffee shop. I knew it still existed as I saw a horizontal form appear ahead of me. A brief stop and coffee, hot in hand, I continued my journey. It was quiet. The energy of the new fall semester had worn off for many. Only a few figures quietly moved through the damp, opaque fog. It was early. It was Friday. All the reasons one needed to stay in bed.

Today, I would introduce visual images into our literacy inquiry and through these continue to challenge their personal understandings of literacy, asking them to transfer their

personal interpretations of literacy over to a visual interpretation. I had brought in a piece of artwork, a painting I had created using an old window as a surface. The small wooden window was made up of four panes. Using a technique called polymer lifts, I had lined the outer frame with transparent reproductions of famous artworks depicted through the ages. On each pane, I had painted brightly colored symbols of literacy.

I told the students little about the window except that it represented my interpretation of literacy. I demonstrated how different colors of cardboard could be inserted into the back. Then I asked them to interpret it, encouraging them to be relaxed in their response, reminding them that there were no right answers. I was interested in what their interpretations of this representation would be. As the artist, I knew the kinds of literacy ideas I had tried to represent. Because the form was somewhat abstract, I wondered if I had communicated my ideas to my viewers.

Marie wrote: The history of print surrounds and encompasses the windows which peer into Ms. Bustle's literate self. They, the prints, are the framework of her literacy. She is an individual with a passion for literacy. The picture of "Where The Wild Things Are" represents one of her favorite stories. The panes overlap. The child offers the story of her early years and an opportunity to find your own reflection. JKL and the word, "love" possibly symbolizes her love for literacy and for JKL whoever this may be... The joyous people may represent her understanding of herself as a literate person. To Ms. Bustle, literacy is everywhere, especially within herself.

Sally responded in this way:

- shows evolution of printed language around border
- change color-show how interpretations change
- letters-part of literacy
- art-another form of literacy communication
- see yourself- mirror
- glasses-see different ways.
- love of reading and an appreciation of literacy
- shown by the word LOVE and heart.

Not all of the written reflections used in this study were created during my class. Literacy autobiographies were created in Susie's class, Teaching Reading and Language in the Elementary School. Guidelines for this autobiography were outlined in her syllabus. It stated: "You will create a literacy autobiography. This will consist of literacy stories, literacy artifacts that represent your literacy experiences, and, an explanation of the themes that pervade your literacy life." Because these stories were constructed out of literacy experiences, they offered very important insights into not only past experiences but how and why those experiences were constructed as stories.

The autobiographies represented important textual literate images portrayed by the participants. What the women chose to represent in their stories highlighted meaningful events, individuals, or actions that impacted their lives. Many remembered influential teachers or family members that had impacted their literacy. Some revisited painful events that left an indelible print on their minds. Many represented their literacy through their own creations such as books, illustrations, or papers. How they chose to frame their stories, either through the use of metaphor, personal stories, or chronological retellings, is valuable. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) refer to this kind of constructed retelling as "chronicling".

As social actors, we are all involved in retelling our experiences and lives. In doing so, we chronicle our lives in terms of a series of events, happenings, influences, and decisions. Time is placed into a personal history, where the past is given meaning in the present. Social actors organize their lives and experiences through stories and in doing so make sense of them. This chronicling of a life, or part of a life, often starts from a point of "how it all happened" or "How I came to be where I am today" (68).

Chronicling became an important component of the participant's inquiry because it asked them to look backward, to bring up past literacy experience as a way of moving forward. Story was one way for each to organize and synthesize their experiences. "[Stories] provide, so to speak, a map of possible roles and of possible worlds in which action, thought and self-definition are permissible (or desirable)" (Bruner, 1986, 66).

Many scholars celebrate the power of narrative as a mode for better understanding our selves and our world (eg. Connelly and Clandinin, 1990; Witherell and Noddings, 1991; Polkinghorne, 1995; Bruner, 1986; Greene, 1994; Cooper, 1990; Coles, 1989). "Stories invite us to come to know the world and our place in it. Whether narratives of history or the imagination, stories call us to consider what we know, how we know, and what and whom we care about" (Witherell and Noddings, 1991, 13).

Because narratives offer a meaningful constructive mode of expression, the literacy autobiographies created by these five women represent valuable interpretations of past literacy experiences. "The coherence or structure of the self's narrative is provided through the integration of value, purpose, and meaning, where value represents the valence we attach to the present, purpose entails our sense of future possibility and aspirations, and meanings our memory and interpretation of the past" (Witherell, 1991, 93). What and how they chose reveals a lot about what they valued and provides a glimpse into their selves.

The unique quality of each literacy autobiography reflects the individual's approach to their story. Along with the process came the struggle to describe, synthesize, organize, and interpret past images. This was done through the retelling of family stories, the recreation of mental images, the chronological representation, or the metaphorical portrayal of the past.

Despite being, for some, very difficult and challenging, the participants found the process valuable. Each of the five participants reflected on the project:

Sally: The literacy autobiography. This project took a lot of work for me. I mean I really put a lot of thought into this one too. One reason that I, this one was really important to me is because it brought up a lot of really good memories. And it also it allowed me the leeway to do really what I wanted to do with it. It wasn't quite so structured. And everyone's was really different in that aspect.

Barb: I think this was a tough paper to do. It took a lot of reflecting. I had a hard time finally pulling it together. But once I did it, it all made sense.

Marie: My literacy Autobiography. I think this is important because it does give a glimpse as to who I am and why.

Jessyca: I focused more on how I became a reader and a writer. But, I think what I really learned from this project was how much of an influence I am going to be as a teacher

and hopefully one day as a parent on how children become literate people.

Julie: I think it was hard, but, I had to focus in on what I was trying to say about literacy in my experiences. The parts that I did leave in were the ones that really effected me as a student and as a literate person. And it was nice to go back and think about all the things that happened.

Literacy autobiographies are meaningful representations of self; they embody personal expressions of each of the participants literate pasts. Their struggle to create them is testimony to the complexity and richness of experience that often lies dormant in our minds. Story awakens them, calling them to action to be reborn in new forms.

This section examines each participant's interpretations of her literate past as a way of defining self, setting up what each attends to in the present. Past experiences feed future action and are interwoven tightly in the choices we make. The experiences we choose to reflect upon say much about what we consider to be valuable.

To stay as close as possible to the voices of the participants, I have included their words throughout limiting my comments along the way. Considerable information was elicited from the literacy autobiographies and this was then reaffirmed or added to through interviews and their literacy portfolios. I have also included artifacts such as childhood illustrations, report cards, and passages from stories to help recreate their literate images.

Marie: The Duck Poem and the Fading Sun

"The focus of my literacy is experience, inspiration, and the wisdom gained from experience."

Marie is Catholic, the middle of four children--two sisters and one brother. She lived her entire life in the same place, attending Catholic schools from kindergarten through the twelfth grade. Although Marie doesn't say much about her parents' own reading habits she remembered them as very supportive and encouraging. "My parents encouraged us to read. We had books and those little children's bibles with all the pictures. Images of flash cards and memories of bedtime stories surround my thoughts of the past."

Marie recalls her past through vivid images, naming of specific objects as symbols of a literate experience. Marie recreates her kindergarten experience vividly with this descriptive passage from her literacy autobiography. "I remember sitting in kindergarten with the big fat crayons and pencils. I can visually recall our class calendar and my name tag that I continually traced so I could write like a 'big person'."

Marie says very little about her early years of elementary school, but describes other activities she found important. She did not consider herself to be an avid reader. Instead, she preferred to move. She especially enjoyed playing sports. "I just was more into basketball and soccer and just anything." During the fall, Marie took photographs that revealed her passion for movement. Over half of her photographs celebrate the movement and expression of children engaged in movement activities.

In addition to sports and reading, Marie enjoyed playing with dolls.

I did not sit down very often and read for pure enjoyment. I spent the majority of my time playing with Barbies. I would create imaginative dialogues for my dolls. This was the way in which I began my journey of literacy. My scribbled stories burgeoned into long readable plays. I enjoyed the experience and learned a lot from the process.

For Marie sensemaking existed in the stories and her social interactions with dolls. Her hands-on movement of the dolls in contrast to the sedate task of reading engaged her and the idea of constructing her own stories intrigued her.

As Marie experienced the educational agenda of schools, positive and negative literacy experiences began to shape how she saw herself as a literate person. Literacy was defined largely by the tests she took, the grammar she studied, or her ability to read fast.

Fifth grade offered a bright spot in her early elementary years. Her self image found support and affirmation through the support of her teacher. "I think fifth grade was a real important year for me academically, like literately. Because my teacher, Ms. Ryder was phenomenal and she pulled me aside one day and I mean I never did poorly in school. But she, just her constant attention, and she pulled me aside one day and was like, 'Do you know how smart you are?'. " Here, Marie connects literacy with academics. If she was academically successful, she was literate.

In the sixth grade Marie's self image took a memorable blow. She found herself expressing herself artfully only to be met with the harsh red marks of her teacher's "degrading" pen. The image she provides is as clear and sharp as the incident itself.

I remember sitting on the right hand side of the classroom towards the back of the room. I wrote a poem about ducks and my classmates loved it. I utilized all the big words I knew and really focused on imagery. When my turn came to show my work of art to Mrs. G, she pulled out her degrading red pen and crossed out, corrected and changed all that I had proudly written. I was sick and lost as I walked back to my desk with my head hanging low in order to hide my watering eyes. How could we all have been foolish enough to think my poem was good? On that winter day, I lost faith in my abilities and I did not enjoy writing. I became convinced that I was not a good writer...my creativity was stunted.

Marie's experience is not unlike the mental images that we all carry around and moments we remember feeling less than adequate. Images we clearly remember because they made an indelible mark on our selves; the kind of marks that directly influence future literate endeavors.

In the seventh grade, Marie continued to struggle with her image of herself as a literate person. Associating literacy with her ability to read "quickly," once again she considered herself less than literate. To use Barb's word, Marie did not "belong" therefore she was removed from the classroom to find herself outside in a "trailer in the back of the school."

I was just too slow of a reader. But, my comprehension was good. But, I remember being pulled out for Title 1, Chapter One, or whatever, in the trailer in the back of the school. Uhh, with large overheads and she would make us read aloud. She would go faster and faster and copy the words and you would have to...I don't know what that was for but, I would assume it was because I didn't read fast enough. And I am still not the fastest reader. Which is fine.

Marie tells us little about her years in high school except to say, "I think I kind of put a negative connotation on literacy. Because it had to do with spitting out that ten page paper or reading a two hundred and fifty page novel." Marie defines literacy through the descriptive images of objects as symbols. Literacy is a "ten page paper or a fifty page

novel." As Marie's high school years came to a close she found herself measuring her worth by her SAT scores which she felt fell far short of the expectations others had of her. "SAT's destroyed my self confidence."

Marie's most cherished source of pride comes with her ability to write poetically, her love of letter writing, inspirational reading, and children. Rising above past experiences she was able to develop herself as a passionate writer. One of her most important literacy experiences was the both the creation and representation of her poem, *Fading Sun*. It evokes the kind of literacy that is most meaningful to her.

I find solace in writing. The most important and beautiful writing I have accomplished is scribble in my journal, not typed in a research paper. When I free myself of the rules and regulations of writing I create a portrait of the depths of my soul. To write is to risk. It is important that we find our voice and express ourselves. I found my voice while writing the poem, *Fading Sun*.

Sally: Telling Stories As A Way Of Life

"Listen to my story and discover who I am."

Sally grew up on a tobacco farm. She lived there her entire life with her parents and her younger sister. Her family was close knit, with a strong oral tradition of storytellers. She remembers family get-togethers when conversation would move continuously from one story to another. "My family tells stories. We're all pretty big talkers." Sally's literacy autobiography is not organized chronologically. Instead, it is organized around stories, most of which include her family.

Both sets of Sally's grandparents lived within one mile of her house and were very much a part of her past literate image. The following excerpt from her literacy autobiography represents both her love of story and the strong influence of her grandparents.

My grandfather only completed the seventh grade in school; however, he was one of the most educated men that I have ever known. My earliest memories are of him, sitting in an old brown rocker in front of the window by the fireplace reading books of all kinds. The tick tock of the clock echoed throughout the house and squeak of the old rocker broke through the air. Each day began with a stack of books and a glass of juice or milk, while my mother and father were at work. Pa would devote most of his morning to me reading book after book as I wished for hours. I always wore my Granny's huge blue sweater and snuggled up in his warm arms. His deep resounding voice changed to one of warmth and tenderness as the pages turned. We read everything-- storybooks such as Peter Rabbit (Potter, 1963), The Little Engine That Could (Piper, 1961), and books about foreign countries and American history. Pa made everything interesting, adding songs and stories that were brought to mind. One of the first songs that I learned was the Marine Corp hymn. At about the age of four, I began to read to my grandfather. I always tried to read harder books and he always patiently allowed me to try. However, more than anything, I enjoyed hearing him read to me.

This specific image of her literacy experience is created from a mental picture of herself as an emergent reader. Recreated through words, this image brings to life the aesthetic qualities of past experience that remain imprinted in our minds.

Sally's ability to recreate this image for us is the result of her strengths as a storyteller--strengths that not only include the technical ability to construct sentences but the aesthetic sense to perceive and represent meaningful experiences.

Like Sally's grandparents, her parents were a very supportive influence on her growth as a literate person. She describes their influence in this way: "My parents both just graduated from high school. They never went to college, but reading has always been very important to them. Maybe not reading scholarly journals or anything like that, but, it's always been a part of our family."

As a kindergartner, Sally received her first teaching experience. Already a reader, and somewhat bored with the business of kindergarten, her teacher paired her with another student to act as a mentor.

I remember in kindergarten I was so bored when we were copying the sentences off the board and reading them. And my teacher finally just paired me with this little boy that couldn't read at all, and so I worked with him and pretty much helped him to read throughout the year. I remember this child smelling bad, and he would always, he couldn't color very well. And, I feel really bad about this now but I didn't want to be around him. But then, I started, I would bring papers and I would start telling him, "You know you should do this."

Sally's role as a teacher continued. When her sister was four years old, she taught her to read. "At the age of ten, I taught my sister how to read. She was four years old and very interested in learning to read. Each day, I read to her and with her. We used the lists in the "easy reader" books and worksheets that I made for my pupil."

Sally loved to write poems and stories.

I wrote a lot of poems and I have lots of them at home. I had a little notebook and whenever we would go on trips or anything, I would be the poet sitting in the back seat, and my parents they thought it was so funny because I would sit back there and look at the leaves and just write and write.

As a literate person, Sally found confidence and pride in her abilities as a reader and writer. Her self-image reflected the kind of joy and success she had experienced

I love to write. I wrote a lot of poetry when I was younger. I would enter poetry contests if I saw them in the newspaper. I would write and write and write. And I am, a published author. They just, you know, published my poem to try to get me to buy the book but still, you know, I am a published author now.

Sally is a prolific letter writer. She remembers writing constantly to her Aunt Claire while growing up.

My aunt, she lives in Kentucky and she would always write letters. I got one from her yesterday. Actually we, we still correspond, even though you know, its much easier to call

but I still love to get mail. So, my mom would always tell me to write back, and I can remember even before I could really make sentences, I would draw pictures and make squiggly lines and Claire has one up on her refrigerator from when I was really young. And it says, "Dear Claire," and then it has a bunch of little squiggles after it and then a picture at the end and it says, "Love, Sally".

The letter writing process reaffirmed Sally as a young emergent writer. The fact that her Aunt engaged in the correspondence left a meaningful mark on her confidence as a writer.

Sally speaks very little about her literacy experiences as she grew older. "I guess while I was in school...in high school, I pretty much thought of literacy as reading and writing, because it was taught that way to me. Everything was pretty separate. We learned how to read and we learned how to write." Sally remembered one high school English teacher who influenced the way she thought about literacy. "He was way out there, and we tried so many things in his class and there wasn't a separation. It just seemed naturally to flow together. So, I guess that really changed my way of thinking a lot."

I close with Sally's definition of literacy she articulated in an interview.

Literacy: It's mainly a means of communicating with other people, it may be through signs, it may be through storytelling or music. Any way that you communicate with other, other human beings. And especially with young children, I mean they start out, you know they start out talking and they start seeing things in their environment and I don't think that you can just say that literacy is just reading and writing because you don't start out just with that. You know everything builds up to that, so.

Julie: *Feeling Literate*

"On a personal level, literacy to me is reading, for pleasure, something I cherish having the ability to do and appreciate for me."

Julie's story is about finding pleasure in literacy and "feeling" literate. Her story represents a long and arduous journey caught up in comparisons of herself to others, self-doubt, and at times, failure. Her literacy autobiography centers around her self image as a reader and writer manifested through traditional modes of language. She gives us a vivid sense of her struggle to live up to and compete with others and herself.

Julie was one of the youngest of four children--one brother and two sisters. She described her mother and father as good role models.

Both were avid readers. My mom's very much a reader. Like when we go on vacation, she'll bring a whole box and she'll just fill them with books, books, and books. My father is, I would consider him to be highly intelligent because he has a lot of book knowledge. And he likes research. He likes, you know, there were tons of books in our family room that are medical-type journals and all kinds of books he's kept from college and he's very much an avid book reader.

In spite of this, Julie struggled as a beginning reader.

I can remember, like being in school and just trying to read words and just looking at each word and trying to sound them out and then having to read them altogether, trying to get the context of the whole sentence and the words and then keep writing and reading and not knowing what I had just read. So then I would have to reread it. And it got so tedious to have to reread and reread that it's kind of, I guess, like I felt kind of hopeless.

Julie represents reading as a task or skill connected with word recognition, sounding out words, and comprehension. Her description depicted the kind of hopelessness she felt when she performed at a less than adequate level of competency. It brought confusion and frustration.

Julie often compared herself to other children in class--a habit she would continue throughout her schooling. "Some children could read a story once and understand what and who it was about. For a while I would have to read three times as many times as the other children just to get the same meaning out of a story."

As a shy child, her insecurity was challenged when she was asked to read in front of the class. Reading was a self-defeating experience that only intensified her discomfort. She recalled: "Some students would be fine you know, reading a book out loud in front of the whole class. Where, for me, a spotlight was not a good thing."

She received help with her reading at home. "There were times when I was at home when I would be reading to my brother or sisters. My mother said, that they helped me a lot, but other times they became frustrated with me." Being the youngest, Julie compared herself to her brother and sisters just as she did others in her class. "I was very much a child that compared myself to other children and to my brothers and sisters. I mean, I'm the youngest, so that maybe people might say, psychologists might say that's probably why."

Julie's difficulties followed her throughout elementary school. It was suggested that she repeat the first grade. "My mother knew, as well as I, that having to repeat first grade would have been traumatizing. Feeling stupid compounded with having to repeat that grade would have made things worse." Julie worked with tutors during the following three summers. With the support and confidence of her tutor, in a secure environment, she began to improve. She credits her tutor for her new found success. "When I think back on this time in my life I see how important Mrs. G was to me... I needed to know that even though I did not think I could do it, that someone thought that I could."

Although Julie saw improvement, her self-image took another blow in junior high school. "I can remember in seventh grade, I got a B in the class but my teacher recommended that I take reading again in the eighth grade." Julie was placed in a remedial reading class in the eighth grade. She made excellent grades in a class that offered her few challenges.

During high school, Julie made good grades and despite insecurities did well. However, her perception of herself as a reader continued to haunt her. "I always felt that I was lower than everyone else, even though I could pull the weight and do the work just as good as everyone else." Again, comparing herself to others, Julie felt failure in spite of new found success. Her past experiences would continue to cloud the image of herself as a literate person.

Julie describes her twelfth grade year as her most demanding, yet most valuable. She made great strides, reading extensively and coming to know the challenge of research. "That last year I probably read the most I had ever read. We read novels, poetry, you name it, we read it." Meeting the challenges of her classes, finding meaningful work in research

and essays, and sensing the confidence of her teacher, Julie's self- image improved. "Reading started to become purposeful for me. It became a way for me to find information."

Julie's years at college were invigorating. She discovered a love for research and the ability to support her ideas. Success was empowering. She began to recognize herself as an accomplished literate person. "To look at my book shelf in my apartment I am excited knowing that I have read a lot while in college...I am very proud of myself for this accomplishment. For me literacy had changed so much. I went from being a little girl who disliked reading to a woman who enjoys to read a lot."

Because of the success Julie experienced in late high school and college, she found her strengths, mastered weaknesses, and laid to rest some of the ghosts of her early experiences as a reader and writer. For Julie, success as an individual was defined by how fast or slow one could read in front of a group. Julie does not mention other literacy experiences other than reading and writing. Her interpretations of herself as a literate being revolved entirely around reading and writing. When the traditional modes of literacy failed, little was left through which she could reconstruct a positive self-image.

For Julie, feeling, lies at the core of her story. Her account represents the role of affect in determining our ability to carry out acts of literacy, whether it is reading, writing, drawing, or listening. The open-ended tasks of meaningful writing and reading, such as the essays and research she experienced in high school, allowed Julie to feel empowered and successful.

Jessyca: Literacy for One's Self

Jessyca opens her literacy autobiography with a description of her grandmother reading to her as a child. "I remember sitting in my Grandma's lap and listening to her read my favorite book. It was called *A Fly Went By* (McClintok,1958) and she read it every time I went to visit. As a four year old, I could recite almost every word in the book." Beyond this description, Jessyca says very little about the rest of her family, however she does acknowledge their influence. "The attitudes of family members and teachers influenced patterns in my reading and writing." She does not elaborate on their role or provide any literate images of her home life. Her mother is represented as the person who, over the years, collected the literacy artifacts in her literacy portfolio.

Jessyca's literacy autobiography chronologically retraces her literacy history. She separates literacy experiences into two separate areas--reading and writing.

I pretty much had two distinct sections, like the first part of the essay was about my reading experiences and how I evolved as a reader and about where I think I am right now and then I went on to talk about writing.

Most of the experiences Jessyca chose to include in her story were school experiences.

Jessyca entered kindergarten reading--an activity that provided great pleasure and success. In the first grade, she excelled and was placed in the "high group." "My grades in reading, language arts, and spelling were always good." Jessyca remembers learning how to write. In first grade, learning how to write meant learning the skill of handwriting. "The memories of paper with two solid lines and a dotted line in the middle are so vivid." Jessyca points out the comments teachers wrote on her report cards regarding handwriting. The comments suggested an area of weakness. She included these report cards in her literacy portfolio(see Figure 8).

Figure 8. Jessyca's report card.

By the third grade, Jessyca moved from skill-oriented tasks to rediscover reading for pleasure. Her love for reading grew through the fifth grade. "I think I read every Judy Blume and Beverly Cleary book I could find. Ramona Quimby (1981) was one of my best friends. I went through lots of adventures with her."

Along with reading for pleasure came writing for pleasure. In the fourth grade Jessyca wrote and illustrated her first book entitled, *Why Frogs Are Green* (see figure 9).

Once upon a time frogs were blue. here was one different frog. He was magic. He thought her was the boss. One day the frogs were very mad because he made them work for him. They had a plan. The plan was to paint him green while he was asleep.

Figure 9. Illustration from Jessyca's book, *Why Frogs Are Green*

Her teacher selected her story for The Young Author's Contest. "This was so exciting for me because I had the chance to write, illustrate, and bind a book." For her, this was a moment of pride--a positive contribution to her self-image. She included a copy of this book among her literacy artifacts in her portfolio.

By the time Jessyca reached the sixth grade, her feelings about reading began to change. "My teachers did not really emphasize reading for fun. I stopped choosing books to read at home. The television and homework became my focus."

In the seventh grade, Jessyca wrote another book entitled, *Murder On Haunted Mountain*. She described it as obviously insignificant. "It was written for the sole purpose of meeting a requirement. This trend continued into middle school and high school. I do not recall being engaged in any kind of meaningful learning." Meaningful writing which Jessyca had found in early elementary school to be so enjoyable was reduced to a structured task--a voiceless act.

Unfortunately, high school offered very little to excite Jessyca. "In high school, it was research papers, things like that, and we really didn't get a chance to express ourselves in a more creative way." Jessyca recalls enjoying *To Kill A Mockingbird* (Lee, 1961).

Jessyca does not elaborate on other interests in her autobiography. However, in an interview she begins to talk about other activities she engaged in. "I was very involved in my church youth group all through middle school and high school. I did lots of things with my church. I belonged to several clubs and in high school like Spanish. Like FCA and things like that."

When Jessyca entered college she began to love reading again. It was in college that she started reading the religious devotional book, *The Upper Room* which had become the important book in her life. Writing, too, became more personal--writing more for herself, than others.

Barb: Here I am

"Literacy to me is singing in church on Sunday. It's you know, dancing for my high school dance team. It's, I think, it's a lot of things. Writing letters, you know, and writing in journals, and talking on the phone. I think it covers a lot of things."

Barb was one of four children who grew up in northern Virginia in a very devout Catholic family. She describes the literacy of her mother and father in this way:

My dad reads everything under the sun. He loves autobiographies and he reads a lot of politician type books and you know, everything. He watches the news and he

doesn't like soap operas and talk shows and the stuff that my mom likes. So, I kind of get both, the imaginative side from my mom and the concrete, you know, straight-forward, this-is-how-it-goes side from my dad.

Barb attended Catholic schools throughout her education with the exception of seventh and eighth grade. Taught at home, by her mother, she began reading when she was in kindergarten. Despite her early success as a reader, during first grade she was placed in a low reading group as a result of her SRA (Scholastic Reading Assessment) score. She describes her experience in this way. "The disappointment surged through my body as I flipped the dull pages of the ugly green book. The pictures weren't nearly as colorful as the ones in the big books..."

At the recommendation of her teacher, who saw her as a more advanced reader, Barb was moved from the lower group. Describing her acceptance as "belonging," Barb was allowed to join the "Blue Jays".

As the bluejays read around the circle, my hands started to shake more and more, I tried to read ahead to find my paragraph. Then suddenly, it was my turn. I felt as if all eyes were watching me like a hawk watching its prey...I looked down at the page. The fence in the picture was covered with black crows. Behind it was a field of corn and the sun was shining. "What a pretty picture" I thought. As I started to read I felt as if my tongue had grown in my mouth. The sentence seemed to go on forever. The children waited for my mistakes. I didn't make any mistakes! I read my sentence, and I was a Bluejay! I deserved to be a Bluejay!

Barb found herself "belonging" to a group of individuals considered to be literate. Before, she had belonged to the group of others--those who lie outside of those considered to be literate. She gained entry into the group based on her skills as a reader.

Rebounding positively from this potentially destructive experience, Barb continued to read and write successfully throughout grammar school. Barb included several artifacts from these years in her literacy portfolio. Among them was an imaginary story she wrote in the fifth grade entitled, *The Unknown Adventure to Pluto*. Barb included herself in the story (see Figure 10).

Figure 10. Drawing by Barb as a child

Then I saw it. The most magnificent place I ever saw. It kind of reminded me of my hometown back on Earth. It was very dark on Pluto. I landed my spacecraft and this Plutonian sort of thing greeted me. It asked me who I was, what I was, and where I came from. I answered quickly by saying, "Hi" My name is Barb. I'm a girl from the planet Earth, who are you?

Barb loved (and still loves) to hear stories, especially mysteries. "I like to tell stories. I've always liked it. I've always liked it when people read stories to me when I was little. And even now in [Dr. Murphy's] class, when [she] reads stories, I love it. And when I read stories to my class, I love it. I love to read stories."

Barb's literacy autobiography is not limited to descriptions of reading and writing experiences. She includes other forms of expression important to her, such as soccer and playing the flute (see Figure 11).

Figure 11. Barb's "Here I Am Drawing"

This is something I drew in fifth grade, and it was actually the front cover of a report I had to do on myself. And I don't know if it was supposed to be called "Here I Am" or if that's just what I called it. But, knowing Catholic schools, we probably had to call it *Here I Am*.

Barb would continue to enjoy music throughout her schooling becoming an accomplished singer and musical performer as an adult. She hints at the connection between performance and reading in this literate image.

On days when I didn't have school, I would sit for hours on the family room couch with my feet dangling over the edge and read from [A Light In The Attic (Silverstein, 1981)]. As I sat on that couch, flipping page after page, bobbing my feet up and down, I pretended that I was sitting on a stage and reading for an audience of silent listeners. This book was most fun when it was read aloud. It almost took on the form of a play in my imagination. I would move my arms around to the rhythm of each poem: changing my voice with each new character I played.

Reading, like music, is just one way for Barb to express her self. Her experience reading Silverstein's (1981) poetry endeared her to his work and today she continues to collect his books. Her favorite is *Where The Sidewalk Ends*.

As Barb grew, her conception of literacy grew as well. She remembers a shift from creative to more serious forms of writing.

My transition from a child to a woman coincides with my writing from creative to realistic. At this point, she needed to relate to her writing. No more this planet, you know, traveling to Pluto stuff. Writing must have feeling and meaning and it had to be real deep and touch you...you know, touch your heart.

In high school, Barb continued to sing and dance, performing on the dance team and at sporting events. The performance aspect of her life continued to flourish. However, her literate experiences did not. As a high school student, Barb recalled going through the motions of reading and writing. "I managed good grades in all of my high school English classes, but I sure didn't learn much." School experiences offered little to nurture her desire to write meaningful, heartfelt pieces.

As Barb entered college, her coursework offered new and exciting challenges. She recalled having difficulty with comprehension, composing beginnings and endings for papers, and writing research reports. Feeling inadequate in her skills as a writer, she worked hard to improve herself. In her freshman year, with the help of a professor, Barb rediscovered a way to make her work meaningful. "Thank goodness for Dr. Kiser, who finally taught me how to write." It was through the crafting of papers such as *My Plate Of*

Spinach that she began to understand herself as a writer. Confronting challenges and insecurities she wrote:

My first problem is I do not think of myself as a writer, but more as a student. This starts me off on the wrong foot because it fails to put me in that "sit down and write a paper" mood... I compare my writing to a plate of spinach. I dislike spinach just as much as writing a paper, I sit there and stare at the plate for a while, knowing I have to eat it or I can not get up from the table. Of course I have already eaten everything else on my plate, so there is nothing to mix the spinach with. Once I take that first spoonful, I plunge into it making it a quick, painless adventure, knowing in the end I made it through and I am still alive. When I sit down to write a paper, I stare at the blank page for a while pondering what to write, and dreading the start.

Using metaphors as "a way to pull things together" she began to find meaning in her work. In her literacy portfolio she included a copy of a story she wrote for one of her classes. Using the title, *A Box Of Chocolates* as a metaphor, she wrote a paper about her mother's best friend. Her literacy autobiography entitled, *Birds of A Feather* uses the title as a metaphor for her literacy development. "Once I had found my flock to fly with, everything else came into place. There were times long my flight when I felt a little out of formation, but there was always another bird to get me back on track."

Barb discovered a passion for writing. Making important connections and finding her "self" in this image of what a literate person might be, she found a way to bring together the outpouring of expression she found so powerful in performance and story within the necessary demands of assigned tasks.

I think that people can understand something better if they can relate it to their lives, however that's done. I mean they could read a story that has nothing to do with them. But, if someone somewhere can pull that story into their lives, and then they write a paper on it, I think it's going to be a better paper than if they read the story and the teacher said, "Okay, answer this question." And they have no clue what they're talking about. So, I think literacy, I just think it needs to be, for me, its easier when I can relate it to myself, in some way. Even if its just part of a story. I'll remember that story if that little part...if she was a dancer, or if she sang, you know, the character sang.

Barb continued to perform music in college finding it to be a very important part of who she is. She sang in the Campus Ministry choir for four years and directed various musical productions. Her literate experiences cover many modes for understanding: performance oriented modes such as singing and dancing as well as more traditional forms such as reading and writing.

"Since high school I have learned to express myself in other ways. Through my dancing, I have interpreted songs to make new meanings. I sing and I feel the singing is another device of writing. It is like oral writing with a melody." Singing for Barb was-- to use Barb's metaphor of flight-- soaring. It was heartfelt, meaningful, and inspirational. "Inspiration...a word so important in the discovery of myself as a literate person. I have realized that the things that inspire me the most are the events and people that touch my life. It is these memories that have helped shape me as a literate person."

The participants' representations of self recreate past literate images as the lived experiences we bring to inquiry. Rich, descriptive, and story-like in nature, they represent valuable forms for inquiry. Bruner's (1986) use of the word verisimilitude, defined as "the appearance of being true" (Oxford Dictionary, 1995) gives credibility to stories as valuable modes for inquiry that reveal and value lived experiences, passions, and the hopes that create them. Stories and the "ways of telling and the ways of conceptualizing that go with them (internal states) become so habitual that they finally become recipes for structuring experience itself, for laying down routes into memory, for not only guiding the life narrative up to the present, but directing it into the future" (Bruner, 1994, 36). As the participants continued in inquiry they drew on the past images that they recreated, employing them in acts of the present. As the participants transacted with others and their environment, new stories and images emerged and future images were created. The following section represents the participants engaged in acts of the present as a means for creating new images of themselves as future teachers.

Chapter 5 The Self and Its Acts

Inquiry As Exploration

Fall blew into the semester with a crisp, colorful wind. The sun strong and bright --our relationship as students and teacher becoming situated and clearer. Stepping beyond the first week where I struggled to attach names to faces, I began to create a fuller image of each participant as individuals. Their ideas revealed their thoughts and ideas. Images becoming more than faces and more self.

Sally described her image of a good teacher as her favorite high school English teacher; a man who lit candles in the classroom. Barb and Marie responded to Denny Taylor's (1991), *Learning Denied*, by composing a letter entitled, *Dear Jesus*. It was written with the unsure hand of a novice handwriter on handwriting paper and was signed, "Love, Patrick. P.S. Where is heaven in our solar system?" At the end of class Julie shared with me a three inch binder full of important artifacts she had collected throughout her years at college. It was packed with meaningful artifacts from her college years such as letters, ticket stubs, and old essays. As the semester progressed students continued to create various works representing their understanding of literacy. The participants' ideas continued to intrigue me and kept me questioning. I wondered if they too felt the challenge as well as the excitement of inquiry. I found it very hard to contain my excitement; their ideas fueling mine and inspiring me to think in new ways.

I structured my class to include a visual component. Not only did I want students involved in visual interpretations, I wanted them to become visual creators. Students continued their explorations through written reflection while I slowly added opportunities for photographing and speaking. Students would soon begin to tackle literacy visually with the addition of photography as a method of inquiry.

I wanted to use a visual form that was easily accessible and relatively inexpensive (no more than a text book) as well as something in which most people feel confident. I worried about the risks involved in having students draw considering the fact that many people feel less than adequate in this area. I did not want the feeling of inadequacy to limit expression.

Each student was asked to take at least one 24 exposure roll of film throughout the fall semester. Their photographs were to reflect their interpretations of literacy. From these photographs, each student would select at least eight to be included in photographic essays they would create at the end of the semester. Most of the students exceeded their requirement to take one roll and instead took multiple rolls.

I suggested the use of disposable cameras, but was quick to find that the majority of students already owned 35 mm cameras. They seemed comfortable with the idea of taking pictures. I did not limit the students to color film offering black and white as an option. My use of black and white film stems largely from my fascination with it as an abstraction from real life. Since most of us naturally see in color, black and white film removes that color revealing other elements such as high contrasts of lights and shadows. The nostalgic quality of a black and white photograph provides a unique aesthetic sense not found in color photographs. Since color film is most often used in family photographs and snapshots, the black and white photograph becomes a novelty. Color or black and white did not seem to be an issue, rather a preference. All of the students chose to photograph in color.

Some students had questions about the kinds of photographs that would represent literacy. We spent time discussing the kinds of pictures they might take. I wanted to be very careful not to steer the students towards a certain kind of photograph. To help with their understanding of the assignment, I prepared a handout outlining very minimal guidelines for taking photos, sharing information from, *Photojournalism* (Lewis, 1991)

and *Criticizing Photographs* (Barrett, 1996). The handout stated: "This assignment should reflect your understanding of literacy. The kinds of photographs may vary greatly. Some may include children and others maybe still life shots or depict spaces. Some will reflect your personal literacy while some may reflect the literacy of others. Others may contain literacy artifacts you find important. You are the artist and creator of your literate images."

There was a breathlessness to the mature fall day. An almost painfully blue sky interrupted the mustard yellow and russet leaves tattered across the skyline. The sun warmed my face. A stray leaf somersaulted across the pavement as I shuffled through the old leaves-- maples and sycamores. I turned right down the short sidewalk that separates the walkway from the building. My climb up the stairs was hampered by a double-fisted load. My bag was full of papers and hurriedly stashed photographs. On my hip was a brown cardboard box full of photographs mounted and framed in Lucite.

The fourth floor arrived slowly but none too soon. I unloaded; carefully placing photographs along the chalk tray--shifting and sliding them in place. I spread unmounted photographs across a table at the front of the room. Proud and embarrassed at the same time I looked across the display of photographs. I had felt some had turned out great. Others had flaws--too light, too dark, fuzzy, or blurred.

I brought some of my black and white photographs of literacy to share with the class. I stood many across the front of the room and laid a few in piles on the front tables. I introduced the photographs as my "literate images" or interpretations of literacy, saying very little about them. I did not want to influence their interpretations. I then asked each student to study them carefully and select one photograph to interpret. They were to describe the photograph telling what they saw in the picture. Next, they were to explain how the photograph related to literacy. And finally, they were to express an emotion or memory that surrounded the image. I wanted the students to do more than describe its content. I wanted them to interpret it in relationship to literacy and then connect it to themselves personally. As the artist, I knew what the photos represented. Some were very abstract and seemingly far from what one would consider representations of literacy. Barb responded to a photograph of a young girl (see figure 12).

Figure 12. Young Girl by Lynn

Description: It's a small black hand playing in the sand. Her fingers are spread as if she is trying to make a hand print. She must be sitting down because I also see her jeans with the very bottom of the cuff turned up, possibility on accident. Her sleeve hangs all the way past her wrist. The sand has a very distinguishable texture. It almost looks like wet sand that has dried and become hard.

Literacy interpretation: This little girl is discovering. She is feeling the sand underneath her hand and between her fingers. She is practicing her letters and writing skills, erasing the ones she doesn't like. She is concentrating but she is alone. She likes it that way.

Julie interpreted a dark photograph of a candle (see figure 2, Chapter 1).

Literacy interpretation: One single candle can light up darkness and it can be a single glimmer of hope to

hopelessness. Darkness can consume a room but one little light from a candle can illuminate it.

Memories: My teacher who gave me hope. My life seemed to be going on a certain path or plan that I have always wanted to go and be and this candle is what drives me to continue to struggle to achieve and complete my goals.

Throughout the semester, the students took photographs. As the weeks flew by, it was time to develop their film and bring their photographs to class for a sharing session. I remember this day clearly. I had made the mistake of having the students share their photos toward the end of the class period. As students seated themselves that morning, I notice all of the brightly colored developing envelopes dotting the tables. Many students had already begun sharing, laughing and whispering as they shuffled through one another's pictures. This activity occurred throughout class. I realized that I should have taken full advantage of their excitement by having the students share their photographs at the beginning of class.

As a sharing activity, each student switched their photos with a partner. In silence, each selected at least eight photos they felt best represented literacy. After a brief period of silent reflection the partner could then present and discuss their selections. At the beginning of the sharing period, I encouraged silence so that each student would not base their selections on the words of their partner. This was a difficult task. It was hard not to talk. They so wanted to invite language into their exploration. As they looked at the photographs, they giggled, oohed and aahed, bursting with questions. I policed the room in fun, catching those who tried to talk.

After this planning session, each student selected at least eight photographs to be included in their photographic essay. Photographic essays required the students to select photos they felt best represented literacy. They would then select quotes to accompany the photos. Pairing text with their photographs required students to study their photographs and make decisions about their meaning. The text they selected could be a cited quote or a statement written by the students. Text became a bridge between the photograph and the viewer. Barb felt that the quotes "made the photographs more meaningful." I purposely requiring the photographs to be mounted on standing display boards so as to put emphasis on them as representations to be viewed versus read. I felt that a portfolio in book form would support the latter. As viewed representations, the photographs no longer became secondary additions to text but took on a equal status.

At the end of the semester, the photographic essays were displayed on three dimensional boards at a reception for the students. As part of this reception students were asked to display Literacy Portfolios alongside their photographic essays. The portfolios represented a collection of works created in both Susie's and my class as well as any other artifacts students chose to include. This collection contained both visual and written representations of their growth as literate persons.

As the semester drew to a close and my participants had clearly identified themselves, we set out to begin individual interviews. The first two individual interviews began in late October stretching into early December. These introductory interviews were designed to capture the participant's current understandings of literacy.

Following the lead of ethnographic strategies, interviews were relatively informal and conversational. "Within the boundaries of the interview context, the aim is to facilitate a conversation, giving the interviewee a good deal more leeway to talk on their own terms than is the case in standardized interviews" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1993, 143). Setting myself up as a removed researcher interviewing the participant did not seem to be a viable option. Knowing my somewhat familiar history with the participants as their instructor, I felt it more natural to interview in a relaxed manner. Anything else would have seemed unnatural and perhaps uncomfortable for the participants. Having worked with them in class in the fall, I felt as if I knew them fairly well. They knew my mannerisms, speech patterns, and many of my passions. This familiarity would spill over into the interviews

which were set up much more like conversations. Oftentimes I felt as if I was too familiar as I worked to keep my responses to a minimum. However, their comments fascinated me and often pulled me in. The excitement of what they were saying or the photographs they shared made it hard for me to remain silent. I often responded to their discussion. Response seemed like a natural reflex.

The first two interviews were designed and conducted by myself and Susie. Sharing not only the students in our classrooms, we shared a genuine interest in their interpretations of literacy. So, we worked together keeping in close contact through our letters.

In our first interview, we followed a script we co-created asking what Hammersly and Atkinson (1995) refer to as non-directive questions. "Non-directive questions are relatively open ended, rather than requiring the interviewee to provide a specific piece of information or, at the extreme, simply to reply 'yes' or 'no'" (153). Most of the questions revolved around their definitions of literacy and personal literacy histories. We intentionally tried "to keep the first interview with the participants broad, letting the participants tell 'their stories'" (Morse, 1994, 229). The questions served as a very helpful guide for keeping on track, but at the same time, were open-ended enough to allow space for elaboration and interpretation. Much of what the participants discussed were elaborations on their literacy autobiographies.

The second set of individual interviews took place in early December. By this time the students had completed their fall coursework and were finishing up their first student teaching placement. They were in the midst of closing down the semester and looking forward to a much needed winter break. These interviews, we referred to as Portfolio Walkthrough interviews, asked the participants to go through their Literacy Portfolios and their Photographic Essays describing and explaining the various entries. In this interview, we did not use a list of questions because we felt it was important for the participants to choose what they wanted to highlight.

The participants would continue to write reflectively, take photographs, and talk about their inquiry. The fall was a good beginning.

Continued Explorations

Winter break was over and everyone had returned to their tasks of school. Cold winds and wet crunchy ice pervaded the winter landscape. My dogwood in the front yard dangled one crisp leaf from its brittle branches. I now spent a large amount of time working at home preparing for continued research. My first semester had come to a close quickly, and I liked the fact that I still had contact with a small contingent from my fall class.

With the onset of spring semester came the second thrust of inquiry. Now, we were a much smaller group. There were six of us compared to twenty. I liked the idea of being able to work in a more intimate atmosphere. I was no longer their instructor, so that role had been lessened.

I decided early on in this process, that I wanted to make this process as rewarding as possible for these young women. Knowing their workload, and respecting the demands on their time, I consulted them on meeting dates, realizing that I would not be able to meet as often as I would have liked.

I looked forward to our first meeting. The women were beginning a new semester with coursework of their own as well as new student teaching placements. Their lives would only get more complicated as time went on. In an attempt to make their lives less stressful, I felt our meetings needed to take place in a relaxing atmosphere--something less institutional. I decided on my home.

This would be the first of three group interviews. Each of which were audiotaped and transcribed. Because of the closeness of the women, I felt that the group interviews would provide unique opportunities for practical discussions of literacy that would otherwise not come out in formal interviews conducted between two people. Group interactions among members offers a co-constructive discourse not found in individual

interviews. It provides a format in which interpretations can be shared and reacted to, allowing multiple perspectives to be heard .

In pursuing members' meanings, ethnographers begin by looking at how members describe and categorize people, events; they try to discern their terms, phrasings, classifications, and theories. But indigenous categories provide only a starting point: the ethnographer's task is not simply to identify member-recognized terms and categories but also to specify the conditions under which people actually invoke and apply such terms in interaction with others (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, 1995, 139).

I spent the early part of the day preparing for their visit. Part of making them feel comfortable meant having refreshments. Considering many would be coming straight from school, I wanted to replenish their energy. I purchased a journal for each student choosing from a wide selection of fabric covered books at the local bookstore. Remembering that I needed to provide money for their film, I hurried to the bank and withdrew money that each participant could use for film and developing. I continued to supply funds for their film and developing throughout the study.

Earlier that afternoon, I spent time outlining points I felt were important to cover. This was to be our first meeting as a group. What would I say? I felt a certain amount of pressure to find out something monumental. I put this out of my mind and relied on my first instincts. I outlined two purposes for the meeting. One was an administrative purpose in which I would pass on the procedures of the research as I had outlined, give a little background on how I came to this research idea, and to encourage feedback. The other purpose was to lay the groundwork for a research relationship, one that would allow the participants to engage in creative literacy inquiry based on their personal prior knowledge. I wanted them to know that their voices and their construction of this research was important and paramount to the project. From these two ideas, I outlined my meeting, feeling comfortable if the discussion moved in a different direction.

We met in the dining room at a large oak table. A tape recorder with a microphone perched on its stand was set up in the center. After everyone was greeted and served, I turned on the microphone and promptly began outlining details of the study. Everyone listened intently except for a brief moment when Barb poured her coke and it bubbled loudly into the microphone.

The consent forms I had given them outlined the research but I felt it was important to talk about why I considered the research important. If I was asking this group to share their questions and ideas then it was important for me to do so as well. I talked about my personal literacy history and explained the term, literate image. I revealed my processes for studying their work and encouraged them to revisit their literacy autobiographies and their photographic essays.

I scattered the brightly patterned journals across the table encouraging each person to select one. After much discussion about their personal preference for designs, the students selected one. Marie ended up with the *Fat Cats With Hats* journal despite her distaste for cats. Jessyca grabbed the graphic one with musical notes, a piano keyboard, and a rose. Barb and Julie ended up with the patterned fabrics of text and Sally, offering it kindly to Marie, kept the one with the folk art design.

"Just write in it [the journal] once a week," I encouraged, "Anything you think pertains to literacy, whether its something with the photographs, whether its something that you noticed that's powerful about literacy, or whether it is a light going on, saying, 'WOW, I want to record this!' " I did not want to limit the writing that might take place, so therefore, I kept citing examples. I encouraged the participants to write weekly reflections based on their literacy inquiry thinking carefully about their experiences as well as any

questions they were considering. Their journals were collected approximately every two or three weeks. I would then read them and respond to their ideas often with questions of my own.

Our conversation turned to the of taking photographs. I explained that I felt that they would take approximately three rolls of film throughout the semester for which I would supply funds for film and development. I made sure to ask, "Are you okay with taking photographs?" Not surprisingly their conversation revealed many of the challenges I had experienced taking photographs. As I had discovered early on in my visits to sites with cameras, children responded in a myriad of ways to my presence. They often asked questions, covered or made faces. They, too, had experienced this.

The meeting finally came to a close. Everyone left quickly except Julie and Marie who stayed behind almost 20 minutes chatting with me about their new classes, professors and already full schedule. Later that evening, I wrote up my fieldnotes. My writing served as both a record-keeping and reflective device. I continued to take fieldnotes based on meetings and interviews recording the actions or words of the participants. Like my participants, I kept a handwritten journal of literacy outside of computer generated notes. These ideas, thoughts, or interpretations served as a sketchbook for ideas to consider. Unlike the computer, handwriting still seemed to give a me a physical connection to my words--my thoughts running through my hand onto the paper.

My writing moved beyond a record keeping device into a process for reflection, interpretation, and analysis. "Writing is also a way of 'knowing'--a method of discovery and analysis. By writing in different ways, we discover new aspects of our topic and our relationship to it. Form and content are inseparable" (Richardson, 1994, 516). Analysis seeping into all that I did. The fine line between methodology and analysis blending.

The second group meeting took place at my home late in the afternoon. Everyone but Sally was present-- tired-- but present. Having read many wonderful excerpts about the power of group discourse, I was faced with reality. The group came in dragging. Julie had a cold and Sally's chair still sat empty. The hectic pace was catching up with them and the strain of their load was taking its toll. The advent of a professional week of interviews complicated their tasks. They were quiet as I turned on the tape recorder.

I began the meeting with a few observations. We discussed practical matters surrounding our meetings, journal writing, and the taking of photos. I solicited ideas for the best meeting times as they pointed out conflicts. Today would be the first photo interview. "The photo interview is a forum for the active construction of meaning. Taking an attributional approach to the viewing process, informants respond with extended narratives and supply interpretations of the images, drawing from and reflecting their experiences from the community" (Schwartz, 1989, 140). This interview was designed to get each participant to select photographs and to then share them with the group. Each person sifted through their photographs selecting three. Then, they explained why they took the photograph, how they went about taking it, and why it represented literacy. What I had hoped for --rich discussion--was more methodical as we moved from person to person sharing the photos. A few people asked questions but, it remained relatively quiet. I gave them a few minutes to make their selections. Marie informed me she did not have time to develop her photos. Sally still was not present. We later heard her voice over my answering machine describing why she could not make it. The complications of research were making an appearance.

After this group session, I met with each participant to conduct individual photo interviews. The interviews took place over a one month period. I asked each person to bring all of their photographs. Each person then spent five to ten minutes organizing their photographs into any categories. I then had them go through their categories and talk about why they organized them. Both photo interviews and their portfolio walkthrough interviews were very valuable forms for understanding how they went about the taking of photographs. Understanding why they chose to take a photograph became an important representation of their individual approaches to inquiry. Because the value of inquiry lies

not only in the final form--a photograph or a story--but in the process, understanding both is important.

This next section explores the self and its acts as a process of transaction with physical and social world. Just as the literacy autobiographies served as a valuable recreation of the past, photographs were especially effective for examining the present. Taking photographs became a valuable tool for looking for evidence of literacy in the immediate world.

Spoken discourse, as a means for understanding the participants' processes of "photographing", became a valuable source of information. As I began to represent "photographing" as an act, I realized that since I did not observe the students taking photographs, I would have to rely partly on language to understand their process for taking photographs. I relied heavily on their interviews (portfolio walkthrough interviews, group photo interviews, and an individual photo interviews) as well as journal entries to examine their process.

Chapter 6

Creative Inquiry and Photography: Transactions with the Physical and Social Environment

Creative inquiry invites the self to engage in multiple processes for transacting with our physical and social worlds, highlighting those processes that encourage aesthetic and intuitive as well as the cognitive modes for understanding. Action is the result of affective or intuitive preferences that originally arise from affective entities such as intuition, need, and emotion. It is from these affective preferences that choices are made.

Intuitive preferences shape choice and guide expression. Through expressive acts, affective modes surface, allowing individuals to connect self to one's acts. Marie's recollection of her childhood play with Barbies is a reminder of this. Through play, she created stories making her play a meaningful literate activity. Barb, on the other hand, found reading meaningful when it was tied to her love of performing--the rhythmic nature of her words spilling out as she recited the poetry of Shel Silverstein-- not unlike the rhythm of notes as they spill out as she sings. Sally, whose love of reading and writing were closely tied to the love of storytelling, found an important connection between literacy and her family. In all instances, the self is embedded in its acts, where the act is meaningful and connections are made.

The Self In Transaction with the Physical and Social Environment.

All inquiry involves the self in transaction with the physical and social world. As actors we engage in complex transactions with our physical surroundings and those who act in it: "Selfhood is not something which exists apart from association and intercourse" (Dewey, 1925, 298). As teachers, our classrooms are exceedingly complex social and physical environments teeming with students and objects-- all evidence of the social and physical worlds with which we transact, all evidence of the literate world we live in.

As actors in a constantly changing physical environment, "there are things external to our existence that are internal to our being" (Dewey, 1925, 212). Acting in the world is not only our engagement with all that surrounds us but our adjustment to it. It involves our interaction and reaction as "live creatures" to experience.

The first great consideration is that life goes on in an environment; not merely in it but because of it. No creature lives merely under its skin: Its subcutaneous organs are means of connection with what lies beyond its bodily frame, and to which in order to live, it must adjust itself, by accommodation and defense but also by conquest...The career and destiny of a living being are bound up with its interchanges with its environment, not internally but in the most intimate way (Dewey, 1934, 13).

Dewey depicts individuals as unique creatures actively engaging in the world: going into--feeling, touching, and looking at all which surrounds us. However, it is not enough to merely take in. We must transact with, make sense of, respond and adjust. Our transaction with the physical environment not only moves us to act, but reshapes our selves in the process.

Like the physical environment, our social environment is an important venue for transaction. According to Dewey, the interaction of human beings, namely association, is not different in origin from other modes of interaction" (1925/1988,138). Just as we associate with our environment, we associate with others in it. Environments are social spaces teeming with activities and the interactions of individuals. Schools by their very nature are social environments and the participants as photographers and social beings could not help but capture this in their photographs. However, it is not enough to be in the

classroom physically and socially. It is our transaction with students and space that ultimately defines ourselves as teachers. Transactions not only cause us to act but they cause us to make choices and preferences. They cause us to adjust and, in essence, to reinvent ourselves. Transaction reinvents the self and shapes the kind of person we become.

Creative modes, as expressions of our selves, provide the kind of affective, intuitive, and aesthetic qualities that foster growth. In this next section, I will focus on photography as an expressive device for the interpretation of literacy. As an act of preference and choice, it reveals a lot about our selves and our understanding of the physical and social worlds as literate environments.

Taking photographs: An Act of Preference and Choice

With camera and self in hand, the participants set out to "capture" literacy in their physical and social worlds. As a transactive process, picture taking brings together the self, the camera, and experience. All work together to stabilize meaning and communicate in a photograph the complex qualities that exist in the physical and social world into a photograph.

The act of taking a photograph is a process that begins with the unique qualities of the photographer as self--intuition, interest, need, and emotion. Transactions captured by particular individuals represent one point of view or perspective--just one image of experience as told through the eyes of that person. This is obvious when we consider the wide range of images captured by each participant.

People quickly discovered that nobody takes the same picture of the same thing, the supposition that cameras furnish an impersonal, objective image yielded to the fact that photographs are evidence not only of what's there but of what an individual sees, not just a record but an evaluation of the world. It became clear that there was not just a simple, unitary activity called seeing (recorded by, aided by cameras) but "photographic seeing," which was both a new way for people to see and a new activity for them to perform (Sontag, 1977, 88).

Like all acts of creative inquiry, photographing is a personal transaction with the world. As a process, taking a photograph brings with it the eye of a unique self "attending to" or "gathering" slices of the world in unique and personal ways. As individual photographers we bring a unique frame to our acts. We engage with the world through the eye of a camera perceiving what is around us in individual ways--the self wrapped up in our act. Sally describes her process for picture taking in this way:

I think that when you take the photos you pay very close attention to what you're gathering. In that frame maybe you see just a glimpse. You have to decide what you want to capture about that particular moment.

In a shifting and constantly changing world, the choice to take a photograph is often a quick reaction for multiple reasons: perhaps one intuits quality in the arrangement of bodies, the color of a tree, or the expression on a child's face. From a vivid landscape, the photographer moves toward a particular element, twisting and turning the camera, focusing and adjusting the aperture. Collecting the image in the frame, the photographer zooms in to snap the photograph.

Taking photographs is an act of preference and choice, an intuitive as well as cognitive process of selection. Preference or selective attention is the result of intuitive or aesthetic responses to the qualities in the environment. Preferences may appear to be

unintentional and unimportant and are often hard to articulate, but can lead to choice as a deliberate, cognitive act.

Acting in the world requires us to make choices from all there is in the world. Prior to anything which may be called choice in the sense of deliberate decision come spontaneous selections or preferences. Every appetite and impulse, however blind, is a mode of preferring one thing to another; it selects one thing and rejects others. It goes out with attraction to certain objects, putting them ahead of other in value (Dewey, 1932, 286).

Choices are more easily articulated while intuitive preferences are difficult to put into words. The tendency is to notice only what we can articulate. The participants articulated three types of choices or preferences for taking photographs: taking photographs for record, to represent, or for aesthetic reasons. Although listed separately, they are very interconnected. Along with the photographs themselves, interviews, and journal entries provide valuable insights about the picture taking process. These preferences or choices emerged in varying degrees throughout their descriptions.

Of the three preferences for picture taking, taking photographs for record and representation were more easily articulated as intentional or deliberate choices. Using the camera as a record keeping device, the photographs included images of specific objects, activities, or individuals they wanted to remember. In addition, many photographs were taken as intentional representations of literacy. Whether objects or activities, the participants intentionally set up or framed an element of the environment as a symbol or representation of literacy. For instance, many took photographs of children reading, while others took photographs of children's artwork. And finally, some of the photographs were taken for aesthetic reasons. The distinction between "taking to represent" or "taking for aesthetic reasons" is fuzzy. The participants described taking pictures because they represented a literacy idea. Yet, in the same breath, they described aesthetic reasons for taking a photograph.

Aesthetic preferences are those made in response to aesthetic qualities in the environment. Aesthetic qualities may include visual aspects of the environment, such as splash of color or an interesting arrangement of objects. These I refer to as *visually aesthetic preferences*. Aesthetic qualities may also include intuitive qualities felt in the environment, I refer to these as *intuitive aesthetic preferences*. Intuitive aesthetic preferences result from emotive feelings surrounding an experience. They occur because an object, an individual, or a space arouses an intuition or an emotional response that then encourages the taking of a picture.

The taking of photographs for aesthetic reasons is not easily articulated in textual representations. As a process that can escape language, aesthetic choices are often dismissed or overlooked. With this in mind, I explored text for evidence of aesthetic choices, searching specifically for words related to feeling, emotion, or intuition, as well as those situations where words failed to capture the experience.

Visual and intuitive aesthetic choices are so closely interwoven that often a discussion of one leads to another. For expository purposes, I distinguish between the two and show how they are interwoven. I make a distinction between two kinds of aesthetic choices not to separate, but to bring into view the broader role of aesthetics in this research. Ironically, a discussion of the two separately, pulls them together, showing a link between the visual and the intuitive--an example of how Dewey's qualitative whole exists in experience. An example of this can be found in my photograph of two paint containers (see figure 13). As the photographer, I can retrace some of the preferences and choices I made.

Figure 13. Paint jars by Lynn.

Like my participants, I spent a considerable amount of time exploring literacy with a camera. I was walking through the middle school on my way to the library and noticed some old paint jars sitting on the window sill. For no particular reason beyond their austerity and absence of color, I took several shots. I took the picture for visually aesthetic reasons. Part of my reasoning for doing so had to do with my perception of the jars as visually interesting, a trait I had acquired through my art training. In addition, my attraction to the paint jars resulted from a flood of affective responses to the qualities in the environment. I not only saw a visually rich environment, but I felt a sense of belonging. I remembered the crustiness of old paint, the sounds of kids working, and the smell of damp newsprint. Having taught in the middle school years before, my personal experiences were embodied in the scene. I took the photograph, not only because the colorless, bleak window blended with the hueless jars, but because I felt a certain quality in the environment surrounding them.

My experience is very much like many of the experiences the participants describe in the following sections as they explored literacy in their social and physical environments through the eye of a camera.

Taking Photographs in the Physical Environment

Figure 14. Books in pattern by Lynn

As actors in the environment, we do not exist separate from our physical environment. Many of us work daily to adjust surroundings, making them conducive to our needs or the needs of others. For example, in order to write, my space must be clean and tidy. As simple as this seems, this order among the chaos of photographs and file folders is essential to the quality of work I produce. Like personal environments, classrooms are physical spaces that reflect who we are as teachers. We go to school early in the morning to clean them. We make spaces special by adding large fluffy pillows for reading and carpet for comfort. We design bulletin boards not only for content but to catch the eyes of our students. We hang art work around the room and in the hall. Our spaces represent the kinds of activities we allow. For example, when we walk down the halls of schools, we can see a variety of ways teachers have chosen to represent themselves through their classroom spaces. Some classrooms are colorful and inviting and full of interesting objects to explore. Other classrooms are cold and sterile, empty, and void of stimulation.

Photographs, because of their ability to capture life visually, offered a valuable tool for exploring literacy in the environment. Sally took this photograph of a wheel diagram hanging on a wall outside of a classroom (see figure 15).

Figure 15. Wheel diagram by Sally

"I thought it was a great idea to communicate to other people around the school. And I thought that was just an interesting way of doing things. I'd never seen this before. I took a picture of that."

In a group photo interview, Jessyca described a photograph she had taken of a bulletin board. "The next picture is of a bulletin board that is in my classroom. And it says, "SQUIRT" And I had no idea what "SQUIRT" was until I went into this classroom. And what it is, it stands for sustained, quiet, uninterrupted, independent, reading time...So, I wanted to remember it" (photo not available). Julie, also took a photograph of a bulletin board to help her remember a book (see Figure 16).

Figure 16. The Math Curse by Julie

One reason why I took it is because there is a book called, *A Math Curse* (1995) and it talks about how, you know, it's kind of a curse but its everywhere...And it had you know, this is the week's number. It had four different ways to represent those numbers. And I thought it was kind of good because it had multiplication facts, and repeated addition. And it was just a really good way for them to visualize how they could, you know... look at this number. But, I just thought it was really cool. I wanted to remember the title of the book, even though I wrote it down too. I just wanted a picture of it so I could remember what it looked like. So, if I am at the store, I am "Okay, I remember what that book looks like" instead of just the author.

The participants also captured certain aspects of the physical world they felt served as representations or examples of literacy. The choice to take these pictures was intentional. As objects or spaces, they represented evidence of literacy. Julie took the following photograph at her second placement in the spring (see Figure 17). In strong contrast to her previous placement, she described this environment as "literacy rich."

Figure 17. Classroom Environment by Julie

I can't really describe a word...how I could describe it. I mean it's just surrounded by things on the walls and things and...just displayed. Like there are tons of bulletin boards and that's something that's changed almost weekly...So, you really can't see it, but the paintings are on one side and on the other side are flamingos...I liked it because it seemed more of an environment which I thought was literacy rich, I guess.

Marie took many photographs of objects: personal books, a puzzle, a globe, and a swing on the playground. Not limiting herself to restricted notions of literacy, her subjects were varied. She took this photograph of a globe in response to a story her cooperating teacher had shared (see Figure 18).

Figure 18. Globe by Marie

In her photographic essay, Marie paired this photograph with a remark made by the kindergartner: "Where is kindergarten on this globe?" She found the globe to be a significant representation of a "kindergartner's world of literacy."

Marie also took this photograph to represent her love of sending and receiving greeting cards (see Figure 19).

Figure 19. Greeting cards by Marie

"I realized that for me literacy is inspiration. It's comfort, it's that process of understanding myself and the world around me. So, I think for greeting cards, I buy those inspirational and the hilarious ones. And I think that summarizes it."

Jessyca described her early attempts to represent literacy in her photographs as very limiting. In her photographic essay she included this photograph (see Figure 20) of a book coupled with this text. "Literacy evolves through traditional forms." At the time of this photograph she was intentionally trying to represent literacy as reading and writing.

This strategy for taking photos began to bore her, however, as she repeatedly found herself intentionally taking pictures of books. Once she began to randomly explore her environment, she

Figure 20. Book as a traditional form by Jessyca

was able to make broader connections between what she photographed and what literacy might mean. In essence, the visual images provided the necessary scaffolding for thinking differently about literacy. She explained in her journal:

When I began taking photos for Lynn, I really tried to focus on literacy. It was a little bit boring because I was taking too many pictures of books. I finally realized that I was taking pictures that gave a very narrow definition of literacy. It was amazing that I could take random photos and make literacy connections.

More than the others, Marie speaks of photographing with visually aesthetic intentions. She is particularly perceptive in this area, sensing in the environment a spark of bright color or an interesting arrangement of objects. She saw, for example, the interesting contradictions evidenced in this art teacher's cart (see Figure 21).

Figure 21. Art Cart by Marie

In her photo interview, Marie describes her reason for taking the photograph. "This little lady just totes it [art cart] around and I thought it was hysterical because it was so disorganized and then you had the paint brushes just all straight in a row...and I was drawn to the straight paint brushes. All the chaos.... That's all neat, then you've got just the chaos." Later, she connected this photograph to her feeling about her life at the time: "This is my life now. This is how I feel...chaos-vs-rigidness."

In Barb's photo interview, she referred to a category of photographs as "scenery." She included several photographs using the word "beautiful" to describe them (see Figure 22).

Figure 22. Fall Mountains by Barb

"The mountains in the Fall how colorful they were. I just thought they were beautiful... I just love that. I don't know why...those were pictures I took solely for their beauty." Barb's affective attraction to "scenery" was underscored by text from the Bible that she included in her photographic essay (see Figure 23).

Figure 23. Roses by Barb

Love is patient. Love is kind.
It does not envy, it does not boast. It is not proud.
It is not rude. It is not self-seeking. It is not easily angered. It keeps no records of wrongs.
Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.
It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.
Love never fails.

(I Corinthians 13).

Barb was drawn to take photographs because of her visual attraction to the environment. However it is her words that illuminate her affective sensibilities. Because of Barb's articulate nature, she was able to communicate her affective motives. She later extended her attraction to beauty to her students: "I see so much beauty in my children but I think it is important also to see the beauty in nature and somehow make a connection." When asked how text benefits a photograph, Barb responded, "I think it brings the beauty out of the picture. I think it adds more to the picture...It makes the picture more meaningful." Barb's ability to use language helped her find or make meaning.

Julie's photograph of a sunset represented in her collage (Chapter 7) prompts similar questions. Julie described taking the photograph: "Just one day I was walking around with my camera and in minutes of each other...I think I love sunrises and that's what my photos is saying." She attended to the sunrise because of her "love" for them, yet this tells us little about the emotion she felt. Later, she struggled to explain why the photograph represented literacy:

Something's coming to me right now, just like with the sunrise. It comes up and it goes down every morning. And I think that every day is a new beginning...And the way everyday is a different day and I think that you know it's a new beginning. And in terms of literacy there is so much out there available in terms of being a reader or even just having to do with mediums you can use...I love sunrises. I have tons of pictures of sun rises of just where I've been. I don't know.

Julie's attempt to explain the connection between literacy and her photograph is intriguing. She attended to her environment by choosing to take the photograph. We know she loves sunrises. Julie included the photograph in a selection of her five best literacy photographs. It was significant to her, yet she was unable to articulate its importance. Once again, intuition guided action and made for a felt act versus a concrete one--an act that "left her speechless at the limits of language" (Garrison, 1996, 399).

Taking Pictures of the Social Environment

Figure 24. Sidewalk shadows by Lynn

Attending to social environments is a natural part of being a teacher. Teachers by necessity, are social actors constantly engaging with their students. Sally often included her students in her inquiry. This photograph was taken by one of Sally's students (see Figure 25).

Figure 25. Kyle's Frog by Sally

Using her camera,

[Kellan] took a picture of Kyle painting a three, and it's backwards and I said, "Kyle, you know your three is really interesting. It doesn't look like a lot of threes." And he said, "Ms. Moss, it wouldn't look like a frog if it were turned the other way." So, that three has legs and everything. And Kellan

took, I think, most of the pictures that are in here [her portfolio].

Capturing social qualities in the environment is a complex act. Social interaction brings with it a lot of activity, movement, and change--all played out against a shifting backdrop. Barb's decision to take this photograph of children on the playground captures this fluidity (see Figure 26).

Figure 26. "There is no "I" in Team" by Barb

Barb describes her process for picture taking in this way.

Well, it was one of those pretty Indian Summer days, and we went outside. And the tomboy of our class, Anna, brought her football to school, and they got a football game going. And, I was just observing, just kid-watching, and usually I would get in there and play with them, but... I couldn't run in my shoes. I had good shoes on and I didn't want to get them all gross. So I was just watching them play, and I noticed that every time that team was up, they'd get in their little football huddle, and do, I mean, go full-out football. And I started thinking, I had my camera with me, and I started thinking, "Wouldn't it be neat if I could get a picture of them inside their huddle." And so one time, after they finished the play, I just kinda started walking up, and getting a little closer, and then I ran out there and just shot the camera, and they didn't notice I had taken the picture...until after I stood up with my camera. "Miss Arnold, what'd you do that for?" Because I wanted to!

Barb describes her interaction with this scene as "kid watching." Her interest in the space and the students is a complex one, beginning with her visual attraction to the group. Limited by her high heeled shoes, she spent her time watching the students, noticing their patterns and finally making a decision that it would be a "neat" shot. She did not look at the group and see it as a literacy photograph initially. Instead she snapped the photograph out of challenge and intrigue. Only later did she articulate its connection to literacy. In her photographic essay, Barb coupled her photograph with this text: "There is no I in the word, TEAM," emphasizing teamwork as an important element of literacy--a theme she continued to develop. Barb discussed one reason for taking the photograph: "It's just neat to see because every single one of those children has fought with each other. They've gotten in fights... just to see that reminds me that it can be done, you can be friends and you can cooperate together, so...I just love that picture." Part of what had attracted her was the history behind their social relationships.

Over and over again, the participants took photographs of students in group activities "together and with" one another. Julie's photograph shows children in a sharing activity (see Figure 27). "These pictures are basically us interacting with things, whether we were drawing and sharing...I think a lot of literacy involves actually telling people things."

Julie captured students at the computer writing stories. Many were individual shots as well as group photographs (see Figure 28).

Figure 27. Kids in literate activity by Julie

Figure 28. Children Working At the Computer by Julie

"It was just really neat to see them work on the computers...they are so involved in working on the computers and writing their stories."

Sally frequently incorporated a lot of group activities into her teaching. A large majority showed students in large and small groups engaged in various literate activities. This photograph of three young boys discussing *Roll of Thunder* (1991) held special significance for her (see Figure 29).

Figure 29. Boys sharing reading by Sally

Jeremy, the little boy in the blue said, "Miss Moss, I think this is a lot like *Schindler's List* (1983) And he said, "The way the Nazi's treated the Jews is a lot like the white people treated the black people in this novel. And I thought that was such a strong conclusion to draw from. They talked about this. They did not get off task at all. They worked together and just talked about it and then they wrote their questions and their answers down. We discussed it as a group.

Barb captured this image as a record of a reading activity she found valuable (see Figure 30).

I took this picture because they were reading in their basals and they do something called partner reading where they sit down with a partner, and their chairs have to be facing opposite ways so that if I'm sitting this way, my partner's face is right next to me...This is Lisa, and she uses a little strip of paper to go underneath the line that she's reading. You know she is an emergent reader. Then there's some that don't need it. And some that use their fingers. So I just thought it was really neat.

Figure 30. Partner Reading by Barb

As a prospective teacher, she found this an important activity to remember. Although Barb initially took this photograph to record the activity, she quickly articulated the significance of the photograph, noticing the various ways emergent readers go about the activity.

The participants photographs highlight social relationships as highly aesthetic endeavors. Just as Marie noticed sentient qualities in her physical environment, she was able to perceive social relationships with children. Of the participants, Marie most personally entered the spaces and faces of her students. She moved in closely, capturing activities and expressions with the same approach she used to photograph physical evidence of literacy. It was very common for Marie to capture "the eyes" or "expression" of a child. Her special affection for this young kindergartner is reflected in multiple photographs. Bradley was her favorite subject (see Figure 31).

Just if you look at his eyes...I figured this out last semester. A lot of my literacy,...what kind of draws me in is like inspirational and emotional. And if you just look at his eyes and he's holding one of his pictures on his head.

And...something that he drew...He's so beautiful. Look at the shape of his eyes.

Figure 31. Bradley's eyes by Marie

Marie's discourse mirrors her photographs. Here, Marie talks about being drawn in by the inspirational and emotional qualities of her environment. She speaks of how "beautiful" Bradley is, specifically noticing the shape of his eyes. Her ability to perceive beauty in the shape of his eyes is articulated as well in her affection for her subject. For Marie, "beauty" is an affective as well visual phenomenon.

Although many of the choices the participants made during inquiry were intentional, some involved practical considerations related to the taking of pictures. The following section highlights some of these considerations and show how they affected the picture taking process.

Practical Considerations

Introducing photography into literacy inquiry brings with it some interesting challenges, as well as some enlightening experiences. To begin with, walking into a school with a camera requires access. Not only in terms of permission and consent, but in terms of acceptance. Try quietly slipping into a classroom with a camera around your neck. Doing so brings with it a certain amount of interest, excitement, and disruption; faces turn, eyes grow wide and facial expressions often change, taking on interesting manipulations of the features. Kids giggle, move, toss in a few peace signs, or locate their buddies for a quick group shot. Suddenly, the shot you so desperately wanted to capture is gone. Soon the questions begin. Why are you taking these pictures? What are they for? Are they for the year book?

Deciding where to take photographs was just one of the choices each participant had to make. Although I had encouraged students to push the limits in terms of spaces where they might find literacy, the majority of the photographs were of students in school environments engaging in school related activities. The challenge of exploring the school environment for evidences of literacy became a valuable and immediate one. The participants photographs, discourse, and journal entries reflect preservice teachers immersed in schools, exploring their environments, and getting to know what literacy does and looks like in school.

In our first group meeting we discussed why the participants tended to limit the taking of photographs to school settings. Jessyca explained:

It might be because a lot of people think that literacy is associated with curriculum and with school..."Where will you look for it?" "Literacy, Oh, let's go to the school." You know, you don't really think about other things you might find outside. I've thought about it when I was at school. "What can I take a picture of outside?" You know, I've been trying to figure out.

Early in the picture taking process, Jessyca admitted although "she [could] see the connection between literacy and things outside, [she kept her] camera at school most of the time. Like, I just don't carry it around. Which maybe I should." Jessyca saw school as not only a logical place to photograph literacy, but a practical one as well. This was where she kept her camera. Barb offered this explanation, "I mean all of us are going to be teachers and we're so fascinated by children. So, why not take pictures and capture that fascination."

Later in a spring journal entry, Jessyca indicated an interest in looking at other environments for what she referred to as "evidence" of literacy: "Literacy surrounds us. We don't find it exclusively in schools. I was driving to school today and noticed the numerous signs and billboards. These could represent literacy. Symbols can also be a representation. I got a few ideas for photographs: Burger King Sign, stop signs, and stop lights." Later, during Jessyca's spring placement she took her camera on a class field trip to an art museum, taking multiple shots of exhibits (see Figure 32).

Figure 32. Art Museum by Jessyca

Jessyca was not the only person to carry a camera on a field trip. Marie, Julie, and Sally did so as well (see Figures 33 and 34).

Figure 33. Field Trip by Sally

Figure 34. Field Trip by Marie

Sally described her decision to expand her perspective of literacy beyond schools: "I started out just taking pictures in the school and I've branched out now. I took some interesting pictures of signs on the trip. One rest room said out of order, O- R- T-E- R and I thought this communicates the meaning that it needs to."

None of the participants limited themselves to taking photographs inside schools. All of them wandered out of doors, taking photographs of the school or children engaged in activities. Julie and Jessyca, who had the same placement during the Fall semester, included very similar shots of their schools in their photographic essays (see Figures 35 and 36).

Figure 35. School by Julie.

Figure 36. School by Jessyca.

Julie also took an entire roll of film of children playing outside on playground equipment. She attributed her choice to the animation of her students: "Well, the ones I took outside, were because they were outside of the classroom and I think a lot of their personalities start...I started noticing their personalities start to come out" (see Figure 37).

Figure 37. Children on the playground by Julie

Of all of the participants, Marie was the only one to take many pictures of objects in her apartment describing objects that "symbolize" her personal literacy (see Figure 38).

Figure 38. Bulletin board by Marie.

She took photographs of her desk, her books, and her bedside table. At the end of the study, Marie shared a plastic bag full of photographs that she had taken throughout her inquiry. They were varied shots that included pictures of trees, her family, and her apartment: "This one is my bulletin board and I just, I mean to me, it's about who I am, and it captures me and my life"

Though all of the participants began taking photographs in schools, each approached the task of picture taking differently. Barb described how she began taking pictures with the entire class but quickly and decisively zoomed in.

Well, when I first started taking pictures...that was probably my first picture I took, was of the class. One of the things I wanted to get was a picture so I could remember them. I like to get down in the kids' faces and just capture them. I liked the individual pictures. I liked to see kids at what they do best. I think the close-up pictures ended up turning out better than the ones from far away.

Julie began by taking pictures of students engaged in literate activities. "When I was taking them, I was either trying to find...my students in some form of interaction, you know whether it would be like making their books, working with the technology of computers, listening center, and just playing around." Jessyca began taking photographs of reading and writing activities, yet broadened her focus as time passed. Marie carried her camera around with her, watching and thinking about what she could take a picture of.

What did I do with the camera? Well...I took it with me everyday. I always had it in my bag. And, lets see, the process I went through. Like at first, I started watching a lot and thinking about okay, what am I going to do. And then, precious things would happen, and I would try to take pictures. Some things, just, were happening and I caught it. While other things were like still pictures that I thought would be neat.

Variables unique to the participant's placement, such as the age of their students or the support of their cooperating teacher, brought up special considerations with regard to their ability to take pictures. These considerations were shared during a group interview.

Barb: Last semester my kids were just wonderful! They knew that when I had a camera in their face that they had to keep doing what they were doing. And I have second graders this semester and I am kind of worried that they are going to see it and be like, "Eeh" and I won't be able to capture as much as I would hope to catch as I did.

Marie: You would be surprised.

Jessyca: Because I know I was in a kindergarten class, I thought they were just going to be posing and if you just don't even make it a big fuss about it, you just kind of bring it out.

Marie: Yeah. And if you start from the very beginning they become so, I had to do this a while, they become so used to it.

Barb: Which is like how it was in my class, as well.

For Julie and Barb, new placements provided renewed stimulation as literate environments. The taking of photographs provided a lens for comparing situations.

Julie: I think for me, you know, my last placement, I still took pictures, but I found it harder for me to take pictures of things that were representative of literacy. I took more pictures of maybe the kids. And because I felt like it was

harder for me to take pictures of anything else. And this, [placement] I'm just kind of, I'm not overwhelmed in a bad way, but overwhelmed in a good way. I'm seeing what is out there and kind of constructing what I would like to have.

Barb: I think it is easier for me to take pictures this semester because my teacher remembers how important it is to take pictures. She's only been teaching for three years, so she just went through the whole getting a job process and having a portfolio. Whereas last semester my cooperating teacher had been teaching for like thirteen years and you know doesn't use the camera at all in the classroom. So, I find it easier now, to take pictures.

Marie: I think I find it harder...because the kids are older and they're more caught up in the whole camera thing. The kindergartners, I mean they loved it but they could care less, and I think they were so more involved in what they were doing. They were just more clueless.

Jessyca: What grade are you in now?

Marie: Third.

Jessyca: Oh, I'm kind of with Marie. I was in kindergarten last semester and it was so easy. I'm in fifth grade this semester and the kids are really willing to have their pictures taken, but I think the activities are so different that I was more drawn to take pictures...

Marie: Yeah, that's a good way to put it.

Jessyca: ...of the younger kids. And then also the classroom... Even though the classroom that I'm in is very rich, it's a different kind of rich and I think the connections for literacy for me were more obvious in the kindergarten classroom because they were emergent readers and writers.

Group interviews became an important place for revealing common concerns. For example, Marie and Jessyca shared important insights concerning the age of their students and the activities in which their students engaged. Although the older students were willing to have their pictures taken, Marie and Jessyca found picture taking at the kindergarten level less intrusive. Both suggested that the activities of the younger students prompted them to take more pictures.

Several participants struggled to make their camera accessible, often not having it close by when they needed it. Sally adjusted by carrying her camera with her at all times. "There's so many things that you think of afterwards. You know, I really should have taken a picture of this. And that started happening quite a bit. So, I pretty much keep my camera with me now. It's in my bag wherever I go." Jessyca voiced a similar desire to have her camera more accessible, remarking, "It would be neat to have your camera in your hand the whole time".

Sally's cooperating teacher was particularly good at helping her take pictures.

If I was reading with the children and you know something, something great would happen, I really wish that I had been able to take a photograph then. And that's when I started leaving my camera out on my desk. Ms. Sanders who had been wonderful about this, if she sees something that she thinks is interesting she'll run over and grab the camera and take pictures.

Barb, too found herself wishing she had her camera: "There were tons of times when I am observing the children and I'll see someone making a face. I'm, like, if I only had my camera right now."

For several of the participants, their photographs supplemented their professional portfolios--a task they were required to complete for their preservice program. Concerned with employment, professional portfolios were paramount in their minds. Teacher interviews were conducted early in the spring semester at the university and the student teachers, immersed in the rigor of student teaching, were trying to prepare. The connection between their literacy photographs and their need to produce portfolios is an important one. It represents the usefulness of such representation as not only a meaning making process, but a needful one as well. The photographs had provided a very important mode of sense making. Jessyca revealed: "I see this helping us with our portfolios that we have to do for teaching and... maybe help us get a perspective on how we really stand on literacy and kind of help with our teaching philosophy and things like that."

It is also an example of bringing self to inquiry. The photographs became a means for satisfying immediate requirements. Barb remarked, "Why I took a lot of my pictures this semester was, to build my portfolio on team work and capturing that and capturing them working together playing games, being second and fifth graders, laughing together."

Although the participants appeared comfortable taking pictures, they faced many challenges surrounding the use of a camera. Some of the participants more than others struggled with technical considerations such as lighting, depth of field, and movement.

The quality of pictures varied. Barb seemed very confident in her picture taking abilities and took multiple rolls with a high success rate. "Some of them just, they're great, they're good pictures, but here was a couple that were a little blurry that I just got a little too close, maybe. Or maybe the angle." Technically, her photographs were vivid and clear, with few fuzzy or distorted images.

Although Marie took vivid pictures, she did not have Barb's confidence. Like Barb, most of her pictures were very vivid and clear. She attempted and succeeded in taking shots from different angles, considering color and composition in her work. Marie remarked that she had "a lot of pictures that did not turn out."

This excerpt represents the kinds of pictures Marie was trying to take, as well as the problems she faced as a photographer.

Marie: Oh, I had a lot. Like one thing I tried to do was get one of those magnetic boards that has lines on it and says, my a b c 's and it looks, looks like pieces to puzzles. And we put different letters on it and we put the puzzles together and you can make a word. And so I am like, that would be so neat. And so I spelled Ms.Quand and it didn't turn out at all. A lot of the neat ideas that I had, didn't turn out (see Figure 39).

Figure 39. Magnetic puzzle by Marie..

L: So, there were times you set up...?

M: Oh, sure, sure, and all the ones that I set up didn't work out.

L: Did they just not even turn out or did...?

M: Yeah, well the one that said, Ms. Quand. I was just so off centered. So off-centered. On both, and I took two of them just in case, just to be sure. And I was, and the one picture that I am going to take again, is a pic...it's in my house. It's the crest for White and Cobb which is my middle name. And, I got it from my grandmother when she passed away. And, so I tried to take a picture of that, but unfortunately it was straight on and it reflected from the glass. So, there are a lot of pictures I want to go back and retake. So yeah I did set up some. But some of them were just things that were going on around me.

Sally, Julie, and Kelly took fewer pictures and their photographs revealed lighting deficiencies, blurring, and dull color. I wondered if they took fewer pictures because of the deficiencies. Sally described one of her photographs that did not turn out :

A group of children were out in the hall and they were all reading stories. At H. B. Penny Elementary, you know, we have all, there's a lot of artwork and written work in the hallway. And there were a group of children that had just stopped at another classroom and they were reading, a story. It was [artwork] from fourth grade that was like on the wall and I took a picture of this. But, it was so dark that it really, it didn't turn out. You can see the lights up above and that's really all you could see and I really, I'd hoped that one would turn out.

For the most part, the participants talked about their less than perfect photographs in a light hearted manner, focusing on what the photographs represented rather than the quality. I knew too well the disappointment of getting a roll of film developed and having many come back blurred or overexposed. The trials of photographers were very real for these five women. On the whole, however, they were very successful. I was impressed not only with their choices but with the aesthetic sensibility I saw in their photographs, whether they recognized it or not. I wavered between looking at the photos aesthetically, as an artist, and looking for representations of literacy, as a literacy instructor.

Acting in the process of inquiry is only one part of a process of growth. However, it is not enough to act, we must access the evidence of our acts, reflect on it, move forward, and grow. The following chapter focuses on forms as expressive objects that invite transaction as well as reflection. Forms are reflective in that they reflect the interests of the self, and as stabilized forms they serve as valuable devices for reflection. It is often through the reflection of our own work and the work of others that we begin to grow.

Chapter 7

THE SELF AND ITS FORMS

It was a clear May evening. Low in the sky, the sun lightly filtered through a bank of windows in the large banquet room. Susie and I had worked very hard to make the room festive for the preservice teachers' final reception: white table cloths, flowers, and candles softly graced each table. It was to be a celebration of learning as well as a time for each to share portfolios and, in the case of the five participants, a time to make public their photographs.

In the back of the room a display screen held twenty eight-by-ten photographs. Each of the participants had selected five of her photographs she felt best represented literacy. In turn, I enlarged and mounted each one. Now, they now hung for others to see; brilliant in color, sharp, and well-composed. Having hung each carefully, I was reminded of the countless times I hung student art work in the halls of schools-- masking tape sticking to my fingers, hanging off my shirt, pockets full of staples, scissors, and tacks. Just as I did then, I looked at each with great pride, thinking not only of the piece but of the individual that had created it. I could not look at Marie's photograph of Bradley without picturing her speak of him, her eyes soft with care. Clipping up Julie's photograph of a child on a playground slide, I remembered her endless discussions of self-esteem and how she so desperately wanted her students to feel safe in their school environment. Their stories, memories, passions, and experiences were so closely caught up in the photographs that looking at them was in many ways like looking back at our experiences together.

Literacy can be understood through its forms. Forms of representations, as the nouns of literacy, are the objects that represent our understanding. They are the objects of the verb-- the consequence of action. Jessyca describes literacy as the way "we communicate through speech, letters, books, phone calls, music, e-mail, etc." Literacy is embodied in its forms, where evidence of literacy is being able to create forms. Marie describes "poems, magazines, songs, lists, and signs" as forms "characteristic" to literacy.

If literacy can be understood through its forms, then forms offer a window into the self. If created expressively, forms embody the self. What we see in the photographs and read in the words of the participants are an expression of their unique understandings--a reflection of them selves. As we explore their forms as evidence of what they mean to be in their lives, we begin to understand those aspects of literacy they attend to and find important.

Forms become "expressive objects" when inquiry invites the self in their creation (Dewey, 1934, 82). For Dewey, "expression, like construction, signifies both an action and its result" (1934, 82). Creative inquiry highlights the notion that form is personal expression--the result of acts of personal engagement. Whether through story, song, dance, or image, if we represent our selves through expressive forms, our inquiry takes on meaning. The arts support an engagement with expressive forms and offer a valuable frame for thinking about inquiry as an expressive act. "Art would not amplify experience if it withdrew the self into the self nor would the experience that results from such retirement be expressive" (Dewey, 1934, 103). It is through expressive acts, represented in form, that meaningful experience is amplified.

The artist may be said to express his feelings about life growing out of his continuing experiences with people, place, events objects, and ideas. These experiences, interwoven with the associations and sentiments of memory, are molded or reworked in the mind through the artist's understanding of artistic values. Finally, this feeling image is given form and meaning through the artist's mastery of his chosen medium. Expression becomes the stylistic form in

which the artist couches his sensual-visual meaning: it is an attempt to say something about his subject in terms of his own time (Ocvirk, Bone, Stinson, Wigg, 1975, 135).

Like the artist, creative inquirers express experience, stabilizing it through forms to be revisited, shared, and reflected upon.

Forms As Representations Made Public

"Forms of representations are the devices that humans use to make public conceptions that are privately held" (Eisner, 1994, 39). Stabilizing conceptions to share with others is a sharing of self. Sharing ourselves and our work, as one and the same, is indeed risky business. It asks us to lay bare our selves. However, the result can be astounding and the risk well worth the chance. It is through our sharing that new, exciting, and often transforming views are made known. It is through new and innovative creations that growth takes place.

By sharing our work we bring into view valuable insights about important issues. Going public with our conceptions is part of the creative process of inquiry. As artful inquirers, our expression is complete "only as it works in the experience of others [and] the one who creates it" (Dewey, 107). Traditionally, artists are accustomed to public viewing of their work. The art show or gallery opening is seen as an event for making work known. In the spirit of the art opening, the sharing of work provides a necessary public forum for discussing our work. It brings into public view and public spaces work to be shared, communicated, transacted with, and passed on. In very powerful ways, through public sharing, we promote an idea or understanding of a subject. We communicate our cause. "In the end, works of art are the only media of complete and unhindered communication between man and man that can occur in a world full of gulfs and walls that limit community of experience" (Dewey, 1934, 105). Sharing work engages others and offers new insights, stimulates the imagination, and in many ways affirms our understanding. It becomes a symbol for understanding. In this case, these five participants brought to bear richly articulated and vividly imaged understandings of literacy.

Forms made public invite others to transact. Transaction with forms is an active process whereby the viewer/reader gives meaning to a work by bringing his or her own frame of reference to that work. The idea that a work has only one interpretation is not applicable to artful forms. "The conception that [forms] have fixed and unalterable values is precisely the prejudice from which art emancipates us. The intrinsic qualities of things come out with startling vigor and freshness just because conventional associations are removed. (Dewey, 1934, 95). It is the viewer/reader that gives a work new meaning.

Eudora Welty (1989), best known as a writer, lesser known as a photographer, responded when asked what she discerned as the vision she expresses in her works (photographs and writing).

Well, I think it lies only in the work. It is not for me to say. I think it's what the work shows, comprises altogether. But, as in everything, I want the work to exist as the thing that answers every question about its doing. Not me saying what's in the work. In fact, I couldn't. Some time, if I have the time left to me I would like to do more, but of course you could never make it full enough. You know, of what is out there and in here (Welty, xxviii).

Some forms offer viewers/readers wider spaces for meaningful transactions. Creative inquiry encourages the use of expressive forms as open-ended thoughtful works that invite transactual experiences for others. Rosenblatt's (1978) Reader Response theory describes transactual experiences with textual forms, illuminating artistic elements found in language.

The reader brings to the work personality traits, memories of past events, present needs and preoccupations, a particular mood of the moment, and particular physical conditions. These and many other elements in a never-to-be-duplicated combination determine his response to the peculiar contribution of the text (Rosenblatt, 1978, 30-31).

Images are powerful forms for transactual experiences. Unlike text, which requires "competence in phonemic and syntactic systems" (Rosenblatt, 1978, 55), images provide a visual system of cues accessible to most individuals. One's requirement for viewing a photograph is that of having eyesight. The ability of images to speak to a mass audience, despite language differences, makes them a valuable and powerful tool for inquiry.

Photographs in particular offer an interesting visual component to inquiry. As forms, they encompass the complexity of experience, representing not only what exists visually in a particular frame, but that which exists along with and beyond it. In contrast to the notion of capturing, photographs encompass a host of qualities that lie beyond the edges of the photograph. They revive the smells and tears of kindergartners, forgotten homework, friends, and fat crayons. Photographs capture a mood, a feeling, or an expression in ways often difficult to express through words. Images are so closely interwoven into the experiences of the preservice teachers that they act as visual prompts for a flood of memories, feelings, shifting ideas, wishes, and dreams.

As stabilized forms, photographs can be revisited, reflected upon, and shared easily. This became very obvious during the group photo interviews when the participants shared their photographs. Photographs could easily be passed around and quickly viewed. Response time was relatively quick permitting more time for individual interpretation. Discussion surrounding the photographs served to communicate ideas representing the unique frame of reference individuals brought to the photographs.

As visual prompts, photographs served to "extend the frame of reference or extend thinking" (Lowenfeld, 94, 1975). By interpreting photographs during photo interviews, new observations were made. There was a strong sense of immediacy to the photographs as they provided images of the immediate environment--objects, others, and experiences. The photographs provided an opportunity to examine, over and over again, the physical evidence of literacy in school settings. Sorting through the visual data of their lives to examine representations and actions of literacy stimulated continued inquiry.

Collage As A Metaphor for Creative Inquiry

Representing the literacy interpretations of my five participants was a challenging task, bringing to the forefront of my inquiry a host of interwoven experiences, images, voices and text. It was a task that asked me to select from and synthesize a vast array of representations.

The representation of creative inquiry invites interesting challenges for several reasons. First of all, creative inquiry is not a linear process. Its spherical nature reflects complex, interwoven, growing experiences, and the unique qualities embedded in personal inquiry. It becomes difficult to represent the holistic nature of inquiry while at the same time naming specifics, categorizing, and citing examples.

Secondly, the use of multiple forms in creative inquiry gives representation added complexity. Because the participants' understanding of literacy is represented across forms, one can not consider words or images separately. Negotiating the move from one to the other represents a unity among difference that is similar to the unity a sculptor strives for in a sculpture where the unique qualities of each element--texture, line, or color-- combine to create a whole.

To negotiate these issues, I use collage as a metaphor for the literacy understanding of my five participants. The multi-layered and interwoven nature of collages provides an interesting form for representing complex ideas. The result is a collage of shifting nuances, accents, colors, feelings, passions, words, and images.

collage-(kohl-lahzh) From *papiers colles*, the French for 'pasted paper': a composition deriving from cubism and made by pasting together on a flat surface such originally unrelated materials as bits of newspaper, wallpaper, cloth, cigarette packages, and printed photographs (Fleming, 1974, 440).

I am reminded of Picasso's collages that show artifacts, texts, and images in abstracted forms-- defying realistic and spatial representations (see Figure 40). The juxtaposition and interwoven relationship of forms disrupt realistic modes for understanding and encourage alternative interpretations. Seen in this way, the parts take on new identities and the unique form--the collage--continues to be interpreted and reinterpreted by its viewers.

Figure 40. *The Three Musicians* by Pablo Picasso 1921

Consider the collage as a creative process. Unlike many processes which are highly linear, the collage has an intuitive element. As a collage is created, one makes both intuitive and practical decisions. There are times when the artist senses the need for a bright color versus a subdued neutral. There are times when the quality of the aesthetic moves the artist toward an artistic order. The making of a collage negotiates the push and pull of what needs to be and what feels right.

Not all layers of a collage are seen; some elements have been covered by the acts of the artist over time. This does not negate their existence. Only certain parts are left visible, purposefully or by accident. Much like photos, collages often hold hidden images that emerge later. Some elements in collages are highlighted. A bright red on the right or a tattered scrap peeking out from a hard edge. These accents come to the forefront because of their strength. They stand out. In this study, much like accents, there are strong individual and collective recurring themes. What lies beneath are many images, many stories and many interpretations.

Using the words and images of the participants to support one another, I have created five collages that provide the viewer/reader with an understanding of the participants' inquiry--image supporting text and text supporting image. As a metaphor for creative inquiry, collage underlines the challenge and depth of understanding that creative endeavors provide. Because creative inquiry represents a personal exploration of literacy and self, I have organized the collages into individual representations--representations that I hope will highlight personal as well as collective themes of inquiry. Collective understandings, which emerge across forms, are shared ideas or themes articulated or captured in the words and images of the group. These themes were: self and self image, together and with, environment and as a teacher. These collective themes emerged more strongly in some than in others. Each participant represented important ideas about their literate self. Each, in some way, related literacy to self. All words and images represented in the collages are those of the participants unless otherwise noted.

In my attempt to represent a clear image of the participant's literacy understanding I have refrained from adding my textual comments. In respect for the transactual qualities of creative forms, it is my hope that you will experience these collages and make sense of them based on what you bring to their forms.

marie
 Literacy is not limited to words written in black.
 Literacy is C O L O R ;
 It is what each individual perceives it to be in their own mind.
 Literacy is interpretation of the world.

Figure 41. Sunset by Marie

The Fading Sun

Whenever someone special dies,
 God lets them paint the endless skies.
 He calls the young and precious first
 and gives them the C O L O R S of Heaven and Earth,
 to create the sunset of their choice
 which becomes their silent voice
 proclaiming that they do live on:
 their love seen through a fading sun.

To write is to risk.....I found my V O I C E while writing the poem, *Fading Sun*.

I am not real poetic but I have written some poems
 They are all about real life experience

?

Is there literacy through emotion?
 Is there literacy through tears and laughter?
 Or is emotion a form of literacy?
 I have found in my lowest moments (now) that I reach and find solace in reading and
 writing. I also find solace in tears.
 Is there a connection?
 Do I experience a cleansing when I read and write or cry?

Figure 42. Bookcases by Marie

This is my life last month. This is my life now. This is how I feel....chaos-vs-rigidness.

Characteristics of Literacy
 communicates-perceives-explains-emotional-personal-changing

I love working with children with cancer. I also love helping others
 singing sports humor and laughing.

.I worked very hard capturing the feel for my classroom in relation to literacy.

Figure 43. Little girl working
 This little girl tries so hard
 she's an average student or
 that's what she's labeled by all
 those stupid tests. I tell you
 what, she works harder than
 anybody. So, I'm just glad,
 cause she was like that for
 about a minute and I had time
 to get my camera. photo

"Good photographs start with perceptive minds rather than with merely perceptive eyes."
 David Yarnold, photojournalist, assistant managing editor, San Jose Mercury News.

Facial expression and body language is a part of a child's literacy.
 Not only do they communicate to others; but they also understand this unspoken language.
 E x p r e s s i o n
 From a distance we instruments marching in a common band
 playing songs of hope playing songs of peace they're the songs of every man.

Figure 44. Childrens' shadows by Marie

It's a song. *From A Distance.*
 I think just symbolizes peace.
 The way I express myself is through song. I am a singer (on a good day in the shower).
 Music soothes my soul. I handle exciting, happy, sad, and disappointing moments through
 music. The words not only tell a story, but so does the rhythm and melody. There is a
 hidden agenda within the rhythm and melody. The notes and instruments used evokes
 powerful emotions. Music is amazing. It talks to the depths of our souls. It reaches beyond
 to a place where words cannot go. Music is the dialect of our hearts. Our heart and soul
 guides our bodies to create a responsive movement.

School chooses our forms of literacy. We need to challenge children to create their own
 individual definition of literacy beyond reading and writing.

I would like to learn how to best encourage children to utilize their imagination. I want to
 make "literacy" fun and exciting.

From that point on, I, my imagination...not that I have an incredible imagination at all and I
 think that might be why. Cause I never, I was never really allowed to utilize it.

I saw that swing and it was empty.
 And the kids had been playing on it all day, fighting over it.
 And when we lined up it was just empty and I was like... (laughs).

Figure 45. The swing by Marie

I just, I think there is great symbolism there. And so just...I think to me it just symbolizes that childhood freedom and cause they all there like "Ms. Reed, I'm flying, I'm flying." And I think that's... that concept is so neat.

Pictures capture moments more so than a lengthy explanation. The quotes reinforce that which the photographer witnessed.

Literacy is: culturally flavored
is empowered by choice
what we read
what we write
what we choose.

Literacy is more than words in a book--literacy is about understanding the world.

A child is the root of the heart.

I love this one of Chris. I don't know
if you looked at the ribbon close
enough but it says drug free. And
I think that is really...he's just, so..
I love the expression. He's not
even in my class. This was during
bus line. He is so cute.

Figure 46. Marie reading

I will inspire children to write about that
which lies in their
hearts.

As a teacher, I will not limit a child's definition and understanding of literacy....I want children to explore literacy and define it for themselves. I will create an exciting and entertaining classroom filled with enriched activities and lessons that will enable each child to define literacy on a personal level.

s a l l y

What inspires one
to read
to dream
to pray
to write
to smile
Something phenomenal
powerful, majestic
lighting the darkening sky,
like a bold, bright, brush.
Or a simple, cool breeze,

Chilling the skin, warming
and challenging
the mind.

Figure 47. Sunset by Sally

Literacy is a part of everyday life; it should be real, purposeful, and enjoyable.

Through reading, writing,
and talking with others,
and experiencing
the world around me,
I become more literate.

Figure 48. Photo of shelves by Sally

Literacy is not static, but changing and growing constantly. Every time we put meaning to what we see, read, hear, we grow as literate individuals.

Figure 49. Sally reading

My literacy autobiography is mainly a collection of stories. Generally when I talk, or when I explain things, I tend to do it that way. I tend to be more of a storyteller. And stories are really a large part of, you know, how I became a literate person.

Like a web, literacy is made up of threads, that are closely intertwined. By touching one, we touch them all. Like spiders, we are naturally wired to create "webs" and miraculously we each spin different webs for ourselves everyday.

The smile.....
Wonder, spark, imagination,
and eagerness,
An unquenched desire to
know, to grow, and to love,
Anything and everything
With wings like a soaring falcon,
A child searches and seeks
Wonders and wanders,
Everywhere and nowhere,
Consistently, insistently,
and persistently.

Figure 50. Child Smiling by Sally

This is our rainy day field trip. It is out on the porch and it's just this old wooden barrel and it has this rusty ring around it and I think you can see the top of it and it seems like the barrel, it's kinda dark inside. I really, I like that photo and I think you could say a lot about that .

Figure 51. Barrel by Sally

He asked me, "Ms, Moss, why are you always taking our picture?" So, I told him, "I want to be able to remember some of the things that we are doing and he said, "Well, you don't have any pictures of you" And he just kept on and on. "Can I take a picture with your camera?" So, I said, "Okay, when you see me doing something that you think is important, I want you to take a picture."

Figure 52. Sally reading.

Some teachers just squashed every bit of enthusiasm out of reading for me and then others really brought things out that made me become more interested in it and I, I see the things that I want to do but also the things that I will never do in my classroom.

I enjoy writing so much that when I am teaching, I want my children to enjoy it just as much as I do.

c o m m u n i c a t i o n

Literacy is not only reading and writing,
but other ways that we communicate meaning to others.

I think of literacy more as, as I said before, it's communication. I think in order to have

p e a c e

that you have to have and understanding of each other.

And I never really thought about that.

Literacy helps children understand their world and those around them.

It has a different meaning for everyone.

Literacy cuts across all subject areas and all facets of life.

Figure 53. Children writing with cake frosting

This picture shows what my classroom looks like. I am in the most crowded classroom in the world because my teacher does not use textbooks really except as a reference. As you can see she has just so many books. The children are just surrounded by literature, they're surrounded by words, just everywhere. There's, as you can see, there's not a space in our classroom that isn't taken by something like that.

Figure 54. Classroom

I write lots of letters. That's my way of keeping up with my friends. So, it pretty much involves every aspect of my life.

My classroom is, a coincidence, the "we deliver" center of the school. We deliver mail and letter in the school. They [students] can write letters to each other. The U.S. Postal Service does this with a lot of elementary schools and in our class the children have jobs. They're the post master, the carrier, and they go to the different classroom and deliver their mail.

They, (pictures) tell a story of their own by evoking emotions, stirring the imagination, and adding clues of the mystery of the printed page.

This drawing on the opposite page is by my cousin Jonathan. Jonathan is three years old and loves to "write and draw". Jonathan made a clear communication orally of his message

in this drawing. At this young age, he was unable to write about his picture, but there is a definite connection.

Figure 55. Drawing by Jonathan.

As I worked on my journal writing, one child questioned what I was doing. I explained that I was looking at what literacy was. He said, "Oh that's easy! Well, it's how you express yourself!" I continued, "Anything that involves expressing oneself is literacy?" The child responded with, "Kind of like rap music."

Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once he/she grows up.
Pablo Picasso

Art is different perspectives on the world; expressing oneself through shape, line, color, and texture offers a glimpse into the soul and into the fundamental workings of the mind.

julie

Literacy in a word?
SUCCESS

*"The ultimate end, the print, is but a duplication of all that I saw
and felt
through my camera."* Edward Weston (Lewis, 1995, 69).

Children Learn What They Live

If a child lives with criticism,
He learns to condemn.
If a child lives with ridicule,
He learns to be shy.
If a child lives with encouragement,
He learns confidence.
If a child lives with approval,
He learns to like himself.
If a child lives with acceptance and
friendship,
He learns to find love in the
world.

Figure 56. Little girl with "thumbs up" by Julie

Self esteem
is more like a base foundation. Just as you learn the alphabet.

What was it about reading that I did not like?
Was it my lack of confidence in my ability to read and understand?
Was it just disinterest?
I did not perceive myself as a good
reader.

In addition to a healthy self-image,

I think reading should be made fun before it can ever be made purposeful in life.

Children

must have at least one person who believes in them. It could be a counselor, a teacher, a preacher, a friend. It could be you. You never know when a little love, a little support, will plant a small seed of hope. Marian Wright Edelman

Literacy

can not be viewed by itself.

"Whether of a board fence, an eggshell, a mountain peak or a broken sharecropper, the great photograph first asks, then answers, two questions, 'Is that my world? What, if not, has that world to do with mine?'" Dorthea Lange (Lewis, 1995, 97).

Looking at the photos that I have taken brings me to believe that literacy is everywhere.

Figure 57. The environment by Julie

I think that you need to give them the environment they need so they can feel comfortable enough, where they can trust you to be able to do whatever. So they won't feel like they are embarrassed or don't, kind of like a safe zone to feel like they are unique.

I liked it because it seemed more of an environment which I thought was more literacy rich, I guess.

I really want to empower my students. Not only for them to feel safe-- you know safe haven kind of environment-- but, I want them to feel like they are special and that what they do say or what's important to them is important to me.

Figure 58. Science Lab by Julie

Seeing

what is out there and kind of construct what I would like to have.

I wish that I had not allowed circumstances in my childhood to dictate how I felt about my ability to be a literate person. I definitely plan to take advantage of reliving my early literacy years through my students.

Figure 59. Child Reading by Julie

I see and I look
 at the kids in my first grade and I think,
 "Wow, I don't want them to have to feel the same way I felt."

Figure 60. Julie reading to class

As a teacher it (literacy)
 includes the environment (of
 the classroom and beyond),
 the self-esteem (of the student
 and teacher), the behavior,
 and the methods used to
 facilitate the empowerment of
 students as individuals. I hope
 this is clear.

I am successful.
 I have grown up and achieved what was once impossible.
 And I enjoy it.

Each
 child learns to read and write as an individual, putting together ideas in a way that makes
 personal sense. Julie Kane Lenth.

Figure 61. Children reading in a window by Julie

I guess if I was to summarize it in some way, literacy is to me unique in terms of
 individually. Like a person having a portrait made. And what they do, how they actually,
 what they do to be literate. I guess, whether it's reading, writing, or sharing. Those are
 types or ways that you can be literate...I know with some artists, some mediums are better
 than others; they are more using this type of medium. It's very similar to where some
 students or even me, for that matter, I pick certain mediums that are more comfortable for
 me and make me feel confident.

I picked this stack because they're pictures of my students, and they are all individual and
 they all have their own personalities. They're very different and unique that way. So, I
 picked that.

They were outside
 of the classroom,
 and I think a lot of
 their
 personalities
 start, I started
 noticing their
 personalities
 start to come out.

Figure 62. Children playing outside

I interpret expression to be related to literacy.

During sharing of reading a story they have written,
the students express happiness and enjoyment on their faces.
Literacy is fun.

They read by themselves. They
read on the tables. We have
a ship in our classroom and it's
set up where there is a ship
made of cardboard and
there is a table. They request
now and then if they can read
on the ship, and then
I have some underneath the ship.
Literacy, I feel like there's not
one specific area you can really
pinpoint. It's a lot of things and
that way not so much literacy
being unique but because there
are so many forms you can
use or even represent.

Figure 63. Little girl laying on floor reading by Julie

FRIENDS from *Wee Sing Song*
books

Friends, friends, one, two, three.
All my friends are here with me.
You're my friend. You're my friend.
You're my friend. You're my friend.
Friends, friends, one two, three.
All my friends are here with me.

Figure 64. Children sharing by Julie

I think for me, it took a very long time for me to grasp the concept that reading is not just
reading the words and a speed of reading-- like getting the book done--
it was really
enjoying it.

Looking at the photos that I
have taken brings me to believe that
l i t e r a c y i s e v e r y w h e r e .

When I hear the word, literacy.
I naturally think of reading and
writing. But when you think
about it and are able to try to
capture it in photos, you are
able to go beyond that.
Literacy is part of a big picture.

To a point, it is quite difficult to put into coherent sentences.

Figure 65. Sunset by Julie

Characteristics of being literate:
 -being able to read at the ability you are capable of. (competent)
 -knowing, having confidence in yourself. (confident)
 -self-motivated in reading. (no one needs to motivate you to want to read)
 - read/write for purpose (to gain pleasure/fun)

School is a building of four walls with tomorrow inside.

School and literacy is more than just learning how to, you know, skills and knowledge.

Figure 66. Photograph of a school by Julie

Looking at my pictures some things stand out-- words on the walls-- in the environment

jessyca

Since growth is
 the characteristic of life,
 education is all one with growing:
 it has no end beyond itself.
 Dewey, 1916, 58

I believe that literacy is the ability to read and write. I also think that it is the ability to appreciate reading and writing.

I feel like as literate
 people we are
 constantly growing,
 constantly becoming
 better readers and
 writers. I see myself
 as growing as a
 literate person as far
 as my definition, it's growing.

Figure 67. Photo essay

I ran across a story called *John Corceran, The Man Who Couldn't Read*. It was about a man who had gone through school and college without knowing how to read. He even became a teacher. It amazed me that he made it so far without anyone knowing he couldn't read. It scares me that people can slip through the cracks. This story made me consider the implications of literacy outside of school.

Figure 68. Bulliten board by Jessyca

Characteristics OF a literate person:

.....enjoys and seeks understanding.....a reader.....
a writer.....interested in many topics.....desires
learning.....explores.....divergent.....constantly growing.....
and.....changing.....

I think you always learn
 from thinking about your
 own life and your own
 experiences and I think you
 can always learn by working
 with other people.

Figure 69. Students painting by Jessyca

Literacy was explored through self-examination and the observation of others.

We can read lyrics and write them. We can also write about music.
 It can spark memories and ideas that may lead us to write.
 I feel that all teachers should use music as a part of their literacy curriculum.

We communicate through speech, letters, books, phone calls, music,
 e-mail, etc. It prompted the question, How are literacy and communication linked? Maybe
 I'll come to some conclusions.

Figure 70. Students cutting paper by Jessyca

I started thinking about how we teach
 children with hearing and vision impairments
 to read and write. When I think about
 reading, I typically imagine looking
 at written words. What if a person can't see?
 As teachers, we must make accommodations
 for people who cannot hear.
 Everyone can experience literacy.
 However, we must realize that there
 are a variety of literacy experiences.

Figure 71. Students at art gallery

Not only have I seen
 evidence of literacy
 in my school, but I
 have also seen it in
 my courses. I have
 come to believe that
 music and visual arts

are components
of literacy.

I see myself as a very literate person.
I also see ways that I can grow. I know that.

L i t e r a c y i s a p u z z l e w i t h m a n y m i s s i n g p i e c e s .

I think I've let reading and writing grow. For example, writing. I never really thought of illustrations and drawing as a part of writing. And so now, I am starting to see that that can be writing especially for younger children and even for people of our age. Drawing can be a form of writing and so I think that maybe the definitions of reading and writing have grown.

Figure 72. Tessellations hanging in the hall by Jessyca

Although I associate literacy primarily with reading and writing, I am able to recognize that literacy can be achieved through other means. The photographs represent literacy through art, cooking, play, reading, and writing. Literacy is a process that grows continuously through a wide variety of methods.

Figure 73. Children reading on the floor by Jessyca

Facilitator
I also see myself,
since I am going to be a teacher,
as becoming a f a c i l i t a t o r for literacy.
I have to learn ways to make literacy interesting to other people.

I have been thinking that literacy is facilitated by adults. However, literacy can be facilitated by children. Children can become more literate by working with each other.

It is really neat to
look at kids.
They notice things.

Figure 74. Jessyca playing outside with her students.

I got to close my eyes and think of myself as the ideal teacher, the perfect teacher, what I want. No, I may not be all of these things as a teacher, but it is fun to strive and to know what you want to be. I may never get there, but it's fun to think that you can.

barb
i n s p i r a t i o n

I feel creative like an artist, yet at the same time, like an author.

Figure 75. Tree by Barb

Literacy encompasses every sense.

My life follows the pathway that my words are making. When I was young, my path was narrow and very straight. It included reading and writing but not much more. My path has grown with every step I take and now has some curves in it. Singing and dancing have curved my path encouraging me new ways to experience literacy. It could not longer be just reading and writing.

Literacy is:

Inspiring
Powerful
Individualistic
Growth and change
Reaffirming
Eclectic
Discovery

Figure 76. Boy writing on the floor by Barb.

Each child needs to be treated as an
i n d i v i d u a l.
I think that this will show them that they are owners of their thoughts
and can express them as they choose.

Figure 77. Boy drawing by Barb

I think the pictures that stand out the most to me are the one's that I know I captured that child, what I think of that child, or what I see as that child.

Literacy includes books, plays, movies, music, poems, journals, and
s e l f d i s c o v e r y
to make it a whole system.

Figure 78. Girl digging by Barb

Literacy is a means of connecting to the world.

I put these all together because it looks like they're discovering. Whether it be through art, gluing, painting, cutting, using prisms, flashlights, and science objects. They're all somehow engaged in discovery.

Figure 78. Girl drawing at desk by Barb.

All of our experiences make up
who we are as literate individuals.

Together and with

"Birds of a feather flock together" is a cliché that can be used for many things. I'm using it to represent my life as a literate person. Once I had found my flock to fly with, everything

else came into place. There were times along my flight when I felt a little out of "V" formation, but there was always another bird to get me back on track.

Figure 79. Shadows by Barb

I learned so much more from other people and usually my best work comes when I work with others, because, for me, I can pull ideas from what someone else says.

Figure 80. Boys reading book together.

Oh, I love it!
I love seeing
them work together
and have strong bonds of friendship and working as a team.

To be a photographer: "You need a heart, an eye, a mind, and a magic box"
Carl Mydans, one of four original LIFE Magazine photographers.

They had testing last week. The poor kids and we had a break and were just fooling around and just taking crazy pictures of heads and feet. I just thought it was neat. This picture reminds me of a quote that I heard from someone in my sorority and it's, "You're only as strong as your weakest link".

Figure 81. Childrens' feet together in a circle by Barb

I never would have thought that a picture could be so powerful.
I guess that's where the saying
"a picture says a 1000 words"
comes from.

I'm going to let each child take two pictures and each picture they take,
they have to write down why they took that picture.

I get that warm fuzzy feeling deep inside,
I want to bring that alive in my classroom.

Chapter 8

Reflections: A Look Back, A Look At, And A Look Forward

Having explored the creative inquiry of five preservice teachers, I now turn my attention to my own inquiry. It is my hope that this will not only summarize what I feel are important insights gleaned from my inquiry, but will illuminate qualities of this research that I have found intriguing, personal, challenging, and hopeful.

Creative Inquiry

As a researcher, art educator, and teacher educator, I brought to this inquiry a respect for the artful qualities found in our lives. Finding value in aesthetic modes of expression in all that we do-- including teaching, I wanted to incorporate these artful endeavors into preservice teachers' literacy inquiry. I came to my own inquiry with questions about literacy, multiple forms of representations, and research.

I had not anticipated the role that inquiry would play in the research. I had not set out to create an image of creative inquiry, instead it evolved from the four themes the participants interpreted as important aspects of literacy: self and self image, literacy as a social act (together and with), literacy in the physical environment, and growth ("as a teacher"). I realized that it was not enough to only represent the themes, but just as important to represent the relationship among them. As I studied the themes and their relationship to one another, a framework evolved. That framework seemed to be a necessary means for talking about highly complex and interrelated ideas.

Although creative inquiry grew out of the collective themes as a construct for understanding research, it also described the space each participant used to develop her personal inquiry into literacy. Slowly the subtle nuances of each participant emerged. Embedded in emotive and passionate qualities, their interests, and needs guided their inquiry. Each participant proceeded through inquiry differently, bringing self to inquiry in personal and unique ways. Marie's self floated close to the surface throughout her inquiry. Her acts and her forms were emotive and intimate. Her inquiry was personal and meaningful. It communicated heartfelt feelings and thoughts. Marie's questions about literacy, were questions about her self.

Unlike Marie, Julie proceeded through inquiry with the eye of a researcher, examining her environment for evidence of literacy. Somewhat distant, she side-stepped the sensitive experiences surrounding her literate self image, and instead used environmental evidence as a spring board for realizing the importance of "safe spaces" for positive literacy experiences.

Jessyca was methodical and practical. She went about inquiry in an almost detached manner as if self was looking down on inquiry. She moved through forms and acts in logical ways carefully recording what was around her. Jessyca was reflective and thoughtful, yet very private. Emotive elements lay below the surface, yet existed in very powerful ways. Her ability to reflect thoughtfully encouraged her to explore new possibilities, actively seeking alternative perspectives. Her willingness to grow was a valuable aspect of her literacy inquiry.

Barb was an exuberant explorer who soaked up her surroundings and those in it. She came at inquiry from all angles, carefully reflecting on her work. Her passion for teamwork and discovery was reflected in her literacy inquiry.

Sally surrounded her work with stories, weaving others into her inquiry. She connected her self to others and the environment--her students, her family, the beach, a sunset, or a barrel and highlighted the importance of literacy as a device of communication. Sally was an inquirer who was moved to action. Her insights about literacy were meant to be acted upon and shared with others. Her ability to master language enabled her to recognize images in the world as well as recreate them in story. If there was something to be said, there was a story to be told.

Multiple Forms of Representation

As a researcher, I was interested in the participants' process of inquiry, but I was also interested in how they used multiple forms of representations to understanding literacy. Biased by my own ideas about literacy and forms of expression, I wanted to examine the valuable aspects of multiple forms of representation and study their role as sense making devices.

Interpreting and representing those interpretations of inquiry involved juggling the multiple forms within a closed space. I had to extract the subtle nuances of spoken discourse, written reflection, and photography while at the same time keeping my footing. I wanted to blend the expressive qualities of each forms while at the same time extracting and articulating valuable insights--a somewhat exasperating balancing act.

I wanted to represent artful expression through their images and text, and at the same time clearly articulate discoveries that lie at the edge of language. I went there. I could not find words. They were not there. I would sit and stare: forcing words into awkward spaces only to find them rooted to opposing words on the other edge...across a deep chasm...surrounded by a wall of difficult ideas.

On the edge one may not be able to speak, but one can feel the tension between edge-like inquiries. Julie found it when she tried to articulate her reason for describing a photograph of a sunset as a representation of literacy. Marie found it when she tried to articulate her intuitive preference to photograph chaotic bookshelves and paint brushes. I found it at art school when I tried to describe my painting during a class critique. I have found it again with this study. As infuriating as the edge may be, it provokes struggles that lead to growth. It sends us down new roads without road signs and asks us to find our way.

In relation to research, Eisner speaks of the edge as a place for "productive ambiguity". "By productive ambiguity, I mean that the material presented is more evocative than denotative, and in its evocation, it generates insight and invites attention to complexity" (1997, 8) As a novice researcher, I must say, the edge is scary. But for all of its challenging ambiguities, it illuminates the evocative qualities of inquiry.

This research highlights important insights about the creation and representation of multiple forms. Stemming from creative acts, each representation has unique qualities as both processes and forms. Different processes illuminate different insights, and as stabilized representations, forms are excellent reflective devices. Just as different processes allow for different insights, different forms allow for different kinds of reflection and interpretation. Each form, by its unique nature, invites new perspectives.

As written reflections, the literacy autobiographies highlighted past literacy experiences giving time for the participants to look backward and revisit memorable images. We learned about Julie's self-image growing up as a literate person. We learned of Sally's strong oral tradition and her early experiences as a young poet and teacher. We were introduced to Barb, the singer, the actor, and the dancer and to Marie the poet and passionate humanitarian. We met Jessyca, successful, straightforward, and practical in her chronological representation of her past.

Other written reflections such as the participants' journals provided a valuable space for reflection. A space that does not have the restrictions of a finished work. Through the act of writing, they were able to make sense of their selves, acts, and forms, through reflection. Writing bridged gaps and reaffirmed ideas represented in other forms. Journals helped the participant write their way into the future by making important insights about their growth.

For me, photography was one of the most intriguing aspects of this inquiry. As a visual process of inquiry and a form of representation, it heightened the importance of the visual world and encouraged the participant to examine literacy with a new focus. The immediacy of photography as a representation of the present world provided an important bridge between the student teaching placement environment and the participants' understandings of literacy. Often an object or space made an important connection between

literacy and the participants' understanding of literacy. Even if a photograph was not initially taken as a literacy representation, connections could be made. The camera framed certain aspects of the environment asking the participants to select some images while rejecting other. Photography became an important mode of inquiry in that it allowed the participants to approach literacy through a different lens

As forms, the photographs functioned as prompts for discussion and reflection, often inciting new ideas and expanding notions of literacy. Although some photographs were taken unintentionally or for other reasons, the participants were able to make important connections to aspects of literacy they had not considered.

Spoken discourse reaffirmed and added to other forms of representation. It is through spoken discourse, as an immediate, unedited, form that I saw language and image both collide and coexist. Supporting one another, they held each other up. Where language failed, powerful and emotive images spoke with a sharp silence. Where images failed, language with its ability to express, provided a bridge to understanding.

Growth

Growth is measured individually. As a process for growth, creative inquiry invited participants to move forward in unique ways, based on needs and interests. Beginning inquiry with a very narrow definition of literacy, Jessyca's growth, across the inquiry seemed very dramatic. Moving from a belief that literacy was reading and writing, she "expanded" her definition "to believe that music and visual aids are components of literacy."

Participants who entered inquiry with broader conceptions of literacy on the other hand, grew by reaffirming ideas and further examining aspects within their definitions. Barb described her growth in this way: "Nothing has really changed. It has only been enhanced and reaffirmed." Marie who entered with the conception that literacy was inspirational, began to look at the components of inspiration, articulating literacy as a perceptive, expressive mode of communication.

Julie grew by discovering the connections between the environment and self image. Her discovery of the role of environment in positive or negative literacy experience gave her important information for developing her own safe spaces for her students. It confirmed her feelings about unsafe spaces and inspired her to become a teacher who nurtures empowering and successful environments for children.

Sally, like Barb and Marie, entered with a broad image of literacy. For the most part, Sally's inquiry connected directly with her role as an educator. Growth involved learning more about literacy with her students. This meant asking her students what they thought literacy is. This meant letting them take photographs of her. This meant implementing multiple forms into her teaching, and moving forward in literacy inquiry as a teacher.

And finally, in my growth as a researcher, I have been able to reaffirm the idea that literacy is a conception that is best defined by the individual. It is a personal, expressive, artful, and communicative mode of sense-making that invites difference, possibility, and imagination.

Literacy surrounds us, waiting to be perceived. It is in glowing sunsets that grace our sleepy skies. It is in the eyes of "precious children" that grace our classrooms. It is in the books, stories, paintings, and music... that inspire us. Finally, it is in our minds to be imagined by teachers, teacher educators, scholars, and all who seek to understand it; and it is imagination that creates possibility.

Imagination grants a usefulness to the disinterest of seeing things small at the same time that it opens to and validates the passion for seeing things close up and large. For this passion is the doorway for imagination; here is the possibility of looking at things as if they could be otherwise (Greene, 1995, 16).

At the beginning of the fall semester, I played the song, *Imagine* (Lennon, 1989), I asked my students to "imagine" themselves as teachers and to respond by finishing this statement: As a teacher, I will... Together we revisited learning experiences with the hopes of creating new images of our own selves as educators. My inquiry has stimulated my imagination and allowed me to consider possible venues for artful learning. I imagine students at all levels engaging with multiple forms as expressive devices for learning and growth. I imagine educators tapping into the powerful qualities embedded in multiple forms, employing them in their classrooms daily. I imagine researchers exploring "edges" in new and innovative ways so that discoveries, insights, and illuminations cast a wider glow on what it means to inquire. I imagine literacy that celebrates the diversity of sense making and taps into the rich complexity of its nature. I imagine all people discovering their potential through the artful exploration of their selves, their acts, and their forms so that being empowered, being literate, and being learned are elements available to all.

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PERSONAL

Born: Columbia, S.C.
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 Children: Brad Bustle, ten years old

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

1997 Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction, Virginia Tech University.
1983 MAED in Art Education from East Carolina University, Greenville, N.C.
1982 B.S. in Art Education from East Carolina University, Greenville, N.C.

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

1990-1994 Art teacher- Blacksburg Middle School (sixth, seventh, and eighth grade.)
1988-1990 Itinerant middle/high school art teacher for Montgomery County Schools.
 (Shawsville Middle and High School and Auburn Middle and High School)
1987 Itinerant elementary art teacher for Pulaski County Schools, Virginia (Five Schools)
1986 Organized art program in county and taught art classes for elementary schools in
 Quachita Parish School District. Monroe, LA.(Twenty Schools)
1985 Eastern Elementary School teacher, Taught sixth grade Social Studies, Math, and
 Science. Monroe, Louisiana
1985 Assistant manager of Art and Frame Gallery, Monroe, Louisiana
1984 Assistant manager of Grigsby Art Galleries, Pheonix, Arizona

PUBLICATIONS AND PAPERS

Bustle, L. (1998, April). Constructing Literate Images: Interpretations Across Forms.
 Poster session to be presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Diego, CA.
 Murphy, S. and Bustle, L. (1997, December). Helping Preservice Teachers Define Literacy: Personal Inquiry Through Multiple Forms of Representation. Poster session to be presented at the National Reading Conference, Scottsdale, AZ.
 Oliver, K. and Bustle, L. (1997, January). Collaborative Stories and Images: Adolescent Girls Body Narratives. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Qualitative Research in Education Conference, Athens, GA.
 Bustle, L. (1997). Literate Images. Reading in Virginia 30, 1 - 5.
 Bustle, L. (1996, December). Revealing Literate Images Through the Interpretation of Visual Images. Poster session presented at the annual meeting of the National Reading Conference in Charleston, S.C.
 Bustle, L. (1996, December). Images of Literacy. Literacy Research Seminar at Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA.

CONSULTING

Blacksburg Middle School, Faith Ringgold Unit 1996
Blacksburg Middle School, Judge for Art's Festival, 1996
Margaret Beeks Elementary School
 Coordinator of setup for Reading is Fundamental program, 1995-96
 Art Editor for Counseling Brochure
Virginia Tech Interior Design program- Packaging design judge for student work,
1995, 1997
Auburn High and Middle School, Judge for Art's Festival- 1992, 1993,1996, 1997
Gilbert Linkous Elementary- Judge for *P.T.A. Reflections* Contest.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

American Educational Research Association
National Reading Conference
National Council of Teachers of English
Virginia Education Association

AWARDS AND HONORS

Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society, East Carolina University, 1983
Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society, Virginia Tech University, 1997
Cum Laude Graduate, East Carolina University, 1983.

CIVIC ASSOCIATIONS

New River Mental Health Association
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