



Teacher Candidates' Critical Conversations

The Online Forum as an Alternative Pedagogical Space

Janet D. Johnson

Rhode Island College

jjohnson@ric.edu

Abstract: This article analyzes how teacher candidates in an English Education practicum course utilize an online forum to discuss issues of school equity and teaching for social justice. Throughout the discussions of their field experiences in an urban high school and a suburban middle school, the candidates offered descriptions and reflections, told stories, generated questions, and critically analyzed differences in equity, teaching, and students between the two settings. The research suggests that an online discussion forum can provide an alternative pedagogical space, or “second classroom” (Campano, 2007), for candidates to access, question, and revise dominant discourses about schooling. While candidates occasionally demonstrated inconsistencies when discussing issues of equity, by engaging in thoughtful dialogue with one another, they furthered their understandings of how systemic forces impact schooling. This research suggests that these critical conversations have the ability to enhance candidates’ thinking on the larger, conceptual issues surrounding education, and also impact their teaching practices.

Our [cooperating] teacher does an amazing job. I just can’t understand why someone with such talent and passion for her students wouldn’t want to use it in [a] community that could really benefit from it, y’know? The [suburban] kids are going to do super well whether our teacher is there or not. (Christine, teacher candidate)

This post to an online discussion forum represents Christine’s struggles to under-

stand why a superb teacher would not want to use her talents with underserved students. Christine is implicitly arguing that students in suburban schools have enough resources to succeed, whether or not they have a great teacher. Here, she is demonstrating both her commitment to teaching underserved populations and her assumption, echoed by several of her peers, that kids in suburban schools are “going to do super well,” simply by virtue of living in a particular area. These two themes run through a semester’s worth of posts in an

Janet Johnson has been an assistant professor of Secondary Education at Rhode Island College since 2005. She received her Ph.D. in English Education from Indiana University-Bloomington. Dr. Johnson’s research interests include the intersection of identity performances, literacy practices, and social justice in the work of teachers, teacher candidates, and students. She teaches courses in English education, teacher research, and general methods in the Educational Studies Department, as well as courses in Women’s Studies.

online discussion forum as teacher candidates move back and forth between reifying generalizations and challenging dominant narratives about schooling, teaching, and students.

In this article, I analyze how teacher candidates in an English Education practicum course utilize an online forum to discuss issues of school equity and teaching for social justice. Throughout the discussions of their field experiences in an urban high school and a suburban middle school, the candidates offered descriptions and reflections, told stories, generated questions, and critically analyzed differences in equity, teaching, and students between the two settings. My research suggests that an online discussion forum can provide an alternative pedagogical space, or “second classroom” (Campano, 2007), for candidates to access, question, and revise dominant discourses about schooling and the systemic forces that impact it.

I. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

I ground this work in theories of discourse, research on the efficacy of online discussions for teacher candidates, and how understandings of systemic inequities can lead to social justice teaching. While these perspectives emanate from separate bodies of knowledge, when they are brought together, they create a conceptual frame for valuing the funds of knowledge that students—in this case teacher candidates—have to offer each other within a learning community.

As candidates move back and forth between the college classroom and the public school classroom during their teacher training, they are required to master new and occasionally conflicting discourses (Alsup, 2006). Discourses include ways of behaving, interacting, thinking, believing, and speaking, and a person’s ability to understand and appropriate the given discourses

of a particular social world which in turn demonstrates his/her belonging—or not—within that discourse community (Gee, 1996). Teacher candidates, because they are essentially guests in teachers’ classrooms, are expected to take up the discourses the teacher has put into place and enact them in their roles as apprentices of teaching. Those discourses, which in most cases echo the dominant narratives based on white middle class paradigms, may or may not jibe with what they learned in their teacher education program or their own personal and pedagogical values.

Online discussions can provide candidates opportunities to work through the tensions apparent in these layered and often conflicting discourses, and several studies document these benefits for candidates and beginning teachers. DeWert, Babinski, and Jones (2003) suggest that online discussion groups offered first year teachers emotional support, increased confidence, enhanced reflection, improved problem-solving skills, and the ability to adapt adopt a more critical perspective. Im and Lee (2003) found that online discussions allow students more time to reflect as well as reference resources, so that some who might be uncomfortable speaking in class were more apt to participate online. Singer and Zeni’s (2004) findings support these conclusions, and call for research on how discussion forums may support pre-service and beginning teachers’ critical literacy practices, which is the focus of this research.

In order to address how candidates in this study used the online discussion forum as an alternative pedagogical space, I draw from Gerald Campano’s conception of the second classroom (2007), which is similar to Gutierrez et al’s “third space” theory (1999). Campano describes the second classroom as occurring at the margins of the regular school day and “develops organically by following the students’ leads, interests, desires...” (p. 40). Further, “It also

operates by a different sense of time, largely improvisational...and is an ideological space as well" (p. 40).

Campano conceptualizes the second classroom as a place where he and his elementary school students worked outside the prescribed boundaries of the first classroom. I found this framework applicable to what my teacher candidates were doing in the online discussion forum. Their first classroom, during their field experience, was in the public school. Because we did not meet on campus during their time in the field, the second classroom, the online forum, served as a space to make sense of, and interrogate, what they saw in the first classroom. As Campano suggests, the forum was student driven. The candidates were responsible for leading and participating, and some conversations had multiple posts while others were ignored. Further, candidates read and posted according to their own schedules, outside traditional school-time. In addition, the posts, whether responded to or not, were inherently ideological as the candidates worked out their personal and pedagogical questions and tensions in this semi-public space.

These online discussions hearkened back to our work on campus prior to candidates' moving into the field. Along with practicing lesson planning and focusing on how to meet the personal and academic needs of all students, we discussed the teacher's role in working through inequities based in the community, the school, and the classroom. Teaching for social justice, according to Linda Christensen, involves grounding curriculum in students' lives; believing that all students are capable of learning; ensuring that students always have a voice in the classroom; preparing an academically rigorous curriculum; and teaching students critical literacy skills (Golden, 2008). Many candidates in my class embraced social justice pedagogy, while others saw it as something extra to do

when there was time—more as “icing on the cake” as opposed to the foundational aspect of their teaching. These differences in ideology often served as jumping off points for critical conversations online.

Candidates were most active on the forum when they moved from an urban high school setting to a suburban middle school setting. As the data below demonstrate, they found the differences in school culture, teaching resources, and student preparedness jarring.

Negotiating the borderland discourses between these very different pedagogical spaces was difficult, but the candidates used the online discussion forum as a second classroom to talk out their ideas and tensions.

II. METHODOLOGY

I use critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995; Gee, 1999) to analyze these data. CDA is useful in a critical study of written language because “analysis of texts should not be artificially isolated from analysis of institutional and discursive practices within which texts are embedded” (Fairclough, p. 9). The data were analyzed by developing categories and identifying provisional patterns and themes that were confirmed and disconfirmed with further analysis.

Context and Sources of Data

This research draws upon the experiences of teacher candidates engaged in their one practicum course, which I taught, the semester before student teaching. These eleven participants were all enrolled in an English Education program at a mid-size state college on the East Coast. Seven were female, four were male, and they were all European American except for one Dominican female. They ranged in age between 21 and 44. I invited all candidates in the course

to participate in this research project. Nine out of eleven students (Six female, three male, eight white, one Dominican, ranging in age between 21 and 44) agreed to act as participants, and signed a consent form allowing me, their instructor, to collect and analyze their assignments and communications in the course, including email correspondence and listserv discussion posts. All participants, teachers, and schools have been given pseudonyms.

Teacher candidates in this practicum class already completed courses in general methods, educational psychology, foundations, and most of their English content courses. They also spent 30 hours tutoring in public school classrooms, usually in urban settings, supervised only by the classroom teacher. Therefore, practicum was the first opportunity for them to spend intense time in the field and to teach whole-class lessons. For this course, candidates spent the first seven weeks on campus with nine hours of class a week. In mid-October, the context changed and they spent 9-10 hours a week in urban high school classrooms. Two candidates worked with one teacher and started by observing, then tutored individuals and groups, and then taught or co-taught one to two lessons, depending on the situation. After three weeks in the high school, we spent a week back on campus debriefing and preparing for the field experience in the suburban middle school. I changed the student pairings between field experiences, and the candidates followed the same pattern they did in the high school: observe, tutor, teach. Then they came back to campus for the last week of class and final preparation for student teaching.

In setting up the field experience, I asked the English Department chairs at the respective schools to choose teachers whom they deemed to be knowledgeable and creative instructors who continually interrogated their practice; treated students as individuals with particular emotional

and academic needs; and who wanted to contribute to the profession by mentoring teacher candidates. I met with the selected teachers once before the candidates came to the schools and presented a list of expectations and ideas for working them into their classroom routines. This was not too prescriptive as every teacher is different, and candidate participation depended on a number of factors, such as the curriculum, school schedules, and teacher experience/comfort working with candidates. I visited the schools the first week of the practicum and then observed each pair of candidates teaching the third week, and engaged in troubleshooting issues as they arose (i.e., teacher absences).

For this research, I use data generated from the online discussion forum conducted on Google Groups during the six weeks the candidates spent in the field. This online forum served to maintain the sense of community we formed over the first weeks on campus, as well as offer candidates the chance to reflect on what they were seeing in the schools and how it connected or conflicted with what they had learned throughout the English education program. Further, I wanted to create a space that was strictly candidate-driven, so that they were able to state their observations, reflections, arguments and analyses without gauging my approval. Their real audience was each other, not me. I asked that they initiate one discussion thread and reply to one other candidate's thread per week. The topics were self-selected. I read the threads carefully and occasionally referenced them in individual conversations or when we met again on campus, but I did not initiate or respond to any discussions in the online forum.

The secondary education program at our college requires that candidates divide their field experience between the middle school and the high school. In addition to gaining a wide view of developmental differences in students and how that affects in-

Table 1: School Demographics

Information (2005)	City School District	Rocky River School District
Demographics	22% African-American 7% Asian 56% Hispanic 1% Native American 14% White	1% African-American 1% Asian 1% Hispanic 0% Native American 97% White
Free/Reduced Lunch	75% eligible	11% eligible
Services	16% receive ESL/bilingual services 17% receive Special Education services	0% receive ESL/bilingual services 20% receive Special Education services

structional and curricular decisionmaking. I also wanted candidates to experience how social, cultural, and economic differences affect schools, teachers, and students. Based on my knowledge of individual teachers and the climate of the schools, I placed most of the candidates at City High School, in an urban district, and Rocky River Middle School, in a suburban district. Two candidates were placed in a different high school so they could work with potential cooperating teachers, and four candidates were placed in a different middle school that had similar demographics to Rocky River.

Table 1 indicates the contrast in demographics and resources between the two districts. While City has a diverse student population and a relatively high poverty rate, considering the free and reduced lunch statistics, Rocky River is relatively homogenous. However, statistics offer a limited view of these populations, because they do not take into account nuances of school culture, teacher commitment to the profession, and students' funds of knowledge and family situations. As candidates moved from City High School to Rocky River Middle School, they struggled to understand the personal and pedagogical impact of racial diversity and socioeconomic status on students and schools.

III. "APPLES AND CHEVROLETS": CONTRASTS BETWEEN FIELD EXPERIENCES

Candidates were particularly active on the discussion forum during their first week at Rocky River Middle School. They had just spent three weeks at City High School and had absorbed the ethos of an urban school with a diverse student population, and used the forum to contrast the curriculum, teaching styles, and students in these two settings, going beyond technical practice-oriented dialogue about "what works." Instead, as DeWert et al (2003) found, the participants engaged in critical questions regarding their teaching identities, the political impact of the system on teacher authority and student agency, and when to make choices about working within or against the system when student well-being and learning was at stake.

In discussing the differences between the two settings, the candidates often relied upon metaphor as a way to name, describe, and analyze the impact of developmental and cultural differences. For example, Jim noticed that there were few kids of color at RRMS, writing "I'm snowblind." Michael wrote, "I thought I'd entered the twilight zone" in noting that students got to work

immediately when their teacher gave an assignment. When it came to kids, Annie wrote, "Where I first thought of apples and oranges, they're more like ...apples and Chevrolets." And Lorena documented the differences in academic and social support that students received, noting that the suburban middle school students were "constantly supported." She observed that the middle school kids were cheered on by their teachers, friends, and parents, and that the high school kids didn't have that same support, wondering, "Where's the cheerleading squad?" These metaphors offered opportunities for candidates to make sense of what they were seeing, and also to question the systemic impact—that is, the economic and sociocultural effects—on what was available to students. Seeing the contrast between the resources and opportunities offered to students in the different settings was a surprise to many candidates. While it is one thing to know this intellectually, it is quite another to see its effects firsthand.

Candidates also found troubling differences in the curriculum. Jim wrote the following after his first few visits to the Rocky River:

...We're reading a book called "Zach's Lie" and so far there's not a single non-white character in it and we're almost done reading. At City High there were all sorts of books that gave kids authentic perspectives into the lives of MANY TYPES of people, not only those just like them. But we are talking Rocky River here.

In this post, Jim contrasted the book choices within the larger system, noting that there was attention to diversity in the books at City, whereas there were limited choices at Rocky River. Implicitly, he is arguing that all students, regardless of the setting, should be reading books about

characters from diverse backgrounds. By saying, "But we are talking Rocky River here" he is demonstrating his lack of surprise at this; as if it is to be expected that a classroom in a mostly white, mostly middle class suburb would contain few books that addressed the lives of characters from diverse backgrounds. Rhetorically, Jim moved from discussing one book to making a generalization about the school's commitment (or lack thereof) to diversity. Given his limited perspective—he had only been at the school a few times and this was just one part of the curriculum—this is perhaps not surprising. While making this generalization was problematic—the students in this class later read *The Watsons Go to Birmingham*, a book about an African-American family affected by the events of the Civil Rights Movement—his larger point was on target. The English Department at this particular school is filled with caring, professional teachers who differentiate instruction, lead advisory sessions, and truly have their kids' needs and interests at heart. However, even as there is some multicultural literature in the curriculum, they do not teach critical literacy.

In addition to analyzing the curriculum, candidates discussed how instructional choices and institutional structures affected the classroom atmosphere. In that same post, Jim remarked on the level of engagement of the students at Rocky River:

From a work ethic and instructional strategy perspective, however, these kids get the job done. Into it or not (and most of them are into it), they are THERE. Our CT [cooperating teacher] has their attention and her instructional strategies actually go off as planned...on a personal note, I'M BORED. Why? They don't need my help.

Jim observed that most students were on task, and since the instruction seemed to

meet their needs, there was little for him to do. Most of his classmates, all in different classrooms, agreed. Annie asked, "How do we challenge these kids, since obviously assisting their development is not an issue?" Michael added, "All of the kids in my classroom were working so quietly, I didn't want to circulate and distract them." Deanna wrote, "The kids are really sweet, academically competitive, and want to please the teacher. Not a lot for me to do."

What the candidates do not address here is the idea that, in this setting, pleasing the teacher and doing the work provides particular rewards that may or may not be available—or have the same meaning—to the students at City High School. In other words, the tasks (do the work, be quiet) and rewards (earn good grades and teacher approval) are probably closely connected to students' community and family discourses. Further, students at RRMS are well-supported (back to Lorena's description of "the cheerleading squad"), and at an age where they are more likely to want the rewards offered by adults.

Renee's reply asks her classmates to look below the surface—to go beyond the stereotype that a classroom filled with white children who are quiet and do their work means that there is not a wide range of levels of skill and desire in every classroom. In replying to this thread, she wrote:

Yeah, the [Rocky River] kids are a different breed...but the class...is still full of kids with varying abilities, IEP [Individualized Educational Plans for students diagnosed with learning or physical disabilities], yet to be written or requested IEP's, skill levels, and work ethic.

Renee resisted her classmates' generalizations by describing the variety of students in the classroom she was observing. She noted that there were a variety of issues at play, including culture "[they are] a dif-

ferent breed;" diverse learning abilities and skill levels; responses to learning, which she labeled "work ethic;" and systemic issues which include "yet to be written or requested IEP's." She asked her classmates to look beyond their assumptions that all kids were succeeding and see the individual struggles in the class.

These posts showcase the candidates' rich and varied interpretations of the contrasts between what it means to be a student at City High School versus what it means to be a student at Rocky River Middle School. In some cases, the candidates were able to challenge the dominant narratives at play in RRMS, such as when Lorena described how the kids were supported and Jim analyzed the whiteness of the curriculum and the student body. However, some of these same candidates were unable to see variations within the whiteness of the kids at RRMS, implicitly assuming the students were similarly privileged. To these candidates, diversity seemed to be mostly about race, and if kids of color were poor, then it meant economic as well. But the idea that there can be a wide range of economic privilege in this mostly white, suburban setting was not addressed. These oversimplifications reify the dominant narrative that urban means kids of color who are poor and suburban refers to white kids of privilege. This demonstrates inconsistencies in their understandings of diversity. Fortunately, though, the assumption that kids doing the work means teachers are effective gets questioned in another thread, discussed below.

IV. "SOCIAL JUSTICE LESSONS—A WORD OF CAUTION": MORAL DILEMMAS IN TEACHING

In addition to analyzing curriculum, instruction, and students, a recurring theme on the listserv during their middle school field experience was about how and

when to teach kids about social justice issues. Since the participants' lived experiences, perspectives, and ethical sensibilities differed, there were some lively debates about the appropriateness of teaching for and about social justice. Michael, a passionate and articulate advocate for social change, felt that exposing middle school kids to issues of inequity would be a way to engage them. He believed that, while the students at Rocky River met their teachers' expectations, they had little enthusiasm or investment in their learning because the curriculum did not address real-world issues. He wrote:

The kids are intellectually but not very emotionally involved with their work. In order to create self-regulated, self-motivated learners (our ultimate goal, right?), our students need to get passionate about a topic. Despite the risks, I think exposing students to the injustice around them has the unique ability to arouse this passion.

In this post, Michael argued that engagement in learning is not just intellectual, but emotional. He suggested that students, upon learning about inequities, would become passionate in working against them. In describing what he saw as the limitations of the current curriculum, he expressed shock that the massacre at Tiananmen Square was not included in a unit on China, writing:

Right now, I feel like if I were to teach about something like Tiananmen at RRMS (maybe showing some photos, film footage) and get the kids worked up about the injustice, my job would be in danger (or I'd get angry calls from parents). Anyone else feel that way?

Michael put himself in the teacher's

role in a "what if" scenario, which was fairly common in these posts as the candidates tried on different teaching identities. His goal was to get students excited, or "passionate" about learning, and saw teaching about local and global inequities as one way to do so. In this post, he weighed the risks of teaching about issues that may cause strife with parents, but that would get students "worked up" or engaged in their learning. From his perspective as a vocal advocate for social change, Michael argued that it was worth the risk to teach students about issues of social justice.

Deanna, a mother of three, based her response on her identity as a parent:

...I think presenting a lesson with the social justice slant is admirable, especially in a population that doesn't often see marginalized people or repression. I think what you really have to take into consideration at the middle school level, especially in a middle class suburb, is the developmental? [sic] level of the kids. Some are right out of elementary school and their parents have never let them see a PG-13 film, let alone footage of tanks blowing apart the bodies of its citizens...they're just not ready to see that. So essentially, as a parent myself, I would be upset if my kids were exposed to something in school they were developmentally, and psychologically unprepared to witness...

—One suburban mom's opinion,
Deanna

In this thread, Michael and Deanna spoke from two different perspectives—Michael as a teacher, Deanna as a parent. Michael wanted to take students beyond the safety zone of their limited experience. He suggested that it is appropriate to teach

middle school students about the promises and pitfalls of political dissension as a means to not only educate his students about global issues, but to get them active and engaged in learning.

Deanna called on her experience and identity as a parent to offer a contrasting viewpoint about what is appropriate for students at that age to learn. She felt students at that age were not prepared to view events that would disturb their conceptions of an orderly universe. Interestingly, she twice referenced the inappropriateness of this in a suburban setting, first by referring specifically to students in a “middle class suburb” and then to herself as a “suburban mom.” In so doing, she conflated developmental readiness, a cognitive state, with students' socio-cultural backgrounds. She seemed to assume that kids in urban settings were better able to handle issues that called into question the relative safety of the world.

This conflation of developmental readiness and socio-cultural background was not limited to Deanna. Lorena, like Michael, was a vocal advocate for social justice. She was aware of inequities and prejudices based on her own experiences as a young Dominican woman who grew up in an urban area. She had what Moya calls “epistemic privilege” (2002, p.38) in which some members of oppressed groups recognize that power structures are *deliberately* constructed to benefit some at the expense of others. Those who wield epistemic privilege do so in a variety of ways, depending on their social location and perception of their own agency (Moya, 2002). For Lorena, teaching was an avenue to make the world more equitable.

In spite of these experiences and commitments, Lorena had some uncertainties about the appropriate time and place to teach about social justice issues. In a discussion thread she titled “Social justice lessons—a word of caution” she wrote:

I spoke to [my cooperating teacher about teaching social justice lessons] and she told me we needed to be careful. ‘These are just eighth graders,’ she said. ‘...if you try to teach such an in-depth lesson to kids who are not ready, you could cause a lot of damage.’...With social justice lessons, high school kids can begin to question their world and lives in ways that will ultimately benefit them...But middle school kids don't have that kind of agency. Their lives revolve around the very things we want to question: power, authority, society in general. It could literally rock their world to think that maybe they really never make their own choices and that they are constantly being influenced by the outside...It could be different in an urban setting where kids (it... seems, but it is not always the case) are more exposed to the realities outside of their own communities and are more aware of how it impacts their own lives.

In this post, Lorena, like Deanna, reasoned that teaching about social justice issues had the potential to threaten the well-being of students who may not be ready for it. For her, it is a rational response, a way to make sense of what content is appropriate for teaching middle school—almost as if she were discussing the readiness of students for any difficult content, social justice oriented or not. She theorized about the developmental readiness of middle schoolers by discussing their lack of agency, understanding that they are in the process of forming their identities. While she made the same normative claim as Deanna—middle-schoolers are not developmentally ready to question authority/society—she looked at the issue from an outside vantage point. So, while she and Deanna made sim-

ilar claims, they did so from different perspectives.

Furthermore, Lorena echoed Deanna's reference to the perceived differences between suburban and urban middle schoolers. She was careful to parenthetically note that these are fluid categories in order to avoid generalizations ("it... seems, but it is not always the case") but suggested that urban kids "are more exposed to realities outside of their own communities," which Deanna implied, albeit indirectly. These two teacher candidates, who are so different in age, life experience, and socio-cultural background, came to the same conclusion, alluding to "damage" that could result from teaching about controversial events, like Tiananmen Square, to middle school students. In doing so, they acknowledged the presumed psychic and physical safety of the suburbs—a byproduct of racial and economic privilege—and that schools echo their communities.

This perspective did not go unchallenged. Michael responded to Lorena by writing:

...I think students of any age and background can be exposed to an activist, social justice curriculum if presented appropriately. The degree of activism is where the teacher must use his or her best judgment about the maturity of his/her kids and the school environment...This is the teacher's role—to enable critical thinking by constantly challenging their students to back up all of their opinions with facts. As for content, most pressing social justice issues can be presented in a way that is accessible to kids and in no way graphic. Nevertheless, justice-oriented teaching, by definition, will always involve taking risks.

Here, Michael acknowledged that a

teacher must take into consideration students' maturity level and community expectations when determining how to teach potentially controversial topics. While he disagreed with Lorena, he couched that disagreement by softening his rebuke, through careful use of language: "I think..."; "if presented appropriately"; "the teacher must use his or her best judgment." In taking on the identity of dissenter, he kept the conversation open and the community intact by using these qualifiers.

These critical conversations provided space for candidates to think out and argue their positions about social justice teaching. Each candidate spoke from a particular location—Deanna as a parent, Michael as a forthright advocate, and Lorena as someone who carefully considered the layers and considerations of critical teaching. Even as they came from these different positions, it was evident that they paid careful attention to each other's posts, strengthening the online—and later the classroom—community.

V. CONCLUSION

The online forum served as a second classroom that was both "improvisational" and "ideological" (Campano, 2007, p. 40). I will first focus on the improvisational aspects. The learning that took place on this forum went beyond school-time—beyond what we did as a class on campus and beyond the teaching they did in the field. As has been documented in other research (Ferdig & Roehler, 2003), online discussion forums can provide opportunities for students to spend more time immersed in discussion, fully develop their own ideas as well as responses to classmates, and allow equal time for those candidates not comfortable speaking in traditional classroom environments. For example, Lorena and Michael were the most active on the discus-

sion forum, and yet were the quietest in class. As electronic social networking becomes more integral to social interaction, using online discussion tools can enhance students' learning experiences.

This second classroom also provided an ideological outlet for candidates to engage in discussions on issues of equity and social justice. While candidates sometimes demonstrated inconsistencies when discussing issues of equity (oversimplifying the relationship between whiteness and privilege, for example), by engaging in thoughtful dialogue with one another, they furthered their understandings of how systemic forces impact schooling. This research suggests that these critical conversations have the ability to enhance candidates' thinking on the larger, conceptual issues surrounding education, and also impact their teaching practices.

- Gee, J.P. (1999). *An introduction to discourse analysis: theory and method*. New York: Routledge.
- Golden, J. (2008). A conversation with Linda Christensen on social justice education. *English Journal*: Vol. 97, #6: p. 59-64.
- Gutiérrez, K., Baquedano-Lopez, P., & Tejada, C. (1999). "Rethinking diversity: Hybridity and hybrid language practices in the third space." *Mind, Culture, & Activity: An International Journal*, 6 (4), 286-303.
- Im, Y. & Lee, O. (2003-2004). "Pedagogical implications of online discussion for pre-service teacher training." In *Journal of Research on Technology in Education*. Winter 2003-2004: Volume 36, Number 2, p. 155-170.
- Moya, P.M.L. (2002). *Learning from experience: minority identities, multicultural struggles*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Singer, N. & Zeni, J. (2004). "Building bridges: creating an online conversation community for pre-service teachers." *English Education*: Vol. 37, #1: p. 30-49.

REFERENCES

- Alsop, J. (2006). *Teacher identity discourses: negotiating personal and professional spaces*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Campano, G. (2007). *Immigrant students and literacy: reading, writing, and remembering*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Christensen, L. (2000). *Reading, writing, and rising up: teaching about social justice and the power of the written word*. Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools.
- DeWert, M.H.; Babinski, L.M.; Jones, B.D. (2003). "Safe passages: providing online support to beginning teachers." In *Journal of Teacher Education*. 54: p. 311-320.
- Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language*. London: Longman.
- Ferdig, R.E. & Roehler, L.R. "Student uptake in electronic discussions: examining online discourse in literacy preservice classrooms." *Journal of Research on Technology in Education*. Winter 2003-2004. Vol 36, No. 2. P. 119-136.
- Gee, J.P. (1996). *Social linguistics and literacies: ideology in discourses*. London: Routledge-Falmer.