ABSTRACT

AKERS, ANNE TRICE THOMPSON. Perceptions of Talk, Text, Transactions, and Technology: Preservice Teachers, CMC, and Reader Response. (Under the direction of Carol Pope and Carl Young.)

This qualitative study examined middle grades preservice language arts teachers’ perceptions of young adult literature through the lenses of reader response, new literacy, and activity theory. Undergraduate preservice teachers used synchronous and asynchronous computer-mediated communication (CMC) to respond online to three young adult books with their peers in a young adult literature class. Transcripts from their online conversations served as the primary data for this study.

The nature of preservice teachers’ engagement with young adult literature was examined through 11 strategies they used to respond, three stances or purposes for reading they took, and five discussion strategies they used in their literature conversations.

Preservice teachers engaged with the literature on a personal, aesthetic level taking a reader’s stance, but they also responded on an efferent, impersonal level taking a teacher’s or a student’s stance. Personal transactions with the literature were discarded as they moved to discuss the instructional value of young adult literature from an impersonal teacher’s stance. Some preservice teacher responses
were unrelated to the literature or to teaching and these were identified as student stances.

Through reader response conversations about young adult literature, preservice teachers incorporated five discussion strategies that shifted the internal, individual process of transacting with a text to an external, social one, extending understandings, reflections, and interpretations of the literature through dialogue with peers. They appropriated tools (dialogue, reader response, collaborative talk, and literature conversations) from the activity system of the classroom which helped their discussions to evolve from the one-way direction of monology to the shared interaction of reciprocal, dialogic talk.

Computer-mediated communication also became a tool for preservice teachers to transact with young adult literature individually as well as socially. Preservice teachers saw value in the technology both for themselves as a tool for practice, communication, and reflection and for their future students as a tool for motivation, communication, and participation. CMC provided them with a responsive, student-centered learning environment where they could role-play dialogic teaching and sound out their teacher voice.
Perceptions of Talk, Text, Transactions, and Technology:
Preservice Teachers, CMC, and Reader Response

by
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DEDICATION

In memory of my beloved brother Jim.

To my first teacher—my mother who taught me perseverance and courage.

To my best friend for 34 years—my husband.

And to all those strong women in my life—those who have walked before me to lead the way; those who have walked beside me to bolster and inspire me; and those who will walk after me to continue the journey.
BIOGRAPHY

Anne Trice Thompson Akers, daughter of Annie Blanks Thompson and Vernon Sylvester Thompson, was born in Richmond, Virginia. The eldest sibling of five, she grew up in Virginia, living at various times in Richmond, Suffolk, Rustburg, Lynchburg, Evington, Bedford, and Buckingham County. She earned a bachelor’s in journalism and history from Westhampton College of the University of Richmond, a master’s in history from Virginia Tech, and an MLS from East Carolina University.

Akers has worked as a copy editor, a high school reading and English teacher, and a media and technology coordinator in K-12 public schools in Virginia, Mississippi, and North Carolina. She has also taught undergraduate classes, both face-to-face and online, in reading and technology. Currently she is director of the College of Education Media Center for North Carolina State University.

Akers resides in Raleigh, North Carolina with her husband, their two dachshunds, a cat, and a chinchilla. She has been married for 34 years to Dr. Rodney Cliff Akers. She has a son, Joshua George Akers, and a daughter, Rachael Anne Akers Sylvester, a granddaughter, Rylee Anne Akers, and grandson, Gavin Samuel Akers.
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“You sort of start thinking anything’s possible if you’ve got enough nerve.”

-- Ginny Weasley in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

*If we teach today as we taught yesterday, then we rob our children of tomorrow.*

--John Dewey

Statement of the Problem

*Introduction*

Talk—my students do it effortlessly, endlessly, engaged, and engrossed. They do it face-to-face; they do it virtually; they do it verbally; they do it in writing. Cell phone melodies, mouse clicks, keyboard taps, and thumbs dancing on keypads occasionally interrupt hushed student banter and sometimes even intrude overtly upon serious classroom discussion. Students cast furtive glances my way to see if I will acknowledge their “other” talk that draws faceless, virtual contacts inadvertently into our classroom conversations.

Talk is innate. A baby will look and listen and eventually learn from the talk of others, but there must be others. As Berthoff (1987) states, “the capacity for language is innate, but it can only be realized in a social setting” (p. xiv). So in this frenetic communication age of instant messaging, mobile phones, and virtual social networking, it is no wonder that my students talk effortlessly, endlessly, engaged, and engrossed. The glaring paradox is obvious to me in those furtive glances my students cast my way. They are looking for my response, for my signal that says “enough—time to stop your lively, pertinent conversations, and time to focus instead
on the closed, staid discussions of curriculum.” They have been well schooled. They understand (as do I) and they accept from years of classroom experience (Applebee, 1996), it is time to silence their natural, instinctive, unofficial conversations and supplant them with authorized, sanctioned, disciplined school talk.

**The Relationship of Talk to Learning**

Bakhtin (1981) posits that meaning evolves from dialogue (Fisher, 2007). We understand from Vygotsky (1986) that thought is impossible without language, and higher-level thinking evolves from a language relationship—the talk, the conversation, for example, that happens within a classroom between a more capable other (teacher or peer) and a student. Indeed, Vygotsky emphasizes the dialogical nature of learning (Kozulin, 1985) describing the process of words to thought as a "continual movement back and forth" (pp. 210-211). Learning occurs dialogically as an intermental/social to intramental/psychological, internal process when a student through social conversation internalizes the talk and is then able to act or understand independently (Gallimore & Tharp, 1992). That language relationship or classroom talk, however, is poorly understood and under-researched. What we do know is that while there is a positive correlation between dialogic class discussion and student achievement (Allington, 2002; Mercer, 2000), the teacher voice nonetheless continues to monopolize classroom talk (Mehan, 1979; Goodlad,
Bakhtin (1981) calls this monopoly *monologic* talk (see Definition of Terms, p. 22). Monologic teacher talk, one-sided conversation, manifests through classroom lecture or seatwork, rout-learning, recitation, direct teaching, and anytime the teacher controls the pace and direction of a discussion (Adler, Rougle, Kaiser, & Caughlan, 2004; Christoph & Nystrand, 2001; Fisher, 2007). Teacher talk is the voice of authority and persuasion. With monologic teacher talk there is no discussion, no give and take, no intermental to intramental, and consequently little to no learning. Vygotsky (1986) acknowledges,

> Practical experience...shows that direct teaching of concepts is impossible and fruitless. A teacher who tries to do this usually accomplishes nothing but empty verbalism, parrot like repetition of words by the child, simulating a knowledge of corresponding concepts but actually covering up a vacuum" (p. 150).

Recent research (Alexander, 2006) finds that the quality of classroom talk can support or suppress learning, and the potential of talk for learning is underutilized in classrooms (Fisher, 2007). We also know that while exemplary teachers encourage their students to talk and allow more time in their classrooms for conversational talking (dialogic talk), the most common conversations in a classroom continue to be monologic, teacher initiated, and directed through what has come to be called the
Initiate/Respond/Evaluate (IRE) method—the teacher initiates a question, a student responds, then the teacher evaluates the response (Mehan, 1979; Cazden, 2001; Nystrand, 1997). With the IRE method and teachers doing the talking, students have no opportunity to build schemata and make connections between ideas. The teacher covertly, if not overtly, signals to the students what to think rather than how to think (Barnes & Barnes, 1990). As Purves, Rogers, and Soter (1995) put it, “teachers teach and students ‘student’ ” (p. 89).

Dialogic talk, on the other hand, authorizes the student voice. It empowers students to think critically and openly, to ask pertinent questions, to evaluate, to listen and be receptive to other points of view, and to argue intelligently and rationally (Fisher, 2007). It alters the dynamic such that teachers teach and students think.

It is not surprising that teachers have continued to teach the way they were themselves taught (Lortie, 1975)—they hasten back to their routines of “impulse, tradition, and authority” (Posner, 1996, p. 21). Students, teachers, and administrators caught up in the “powerful discourse communities” of schools are ill disposed to go against tradition and conventional thinking (Putnam & Borko, 2000, p. 8), and political and legislative issues have deterred new, as well as veteran teachers, from adopting practices unsupported by administrators (Wells, 2000). Rosenblatt (1995) laments that beliefs about teaching the enjoyment of literature
are too often “overshadowed by preoccupation with whatever can be systematically taught and tested” (p. 62). And the problem is not just with inservice teachers. While preservice teachers seem to embrace active, learner-centered teaching strategies introduced within their professional education classes, they often revert to the more passive, teacher-centered, controlling strategies of their mentor teachers when they become practicing teachers (Bean, 1997; Zulich, Bean, & Herrick, 1992).

My Story

Stake (1995) makes the case that in a qualitative study a researcher should include his or her story. This study grew out of my experiences with and dual interest in classroom talk and technology. When I decided to add teaching licensure to my credentials as a graduate student, it was only as an afterthought, a buffer to fall back on if I could not find another job. I did not really think I wanted to be a teacher; but in the prevailing economic conditions, if that was where the jobs were, I could see myself teaching history.

Quite through serendipity and happenstance, I was lured not to history but to literacy. My first job in 1978 entailed teaching 8th grade remedial reading with the federal government’s Title I program. Tucked away in a trailer at the back of a rural high school and left to my own devices, I was charged with teaching remedial reading skills seven periods a day to the adolescent sons and daughters of blue collar workers who trusted that I knew what I was doing. The students were good-
nated and trusting as well, and so impoverished when it came to reading and
writing that anything I did in class proved valuable. This was good, because the job
came with no guidelines on how to teach remedial reading. As I had never taken a
reading class, the county was willing to pay for my masters in reading which I could
earn through extension courses with the University of Virginia. In the meantime, I
used my commonsense, my experiences working with children, and my
understanding of teaching based on what I had culled as a student to survive.

Early on, I went to my students’ “regular” classroom teachers—science,
history, math, English—for ideas on what I could do with my students that would
help them succeed in those core courses. I talked with my school mentor and my
county supervisor for suggestions and guidance. I checked out everything I could
find on teaching reading from the school library. Then, I began celebrating literacy
with my students. I went to local businesses for donations such as calendars, and
got paperbacks and comic books from yard sales to establish a classroom library. I
covered the vanilla walls of our classroom trailer with words and pictures. I brought
in newspaper articles about current events or local happenings. I gauged my
students’ interests and found reading materials to match. We began each class
reading silently for 10 minutes, or sometimes I would read aloud. We spotlighted a
word for the day, and occasionally I would find a 16 mm film or filmstrip that would
enhance the understanding of a spotlighted word. I remember being able to share
an extraordinary documentary with my students based on the word *graffiti*. I became a literacy ambassador. I wanted my students to see that literacy was relevant and powerful and touched every part of their lives. I believe I did well. I know I did right by my students. I also know, for as hard as I had tried, I still got more than I gave.

I had enjoyed my first taste of teaching, especially reading, so much so that I concluded maybe I was meant to be a teacher after all. From working as an 8th grade reading teacher I then became a 10th grade English teacher and later an elementary and middle grades media/technology coordinator. Strangely, I found that as a media/technology coordinator I had to teach not just students but my colleagues as well, definitely about technology, but also about literacy and how it was not just an “English thing.”

When I walked into that 10th grade English classroom, I realized I had not been trained to teach English. At first I panicked just like I had the first year when I realized I was supposed to be teaching reading without ever having had any reading classes. I had taken a full complement of English courses in college, but the only real understanding I had of teaching I drew from my student teaching experience and how I had been taught. I took my cues from the mentor teacher I had from student teaching and also from the veteran teachers in the school where I would be teaching. From them I ascertained that the teacher was the voice of authority, so
that is how I began teaching English—as a reluctant voice of authority. It was an ill-suited role for me. I did not like being made the authority. I did not think I was an authority. Instead of telling my students what I thought they needed to know, I wanted us to talk, to take and defend stands, to agree or disagree. I did not believe the way I saw a work of literature was necessarily the same way someone else should see it. I relished the different interpretations that would evolve out of a spirited discussion—that is what made literature provocative and gave it life.

My favorite experience as a student had been in a classroom buffeted with spirited discussion. It was a graduate history seminar unlike any other class I had ever taken. It was a totally dialogic, response-based class. The entire course revolved around our reading and responding to different historical texts. We discussed, we argued, we questioned, we explained, we analyzed, we wrote. We challenged each other. Our discussions were powerful and provocative, and I came away from the experience with an understanding of “talking as a means of learning” (Britton, 1990, p. 127). We were never ready to leave the class when it ended, never ready, it seemed, to end the talk. When we did leave, it was always with more questions than answers, and inevitably we would continue our conversations down the hallway, out of the building, and on to dinner somewhere close by. I loved the "grayness" of it all—the blurred lines. This class for the first time gave me confidence to think for myself, to verbalize and write what I knew rather than what I
thought the teacher wanted to hear. As a student I had learned that my ideas were important, my comments valued. I appreciated the way that others’ comments made me step back and take a different look. I always looked forward to that class and always left it compelled to read more, to talk more, to learn more.

Later, this heady, dialogic, reader response experience was what I envisioned for my students when I began teaching 10th grade English. I had come to understand that my students could learn to think by talking and writing (Barnes, Britton, & Torbe, 1990). I rejected the authority of the text and of the teacher as “explicator of the text’s meanings” (Young, 1987, p. 11). I wanted my students to read not because there would be grades and not because they were trying to please me, but rather “to participate in another’s vision—to reap knowledge of the world, to fathom the resources of the human spirit, to gain insights that ... [would make their lives] more comprehensible” (Rosenblatt, 1976, p. 7).

The Problem: The Situatedness of Practica

Obviously, as that 10th grade English teacher I was idealistic. Unfortunately, I was naive and inexperienced as well. I did not have the wherewithal or confidence to forge a reader responsive classroom out of some 23 reluctant 10th graders, their skeptical parents, and an unsupportive administration. I had been well prepared in my content area but apparently grossly under prepared in my teacher education program. I knew my subject; I knew how I wanted to teach. I just was not sure
how I was supposed to teach. Florio-Ruane and Raphael (2000) describe my predicament, and in doing so, allude to the essence of my study: “Although status quo professional education practice encourages teachers to support learning that is dialogic in nature and aimed at framing and solving complex problems, it rarely provides teachers with opportunities to experience directly such teaching and learning” (p. 288). The question becomes, how can we structure teacher education classes that not only help preservice teachers hear about how to teach but also give them practice in their own learning community of classmates?

Putnam and Borko (2000) write, “An important question facing researchers and teacher educators is whether experiences can be designed that maintain the situatedness of practica and student teaching while avoiding the ‘pull’ of the traditional school culture” (p.8). Preservice teachers are often exposed to new practices in teacher education but subsequently do not see those practices reinforced in the classroom setting and consequently do not adopt them.

For Hughes & Scharber (2008), conflict or “cognitive dissonance” works to make learners question strongly held beliefs. They argue, “We must engage both novice and veteran teachers ... in new technologies and new literacies to create moments of cognitive conflict during which they will evaluate and deliberately think about their professional knowledge” (p. 101). For preservice teachers to resist the pull of tradition will require deliberate thinking to evoke conceptual change, and
research shows that talk or discussion can serve to encourage that change (Agee, 1998). Unfortunately, dialogic learning or teaching does not happen without effort. Fisher (2007) contends dialogic learning or teaching requires training in "the skills of dialogue" (p. 618). These skills involve listening, asking effective questions, thinking creatively and critically, and using good judgment. Within the activity setting of the university classroom, preservice teachers can participate in dialogic discussion through learning about and using tools such as reader response and computer-mediated communication and, in turn, perhaps learn the skills of dialogue as well as come to question assumptions “as they work through multiple perspectives on the value of the familiar and unfamiliar” (Agee, 1998, p. 118).

If the cycle of teachers continuing to teach the way they were taught is ever to be broken, if new teachers are ever to succeed in divorcing themselves from monologic classroom traditions and embracing possibilities of responsive classrooms dominated by dialogic student talk, it is imperative that preservice teachers have opportunities themselves to participate in dialogic, reader response activities to explore their own personal transactions with texts.

Another Problem: Situating Technology

Like the recurring classroom tradition of monology, early computer use in education simply, unimaginatively parroted “the dominant instructional approaches of knowledge dissemination” (King, 1998, pp. 367-368). Today while new literacies
and attending computer-mediated communication tools offer intriguing and wide-ranging opportunities for educators to move well beyond the boundaries of knowledge dissemination, it would be foolish to assume that we have moved far enough away from the past that we can avoid the mistakes of our predecessors. As research demonstrates (Watson, 2001; Jones, 2002), teachers hold to the comfort and security of tradition and have been reluctant to integrate technology. Classroom teachers in their reluctance influence student teachers.

Technology is initiating or perhaps forcing new conversations about what is language, text, and talk in the virtual environment (Warschauer, 2002). New literacy theory provides a contemporary definition of literacy based on social and cultural practice and the role of technology, drawing special attention to new interpretations of what is reading and writing in the electronic or virtual environment (Cervetti, Damico, & Pearson, 2006). It is a disquieting sensation for those schooled in the passive traditions of conventional print and monology (Coiro, 2003) to try and teach our equally frustrated 21st century students attempting to navigate a 19th century school culture “of linear time and print technology” (Albright, Purohit, & Walsh, 2002, p. 693).

Research shows that preservice teachers often do not see technology integrated in their education courses or in the field (Willis & Mehlinger, 1996). Consequently, they are not learning “how to learn their content” using technology
tools (Niess, 2008, p. 224). Preservice language arts teachers must learn about new literacy and have experiences themselves with new literacy technologies to envision the possibilities for use with their own students.

Teaching with technology poses “decontextualisation” issues for preservice teachers who need opportunities to use technology in a teaching context (Jones, 2002; Pope & Golub, 2000). They need to see technology integrated within the literacy and teaching pedagogy of their professional education classes as well as see it used in the field. Studies indicate that preservice teachers gain confidence in using technology and are more likely to integrate technology into their classes as inservice teachers if they have realistic and positive experiences using technology within their teacher education courses (Stuhlmann, 1998; Pope, Hare, & Howard, 2002). Additionally, Putnam and Borko (2000) contend that the use of new technologies in professional education classes can support preservice teachers as they “explore unfamiliar pedagogical practices and various problems of pedagogy” (p. 11) such as reader response and teaching dialogically. Reciprocally, in the process of using technology to explore new pedagogical processes, preservice teachers can have opportunities to explore new technologies in practice.

Undoubtedly, traditional teaching strategies—familiar, comfortable teacher-centered—are rapidly becoming uncomfortable, ineffective, and irrelevant to students living in a technology-driven, communication-centered world. It is only
appropriate, if not long overdue, that we challenge our preservice teachers to consider how new literacy computer-mediated communication tools, which our students are so comfortable using outside of school, might work to create student-centered, dialogic classrooms within our schools.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to document how one undergraduate class of preservice middle grades language arts teachers positioned within the dialogic practica of reader response and computer-mediated communication transacted with young adult literature. The premise of this research is that preservice language arts teachers enter teacher education steeped in the traditions of monologic teaching and New Criticism (see Definition of Terms, p. 23) and ill-prepared to teach dialogically or with technology. By engaging them with reader response and computer-mediated communication as pedagogical tools, we can observe how these tools function to mediate their understanding both of response-based, dialogic teaching and learning, and integrating technology into their teaching pedagogy.

This study takes two approaches. The first approach looks at how preservice language arts teachers use discussions about young adult literature to understand the literature. Guiding this approach are the theories of reader response

The second approach follows the first except it reviews how discussions play out online through computer-mediated communication. This approach is driven by the theory of new literacy (Coiro, Knobel, Lankshear, & Leu, 2008; Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, & Cammack, 2004).

Activity theory (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986; Leont’ev 1978, 1981; Luria, 1976; Engestrom 1990; Cole, 1996; Russell, 1997; Wertsch, 1998; Rogoff, 1990, 1995) is suggested to connect both approaches by looking at how the tools (reader response; classroom talk; computer-mediated communication) in an activity system (language arts class) might work to support new teachers’ attitudes towards conceptual pedagogical change.

In this chapter, I have argued that while dialogic classroom conversations hold intriguing possibilities for student learning and are crucial for critical, higher-level thinking, teachers have not embraced the concept for various reasons that include authority, accountability, and administration (Allington, 2002; Cazden, 1988; Nystrand, 1997; Mehan, 1979; Perkins, 1993). Fecho and Botzakis (2007) lament, “Dialogue, it would appear, too often has been wrung out of education as surely as water from a dishrag” (p. 557), and they question why a concept introduced by Socrates and advocated by so many revered researchers and theorists has not taken
hold especially within professional education classes. They argue that it is not enough to advocate for the concept, we must practice it ourselves as teacher educators. This study documents how one professional education class attempts to address Fecho and Botzakis’ challenge.

I have also alluded to the challenges that new literacies bring to the classroom. I contend that allowing preservice language arts teachers to respond to literature through reader response in a professional education setting gives them insight into using reader response as a student-centered teaching strategy and proposes for them a way to feel adept and comfortable at transitioning from a monologic to a more dialogic pedagogy. Their success in the nonthreatening activity system of their professional classroom should translate to success in the more challenging K-12 school classroom. Furthermore, by using the new literacies of computer-mediated communication situated in the social context of their teacher education class, preservice language arts teachers may become more confident eliciting, understanding, supporting, and valuing student talk as well as the new literacies that support it.

This study addresses the following research questions:

- What is the nature of preservice language arts teachers’ participation with young adult literature through reader response, and what role does computer-mediated communication play in facilitating this participation?
o How do preservice teachers perceive young adult literature through reader response?
  ▪ What strategies do they use to respond to young adult literature?
  ▪ What stances do they take in response?

o How does reader response facilitate discussion?

o How do preservice teachers perceive reader response mediated through computer-mediated communication.

Significance of the Study

Barton and Tusting (2005) address the need to study literacy as it happens meaning to look at both the activity and its social context, to understand it as social process, and to understand it as interaction between and among people. This research examines literacy in all of those ways: as the interaction between preservice teachers learning about and using reader response collaboratively and collectively, and in the immediacy of shared literacy occurring online through computer-mediated communication.

Response to literature has a long and distinguished history in literacy, “expanding exponentially in the past 30 years” (Galda and Beach, 2001, p. 64). It has remained relevant through a more recent focus on sociocultural considerations, on the reader and context (Sipe, 1999), and on the communicative arts, including
technology. Studies are needed to investigate “what happens when computers are used as a vehicle for response” (McKeon, 1999, p. 700; Groenke & Paulus, 2007).

While we know much about reader response, and we know that it is often presented as a strategy for teaching literature, we need to understand more from the perspective of preservice teachers. We also need to understand how reader response might contribute to dialogic teaching. If, as research shows (Applebee, 1996), that preservice teachers are receptive to nontraditional teaching strategies proposed in their education classes, but often fail to adopt those practices when they become inservice teachers, we need to consider how we do what we do in our professional education classes. Allington (2002) finds little guidance to support inservice or preservice teachers who want to create dialogic classrooms. This study begins to fill the void. By documenting their experiences with reader response and computer-mediated communication, we get a glimpse of what preservice teachers think about learning through talking and about the use of technology to support talk.

Additionally, research (Doering & Beach, 2002) indicates a compelling need for preservice teachers to learn about new technologies and have opportunities to practice with new technologies within their education classes. While research has studied the use of computer-mediated communication with preservice teachers (Groenke & Paulus, 2007; Beach & Lundell, 1998; Harasim, 1990; Zhu, 1998; Kang,
1998; Doering & Beach, 2002, Bonk & Cunningham, 1998; Schrire, 2006), little in this area has been done looking specifically at reader response or computer-mediated communication as activity system tools through which preservice teachers respond to young adult literature. This study will add to the literature by documenting preservice language arts teachers’ use of asynchronous and synchronous computer-mediated communication tools within the activity system (Engestrom 1990; Cole, 1996; Russell, 1997; Wertsch, 1998) of their young adult literature class to facilitate their conceptions of response-based learning and technology integration.

As more and more educators experiment with different forms of electronic discussion within their classrooms, the novelty of asynchronous and synchronous discussion has begun to outpace an understanding of its pedagogy. That electronic discussion does, in fact, contribute to learning has not been firmly established in the research (Perkins and Murphy, 2006). The purpose of this study is to add to the research on the contribution of electronic discussion as situated in new literacy, reader response, and sociocultural activity theory to the study of literature for preservice English/language arts teachers.

Limitations

Any research that involves new literacies has a limited shelf life (Harrison, 2008). Since I began this study, electronic communication has taken on added
dimension with new literacies such as social networking, blogs, wikis, podcasts, vodcasts, and more. Anyone with a cell phone can take pictures, record audio messages, and make simple videos. To talk about the use of email, instant messaging, and discussion forums borders on the archaic, and limits this study.

While the technology in this study is seen as mediating communication, it has a dark side as well. Asynchronous and synchronous data can be manipulated by participants before it reaches the researcher. Interpretation of data transmitted electronically may be distorted or misunderstood by the researcher because it lacks verbal communication cues such as gestures or intonations. Different levels of access by participants could affect the quality of data. Those who have to make more of an effort to participate in the project overall may be less invested in the outcome and ultimately put less thought, time, or energy into discussions. Those who are less comfortable using computers and CMC tools may be less represented in the data while those who are relaxed and skilled at communicating online may be overly represented in the data.

Another limitation of this study included a lack of contextual, observational data. “Questions of practicality” (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.31) suggested it would be impractical to observe students performing synchronous and asynchronous discussions outside of their classroom. However, looking at the online data alone could be analogous to wearing blinders. Observing what went on in the classroom
before and after students participate in online discussions may have provided clarity and enhanced perception.

Additionally, interview data were limited to those participants who volunteered. Also interviews were not conducted during the classes but afterwards when students' memories were not as fresh.

Framework for Review of Related Literature

The review of related literature for this study is organized into two broad categories exploring both reader response and new literacy. Initially, I survey the history of reader response as a theory of literacy and as a rebuttal to New Criticism, and then narrow the focus to Rosenblatt’s vision authorizing the reader. From there I discuss the importance of preservice teachers learning through and about reader response. The review then establishes the importance of talk as learning within a sociocultural framework. Within this framework, contemporary reader response is examined in terms of its potential for enabling preservice teachers to learn socially through shared conversations.

Because this study considers preservice teachers’ dual experiences with reader response and response mediated through technology, the literature follows with an examination of the background of new literacy and computer-mediated communication. Research finds preservice teachers often do not see technology modeled well in their professional education courses or in their field experiences
resulting in their reluctance to then use technology themselves as practicing teachers (Groenke & Paulus, 2007). Several intriguing theories such as new literacy and activity theory emerge in the literature review to suggest how preservice teachers might come to embrace the instructional support of technology tools. New literacy theory (Coiro, Knobel, Lankshear, & Leu, 2008; Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, & Cammack, 2004) offers a view of technology blended with sociocultural theory. From an activity learning perspective (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986; Leont’ev, 1978, 1981; Luria, 1976; Engestrom 1990; Cole, 1996; Russell, 1997; Wertsch, 1998), the literature review suggests participation in technology activities enables preservice teachers to internalize and ultimately adopt teaching strategies that incorporate technology.

Definition of Terms


Aesthetic stance – According to Rosenblatt (1976), a reader who focuses on the
emotive, affective, and qualitative aspects of a text adopts an aesthetic stance. This stance is used most often for reading poetry and other literary texts.

Asynchronous computer-mediated communication - delayed communication between humans through a computer such as email.

Computer-mediated communication (CMC) - the abbreviation for computer-mediated communication which is electronic, text-based communication between humans via a computer.

Dialogic teaching - Instruction and learning incorporating verbal interaction that stimulates thinking (Fisher, 2007).

Dialogism - the term is credited to Russian literary and cultural critic Mikhail Bakhtin although he never used the term. A dialogic novel is one in which multiple voices interact with one another equally (Holt, 2004).

Efferent stance – According to Rosenblatt (1976), a reader who focuses on the analytical, logical, and quantitative aspects of a text adopts an efferent stance (from the Latin, L. efferre, to carry away). This stance is used most often for reading textbooks, newspapers, scholarly articles, and other informative texts.

F2F – face-to-face

Monologism - Bakhtin described a monologic novel as being dominated by one
single, controlling, authorial voice (Holt, 2004). 

New Criticism - the dominant theory of literacy from the 1930s to the 1960s. It said that the meaning of a text was found solely within the text itself excluding any meaning a reader would make or, indeed, the actual intent of the author. 

New Literacy - the school of thought that considers “the skills, strategies, and dispositions necessary to successfully use and adapt to the rapidly changing information and communication technologies and context that continuously emerge in our world and influence all areas of our personal and professional lives” (Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, & Cammack, 2004, p. 1572). 

Podcast - an audio file which has been converted for playback in a portable device. 

Reader Response Theory - a literary theory authorizing a reader’s interpretation or “response” to a text (Rosenblatt, 1938; 1978). 

Social Networking - groups of people meet virtually on social networking sites to communicate with each other in a type of virtual community. 

Stance - the focus a reader takes when reading. According to Louise Rosenblatt a reader tends to vacillate between an efferent stance (scientific; reading for meaning) and an aesthetic stance (artistic; reading for pleasure). 

Synchronous computer-mediated communication - real-time communication between humans through a computer such as chatting.
Technology integration - the act of including technology in pedagogy.

Vodcast - a video file converted for viewing through a portable device.

Wiki - a web site designed for collaboration.
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter reviews both current and historic research and draws on multiple perspectives to establish a context, purpose, and direction for this study. First, by exploring the theory of reader response with an emphasis on Louise Rosenblatt’s (1938, 1978) enduring transactional theory of reading, I will attest to the time-honored place this theory continues to hold in the literature and, more importantly, deserves to hold in a contemporary preservice teacher language arts program.

The section on reader response breaks down into the following five sections: historical overview, Rosenblatt’s transactional theory of reading, transactional theory and preservice teachers, activity theory, and contemporary applications of reader response.

Next, I will introduce the concept of new literacy (Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, & Cammack, 2004) and review the use of computer-mediated communication (CMC) or computer-mediated discussion (CMD), both synchronous and asynchronous, and the extent to which it is used to cultivate preservice language arts teachers’ responses to young adult literature. I will explore the idea and the implication of using a new literacy tool such as CMC to support student talk and propel reader response into the 21st century. As this study examines preservice teachers’ transactions with text, so too will it consider their transactions mediated by
technology. By drawing attention to the limited research in the partnership of preservice teachers with reader response mediated by technology as well as to an ongoing urgency to study talk in the classroom, this chapter asserts the need for a qualitative study to bring understanding to the transactional theory of reading, its place within new literacy, and its significance to the education of preservice language arts teachers. This section breaks down into the following five sections: computer-mediated communication, asynchronous CMC, synchronous CMC, CMC and reader response, CMC and preservice teachers.

This chapter documents a profusion of research on asynchronous and synchronous learning environments with some of the research focused on the preservice teacher experience with CMC; however, little research exists on preservice language arts teachers’ experiences with reader response through computer-mediated communication. A multitude of reader response research likewise exists to satisfy scholars and practitioners alike. This chapter calls attention to a deficit of research in the use of CMC with reader response theory and practice.

Reader Response Theory

**Historical Overview**

Rejection of the theory of New Criticism, which had long authorized the text over the reader, became obvious in the 1980s when a divided literacy community began to recognize and validate the reader’s role in making meaning through his/her
experience with a text. Interestingly, what Beach (1993) heralds as “one of the most dramatic changes in literary theory” (p. 1), Suleiman (1980) describes happening rather non-dramatically as a quiet rebellion of New Criticism:

Some revolutions occur quietly: no manifestoes, no marching and singing, no tumult in the streets; simply a shift in perspective, a new way of seeing what had always been there. [What we] have been witnessing [is] just such a change in the field of literary theory and criticism. The words ‘reader’ and ‘audience,’ once relegated to the status of the unproblematic and obvious have acceded to a starring role (p. 3).

Theories celebrating the newly-awakened authority of the reader appear in anthologies of the time under a broad, all-encompassing category of reader response criticism. Rosenblatt (1991) later organized the theories into three categories based on more specific and more defining reader-to-text relationships: reader-oriented theories, text-oriented theories, or reader-and-text-oriented theories (Beach, 1993).

*Reader-Oriented Theories*

In reader-oriented theories, meaning or interpretation of a text evolves through the reader’s personality. The “psychoanalytically oriented theories” (Rosenblatt, 1991b, p. 59) of Holland (1975a, 1975b) and Bleich (1975, 1978) focus
on a reader’s response to a passive text as a way of explaining or finding the reader’s identity theme or self-understanding. Bleich, especially, authorizes those feelings and emotions that New Criticism had denied readers. The reader-oriented reader response theorists are those who view text, according to Beach (1993), as more akin to the psychologist’s inkblots.

**Text-Oriented Theories**

Developing out of both structuralist views that meaning has nothing to do with the reader and poststructuralist views such as “language mirrored reality” and “no single, unvarying meaning of a text” (Rosenblatt, 1991b, p. 59), text-oriented theorists are actually New Critics clothed in reader-response cloaks. Stanley Fish’s (1980) controversial work is the most well-known of the text-oriented theorists who actually started as a New Critic and gradually became a poststructuralist. Eventually Fish introduces a sociological bent to reader response when he abandons both reader and author to espouse "interpretive communities" (Rosenblatt, 1991b, p. 59).

**Reader-and-Text Theories**

Even within this category of reader-and-text, theorists support different visions of how readers and text come together to produce meaning. Jauss (1982) explores the audiences’ reception of a text. Iser (1978) and others writing under phenomenological influences, describe complex reader/text interactions in which different readers would "concretize" text differently (Rosenblatt, 1991b).
Falling within the same category as Iser and Jauss but arguing for a reader’s transaction with a text as contrasted with Iser’s interaction with a text, Rosenblatt (1938, 1978, 1983) is by far the most famous theorist in this category. Rosenblatt’s transactional theory accepts a flexible, reciprocal relationship between text and reader framed by each transaction’s particular and peculiar context. Rosenblatt (1991b) explains that transactional theory recognizes the significance of social and cultural contexts but the actual transaction of reader to text occurs within the reader.

The importance of the cultural or social context is stressed, but transactional theory sees the convention or code, as, e.g., in language, as always individually internalized. Each reader draws on a personal reservoir of linguistic and life experiences. The new meaning, the literary work, whether poetic or nonpoetic, is constituted during the actual transaction between reader and text (p. 60).

It is Rosenblatt’s transactional theory of reading that forms the basis of this study.

*Rosenblatt’s Transactional Theory of Reading*

Rosenblatt (2005) credits pragmatists John Dewey and Arthur F. Bentley with the genesis of her transactional theory of reading. In *Knowing and the Known* (1949) they introduced the term *transaction* in counter to the positivists’ idea of human interaction with the world. For some 300 years positivists had perceived
reality as a one-way interaction in which an observer/subject and the object observed were segregated—the observer was not part of the object’s reality. Einstein’s work and new developments in physics led to the realization and the revelation that the observer was, indeed, part of the observation. Dewey proclaimed that the idea of transaction took into account both the observer and the observed with the action being reciprocal (Rosenblatt, 2005, p. x). From this comes the notion of student as active participant (Connell, 1996). Rosenblatt’s theory of reading envisions the reader and the text in just such a transactional, reciprocal, active relationship.

Even more than Dewey, Rosenblatt (2005) attributes Charles Sanders Peirce’s contributions to the transactional theory of reading. Peirce, recognized as the American father of semiology (the study of verbal and nonverbal signs), believed that a sign has no meaning until it is interpreted by a thought or action. He qualified thinking as behavior, as an action, and described a “triadic nature of thinking” (p. 8) which involved the object, the sign, and the interpretation of the sign. Through this triadic process Peirce believed ‘men and words reciprocally educate each other’ (Houser & Kloesel, 1992, p. 54), and thus he situated language as a thought process, a transaction between individuals and their worlds (Rosenblatt, 2005).

According to Rosenblatt (2005), the "selective attitude" or stance that a reader chooses during the reading process is critical. It reflects the reader's
purpose. It means that in the reading process the reader will choose some things to focus on while ignoring others—all based on the reader's purpose for reading. Using Peirce’s concept of “abduction,” Rosenblatt (1978) describes the reading transaction two opposing ways in which a reader uses clues to guide his/her reading of a text choosing along a continuum from either a cognitive/efferent stance or from an affective/aesthetic stance. For Rosenblatt (2005), efferent or aesthetic reading represents two different ways to read the world—scientifically and artistically.

Efferent reading is the impersonal, scientific reading a student does to find information, “the kind of impersonal abstracting, analyzing reading that the scientist aspires to” (p. 894). While from an aesthetic, artistic stance, the reader experiences “the sounds and rhythm of the words in the inner ear, images, sensations, feelings, characters and situations, emotional and intellectual associations ... ” (p. 894).

Rosenblatt (2005) also acknowledges the role prior experiences play in reading. Her idea of “selective attention,” in simplistic terms, states that people have the ability to select from their stream of consciousness what they choose to think about. Readers use selective attention by drawing from their “linguistic-experiential reservoirs” (p. 6) when transacting with a text. This reservoir is filled by readers’ personal and linguistic experiences, by social, cultural, and personal experiences, by readers’ past experiences with and expectations of text, and by readers’ present experiences and interests.
Rosenblatt (2005) uses her own conceptual triad, the idea of transaction, the transactional process of language, and the process of selective attention to formalize her theory of the reading process. For Rosenblatt, reading is an event, a transaction, between reader and text. Meaning evolves and forms only during the transaction. A text is simply symbols, “inkspots” (1995, p. 24) on a page and a reader is a reader in name only until text and reader come together. Rosenblatt (2005) explains, “The term reader implies a transaction with a text; the term text implies a transaction with a reader” (p. 7). As reader confronts text she will time and time again delve into her linguistic-experiential reservoir testing different options, exploring multiple choices, revising expectations. Reader and text are “involved in a complex, nonlinear, recursive, self-correcting transaction” (p. 9). From a vast personal reservoir, a reader will construct meaning out of meaningless text.

It is interesting to note in the history of reader response theory, Rosenblatt’s contributions were often overlooked (Allen & Berg in Clifford, 1991). Rosenblatt’s first book, Literature as Exploration, came out in 1938 amid accolades from teacher practitioners, teacher educators, and literary critics as well, but interest in the book waned until the 1960s. Some blamed the stronghold that New Criticism made after World War II for the dismissal of reader response (Allen & Berg, 1991). New Criticism, following in the wake of the positivist influence on the natural sciences, applied the detached, objective analysis used in scientific research to the analysis of
literature. New Criticism stripped any authority from the reader and placed the reader subservient to the text leaving no room for democratic theories that authorized readers over text (Marshall, Smagorinsky, & Smith, 1995).

Allen (1991) cites other factors that also perhaps played a role in the dismissal of Rosenblatt and reader response. The transactional theory had initially been embraced by practitioners in the practitioner literature rather than more scholarly journals and may not have been as well-known to theorists. Additionally, Rosenblatt’s straightforward writing style, her pragmatic approach, and her reluctance to use references may have made her appear less erudite when compared to the oftentimes verbose, abstract writings of other theorists. Berg (1991) argues, from a feminist critique, that Rosenblatt’s work in reader response has never been given the same respect as the men in the field such as Stanley Fish, Wolfgang Iser, David Bleich, and Norman Holland.

Salvatori (1991) writes that Rosenblatt’s work demonstrates why theory and practice should not be considered in isolation—because one informs the other. To overlook Rosenblatt’s work or to relegate it to footnotes in the reading literature, states Salvatori (1991), not only insults Rosenblatt but also perpetuates the historical friction between practitioners and ivory-towered scholars. The oversight becomes
Simultaneously, a gesture of inclusion and exclusion. Because this gesture can be read as a reenactment of the historical and institutional lack of transaction between those most concerned with questions of pedagogy and those most concerned with literary theory, such a gesture can unwittingly reinscribe and perpetuate the marginal position of pedagogy in our profession as it disseminates a reductive view of its function and consequently of its practitioners (p. 48).

**Transactional Theory and Preservice Language Arts Teachers**

Because it “worked in classrooms,” and because analysis of text in the New Criticism tradition was a skill that could be scored, assessed, and evaluated, it remained the dominant method of teaching literature well into the sixties when reader-response and other student-centered theories of learning began to focus attention upon the learner, the reader, the reader-text transaction, and interrelated issues of gender, ethnicity, psychology, and culture (Marshall, Smagorinsky, & Smith, 1995, p. 5). Even with encouraging new findings on student-centered learning, teachers were loath to give up their New Criticism ways. They continued (and continue) to do most of the talking, to ask most of the questions, to control the pace and direction of talk, and to transmit information (Mehan, 1979; Goodlad, 1984; Gallimore & Tharp, 1992; Applebee, 1996; Nystrand, 1997). Rosenblatt (1995) herself realized that a teacher’s personal love for literature was not enough
to stem “the influence of routine, pedantic notions concerning teaching methods” (p. 63).

Preservice teachers often come to teaching with the belief that it is their duty to transmit knowledge to their students in the traditions of their teachers before them (Agee, 1998). Holt-Reynolds (1992) finds that her secondary preservice English teachers plan to use lecture as their primary teaching strategy because it would show that they are experts in their subject. Expert status is critical to Holt-Reynolds’ teachers-in-training, so much so, that they feared taking risks in the classroom. Similarly, Groenke and Paulus (2007) report their preservice students distanced themselves from their adolescent online collaborators because of their beliefs that they should be the experts, and ultimately were unable to “co-construct negotiated meanings” about young adult literature (p. 157).

Research indicates preservice teachers have inadequate knowledge about literature and think of reading in terms of comprehension skills (Sadoski, Norton, Rodrigues, Nichols, & Gerla, 1998; Hollingsworth, 1989; Holt-Reynolds, 1992). In their work with teachers and literature, Eeds and Peterson (1994) discover that few teachers have ever before participated in a book group or literature discussion themselves. Additionally, when attempting to work with students in a book discussion, the teachers had difficulty participating in a role other than as questioner and judge. Apol, Sakuma, Reynolds, and Rop (2008) find preservice teachers
respond to literature with a “limited vision” based more on which books they would use and how they would use those books for teaching (p. 446). Understandably, harried students gravitate to books that would fit easily and conveniently within the curriculum as opposed to more complex books that would ignite difficult questions and force discussions about complicated issues. They are comfortable responding to literature themselves on a personal level, but resist taking a critical stance. The researchers offer the following explanation:

Critical reading strategies are bound to lead readers (and teachers) into unfamiliar territory, and these pre-service teachers may have felt as though they were venturing out with little support. Consequently, they may have been more than a little reluctant to put themselves in positions where they were not authorities and may instead have chosen the safety of texts, responses, and pedagogies that would not challenge their ways of thinking about literature, literature response, and their own roles as teachers of literature (p. 451).

Apol, Sakuma, Reynolds, and Rop’s findings would not have set well with Rosenblatt (1995). She maintains, literature teachers need “much insight into the complex nature of the literary experience” (p. 30). A reader can only begin to understand a work of literature critically through reflection, attempting to understand what caused the reaction or response and then determining whether to
accept, reject, or change it. She wants students to respond to a text through their own honest, authentic feelings rather than from a scripted response to literature that they have learned through New Criticism, and she charges teachers to prepare their students to read “without artificial restrictions” (p. 73). Marshall (2000) wonders that if students are conditioned through New Criticism to analyze text objectively, are they not also conditioned to respond to readings in ways they deem appropriate for participation in their school culture and specifically for their teachers rather than from their own thoughts? Rosenblatt (1995) condemns “that blight on our educational system, its emphasis on the attainment of good marks rather than on the value of the work or the knowledge for its own sake” (p. 60).

There is encouraging research, however, that suggests that when teachers participate in reader response with students, the types of questions they use can facilitate dialogic inquiry (Groenke, 2007). Teachers who used open-ended questions and followed-up on student responses elicited prolonged student discussion, participation, and quality dialogue (Wang, 2005; Nystrand, 1997; Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991).

Activity Theory
Activity theory (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986; Leont’ev, 1978, 1981; Luria, 1976; Engestrom 1990; Cole, 1996; Russell, 1997; Wertsch, 1998) has been used to explicate how teachers learn to teach and can suggest how preservice teachers might be supported in responding to literature critically as well as in adopting learner-centered, activity-oriented, talk-based teaching strategies such as reader response and technologies such as CMC (Grossman, Smagorinsky, & Valencia, 1999). Credited to Vygotsky (1978, 1986), Leont’ev (1978, 1981), and Luria (1976), activity theory stems from the sociocultural tradition and suggests learning can be understood through activity (Bonk & Cunningham, 1998).

As a predecessor to activity theory, Dewey (1902/2001) argued that the school of his time could not organize itself as a social unit because the “element of common and productive activity is absent” (p. 10). He used the concept of a playground to illustrate how schools denied the natural activity of learning:

> Upon the playground, in game and sport, social organization takes place spontaneously and inevitably. There is something to do, some activity to be carried on, requiring natural divisions of labor, selection of leaders and followers, mutual cooperation and emulation. In the schoolroom the motive and the cement of social organization are alike wanting. Upon the ethical side, the tragic weakness of the present school is that it endeavors to prepare future members of the social
order in a medium in which the conditions of the social spirit are eminently wanting (pp. 10-11).

According to Dewey, the organizing unit of school work should be meaningful and practical and parallel a child’s social world (Miettinen, 1999).

Sociocultural theory continued and expanded upon Dewey’s concerns. From the sociocultural beliefs that positioned activity theory, learning is believed to transpire through experiences, actions, and dialogue, and is influenced heavily by the values of the surrounding environment (Langer, 2001). Vygotsky’s sociocultural/sociocognitive framework (1978, 1986) established that learning occurs through participation in social or cultural events with emphasis on the context (the discourse and actions) of the learning activity and the acquisition and use of tools that precipitate literacy. Meaning from the sociocultural perspective is not prescribed, it is negotiated (Kang, 1998). Bonk and Cunningham (1998) describe sociocultural learning as a “knowledge construction process rich in social interaction and dialogue” (p. 290).

Dewey (1916), who wrote passionately on the need for schools to prepare students to be successful members of society, stressed the role of communication in society, writing that society could not exist without communication. People live in a community, he wrote, “and communication is the way in which they come to possess things in common” (p. 5). In a community “emotions and ideas are shared
as well as joint undertakings engaged in” (p. 159). Rosenblatt (1995), like Dewey, regards that language evolves through communication with others. “Language is socially evolved,” (p. 25), and “the literary work, like language itself, is a social product” (p. 25). She believes a student needs to know how to get along with others, to refine “an inner center from which to view in perspective the shifting society about him; [as he] will influence for good or ill its future development” (p.3). From a sociocultural perspective, readers still respond from a personal, individual level that Rosenblatt describes, but each reader’s response is believed to be influenced by a multi-voiced chorus arising both from his or her community of practice and from his or her lived experiences of home and culture. Social settings with reader response, according to Gavelek and Raphael (1996), are where students talk through new knowledge, new interpretations, and new perspectives of text. It is where they bump into other perspectives, activate prior knowledge, and co-construct meaning.

Socioculturalists are interested in how tools and contexts intervene in activity and communities of practice. Vygotsky believes when learners interact with others they acquire tools, such as language, that they then internalize through an internal dialogue with self (Beach, 2005). Dialogue is a critical component of Vygotsky’s learning—so much so that higher-order, sophisticated thinking is often deemed dialogical (Hogan, 1997). Vygotsky sought to understand how external processes
were internalized as higher-order thinking. Lee and Ball (2005) citing Ball (2000) explain that internalization is the process which helps teachers evolve from practicing to accomplished, and is initiated by purposeful and reflective activities in professional education classes.

Activity theory (Vygotsky 1978, 1986; Leont’ev, 1978, 1981; Luria, 1976; Engestrom, 1990; Cole, 1996; Wertsch, 1998) draws heavily upon Vygotsky’s idea of tools situated within cultural and historical traditions. Russell (1997) and others, in fact, refer to Vygotsky’s cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) or to social-cultural activity theory. In the parlance of activity theory, an activity is conceived as a learner’s appropriation of tools such as language, images, signs, texts, and even technology tools (Doering & Beach, 2002). Within an activity system such as the classroom, individuals are motivated to use those tools to work with others to achieve a desired outcome or objective. Learning results by participation or practice in purposeful, motivated activities which result in change or improvement. Russell (1997) elaborates that an activity system was “any ongoing, object-directed, historically conditioned, dialectically structured, tool-mediated human interaction” (p. 510), such as schools and families. The process by which Rosenblatt (1985) describes how a reader uses textual cues to select “ideas, sensations, feelings, and image drawn from his past linguistic, literacy, and life experiences, and synthesizes
them into a new experience” (p. 40) demonstrates from an activity standpoint how a reader uses the tools of response to experience a text.

Clancey (1995) notes that activity theory draws from Vygotsky’s socio-cultural work (1978, 1986) in the following ways:

- Learning is considered a social, collaborative process.
- Tools, activity, and language mediate understandings that are socially constructed and shared.
- Collaborative problem solving works in the zone of proximal development to help an individual achieve greater potential working with more capable others.
- Talk and other activities build shared experiences for both teachers and learners.
- Socially-organized activities are mediated by tools which are acquired through participation in a social setting.
- External signs (language, talk, etc.) are internalized and reconstructed as thoughts–intermental to intramental.

For Vygotsky, the fundamental concept of activity is mediation or mediated activity—which involves not only the process by which cultural tools shape activity but also the actual use of the tools (Lee & Ball, 2005; Holt, 2004). As Bazerman and Russell (2003) explain, tools or artifacts are not to be understood in isolation but
rather within the activities in which they are used. “Their meanings are found in these dynamics of human interaction....The principles by which they are formed and maintained and changed are those of activity” (p. 1). No matter whether the tools were physical such as hammers or computers or mental such as ideas or words—they mediate activity (Holt, 2004). Through participation either individually or as members of a community of practice, learners acquire the use of tools (Beach, 2005; Lee & Ball, 2005). Preservice teachers use conceptual tools (theories or concepts) such as reader response or practical tools (specific instructional practices or activities) such as responding to literature through an electronic discussion forum or chat (Grossman, Smagorinsky, & Valencia, 1999). Written reflection and oral discussion are mediating tools in the local activity system of one classroom that provides preservice teachers a metacognitive avenue to challenge preconceived notions and consider new pedagogical approaches and perspectives (Lee & Ball, 2005).

The concept of appropriation in activity theory accounts for how a person comes to choose or appropriate tools for use in a particular setting. The learner’s active participation is critical to appropriation. In appropriation, learners restructure knowledge they have internalized. Through the internalization process, they transform their own understanding but they also force a transformation in how others view and use that knowledge as well (Grossman, Smagorinsky, & Valencia,
Appropriation helps explain why preservice teachers might choose to use or not use pedagogical tools from their professional education classes.

Beach and Kalnin (2005) point to the importance of value stance in motivating the appropriation of tools and practices within an activity setting. Preservice teachers must negotiate multiple, often conflicting, settings including but not limited to the professional education setting and the field setting each of which has its own motives or sense of purpose. Not surprisingly, new teachers often allow the activity setting of the school to override the activity setting of the university—adopting the value stance of the school over that of the university. Grossman, Smagorinsk, and Valencia (1999) find that preservice teachers are motivated less by achievements in their course work and more by their perception of success within the school as defined by earning the respect of their mentor teachers, establishing rapport with students, and demonstrating competencies that fit within the school’s value system.

Applying activity theory to reader response moves the focus from reading as a cognitive process to reading “as embedded in complex participation in object-driven activities,” (Beach, 2000, p. 237). Response can be understood as a reader compares her real-world activity system with a fictionalized activity system in a text and makes connections to shared components working within both systems. From this comparison, Beach (2000) develops three levels of understanding for how a
reader responds to a character’s actions. At the level of activity, both reader and character are often unaware of participating in an activity system or of being motivated by objects. At the level of acts/goals, the reader or character knowingly and purposefully uses acts to achieve goals. At the level of operations/conditions, readers and characters operate from a routine with little conscious effort.

New Literacies

As Rosenblatt describes a transactional relationship between reader and text, Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, and Cammack (2004) see a transactional relationship between technology and literacy: New communication and information technologies require new literacies which in turn transform the technology resulting in more new literacies. Obviously, this continual transaction between literacy and technology has made the definition of literacy a “moving target” (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003; Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, & Cammack, 2004, p. 1585). The ideas of multiliteracies, critical literacy, and media literacy have been put forth as ways of defining a new literacy; however, these theories borrow and build from other existing contexts and are then applied to the technology when, in fact, the technology should be the jumping off point. Contemporary researchers propose the idea of New Literacies which recognizes “an epochal change in technologies and associated changes in social and cultural ways of doing things, ways of being, ways of viewing the world (worldviews), and so on” (Coiro, Knobel, Lankshear, & Leu, 2008, p. 7). New literacy
accounts for the complexity and uncertainty involved in redefining literacy. It acknowledges the sociocultural nature of literacy, and how ensuing technology is changed by and through different social contexts (Coiro, Knobel, Lankshear, & Leu, 2008). Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, and Cammack, (2004) offer a working definition:

The new literacies of the Internet and other ICTs include the skills, strategies, and dispositions necessary to successfully use and adapt to the rapidly changing information and communication technologies and contexts that continuously emerge in our world and influence all areas of our personal and professional lives. These new literacies allow us to use the Internet and other ICTs to identify important questions, locate information, critically evaluate the usefulness of that information, synthesize information to answer those questions, and then communicate the answers to others. (p. 1572).

As literacy changes, so too must literacy teachers (Leu, 1997). New literacies bring new challenges to literacy teachers and to those who would prepare them to teach—challenges of comprehension in the “changing landscape of text” (Dalton & Proctor, 2008, p. 297). Teacher education must prepare preservice teachers to address, to understand, and to initiate ever changing new literacies into their classrooms (Pope & Golub, 2000; Young, Hicks, & Kajder, 2008; Swenson, Young, McGrail, Rozema, & Whitin, 2006). Preservice teachers will need experiences with
instructional strategies that will optimize the sociocultural potential of new CMC literacies so that they can in turn optimize understanding and learning for their own students (Leu, 1997; Coiro, 2003; Dalton & Proctor, 2008). Pope, Hare, and Howard (2002) found that preservice teachers gained confidence in using technology when they experienced it in their coursework and saw it modeled by their professors.

Computer-Mediated Communication

Computer-mediated communication (CMC) is one of the tools of new literacy. Defined as communication between humans via the computer, CMC is electronic, text-based, communication unrestricted by time or place that is appropriate for large and small groups (Warschauer, 1999). It allows for either synchronous communication, happening in real-time much like a telephone conversation, or asynchronous delayed-time communication such as email. CMC is referred to variously as computer conferencing, online discussion, electronic discussion, asynchronous or synchronous discussion, threaded discussion, electronic discourse, electronic messaging, electronic dialogue, networked text, and include such activities as chatting, instant messaging, emailing, posting to a discussion forum or bulletin board, and more recently, blogging.

Research has championed CMC for its promise to revolutionize the learning process (Bonk and King, 1998; Wallace, 2003; Lapadat, 2002).
Development Council (NSCD) guidelines require teachers to collaborate with others as a way to understand and improve learning and teaching (Jetton, 2003-2004). CMC has been found to support collaborative learning wherein students and teachers dialogue together to find meaning and understanding–initiating a major departure from the active teacher/passive student tradition (Hiltz, 1990; Winter & McGhie-Richmond, 2005; Jetton, 2003-2004). Studies supporting its collaborative, student-centered nature suggest that CMC may be successful in supporting dialogic learning (Gronke & Paulus, 2007).

CMC offers face-to-face (F2F) communication features such as group communication and interactivity, time and place independence, and impressive new methods for communication storage and retrieval (Hara, Bonk, & Angeli, 2000; Li, 2002). It facilitates conversations that might be constrained in F2F situations. It affords anonymity, eliminates signs of social context such as gender, race, socioeconomic status, and disability, and devalues nonverbal gestures or facial expressions (Shetzer and Warschauer, 2000). In the classroom environment, it has a “neutralizing” effort on those voices that would normally dominate (Goldman & Hiltz, 2005).

Early research comparing F2F with CMC found it impersonal because it was lacking in social cues (Beach & Lundell, 1998; Kang, 1998). Later research found that CMC was not necessarily impersonal; it just took longer for participants to
develop social relationships (Beach & Lundell, 1998). The lack of social cues has even developed in later research as a positive feature of CMC in that students report being less intimidated in the online environment due to an absence of negative social cues that often occur in the F2F environment (Kamhi-Stein, 2000).

**Asynchronous CMC**

Asynchronous CMC is delayed communication which means that users do not have to be online at the same time to participate. It is associated with email, discussion boards or forums, listservs, and blogs (Beach & Lundell, 1998; Murray, 2000). Participants can take their time reading and responding to postings which are often threaded or arranged by topic. Because discussions are electronic, messages can be printed or stored for later access. As in F2F discussions, students make inferences and judgments and use metacognitive reflection strategies when working asynchronously. Students who use asynchronous CMC before classroom F2F discussions are better prepared to participate. Students rather than the teacher dominate the discussions and help scaffold understanding for their peers. While students report fewer inhibitions, feel less pressure to perform, and appreciate the lack of cultural and linguistic barriers in the CMC environment, nonetheless, they are often unmotivated to participate beyond the required number of posts. (Hara, Bonk, & Angeli, 2000; Kamhi-Stein, 2000).
Synchronous CMC

Synchronous CMC occurs in real-time and, as it mimics conversation, it is usually associated with terms of conversation such as chatting, chat rooms, or instant messaging, but it also includes Internet Relay Chats ( IRCs ), multicast, and real-time interactive MOO conferencing systems ( Zhang, 2003 ). Thoughts appear as rapidly as they can be typed into text on a screen that scrolls to allow extended conversation. Participants find that synchronous CMC is more akin to spoken conversation; however, it is different in that the conversation is not just immediate. It is also written and, therefore, the reader can take some time to read and reflect before responding as well as archive and print written transcripts for later reflection. Lapadat ( 2002 , para. 14 ) characterizes synchronous discussion as linear, “superficial, socially oriented, and ambiguous.”

While the process of synchronous CMC has evolved similarly to reading, writing, and oral conversation ( Anson & Beach, 1995 ), it has its own “distinctly unique social context” based on reading and writing ( Beach & Lundell, 1998 , p. 95 ). Participants must read both the text and the social situation simultaneously and then write an appropriate response that anticipates others’ reactions such as when students pass notes in class or participate in a dialogue journal. It permits a cautious and probing “unfolding process” of ideas within a nontargeting forum ( Beach & Lundell, 1998 , p. 97 ).
CMC and Reader Response

The pairing of reader response with CMC would appear to be a perfect fit. First, there is the dialogic component. Both synchronous and asynchronous forms lend themselves to the dialogic discussion of reader response facilitating participants’ reflective and cognitive processes (De Wever et al., 2005). Participants create a "group text" which is dialogically forged through agreement, contention, modification, reversal, stance taking, and altered perceptions (Groenke & Paulus, 2007, citing Golden, 1986, p. 142). CMC environments provide safe contexts as well as time for students to reflect, to disagree, and to offer “counterpositions” to others (Beach & Lundell, 1998, p. 97). Then there is the constructivist, collaborative, and sociocultural aspects (Harasim, 1990; Zhu, 1998) wherein students are encouraged to construct and negotiate meaning collaboratively as well as dialogically (Kang, 1998). Applebee, Langer, Nystrand, and Gamoran (2003) believe, “The starting point for studies of literacy instruction has been in the exchange of ideas—the discussion—that takes place in a classroom including reading, writing, and the talk that surrounds them” (p. 688). CMC environments are motivating and support active learning through student ownership, connection-making, reflection, self-analysis, evaluation, problem-solving, and resource sharing (Ferdig & Roehler, 2003-2004). Indeed, CMC creates “an engaging dialogic forum for social literacy practices” (Beach & Lundell, 1998, p. 93).
Doering and Beach (2002) find preservice teachers need to assume “tentative, exploratory stances” to participate in computer-mediated discussion (CMD) successfully (p. 132). They need a willingness to accept what others offer to the discussion and to proffer their own statements of beliefs tentatively, as “passing theories” (Dasenbrook, 2001 as cited by Doering and Beach, 2002), indicating a willingness to modify their own ideas by incorporating thoughts of others.

The many new computer-supported collaborative learning tools lend themselves to creating new activity systems. Bonk and Cunningham (1998) emphasize the need to understand how these new tools support conversations in communities of learning. While there is no definitive theory of the electronic discourse of CMC, (Schrire, 2006), activity theory offers a way to examine the use of CMC and reader response with preservice teachers. Preservice teachers learn the value of technology tools through active participation rather than through instruction (Doering & Beach, 2002). Studies using activity theory consider how technology tools work as agent-objects within learning (see Beach et al., 2005). Research from an activity theory perspective has also explored how technology tools function in Vygotsky’s (1978) zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Beach & Kalnin, 2005). According to Holt (2004) the zone suggests an area where collaborative learning between a student and a teacher or mentor takes place. In the ZDP the student is
able to reach a place of understanding that she could not have mastered without support from the teacher/mentor.

The strong sociocultural bent of activity theory says that activities do not happen in isolation; rather they are carried out in conversations and negotiations by participants working towards a common goal (Wells, 1996). Learning happens within communities of practice through “changing participation in changing practices” (Lave, 1996, p. 150). The setting has value only in terms of an activity’s value or meaning to the participants (Neuman and Roskos, 1997). The "tool of tools" within an activity system is talk (Halliday, 1993, as cited by Wells, 1996, p. 80). What is important within an activity system is not the talk so much as how the talk functions to affect the activities in which students are involved (Wells, 1996). With Wells’ understanding of the role of talk and Russell’s (1997) succinct description of an activity system as “any ongoing, object-directed, historically conditioned, dialectically structured, tool-mediated human interaction” (p. 510), it follows then that preservice teachers responding to literature online with each other constitutes an activity system.

Vygotsky emphasizes the appropriation of and mediation through tools in an activity system. As members of their virtual community of practice (activity system) of their professional education class, preservice teachers use tools of reflection and discussion. They also practice using the conceptual tool of reader response and the
practical tool of CMC. How well they succeed at the activity of responding to young adult literature through CMC ultimately determines whether they choose to appropriate these tools for their own teaching. As Beach and Lundell (1998) see it, participation in an activity helps internalize the activity.

So, through discourse and the ideas of mediation and appropriation from activity theory, we can consider how the tools of reader response and CMC within their community of practice serve to mediate preservice teachers’ perceptions of response-based teaching and technology integration.

**CMC and Preservice Teachers**

Certainly the CMC environment alone is not enough to ensure successful participation and ultimately dialogic discussion. Nor do F2F classroom questions designed to promote discussion necessarily transfer well to the CMC stage (Groenke & Paulus, 2007). Interestingly, Groenke and Paulus (2007) find that preservice teachers drag the same dated, conventional baggage of talk and discussion from their classroom experiences into the CMC environment with dismal effects. Nonetheless, they argue that discussion through CMC tools helps preservice teachers begin to understand and practice learning-centered, dialogic pedagogy.

Other research in the use of online discussion with preservice teachers points to sociocultural, constructivist benefits. Research underscores preservice teachers’ use of CMC for discussions about cases and literature, for talking with mentors, for
reflection, and more. Transcripts of online discussions show that students problem-solved by interpreting, negotiating, concluding, and providing rationales. Collaboration occurs in the “shared space” of the computer screen where students can see each other think. Students feel “intellectually challenged” by working closely with each other (Cooney, 1998).

CMC has been used to facilitate conversations and reflections as part of a learning community with preservice language arts teachers. Ferdig, Rlehler, and Pearson (2002) observed how language and discourse in the electronic environment affected the ways teacher candidates thought about teaching and learning. They determined CMC provided the best of both worlds—the social benefits of interactions with others and the visual, thought-provoking, reflective benefits of print. By reviewing and responding to posts, preservice teachers developed patterns of careful thinking which could translate into their inservice understanding of ongoing assessment and monitoring of student learning.

Participating in online discussion forums increases preservice teachers’ interactivity. Students provide feedback to each other, take into consideration other perspectives, come to rely on each other for guidance and support, facilitate classroom discussion, construct shared experiences, take ownership for learning, and work together in teams (Ferdig & Roehler, 2003-2004).
Black (2005) considered CMC as both writing process and product. Her students used synchronous electronic discussion to create a “text of talk” that, for her, documented their critical thinking while additionally providing a “safety net” for those students whose voices in a F2F environment might otherwise be silent. F2F stressors common in social interaction were reduced in CMC. Students were able to self-censor comments and language use (Kang, 1998), and had more time to reflect and organize their thoughts before responding (Im & Lee, 2003-2004; Moreillon, 2003).

Two particular studies evoke special interest as they venture into reader response activities with CMC and preservice teachers. In the first study (Pate-Moultom, Klages, Erickson, & Conforti, 2003-2004), CMC is used for literature circle activities which are student-led book discussion groups. Preservice teachers met in F2F classroom literature circles but also extended the circles through email to preservice teachers at another university. Differing perspectives brought value to the CMC conversations; however, asynchronous conversations often proved forced and unnatural. Preservice teachers in this study were obviously unfamiliar (and hence uncomfortable) with dialogic, responsive pedagogy. Some stated they would have preferred a more lecture driven class over the more student-centered literature circles, while others expressed need for more guidance and structure. Surprisingly, one student complained of having too much freedom and flexibility. The study does
not examine final student perceptions about the literature circle approach; however, some students did like the idea of using CMC as a teaching strategy.

Moreillon’s (2003) students responded to children’s literature in a digital discourse community with students in another state. Students made personal as well as historical and cultural connections to the literature. They began the process of “distancing” (Brown et al., 1998 as cited by Moreillon, 2003)—pulling back and reconsidering their world differently. Students saw the technology tools as a means to facilitate their teaching and introducing differing perspectives into the classroom.

Ferdig and Roehler (2003-2004) and Black (2005) touch on the idea of structure and the crucial role the instructor plays in the success of using CMC. They point out that in successful CMC experiences instructors are well-organized, provide structure and scaffolding, and otherwise support social constructivist principles. Those classes that are "discourse friendly" (Ferdig and Roehler, 2003-2004, p. 127) are most successful. Seemingly, the concept of structure would be at odds with the notion of social constructivism. In the case of discussion, structure would seem to imply imposed control whereas social constructivism would ostensibly suggest less authority and more mutual collaboration and participation. Black (2005) addresses this contradiction noting that good discussion does not just happen; it requires a competent instructor to facilitate it.
Summary

This chapter has presented a review of the theories and research that situate reader response, new literacy, and sociocultural activity theory within teacher education. It examined historical as well as current implications of reader response, explored the concepts of computer-mediated communication in teacher education, and looked at the influence of activity theory as a bridge between literacy and technology.

This review points to the understanding that activity theory brings to the concepts of reader response and computer-mediated communication, and highlights a need to examine preservice teachers’ understanding and perceptions both of reader response as a dialogic teaching strategy and computer-mediated communication as a method to support student discussion. The next chapter details the study’s research design.
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter presents the research procedures used in the conduct of a qualitative research study that examined preservice language arts teachers’ perceptions of reader response using synchronous and asynchronous computer-mediated communication. It includes the following sections: an overview of the study, the research design, data analysis, generalizability, validity, and reliability, subjectivity, and a summary.

Overview of the Study

This study examined how preservice teachers perceived reader response and computer-mediated communication in a teacher education class. At issue was the following research question: What is the nature of preservice language arts teachers’ participation with young adult literature through reader response, and what role does computer-mediated communication play in facilitating their participation? The research question looked at three specific areas of interest:

1. How preservice teachers perceive young adult literature through reader response;
2. How reader response facilitates discussion, and
3. How preservice teachers perceive reader response mediated through computer-mediated communication.
Reader response is a transaction between readers and their worlds (Rosenblatt, 2005). It is a conversation between reader and text that is shared in discussion with others. It facilitates discussion (Lehman & Scharer, 1996) and therefore, holds promise as a teaching strategy to mediate classroom discussion. It is also well-fitted to the communication technologies of New Literacy. Previous research has explored the many faces and facets of reader response, but little research exists that explores how preservice teachers engage in reader response online. Through computer-mediated communication, with stored transcripts of chats and discussion forums, we are now privy to reader responses online. We can see how preservice teachers respond to literature and we can see their thinking exposed within the transcripts of their chats and postings in the discussion forum. At the same time, we can see how technology affects, e.g., facilitates, or impedes response.

This study adds to the literature of reader response by exploring how preservice language arts teachers respond to and discuss young adult literature through computer-mediated communication. It looks at the role activity theory plays in the reading stances preservice teachers take, and it suggests how preservice teachers approach the idea of a student responsive, dialogic classroom. This study examines student synchronous and asynchronous responses to young adult literature, considers how responses evolve through online conversations with peers, and
evaluates the medium of computer-mediated communication through which responses occur.

Research Design

Because this study is about words and talk, conversations and discussions, thoughts and feelings, and individual responses to literature, it is appropriately positioned as a qualitative study—building upon variables that cannot be quantified. As it explores multiple, varied, ever-changing constructions and interpretations of reality, it is not observing measurable phenomenon in the tradition of positivist, quantitative research (Merriam, 1988). And because the intent of this study is to interpret the meaning that preservice teachers constructed for themselves through the experiences of reader response and computer-mediated communication with young adult literature, it is not looking for definitive answers nor is it testing any sort of hypotheses. It is quite simply a naturalistic effort to observe, identify, understand, and describe the lived experiences of the preservice teachers being studied within the context of their experiences (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003) in their young adult literature class. Thus, it is by Merriam’s (1988) definition, a qualitative study.

I undertook a qualitative study because I believe meaning is “a function of our engagement with the world” (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005, p. 14). I do not accept meaning, consciously or unconsciously, simply because someone else defines it. Rather, I prefer the palpable engagement of turning a thought over in my mind,
deliberating on it, discussing it, stroking it, moving it, twirling it around, holding it up to the light, reveling in its color and texture, playing with it, constructing it. I work it like clay until there is form and understanding. I see qualitative research as art and agree with Stake’s (1995) appraisal, “The function of research is not necessarily to map and conquer the world but to sophisticate the beholding of it” (p. 43). Qualitative research privileges me to talk with people, to listen, to be privy to their stories—to behold.

Within the qualitative research tradition I constructed a purposeful, multiple, descriptive, intrinsic case study of the phenomenon of preservice teachers responding to young adult literature asynchronously and synchronously within the context of the virtual classroom environment. As an intrinsic case study, the case itself was of interest in “all its particularity and ordinariness” (Stake, 2005, p. 445).

Participants and Sampling Techniques

Qualitative research anticipates that the participants’ perspectives will be featured (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Participants are positioned as the experts, and the researcher aims to learn from what they tell her (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). As a qualitative study, this investigation attempted to understand and describe the participants’ perspectives—in this case, preservice teachers’ perceptions on reader response and computer-mediated communication with young adult literature, asking Erickson’s (1986) key questions about what was
happening in this specific instance, and what it meant to those involved. This study focused on the story—what participants had to tell; and not what statistics or quantitative data might show.

Qualitative sampling aims for small, purposeful cases that can offer plentiful, in depth, quality information, and “context-bound extrapolations” (Patton, 1990, p. 491). My nonprobability, purposeful, intensity sample (Merriam, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990) involved a combined total of 64 undergraduate preservice language arts teachers from three semesters of a young adult literature class in a large, urban university “nested in their context and studied in depth” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 27).

Merriam (1998) notes two levels of sampling in a qualitative case study. The first level is the case itself. In this level no real choice is involved. A case already exists that a researcher is interested in studying in depth (Stake, 1995). Such is the situation with my study. The cases (three classes) that I chose to study already existed.

As part of the middle grades young adult literature class in this study, students participated in reader response activities with three young adult books using computer-mediated communication. Reader response is a teaching/learning reading strategy in which readers respond to a text either
in writing or through conversation with others. Students read the books at
different times over the semester and then meet in pairs or small groups
online to respond about what they read. They use a discussion forum or
email to respond to two of the books asynchronously and a chat program to
respond to the final book synchronously. They save their conversations and
send them to the professor. The professor in this study had previously
collected and stored electronic data in the form of online discussion
transcripts from the students. She made these transcripts available to me
and they served as the main focus of my data.

The second level Merriam (1998) refers to is within case sampling—
choosing what to observe and who to interview (Merriam, 1998). Because of
the virtual context of this case study, (students responding online through
computer-mediated communication), there was no setting or anyone to
observe. Sampling, in my three cases, involved written data over
observational data. To augment the written data, interviews were conducted
with the professor of the class and with five student volunteers from across
the cases. A male and a female were interviewed from the early part of the
study while three females volunteered from the later part of the study.

Multiple-case sampling was conducted within each class and across
both classes studied. Looking at more than one instance or case helped
explain the single case and added to the trustworthiness of the findings. Sampling within and across case put “flesh on the bones of general constructs and their relationships” (p. 27) and added “confidence to findings” (Miles & Huberman 194, p.29).

Methods of Data Collection

Data collection depends on the research questions, the sample, the data selected, and the theoretical beliefs of the researcher (Merriam, 1998). The researcher is the primary data-gathering instrument (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Merriam, 1998; Glesne, 1999). Therefore, my research questions were descriptive and explanatory in nature drawing from my constructivist beliefs that the world is socially constructed, multifaceted, and constantly evolving. I was interested in the multiple perspectives, the constructed realities of others, and disinterested in reducing “multiple interpretations to a norm” (Glesne, 1999, p. 5).

The “multiple sources of evidence” (Yin, 1994, p. 13) included transcripts of synchronous and asynchronous discussions, participant interviews, and artifacts. Transcripts of students’ synchronous chats and asynchronous email and discussion forums from three fall semesters of Literature for Adolescents, an undergraduate young adult literature class in a large southern university, provided the primary data. Overall, 64 students participated in this study from three years’ classes. Students were required to save transcripts of their chat discussions and email them
to the researcher. The other transcripts were available through the discussion forum online.

Pairs of students used the university’s NetForum discussion forum or email to discuss the first book, *The Pigman*, by Paul Zindel asynchronously. Then in larger groups of four or five they also discussed *Canyons* by Gary Paulsen asynchronously. Finally, in groups of two or three they discussed *Tuck Everlasting* by Natalie Babbitt synchronously. For the synchronous discussion students chose the chat program (AOL Instant Messenger, MSN, etc.) they preferred.

During the first year of the study students were given instructions by the professor and teaching assistant in the use of the discussion forum and chat software. Directions and additional information were also provided on the website. In subsequent years students were more familiar with communication technologies, especially chat, so only those who needed assistance were given individual support by the teaching assistant.

Observational data was a question of “practicality” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 31). Students who participated in reader response did so at various times and places outside the classroom environment. I did not want to observe, nor was it practical to observe students responding to young adult literature using computer-mediated communication. My interest was not in the physical act of students’ typing their responses; it was in their words, their responses that lived in the transcripts.
Interviews

Because observational data were nonexistent, interviews were used to augment the transcript data—"reach areas of reality that would otherwise remain inaccessible such as people’s subjective experiences and attitudes" (Perakyla, 2005, p. 869). Five students were interviewed—two from the first-year’s class and three from the third-year's class. Four female students and one male student were interviewed. The professor was also interviewed. Additional artifacts included the class syllabus and class website.

Because the success of the interview, “a basic mode of knowing,” (Kvale, 1996, p. 3) hinged on the questions (Patton, 1990), I took great pains to prepare. I used a standardized, open-ended, semi-structured interview guide (Kvale, 1996), but during the interviews I allowed for and promoted the flexibility of the informal, conversational interview (Merriam, 1998) to permit talk to flow in multiple directions, and to give participants ample opportunity to tell their stories (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). All were willing, articulate, informative participants, and the style of the interviews was conversational. Data gleaned from the interviews proved to be cumulative (Bodgan & Bilken, 2004), filling in gaps and adding details from student to student.

Interviews, lasting approximately one hour, were conducted at the university, and were recorded digitally with multiple recorders used as backup. Researcher
notes and reflections were made following each interview. Each interview was preceded with an explanation of my study.

Careful, thorough efforts were taken to ensure participants’ anonymity. Pseudonyms were used in place of all student names. Participants signed consent forms which guaranteed them anonymity along with the opportunity to forego and/or end participation at any point in the process. All participants were protected under Internal Review Board (IRB) procedure.

Using a word processor, I transcribed each interview. I chose to transcribe the interviews myself because I had previous experience doing so, and I welcomed the opportunity to become immersed in the data. Transcribing the interviews allowed for data reduction in that I could eliminate superfluous comments that did not add to the research questions. Following Kvale’s (1996) recommendations, I chose not to transcribe verbatim. Rather, taking into consideration that I would be the audience, I chose to transcribe the interviews in a less formal written style deleting phrases and repetitious language that occurred naturally in oral conversations.
Online Data

Online document data brought a new dimension to the traditional qualitative interview, observation, and document data. Because of the nature of this research project which looked at electronic discussions, online document data in the form of discussion transcripts were the major data source. Student discussions were digitally archived and were available as electronic documents.

While online data are similar to traditional qualitative data, Merriam (1998) suggests limitations. The first limitation involves access. While all students in the classes had access to computers at the university and at the public library, the level of access could vary. Students who did not have a home computer would have to make more effort to use a computer somewhere else, making participation less convenient. This limitation of access to technology could affect the quality of online discussions.

A second issue involved censorship. Students were responsible for archiving their own transcripts after their discussions so it would be possible for them to edit or censor data before it reached the researcher.

A third issue involved the transmission of information through electronic, online means. Computer-mediated communication “has a unique effect on the information it transmits” (Merriam, 19, p. 129). Nonverbal information such as gestures or facial expressions that could reveal subtleties and emotions in face-to-
face communication are inaccessible in an email, electronic chat, or discussion board. Emotions, jokes, or sarcasm that would change the meaning of a sentence might be lost in electronic communication or even misunderstood if embedded within the emoticon symbols and creative uses of text (such as writing in all caps or using extra punctuation) that attempt to substitute for emotions.

A final consideration involved the transmitting of self through online means. “In terms of group interactions, writing skills and computer literacy strongly influence how individuals are perceived on-line” (Merriam, 1998, p. 129). Someone who has poor writing or computer skills or a limited vocabulary might struggle to participate in an online discussion. A weakness in writing might also inadvertently affect how someone is perceived by others in the class and by the researcher. Someone who has strong writing and/or computer skills might, on the other hand, be allowed to dominate the discussion.

Data Analysis

All students’ responses from their chat and discussion forum conversations were stored digitally and then printed for analysis. For the first part of the research question which asked how preservice teachers perceive young adult literature through reader response, analyses were undertaken using 10 descriptive codes (Miles and Huberman, 1994) to explain the different strategies that preservice teachers used to respond. Nine reader response codes developed by Purves and
Rippere (1968) and later amended by Purves and Beach (1973) were used. The amended content analysis scheme was descriptive in nature and categorized responses by type of response and process for making the response. It divided responses into four sections looking at (1) personal statements, (2) descriptive statements, (3) interpretive statements, and (4) evaluative statements. Within these four sections data were fit into nine codes that reflected strategies preservice teachers used to respond to young adult literature. A 10th code (teacher code) was added to address responses preservice teachers made about using the books as teachers, while an 11th code addressed comments that preservice teachers made that had nothing to do with the books or teaching. The 11th code was called the student code. Each sentence within the transcripts was coded using one of the 11 codes (See Figure 1).

The second part of the research question looked at how reader response facilitated discussion. Once data were analyzed for reader response categories, they were analyzed a second time for discussion patterns matching categories that Eeds and Wells (1989) used: 1) conversation maintenance, 2) constructing simple meaning, 3) sharing personal stories, 4) active inquiry, and 5) valuing and evaluating.

Conversation maintenance involved strategies students would use to prompt or further conversation. Strategies to construct meaning included retelling parts of the stories, making inferences, and describing specifics about a book such as the action,
What is the nature of preservice language arts teachers' participation with young adult literature through reader response, and what role does computer-mediated communication play in facilitating this participation?

Data Analysis Categories or Nature of Engagement

**Strategies**
- What strategies do they use to respond?

**Personal Statements**
- Code 1: About the reader: an autobiographical digression.
- Code 2: About the work: expressing personal engagement.

**Descriptive Statements**
- Code 3: Narrational, retelling part of the work.
- Code 4: Descriptive of aspects of the work, such as characters, setting, etc.

**Interpretive Statements**
- Code 5: Interpretive of parts of the work.
- Code 6: Interpretive of the whole work.

**Evaluative Statements**
- Code 7: About the evocativeness of the work.
- Code 8: About the construction of the work.
- Code 9: About the meaningfulness of the work.

**Stances**
- What stances or orientations or purposes for reading do they take in response?

**Reader Stance**
- Purpose for reading is enjoyment.

**Teacher Stance**
- Purpose for reading is to consider teaching strategies.

**Student Stance**
- Purpose for reading is to pass the class.

**Conversation Maintenance**
- Responses which prompt, further, or stop conversation.

**Group Construction of Simple Meaning**
- Responses which are retellings, references to descriptions, or inferences.

**Personal Involvement**
- Responses which involve personal associations or insights and prior experiences.

**Active Inquiry**
- Responses which involve hypothesizing, interpreting, verifying, questioning, and predicting.

**Value and Evaluated**
- Responses which involve critiquing & looking at rationale underlying the critique.

Figure 1. Data Analysis Categories.
characters, or author's style. Sharing personal stories was a strategy that illuminated how students engaged or transacted with the literature on a personal level, often by citing prior experiences or thoughts that were triggered by the readings. Through active inquiry student conversations were prompted by questions, interpretations, clarification, verification, and hypothesizing. The final discussion strategy, valuing and evaluating, referred to the ways in which preservice teachers discussed their evaluations of the literature as well as how they determined their evaluations. The analysis of preservice teachers' literature conversations using Eeds and Wells (1989) discussion strategies suggested how reader response facilitated discussion.

Once coding was complete, the next step involved looking recursively for consistent patterns that would allow data to be synthesized into meaning. Transcripts were read and reread. The "constant comparison method" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of analysis was used as a guide for understanding the data collected” (Kang, 1998, p. 325). During the initial reading of the response transcripts summaries were kept to record researcher perceptions and help with data display (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Examining the data inductively, the Purves and Rippere (1968) codes were used first to look at specific elements of the data to create “frames of analysis” or conceptual categories (Hatch, 2002, p. 163). Consistent patterns or conceptual categories emerged from reading and rereading the data that helped explain preservice teachers' perceptions of reader response
based on purposes or *stances* they took for reading young adult literature. The data indicated preservice teachers took three stances when they read: a reader, a teacher, and a student stance. From a reader stance, preservice teachers read the books to enjoy young adult literature; from a teacher stance, they read the books to learn about teaching with them; and from a student stance, their purpose was to read the literature because it was a class assignment.

**Generalizability, Validity, and Reliability**

Perhaps the most contentious breach between conventional, traditional quantitative research and naturalistic inquiry or qualitative research is the small, purposeful sample size of qualitative inquiry and its resistance to generalized findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990; Merriam, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Generalizations that can be made from a sample to the population at large, that can predict results and draw inferences based on statistics, are considered a strong measure of external validity for a traditional, quantitative study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Qualitative researchers are, for the most part, dissuaded by generalizability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990). They find fault with generalizations applied from large random samples to individuals (Merriam, 1998). Rather, their interests lie in understanding “the particular in depth, *not* to find out what is generally true of the many” (Merriam, 1998, p. 208). Purposeful sampling is not well understood,
and qualitative research is constantly challenged by those who would only trust large, random samples and the security of statistics (Patton, 1990). The issue then becomes, for the qualitative study, one of validity. Without generalizability, how is validity assured?

Some researchers forego positivist vocabulary for terminology more closely aligned with qualitative or naturalistic inquiry (Creswell, 1998). Lincoln and Guba (1985) offer the following qualitative terminology to supplant quantitative vocabulary: trustworthy for validity or generalizability; credibility for internal validity; transferability for external validity; and dependability for reliability. For demonstrating trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, and dependability, researchers use triangulation, “rich, thick description,” (Geertz, 1983, p. 43) prolonged engagement in the field, research audits, discussion of researcher bias, and member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Creswell, 1998).

Because of the multiple constructions of meaning arising from this study, replication or comparison of this case study to others is unlikely. The goal of this study is not generalizability. It is simply to understand, to learn, and to describe how these students come to respond to young adult literature within the online environment. This study uses “rich, thick description” (Geertz, 1983, p. 43) to allow for transferability or reader generalizability. It also uses triangulation, clarification of
research biases (Merriam, 1998; Creswell, 1998), and reflective journaling to support validity.

Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) argue for a new metaphor to replace triangulation—the crystal. They describe their metaphor as follows:

I propose that the central imaginary for ‘validity’ for postmodernist texts is not the triangle—a rigid, fixed, two-dimensional object. Rather the central imaginary is the crystal, which combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach.

Crystals grow, change, alter, but are not amorphous. Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colors, patterns, arrays, casting off in different directions. What we see depends upon our angle of repose. Not triangulation, crystallization.... Crystallization, without losing structure, deconstructs the traditional idea of ‘validity’ (we feel how there is no single truth, we see how texts validate themselves); and crystallization provides us with a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial understanding of the topic. Paradoxically, we know more and doubt what we know (p. 208).
For crystallization (the use of multiple sources of data), I used transcripts of online discussions, interviews with participants and professor, analysis of class documents, and clarification of researcher bias to bring symmetry and substance to my research and enable my texts to validate themselves.

Subjectivity

Clarification of researcher’s biases is another method of crystallization. Clarification of bias enables readers to understand how the researcher’s biases or assumptions might impact the study (Creswell, 1998). This means the researcher has an ongoing, interpretive role within her own research (Stake, 1995). The idea of research bias or reflexivity helps us come to terms with our research problem, our respondents, and ourselves. It acknowledges us as researcher and as research instrument (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Malterud, 2001; Stake, 2005). Reflexivity accepts that qualitative research is subjective and allows the researcher to use her subjectivity to understand participants’ motives and assumptions (Hatch, 2002; Maxwell, 1996).

There is certain freedom in acknowledging biases. As a former preservice teacher, I remember well the distrust I had for university courses that prepared me to be a teacher. Very little of what I learned in those classes seemed applicable when I began student teaching. I also remember an anxiousness to get on with my life—to begin teaching. I did what I had to do to get by in the coursework. My eye
was on the prize. So, I understand the skepticism preservice teachers have for new ideas such as reader response coming from teacher educators.

The other side of the coin is that as a practiced, veteran teacher and now as a university instructor, I am also disappointed by preservice teachers who simply “go through the motions” in their university classes and are not willing to consider something different or new. Through reflexivity, I will use rather than excuse my subjectivity.

I also must admit to some preconceived notions about technology which make up my researcher subjectivity. Because I work around and with so many young adults and college students who are comfortable with technology and who seem to have all the latest gadgets, I tend to believe that:

- Males are more comfortable with technology than females; consequently, I expect the male preservice teachers will be more receptive to using electronic discourse tools.
- I expect access to technology will not be an issue.
- I expect preservice teachers will be fairly comfortable using a chat and discussion forum and will need little support with the technology.
- I expect the young preservice teachers will embrace technology integration more so than their older practicing peers.
Other subjectivities that I brought to this study concern the type of students I expected to find in an undergraduate preservice class and the type of student I would expect to find preparing to become a language arts teacher. I expect the class will be made up mainly of female college-age juniors or seniors because so few men teach and fewer still choose to teach English. In reality there were males in the class as well as older, nontraditional, adult students who had returned to college to pursue a teaching degree. In a language arts preservice teacher’s class I expected all the students to be avid readers, competent writers, and articulate speakers. I have a truly difficult time imagining why anyone would want to become an English teacher if he/she did not like to read.

Summary

This chapter presented the methodology that was used to conduct a study into the ways preservice language arts teachers respond to young adult literature synchronously and asynchronously by means of computer-mediated communication. It covered the study’s research design, data collection and analysis, role of the researcher, and procedures that will ensure verification and generalizability. The next chapter explores data analysis, process, and findings in depth.
CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Introduction and Framework for Analysis

Data analysis, as Hatch (2002) succinctly explains, “is a systematic search for meaning” (p. 148). Wolcott (1995) even more succinctly calls it “mindwork” (p. 233). In this chapter I question my data searching for relationships, patterns, themes, explanations, and theories. I present my “mindwork”—the findings based primarily on the transcripts of the middle grades language arts preservice teachers’ asynchronous and synchronous responses to three young adult novels.

The overarching research question for this study was: What is the nature of preservice language arts teachers’ participation with young adult literature through reader response, and what role does computer-mediated communication play in facilitating this participation? This question has three components that look at (1) how preservice teachers perceive young adult literature through reader response; (2) how reader response facilitates discussion, and (3) how preservice teachers perceive reader response mediated through computer-mediated communication.

This chapter is divided into five sections to provide background and to address the research question. The first section presents a modified context portrait of the middle grades young adult literature class which supplied the data for this study. Following the context portrait, the remainder of this chapter is organized into four sections by the research question to present the findings.
The second section of this chapter describes how preservice teachers perceive young adult literature through reader response. This section examines two questions under the main research question:

- What strategies do preservice teachers use to respond to young adult literature?
- What stances or orientations, or purposes for reading do preservice teachers take in response?

Findings are discussed in terms of 11 strategies or ways of responding as well as three stances preservice teachers used when responding to young adult literature.

The third section explores how the shared dialogue of reader response is shaped through discussion with others, while the fourth and final section examines the preservice teachers' participation in reader response through computer-mediated communication.

Context Portrait

This study involved electronic, asynchronous and synchronous discussions about three young adult literature novels that undergraduate preservice language arts teachers had over three spring semesters of a young adult literature class in a large, southern, urban university. A total of 64 students participated: 22 in the first class, and 21 in each of the succeeding two classes. Out of the three classes in the study, the students in the first
class were less “talkative” according to the professor (personal communication, November 11, 2005). They were reluctant to elaborate on their online conversations in the face-to-face classroom because they claimed to be “talked out.” The professor noted that for the students who did not like to contribute in the face-to-face class that first year of the study, they did, however, seem to enjoy talking and discussing the books online.

Students from the first year’s class also exhibited what the professor called “tensions” which may or may not have been related to the fact that some students in the class had formed integral classroom groups. Also according to the professor, the students in the first year’s class did not seem comfortable with each other. Sometimes students seemed disgruntled and uncooperative, and, consequently, the professor stated she had a harder time getting them involved in classroom activities.

Students in the second and third year of the study, according to the professor, seemed to get along well with each other in class. Neither the second nor the third year’s class exhibited tensions similar to the first year’s class and students were more cooperative, more willing to participate in class activities and elaborate on their young adult literature discussions during face-to-face classes.

Because the data for this research were electronic and virtual, pulled from transcripts of asynchronous and synchronous electronic discussion, there was no
benefit in observing or describing the physical classroom. Instead, to establish context, I examined the class syllabus and website, and interviewed the professor.

According to the description in the University’s online course catalog the Literature for Adolescents course:

- Reviews the history, types, and characteristics of literature for adolescents. Emphasizes reading and analyzing the literature by exploring the themes, literary elements, and rationale for teaching literature for adolescents. Addresses ways in which this literature can be integrated and implemented in English/Language Arts curriculum.

Surprisingly, there had been no undergraduate young adult literature class before the professor (personal communication, November 11, 2005) started the class in 1997. Until that point, young adult literature was an add-on to the language arts methods classes—sending a message inadvertently that young adult literature was not important even though research into young adult literature told a different story. The course elevated young adult literature, making it a significant and valuable component of the middle grades language arts program (professor, personal communication, November 11, 2005).

The professor (personal communication, November 11, 2005) designed the “highly experiential” course to be taught from a pedagogical standpoint—the way one would teach young adult literature in a middle grades classroom. Students in
the class were immersed in young adult literature. They read and responded to young adult literature. They shared book talks, evaluated literature, and compiled reading lists. They participated in small group work all focused on young adult literature.

Currently the course is offered on a regular basis each year. It has a commanding web presence. A vibrant, colorful home page organizes the course by its syllabus, schedule, and requirements. Additional information from the website includes: the course rationale and objectives, student requirements, formative evaluation, grading, required texts, and student code of conduct. The College of Education’s conceptual framework for developing professional educators who lead and serve is displayed prominently. There are links to a Technology Toolbox that offers a full range of technology support from software plug-ins to tutorials and guides for using AOL’s Instant Messenger and the University’s NetForum software. A resources button takes students to a page that includes book talk guidelines, a reading list, and links to a host of other literacy sites.

The three books used in this study included *The Pigman*, *Canyons*, and *Tuck Everlasting*. *The Pigman* (1968) by Paul Zindel, told in alternating chapters by John and Lorraine, is the story of how two adolescents come to befriend and then inadvertently betray lonely widower Angelo Pignati. *Canyons* (1990) by Gary Paulson, also told in alternating chapters by two male protagonists, is an adventure
novel about adolescent Brennan Cole’s obsession with a century-old skull he finds of a murdered Apache boy, Coyote Runs, and his all-consuming need to return the skull to its proper resting place in the canyons of Texas. Natalie Babbitt’s adolescent heroine in *Tuck Everlasting* (1975) wrestles with the concept of life and death when she becomes involved with the immortal Tuck family who had drank inadvertently from an apparent fountain of youth.

The prompt for the synchronous discussion was presented in class. The professor explained that it was an open-ended prompt similar to the asynchronous prompt (personal communication, November 11, 2005). The following prompt introduced the asynchronous discussion forum:

Please find below your group and reply to that link based on my suggestions below. Enjoy! In your asynchronous group discussions please post and respond to each other at least two times. You may begin as you wish—ie., by describing your experience of reading the book, your view of its quality, questions you have, opinions you have about the characters, plot development, literary elements, etc. You might also think and talk about any personal experiences you have had that the book elicits or even extraneous connections you made/make to the novel. This is a chance for open discussion before we focus in class.
The professor (personal communication, November 11, 2005) explained how she selected the three particular young adult novels:

I try to do classics. For the in-common readings I try to use things that they might not choose because they are not the most contemporary but that are considered classics so I use The Pigman because it’s considered a classic of young adult literature. It was one of the earlier ones. I choose it because it’s kind of typical teenager stuff and there’s both a male and a female narrator.

I choose Canyons because it’s controversial ... it gives me a chance to talk about any time you have an in-common reading you’re going to have kids who are not going to like what you’re reading. How do you deal with that? How do you make it possible and palatable? What’s wrong with in-common readings anyway? And that really gets them to thinking about requiring everybody to read the same book at the same time, which is what I want them to think about. And if you do that [require everyone to read the same book] you’ve got to deal with the fallout from it, so they see how I deal with it.... And I like the kind of mystical thing that goes with it [Canyons] because that kind of trips them up a little bit.... It’s ambiguous.
Then I do *Tuck Everlasting* because of its staying power. It is a classic and it’s very easy, but it’s also a very complex theme. It can be read in fourth grade; it can be read in eighth grade. And everybody gets something different from it.

In 2002, the professor expanded on how she had her students respond to young adult literature by introducing online asynchronous and synchronous discussion. She wanted “to infuse the technology into the young adult literature class philosophically in a way that made sense” and was not adding technology simply to be adding technology.

**Findings**

**Introduction**

Hancock (2004) positions reader response within the standards of the International Reading Association (IRA) and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE):

Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience and their interactions with other readers and writers (p. 1).

This standard suggests a need for teacher educators to understand how language arts preservice teachers perceive young adult literature and what strategies they
might themselves use that will one day affect their teaching of young adult literature.

The following section addresses the first part of the research question, which draws from the IRA and NCTE standard: how preservice teachers perceive young adult literature through reader response. Perception is explained by the nature of their engagement with the literature in two ways: (1) through strategies they used to respond to young adult literature, and (2) through purposes for reading or stances they used as they responded. Preservice teacher perceptions of young adult literature are discussed below.

*Nature of Engagement: Strategies*

Responses to literature perhaps can be likened to literary icebergs. As with icebergs, there is much more beneath the surface than what is expressed outwardly. Reader response is just the tip of the iceberg. It is an uncertain business, “an elusive concept” that restricts understanding to that which is stated or written down in black and white. There is no definitive way to determine what goes on in the “black box of the mind” to evoke response (Probst, 1991, p. 655).

Purves and Rippere (1968) devised a multi-faceted content analysis coding scheme for reader response to classify and begin to understand what went on in the black box, beneath the surface. Purves purposed these codes to be descriptive rather than judgmental, and he designed them to reflect both product and process
of response. Knowing the kinds of responses students make and the processes by which they respond would ultimately help teachers address the NCTE and IRA standards by guiding students to a richer and deeper engagement with literature (Odell and Cooper, 1976).

The original Purves and Rippere (1968) codes included four main categories broken down into 24 subcategories with 115 total elements (see Odell & Cooper, 1976). In 1972, Purves and Beach revised and streamlined this original, unwieldy coding scheme into something much more manageable. The revised coding used the same four general areas but reduced the original 115 codes to nine. Some of the explanations and descriptions from the original coding scheme were used with this study, but the modified coding system of nine codes was used to code responses.

The nine Purves and Beach (1973) codes looked at:

1) Personal Statements
   a. About the reader, an “autobiographical digression” (Code 1)
   b. About the work, expressing personal engagement (Code 2)

2) Descriptive Statements
   a. Narrational, retelling part of the work (Code 3)
   b. Descriptive of aspects of the work such as language, characters, setting, etc. (Code 4)
3) Interpretive Statements
   a. Of parts of the work (Code 5)
   b. Of the whole work (Code 6)

4) Evaluative Statements
   a. About the evocativeness of the work (Code 7)
   b. About the construction of the work (Code 8)
   c. About the meaningfulness of the work (Code 9)

As I began the coding process I began to notice two types of comments students made within their discussions that were apart from their personal responses to the novels. I noted students were discussing how they might teach using the novels or talking about the mechanics of doing reader response such as asking each other how long they needed to discuss the books, and so forth. So, in addition to the nine Purves and Beach (1973) codes, I added two new codes to account for those responses that did not apply to the young adult literature. Code 10 was added to represent responses that talked about teaching with the books (Teacher Code) and Code 11 (Student Code) represented statements preservice teachers made from the perspective of being students in a language arts class such as asking about the mechanics of reader response or expectations of the class. The 11 codes and responses from preservice teachers are described in detail below.
Personal Statements (Codes 1 and 2)

Codes 1 and 2 address engagement with reading as Rosenblatt (2005) sees it—“a particular and personal event” (p. 63). By examining personal responses (Codes 1 and 2), we become privy to the particular and personal ways preservice teachers make meaning from young adult literature.

Personal statement responses (Codes 1 and 2) are the comments preservice teachers make about those qualities of young adult literature, mainly subjective, sometimes illogical, and oftentimes negative, that attract or repel them. Personal statements are the expression of a reader’s “reaction to the world of the work as if that world were not fictional” (Purves and Rippere, 1968, p. 12). Explanations and examples from Codes 1 and 2 are provided below.

Code 1: Personal statement about the reader, an “autobiographical digress.”

This code elicited 208 responses out of 2425 and accounted for 8.5 percent of the total comments made by preservice teachers, both negative and positive. According to Rosenblatt (2005), a meaningful text is one that connects with a reader emotionally and experientially; it has to “link” with a reader’s concerns, emotions, interests, and aspirations. Responses coded as autobiographical digress (Code 1) indicate the ways preservice teachers linked their own lives to the young adult literature.
Preservice teachers used several strategies or ways of responding to create autobiographical links. They responded about their experiences reading a certain book previously in middle or high school. They described themselves as readers and talked about how they related to the young adult literature based on the types of books they liked to read. They reminisced about experiences they had similar to those of the characters in the books such as a first kiss or an adolescent prank. They speculated how they might act if faced with a situation such as Winnie in *Tuck Everlasting*, who had to decide if she wanted to be immortal. Examples of Code 1, autobiographical digress, are provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Statements: Code 1: Personal statement about the reader, an &quot;autobiographical digress.&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I actually read this book in middle school. I think I related to Winnie.... I mean I always wanted to get away when I was younger but never really did it though. Winnie did the one thing I always wanted to do. Well, not necessarily run away but just get out and be free.[<em>Tuck Everlasting</em>]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 1 continued.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jillian</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tabitha</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Morgan</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marian</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nell</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 continued.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natalie</td>
<td>I could relate to her [Lorraine] when it came to moving around a lot and feeling so alone sometimes in a new school.  [The Pigman]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gavin</td>
<td>I remember throwing a party at this lady’s house when I was watching it for a few days. It wasn’t nearly as large a scale as theirs was [John and Lorraine], but I told myself the whole time that she would have thought it was OK, just as John did. [The Pigman]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda</td>
<td>My parents were ALWAYS present and involved in my life, so it is hard for me to understand where John and Lorraine were coming from.  [The Pigman]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinda</td>
<td>I was best friends with the “bad” kid in middle school and high school too; at least I was until he got kicked out and sent to military reform school. So overall I related to their relationship [Lorraine and John] so it made me enjoy the book that much more. [The Pigman]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Table 1 continued.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>The fact that the characters were so committed to enjoying each day continually left me wanting to go outside and try something that I had never done before.... I was forced to examine the way in which I live my life on a daily basis. So often, I end up just trying to get everything done, and I forget that sometimes the best experiences can be made through choosing to do something out of the ordinary. [<em>The Pigman</em>]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tabitha</td>
<td>I think because I am not all that interested in stories that deal with raids and battles. [<em>Canyons</em>]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tommy</td>
<td>I feel like (as a male) that I should be able to relate to this topic more than you all, but I must say I found it a bit mundane. I have lived my life in western NC. I know nothing of the Apache culture, nor of canyons. [<em>Canyons</em>]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>Due to the fact that I have spent a great deal of time working with Native American students in Alberta, Canada, I expected to find the story of Coyote Runs much more appealing.... I was not particularly impressed by Paulsen’s interpretation of Native American life. [<em>Canyons</em>]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Code 2: Personal statement about the work, expressing personal engagement.** A majority of all responses (945 responses or 37 percent), both positive and negative, that preservice teachers had to the young adult books fell within Code 2. Whereas responses in Code 1 were more intimate and autobiographical in nature, responses in Code 2, while still personal in nature, did not elaborate or digress about a students' personal relationship with a book. Within Code 2, preservice teachers responded that they were so engaged with a book they read it in one sitting. Some said they could not put a book down. They described a book as “a page turner.” They talked about being “hooked” and “engrossed” with the book and “curious” wanting to know more about John and Lorraine’s relationship in *The Pigman*, or how Brennan would deal with the skull in *Canyons*, or if Winnie would drink the water in *Tuck Everlasting*. They were “shocked” at a death, kept in suspense, taken by surprise, disappointed, bothered, upset, impatient, bored, and hurt by things that happened in the books. Examples are listed below in Table 2.
Table 2.

**Personal Statements:**

**Code 2: Personal statement about the work, expressing personal engagement.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beverly</td>
<td>could not stand the wait, so I read the ending after I was about 1/3 of the way through the book. I would not have been able to enjoy the book if I had not read the ending. Waiting kills me.... I am contemplating reading the next book in the series to see what happens to John and Lorraine romantically. I mean, of course, they will get together, but I want to know the story. [Tuck Everlasting]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regan</td>
<td>The conversations about Canyons really left me not very excited about starting it ... However, during the weekend I really buckled down and “made” myself do it. Surprisingly, I fell right into the book enjoying every chapter told by the two characters. I sat down and read sixty pages in my first sitting. [Canyons]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gail</td>
<td>I thought I might never really get into the book again but luckily that wasn’t the case. I really ended up liking the book a lot!!!!.... I was on the edge of my seat to see what would happen next. [Canyons]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 2 continued.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marsha</td>
<td>[It ] was a big let down ... I completely did not love the ending. I’m not overly sure what I would have liked to see happen, but that wasn’t it. [Canyons]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marcie</td>
<td>I did like that Brennan ran in the story; it helped me relate to him because I run. [Canyons]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob</td>
<td>I’m halfway through The Pigman and I absolutely hate it. The story from my perspective isn’t believable. It rambles aimlessly with no real purpose. I’m holding my nose through it only because I have to. [The Pigman]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Description Statements (Codes 3 & 4)**

Moving away from personal engagement, descriptive statements are responses indicative of how readers perceive the text as literary. These are responses in which the reader looks at the world from the point of view or consideration of the author (Purves & Rippere, 1968). Code 3 describes readers’ responses which narrate or retell scenes from a book, and Code 4 pertains to those responses which refer to literary elements working in a book such as figurative language, character descriptions, setting, or plot. Codes 3 and 4 together account for 525 responses or 21.6 percent of all responses. Explanations and examples from Codes 3 and 4 are provided below.
Code 3: Narrational, Retelling Part of the Work. There were 147 responses within Code 3 (5.7 percent of total responses) in which students narrated or retold events as a way of expressing their understanding of the young adult books or elaborating on a point they were making. Table 3 lists responses described by Code 3:

Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive Statements:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jasmine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lydia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 continued.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>Lorraine deals with a mother who is too busy with her life to pay attention to her needs while being very abusive with her words, while John has two parents who apparently don't see that he has a drinking problem and do not do anything to him when he does things wrong except for try to rid him off to some psychiatrist. [<em>The Pigman</em>]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gail</td>
<td>One particular instance that sticks out to me was when Brennan thinks about his mom’s new relationship and how all he wants is for her to be happy. He decides that he wants to get to know her new boyfriend better if that will make her find happiness. [<em>Canyons</em>]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>I agree with you guys on maturing. I mean at first he [Brennan] could not do anything but run. He was not close to his family or his teacher and he basically shut the world out. It wasn’t until he found the skull that he became close to his mother and turned to his teacher for help. [<em>Canyons</em>]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Code 4: Descriptive of Aspects of the Work: Language, Characters, Setting, etc.* In this category students responded 378 times (14.6 percent of all responses)
to literary devices they saw working in the books such as word choices, dialogue, setting, imagery, and more. Preservice teachers commented that they saw characters as realistic or flat. They spoke about being able to visualize a setting or not. Examples taken from Code 4 are provided below in Table 4:

Table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive Statements:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Code 4: Descriptive of Aspects of the Work: Language, Characters, Setting, etc.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| Brenda | Lorraine is not the average pretty, pretty female lead. She is smart (especially linguistically) and a little physically awkward, and portrays herself as being more of a misfit than John does.... John reminds me of a less abstract version of Holden Caufield (<em>Catcher in the Rye</em>). He is gifted in ways that adolescents generally admire; good-looking, rebellious, charming, brave, fun, smart—but not in a nerdy sort of way. Yet he chooses to not really play the role of Joe Cool in school. He really does his own thing. [<em>The Pigman</em>] |
| Nell   | [The characters had a] great sense of humor.... By the end you feel like you know all of the characters as though they are your best friends. [<em>The Pigman</em>] |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sally</th>
<th>I think that the scene descriptions and the description of the fighting between the Indians and the soldiers were very detailed and grabbed my attention quickly. [Canyons]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>I think that the detailed descriptions of scenery and setting are very good. I could see artists in a class really getting into painting a picture of the canyons at sunset. [Canyons]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casey</td>
<td>I agree with you about Babbitt's use of imagery—some of the word pictures she painted were amazing. I love reading things in which the author describes something in a way you never would have thought of…. I also thought the symbolism she used when Winnie and Tuck were sitting in the boat was an extremely effective means of explaining the Tucks' dilemma. [Tuck Everlasting]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>I definitely think these characters were oval. They weren't quite developed like an adult novel but the potential is there. [Tuck Everlasting]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interpretive Statements (Codes 5 and 6)

Purves and Rippere (1968) use the category of Interpretation in their original coding to define responses in which the reader connects the text to the world s/he knows by finding meaning or making inferences, generalizations, or analogies. Interpretation differs from description in that a description is verifiable whereas interpretation is a "projective means of grasping meaning" (p. 7). Purves and Rippere (1968) see interpretation joining the reader's existing world with his or her new experience created through the text. They explain, "The writer cannot extract meaning from the work without reference to his prior experiences with words or their referents; he cannot approach the universe as portrayed in the work without recourse to the universe that he already knows" (p. 7). There were 44 responses (1.7 percent) within Code 5 (interpretative statements about parts of the work) and 24 (0.9 percent) within Code 6 (interpretive statements about the work as a whole) accounting for 68 responses or 2.8 percent of the total number of responses. Examples from Codes 5 and 6 are offered below in Tables 5 and 6.

Table 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpretive Statements:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Code 5: Interpretive Statements of Parts of the Work</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jasmine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Olivia</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mindi</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yvonne</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Devon</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gail</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Regan</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 6.**

Interpretive Statements:

Code 6: Interpretive Statements of the Whole Work

<p>| Patty | [It is about the] fragility of life. [The Pigman] |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rosina</td>
<td>When he [the Pigman] saw the broken pigs, he decided life was no longer worth living because what he loved was gone. As far as the baboons ... maybe that was his way of escaping his life and being able to focus on something else that seemed not to have any worries. Though, I think in some way they were both trapped, the baboon in the cage and him with his secret ... whatever that may be. [The Pigman]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olivia</td>
<td>I think that this book does show a couple of important aspects of growing up, though, which are consequences and responsibility. [The Pigman]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morgan</td>
<td>The one thing that I really did like about this book was the high moral discussion and the ways the characters like Tuck and Winnie went with what they believed was right. Were they right or was the man in the yellow suit right? [Tuck Everlasting]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy</td>
<td>This was kind of a different “coming of age story,” I guess–especially since it featured a girl–but I didn’t really think of it that way while reading it. [Tuck Everlasting]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becky</td>
<td>I feel as though the book is fairly flat. The ending is predictable, the main character takes interest in one thing: running, and the relationships established between characters is rather nondescript. The addition of Coyote Runs and his culture to the novel adds a dimension of curiosity and historical interest, but I question how accurate Paulsen portrays Native Americans. [Canyons]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evaluative Statements (Codes 7, 8, and 9)

Within this category Purves and Rippere (1968) identify statements that reveal how a reader responds either objectively or subjectively to the value of the work. Statements in this category, as in the others, may be positive or negative. Readers find the work good or bad. Students in this study responded within the three elements of this category a combined total of 279 times accounting for 11.5 percent of all responses. Explanations and examples from Codes 7, 8, and 9 are provided below.

Code 7: Evaluative Statements about the Evocativeness of the Work. The term evocativeness comes from Rosenblatt (1938, 1978). It describes what happens for a reader during a transaction with a text; what emotions are evoked or called forth. In an evocation a reader participates vicariously in the story by living through the characters—delighting in their joys and suffering their anguish. This element received the most responses (172) of all three elements in the Evaluative statements category and 6.6 percent of all responses. Responses categorized in this element addressed how realistic or believable students found a book or if they thought young adolescents could relate to a book. Statements in this element also addressed originality, plausibility, genre, and emotional appeal. Representative comments from Code 7 can be found in Table 7 below.
Table 7.

**Evaluative Statements:**

**Code 7: Evaluative Statements about the Evocativeness of the Work**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marge</td>
<td>I just couldn’t get caught up enough in the story to feel like something like that could have really happened.... Part of my disconnect comes from feeling like the research that Brennan had to do came all too easily. I mean, he all too coincidentally was friends with his previous biology teacher, who just happened to know a pathologist and also someone who could get a hold of government documents. Not to mention that his friend was willing to put the tremendous amount of time and energy into compiling all of it, all the while not knowing what his friend wanted this stuff for. I know the story says that they were all Vietnam buddies, but the work just came too easy. [Canyons]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angelina</td>
<td>[Brennan’s &quot;quest for closure&quot; seems extremely unrealistic] especially at the end when Brennan ran from the cops with the skull to return it to its right place. I thought the correlation between that scene and Coyote Run’s death was a bit extreme. Some middle school students might not be able to relate to this novel as much because it is too &quot;deep&quot;. [Canyons]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judy</td>
<td>The emotional angst [was so believable] the reader gets sucked in and feels involved enough with the characters to feel guilty too. [The Pigman]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td>I found it pretty amazing at the amount of friends or people these kids knew. I also found it difficult to believe that there were no drugs around. I also thought it was strange that a whole band showed up to the house.... [The Pigman]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7 continued.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Judy</td>
<td>Some of the situations and language might seem totally foreign now—e.g. being able to buy alcohol and cigarettes so young, the descriptions of dress, music, and television, terms such as being called a &quot;card,&quot; etc. Plus, I wonder if something as initially innocent as the &quot;bathroom bomber&quot; might seem more sinister today, in light of school violence. [The Pigman]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olivia</td>
<td>I really liked the book although I think some of the themes are a little mature for middle school students. [The Pigman]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa</td>
<td>I just thought it was really unrealistic. Not something that I could relate to.... And it just seemed weird that no one else knew about the pond. After all these years no one had stumbled upon it. Just didn’t seem normal to me. [Tuck Everlasting]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bella</td>
<td>I felt as though she knew them completely within a day of meeting them. [Tuck Everlasting]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Code 8: Evaluative Statements about the Construction of the Work.**

Responses to the construction of the work are comments that judge the way a work is created. This category considers if the author has written a book that works for the reader stylistically. Writing style is considered along with how well a book fits
within a certain genre. Responses categorized in this element reflected preservice teachers’ sense of the form or style of a particular book and described their perspective of the author's success in creating the work. This element received the fewest responses (36) out of all three elements in the *Evaluative* category and 1.4 percent of all total responses. Table 8 lists responses from Code 8.

Table 8.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><em>Evaluative Statements:</em></th>
<th><em>Code 8: Evaluative Statements about the Construction of the Work</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Margaret</td>
<td>[I liked the author's decision] to bold the chapters that were about Coyote Runs and leave the chapters about Brennan in a regular font. This made it easier for me to decipher between the two characters and what was going on with each! [Canyons]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regan</td>
<td>The ending brought such a parallel in the characters, and the lives that they lived. I thought it was neat the way the book was set up. I liked how the beginning of the book was separated by the stories of the characters, and then it joined together at the end. I feel like this joining of the two stories made the connection of the characters more real. As well, a lot of their choice in dialogue was the same. [Canyons]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Comment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosalina</td>
<td>Thought the book was written for male readers. [Canyons]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judy</td>
<td>It's tricky to pull off something like dual narrators without having it seem too gimmicky or trite, but I think Paul Zindel developed such a feel for the two students' voices that it really worked. Not only that, but it was amazing to me the extent to which he was able to get into the mindset of teenagers and use their unique perspective in the creation of his novel. [The Pigman]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td>Babbit’s style of writing makes this book a page turner. [Tuck Everlasting]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olivia</td>
<td>I think that Paul Zindel made all of the adults in the book pretty much the same. When I read it, I felt that the story showed adults in a negative light. I’ve heard that Paul Zindel does this a lot in his books because that’s the way that kids sometimes see the adults around them. I don’t know if that’s really a great idea. If kids get interested in Paul Zindel and see how bad the adults in the book are, what kind of impression is that giving them? I think that he should maybe show the other side of the story, the parents’ side.... I still think that Zindel should show a little more depth in the adult characters. [The Pigman]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Code 9: Evaluative Statements about the Meaningfulness of the Work.**

Meaningfulness is defined as the author's vision or intention. It also addresses if the story is plausible and sincere, if it is imaginative and original, and if it has thematic importance. There were 71 responses or 2.7 percent of the total responses in Code 9. Responses preservice teachers made in Code 9 are detailed in Table 9.

**Table 9.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluative Statements:</th>
<th>Code 9: Evaluative Statements about the Meaningfulness of the Work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Becky</td>
<td>[It] conveys to young adults that the decisions you make on a daily basis impact the life that you live. [The Pigman]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte</td>
<td>[It shows] the importance of friendship, loyalty, responsibility. [The Pigman]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judy</td>
<td>Paulsen combined these two [stereotypes] to create his own idea of Native American life, and chose not to flesh out any of his ‘ethnic’ characters beyond two dimensions... [He] bowed to old Hollywood conventions and perpetuated the noxious pidgin-English of bad Westerns. If he were telling a first-person story from the point of view of a young French boy, would the results have been the same? ... Paulsen could have done so much, but he got Lazy Author Syndrome and had his character speak with a Hollywoodized, inauthentic voice, worse yet—missed a golden opportunity to show parallel lives of two young men coming of age. [Canyons]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jasmine</td>
<td>I thought Paulsen was being consistent within the time period Coyote Runs’ history was taking place. Yes, I agree, he could have done his homework and used the Apache language, but I do think he may have been keeping the age of his audience in mind.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genevieve</td>
<td>There are a lot of good themes, too, especially about maturity ... the whole coming-of-age thing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>Because one of the major themes is what looks good and seems like will be good, often times turns out to be more trouble than it’s worth.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Code 10: Teacher code.** The second highest number of responses preservice teachers made (417 or 17 percent) did not fall within the nine Purves and Rippere (1968) response codes. Instead of responding to the books as readers, preservice teachers responded as future teachers about how they might use or not use these books in their classrooms. To account for these responses about teaching, a 10th code was added. Examples are presented below in Table 10.
| Teacher Codes | Bethany                                                                 | Marian                                                                                   | Devon                                                                                     | Lucy                                                                                         | Marge                                                                                     |
|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|              | I am not sure I would want to use this book to teach with. It might be | I think the way the book talks about smoking and alcohol may not be completely appropriate because it doesn't seem to look down upon the use of alcohol at such a young age. [The Pigman] | That would be something you could do with your students, too. Have them compare the movie and the book. [Tuck Everlasting] | This might be another good activity for students to do is to make up an adventure with one of the characters from this book .... This would be a great way to model good sentences to students. They could practice sentence expanding modeling some of the ones in this story. [Tuck Everlasting] | Because of the prevalence of so many literary terms, along with such an intriguing story line, I would most definitely use this book in my future classroom. In addition, this book leads to many other questions that could be easily transformed for use in writing. For example, students could write an alternate ending if Winnie had of drank the water, or write about what would the (the student) do ... drink the water or not—would he/she want to live forever? Was Mae's |

Table 10.
Table 10 continued.

| Becky | action, hitting the man in the yellow suit, the right one? There are so many topics and themes that stem from this story that could be discussed and/or written about. [Tuck Everlasting] |
|       | It would be a great project for students to investigate this question [Paulsen’s portrayal of Native Americans]. After reading the novel students could research the area of Canyon’s setting and report to the class supported evidence of Apache raids and what it meant to be a Native American in the late 19th century living in western America. [Canyons] |

**Code 11: Student code.** In addition to personal responses preservice teachers made to young adult literature and about teaching using young adult literature, 154 or 5.9 percent of all responses were non-book responses that reflected their roles in the class as students. Statements coded in this category included questions students had about the length of and mechanics of doing the reader response activity. They commented about their time constraints as students, prior commitments, and technical issues. They also made off-topic statements about other activities in which they were involved or interested. So, an 11th code was added to account for responses that preservice teachers made, apart from the literature, as students. Examples are presented below in Table 11.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code 11: Student Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mary</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Becky</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rachael</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rosina</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kristin</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marian</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bethany</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gail</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 11 continued.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Becky</td>
<td>So, what do you think? I’m kind of running out of ideas to talk about...?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marcie</td>
<td>There was a Disney movie made about 2 years ago with the girl from <em>Gilmore Girls</em> as Winnie [<em>Tuck Everlasting</em>].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy</td>
<td>My iBook crashed and I lost all my data. So, here I go again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patty</td>
<td>I liked it, but since I had so much other “stuff” going on, it was hard to get into it this time.... Time constraints just made me put it on the back burner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skylar</td>
<td>Are U on for a few min where we could get this thing done?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josey</td>
<td>I think we pretty much covered it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regan</td>
<td>Well, splendid. Looks like we’ve done our job.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary**

In examining how preservice teachers perceive young adult literature through reader response, research suggests that students should develop "a sophisticated repertoire of responding options to use in a variety of reading situations" (Beach & Hynds, 1991, p. 459). From the data in this study it is apparent that preservice teachers engaged with and responded to young adult literature with a variety of responses. Using the nine reader response codes, preservice teachers responded a
total of 2,025 times with different response strategies that were personal, descriptive, interpretive, and evaluative in nature. Viewing reader response through the nine Purves and Beach (1972) analysis codes illuminates the various ways preservice teachers in this study engaged with young adult literature. A majority of responses, over 44 percent, fell within the Personal Statement category (Codes 1 and 2) indicating preservice teachers were most comfortable responding from a personal perspective. Students appeared less comfortable evaluating or interpreting young adult literature as evidenced by codes in those categories (Code 6 and Code 8) which received only 2 percent of all responses. This suggests that while students enjoyed reading the young adult literature they tended not to discuss it critically or in depth.

Data uncovered two additional ways preservice teachers responded apart from engagement with young adult literature. Preservice teachers made statements that expressed their perceived roles as future middle grades language arts teachers (Code 10) and as students in the language arts class (Code 11). Code 10 (Teacher Code) received the second largest number of responses or 16 percent of all responses. Because the young adult literature class was a class in language arts pedagogy as well as literature per se, it is understandable that preservice teacher responses reflected thoughts about how they might use the books with their
students. Table 12 below summarizes preservice teacher responses to each code, and Table 13 summarizes the ranked codes.

Nature of Engagement: Stance

In an effort to explain and understand responses readers make, researchers look for consistent patterns (Beach and Hynds, 1991). Therefore, once preservice teacher responses in this study were coded, inductive analysis using the constant comparative method (Patton, 1990) was undertaken to determine any consistent patterns that would further illuminate preservice teachers' perceptions of young adult literature through reader response. While responses varied among preservice teachers, commonalities surfaced in the way they chose to respond from their shared backgrounds, experiences, dispositions, and interpretive strategies. From the coded data and from statements students made in interviews, the two codes which received the most responses and a third code that received a significant amount of responses, were used to identify three consistent patterns that represented how preservice teachers perceived young adult literature and helped explain their perceptions based on the ways they focused on the literature. These patterns represented the purposes for reading or stances that preservice teachers took towards the literature. These patterns and how they were determined are discussed in detail later.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th><em>The Pigman</em> % of responses in <em>The Pigman</em></th>
<th><em>Tuck Everlasting</em> % of responses in <em>Tuck Everlasting</em></th>
<th><em>Canyons</em> % of responses in <em>Canyons</em></th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Code 1 (autobiographical digression)</td>
<td>69 7.5</td>
<td>58 9.4</td>
<td>81 8.9</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code 2 (personal engagement)</td>
<td>337 36.7</td>
<td>250 40.7</td>
<td>358 39.4</td>
<td>945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code 3 (narrational; retelling)</td>
<td>73 7.9</td>
<td>33 5.4</td>
<td>41 4.5</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code 4 (descriptive)</td>
<td>155 16.9</td>
<td>82 13.4</td>
<td>141 15.5</td>
<td>378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code 5 (interpretive of part of work)</td>
<td>27 2.9</td>
<td>4 0.6</td>
<td>13 1.4</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code 6 (interpretive of whole work)</td>
<td>14 1.5</td>
<td>5 0.8</td>
<td>5 0.6</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code 7 (evocativeness of work)</td>
<td>106 11.5</td>
<td>27 4.4</td>
<td>39 4.3</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code 8 (construction of work)</td>
<td>10 1.1</td>
<td>0 0.0</td>
<td>26 2.9</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code 9 (meaningfulness of work)</td>
<td>9 1.0</td>
<td>12 2.0</td>
<td>50 5.5</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code 10 (Teacher)</td>
<td>119 12.9</td>
<td>143 23.3</td>
<td>155 17.1</td>
<td>417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code 11 (Student)</td>
<td>82 3.16</td>
<td>48 1.85</td>
<td>24 0.92</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Responses</td>
<td>1001</td>
<td>662</td>
<td>933</td>
<td>2596</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranked Codes</th>
<th>Code Descriptions</th>
<th>Total Responses</th>
<th>% of Total Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Code 2</td>
<td>Personal Engagement</td>
<td>945</td>
<td>36.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code 10</td>
<td>Teacher Code</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code 4</td>
<td>Descriptions</td>
<td>378</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code 1</td>
<td>Autobiographical Digress</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code 7</td>
<td>Evocativeness</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code 11</td>
<td>Student Code</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code 3</td>
<td>Narrational; Retelling</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code 9</td>
<td>Evaluative: Meaningfulness</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code 5</td>
<td>Interpretive of Part</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code 8</td>
<td>Evaluative: Construction</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code 6</td>
<td>Interpretive of Whole</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In her discussion of the transaction between reader and text, Rosenblatt (2005) argues that “the most important choice of all must be made early in the reading event—the overarching choice of what I term the reader’s stance...” (p. 73). 

*Stance* refers to the expectations a reader has for a text—“the way in which a reader approaches a text” (Galda and Liang, 2003, p. 269). It situates a reader to experience the reading event, and it determines how a reader will engage with a text. *Stance* is influenced by the unique experiences and background each reader brings to the text and also by social context. The stance a reader adopts is "essential" to the act of reading; it is a reader’s "selective attitude," and reflects the reader's purpose (Rosenblatt, 2005, p. 10). Rosenblatt (1978) contends readers
make multiple transactions with texts and can view a text variably back and forth in their many transactions along a continuum between aesthetic and efferent responses. When a reader takes an efferent stance s/he is reading for information such as s/he would read an instruction manual. His or her attention focuses on "accumulating what is to be carried away at the end of the reading" (Rosenblatt, 2005, p. 72). When a reader takes an aesthetic stance, s/he is reading for enjoyment, not "the abstract concepts that the words point to, but also what those objects or referents strip up of personal feelings, ideas, and attitudes. Out of these ideas and feelings, a new experience, the story or poem, is shaped and lived through" (p. 73). The data from this study indicate preservice teachers responded to the young adult literature by alternating among three different stances—reader, teacher, and student—each one reflecting a different purpose for reading and a different appreciation of young adult literature. These three stances will be discussed in the following sections.

Reader Stance

Because the highest percentage of responses to young adult literature were statements reflecting personal engagement, this indicated preservice teachers' first approach to young adult literature was to transact with the stories—to have the "lived-through," aesthetic experience. The term reader stance was used to represent preservice teachers' initial purpose for reading for pleasure. Therefore, the
first pattern that emerged from the data was that preservice teachers perceived of young adult literature aesthetically. By taking an aesthetic reader's stance, preservice teachers first positioned themselves through reader response to engage with the literature.

Rosenblatt (1976) describes a reader's aesthetic stance as focusing on what the reader thinks, experiences, and feels as s/he is reading. It is a personal evocation or engagement with the text. Reader stance represents aesthetic, lived-through responses that preservice teachers had in their transactions with young adult literature.

Preservice teachers in the class were given an open-ended prompt to “Enjoy” their discussions, “to begin as you wish,” and “to begin with your own direction.” So with this freedom, preservice teachers began their discussions about young adult literature aesthetically, looking inwardly to “what is being created during the actual reading”—talking about their personal feelings and attitudes (Rosenblatt, 2005, p. 73). One student responded that she was “sucked into” Tuck Everlasting. Her partner, admittedly not an avid reader, “couldn’t put the book down,” and regretted wistfully that Winnie and Jesse did not end up together “17 forever!” Another student wrote that John and Lorraine in The Pigman were “cool kids” with “good hearts.” He vehemently disliked “that Norton kid” and was "glad that he got
bloody.” Another student wrote that she had been "angry and frustrated" that John let Norton into Mr. Pignati’s house.

Responding from a reader stance, preservice teachers participated in the stories as one student who wrote:

[I was] having feelings as if I was Mr. Pignati just arriving home from the hospital and seeing the kids and his wrecked house. I was also having feelings as if I was John and Lorraine in their situations.

As indicated from responses within the nine Purves and Beach (1973) codes, preservice teacher responses were multifaceted ranging from engagement to evaluation. They reacted to the characters, experienced the conflicts, and celebrated the resolutions. They lived the experiences. They related autobiographical stories that showed their connections with the books such as Casey who wrote in her response that if she had found a skull like Brennan in Canyons, "there would have been some screaming involved." They discussed literary devices in the books such as setting, description, and characters, and retold events from the books to make a point. They suggested their interpretations and offered their evaluations of the books.

Some transactions with the literature were negative. Several preservice teachers resisted Canyons with responses that reflected their life experiences.
Table 14.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comments from Preservice Teachers’ Reader’s Stance Which Were Negative.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marge</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think one of the reasons that I had such a difficult time reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>through this novel was my inability to relate to it. I've never seen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>canyons, except through pictures, and I don't feel like Paulsen gave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good descriptive details. During the part when Brennan was running</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from the rescue men I just sort of muddled through because I could</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>never get a good mental image of what was happening.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tommy</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The first several pages seemed to be really disconnected and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>confusing.... I have lived my life in western NC. I know nothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of the Apache culture, nor of canyons.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Teacher Stance*

Regan wrote in her response to *Canyons*, "As I was reading, many ideas of ways to incorporate the book into my classroom came to mind." The second highest percentage of responses preservice teachers made (16 percent) involved statements from students such as Regan responding about teaching with young adult literature. Because so many responses were about how the young adult literature could be used to teach middle grades students, it appeared preservice teachers had changed
their focus or purpose for reading from an aesthetic, reader stance (looking inward to how the books made them feel) to an efferent stance (looking outward to what they could take away from the books) reading with the altered purpose of finding what possibilities each book offered in relation to the curriculum. The term teacher stance was used to represent preservice teachers' second purpose for reading which was to think about ways to use young adult literature with middle school students.

With *Canyons*, students saw interdisciplinary connections such as studying about Native Americans, different cultures, and geography. Angelina suggested students study Native American tribal names and then create their own names. Lisa would have her class listen to tribal music while doing the activities. The skull could be tied into science. According to Ruth, *Canyons* would be effective in "taking the reader to a place they might not ever get to go, especially students here in NC."

As evidenced from the Teacher codes, responses were no longer about how preservice teachers engaged personally with young adult literature as readers. Their purpose for reading changed, shifting away from an aesthetic, inward-looking understanding and appreciation of young adult literature to a more efferent, utilitarian, outward-looking teacher stance. They focused upon understanding how they might teach using young adult literature. Lydia in responding to *Canyons* addressed her purpose in reading young adult literature:
While I'm reading young adult literature, I'm reading it with the perspective in mind of how will this appeal to the middle grades student? Has this book stood up to the test of time, and can the youth of today relate to the topic?

This shift of stance predicated the second pattern of preservice teachers moving from a reader stance to a teacher stance. Mary’s statement below suggests one possible explanation for preservice teachers shifting in their reading from a reader stance a teacher stance.

I want[ed] to know more about teaching. I don't really care what my classmates ... [thought] about Tuck Everlasting. I care how they would teach it, but I don't really care about how they think about that book (personal communication, December 4, 2006).

From a teacher stance, ways to teach the book, discovering what the author meant, looking at structure and plot, and determining how the book could be used across the curriculum became important considerations for response. For example, Gail saw "so much to work with in this short book [Canyons]." Tuck Everlasting seemed to lend itself well to "some very cool assignments" and "creative projects" as well as journal writing topics. Marrian speculated that she might show the video of Tuck Everlasting to her class “on like a free day or something, after we had discussed the book and did all the activities.” Some students suggested using a
book for character study or to analyze science fiction, or do sentence modeling. Bella saw interdisciplinary potential using *Tuck Everlasting* with science to learn about lifespan and history to “speculate about the future using the trends of the past.” Preservice teachers suggested ways to incorporate art "by drawing the town and the Tuck’s home." Margaret wanted students to do something musical to go along with the music box in *Tuck Everlasting*. The book would be good to use to “tell kids about literary devices and whatnot,” while Morgan thought it would be perfect “having the students recreate a workable ending as prelude to a sequel.”

Not all comments from the teacher stance pertained to teaching. Some responses were about the appropriateness of a using a certain book with middle grades students. For example, Esme decided she would not use *The Pigman* with her students because it didn't "have a positive feel to it." Bethany would put *The Pigman* in her classroom library rather than use it with as a whole class read because “it just mentions things that I would not want to address in a middle school classroom.” Before she would use this book with her students, Linda thought that it "should be cleared by parents ... only because of the situation between Lorraine and John." Margaret would send a permission slip home to parents also because she would be “uncomfortable dealing with those issues in the classroom." Arlene worried that by using a book such as *The Pigman* in her class, parents might think she was “encouraging these behaviors," while Rachael was not sure, “as a public
school educator, what I should or should not say about drugs, alcohol, or homosexuality.”

On the other hand, Jasmine recognized that reading a book such as *The Pigman* and discussing “issues such as drinking, smoking, drugs and sex, rather than avoidance may help students make the decision to stay clear of those things.” Rachael noted that she could probably use the book to teach what not to do, and Esme responded that, rather than “getting lectured or talked down to by an adult about not behaving” students could discuss the situation and put themselves “in the shoes of their parents or teachers.” Furthermore, through reading students might actually learn that their mistakes do not mean “the end of the world!” Rachael discussed the book with her cooperating teacher who told her it would be “a good tool to use to warn kids about drugs, drinking, skipping school and other unruly behavior. She said kids really take [it] as a lesson, not encouragement.”

*Student Stance*

Tabitha wrote that she was not sure what to say about *The Pigman*, "so I just rambled on about useless stuff, haha." Similarly Yvonne said, “I’m trying to think of something brilliant to say about the book—it’s not happening!” Thus evolved the third pattern—preservice teachers responding as students. Derived from statements or responses such as those of Tabitha’s and Yvonne’s, the third pattern to emerge from the data represented responses preservice teachers made apart
both from the literature and teaching. The term *student stance* was used to represent a third purpose of reading for preservice teachers which was to read the young adult books because reading was a required class activity. Preservice teachers responded 154 times or 5.9 percent overall from a student stance.

From a student stance, preservice teachers *performed* reader response. Perhaps they had difficulty connecting with the literature or perhaps they had no interest in connecting with the literature at all, so they ultimately perceived reader response as a requirement of the young adult literature class rather than as an opportunity to find personal meaning with literature.

One student asked her partner if she was ready so they could “get this thing done.” Another pair of students decided that they had talked enough because they had "dissected" the book pretty well. Several other students like Lisa and Esme indicated that they had talked enough (see Table 15 below). They asked their partners if there was anything else that needed to be discussed, signifying their belief that they had fulfilled the specific requirements of the assignment and were “done” with it.
Table 15.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comments from Preservice Teachers’ Student Stance.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lisa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Researcher notes about the responses of Thomas and Morgan’s response (below) to *The Pigman* pointed to their interest in getting the assignment over with as well. Their conversation appeared rushed and hurried, uncomfortable and unnatural, written in short, staccato sentences with a tendency to go off topic. They simply wanted to get it done.

**Thomas:** I really don’t have much more to say about The Pigman.... It seems like there is another book after this. I don’t really want to read it. However, I would maybe just like to read the Cliff Notes on the book or something.

**Morgan:** It is a little hard to keep talking about something you were not really into. It’s almost over.
Within this third pattern preservice teacher responses were neither reader focused nor teacher focused; rather they were student focused. From a student focus or student stance, preservice teachers' perceptions of reader response and young adult literature were linked to their understanding of doing class assignments. Responses were driven with the purpose of fulfilling a classroom requirement. Renesmee wrote, “I’m writing the first conversation of our online discussions, regarding the beginning chapters of The Pigman.” Tabitha clarified the assignment stating,

This is my first response for The Pigman. Supposedly, we’re supposed to do it 2 times, so like u respond to this one, and then I respond, then u respond again, or something like that.

For her second response she announced formally:

I am responding for the second time.... OK, you respond one more time, then we are done.

Responses such as Renesmee’s were what Rosenblatt (2005) would call efferent responses—formal, less conversational, more public, focused outwardly rather than inwardly, and unemotional. Students responding from an efferent, student stance were reading not for pleasure but for the purpose of doing what the teacher wanted them to do.
Also from a student stance, preservice teachers appeared uncomfortable and uneasy with the procedures for responding. Marrian began, "I guess this is what we are supposed to talk about, so I guess I will bounce it to you now!!"

Preservice teachers talked about the requirements of the assignment in their conversations. They asked each other how much they were required to write, how long they needed to talk, and how soon the assignment was due. They wrote their responses as Gavin noted, "So we would have something ... [the professor] could see."

In her interview, Becky said she much preferred responding face-to-face and intensely disliked responding online. She said she only participated because it was a requirement of the class:

Going back to that contrived feeling I felt like often, okay, we have to do this assignment. Let me try to fluff it up a little bit so that it doesn’t sound like I don’t really—not care but I’m not really as interested in conducting these kinds of conversations online (personal communication, November 11, 2005).

Gavin, like Becky, said that by the time they had already discussed the books with their friends outside of class, they did not have much to add online, so what they wrote on the computers was mainly, "So we would have something ... [the professor] could see" (personal communication, November 11, 2005).
Beverly (personal communication, December 1, 2006) expressed frustration at the "student mentality" of her group in discussing Canyons. They didn't even respond to what I said. I really did not like the way that one went down. Ok, I put down this thought and the next girl put down her thought and the next—none of it was like responding ... I thought the point was to look at other people's opinions and react to it and not just say just whatever is on your mind like, I like purple.... So I'm talking about Brennan's lack of purpose and how it reminds me of Erickson and then Leigh comes in and she's like, well, I don't know if I like the book. She doesn't even say anything about what I said. I really thought what I said was interesting—so it’s a lot easier to type something up about whether or not you like the book than to try and connect it to something else—avoiding having to become too involved.

Summary

This section has presented data relating preservice language arts teachers' perceptions of young adult literature through three stances they took in their reading. Responses from their conversations and comments made in their interviews suggest that preservice teachers perceive young adult literature from an emotional, aesthetic, reader stance as well as from an analytical, efferent teacher and/or student stance.
From a reader stance, preservice teacher responses focused on Rosenblatt’s (1978, 1991) “lived through” experience of reading, connecting with the books on an emotional level. Little effort was made to reflect on the books critically. A second pattern of response involved preservice teachers taking a teacher stance wherein their responses focused on how they would teach using the young adult literature. Responses forming the third pattern, student stance, were student responses that focused on classroom requirements or other statements that had nothing to do with reading or teaching.

The next section analyzes how preservice teachers' participation in reader response intersects with discussion—how reader response works to facilitate dialogue or conversation among the students.

Nature of Discussion

Introduction

Rosenblatt's transactional theory of reader response emphasizes that meaning is not limited to the words of a text. Rather, meaning evolves from an active transaction between reader and text wherein "meaning is being built up through the back-and-forth relationship between reader and text during a reading event" (Rosenblatt, 1999, p. 160). Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, meaning is an active transaction of reader with others wherein meaning is also being "built up" through the back-and-forth dialogue between multiple readers.
Rosenblatt (2005) equated the idea of the reader/text transaction to the idea of a verbal transaction or conversation between two people:

> A conversation is a temporal activity, a back-and-forth process. Each person has come to the transaction with an individual history, manifested in what has been termed a linguistic-experiential reservoir.... Both speaker and addressee contribute throughout to the spoken text (even if the listener remains silent) and to the interpretations that it calls forth as it progresses. Each must construct some sense of the other person.... Hence, the text is shaped transactionally by both speaker and addressee" (p. 5).

Lehman and Scharer (1996) recognize that while reader response is about the individual transaction between reader and text, the social transaction of reader, text, and others through discussion is critical in developing reader responses to literature. It is what takes a reader from a personal, individual understanding to a broader, more social appreciation of the text as a literary event. It allows the reader to see the text not just as an individual creation but as a group creation (Eeds & Peterson, 1994). The previous section considered reader response from the individual perspective of the reader. This section explores the transactional, social nature of reader response through shared dialogue with others.
Peterson (1984 as cited by Eeds and Wells, 1989) argues that literature discussions can propel reader response from simple reading and answering questions about literature to meaningful "dialogue." Dialogue results through literature conversations in two ways: through the transaction a reader has with a text and through the transaction a reader has with others about the text. Eeds and Wells (1989) undertook Peterson's challenge by devising five categories from which to examine dialogue in reader response. They determined that dialogue occurred within literature conversations as transactions with text and others through 1) conversation maintenance, 2) construction of simple meaning, 3) sharing personal stories, 4) active inquiry, and 5) valuing and evaluating. Using the same Eeds and Wells (1989) categories, the next section considers how preservice teachers perceive reader response through conversation with each other.

**Conversation Maintenance**

Eeds' (1989) first category, conversation maintenance, involves responses about the text directed to others which prompt, further, or stop conversations. It includes encouraging remarks, statements of empathy, and restatements or summaries. The conversation maintenance category intersects with the nine Purves and Beach response strategies as students use personal engagement statements to initiate conversation and description to retell or restate events from a book to further conversation.
Eeds and Peterson (1994) report that "almost all" conversations about literature starts with impressions of the literature, retelling of incidents in the book, or relating the book to personal experiences. In this study, preservice teachers used personal engagement strategies as the most common way to begin their conversations. Many students like Becky started their conversations by talking about their impressions of a book and then prompting their partners' responses by asking, "What do you think?"

Preservice teachers encouraged further conversation by their encouraging remarks and empathy. Regan told her partner, "You bring up a really good point ... I felt the same way you did," while Jasmine initiated her response by thanking her group for their "thought provoking insight."

In the heated discussion over Paulsen's treatment of Native Americans in *Canyons*, Lydia showed empathy for Judy saying,

It seems to me that you would have a very difficult time giving an unbiased opinion to your students, and that's okay.... You've come up with a lot of great ways to present this book which makes me think differently.

Researcher notes for Group 4 about *Canyons* found that Alice responded only one time—maybe because she considered herself in the minority. She liked *Canyons* when others in her group clearly did not. She called herself the "weirdo" of
the group because she liked the book. This created some conversational empathy from others in the group:

Jane: Ha, don’t feel weird. I think the neat thing about literature is that it’s open to interpretation.... I think you bring a valid point to the table in that every reader will see things differently. If everyone looked at everything we read the same, how boring would that be! This is something I’ll have to remember in my classroom ... not all my students will have the same reactions and interpretations of things.

Kristin: I think that this is what makes choosing a book for the entire classroom SO HARD! How do you please everyone? And not turn them off to reading? You want to encourage them to keep reading after the novel and brainstorm ideas but how can you if the book is absolutely horrible to them? This activity has really opened my eyes to bringing literature into the classroom—so thanks!

Summarizing the group’s discussion, Renee attempted to move the conversation forward by looking at turning the conversation to another topic. Regan also furthered conversation suggesting a new direction the conversation should take: "I look forward to discussing plot and characters."
**Group Construction of Simple Meaning**

Next, Eeds and Wells (1989) examined discussion transactions that evidenced students working together to create meaning and understanding through their literature conversations. To identify statements that implied group construction of simple meaning, Eeds and Wells used statements that were "retellings, references to descriptions and reiterated facts" as well as inferences (p. 9).

Preservice teachers in this study shared information through their transactions with each other, presented and explored ideas, received feedback, put together information, and collaborated to create meaning. For example, Tommy described a real life parallel with the businessman in *Tuck Everlasting* noting that the Tucks were like "our parents [who] are keeping us safe" from people like the man in the yellow suit who would take advantage of our innocence. His partner responded, "I didn't think of it that but, yeah, I think that is a great conclusion."

In their conversation about *Tuck Everlasting*, Gavin and Becky came to the shared conclusion that the toad was trying to kill itself, while Mary and Ruth’s dialogue helped them work out the themes of the book:

Mary: I think its strong points are that it teachers the circle of life and the importance of change.

Ruth: and the necessity of death, too.
Margaret and Arlene recognized connections in the moral dilemma in *Tuck Everlasting* to theories of Kohlberg, while Jillian and Devon discussed the significance of the frog.

In *The Pigman* students talked about the significance of the pigs to the overall story. Rosina believed the broken pigs contributed to Mr. Pignati’s death as he came to realize "life was no longer worth living because what he loved was gone." Preservice teachers also recognized both Mr. Pignati and the two young people came together in the book out of needs—"Mr. Pignati needed friends and the adolescents needed someone in their lives who accepted them and gave them attention."

The changing relationship between Brennan and his mother in *Canyons* proved to be an important topic of many conversations as did the coming of age theme. Also, students talked frequently about the dual narrators, one from the past, the other from the present, and how that sometimes made it difficult to understand the book at the beginning. Another area students elaborated on was the mystical connection between the main character and the skull of the Native American boy. Angelina, for example, thought the correlation between that scene where Brennan is running from his would-be rescuers to return the skull and Coyote Runs is fleeing death from the soldiers was "a bit extreme" and unrealistic. Beverly saw a connection between Brennan's self-imposed task and "Erickson's stage of
identity vs. identity confusion," and for Tabitha, "it came together" with the two mothers each frantically searching for their sons.

There was evidence that student thinking had changed by what their peers had said (Pate-Moulton, Klages, Erickson, & Conforti, 2003-2004). Often students commented that their partner made them think differently about a book. For example, Charlotte stated, "It was interesting to hear your take ... I hadn't thought about their relationship [John and Lorraine in The Pigman] to each other and how they might view something differently." Similarly, Esme said to her partner about The Pigman, "I guess Bobo did love him. I never really saw it until you said that." More examples are provided below:

Table 16.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preservice Teacher</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nell</td>
<td>Wow, girls! Great job with the thoughtful comments. After reading everyone's responses a lot of ideas came to the table that I hadn't even considered earlier.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judy</td>
<td>I have had a great time reading everybody's posts on this book; it never fails to amaze me how different pairs of eyes reading the same text can produce so many different thoughts and perspectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becky</td>
<td>I guess after finishing the novel I came away with the conclusion that other people's opinions can truly have an impact on how I read, or more specifically, what I like to read. This made me think about how important it is to remain unbiased in presenting literature to students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 16 continued.

| Margaret | I think you made some really good points. As I was reading and reflecting on the book, the relationship aspect did not really cross my mind. |

**Personal Involvement**

According to Totten (1998), “for a reader to get the most from a work of literature, he or she must bring personal insights, a knowledge base, and past experiences to bear in reading it” (p. 31). Conversational responses within this category involved personal associations and personal responses with the literature, again paralleling the response strategies of personal engagement. Preservice teachers transacted with the text and with others dialoguing about their personal insights and stories, including their perceptions and interpretations, suggested either by a book or by the conversations. In this way they expanded upon the ways a book might hold personal significance for them, and they also filled in gaps left by authors. For example, many students reflected personally about how sad *Tuck Everlasting* made them feel. One student “actually cried ... when the Tucks found Winnie's grave.” Many students related prior experiences such as the two students who remembered reading *Huckleberry Finn* and how it reminded them of *Tuck Everlasting*. Casey said that the man in the yellow suit reminded her of the man in the yellow hat from *Curious George*. One student said she kept picturing her
"grandmother's old house that she lived in like 10 years ago up in New Jersey."

Another student said she could "See the trees in my head and Jesse and Winnie meeting. I could see them in the boat, and her talking to the frog."

A different sort of personal involvement arose from discussions about *The Pigman*. Some students like Becky looked at the relationship between Mr. Pignati and adolescents as one that would appear strange and even dangerous in today's world stating, "I thought about what could have happened if the Pigman wasn't a harmless, lonely old man. What if he were a criminal with less than good intentions?"

Gavin talked about throwing a party when he was a teenager similar to the one in *The Pigman*. He also thought the story "made me feel like I was hanging out with them in the cemetery having a beer and listening to an interesting story."

Drinda commented about being friends in middle school with a boy who reminded her of John.

Students responded personally to *Canyons* by relating to the main character as a runner. Rachael thought as she read *Canyons* that she was reading a work of nonfiction, and she also noted how she could identify with how unwavering and deliberate Brennan was in the book because, "If I start doing something, sometimes I will stay up all night completing a task." Beverly thought the ending was sad for Brennan whose quest comes to an end but she is able to fill in the gaps the author
leaves in the story by responding, "I am thinking his deeper friendship with his teacher, and his new found connection with his mom will allow him to fill this hole."

Active Inquiry

In their study of the nature of discussion, Eeds and Wells (1989) identify active inquiry within literary conversations when students hypothesize, interpret, verify, explore ideas, question, or make predictions about characters and events in the books.

Preservice teachers in this study hypothesized about *Tuck Everlasting* in their literature conversations wondering if anyone else besides the Tucks had found immortality drinking from the water. They speculated how middle school students would view the idea of immortality. Jillian and Devon wondered how they would react if they had been in the story. Jillian said, "I thought about it for a while, and I don't know what I would have done—if I'd have drank the water and tried to find Jess after all that time." They also conjectured about "the implications of living forever" and "all the things that you would leave behind," and they wondered if Winnie ever regretted her decision not to drink the water. They even questioned how the toad felt about living forever. Margaret and Arlene explored the idea of how Jesse in *Tuck Everlasting* could act like he was 17 when he was really hundreds of years old, and why Winnie chose not to drink the water. Another important point
of conjecture and debate that came up in *Tuck Everlasting* was about the murder of the man in the yellow suit.

Students who took the lead in the discussions used questions to provoke the dialogue or seek affirmation or clarification. For example, Jasmine asked her group, "Do you think it was symbolic when Norton smashed the first pig Mr. Pignati ever gave his wife?" Several other students wondered about why Mr. Pignati kept his wife's death a secret, and some even speculated that he might have killed his wife. Rosina believed John in *The Pigman* was treated unfairly by his parents. She sought affirmation from her peers when she asked why John's parents seemed to have lower expectations for him than they did for his siblings, and wondered how teachers might be able to help students find confidence to follow their dreams. Others wanted to know how things turned out for John and Lorraine—did they "get together?"

In *Canyons*, the skull that Brennan found seemed to precipitate thoughtful active inquiry. One student hypothesized that "the spirit in the skull thing is tied to Native American religious beliefs," while another student explored the idea of "what would I do if I found a skull with a bullet wound?"

Lisa wondered why *Canyons* starts out talking about family but never seems to return to that subject. Her partner Arlene verifies what Lisa says and moves the
conversation forward with her prediction: "I did get the sense, though, as the story moved on that his relationship would improve with his mom."

*Valued and Evaluated*

In their explanation of the nature of discussion, Eeds and Wells’ (1989) final category is valuing and evaluating literature. Through evaluation in literature conversations, students operate at a "meta-reader level" (p. 26) which helps them not only critique a book but also look at the underlying reasons for how they come to judge a book. This category is evidenced in comments preservice teachers made in response to the young adult literature.

Some preservice teachers expressed dismay at first about having to read *Canyons*. Becky and Margaret said they approached it with difficulty, while Regan said she had to make herself read it. Margaret, Becky, and Regan, along with others in the class, attributed their reluctance to read the book from negative comments made by other students in the class who had already read the book. Their first evaluation of the book, based on transactions with others, had led them to believe *Canyons* would not appeal to them. Once they began a personal transaction with the book, however, their evaluations changed. Margaret stated that even with her initial reluctance, she "really enjoyed the book." Regan as well said, "Surprisingly, I fell right into the book enjoying every chapter told by the two characters." Their personal transaction with the book changed how they valued
the book and caused them to re-examine their earlier evaluations of the book. As Becky observed, "I guess after finishing the novel I came away with the conclusion that other people's opinions can truly have an impact on how I read, or more specifically, what I like to read," and Regan added, 'It just goes to show that literature appeals to people in different ways."

From transactions with the text and with others, Ruth recognized value in *The Pigman* for young adult readers who could share the story of an adolescent protagonist who came from a single family home. Gail liked that *The Pigman* "didn't deny who an adolescent reader is, or what their life is like....The story shows characters growing up and learning just like our students will hopefully be doing."

Olivia and Victoria judged that the man in the yellow suit could not be trusted in *Tuck Everlasting* and equated him to "a modern day business tycoon," noting how "he took advantage of the situation to gain the land with the magical stream."

**Summary**

The application of Eed and Wells' (1989) discussion categories to the data in this study reveals that preservice teacher literature conversations built upon the nine individual response strategies they used initially to transact with the literature. Transacting aesthetically and personally with the literature first, they then transacted with the books and each other through literature conversations, extending the individual experience into a social one, creating meaningful dialogue.
Through conversation maintenance, they supported each other with dialogue that was supportive, encouraging, and empathetic. They shared how they connected on a personal level with a book. Through group construction of simple meaning, they talked together, sharing information, giving feedback, exploring ideas, and making inferences. Through personal involvement they shared personal responses they had to the literature, and through active inquiry they made predictions and tested hypotheses with each other; verified beliefs, expressed ideas, and raised questions. Finally, through the discussion category of valued and evaluated, they used dialogue to evaluate the books and to evaluate themselves—to explore why they responded the way they did.

*Nature of Technology*

Research shows that preservice teachers gain confidence in using newer technologies such as computer-mediated communication and are more likely to use newer technologies as inservice teachers if they have positive, authentic experiences using it in their teacher education courses (Stuhlmann, 1998; Pope, Hare, & Howard, 2002). In addition to practicing with newer technologies, experiences in professional education courses with technologies such as computer-mediated communication allow preservice teachers opportunities to explore and practice different and unfamiliar pedagogies such as reader response (Putnam & Borko, 2000). This final data section of this study explores the second part of the research
question: How preservice teachers perceive reader response through computer-mediated communication.

Preservice teachers conducted asynchronous CMC discussions with *The Pigman* and *Canyons*, and synchronous chats with *Tuck Everlasting*. Students responded in the online environment to the technology and through the technology in ways representative of their responses to the literature, responding personally, interpersonally, and reflectively.

Personal responses to the technology included comments about the nature of responding online, technical difficulties, and statements about personal comfort levels with the technology. They described responding through CMC as fun or frustrating. They talked about being at ease with the technology. They liked the expediency and immediacy of it.

Students like Rosina, responding personally, noting her enthusiasm for the online conversations. She wrote, "I really like this type of responding.... I always hear things I hadn't even thought of." Natalie agreed, "I like these discussions way better than the others," while another student added, "This is going to be fun!"

Most of the frustration that preservice teachers expressed about the technology came from the first year's group in the study. Table 17 reveals responses students made about their personal frustrations with the technology.
Table 17.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preservice Teacher Comments Expressing Frustration with Technology.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Becky</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Nell</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Charlotte</strong></td>
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</tbody>
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Neither of the students interviewed from the first year cared for doing reader response electronically. Neither student was comfortable with the technology, and both responded personally with complaints about access and time constraints.

Gavin stated,

I like working with technological things, but I don’t have that much access to the things. And now I don’t have time to come here and fiddle with them as much as I would like to, so that I can learn better. I can get the basics down and I can use the basics, but I usually can’t get too much further than that.
Just it was so hard to coordinate the time to get everybody together and have the discussion and then there was the time constraint—how long we can do it because some people had to go (personal communication, November 11, 2005).

The following two years of the study saw fewer technology glitches, and students seemed more accepting of the technology. There were few to no negative comments within the transcripts from their book conversations. The students interviewed in the third year confirmed they had no problems with access or coordination. Students were becoming more comfortable with technology in general so frustrations were at a minimum. The only real technical difficulty the interviewees mentioned in the third year was that they had trouble finding the discussion forum.

Only one of the students interviewed from the third class rated herself as uncomfortable with the technology. Beverly joked that she was at least "better than my grandmother or my mom" when it came to using technology. "I know enough to get by." She explained that she did not have a home computer until her junior year of high school so she felt she had gotten "behind the curve." She explained that she could get on the Internet and she could chat, but she could not yet download music and was not comfortable at searching online. She added, "I just
like for things to be simple .... I've gotten a lot better since I've been in college. I've gotten my own computer and I'm on it all the time."

While Beverly did not feel technologically savvy, she was adept at using the chat feature. Her bigger concern was not being a part of the cohort of language arts students in her class. She said it made her feel anxious about having to find a partner for the online assignment. She worried "a little bit" about the technology, but was relieved that responses could be conducted through email. Finding the discussion forum was a bigger problem for her.

The other students who were interviewed later in the study felt at ease with the technology. Alice (personal communication, November 30, 2006) said she knew a lot about computers because her father worked with computers, and Mary (personal communication, December 4, 2006) said she not only liked using computers, she felt "disconnected" when she was not online. Unlike the first class, there were no mentions in the other classes about technical difficulties. Though the students did not mention any problems, one transcript in the last class evidenced a technical break in the chat session. When Victoria and Olivia's synchronous session went down in the middle of their conversation, they were able to reconnect and continue. Neither Victoria nor Olivia seemed flustered by the break in their conversation but it was evident from the transcript of their discussion that the technical snafu created a significant break in their thoughts. Before the
connection crashed they had been talking passionately about the author's purpose for the book but that train of thought ended abruptly when the connection died and was not continued when they reconnected.

Mary (personal communication, December 4, 2006) reported that she and her partner forgot to save the transcript from their synchronous conversation and it became more of a drudgery and "less sincere" to have to repeat the discussion.

Both students from the first year's class saw the online activities as redundant to the classroom discussion. Becky (personal communication, November 9, 2005) even called the discussions “contrived.” She said,

Yeah, so we did these, you know, discussions online or with our partners and then came back in class and then did it again. And so it was like, do we have to really revisit this?

Gavin echoed Becky’s sentiments:

That really seemed a lot like we were just going through formality, and most of the things we were typing was just hype—something to have on the computer. So we would have something ... [the professor] could see. Because we were in the class all the time and if we had anything we talked about it, we would talk about it when we’d see each other. So by the time we got to the computer, it was like, well, what do I put in here? But you had to have something, so we would
type a bunch of nonsense, and a lot of time if I wondered about
something or had a question about something I would put it in there
...You participated because you had to. (personal communication,
November 11, 2005).

The students interviewed in the last class were much more positive about the
type a bunch of nonsense, and a lot of time if I wondered about
something or had a question about something I would put it in there
experience. Mary (personal communication, December 4, 2006) liked that she could
chat about a book as opposed to writing a formal paper. She said it was quicker,
she did not have to worry so much about the mechanics of writing, and "you can
just submit it and it's done." However, Mary was disappointed that the online book
discussions were only done at the beginning of the semester. She thought the
technology had been injected into the class just to give students a "taste" of how
they might do online book discussions with their students. She felt there would have
been more value, a "fuller experience," if the online discussions "had flowed"
throughout the whole semester.

Both students from the first class preferred doing reader response face-to-
face in the classroom than online:

Becky: I’m so much more interested in doing things in a classroom
rather than in technology—you know, I’d rather be face-to-face
with a person talking rather than doing this on the technology
(Becky, personal communication, November 9, 2005).
Gavin: I heard people talk about *NetForum* and this is another way to do it, but I preferred to meet with people in groups instead of going to *NetForum* because I wasn’t that comfortable using it (Gavin, personal communication, November 11, 2005).

Becky and Gavin also both preferred the face-to-face environment because it was easier to convey emotion and feelings, and there was less chance for misinterpretation.

Becky: I think it’s much better conveyed in face-to-face interaction and this whole smiley face culture thing, I hate that! I think it’s just like—they’re so often misinterpreted. Sarcasm isn’t really able to be conveyed very well (personal communication, November 9, 2005).

Gavin: Because when you are talking to somebody you can see their eyes and you understand the emotions, but it isn’t like that over the computers. So you have to word things more, you are sending your emotions through, across the computers. You actually had to be a little bit more descriptive about how you feel about things. Specifically, I remember that one part of *The Pigman* making me cry, and actually I had to write I was in tears for that (personal communication, November 11, 2005).
While Becky found no redeeming qualities to doing reader response online, Gavin did see the possibilities:

It was okay overall. I liked it a lot because it gave me an extra place to share my feelings and thoughts, and to discuss anything that I wanted to hear about before the class meets again. It was nice to have that option out there and things like that available. Like I said, some of that seemed formality but another time it was fun to see what your partner thought about things, so overall it was okay. I definitely wouldn’t say it was excellent, but it was all right (personal communication, November 11, 2005).

Interpersonal responses to the technology included comments about talking with and learning from their peers. Preservice teachers described responding through CMC as helping them understand the books better. They commented about feeling more comfortable responding online than in the face-to-face environment. They also talked about difficulties encountered in having to work collaborative with others.

Preservice teachers interviewed from the third class preferred the online discussions over face-to-face especially because it helped them understand the books, it was efficient, and they appreciated that it gave them a voice in the class.
Beverly, Mary, and Rylee all described themselves as students who did not like to speak up in class but were uninhibited when it came to responding online:

Beverly: I've never raised my hand in class but online you are anonymous and so you can say whatever you think without everyone turning and looking at you and saying, "Oh, my gosh, I can't believe she said that! That was dumb!" So when you are online you are anonymous (personal communication, December 2, 2006).

Mary: I was able to say all that I wanted to say instead of face-to-face. I'd be the one in the back who wouldn't say anything - I'm just not going to share all my feelings in class (personal communication, December 4, 2006).

Rylee: It didn't matter how much I wanted to say something, I wasn't going to say anything [in class], but if its online ... you're kind of ... you don't have to look at people which was my big thing, I didn't want the eyes on me ... that was a big thing when I was in middle school— I didn't want the eyes on me. I didn't want anyone looking at me (personal communication, November 30, 2006).

Rylee’s problem with the online discussion was not with the technology or the activity; it was with her peers. She described herself as "iffy" about the
asynchronous experience with the discussion forum only because she said people would wait to the last minute to do the activity:

I knew something like that would happen because people have so many things going on or they forget to do it, and it's just hard to do it because you never know who's going to get it done. And if your work is based off of what everyone else posts, it's hard to discuss (personal communication, November 30, 2006).

She found the asynchronous discussions were not immediate and too often responses seemed insincere. The synchronous discussions, however, were "right there, and we could do it and get it done."

Mary suggested that the reader response activity might have been more effective if the preservice teachers had responded about the books through the synchronous chat and used the asynchronous discussion forum to discuss how they would teach the books. Like Rylee, Mary thought the online discussions were immediate and efficient. She liked the immediacy of the chat, as well as the thinking time the forum provided:

Online is more efficient and I can get more out. I feel like I am not wasting anyone's time. The chat is one-on-one and so you wouldn't get as broad a range of opinions, but it's quicker. The forum, you get to see what everyone is saying. There is value to both. You can be
anywhere doing it. You don’t have to be in class. You might think of something hours later and add it while in class you don’t have time. If you think of something later, it’s too late. Window’s closed (personal communication, December 1, 2006).

Preservice teacher CMC responses to the technology evidenced reflective comments as well. They liked the opportunity CMC afforded them to think before responding, and they reflected on using the technology with their own students in the future. They also began to see technology as a tool for teaching.

For Beverly online discussion provided more freedom. She liked how she could think before talking in the asynchronous forum, and she mentioned efficiency as well: "You can say what you want to say without rambling, and you can say it in the best way (personal communication, December 1, 2006)."

By the third year students were beginning to think of the computer-mediated communication as a tool. Mary responded to her partner about the potential of using technology with her own students in talking about *The Pigman*:

You could possibly do a writing activity like John and Lorraine did with middle school students. They could be given a prompt or problem or life experience to write about asynchronously, back and forth, with their different opinions and writing styles. I think it could help students find their own voices.
In fact, all students who were interviewed said they would consider using computer-mediated communication with their students. They worried whether access might be a barrier, but they definitely saw potential. They thought it provided a much more comfortable forum for the students to talk. Not only would all students have a voice but also no one would be able to hide in the back of the classroom. They would not have to be concerned about someone looking at them when they talked, and, best of all, there would be "no one judging you" (Rylee, personal communication, November 30, 2006).

Summary

Preservice teachers in the first year's class had much different perspectives about computer-mediated communication than those in the last year's class. At the beginning of the study, CMC tools were not as commonly used as they were later in the study. Students interviewed from the first year of the study knew about CMC tools such as chats and discussion forums but did not use them on a regular basis. Students in succeeding years chatted online on a regular basis and had more experiences using discussion forums in school. While preservice teachers in the first class saw value in CMC tools as teaching tools, they preferred face-to-face discussions. Preservice teachers in the last class liked the thinking time, the efficiency, and the immediacy of CMC tools, and they especially liked the voice they provided to students who preferred not to speak up in class.
Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the data from this study which addressed preservice teachers' perceptions of young adult literature through reader response. The data suggested that preservice teachers used nine personal response strategies to relate to young adult literature from an aesthetic reader stance. From the teacher and student codes, it appeared that preservice teachers also perceived of young adult literature from efferent teacher and student stances, responding about how they would teach with young adult literature, and how they perceived of young adult literature as a class activity. Most responses reflected student likes or dislikes about the books, lacked critical perspective, and avoided confrontations.

Through discussion, preservice teachers broadened their perspective of young adult literature as a literary event involving an individual transaction with text to a more social understanding of a literary event as the transaction of reader, text, and others.

Preservice teachers responded personally, interpersonally, and reflectively to using the CMC technology. Their perceptions of doing reader response online changed over the course of three years that the study was conducted. Early on technical issues plagued students and made online reader response seem frustrating and superficial. Students in later classes did not seem to have the same technical challenges with the technology and perceived reader response through CMC as a fun
activity that facilitated all student voices being heard. All preservice teachers saw benefits in using CMC in the future with their own students. They like its efficiency, expediency, and ability to support deeper thinking.

The next chapter discusses the value in these findings in relation to the study’s research question, and proposes additional avenues for research.
CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter presents a summary and discussion of findings from a qualitative study conducted over three years with preservice language arts teachers in a young adult literature class with online asynchronous and synchronous reader response with three young adult novels. The study focuses on the transcripts of students' reader response conversations that resulted from online chat and discussion forum sessions through which the preservice teachers discussed the novels.

The following research question guided the study: What is the nature of preservice language arts teachers’ participation with young adult literature through reader response, and what role does computer-mediated communication play in facilitating this participation? This question examined three areas of interest:

1. how preservice teachers perceive young adult literature through reader response;
2. how reader response facilitates discussion, and
3. how preservice teachers perceive reader response mediated through computer-mediated communication.

Each fall undergraduate preservice language arts teachers in a young adult literature class responded asynchronously through email or a discussion forum to *The Pigman* by Paul Zindel and *Canyons* by Gary Paulsen and synchronously through
a chat program to *Tuck Everlasting* by Natalie Babbitt. Transcripts from students' electronic conversations in the three classes served as the primary data for this study. Researcher notes, student and instructor interviews, and the class website provided additional information. Students responded in the discussion forum to the following open-ended prompt:

Please find below your group and reply to that link based on my suggestions below. Enjoy! In your asynchronous group discussions please post and respond to each other at least two times. You may begin as you wish—ie., by describing your experience of reading the book, your view of its quality, questions you have, opinions you have about the characters, plot development, literary elements, etc. You might also think and talk about any personal experiences you have had that the book elicits or even extraneous connections you made/make to the novel. This is a chance for open discussion before we focus in class.

A similar prompt was used for the synchronous discussions.

The first area of interest within the research question for this study asked how preservice teachers perceived young adult literature through reader response. Perceptions were explained through the nature of their engagement with young adult literature in two ways: (1) through strategies they used to respond to young
adult literature, and (2) through stances or purposes for reading they used as they responded. Data analysis found that preservice teachers used "a sophisticated repertoire of responding options" (Beach & Hynds, 1991, p. 459) or strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate young adult literature. The nature of their participation was personal and involved. They used autobiographical stories to relate incidents from their lives to incidents in the books. They also responded to the books' literary value by sharing their ideas and interpretations of themes and character motivation. They evaluated the books in terms of relevance and significance to young adult readers. In addition to responses about the literature, they also responded about how they might use the literature to teach, and they responded off-topic about the class or other activities.

The nature of their participation with reader response can also be explained from three different purposes or stances for reading they used to respond: a reader stance, a teacher stance, and a student stance. Preservice teacher responses were primarily two dimensional focusing on a surface discussion of the literature and on a discussion of the literature as a teaching tool. They tended to avoid evaluating the books on a critical level. They responded aesthetically (inwardly) and emotionally from a reader's stance, engaging with the books on a personal, reflective level, but they also responded efferently (outwardly) and impersonally from a student stance and a teacher stance.
From the transcripts of their conversations, it was evident through their teacher stance and student stance that for some preservice teachers, reader response was not how they had been schooled to respond to literature. They seemed uncomfortable with so much freedom. They responded to the books and to each other as if answering an implied teacher's questions or writing something appropriate for a book report assignment. They tended to follow the prompt specifically by limiting their responses to the minimum required. Many seemed unaccustomed to voicing their own opinions or to hearing their own voices. As Rylee explained her previous experience, "I don't think I ever felt comfortable in middle or high school saying I didn't like a book because the way I think it was presented you weren't allowed to dislike it" (personal communication, November 30, 2006). With so little experience responding aesthetically to a text, they responded as they had been trained, unemotionally and efferently from a student's stance or from a teacher's stance.

The second area of interest in this study of reader response examined how reader response facilitated preservice teachers' discussion. The response strategies preservice teachers used with the books were interspersed within and contributed to their discussion strategies with their peers. These discussions strategies were analyzed through 1) conversation maintenance, 2) construction of simple meaning, 3) sharing personal stories, 4) active inquiry, and 5) valuing and evaluating. As with
the response strategies to the literature, preservice teachers responded to each other with discussion strategies on a personal level by sharing autobiographical stories, making empathetic and encouraging statements, and creating rapport with each other. They shared and co-created different views and understandings of the books, offered interpretations and validations, and asked questions not only of the books but also of themselves in an effort to understand the books and their responses to the books.

Findings indicated preservice teachers actively transacted with the text, and for many their personal transactions were extended naturally in discussions with their peers about young adult literature. Through reader response conversations, students took the internal process of interacting with a text to an external level extending understandings, reflections, and interpretations through the give and take of dialogue with others. From a sociocultural perspective (Rogoff, 1990; 1995; Vygotsky, 1978; 1986), talking together through the activity of reader response provided preservice teachers with an opportunity to verbalize their personal, internal transactions with the texts as an "apprenticeship in academic discourse," allowing them to transform their understandings and appropriate other's knowledge and perceptions as their own (Pomerantz, 1998). Unfortunately, they also bounded and limited their apprenticeships by steering conversations away from any topics that
might be discordant or confrontational, avoiding the “cognitive dissonance” that might challenge strongly held beliefs (Hughes & Scharber, 2008, p. 101).

The responses many preservice teachers had to the young adult books prompted electronic "literature conversations" (Daniels, 1994) or "grand conversations" (Eeds & Wells, 1989) with their peers. Through their talk they not only debated the value of young adult books, they also collaborated with each other to make meaning, to consider different perspectives, and to reflect on teaching strategies.

The third area of interest in this study focused on how preservice teachers perceived reader response mediated through computer-mediated communication. Findings indicated preservice teachers responded to the use of CMC for reader response similarly to the way they responded to the literature—personally, interpersonally, and reflectively. They responded personally about technical difficulties, about their comfort level in utilizing technology, and about the overall experience of using the technology. Interpersonal responses detailed their experiences of responding with peers in the online environment, and reflective responses mentioned the advantages of CMC as a discussion tool and as a teaching tool.

Perceptions of using CMC for reader response changed over the course of the study. Students interviewed in the first year of the study spoke of being
uncomfortable with technology and expressed deep frustrations with doing reader response online. They found it superficial and unnecessary and admitted they much preferred responding with their peers face-to-face. These students also noted that they had not had much experience either in high school or college classes with technology either seeing their instructors use it or using it themselves. Students interviewed later in the study mentioned minimal, if any, difficulty with the technology, and overall talked about the experience as exciting, efficient, thought-provoking, and something they could see replicating with their own students one day. While these findings may indicate a sampling issue, it is likely that due to rapid technology advances, students in the later years of the study had more access to CMC tools, used them more often than students in the first year of the study, and were therefore more comfortable with the technology.

This study offers three findings that are significant and contribute to the literature:

Through the activity of reader response preservice teachers:

- respond initially to young adult literature from an aesthetic reader stance transacting with literature on a personal, engaged level. However, this stance is often subdued or curtailed by efferent stances they ultimately take as students and as teachers in training.
appropriate tools (dialogue, reader response, collaborative talk, literature conversations) for discussing young adult literature which help their discussions evolve from the one-way direction of monology to the shared interaction of reciprocal, dialogic talk;

appropriate CMC as a tool to respond as readers, as teachers, and as students. CMC affords preservice teachers a space to talk without the instructor; to role-play teaching. Within CMC preservice teachers create a place for their teacher voice.

Discussion of the Findings

*How Preservice Teachers Perceive Young Adult Literature through Reader Response*

Porter (2001) found "an eerie mix of voices and audiences" in his students' responses. He described finding a 'readerly' voice which then shifted to a 'teacherly' tone (p. 583). Like Porter's students, the preservice teachers in this study responded to the novels with multiple voices. Many responded on a deeply personal, aesthetic level, but this aesthetic stance was often replaced when students switched voices to respond as teachers in training or as students. Apol, Sakuma, Reynolds, and Rop (2003) assert that the preservice teachers in their study had "a limited vision of what it means to respond to literature" (p. 446). Their students focused on pedagogy over response. They resisted responding in "complex ways," to children's literature opting instead to build repertoires of which books to use and
how to use them. The students in this study responded similarly by shifting from a reader stance to a teacher stance in their responses to young adult literature. From the lens of the sociocultural of learning (Leont’ev, 1978, 1981; Rogoff, 1995; Wertsch, 1998), the preservice teachers' change in stance is not surprising and somewhat understandable.

According to Wertsch (1998), sociocultural analysis helps explain the relationship between human action and the cultural, institutional, and historical contexts or activity systems in which activity occurs. Preservice teachers in this study operated within numerous sociocultural activity systems. They operated within the activity system of their language arts class but also within the larger, institutional activity system of school—both K-12 and university. Their perceptions of the activity of reader response, their responses to the books and the stances they took, can be understood by examining their goals or needs within their multiple activity systems.

Participation in an activity system is driven by the need to achieve a certain goal, object, or outcome (Beach, 2000). Within the activity system of the young adult literature classroom where preservice teachers studied to become language arts teachers, their perception of the activity of reader response was fragmented by conflicting needs—the need to respond to young adult literature as readers, as teachers, and as students. As language arts students, their objective was to
appreciate young adult literature. As preservice teachers, their own objective was to learn methods for teaching young adult literature, and as university students, their objective was to pass the course and ultimately graduate with a teaching degree.

Within the social context of the classroom, preservice teachers responded to the text and to each other as readers, talking about young adult literature. They focused their attention on "experiential as well as referential elements" of the texts (Purves, 1991, p. 213). They used the text as a tool to draw from and synthesize past reading experiences into new ones. Within this context they embraced Rosenblatt's evocation, the "lived-through meaning," of the stories, and participated in "the tensions, conflicts, and resolutions of the images, ideas, and scenes as they unfold[ed]" (Rosenblatt, 2005b, p. 11). They used reader response as a tool to experience the literature. They hated the man in yellow from *Tuck Everlasting* and fretted over Winnie's decision to drink the water. They delighted in the budding adolescent romance in *The Pigman*, fumed at John and Lorraine's betrayal, and cried at Mr. Pignati's death. They dodged snakes as they fled across the desert with Brendan in *Canyons* and reminisced about the angst of adolescence. They responded with the object or goal of developing appreciation for young adult literature. They experienced learning through young adult literature as a social activity built upon collaborative talk. They practiced learning from the repartee of a
dialogic classroom. Seeing positive, aesthetic responses from peers helped Rylee (personal communication, November 30, 2006) think differently about a book she might not have liked. It gave her pause to consider that the book might have redeeming qualities she had failed to recognize. Judy wrote to her peers during their conversation, “It never fails to amaze me how different pairs of eyes reading the same text can produce so many different thoughts and perspectives.”

Rosenblatt (2005b) believes readers can have 'innumerable separate transactions" with literature (p. 1). This perspective emerged in this study from preservice teachers' varied transactions to the texts. Competing with, and in many cases, overtaking aesthetic responses or 'literary' readings were those more efferent or 'nonliterary' readings (Rosenblatt, 2005a, p. 34) preservice teachers made from a teacher and a student stance. From a teacher stance, their participation in the young adult literature "discourse community" (Gee, 1996) of like-minded preservice teachers encouraged their identity as teachers, and thus they responded as teachers moving away from an aesthetic to an efferent stance with a focus no longer on enjoyment of the literature but rather on "abstracting out and analytically structuring the ideas, information, directions, or conclusions to be retained, used, or acted on after the reading event" (Rosenblatt, 2005b, p. 11). Similar to what Cox and Many (1992a) reported, preservice teachers in this study saw it as their responsibility to plan to teach the young adult novels, "to tease everything out of
the book that the author put there" (pp. 122-123). From the teacher's stance, preservice teachers found value in discussing how the books might be used to teach future students, and they justified using or not using the books within the curriculum. They suggested writing prompts and interdisciplinary connections; they pictured themselves using the books for lessons on character education or adolescent relationships; they wrestled over scenes in a book that might disturb parents; and they struggled with whether they would use a book with the whole class or offer it on an individual basis.

Their responses were also tempered by a "limited vision" of young adult literature as something they needed to learn how to teach (Apol, Sakuma, Reynolds, & Rop, 2008, p. 446), and so they took an efferent stance. The young adult books were effectively "depoeticize" signaling what Purves (1991) called "the end of reading" (p. 216). For the preservice teachers in this study emotional, personal connections to the young adult literature were frivolous and short-lived. It is evident that Mary's object or need to learn how to teach with the books outweighed her need to enjoy and appreciate them:

I'm comfortable with everyone [listening to responses] but it's like let's use our time some way else. I want to know more about teaching. I don't really care what my classmate cares about Tuck Everlasting. I care how they would teach it, but I don't really care about how they
think about that book, and if I did, we could do it outside of class.

Let's listen to [our professor] talk about actually teaching it (personal communication, December 4, 2006).

Gee (1989) argues that the ways we read and respond do not "flow full-blown" from one's soul, rather they are learned through social settings and enculturation within a certain social practice such as school. There are few "untrained" voices and any consideration of reader response must factor in the role of school (Purves, 1979, p. 809). What Beverly remembered from school was that the teachers did most of the talking. She could excuse this because they had "so much to cover that they need[ed] to tell us what we need[ed] to know. There just wasn't time for discussion" (personal communication, December 1, 2006).

Purves (1991) laments the "authoritarian voices," that govern students and says that readers like the preservice teachers in this study are not "blank slates" (p. 210). The participants in this study came to the text with prior experiences, prior reading, and prior schooling which they could not avoid in their interaction with texts. Rylee (personal communication, November 30, 2006) remembered from prior high school experiences feeling like she was not allowed to dislike a book or say she disliked a book her class was reading. Devon did not remember reading young adult literature at all when she was in middle school and bemoaned, "If I had, maybe my middle school language arts classes would have had more of an impact on me."
From a teacher's stance preservice teachers practiced how they would teach, and through their responses we get a glimpse of their thinking. Insecurities emerged such as that expressed by Regan who wrote, "I'm a little iffy on teaching novels as class reads in general." Rachael was not sure "as a public school educator, what I should or should not say about drugs, alcohol, or homosexuality."

Talk of ethical responsibilities surfaced as well from preservice teachers' conversations from a teacher's stance. Rosenblatt (1995) argues that literature naturally evokes ethical responses:

The teaching of literature inevitably involves the conscious or unconscious reinforcement of ethical attitudes. It is practically impossible to treat any novel or drama, or indeed any literary work of art, in a vital manner without confronting some problems of ethics and without speaking out of the context of some social philosophy. A framework of values is essential to any discussion of human life (p. 16).

She believes like Dewey, that confronting rather than avoiding emotional tensions as a part of the aesthetic transaction with literature stimulates deeper, more rational thinking that would later influence behavior, "The emotional character of the student's response to literature offers an opportunity to develop the ability to think rationally within an emotionally colored context" (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 228).
Preservice teachers in this study wrestled with ethical, emotionally-colored context but, like students in the Apol, Sakuma, Reynolds, & Rop (2008) study, they avoided confrontation and resisted grappling with uncomfortable issues. Beverly explained, "it's a lot easier to type something up about whether or not you like the book than to try and connect it to something else—avoiding having to become too involved" (personal communication, December 1, 2006).

Linda resisted what she perceived was an uncomfortable issue in her response to *The Pigman* by stating the book "should be cleared by parents" before she would feel comfortable using it in the classroom. Another student said she also would be "uncomfortable dealing with those issues in the classroom," and would send a permission slip home before using the book in class to forewarn parents about the book. Bethany refused to use *The Pigman* as a whole class read because "it just mentions things that I would not want to address in a middle school classroom." Arlene worried that by using a book such as *The Pigman* in her class, parents might think she was "encouraging these behaviors."

Apol, Sakuma, Reynolds, & Rop (2008) describe "an ideology of protection" in their preservice teachers who wanted to shield children from difficult concepts or sad, troubling events. Preservice teachers in this study as well thought of themselves as the authorities needing to protect and manage their students. Issues of control came through in their talk about which books they would choose to use
with their students. Casey talked about how she would be "putting such power" into her students' hands, and Jane would "tell" her students what they needed to know.

So also from a teacher stance, the "authoritarian voices" of past teachers and past reading experiences could be heard in preservice teacher responses, raising important issues. Would preservice teachers in their own classes one day be able to move beyond their understanding of teachers as transmitters of knowledge, and would they be able to mask personal ethical criteria and lead students to develop and value their own "habits of thoughtful ethical judgment" (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 17)?

Perhaps a sense of not being in control can also help explain why preservice teachers often shifted rapidly from an aesthetic reader stance to a teacher stance. Reader response was unfamiliar territory for them, something they were not confident doing. Their responses from a teacher stance, however, echoed voices of past teachers and reflected observations on how to teach literature from years of schooling. It was what they were studying and practicing to do. So from a teacher's stance, they felt more comfortable responding as a traditional teacher might, choosing "the safety of texts, responses, and pedagogies that would not challenge their ways of thinking about literature, literature response, and their own roles as teachers of literature" (Apol, Sakuma, Reynolds, & Rop, 2008, p. 451).
Responding from a teacher's stance, however, not only mirrored preservice teachers' past experiences; but it also, and more importantly, verified new perceptions of their future roles as responsive, dialogic language arts teachers. While response from a teacher's stance moved preservice teachers away from an aesthetic reading of young adult literature, it still nonetheless served to move them dialectically and self-assuredly to enjoy young adult literature and to see beyond the stories to what young adult literature could actually offer to middle school students. Regan found *The Pigman* "really hit home" to her as a teacher making her realize how "we have to make things practical" and relevant for students. Lisa saw team teaching potential, and Regan realized how young adult literature could broaden her students' horizons, taking students to places "they might not [otherwise] ever get to go." So it would seem, by responding efferently from a teacher's stance, investigating through their discourse ways to teach literature, preservice teachers, in essence, validated and sanctioned an aesthetic reading of young adult literature for their future students.

Finally, within the institutional activity system of school, preservice teachers thought of themselves as students, and so they responded as students. The concept of appropriation in activity theory accounts for how a person comes to choose or appropriate tools for use in a particular setting (Grossman, Smagorinsky, & Valencia, 1999). Theorists complain that response, most often performed in
school, is a learned behavior with students often simply trying to figure out how the teacher wants them to respond (Probst, 1991). Reflecting their perceptions of their roles as students within the activity system of the university, preservice teachers gave what they considered were "appropriate, sanctioned responses in a classroom" (Beach & Hynds, 1990, p. 465). Preservice teachers appropriated reader response as a tool for "doing school."

From a student stance, preservice teachers talked about what needed to be done to pass the class and move forward in their goal of obtaining teaching licensure. Their responses were often more as if they were writing an analysis for a class requirement, their voices "frequently echo[ing] the authoritarian voices of past teachers" (Porter, 2001, p. 577). Their student talk reflected concerns for the mechanics of "doing" reader response—as asking how long responses needed to be, how many responses needed to be made, and when assignments were due. When they responded as students, they "dissected" the books rather than savored them. They drifted off topic, expressed lack of interest, and completed assignments for the sake of the grade. Their student stance detracted from both their reader stance and their teacher stance prompting Beverly’s obvious frustration with the activity of reader response:

They didn't even respond to what I said! I really did not like the way that one went down. Ok, I put down this thought and the next girl put
down her thought and the next—none of it was like responding.... I thought the point was to look at other people's opinions and react to it, and not just say just whatever is on your mind like—I like purple ...

So, it's a lot easier to type something up about whether or not you like the book than to try and connect it to something else—avoiding having to become too involved (personal communication, December 1, 2006).

Beverly dismissed the "student mentality" of wanting to take the "easy path," and conjectured, "I think it's the danger [emphasis added] of giving us free reign; of letting us choose what we talk about (personal communication, December 1, 2006).

Taking a student stance meant preservice teachers became submissive readers waiting for the text to act upon them rather than actively seeking meaning for themselves (Flynn, 1983). Their responses from the student stance reflected more the social practice of being students and less "curators" (Eeds & Peterson, 1991) of young adult literature. Rylee's comments aptly explain the pull or influence of the student stance:

Even though we are at school to be teachers it is hard to switch over. When we are sitting in a class you still feel like a student even when we are supposed to have our teaching hat on (personal communication, November 30, 2006).
How Preservice Teachers Perceive Discussion through Reader Response

Vygotsky (1978, 1986) and sociocultural theorists emphasize that talk is crucial to learning. Learning is a dual intermental/intramental process in which a child learns dialectically on a social, intermental level and then internalizes that knowledge as inner thought on a psychological, intramental level. Learning depends heavily on experiences, actions, and dialogue (Langer, 2001). Meaning is negotiated through talk and discussion. Learning occurs through talk or discourse and through actions within a learning activity as well as through appropriation of tools within that activity.

Appropriation accounts for how a person comes to use specific tools for learning within a particular setting. A learner's active participation is vital to appropriation because through appropriation, learners reorganize prior, internalized knowledge (Grossman, Smagorinsky, & Valencia, 1999). In this study the preservice teachers appropriated their prior, internalized knowledge of reader response as a tool for discussion. Just as they used the tools of reader response to experience young adult literature by selecting "ideas, sensations, feelings, and images drawn from ... past linguistic, literary, and life experiences" to synthesize them into a new transaction with the text (Rosenblatt, 1985, p. 40), so, too, did they select ideas, feelings, information, descriptions, interpretations, and questions to synthesize them into new transactions with the literature through discussions with their peers.
Initially, preservice teachers began their reader response discussions slowly, sometimes awkwardly, with simple evaluative statements as if they were testing the water. They expressed their ideas tentatively waiting to see what their peers would say and how their thoughts would be received. Sometimes there was a clumsiness to their responses—a lack of trust in themselves to talk without a teacher to listen and evaluate. And then there were those responses that were not for peers at all but obviously for the professor's or evaluator's benefit—seemingly lacking in "social awareness [or concern] that others are listening" (Larson & Keiper, 2002). At those times, responses would wither and die, as Beverly lamented, "They didn't even respond to what I said" (personal communication, December 1, 2006).

Groenke and Paulus (2007) found that preservice teachers bring traditional ideas of classroom discussion with them into the CMC environment. They believe that most preservice teachers base their understanding of response and discussion on their own 'lived experiences' as students in traditional, monologic classrooms (p. 158). Eeds & Peterson (1994) offer that preservice teachers' experiences with literature discussions are limited to non-existent, suggesting their monologic attitudes that teachers should lead and direct classroom conversation. Recognizing that many preservice teachers come from typical classrooms where the most common form of talk is the IRE pattern (teacher initiation, student response, teacher evaluation) would explain in this study why some responses were hesitant and
tentative. When preservice teachers invoked a teacher stance, their more robust responses indicated, as in the Groenke and Paulus (2007) study, that they were taking on the role of "expert" with young adult literature. While they were uncomfortable responding as readers because they lacked experience with aesthetic response, they felt more comfortable, in their element, talking about the books afferently from their training as English teachers.

Bell (1988) posits that the quality of a discussion is based on multiple factors: the nature of the discussion, student familiarity with the text, student self-confidence, and student expectations. As the preservice teachers responded to the three different books, they gained more experience with reader response while at the same time becoming more comfortable with and confident in the expectations of reader response and in the authority of their own voices. They began to take active ownership in their responses, to share their own thoughts about a book, their own understandings, and their own perceptions. They began to self-reflect (Horowitz, 2007) and make meaning together. They came to respond rather than recite. Similarly to what Eeds and Peterson (1991) found, their talk began to evolve from the one-way direction of sharing to the interaction of dialogue—"dynamic, evolving, open-ended, reciprocal communication" (Horowitz, 2007, p. 19).

In some cases, preservice teacher conversations evidenced Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development (ZPD), one student helping the other reach deeper
insights, resolving confusion or misunderstandings about a book. In this way
preservice teachers used discussion as a "cognitive tool" (Neuman & Roskos, 1997, p. 10) within the activity system of the classroom to create meaning together.

Seeing their classmates affirm their responses reinforced their knowledge construction. Being able to provide support to others was equally affirming, and it empowered them as knowledgeable 'experts' (Hirvela, 2006, p. 237). As Mary recognized,

Hearing other people has been really valuable.... There were parts I was rapidly reading and didn't really understand and then Josey or others in the forum would go into more detail and that helped me understand (personal communication, December 4, 2006).

Talking about young adult literature through reader response also stretched preservice teachers to consider complex, controversial issues. After heated discussion about Paulsen's representation of Native Americans in *Canyons*, Judy came to think how her response had appeared "oversensitive" to her peers, while the others in her group grappled with issues she had introduced of "political incorrectness" and stereotypes.

So, eventually discussion did bloom. At those times responses were lively, animated, and aesthetic, and preservice teachers such as Josh reveled in expressing raw evocations: "That Norton kid. He seemed like a real bastard and I'm glad that
he got bloody.” At those times preservice teachers felt the exhilarating pull of talk in the classroom, exclaiming, "This is fun!" They felt the ability of talk to co-create meaning and understanding. They felt the dialectic nature of talk to challenge and inspire, and they felt the power of talk to transcend limited perspectives. Louise Rosenblatt would have been proud.

*How Preservice Teachers Perceive Computer-Mediated Communication through Reader Response*

Participation in an activity system is mediated through the use of tools (Beach, 2000). Through tools humans connect with other objects and with other people. Computer-mediated communication served as a tool for the preservice teachers to mediate their activity of reader response. By looking at the role CMC played in helping preservice teachers respond to young adult literature, we can examine the role of technology not in isolation but rather "as embedded within a matrix of social relations that shape literacy" (Reinking, McKenna, Labbo, Kieffer, 1998, p. 234).

The attitudes and perceptions that preservice teachers had of CMC were embedded within their various activity systems, and ultimately helped define their experience not with technology in isolation but rather with technology as a tool mediating the activity of reader response. These attitudes and perceptions toward
the technology can be discussed by the same literacy stances—reader, teacher, and student—that preservice teachers used to respond to young adult literature.

From an aesthetic, reader stance, preservice teachers responded to CMC personally both negatively and positively. Some students were excited to do their discussions online while others would have preferred doing all the discussions face-to-face in the classroom. A lack of experience, access, and self-confidence with technology as well as technical difficulties were all issues that plagued students' interest in using CMC, primarily during the first year of the study.

From a practical, teacher stance, preservice teachers saw value in CMC for their future students. Especially by the final year of the study, they showed signs that they were beginning to consider technology as a tool for teaching rather than an add-on to teaching. While preservice teachers in the first year of the study commented on technical difficulties and complained about having to use CMC, those in the last year of the study mentioned no technology glitches in their responses. The majority of students interviewed from the third year considered themselves technology savvy. The results of this study are consistent with Pope, Hare, & Howard's (2002) findings that preservice teachers did gain confidence in using the technology when they experienced it within their coursework. Preservice teachers acknowledged that CMC would serve to motivate students, help them see other perspectives, give them time to think before responding, and give them a safe
haven to respond where the "eyes" of the other students would not inhibit their contributions to the discussion.

From an impersonal, dispassionate student stance, preservice teachers liked CMC as a quick and efficient way to communicate. As Mary (personal communication, December 4, 2006) said, "You can just submit it and it's done." However, they also saw CMC as "hype" to "have something on the computer" that the professor could see. It was something "they had to do" for the class. They "waited to the last minute" to do the assignments because they had "so many things going on, or they forget to do it." They saw it as additional work and they complained, "Do we have to really revisit this?" It is interesting that preservice teachers could see value in CMC for their future students from a teaching stance, but at the same time dismiss it from a student stance. Angeli, Valanides, and Bonk (2003) found similar results from their students who devalued online discussion done as part of a face-to-face class. Their students thought of the activity as additional, unnecessary work because they thought they could accomplish the same thing talking with their peers face-to-face in class. Like Becky, they found it "contrived" and unnecessary.

Research has shown that asynchronous CMC discussions are used more than synchronous discussions (Groenke & Paulus, 2007). Preservice teachers in this study from a student stance, however, preferred the synchronous discussion forum
over the asynchronous chat in part because their peers, as Beverly noted, "didn't even respond" to what they said. Some also waited to post until the last minute, as Rylee complained, making it difficult to get a discussion going. Synchronous discussions, on the other hand, were immediate. They were fun, lively, and quick; however, they lacked the depth of understanding produced in the asynchronous forum (Groenke & Paulus, 2007). Nonetheless, preservice teachers liked the fact that they could discuss the books and be done with the assignment as opposed to having to revisit the discussion forum multiple times to see what others had written. Some even chose not to wait on their peers, responding with a monologue rather than a dialogue as Beverly pointed out:

Ok, I put down this thought and the next girl put down her thought and the next—none of it was like responding (personal communication, December 1, 2006).

Preservice teacher responses to the activity of online reader response indicate that the virtual environment alone is not enough to initiate an aesthetic stance or even guarantee authentic dialogue. Nor does it naturally prompt critical thinking. As Groenke & Paulus (2007) report, it is not the medium but rather the message that informs classroom dialogue and discussion. Preservice teachers do not come to their teacher education courses as "blank slates." They come with an understanding of how to teach, rightly or wrongly, based on how they were taught and their ideas
about how to teach can be seen in the stances they take in their responses to young adult literature. They come to their teacher education courses expecting the teacher to be the authority and to do most of the talking.

Wepner and Mobley (1998) assert that the use of CMC within teacher education combined with activities such as reader response can support preservice teachers in breaking old habits. CMC facilitates reader response for preservice language arts teachers by allowing them to talk to each other as readers, as teachers, and as students. As Thomas (2002) finds, CMC in this study provides an "alternative learning environment"—a student-centered environment—a place where students can learn to think for themselves and silence teacher voices from the past. It provides a place for preservice teachers to role play or practice teaching. It is a place where preservice teachers with time can begin to trust themselves and each other, value talk as making meaning, and learn to appreciate and balance both the reader stance with the teacher stance.

Implications

Implications for Aesthetic Reading

Rosenblatt (1986) proffers reading to be, first and above all else, a personal experience, an aesthetic transaction. In *Literature as Exploration*, she offers teachers advice for bringing their students to an aesthetic transaction by relating reading to prior experiences, emotion, and imagination.
From the personal responses exhibited in this study, preservice teachers' initial perceptions of young adult literature began as aesthetic transactions. There was pleasure and joy in their responses. There was also exhilaration, immersion, and sobering reality. It was painfully obvious that they were in the young adult literature class to learn to teach young adult literature, so appreciation for the literature was not their primary focus. Just as the students in the Apol, Sakuma, Reynolds, and Rop (2003) study, the preservice teachers in this study came to the class "with a narrow focus on the pedagogical issues associated with literature ... as a result, they often exhibited a correspondingly narrow view of what it means to respond to children's literature" (p. 446). They responded aesthetically but to what extent? They seemed to be saying, "OK, this book will work. Now, how can I use it with my students?" They dismissed the literature as art, if they ever did conceive of it as art, and rushed to the practical as if to say, "I'm going to be a teacher. I've read the young adult literature. Now how do I teach with it?"

Switching stances during reading is typical and not contradictory (Rosenblatt, 2005a). The problem emanates from an "either-or habit of thinking" that a text is either literary or informational, either aesthetic or efferent (p. 35). For preservice teachers anxious to enter the classroom, it is appropriate, understandable, and expected that they will want to learn teaching strategies. So we would expect them to have various stances or purposes for reading young adult literature that vary
along the aesthetic/efferent continuum. As Rosenblatt (1995) herself explains, transactions are multi-fold, multi-purpose, and ever changing:

Much of the confused thinking about the aesthetic and the social aspects of art would be eliminated if the debaters realized that an object can have more than one value: it can yield the kind of fulfillment that we call aesthetic—it can be enjoyed in itself—and at the same time have a social origin and social effects (p. 23).

Preservice teachers can and will have transactions with young adult literature that are both aesthetic and efferent in nature. Undoubtedly, they will always be looking for ways to teach, and so they will continue to approach young adult literature from a teacher's stance with "limited vision" (Apol, Sakuma, Reynolds, & Rop, 2008) dissecting the books for ways to teach. While we want them to have meaningful, personal, individual transactions with the literature and social transactions through responsive dialogue with others unhampered by efferent stances, we can accept their pedagogical needs if we consider their attitudes as simply "starting points in learning to teach" (Asselin, 2000, p. 32).

While the preservice teachers in this study were provided an encouraging, inviting, open-ended prompt as a jumping off point for aesthetic responses to the literature, they tended to avoid in depth analysis of the literature or the creation of a sustained 'group text' (Golden, 1986, as cited by Groenke & Paulus, 2007, p. 151).
O’Connor and Michaels (1996) argue that in classroom discourse, the teacher’s positive attitude is not enough to ensure success. Teacher educators will need to scaffold literature discussions.

Rosenblatt (2005a) suggests teaching students early on that there are two ways to approach a reading and that the first approach to literature is to experience it. Preservice teachers must be clear in their understanding of aesthetic and efferent reading and wary of overshadowing their own students' aesthetic experiences with efferent purposes of teaching grammar or skills.

This study implies that if we want preservice teachers to value young adult literature first as literature, and if we want our preservice teachers to present young adult literature to their students not only as a way to study content but also as a way to find pleasure and satisfaction, we as teacher educators will need to do more. We must for our students validate reading for pleasure. We must make time within our curriculum through literature conversations, book clubs, and reader response to authorize and sanctify emotional, personal, aesthetic reading. It will fall to us to temper preservice language arts teachers' thinking, their approach to teaching literature, so that they come to understand and accept that responding to literature is a way to teach. It will fall to us to affirm that reading, responding, and participating in literature conversations sometimes is enough in teaching. It will fall to us to engage and scaffold our preservice teachers themselves in aesthetic
literature experiences before they begin as practicing teachers to teach the joy out of reading.

**Implications for Computer-Mediated Communication**

CMC is a logical complement to reader response. It offers an environment for students to transact with literature away from the confines and authority of the classroom. It provides a safe, accessible, non-threatening place wherein preservice teachers participate and practice using authentic, online communication strategies like reader response which they may one day use with their own students. Within the CMC haven they see their words materialize and, with one mouse click, their thoughts are "concretized," published, shared, and rejoined. Through synchronous CMC, preservice teachers participate in discussions that are more like the speech of conversation; while asynchronous CMC affords them opportunities for "conceptual growth facilitated by the learning-focused textual environment" (Lapadat, 2002). Lapadat (2002) also cites research pointing to the value of interactivity and multidirectionality in CMC discussions which frees classroom discourse from teacher-dominated monology.

One unexpected implication from this study is the insight CMC provides about preservice teacher thinking. As Gilles & Pierce (2003) note, by exploring preservice teacher thinking we gain insight into the ideas they have about teaching. There is value in reading their "written conversations" (Daniels, 2006). Inadvertently, as
preservice teachers respond through the activity of reader response, they unconsciously reveal prior ideas about how to teach. We are privy to the strengths and weaknesses they bring with them from their past experiences in school. We see their futures as teachers being built upon their history as students. It is incumbent upon us as teacher educators to develop their strengths and supplant their weaknesses.

It is evident that CMC offers and supports dialogue and the social negotiating of meaning through reader response. What is less evident is the value of the dialogue for preservice teachers. Is practice enough, or should we hope for more thinking and reflection? Should we as teacher educators be content that students practice—have a taste of—reader response and technology? Our dilemma will be inherited by our preservice teaching students as they venture forth into their classrooms.

A continuing need within preservice education is for students to have authentic experiences with technology (Doering & Beach, 2002; Coiro, 2003). Preservice teachers also need time and support to develop discussion skills (Groenke & Paulus, 2007). Additionally, this study indicates a need for preservice language arts teachers to have more practice responding aesthetically to young adult literature. *Doing* reader response online fulfills these needs—providing experiences with reader response, discussion, and technology.
CMC provides a space for students to respond to young adult literature. Surprisingly, this study finds that it also provides a natural space for preservice teachers to practice their teacher talk. Preservice teachers in the last two years of this study seemed comfortable, for the most part, using CMC. They also appeared at ease using CMC to talk about teaching strategies. In fact, they appropriated the online space as a place to practice their teaching voices and role-play teaching. As Tierney and Damarin (1998) found, the technology created a space for preservice teachers to form a community that helped them define who they were “individually and collectively” (p. 258) as teachers.

Preservice teachers respond to young adult literature aesthetically but are more comfortable in the online environment talking about teaching. For the preservice teachers, taking a teaching stance is important. It is a dress rehearsal for teaching. It is also dangerous. The social studies teachers in the Galda and Liang (2003) study responded efferently to both fiction and nonfiction with the attitude that it was "just" children's literature. The danger is that their attitudes will transfer to their students and affect how their students learn to respond and ultimately come to consider literature.

While the depth of responses preservice teachers made in this study was not analyzed, the data suggest preservice teacher responses to the young adult literature were lacking in analysis. Out of all responses only 6.7 percent were
evaluative or interpretive statements about the books. Benton (1988) argues that “Responses need time and space in which to grow. A methodology for teaching has to be built upon these principles” (p. 202). Likewise, McCann, Johannessen, Kahn, and Flanagan (2006) state, “Facilitating dialogue about literature may appear easy, but it involves skills that require development over time” (p. 114). For preservice teachers to think about a discussion forum or chatroom as a logical place to extend classroom conversations, they will need extended time to practice responding aesthetically to young adult literature and to practice using CMC across the breadth of the class and even beyond the practice of reader response.

Recommendations for Future Research

Galda (1992) believes the “idiosyncratic nature” of reader response means any research in reader response will raise more questions than answers. This study is no exception. The first and most obvious area for future research would involve expanding participation in reader response to see how perceptions of CMC, literature conversations, and reader response would evolve over an extended period of time—if students participated throughout the course of the semester to more young adult books and if they received more scaffolding in aesthetic response. Would having preservice teachers explore literature experiences online for the breadth of the course prompt further, more elaborate aesthetic responses, and would having more time to participate in reader response make it more natural and comfortable for
preservice teachers and less like a class requirement? Would more time, more literature, and more scaffolding prompt deeper probing and evoke more involved responses about those experiences? Would preservice teachers be more invested in experiencing the literature over learning teaching strategies?

It would be interesting as well to explore ways to focus discussions on the reading experience and away from teaching strategies; perhaps as one of the preservice teachers suggested, by giving students a separate place, such as the discussion forum, to talk about teaching while having them respond to the literature through the chatroom.

Finally, with the advent of emerging technologies such as wikis, blogs, podcasts, vodcasts, and even twittering, it would be intriguing to see how these new communication tools would mediate reader response.

Final Thoughts

As I watched a live, televised concert by U2, it occurred to me with all the thinking I had been doing about reader response, that the people in the audience were “responding” to the music or as Rosenblatt might put it, “living through” the experience aesthetically. How could I tell this? I could see the physical responses. People in the audience were yelling and screaming, waving their hands in unison and in sync to the beat. Hands lifted cameras or cell phones above the crowd to take pictures. People swayed and sang with the music. They cried out in unison.
They danced, they laughed, they bounced, they cavorted, and they pumped their fists in the air. They were lost to the moment, immersed in the music, consumed with emotional frenzy and passion.

As teachers of language arts, this is the "lived through" experience we want our students to have with reading. We want them to respond as readers, aesthetically, with the same unabashed passion and abandon that propelled the concert audience to celebrate the music. We want to see the "electric current of ... [our students'] mind[s] and personal[ites] lighting up" (Rosenblatt, 2005, p. 63). And we should be leading the charge!

It is our obligation as teachers, argues Probst (1994), that we make sure that "the literature has the chance to work its effects upon the readers, to make sure we don't get in the way" (pp. 37-38). It is our obligation as teacher educators as well.

Rosenblatt (as cited by Probst, 1988, p. 34) speaks passionately of literature as "implicated with life itself" and "grounded in the shared lives of human beings ... the bloodstream of a common culture." Through readings and discussions about literature, students are initiated into this common culture. They see how their lives and their experiences bond them with others.

Reader response offers up a "democratic vision of the classroom" (Probst, 1991, p. 662). It prompts dialogic teaching and learning. It validates students' uniquely personal connections with literature, and invites students to share their
thoughts and make connections to past experiences and prior knowledge. It ensures that the literature does, indeed, have the chance to work its effects upon the reader.
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