Preservice Teachers’ Affective Domains: Reading Models in Progress

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Abstract
To better understand preservice teachers’ attitudes, beliefs, and values of reading, the researcher conducted a sequential explanatory mixed methods investigation, detecting and describing preservice teachers’ affective domains of reading within three children’s literature courses. Mixed data collection and analyses revealed analogous and distinguishing themes in six preservice teachers’ reading experiences, and views of reading and themselves as readers. Findings revealed the complexity of preservice teachers’ affective domains, as well as multiple factors influencing their attitudes, beliefs, and values of reading throughout all stages of their lives. The author uses findings to propose multiple methods of engaging preservice teachers in a culture of reading within teacher education programs.

Introduction
“I don’t really like to read. I wish I liked to read, but I don’t.” I winced each time I heard such statements from various undergraduate students in my teacher preparation courses. After all, my vivid memories of reading great children’s literature had contributed significantly to my desire to teach young children, and later as a teacher, my greatest reward was witnessing striving readers triumph with texts they loved. I wondered how passionate future teachers had developed such apathy and even aversion to reading. And more importantly, what could be done in teacher education, if anything, to instill a lifelong passion for reading? These vexing concerns drove me to investigate preservice teachers’ affective domains of reading in children’s literature courses. Specifically, I sought to determine how preservice teachers’ attitudes, beliefs, and values about reading characterize their views of reading and themselves as readers.

The affective domain was defined in this study as one’s attitudes, beliefs, and values of reading which influence motivation and engagement with reading. Preservice teachers’ views of themselves as readers focused on their views of their affective domains of reading and their past, current, and prospective reading experiences.

Literature Review
Athey (1982, 1985) and Cramer & Castle (1994) assert that attention must be given to the affective domain in reading education if we are to more fully determine “what works” in reading education and ultimately measure up to the expectations of our nation. Although there have been numerous researchers meeting this need at the school age level (Brozo, Shiel, & Topping, 2007; Cramer & Castle, 1994; Gambrell, Marinak, Brooker, & McCrean-Andrews, 2011; Guthrie & McRae, 2011; Shapiro & Whitney, 1997) their studies remain insufficient when applied to teacher education. In essence, these authors often inform teacher educators of what to tell preservice teachers about the affective domain in children as learners, yet not what to do with preservice teachers or why it may be necessary to address the affective domain in preservice teachers.
The influential role of teachers who model enthusiasm and engagement with reading has become more imperative to motivate, engage, and inspire young readers (Commeyras, Bisplinghoff, & Olson, 2003; Cremin, Mottram, Collins, Powell, & Safford, 2009; Margolis & McCabe, 2006). Unfortunately, recent studies of preservice teachers’ attitudes, beliefs, and values of reading demonstrate the lack of their preparedness to model such traits for their future students. There is an incorrect assumption held by some teacher educators and others that preservice teachers have positive attitudes about reading and/or are prolific readers (Applegate & Applegate, 2004; Arici, 2008; Gebhard, 2006). In reality approximately 50% of preservice teachers report themselves to be unenthusiastic and infrequent readers (Applegate & Applegate, 2004; Arici, 2008; Nathanson, Pruslow, & Levitt, 2008; Schutte & Malouff, 2007). In addition, Nathanson et al. (2008) discovered that 63.6% of preservice teachers categorized as enthusiastic readers reported having a teacher who shared a love of reading, and 56.4% of participants categorized as unenthusiastic readers reported lacking this experience.

Clearly, teachers who have established a love of reading are influential in developing such traits in students and at least some preservice teachers are currently in need of support to develop this characteristic. Providing support to preservice teachers to improve their affective domains of reading is particularly important given the reciprocal relationship between affect and efficacy (Bandura, 1997, 2003). Effort should be made to improve preservice teachers’ affective domains of reading while providing experiences that strengthen their sense of personal efficacy as readers. In this way, preservice teachers may be more likely to engage in recreational reading and become models of literacy for their future students.

Methods

Methodological Design
A modified sequential explanatory mixed methods design (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007) was used in this semester-long investigation characterized by sequential phases of quantitative and qualitative data collection. Results informed one another throughout each phase of data collection and analysis for the purpose of explaining quantitative data with qualitative data and developing meta-inferences (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007). Mixed methods validity was addressed using ongoing data comparisons throughout the study and overall analysis of all data guided by Dellinger and Leech’s Validation Framework (2007). A multisite design with data triangulation (Merriam, 1998) contributed to the validity of qualitative findings, which comprises the majority of what is discussed in this article.

Data Sources
The quantitative data used in this study derived from a slightly modified version of Schutte and Malouff’s (2007) Adult Motivation for Reading Scale (AMRS). Participants’ responses to 25 items in this scale were used indicate their overall reading motivation, several dimensions of their reading motivation (Table 1), as well as their reading habits. A modified version of the AMRS measure was deemed reliable with a Cronbach’s alpha of .82. Each item was examined to determine adequate measurement of a reader’s attitudes, beliefs, and/or values of reading.

The qualitative data in this study was obtained through observation, artifacts, interviews, and written logs. I observed each participant for thirteen weekly class sessions within his/her children’s literature course, resulting in approximately 95 hours
of observation. Syllabi, texts, and handouts, as well as students’ assignments, in-class activities, and notes were also analyzed. These artifacts were used in three semi-structured interviews (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Merriam, 1998) with each participant at the beginning, middle, and end of the fifteen week study, resulting in approximately 30 hours of transcribed one-on-one interviews. In addition, weekly personalized e-mailed logs were used to elicit additional data.

Contexts
This mixed methods study was conducted within three children’s literature courses required for students seeking elementary and/or early childhood teaching certification. The three sites were distinct in their student populations, instructional styles, classroom routines, and course materials, although some similarities were also seen (Table 2). One significant difference among the three courses was the emphasis one instructor placed on the preservice teachers selecting, reading, and discussing books for their own enjoyment. In addition, the three courses had varying degrees of connection to elementary teaching. For example, two of the three courses included instructor read alouds to model effective read aloud practices, and small group read alouds to practice these skills. A notable similarity across all three of the courses was the inclusion of at least some self-selection of literature.

Participants
Two preservice teachers were purposefully selected from each of the three sites (n = 6) using quantitative and qualitative data. The AMRS (Schutte & Malouff, 2007) was administered to all undergraduate elementary or early childhood teaching candidates required to take the children’s literature course (n = 51). Qualitative data from precursory observations was also used to purposefully select some participants.

Using the descriptive statistics acquired from the AMRS (Schutte & Malouff, 2007) (Table 3), I selected two cases resulting from maximum variation sampling, and one typical case (Merriam, 1998). The student scoring the highest Total Reading Motivation (TRM) (Richard, scoring 95) and lowest TRM (Denise, scoring 43) were selected. I randomly selected my third participant (Rachel) from a list of 20 typically scoring students which was created with a sequence of calculations involving means and standard deviations of scores for TRM, each dimension, and the number of hours spent in recreational reading.

The final three participants, (Maria, Catherine, and Helen) were unique cases (Merriam, 1998), selected through a combination of quantitative and qualitative data. Maria was noted as unique for her higher than average scores in the AMRS and lack of English language proficiency within a course taught entirely in English. Catherine was chosen because of the vast difference between her in-class behaviors showing great enthusiasm for reading as compared to her average and below average AMRS scores. Helen, represented a unique case due to her lack of any experience in face-to-face college coursework, making her an interesting case to determine how her attitudes, beliefs, and values might be expressed in the college classroom.

Data Analyses
Quantitative data derived from the AMRS was analyzed with descriptive statistics. Qualitative and mixed data analyses required multiple analysis techniques. I used constant comparison coding (Merriam, 1998) across quantitative data and observation protocols, student artifacts, transcribed interviews, weekly and written logs. Multiple codes were
developed within each site data set, across site data sets, as well as within and across participants. Codes and exemplifying data from several sources and all three sites were reviewed by two colleagues experienced in qualitative literacy education research and found to be reliable.

**Findings**

*Descriptive Statistics of AMRS Results*

The average score for Total Reading Motivation (TRM) was 70.57 \((SD = 10.20)\), with a range from 43 to 95. Twenty-one items were rated by preservice teachers on a Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Preservice teachers’ self-reported average enjoyment of reading (ENJ) was measured on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much), and resulted in a mean of 4.31, a standard deviation of 1.03, and a mode of 5. Their self-reported average frequency of reading (FRE) was measured on a scale of 1 (never) to 5 (very often), and resulted in a mean of 4.02, a standard deviation of .93, and a mode of 4. Their self-reported average number of hours spent in recreational reading per week (REC R) ranged from 0-30 hours per week, an average of 6.93 hours per week, with standard deviation of 7.46, and mode of 2.

**Analogous Themes**

Analogous themes often reflected participants’ past experiences with reading and books, which were highly influential in shaping their overall affective domain. All participants recalled times when they had limited choice in what they could read. This repeatedly resulted in negative attitudes about reading and/or an avoidance of reading at least temporarily, though often for at least 6-12 months. Moreover, all participants reported that their affective domains of reading had been positively influenced by avid readers at some point in their lives. For some (Catherine, Helen, and Richard), this was typical of their childhood and is ongoing into their adulthood, whereas for others (Rachel, Maria, and Denise), this occurred only briefly in their lives as children. All participants also discussed the influence of accessibility to texts throughout various times in their lives, with some (Helen, Richard, and Catherine) recalling many books surrounding them in classroom libraries, at home, and frequent trips to local libraries throughout their youth and adulthood, and others (Rachel, Maria, and Denise) reporting few, if any, texts in their classrooms or at home, and limited visits to libraries throughout their youth or adulthood.

Finally, all participants in the study voiced concern about elementary teachers’ affective domains of reading, stating that they felt it was important that teachers be excited about reading so that they could adequately motivate and interest children in reading. Some participants (Rachel and Denise) reported feeling pressured to become more enthusiastic readers and anxious about how to achieve this.

**Distinguishing Themes**

Participants’ views of reading and themselves as readers also varied considerably in a number of areas. First, some participants (Rachel, Denise, and Maria) reported difficulty in locating and selecting texts to read for recreational purposes. These participants all conveyed feelings of being overwhelmed by the quantity of texts available, lost in a sea of unknown authors, types of texts, and titles, as well as feelings of apprehension and self-doubt in their ability to select texts for themselves. On the contrary, other participants (Richard, Catherine, and Helen) reported numerous ways of finding texts they’d enjoy reading, including a variety of online search strategies, knowledge of authors, and frequent visits to public
libraries and bookstores. These participants were varied in their interests and had favored authors, series, and genres, yet stated that they could find value in almost any reading material.

Two of the six participants that reported the least amount of recreational reading time (Rachel and Denise) also reported having significant difficulty setting their own purposes for reading. Rachel described herself as “...someone who does not make reading a priority, unless it is for a class.” Denise reiterated this in her explanation of how quizzes, class discussions, and assignments were and are often her only reason for reading, stating, “I especially (need) a purpose to read, cause without it, I’m not going to.” The other four participants that reported six or more hours of recreational reading per week (Helen, Richard, Catherine, and Maria) described various purposes for reading different texts, often simultaneously. Their purposes included but were not limited to entertainment, self-improvement, staying current, “reliving” a text, social rewards, and expanding knowledge. Reading to fulfill others’ purposes was rarely mentioned by these participants.

Yet another distinguishing theme that emerged from the data was the impact of relating with other readers. Some participants (Richard, Helen, and Catherine) reported the presence and impact of interactions with parents, siblings, and peers about texts and authors throughout their youth and adulthood. Such interactions were not often discussed by the other three participants (Rachel, Maria, and Denise). Rachel and Denise both shared stories of their mothers participating in book clubs, but lacked an understanding of what their mothers experienced or gained by participating in these clubs.

There were also differences found among participants’ understanding of the effects of recreational reading. Helen, Richard, and Catherine described the influence recreational reading has had on their oral and written language, their cognitive skills (i.e. reasoning, analytical thinking, etc.), their enjoyment and quality of life, and their ongoing interest in learning. Other participants (Rachel, Maria, and Denise) were unsure about the effects of recreational reading, often restating the effects of similar points including, “reading gives you information,” and, “the more you read the better you’re going to be at it.”

The last distinguishing theme was participant opinion on the potential for an adult to become a reader with a positive affective domain. Some participants, such as Helen and Richard, were doubtful, proclaiming that many adults are “very set in their ways”, while other participants (Rachel, Maria, Catherine, and Denise) were confident that this could occur with the presence of a relationship with a passionate reader or “the right text at the right time.”

Discussion and Implications
This investigation into preservice teachers’ affective domains of reading adds to the growing field of research in that the findings demonstrate the ongoing influence of multiple factors impacting the affective domain throughout readers’ lives, not simply during the elementary or adolescent years, as is typically studied. For example, the participants in this study unanimously agreed that other readers have significant influence upon their own reading, often increasing knowledge of texts and authors, as well as enthusiasm for sharing opinions, the experience of a text, or clarifications about a text’s meaning.

Also similar to elementary and adolescent student readers, preservice teacher readers in this study demonstrated a need for self-selection of texts to increase their motivation, frequency, and duration of
reading. When self-selection of texts was incorporated into their coursework, participants expressed a stronger desire to read, were more likely to complete reading on time, and were eager to engage in discussion about their reading. This need for self-selection of texts may be related to an interesting finding in the quantitative portion of this study.

According to the results of the survey rating scale, the majority of students in the starting sample \( n = 51 \) claimed to enjoy reading (\( \mu = 4.31 \) and mode of 5), and yet 37% of students reported reading recreationally for two or fewer hours per week. Although some data collected in this and other studies would offer valid explanations of limited time and numerous responsibilities of college students, other findings within this study prompt a more critical look into the discrepancy between self-reported enjoyment and actual time spent reading. Could it be that preservice teachers’ minimal time spent in recreational reading is more likely due to an inability to identify texts of interest, not understanding the immeasurable value of the activity, or the absence of opportunities to relate to other readers?

Given the participants’ common belief that elementary teachers should be enthusiastic readers, the confession of a desire to become such teachers, and the belief that it is possible for adults to develop into avid readers, it is clear that the motivation to read is not the hurdle they need to overcome. Instead, it appears more likely that at least some preservice teachers must be led into the culture of readers, including the habits, social rewards, and fulfillment of lifelong reading.

Participants’ beliefs in the possibility of developing a love of reading at any time in life combined with evidence of this occurring in teacher education programs (Parsons, 2007) warrants a concerted effort to shape preservice teachers’ attitudes, beliefs, and values of reading within teacher education programs and courses. One way to support this effort would be to provide opportunities for them to relate to readers, such as peers, professors, and visiting authors in teacher education courses, clubs, or organizations. In addition, providing guidance in the self-selection of texts would also support preservice teachers in becoming avid readers. This could be in the form of demonstrations with online literature search tools (i.e., Amazon, local library catalogs, and databases), providing tours of local libraries and bookstores, and sharing or establishing online social networks for readers (i.e. Scribd, Kobo’s Reading Life, Goodreads, or Shelfari).

**Limitations and Future Research**

Although this study features a robust design with varied sources of data, it is limited in scope due to the small number of contexts (three) and small sample sizes \( n = 51 \) and \( n = 6 \). Therefore, findings from this study should not be generalized to all preservice teachers in all contexts. Alternatively, insights gained from this study would be better used to fuel further investigation into the pervasiveness of analogous themes reported here, development of effective ways to positively influence preservice teachers’ affective domains, and the impact of teachers’ affective domains on their teaching and students.

**Conclusion**

The mission of teacher education to prepare influential, effective teachers who inspire and enable lifelong learning and reading in young students is both exhilarating and challenging. A thorough understanding of preservice teachers’ affective domains of reading can assist teacher educators and their students in
accomplishing this goal. Utilizing the outcomes of this study to shape the instruction of preservice teachers has the potential to improve the literacy lives of students of all ages.

References
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