THE VOICES OF CHILDREN:
UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN'S READING WORLDS

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B.Ed., University of Alberta, 1994

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Education
of the University of Lethbridge
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF EDUCATION

LETHBRIDGE, ALBERTA

July 2000

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CHAPTER 1

Journey Into Narrative

Jillian: Children are important. Adults can learn different things from children that they didn't know.

Interview with Jillian 05/19/99

Before I started school, I associated reading with comfort, closeness, and connection. My parents invited me into the world of reading by sharing stories of adventure, friendship, and the gentle lessons common in children's literature. When I entered school I found myself in a much different environment, one with rows of small, unaccommodating desks filled with other children. I longed to be the center of attention in my new teacher's world, but I quickly learned that I would have to wait my turn, have to be patient, have to put my hand up, have to wait in line. I was also introduced to a new kind of reading with a new set of rules. I learned to read independently with a large furry dog and his family. Basal readers featuring *Mr. Mugs* replaced my favorite story books with their colorful illustrations, a tiny desk supplanted my mother's lap, and I learned about sight words and sentences and spelling. And read I did, but it was at home that I truly felt like a reader.

All these years later, I am the teacher, and it is my responsibility to help my grade three children grow in their abilities as literate individuals. Often, I sit at a round table in the middle of the room and survey the remnants of another hectic day. The windows wrap around the ghost sounds of giggling, arguing, helping, sharing, complaining, and questioning.

"Are we going to the library today?"

"What period is gym?"

"I forgot my homework."

"Can I go fill up my water bottle?"

"Teacher, I brought a book to share."

Bits of paper litter the floor, pencil shavings surround the sharpener, and inside shoes lay forgotten under desks. Damp leaves and swing-set hands are the smells that linger with me. In the quiet, I am able to look around and wonder about the children I live and learn with in this classroom. Tucker's desk, overflowing with weeks of papers, still displays the two joke books he proudly brought to school today. "Teacher, I like this one. What kind of arrest is likely to get arrested?" My confused expression at the misread question does not slow him down. "A con-arrest" he announces before I can hazard a guess. Not knowing how to read all of the words does not diminish his enthusiasm. I am beginning to understand Tucker and his love of books, yet he remains an enigma. What motivates this little boy, who seems to struggle with print and who often has difficulty paying attention in class, to be an avid reader?

There are other desks occupied by other children. They hint at further mysteries about children and their reading worlds and invite many questions that long to be explored: Why are some children always reluctant to read for pleasure? What influences one child to read for hours each day while another child is steadfastly opposed to opening a book? What in my practice is helping children grow to love reading, and what is not? How can I both understand the differences between children and honor these differences?

When I started teaching five years ago, I did not concern myself with these questions. I was more concerned with what *I* did with the children than about the

children. Mine was a world of lesson plans, unit plans, monthly plans, yearly plans and I was so busy trying to live the story of a "good" teacher that I did not leave spaces to listen to the children I taught, and as a result, I missed the connections that are possible when you know the hearts and inner-worlds of children. Despite the busy-ness of my new life as a teacher, I felt an emptiness that grew from the knowledge that this was not the kind of relationship I wanted to live with children.

Two summers ago, I took a course that introduced me to narrative inquiry and to the work of the instructors Jean Clandinin, Janice Huber, and Karen Whelan. It was in this caring and open community of learners that I finally found the space within myself to change my thinking about teaching and my relationships with children. I think that the work we did helped me learn the essential quality of narrative: the possibility of creating openings for further understandings about ourselves and the world in which we live. One of the things that drew me to narrative was the idea that narrative inquiry is like a journey where stories are shared and understanding grows. I wanted to negotiate this kind of growth in my relationships with the children with whom I work.

As part of this course, groups read theses and dissertations written by narrative researchers. I read Janice Huber's thesis, *Narratives of Experience: Voice as Evaluation* (1992). Her narrative inquiry interconnected the threads of the experienced curriculum, evaluation, voice, and collaboration. These aspects were woven together as the teacher, children and researcher celebrated their lives within the community of the classroom. The primary focus was to create a space in which the voices of the children could be heard as they told the stories of their lived curriculum. As I read this work, I was reminded of the importance of listening to others, and ourselves. I decided that I did not want to miss

hearing the many voices of the children I would encounter in the years to come. In that way, my own narrative journey had begun.

With the summer behind me and the promise of a new school year ahead, I shared my feelings with a friend during our morning drive to the school. I remember telling her that for the first time, I was more concerned with the children coming into my classroom than about what I was going to do with them. As I made name tags and labeled cubbies, I wondered about the children and the unique experiences that shaped their lives.

Back in the classroom again, I found that I did know how to live a relationship with children, and I finally felt a true sense of connection and caring with the children with whom I learn. During our days together, I did not feel rushed or harried. I no longer felt besieged when children wanted to tell me their stories, and I created spaces for their voices to be heard and honored. I began to see the storyteller in all of the children.

Curiosity made me a better listener and I marveled at the spark and spontaneity as the children's voices burst forth with multiple stories that seemed to build on each other like an oral chain.

"Has anyone ever found a fossil?"

"There was one time, I fell down, and I scraped my knee on the rocks..."

"I went to the ocean when I visited my dad and we looked for polished glass..."

"Blue is the hardest colour to find you know..."

And so the stories would swell, and I remain amazed at the impact, rebound, and music of their stories.

From this place as listener, I started to do classroom research with my children. My university projects and course work all lead back to the children and our lives in the

classroom and focussed on the area that brought me back to university in the first place--children's growth as literate individuals. I started to explore my reading program and, with the children's help, found ways to make it more interesting and engaging. I worked with children and families on the design and implementation of a family literacy program. My teaching and my work with children became an integral part of the questions I kept returning to. The questions that kept repeating drew me to think about the experiences that shape a child's reading world.

As I prepared for the 1998/99 school year, I wondered how I could look for answers to these questions. I knew that I wanted to work with children in my classroom, and that I wanted to be a 'narrative researcher', but I was unsure of how to proceed. In September, I started to plan my inquiry and map out my journey. The 28 children with whom I worked became my travelling companions, but the stories I share in this narrative will focus on four children in particular: Tucker, Lilly, Brad, and Jillian. I shared my narrative sketches about how I had come to know these children as readers at my colloquium. These are not their stories, only my interpretations before we embarked on this inquiry together, and I share them here as an introduction.

Tucker is a little boy in my classroom who loves books. On any given school day, I look at his desk, which resembles a broken suitcase that you see rolling by on an airport luggage conveyer, contents bulging and strewn about, and there amidst the clutter, his books are often proudly displayed. When we celebrated Canadian Children's Book Week, he excitedly ran into the classroom, books in hand: "Look, I think they're Canadian. See, it says so here," he announced as he pointed to the word 'Scholastic'. He recently started to bring books to share at school. When he places them by the window (our place

for shared books) he looks at other stories that invite. He seemed to especially enjoy one. I think about a chicken named Edmund, shared by Lilly.

Lilly is a reader. Right now, she is ravenously consuming the Mary Pope Osborne series featuring a magic tree house that travels to wondrous places. Often, at recess, she leaves with her book held up to her face as she negotiates the sea of children in the hallway. When it is time for Story Circles, she dives into her novel basket with abandon, her exuberance feeding the energy of her group. The excitement that surrounds books draws children to her home on weekends where they find new ways to share stories with the class. During our daily read-alouds, her body language (mouth open, eyes wide) assures me that the novel I chose to share is interesting and engaging... But then I notice the way Jillian's rock, presumably pried out from between running shoe treads, has captured her interest in a way that my best story-reading cannot.

Jillian, after a gentle reminder, can be drawn back into the story. That is until her eyes stray to the piece of glitter that has fallen from a snowflake suspended from the ceiling. When it is time for Story Circles, she can be convinced to read. Sometimes, I see her teetering towards the discovery of true enjoyment in her reading, particularly when she chooses a humorous novel, the kind that Jon Sciezka and Dan Greenburg write. She will share funny anecdotes about male characters who know how to handle a sticky situation. I notice that, at the moment, she has chosen a novel about an owl, and she is somewhat less than enthused. I wonder again how her pencil eraser can possibly be more interesting than what her group is reading. Even Matt, who is a member of her Story Circle group, seems to be frustrated at having to wait for her to join in the reading.

Brad seems to enjoy participating in Story Circles with his friends. When it is time to share a book, he can convince even the most reticent children to write a song about the characters and sing it in front of the class. Yet, when his book bag is returned to school, the novels, picture books, and activities are untouched. His home reading chart, kept out of sight in my purple binder, still shows a long, empty row of boxes that wait to be filled with hours of reading. On Monday morning, he shares a long list of hockey commitments with dramatic emphasis on his general state of exhaustion. Then, with great pride, he hands me the video of his game taped by proud parents, and asks me to get the VCR from the library so that he can show it during sharing.

Children are uniquely situated in the classroom landscape to share stories of their experiences precisely because they are children. As a teacher, I have an opportunity to listen to children as they share stories of their lived experience. My experiences as a reader have shaped *my* reading world, and to some extent my beliefs about teaching children how to read, but I have come to realize that they do not inform me about the reading worlds of the children with whom I work. My memories about being a child and reading have become diluted with the passage of time and I am left with fuzzy impressions and lingering questions.

I think these children's stories, when explored more fully, will hold true for others who work with children and who are interested in children's development as readers. In comparison to studies that have focussed on hundreds or even thousands of children, exploring the stories of these four children will offer a unique perspective on children's reading worlds.

The stories these four children share of their experiences can be seen as a talisman that holds the possibility of a time portal and the promise of journeying backwards to a time that is only partly remembered by adults. My questions are the starting points of this journey. The children's stories are the reasons for my explorations and wonderings in this narrative inquiry.

CHAPTER 2

A Narrative Framework

Stories move in circles.
They don't go in straight lines. So it helps if you listen in circles.
There are stories inside stories and stories between stories,
and finding your way through them is as easy and as hard as
finding your way home.
And part of the finding is the getting lost.
And when you're lost, you start to look around and to listen.
- Sue Bender, 1996

There was a starting point to this inquiry when I departed on this journey. Before I started my research with the children, I wrote about the purpose and focus of this study from the vantage point of hopeful traveler and neophyte researcher. Writing about my research intentions from this vantage point helped construct a framework for my inquiry into children's reading worlds that allowed me to go forward in my work with the children. From the beginning of this journey, I hoped that exploring the shifting stories children are living and telling of themselves as readers would improve my understanding about the individual nature of children's reading and their feelings about reading.

In the first section, I will describe the way my thinking about children's reading motivation has changed as I have worked through this inquiry, thereby revealing the shifting and temporal nature of this journey. In the second section, I will share the way this narrative journey was conceptualized at the beginning by maintaining a "sense of future direction" in the tone of the writing (Huber, 1992, p.14). Hopefully, in this way, I will be able to share the way my understandings of reading motivation, narrative inquiry, voice, and story have shaped the path and the direction of this study.

Shifting Perspectives on Reading Motivation: Then and Now

At the beginning of this inquiry, my thinking was focussed around the definitional constructs of reading motivation. The wording of my initial research question facilitated this way of thinking: *What are the factors contributing to a child's intrinsic reading motivation?* Looking back on my writing about reading motivation reveals that I was drawn to a very quantitative view of children's reading and their motivation to read. For me, there was a rather beguiling pull toward this way of thinking. I suppose the tidy definitions were comforting and offered me a sense of stability. In a sense, there was a fear of "getting lost" in the children's stories, and definitions tethered me to a path that has been traveled before. Sharing the way I conceptualized my study of children's reading motivation at the beginning of my inquiry and then the way this conceptualization has changed helps reveal the way my own understanding has shifted as this inquiry has unfolded.

Beginning Conceptualizations: Reading Motivation as Definitions and Constructs

When I wrote my proposal, I relied on the safety of definitions and constructs created by other researchers in the field of children's reading motivation. I wrote this review as part of a graduate course that helped me plan and prepare for my work as a researcher. The quantitative tone of this writing will be heard throughout this section.

In the literature, the terms *attitude*, *interest*, and *motivation* are often used interchangeably (Baker, Scher, & Mackler, 1997). Reading attitude typically refers to an individual's feelings about reading, such as whether they enjoy reading (Wigfield, 1997). Reading interest refers to the genres children are interested in reading. Much of the research in this area has focussed on the correlation of interest in reading material with

increased attention, effective use of reading strategies, and subsequent gains in reading comprehension (Wolfson, Manning, & Manning, 1984; McCombs, 1997). Reading motivation is considerably more complicated and draws from the work of various motivational theorists.

Reading motivation theory is based on several current theoretical perspectives of motivation. Wigfield's (1997) discussion of motivational theory reveals that reading motivation is largely based on expectancy-value theory, self-efficacy theory, achievement goal theory, and intrinsic motivation theory. These theories have been instrumental in guiding the understanding of how "children's beliefs, values, and goals influence their achievement behaviors (Ibid. p.59). Wigfield contends that beliefs, attitudes, and goals influence children's performance in school, their choice of activities, and their persistence in pursuing activities. Based upon this idea, researchers at the National Reading Research Center (NRRC) have created the "engagement perspective" on reading which includes both cognitive and motivational aspects of reading to explore how children's motivation influences not only their acquisition of reading skills, but also the amount of time they spend reading (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). Eleven domain specific motivational constructs that have emerged in reading theory, as described by Wigfield (1997), are presented in Table 1. Significantly, work in reading motivation indicates that there are a variety of reading motives that can influence children's desire to read, or not to read, and their reading performance.

Table 1

Aspects of Reading Motivation as Described by Wigfield 1997

Aspects Tapping Competence and Efficacy Beliefs	Aspects Tapping Achievement Values and Goals	Aspects Tapping Social Aspects of Reading
Reading efficacy Reading challenge Reading work avoidance	Reading curiosity Reading involvement Importance of reading Competition in reading Reading recognition Reading for grades	Social reasons for reading Reading compliance

At the beginning of this study, I worked through my understanding of reading motivation and constructed a definition. In my proposal, I wrote: *I will define reading motivation as an individual's desire to read based on their self-concept and the value they place on reading.* Essentially, I was drawn into what Carter (1993, drawing on Bruner, 1985) called "paradigmatic knowledge" (p. 6) which often reduces knowledge to singular interpretations. My thinking has undergone a qualitative shift since that time.

Children's Reading Worlds: Shifting From Definitions to Exploration

Thinking about children's reading motivation as a definitional construct has guided my journey in this narrative inquiry, but at the same time, it narrowed the possibilities for exploration. In the early planning stages of this inquiry, I struggled with my research question and the restrictions I was feeling. After some friendly guidance and encouragement, I thought about approaching the study in such a way that I could come to *understand* children's reading motivation by exploring the stories children were telling about their reading in the broader context of their experiences. When I consider what I now know about children and reading, I realize that focussing on reading motivation with a convenient definition limited my understanding.

From this definition, I moved to the idea of exploring children's reading worlds and the shifting stories children are living and telling about themselves as readers. In particular, I see exploring children's reading worlds as creating the possibility to listen to the voices of four children to expand what is currently understood about reading motivation -- expansions that might attend to the temporal, contextual, and individual differences between children and their evolving stories as readers.

Conceptualizing My Narrative Journey

When I think about the role of narrative in this exploration, I conceptualize it as a way to improve my understanding of children and their reading worlds by working through story. I wrote about it this way in my journal some seven months ago:

> *This is not about proving. I am going to try to understand by staying close to these children's stories, and I think that narrative holds the promise of that depth of understanding. Narrative knowledge is fundamentally grounded in how people themselves tell of their experience. Through the research, and the constructing of a narrative, I suppose that I am hoping to understand in such a way that I will shift the conversation to include children, and their stories of experience" (Journal Entry 01/28/99).*

Narrative Inquiry

The focus of this study is gaining understanding of the complex and multihued reading worlds of children. Through listening to children's evolving stories of themselves as readers and recording both their oral and written stories, I explored children's reading worlds. My intention in listening to four children's evolving stories of themselves as

readers was to write a research text which is a narrative account of children's reading worlds.

The research tradition my work is grounded in is narrative inquiry, a method of inquiry into personal experience which holds that people do the things they do because of their experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). Narrative and storytelling help one understand others, as "stories are the closest we can come to experience as we and others tell of our experience" (Ibid., p.415). Narrative researchers, then, describe people's lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience.

Nel Noddings (1991) writes, "Stories have the power to direct and change our lives" (p. 157). Reviewing some of the literature surrounding reading motivation has revealed that this personal, narrative knowing has been largely absent from much of the past work in reading motivation theory. However, classrooms are full of stories; one only needs to listen. Narrative inquiry provides a way to reveal the complexity, specificity, and interconnectedness of classroom life and family life with children's reading worlds thus redressing the deficiencies of positivistic approaches in which learning has been narrowly examined (Carter, 1993). Exploring children's reading worlds by focussing on their "narratives of experience" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988) will help me write what ethnographers call thick descriptions of children's lives as readers (Barone, 1992). In this sense, the stories emanating from my inquiry with four children from my classroom will create openings where individual's voices are heard and honored and their stories are celebrated.

Voice and Story

When I think about listening to children's voices and attending to the stories they tell of themselves, I am drawn to the work of Vivian Paley (1986) who focussed her research on listening to what children say. The voices of the children with whom Paley has worked, are listened to and honored. In her work, Paley creates rich descriptions of the children with whom she is working and the ways in which their voices give expression to their thoughts and their experiences. In other words, by listening to the voices of children, Paley is attending to the stories the children are living, telling, and retelling. Voice is a central thread in my work. Alongside Paley, I understand voice as knowing that may be represented or shared in multiple ways. Storytelling is one representation of voice. Art, dance or music might be other representations.

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) extend my thinking around voice as: "meaning that resides in the individual and enables that individual to participate in a community... The struggle for voice begins when a person attempts to communicate meaning to someone else" (p.4). Voice, then, involves relationship and an understanding of knowledge and knowing as "embodied" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988), as situated within experience and, as made meaningful when shared with others. When I listen to children's voices, I am listening for their stories of experience. In my inquiry, I am interested in learning about children's stories as readers. The children tell their stories when they reflect upon their reading experiences and share stories of themselves as readers. The stories that the children tell are intimately connected with their histories and their unfolding experience through time.

In listening to children's voices and their unfolding stories, my research intention is to understand their narrative histories as readers. This listening helped me piece together stories, laying them alongside one another in order to discover a more holistic understanding of each child's experiences as a reader. Such insight allows me to understand their reading experiences and to look across their stories of experience for recurring themes related to their individual sense of reading motivation. It is not my intention to make comparisons between the children or to judge their stories against the research and literature in reading motivation. Instead, my hope is that by listening to the evolving stories of the four children, a much more expansive and contextual understanding of children's reading worlds might be revealed.

CHAPTER 3

Literature Review

Teacher: I was wondering, do you think adults can learn from children by talking to children?

Brad: Yeah, it's not like there's a book that you can grab out of the library that will tell you all about children.

Interview with Brad 05/26/99

Brad reminded me that reading about children and reading would offer me some ideas about general trends and findings, but that I would be left wanting to learn more. This literature review illustrates some of the findings that have been generated with large studies of children's reading motivation and helps me situate my work with the children in my classroom.

The importance of helping children become motivated readers seems self-evident. A review of current literature concerning reading indicates that children's motivation to read is one of teachers' greatest concerns (Wigfield, Guthrie, & McGough, 1996). In addition, creating interest in reading was rated by teachers as the most important area for future research (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996). Most teachers help children improve their reading skills while nurturing reading as a lifelong activity. This idea of nurturing the love of reading, however, is complicated by the fact that the nature of children's reading motivation is not fully understood (Shapiro & Whitney, 1997).

Most research conducted in the area of reading has focussed on cognitive aspects of reading, although affective aspects are gaining importance in educational studies (Greaney & Hegarty, 1987; Pumfrey, 1988; Henk & Melnick, 1995; Wigfiled, Wilde, Baker, Fernandez-Fein, & Scher, 1996; Metsala, Wigfield, & McCann, 1997; Wigfield, 1997; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). One of the reasons for the current interest in affective

aspects of reading, particularly the area of motivation, is the increasing phenomenon of "aliteracy". Aliteracy is defined as individuals choosing not to read when other options exist (Neuman, 1986; McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth, 1995; Shapiro & Whitney, 1997). For educators trying to foster a lifelong love of reading, this apathy becomes a serious problem indeed.

Young Children's Reading Motivation

Trends in Children's Reading Motivation

Two major trends emerge from the literature. The first trend shows a marked gender difference in children's reading motivation that shows girls are more likely to be motivated to read than boys (Neuman, 1986; Greaney & Hegarty, 1987; McKenna et al., 1995; Shapiro & Whitney, 1997). Also, measures of reading attitude using the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey show that girls have more positive attitudes toward reading than boys (McKenna et al., 1995).

A second trend reveals that as children get older, the amount of time given to leisure book reading is likely to decrease (Neuman, 1986; Greaney & Hegarty, 1987; McKenna et al., 1995; Gambrell et al., 1996; Shapiro & Whitney, 1997; Wigfield, 1997). Embedded in these two trends is a debate surrounding the influence of home literacy environments on the development of children's desire to read for pleasure. A close look at these research trends reveals that more needs to be learned in the area of reading motivation to go beyond gender and age descriptions. Exploring the stories of children can improve our understanding about the individual nature of reading motivation, helping us to learn more about how reading motivation is shaped and developed, and the ways it shifts and changes through time and across contexts.

Measuring Children's Reading Motivation: Past Research and Future Considerations

There are many tests used to measure children's reading attitude and motivation. The usefulness of these tests, however, spans a broad range. Tests like the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey, or ERAS, (McKenna & Kear, 1990) that use smiling or frowning cartoon characters to gauge reading attitudes force children to make difficult cognitive leaps, and as such, may have limited use. Other tests, such as the Reader Self-Perception Scale (RSPS) (Henk & Melnick, 1995), are designed to measure how children feel about themselves as readers. The RSPS asks children to rate how much they agree or disagree with thirty-three statements using a 5-point Likert system. The test is considered to be sufficiently difficult that it should only be used with children in grades four and higher. In addition to quantitative measures, there are qualitative assessments. By way of illustration, The I Am What I Read Survey (Glassner, 1995) presents interview questions that encourage children to think and reflect about themselves as readers. Two tests that merit further discussion are the Motivations for Reading Questionnaire (MRQ) (Wigfield et al., 1996) and the Motivation to Read Profile (MRP) (Gambrell et al., 1996).

Research conducted by Wigfield et al. (1996) describes the use and validity of the MRQ. The MRQ is used to determine the nature of children's motivations for reading, reading frequency, and reading performance. The fifty-four-item questionnaire was administered to approximately 600 fifth and sixth grade children in a large mid-Atlantic city. Reading frequency was measured using The Reading Activities Inventory (Guthrie, McGough, & Wigfield, 1994) and cognitive ability was measured using the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test (MacGinitie & MacGinitie, 1989) as well as a performance assessment measure. The results section presented vast quantities of statistical analysis

and arrived at some unanticipated conclusions. For example, this study found that children do not seem to be highly motivated to read for social reasons, such as reading with friends and family. Rather, intrinsic motivations are more strongly related to reading frequency. This study concluded that the MRQ is an excellent and statistically reliable scale to measure various dimensions of children's reading motivations.

However, it is the absence of children's voices that spoke to me. The 600 children involved in the study were reduced to scales and averages presented in tables. I want to explore the development, nature, and complexities of four children's reading in the broader context of their reading worlds. The MRQ, then, could be used to gauge the ways in which children are motivated to read (Wigfield, Guthrie, & McGough, 1996). However, it is only one part of the equation. As the authors of this study suggest, future research should explore *how* children's reading motivations develop. Exploring children's stories as readers will allow this kind of information to emerge.

The Motivation to Read Profile (MRP) is an instrument that allows for quantitative and qualitative assessment of reading motivation (Gambrell et al., 1996). The profile was designed to measure children's self-concept as readers and the value they place on reading. The MRP consists of a twenty-item survey and a conversational interview. The information from the conversational interview provides authentic insights into children's reading motivation.

Self-report instruments have limitations, even ones like the MRP and MRQ that have strong reliability and validity measures: "It is impossible to determine from self-report instruments alone whether or not students actually feel, believe, or do the things they report" (Ibid., p. 531). Studying large numbers of children makes these kinds of

assessment measures necessary, and the findings from large studies provide important insights into children's reading, but the picture they create is painted with broad strokes and primary colours. Exploring the stories of individual children will enable a fundamentally different picture to emerge, one with intricate detail and a spectrum of shades and colours.

Children's Reading Motivation: From Broad Strokes to Intricate Detail

Studies of children's reading motivation try to answer a very important question: Why do some children choose to read for pleasure while others are not similarly motivated? Most of these studies rely on quantitative measures of reading frequency and motivation to determine the amount children read, and why they read.

Greaney and Hegarty (1987) conducted a study in Dublin that involved 138 fifth grade children from a middle class suburban primary school. Children kept journals to record their leisure activities, and all children were given the Attitude Toward Reading Scale (Lewis, 1979) and Functions of Reading Scale (Greaney & Neuman, 1983). Home environment was assessed using questionnaires. The authors stress that studies investigating children's reading should not over-rely on socio-economic categories because they do little to explain how homes are effective. Some studies have erroneously shown that leisure reading is negatively related to socio-economic status. For instance, there is a tendency to report that working class children do not read as much as middle class children. The authors warn that there are large variations within socio-economic categories, and that generalizations in this realm are dangerous.

The authors found that only 7.2% of children's leisure time was spent reading and one-fifth of the children did not read at all over the periods measured. Reading for

pleasure was the strongest motive for leisure reading, and reading for enjoyment positively related to amount of book reading. Reading for utilitarian purposes and reading for escape were not positively correlated with reading frequency. In terms of home environment, they found that "what parents *do* is more important than what they *are*" (Ibid., p. 15). Ultimately, the researchers felt that the relationship between value placed on reading in the home and amount of children's book reading has been overstated and that personal characteristics such as attitudes, needs, and motivations has been understated. This conclusion is supported by Wigfield's (1997) finding that children do not seem to be highly motivated to read for social reasons. Although this study was conducted in Dublin, the idea that descriptions of home environment should be qualitative is important for my study. Exploring the stories of individual children will help create a detailed picture of their reading worlds by attending to the multiplicity of their reading experiences within and across various contexts, their home environment being one of them.

Pumfrey's (1988) report of a three-year longitudinal study of children's reading behaviours is an excellent example of a study that had good intentions but failed to demonstrate the personal and individual qualities of reading motivation. In total, 324 children between the ages of nine and thirteen were involved in the Branford "Book Flood Experiment" in England. The goal of this study was to examine the effects of providing books in classrooms and the subsequent changes in children's reading attainment, attitudes to reading, and reading habits. Multiple measures were used to determine reading skills, reading attitudes, and reading habits. Case studies were conducted with a ten percent sample of "avid" and "infrequent" readers.

This study found no statistically significant changes in children's attitudes to reading. Pumfrey (1988) suggests that the attitude to reading scales used in the study had poor reliability in light of the fact that observers and teachers felt children's attitudes toward reading improved. Disappointingly, the discussion of case studies was very limited and the descriptions, based on interviews with parents conducted in their homes, were stereotypical. For instance, Pumfrey (1988) reports that parents of 'avid' readers "tended to be in skilled occupations" while the parents of 'infrequent' readers "were more likely to be in unskilled occupations" (p. 170). I also learned that 'avid' readers came from smaller families, had more books in their homes, and had parents who were more likely to belong to public libraries. There were 324 children involved in this study, yet the descriptions provided by the author rendered them essentially invisible.

Pumfrey (1988) criticized the study's quasi-experimental design to explain why children's reading attitudes failed to show improvements. I would contend that the difficulties in getting quantifiable data could be countered with qualitative research methods using fewer children. The case studies here did not explore, or perhaps did not portray, the relationship within the homes between parents and children. Nor did they attempt to look at the stories of children who were identified as "avid" or "infrequent" readers. Furthermore, it is impossible to gain insights about the individual nature of children's reading motivations with a sample of 324 children. Romatowski, Trepanier-Street, & Peterson (1995), in a similar three year study with a much smaller sample (22 kindergartners, 51 kindergartners, and 46 kindergartners in respective years), demonstrated that children who are involved in a special book project do demonstrate more positive attitudes towards reading.

McKenna et al. (1995) conducted a nationwide study involving 18,185 children in grades one through six across 38 states. This national American study was designed to delineate overall developmental trends in recreational and academic reading attitudes. The weakness of the study is the use of the ERAS to measure reading attitude. The stratified national sample allowed for generalizations about American children's reading attitudes. An interesting finding in this study revealed that undesirable reading experiences have a cumulative effect on children's motivation to read. The authors suggest that methodologies that do not rely on self-report measures designed for young children are necessary and they point to the need for qualitative inquiries that explore the question of how frustrating experiences and negative influences of significant others might influence reading motivation. Moving away from massive samples with hundreds or even thousands of children, and listening to the voices of individual children, allows me to explore reading motivation in a qualitative and in-depth manner. Looking at research conducted with smaller sample sizes illuminates an interesting debate concerning the families' influence on children's motivation to read.

Home and Family Influence: A Contextual Picture of Children's Reading

A discrepancy exists within reading motivation literature concerning the influence of home environment and family on children's motivation to read. As previously shown, large studies that rely on quantitative measures indicate that social reasons for reading, including reading with family, play a small role in influencing children's motivation to read. Rather, these studies show that intrinsic motivational factors such as reading for pleasure are better indicators of children's reading activity. Smaller studies that focus on

how families influence the development of reading motivation reveal an altogether different picture.

Research conducted in the area of family literacy has found that children's literacy development depends to a great extent on the literacy environment at home (Strickland & Morrow, 1989). Home environments that promote literacy typically have adult family members who read to children, who read themselves, and who are responsive to the emergent literacy of children. Children who are read to on a regular basis have improved language development and use the language of books in their play (Halsall & Green, 1995). When parents engage children with books, they increase the amount their children read, which in turn increases their proficiency in reading (Rasinski, 1996). Walsh (1995) concludes that "reading to your children is the most effective way to help him or her learn how to read and how to love reading" (p. 5).

Baker et al. (1997) explored how home experiences are related to motivational variables in children. Their report describes the Early Childhood Project, an ongoing longitudinal study interested in understanding literacy development of young children. The sample started with 41 pre-kindergarten children and their families and expanded in subsequent years to include 68 families from four sociocultural groups (middle-income and low-income white and African American families). The researchers wanted to find out if "the experiences children have at home set the stage for positive attitudes toward reading, signal emerging interest in reading and learning to read, and relate directly to the development of motivation" (Ibid., p. 69). Specifically, they examined how the affective domain of shared storybook reading influenced children's motivation to read. The research design included observations, diaries, and interviews in both the home and the

school. Because frequency measures of storybook reading alone do not offer a complete picture of parents reading to and with children, the affective dimension of storybook reading was measured by videotaping storybook reading. The researchers found that there was a correlation between positive storybook interaction and motivation to read in grade one children. They also found that parental beliefs influenced children's reading motivation: "Parents who believe that reading is a source of entertainment have children with more positive views about reading than do parents who emphasize the skills aspect of reading development" (Ibid., p. 69).

Baker et al. (1997) make it clear that research exploring the relationship between children's home experiences and motivation for reading is limited. Although this study showed important ways home environments influence children's motivation to read, stories of individual children were not shared. The authors suggest studies are needed that include ethnographic and process-oriented analysis of home environments to truly understand the families' influence on children's reading. Exploring the stories of children helps me see a detailed and contextual picture of each child's home reading experiences.

Neuman (1986) examined the relationship between home variables and leisure reading. A home environmental process questionnaire was administered over the telephone to parents of 84 fifth grade students in the Boston metropolitan area. The students' reading frequency was averaged at fifteen minutes per day, or just over two books per month, with girls reading slightly more than boys. The strongest relationship found between leisure reading and home variables indicates that parents of children who read more encourage their children to read. Also, the frequency of being read to as a young child had a positive influence on this sample of fifth grade children's leisure

reading. This study, while indicating how parents influence children's leisure reading, does not share the stories of children. This is not surprising considering the fact that home environment was the focus of study; however, children can offer valuable insights. Looking at the experiences of individual children helps me build on studies like Neuman's (1986) that have identified possible characteristics in homes that promote reading for pleasure.

Shapiro & Whitney's (1997) study of 39 fourth and fifth grade children in a suburban Southeast American city measured leisure activities for a three-week period in October. Children were individually interviewed to answer such questions as "What does leisure reading mean to you?" and to respond "never", "rarely", "sometimes", or "often" to various questions. Limiting the children's responses to this narrow range of possibilities where the children were essentially silenced and their stories were not shared severely limited what might have been learned from the study.

A notable exception to studies in which children's voices remain silent is Morrow & Young's (1996) study of a family literacy program's effects on children's attitude, motivation, and literacy achievement. In all, 54 children in grades one through three from an inner-city school district were involved. From this sample, 27 children participated in a family literacy program that was designed to bridge the gap between home and school literacy environments. The other 27 children in the same school were in a control group that did not participate in the program. Several measurements were used to determine reading achievement, motivation, and frequency. Analysis of the quantitative data showed that participants performed "significantly better" than the control group on measures of achievement and motivation. Interviews and anecdotal data provided the

researchers with stories about the families they worked with. Reading the stories of families offered a unique glimpse into the special relationship between the parents and children in this study. Reading these stories reinforced for me that parents play a crucial role in the literacy development of their children. What is more, the stories shared by the authors resonate with many of my own stories about working with families and children. Although these were anecdotal stories that focussed on families, this study demonstrates the power of stories in reading motivation research and their potential for broadening our understanding of the diverse qualities shaping children's reading worlds.

An essential part of learning, especially for young children, is to grow in one's ability as a literate individual. Nurturing children's reading ability, however, is only part of the equation. It is also important to nurture children's love of reading and to promote reading for enjoyment as a lifelong pursuit. Reading motivation research has uncovered many important insights, but there seems to be a gap between the query and the discovery. The goal is to understand children's reading motivation, yet the very people being studied are often silenced. And as I read the literature, I am reminded of Brad's words: "It's not like there's a book that you can grab out of the library that will tell you all about children". It is important to me to move from broad strokes to intricate detail by listening to the voices of the four children in this study. In so doing, I believe I can paint a rich, contextual picture where the multi-hued stories of children's reading experiences might expand my understanding of children's motivation to read in the broader context of their unfolding reading worlds.

CHAPTER 4

Visiting Children's Reading Worlds

Teacher: Why do you think adults should talk to children if they want to learn from them?

Brad: 'Cause if they don't they're going to have to go around just spying on them seeing what they like to do. It's easier to just go ask them if they'll talk with them and ask them questions like you are right now.

Interview with Brad 05/26/99

Going around spying on children does not sound the least bit appealing, but inquiring alongside children in an effort to learn about their experiences as readers was most inviting. I was, in many ways, a traveler visiting children's reading worlds, but I did not travel alone. The children became my research partners and travelling companions, accompanying me during home visits, classroom reading activities, and lunch time conversations. These ongoing travels helped me listen and attend to the stories four children were living and telling of their experiences as readers and were the starting points that helped me create a field text. I hope that in telling how I came to know my travelling companions as a teacher and as a researcher, I can share the complexities of these children's lives and the richness in the ways they gave voice to their experiences.

Travelling Companions

I knew from the start that I wanted to work with two boys and two girls, and the four children whose stories are shared in this writing were chosen for a variety of reasons. With the exception of Tucker, I had already established relationships with the children's parents. I had taught siblings in the past or I had worked with them in the school setting, and as a result I felt comfortable approaching them with the idea of my project. All of the children are very talkative and communicate easily with adults. I worried about working with some of the children who are very shy and quiet because on the one hand, I was not

sure they would feel comfortable when they shared their stories about reading with me, and on the other, I wanted to have 'enough' conversation from our lunch time visits. This is not to say that I was not interested in these children's reading worlds, only that I felt it might be better to work with 'talkers'. Brad and Lilly had to eat lunch at school because they were bus students, and I knew that it would not be difficult for Tucker and Jillian to bring lunches for our visits. And finally, I tried to pick children who might share different insights with me based on my perceptions of their reading worlds. Simply put, I chose two children who seemed to enjoy reading and two children who seemed somewhat less interested in reading. As you read, you will see that these were not necessarily fair or even accurate perceptions, but they informed my decision at the time.

I worked in a classroom full of children whose lives, experiences, and stories were equally captivating and important. In this narrative, I am sharing my experience of working with four of those children to learn more about their lives as readers, but at all times I remain mindful of the stories that are untold by not being able to include everyone in this writing.

Negotiating Entry

Before I could begin, I needed to secure permission to include the children in this study. Fine and Sandstrom (1988) caution that informed consent with children is sometimes problematic. It is quite a different thing to get informed consent from adults than it is from children. I decided at the beginning I did not want to keep my research role a secret from the children and I tried to help them understand what I wanted to learn about. I also had to obtain consent and support from the children's parents. I shared what I planned to do with the children and worked to create an environment of trust and caring.

Before I talked with the children, I telephoned each of their parents at home and shared what I was planning to do and asked if they would let me work with their children. I told parents I would be talking with their children at lunch time to learn more about how they feel about reading, that I would be keeping observations of classroom reading, and that I would like to visit them at home on four occasions. Brad remembers my initial telephone conversation with some speculation:

> Teacher: What did you think when I asked you if you wanted to do this research with me?
>
> Brad: Well, I was wondering when you called, 'who would be calling at this hour?' and I go and I'm "Hello?" and I'm all "Oh, hi Mrs. Schultz." And you're like, "Is your mom there?" and I'm like, "Ah, yeah." And when my mom got off the phone, I'm like, "Why did Mrs. Schultz call?" She said, "Oh, she just wants you to be in this little reading club" or something. I'm like, "Hmm... What's going to happen in that?" She's like, "I don't know." So I was thinking, when is it going to happen? Does she just want to see what's going on in my reading life and stuff? (Interview with Brad 05/26/99)

Tucker approached the research relationship with enthusiasm:

> Teacher: What did you think when I asked you if you wanted to be a part of the research?
>
> Tucker: Well, I felt good that I got to do the interviews and stuff 'cause I like reading and stuff. And when my mom told me I was really happy and stuff. When I heard about it, I couldn't wait to get to school the next morning. (Interview with Tucker 05/25/99).

Jillian had similar feelings:

> Teacher: How did it make you feel when I asked you [to be a part of this project]?
>
> Jillian: I thought it was going to be fun. It made me feel like I was happy about it and I thought I was going to have a lot of fun doing the interviews. (Interview with Jillian 05/19/99)

Lilly thought back to the beginning of our research together and remembered agreeing to

participate. Her words highlight the importance of relationship:

> Lilly: I said yes, cause I thought it would be fun to be in something like that.
> Teacher: Why did you think it would be fun?
> Lilly: Because it was with you and it's about reading. And I like reading. (Interview with Lilly 05/18/99)

At school, I talked with the children about what I wanted to learn by working with them. I told them that we would meet at lunch time to talk about reading ten different times over the coming months, and that I would be visiting them at home to talk with them and their families. Initially, the children seemed a bit shy and reserved as I read the consent letter with them, but as we talked about the work we would do together, they smiled and asked questions and helped me to feel that they looked forward to the work we would be doing together. The consent letter signed by the parents is included in Appendix A. The children's consent letter is included in Appendix B. The children read my consent letter and signed it without ceremony or hesitation. And so our research relationship began.

Building Relationships

One of the aspects of narrative inquiry that drew me to this research method is the relationship between researcher and participants. The relationship that forms between researcher and participants in narrative inquiry is characterized by equality and connectedness and is based on an ethic of caring where "fidelity is not seen as faithfulness to duty or principle but as a direct response to individuals with whom one is in relation" (Noddings, 1986, p. 497).

Lilly shared her thoughts about the importance of relationship when she described why she would have been reluctant to talk about reading with a stranger:

Lilly: I might have been too shy to say anything and it wouldn't work out.
Teacher: How come you think you're not shy talking to me?
Lilly: I know you. And you're easy to talk to. I know you, and I wouldn't know much about a person that I didn't know. Like if I said I was a bad reader, they might go around telling everybody that I was, and I can trust you that you won't. Not that I'm a bad reader. (Interview with Lilly 05/18/99)

I think that starting the research after working and living together in the classroom for five months helped the children feel comfortable with me. Lilly knew that she could trust me, and I knew that I could trust the children. My relationship with Tucker, Lilly, Jillian, and Brad was built on this kind of trust, and I believe they all felt confident that I would not betray their frailties or their honour as children.

Working with individual children in my classroom presented many ethical dilemmas. A problem that I needed to consider was how the research relationship might affect the children in the classroom who were not specifically involved in the study. Pearce (1994) wrote about other children's curiosity surrounding her involvement with the individuals in her narrative inquiry. There were children who wondered why selected children got to eat lunch with her while others did not. In my study, I worked with four children; however, I tried to remain sensitive to the curiosity and interest of the other children in my classroom. It became very important to me, then, to ensure that nobody in my classroom felt disadvantaged or excluded and I found ways to include all of the children in this journey.

I told all of the children in the classroom that I would be talking with children at lunch time about reading, and that anyone who would like to come and visit with me could do so. There were some children who never wanted to take me up on this

invitation, while others asked to visit frequently. Initially, I did not feel any misgivings about this practice of including everybody, or rather pretending to include everybody, in this study. But there were times when I felt fraudulent. I wrote about this struggle in my research journal in March.

Today I met with Naomi at lunchtime. She has been so curious about this whole interview business. She has wanted to visit with me but usually goes home to her babysitter's at lunch. She looked at me with her deeply tired eyes. Can we do it today Mrs. Schultz?

She is one of the little ones that I struggle over the most. I look at her and she is all sadness and unrest. Her eyes reveal an inner turmoil that is difficult for someone like me to understand. She bought Sloppy Joes for lunch and sat anxiously at the table, waiting for 'her time' to begin.

I set up the tape and sat down to talk with her. She told me about her reading, and I listened to her with great interest. But I felt like such a fraud. I knew that I would never listen to the tape, I simply do not have the time right now. Is it enough to go through the motions?

She talked about learning to read by playing with letters in her bathtub. She talked about her father who read stories to her and helped her grow to be the truly amazing reader she has become (she reads at a junior high level). She talked about nice, safe, uncomplicated things.

I wished we could talk about things to help me understand her life beyond the tidy and protected world of book reading. Why do you look so tired every day? Is it true that you don't sleep soundly, that you never have?

What is it like for an eight-year-old to be on antidepressants? Do you understand why your father had to go to prison?

I sat and visited today with a little girl who would benefit more from spending extra time with her teacher, any teacher for that matter, than anyone else I have ever taught. And I wish I could do this everyday... spend this time, listen to the things she has to share, be there.

And I think again about how I picked the children who would be part of this research. Children with parents I feel comfortable approaching, who come from worlds that I can understand, who are healthy and happy, who can talk to me about everything in their lives. I could have never worked with this girl. There is too much agony in her life. There is too much that she does not want to share.

And why should she?

At the end of our visit, I turned off the tape, thanked her very much, and felt secure in the fact that she felt included, valued, listened to. Then she wanted to know when I would be coming to her house...

(Journal Entry 03/04/99)

I never did go and visit at Naomi's house, and all these months later I feel my lingering disappointment.

Creating a Field Text

Studies of children's reading motivation try to answer a very important question: Why do some children choose to read for pleasure while others are not similarly motivated? There are many quantitative studies that identify important trends, yet they do

not help me understand children's reading worlds. The children in these studies are invisible and silenced. In this narrative inquiry, I wanted to explore the experiences children live and tell about reading in a qualitative and in-depth manner so as to shift the larger conversation on reading motivation to also include the particularities of children's lived experiences. To this end, I gathered narrative data in the forms of classroom observations, home visits, and interviews.

Visiting Children's Reading Worlds: The Classroom

"Field records collected through participant observation in a shared practical setting is one of the primary tools of narrative inquiry work" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 5). In this inquiry, I looked at learning "from the inside" (Elbaz, 1991) as I was both teacher and researcher in the practical setting of my own classroom. As such, I was required to wear "two hats" in order to find spaces to make observations about individual children's reading in the classroom landscape. I listened to children in the classroom and watched them interact with one another in response to reading.

It would have been impossible to include all of the classroom talk that surrounds reading, so I focussed my classroom field records on Story Circle activities. Story Circles have evolved in my classroom and are the basis of my reading program. In Story Circles, children select the partner(s) they read with, the books they will read, and how they are going to respond to text. The children direct their own learning and I act as a facilitator. In this setting, children take turns reading, discussing what is happening in the story, and their reactions to the story. They also plan ways to share their learning with the other children in the classroom.

In her controlled and reasonable way, one day Lilly wrote about Story Circles on the back of her duotang while she waited for her group members to finish their written response to a story. I asked her if I could share her description in my writing. Happily, she agreed. Following is Lilly's writing, typed out for readability:

> This book is used for my vocabulary and writing. The teacher checks my work after I am done. If I have spelled some wrong or if it is not neat I have to fix it. On the front of the book it says language learning. The part before the pappers is a green sheet of papper that I keep track of the books I read. The top of the first papper is were I put what chapter I am on. The next one down is were we put vocabulary. I skip a few lines and then write about they story to almost the bottem of the page. Then we read the next chapter and write about it. Look up the vocabulary. Example: Vocabulary – Alpaca- an animal that lives in the mountains of South America and has long silky wool. The alpaca is related to the camel and llama.

I went about recording what I saw during Story Circles in two ways: tape-recording and writing. Following the example of Celia Oyler (1996) and Vivian Paley (1990), I brought a tape recorder and microphone to record classroom talk during Story Circles. Oyler (1996) studied shared authority with a grade one teacher and her children by tape-recording classroom talk. She then analyzed the conversations and theorized about the way authority was shared in the classroom. Paley (1990) utilizes tape recorders to analyze the play of kindergarten and preschool children: "For me, the tape recorder is a necessity. I transcribe each day's play and stories and conversations and then make up my own stories about what is happening" (p. 18). Following their lead, I recorded each of

the four children's interactions and conversations during Story Circles once each week for a period of five months. I also kept notes about children's interactions. This proved to be very helpful because the tapes were difficult to listen to, filled as they were with the voices of 31 children.

Initially, I found observing the children during Story Circle time and taping their conversations to be rather frustrating. I wrote about it in my journal in February:

> *When I observed the children, they acted rather differently than when I circulate among groups. They did not talk freely while they interacted with each other and they seemed to be very aware of the tape recorder's presence. Lilly barely said a word! Tucker was wholly focussed on getting his writing caught up. Brad and Jillian demonstrated what good pencil sharpeners they are and generally drove me crazy. When they are on their own and I see them intermittently, I hear snatches of conversations that lead me to believe real discussions are going on about their reading and responding. Also, conversations go away from the text to other areas of their life that are connected to the activity. Yet, when I sat with them, the small recorder taping, there was a subtle shift. Maybe the novelty of it was transformative. (Journal Entry 02/21/99)*

As time progressed, the children seemed to be much more relaxed, at times even oblivious, to the tape recorder. Even when the tape recorder was no longer creating distractions, I had other concerns about my classroom observations:

> *The only problem we encountered this week is an enormous bout of the flu that is keeping little children home in their beds with cold cloths and hot*

remedies. Brad was absent on Monday and Tucker was away on Friday. And I have been wondering about my field notes... when I sit with each group, I jot down notes, my pencil scribbling away on the paper, and then try to make these notes come alive in the evening when I listen to the tape. I am not coming close to capturing all of the activity that surrounds reading in the classroom, and I find what I read unsatisfying. I am wondering about ways to capture things more completely. I have also been worried that I am not getting anything 'useful' about the reading worlds of the children. It reads more like a list of things that happen during Story Circle periods. Am I writing anything 'important'? Sometimes it is the interruptions that are more important than the observations. Is this going to become like my needle in a haystack? I am wondering if it will be a matter of looking through mounds of hay and receiving a few good (and hopefully revealing) pinpricks... Poor analogy but it is all I can think of at the moment. Hopefully next week everyone will be feeling better and I won't miss anyone! These are the kinds of things I hadn't figured into my research proposal. (Journal Entry 03/15/99)

My frustrations associated with Story Circle observations aside, I found these times to be somewhat useful, if only that I learned not much was revealed to me about how the children felt about reading by watching them read at school. I needed to hear the children's stories as well as observe their reading behavior in the classroom setting. Anecdotal records alone were not telling me the 'whole story' about the children's reading worlds. Classroom reading, after all, is in the mandate of the teacher. Children

read because they have to read. Or so I thought before I listened to Brad's ideas about classroom reading.

> Teacher: Do you think you read at school because you want to read or because you have to read because I've told you to read?
> Brad: I'd have to say it's a matter of wanting.
> Teacher: You think so?
> Brad: Because if someone makes you read, you don't actually know that they're just standing there with a book in their face looking at it, so, or else they might just flip through all the pages and try to find a picture and keep on doing that. They might just stare at the words. (Interview with Brad 03/29/99)

Rather than just staring at the words of my transcripts and notes, I decided to try to capture the life of the classroom in a short narrative story. This narrative is my interpretation of the events, and I hope they reveal some of the activity of a day during Story Circles.

A classroom story. The recess bell breaks the quiet and is quickly followed by the thundering footsteps of the grade one, two and three children who are speeding towards their classrooms and the plaintive cries of the supervising teacher, "Don't run! Go back to the blue line and try again!" My children rush in and look at the chalk board schedule – Story Circles is next.

Lilly is one of the first children back in the room, although I wonder if she ever made it outside. She walks over to her desk and puts her Mary-Pope Osborne book away and proceeds to the Story Circle shelf. She scans the baskets of books and duotangs and finds her group's basket with two copies of *Frindle* (Clements, 1998) proudly displayed on top. She settles into her desk and arranges a place for her partner.

The rest of the children are starting to settle into their places. Negotiations for the prized library work spot are already underway. "Mrs. Schultz, can my group go to the

library today?" T.J. wants to know. "But you said yesterday I could go!" Allison reminds me. The aftermath of a recess altercation demands my attention and I hastily tell Allison she can take her group to read in the room behind the librarian's desk.

Tucker's group is already reading *The Man Who Tricked a Ghost* (Yep, 1995) from the Laurence Yep author study. A see-through plastic line guide jerks across Tucker's page as he tries to keep up with the flow of Michael's reading. When it is his turn to read aloud about the trickster character, he struggles to maintain the pace set by his group members. He reads slowly and carefully, unwilling to make a mistake.

I hear complaints from Brad's group. The girls are growing restless. "Brad. Where is Brad?" followed by general muttering about where Brad could be. "He's late!" Cassandra states with disgust. Brad is very late coming in from recess. He blames sweaty feet for his tardiness--socks are difficult to put on after you have been practicing long jump in the sand pit. Brad sits beside me, accompanied by that sticky outside smell unique to 8-year old boys on hot play days, and regales me with long jumping stories as I read over his written work. When the group is ready to read, Brad orders, "You start".

A group of children, all looking for new books and partners, are in deep discussion. Four girls want Jillian to join their group and she happily agrees. As they collect five copies of the novel *Freckle Juice* (Blume, 1984), I notice there is one boy, Robert, who is left out. He has not been invited to work with anyone, and I can tell he is very unhappy. He spends a lot of time during Story Circles fooling around and distracting others, and I wonder if this might be the reason. Just as I am about to step in and intervene on his behalf, Jillian spontaneously and voluntarily decides to leave the group

she wanted to work with and asks Robert if he would like to read with her. For Jillian, novels are of secondary importance to relationships.

The mention of a heifer calf in *Harriet's Hare* (King-Smith, 1997) sparks an impromptu group discussion chaired by Brad. Emma wants to know what a heifer calf is. Brad assures her that a heifer is a steer. Not satisfied, Emma asks for clarification. "Oh come on! A bull with no balls" is Brad's somewhat confused repartee.

Lilly, who has been laughing and giggling quietly as she wrote out a radio broadcast script with Megan, asks to borrow the tape recorder. The girls are ready to share their novel with the class, so they go out of the room to find a quiet place to make their recording. They are back in five minutes and are ready to share. Everybody gathers on the carpet to listen to the tape. Lilly and Megan introduce their novel and press play. They grin broadly, somewhat embarrassed, at the way their voices sound on the tape. The children all love it and I am certain they have spawned a new phenomenon of radio reports, just as they did with character cookies and hanging character mobiles.

After the presentation, it is time to put our Story Circles away for another day. Tucker finishes reading his page before he returns his picture book to the basket. Lilly puts the novels away while Megan gets their duotangs ready for a new novel--they have already decided to work together again. Brad has deserted his group and stands by the pencil sharpener to visit with one of his soccer teammates. Jillian offers to tidy up the baskets and starts to arrange them neatly under the windows where they will wait until tomorrow when we start all over again.

Visiting Children's Reading Worlds: Home Visits

I wanted to get a detailed and contextual picture of each child's story of themselves as readers by visiting their homes to explore how the home literacy environment has influenced the development of their evolving stories as readers. I wanted to talk with families about their participation in our Literacy Is a Family Thing (LIFT) family literacy program. The children in my classroom take home book bags that encourage families to spend time reading and writing together. I also wanted to see what kinds of reading materials and reading opportunities are available to the children. I visited each child at home once each month for a total of four visits.

This part of my study was possible thanks to the generosity of the families and children with whom I worked. As Purcell-Gates (1993) points out, "it is asking a lot, to say the least, to ask families to allow a nonfamily member into their homes for observation" (p. 672). I tried to communicate openly with parents about their involvement and I maintained confidentiality by using pseudonyms when writing the research text.

My visits with the children and their families were as enjoyable as they were informative. The first time I went to each house, I was both nervous and excited. I tried to settle into natural conversation, which is not always an easy thing to do after you have bumbled around with an extension chord, apologizing as you moved chairs or coffee tables. Sometimes I met with both parents, but more often with the children's mothers. The children drifted in and out of the conversation as they went about their after-school business of playing and snacking, leaving much of the conversation to the adults.

The children had their own ideas about my home visits. Brad was circumspect.

Teacher: What has it been like having me come and visit you at your house and talk to your family?
Brad: It's been weird. First time you came over, I was like, "Whoa, I thought she was only talking to me at school." And I had to get home and then get all ready. But then it's kind of happy because it's letting my mom, dad and sister know what's going on too.
Teacher: Why do you think I like to come to your house?
Brad: I don't know. To see what it's like, like if it's clean or messy. Normally it's messy but we try to clean up. (Interview with Brad 05/26/99)

Tucker, who did not have any reservations about his teacher coming to his house, pestered me relentlessly about when my next visit might be. For Tucker, our visits were about more than books and reading and they involved many aspects of his life. When I asked him what it had been like when I came to visit he smiled broadly:

Tucker: Lots of fun! I like it when you come to my house. I always do because it's fun when you come to my house and interview my family and stuff.
Teacher: What is something that has been fun?
Tucker: When I show you books that I've been reading. And showing you my computer, showing you my room and stuff like that. (Interview with Tucker 05/25/99)

Jillian enjoyed the fact that I visited with her mom after school:

Jillian: I think it's probably been fun for my mom, because I asked my mom a couple of days ago if she liked when you came. And she asked, "Do you like it when Mrs. Schultz does an interview with you?" And I'm like, "Yeah, now you have to tell me what you think." And she's like, "Yeah, I do." So I just thought that would be fun for her." (Interview with Jillian 05/19/99)

Lilly moved our home visits beyond talking about reading by including me in one of her favorite pursuits.

Lilly: It's been fun. Like that time when we went riding and we had lunch together. When are you going to come again?
Teacher: In June. It's been kind of fun?

> Lilly: When you come again bring your riding boots and everything so we can go riding. (Interview with Lilly 05/18/99)

Tucker, Lilly, Brad, and Jillian come from different families with a broad range of family dynamics. Visiting with these families has been an integral part of my growing understanding of the children with whom I worked. After I visited, I went home and ate dinner. By 7:00 I would be ready to listen to the tape of our visit. I did not transcribe these tapes, but I played them while I sat in front of the computer so that I could jot down notes and reflect on their stories about their family and their children. Again, there is so much information that I felt I could not accurately describe these families in my notes. I am sharing four reflections from my home visits in an attempt to show how I made meaning of these visits with the four children and their families.

A First Visit with Tucker's Family. Tucker has been asking me all month when I was going to come visit with him at his house. I told him I would be coming this Thursday, and he was very excited. When the day finally came, he reminded me several times that we would be driving home together.

At the end of the day, we always write a note in our TACO books (Talk And Communicate Often). Everyday, Tucker is the last person finished and is there at least five to ten minutes after everyone else. Today, he was finished and ready to go right when the bell rang. He had to wait for me to get my things organized to go!

We got to his house and went inside. His house is beautiful and cozy. The kitchen is filled with all sorts of cow decorations. Cookie jars, pictures, figurines. It is very cute. Tucker's mom and I decided to sit in the living room adjacent to the kitchen. An antique stove and comfortable furniture made for a very warm visit.

Sandy had cookies and Coke ready. I could not have cookies, but Tucker certainly could! While Sandy was getting out refreshments, Tucker and his little sister insisted on taking me to see their rooms. Tucker pointed out the green I-Mac computer in the far end of the living room. He said it is the best computer on the market. We went down a hallway and saw his sister's room which was very nicely decorated and arranged. And then we went to Tucker's room, which was beautiful and neat. The turquoise walls with cowboy borders (bunnies, bears and cats in cowboy attire) were bright and cheery. He had a little antique desk, the kind children sat in 100 years ago. He had a comfortable looking waterbed with a built in bookshelf. Next to that was a large desk with a big computer. Off to the side he has a closet and shelving unit. I saw the train bookends that his mother made for him at ceramics class. I loved the train going through a tunnel of books. He had several books, handy for nighttime reading, on the bookshelf behind his bed. Tucker wants to redo his room with an eagle motif. His mom is not crazy about the eagle idea.

His mom talked about Tucker being a dawdler and wondered if he dawdled at school. I shared that he does dawdle at times. I have found that doing something humorous helps get him get going again. Hounding him does not work in the least! Tucker went to kindergarten, grade one and grade two in a different community. He commuted from Stirling everyday, but they decided to go to school in Stirling this year. She talked about her worry about the 'pressures' that come from not being Mormon. She wanted him to go to school in Stirling so that he would make friends to play with after school and on weekends. He is also in Cubs which is a good way to make friends as well.

She said that he often complains about not having any friends. I found this surprising since he seems to get along with the other children at school.

Tucker wandered off and came back with his book *The Wind in the Willows* (Grahame, 1980) to show me. He wanted to show me the part he is reading right now. He had lots of things to share while his mother and I were talking. When I listened to the tape, there was always a welcome undercurrent of Tucker comments.

Sandy works in an accounting office. They have three computers in their house because they sell old computers at work for a reasonable price. They are loyal Macintosh users. She said that she went to look at the school before the children started going there and the first thing she looked at was the computers. Sandy usually works until 5:00 or thereabouts so Tucker goes to his neighbor's house until she gets home. He usually has all of his homework finished by the time his mom gets home. They have dinner and then an hour or so together before bedtime.

I asked her what it was like for Tucker when he learned to read. I was surprised when she said it was easy for him all the way through. He always did very well on spelling tests (as he does now) and she said that he didn't struggle at all. He could be stubborn. Sometimes he lay down on the floor and wouldn't cooperate. She said that he used pictures to help him read. Tucker interjected that his mom helped him learn to read.

At the beginning of the year, he was reluctant to choose books at a grade 3 level. I tested him in September and found that he was reading at grade level, but he read slowly and carefully. He started the year reading beginning reader chapter books but now reads novels. The first week of school he wouldn't read aloud so that I could listen. He has grown more confident this year, but I wouldn't say that reading is easy for him.

I made a comment about Tucker always doing the activities in his book bag. Sandy said, "You mean some people don't?" We talked about the time constraints facing families with many children. It is difficult to do the reading each child is expected to do, plus the homework, plus the activities... She said that having two children seems to make it easier to get all of the things done that need to get done. She said that he does not look at book bags like they're homework. He thinks they are fun. They try to read first and then do the activities. He really liked doing the Fairies, Wishes and Baseball book bag because it had an egg painting activity.

His mom told me that Tucker goes to bed at 8:00. He said, "No I don't!" He likes to go to bed and read for an hour or so. His mom said that if he is reading, he can stay up later. The children do not see Sandy reading because they are in bed. Tucker told me about the book she is reading right now (a big novel). Also, she reads log house magazines. She said that she is not much of a 'book worm'. She thought that she used to read a lot more before she had children. She certainly encourages her children to read.

She did not go to university, but she definitely wants her children to go. One member of her family went to university and is a mechanical engineer. She will pay their way and do everything to help them. She does not want to see them not go just because they can't afford it. She thought they should have part-time jobs in the summer and contribute in some way (for instance buy their books). She thought Tucker might want to be a veterinarian or something. Tucker interrupted that he would like to be a sports player. She said, "After your education! Let's see you do sports when you're 70!" She feels that if you have a degree, there are many options for you. She often tells Tucker that reading is the most important thing at school.

The entire time we visited, Tucker was in motion. At first, he ran from room to room to show me things or bring things to share. He rolled around on the living room floor and did somersaults. He got a book to show me. He wanted to set up computer games. He got a TV tray set up so he could do his math homework. He showed me the different compartments in his backpack. He is as full of energy at home as he is at school.

Sometimes I let him wander around the classroom because he has reached a point where sitting still is next to impossible for him. He is like a whirlwind in constant random motion. For Tucker, doing somersaults in front of two visiting adults is completely natural. I can tell from our visit that his mother values education and encourages her children to read. But more importantly, she encourages and values her children for who they are. (Home Visit 02/25/99)

A First Visit with Lilly's Family. What a wonderful way to start my home visits! Lilly and her younger sister waited for me after school so we could drive to their home together. As per instructions, Lilly told the bus driver they would not be riding that day. We pulled up to the log cabin style home at 3:30 p.m. I had been once before for a field trip (we went to see the log cabin Lilly's dad is building), and I was reminded of the farm's quiet beauty. Lilly and I talked about their playhouse before we entered her home. The playhouse, built by their father, is a two-story log structure that resembles a mini-chalet. I told Lilly I thought it must be the best playhouse in the world! We walked past her rabbit hutch. Two lop-eared rabbits munched lazily (one of the rabbits, Bubs, figures prominently in Lilly's stories).

Her mom and dad were waiting for us in the kitchen. The fridge and large bulletin board were covered with artwork accumulated over the years. I noticed that some of the

things Lilly made in grade three were featured on the fridge. Their home is warm and inviting and suggests that children are valued and their work celebrated. Ben made coffee and Debbie and I went to the living room with the girls. I set up my tape recorder and settled on the couch. Ben brought in coffee, and our visit was underway. Lilly picked up her purple book bag from the floor and started working on her stuffed pig (she has the "Wonderful Pig" book bag and is busy doing the activity that accompanies the story *The Wonderful Pigs of Jillian Jiggs* (1988) by Phoebe Gilman). Her mom helped her thread needles and plan how to make the legs while we visited. I asked Lilly if she liked her book bag and she said, "yah".

It was very easy to talk with them as a family. Lilly worked away on the floor while her two younger siblings ran in and out for sporadic visits to share Cadbury Easter eggs that had been embezzled from their hideouts. I could hear squeals of excitement when they were playing their computer game in a nearby room. Lilly stayed with us the entire visit. In keeping with our Reading Week, Lilly kept busy turning her pig into a pirate with innovations like a pig-peg leg cleverly devised from the end of a pencil.

Our visit was very casual and, for me, very informative. Twists in the conversation took us to a variety of topics ranging from television viewing, school learning, and imaginative play. Lilly doesn't have cable television in her home, and her parents limit and screen television viewing. Debbie bought a subscription to National Geographic and received several videos that the children enjoy watching. Also, they watch comedy specials on CBC (the children are huge Mr. Bean fans) and documentaries. Debbie talked about the way some parents use the television as a baby-sitter-- a tempting device for busy families! Both Debbie and Ben thought many children

watch terrible shows on TV that have questionable content. At the same time, they thought it was a part of life, particularly when their children go to friends' houses where television watching is not monitored. I said that I had a hard time thinking that TV was the only factor if children do not read for pleasure. Debbie thought that computers could also be problematic, although they are more interactive and educational (their youngest child has educational software that teaches upper and lower case letters). We talked about the reality of children's lives today. They are growing up in a technology and multimedia centered world where entertainment options are more diverse than when we were growing up. As Debbie said, "If you wanted to entertain yourself, you got into a book and went off into wonderland." Ben added, "kids are less active and more out of shape than when we were kids."

We also talked about the activity overload of some children. (As Debbie said, they're going to, they're going to, they're going to... and then there's homework on top of that.) Ben thought that for some children, it was too much. Lilly and her siblings play indoor and outdoor soccer in Lethbridge, and Lilly is also enrolled in gymnastics. On the weekend they ski. Because they live out of town, a lot of time is spent driving to and from Lethbridge. Debbie has remarked on several occasions that Lilly reads in the car, and also when she has to watch her siblings or mom play soccer. Book bags even go in the car. Lilly had been reading *Babe the Gallant Pig* (King-Smith, 1983) aloud in the car, but Debbie didn't think the other children had been listening to the story.

Lilly and her siblings spend a lot of time outdoors engaged in a variety of imaginative games; exploring, making mud cakes, and barbecuing alpaca goop retrieved from the water trough! Lilly and her sister unearthed an antique beat picker and a horse

harness last week while they were out exploring. She brought both to school for show and tell.

Indoors, the imaginative play continues. Lilly has a vast collection of Beanie Babies which live in a home Lilly constructed. Debbie helps the girls sew clothes and make jewelry for them, and certain animals drive certain vehicles that are parked under the house. (The garage is still under construction.) The girls share a bedroom. They have beautiful bunk beds that their dad made from logs. I didn't notice any books in Lilly's bedroom but I was pretty focussed on Beanie Baby world -- I'll look next time. Just outside of their bedroom is a gathering area with a small television and video rack, children's furniture, and a mini chalk-easel. It looks like a place where children are free to play and cavort. Judging from the combined energy of the three children, it must be used often.

After we finished talking, we went to visit the alpacas and puppies. All of the alpacas have names. My favorites were Drambuie and Ebony. Their farm is interesting and intriguing. I can see so much of Lilly here--the farm, and her life on it, are found in her stories, her sharing, and her personality. It was wonderful going to visit with Lilly and her family to see what her life outside of the classroom is like. (Home Visit 02/10/99)

First Visit with Brad's Family. I wanted to visit Brad last week, but it was a very busy time for his family. They are now finishing up figure skating and hockey. These activities take up most evenings and now they have some time to breathe in the evening.

Before I set out for their farm, I finished up my school work. I was very glad Karen told me to look for the school bus parked in front of the house. I would have never found it otherwise. When I pulled up from the dusty road, Ron came out of the cattle pen

to greet me. When he isn't driving the school bus, he takes care of 180 acres of farmland and tends the livestock. It is calving season in Southern Alberta which makes for long nights and early mornings.

I arrived before Karen came home with Brad and his little sister. Ron and I went into the house where Brad's older sister was curled up asleep on an armchair in front of the television. We talked about the farm until Brad and his mom got home. Their living room is pure country comfort with comfortable chairs and sofas, a beautiful fireplace, and windows that show an expanse of prairie. Cowboy art and rodeo pictures were everywhere. There were two bookcases with voluminous hard cover books (historical novels and books about ferrying) and an overflowing magazine rack. It looked like a wonderful place to sit back and pick up some sort of interesting reading material.

Everyone plunked down on the couch. I felt badly being there before Karen. She didn't have a chance to relax when she got home from work. I'll try to set up another time to come for a visit that will give her some breathing space after work. Maybe a weekend would work better. I think she works everyday in Lethbridge.

The whole family stayed in the room for the visit. Brad's youngest sister, who is almost two, danced around in a princess dress complete with a crown. Her mother explained it is a stage she has been going through. Brad just sat and smiled his easy smile that I have come to love.

I told Karen and Ron about some of the things we have talked about. Brad and I have talked about learning to read and the kinds of things he does read. I told her that he thought she had taught him to read. She laughed and said, "We read around here?" I knew from a previous conversation that Karen thinks Brad does not read as much as he

could and even remarked that it was her fault. She thinks she should make him do it more often.

Three years ago, I taught his older sister. She read everything in sight both at home and at school. Brad's mom said she could understand why he would think he learned how to read at home. Michelle was in grade one, Brad was three, and he simply learned by proxy. She was bringing home all sorts of reading lists and books to do with her mother and Brad was always close by to listen. They read books together, and she said they usually read bedtime stories. Karen said he was interested in street signs and other environmental print and was curious about reading.

Michelle liked to read and did so without needing to be coaxed. Brad, on the other hand, almost needs to be coerced into reading! His mom said that she did indeed use a treat system to get him to read and worked hard to get him to do his early reading assignments. She said that with Brad, it seems to be a matter of focus and desire. She feels that he needs to be pushed with anything he does, including hockey. Even though he loves hockey, he needs to be pushed to keep going and work at it. If she was not there to keep him motivated, he would not keep it up. The same can be said for reading. If she remembers, she makes him do some reading. She said that if he is asked, he will do it because, "he is a really good boy". She said, "He will read if I say, go get your book and read for 15 minutes." The problem she has is remembering to remind him, or finding the time to remind him.

When he was younger, some of the scripture stories from *The Book of Mormon* were difficult to understand so Ron would get out toys and figures and act out the stories so they would make sense to Brad. I asked if they read the scriptures everyday and Karen

said they don't. They read them on Mondays, but now have the videos and find it easier to "plunk in the videos" than to sit everyone down to read.

There is also the matter of time. They live on a farm and have to commute to every activity! Hockey in Raymond, school in Stirling, riding in Cardston. There is not a great deal of time left over. Karen usually gets home around 5:00 p.m. By the time supper is finished and the dishes are cleaned, it is 7:30 p.m. If there is homework, it gets done. That leaves half an hour until bedtime. When you add hockey practices, games, and tournaments into the fray, finding time to read becomes a challenge. He doesn't watch very much television, unless he is at his babysitter's. She indicated that it is hard for him to sit still, even to watch TV.

We talked about the book bags. Brad takes a new book bag home on Wednesdays, they do not do anything Friday because Karen does not get home until 6:00 p.m., on Saturday they go to hockey games or out to Cardston. Last year when the children only took book bags home for a week, it only gave them three days to try to read together. This year, they take home the book bags for two weeks. She thinks it is better that they get to keep the book bags home for longer. I didn't ask about why Brad didn't do anything from his book bags for the first part of the school year. Lately, they have been doing some of the activities in the bags.

Karen compared her two children. She said that Michelle never needed to be pushed because she always wanted to be reading and would "do it on her own" whereas Brad "won't do it on his own". We talked about the fact that Brad is a good reader. His mom said, "He can do it, but if he can not have to do it, then he doesn't". She thinks it "is a personality thing". Ron thinks it "is a girl and a boy thing too". Ron said he reads more

now than he ever has. He commented humorously that he maybe used to think he knew everything when he was young and now that he knows a little bit he knows how much he doesn't know. Karen said she never used to read but is now addicted to novels. She finds that sometimes it gets in the way of accomplishing other things that need to be finished, but she is unable to put a good book down. If she starts a novel, she reads until it is finished.

Brad's parents said that he loves school. He was even up and ready to go the day he was sick. His fever was so high his mom sent him back to bed. They want to see him go to university some day, and his love of school will likely lead him in that direction. Maybe he will spend more time reading later.

Brad definitely lives in a family of readers. Everyone from his youngest sister to his parents read and enjoy reading. One thing that I didn't do on this visit was look at Brad's bedroom. He didn't invite me to see it so I didn't ask. He is a wonderful boy who lives in a warm and caring family. (Home Visit 03/09/99)

A First Visit with Jillian's Family. After school today Jillian and I drove the two-block trip to her house. I had been to her house before when Cathy and I made 16 pairs of angel wings for the Christmas concert. By the time we were finished, tinsel covered every square inch of her kitchen!

Jillian lives in a cozy white house with her older sister, younger brother, mom and dad. Cathy met us at the door and we moved the couch so I could plug in my recorder. Jillian's little brother had a friend over and they were under direct instructions to clean up his room. Jillian got her homework ready and sat at the dining room table. Her older

sister had a friend over to jump on the trampoline. Cathy and I sat on the couch and visited amidst the considerable activity.

Dave was still at work. He is working days at the hospital where he runs the machinery. Cathy said that he usually worked shifts so his schedule really used to fluctuate. Now he is home evenings and weekends. Cathy is a full time mom and classroom helper extraordinaire! They both are very involved with their children in all facets of their lives.

I think that Cathy wondered why I was going to tape our conversation. She asked if I had a list of questions I wanted to cover, and I told her that I just wanted to talk about Jillian and her family. In the beginning, she kept looking at the recorder and then back at me as if to say, is that what you want? After about 5 minutes, we both forgot all about it until it was time to flip the tape.

We talked about scripture reading. Every night her family sits down together and takes turns reading *The Book of Mormon*. They read one chapter a night because after that everyone gets tired. She got the book to show me. The first part is the bible, the second is *The Book of Mormon*. She said, "It's not your average reading" because it is quite difficult. They try to read it every night but they find it is harder to find the time to do so on Friday and Saturday.

When it comes to Jillian and reading books, Cathy thought that if something catches Jillian's interest in the beginning, she gets into reading. She wondered what it was about *The Adventures of Captain Underpants* (Pilkey, 1997) that she liked so much. We both agreed that if Jillian is going to finish a book it needs to be interesting enough to

keep her going. She likes the picture books that feature the character *Clifford* (Cathy loves *Clifford*).

They get the newspaper everyday and Jillian likes to read the comics. The rule is mom and dad get to read first, and then the kids can see the paper. She said that Jillian's sister likes the *Bailey Kids* series. She would like to see Jillian get into a series so she can order books for her to read. Her dad reads Louis L'amour and has every book written save for one. The children know all about these books and Jillian went to get me a couple to look at from downstairs. The children know what dad likes to read. Jillian's mom asked Jillian to tell me what mom likes to read and Jillian said, "Books about *Clifford*". Cathy also likes to read magazines like *Today's Parent* and *Macleans*.

She started doing special memory books for each of the children. We looked at Jillian's book which was filled with photographs and captions that celebrated Jillian -- playing with family, going camping, being silly, doing Judo. One of the special things in Jillian's book was a letter to her from her dad. He wrote it to her to tell her how proud she makes him. Cathy said, "This is so not Dave". He wrote things like "I like seeing you doing your homework and doing well in school. These are really important." He also thanked her for giving them a pizza coupon she had earned. Both her parents are very proud that Jillian won a provincial title in Judo. As Cathy said, "She's only eight!". You could tell that Jillian cherished her letter from her father.

Dave and Cathy want Jillian to do well in school and like her to be focussed on whatever it is she chooses to do. Cathy feels like Jillian does well in school with a teacher who is personal and can develop a relationship with and connect with children. I told her

that I can tell they both send messages like "Try hard" and "I'm really proud of you". The message is, school is important.

Dave took equivalency courses to get grade 12, and he took Math 10 by correspondence. He takes courses at the college as well. I asked her if they want their children to go to university, and she said yes, definitely. She said she never did, was married at 18, and wonders what she would do if anything ever happened to Dave. She sometimes thinks about doing correspondence courses but said, "I'm so not motivated". I have a hard time believing that because she does so many things for her family and home it is baffling!

During our interview, I was amazed at the level of activity in their house. Jackie had a friend over to jump on the trampoline in the front yard. Michael had a friend over and they ran in and out of his room, which they were supposed to be cleaning, to ask a variety of questions. Cathy administered first aid, gave out cookies, directed activities, and repeatedly reminded Jillian to do her math homework. I told her I thought I would be exhausted in the midst of all this after school action.

Before I left, we went to see Jillian's bedroom. She has a nice, neat room. She has one Judo poster on the wall, half a bunk, and a few knick-knacks. I didn't see any books in her room other than *Captain Underpants*. Jackie wanted me to see her room too. She had more 'stuff' on her walls and several shelves. She also had a big collection of books on both sides of her bed and piles of picture books and novels covered her bookshelves.

When it was time to leave, all of the children had left for the corner store. Cathy had given them each a dollar for cleaning up their rooms. Jillian stayed with us--she had not finished her homework and she wanted to say good bye. I felt wonderful when I

drove home. Just being in that house gave me a warm and caring feeling. Jillian is a lucky girl. (Home Visit 02/22/99)

Visiting Children's Reading Worlds: Interviews

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) investigated the reading habits of 1136 fourth grade students across the United States. Their report indicated that much can be learned about children's reading through literacy interviews (Campbell, 1995). Whereas NAEP used a very structured instrument (The Integrated Reading Performance Record) I used unstructured interviews to collect narrative data. I visited with the children at lunchtime for a total of ten interviews each. I tape recorded our 40 minute conversations and later set about the task of transcribing. The 40 transcripts became part of the "ongoing narrative record" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 5). The questions I asked were based on an interview blueprint I created specifically for this study. The blueprint centered upon eight guiding questions about learning to read, narrative text, informational text, home literacy environment, perceived reading ability, school literacy learning environment, reading interest, and reading motivation. The interview blueprint is included in Appendix C.

The questions that I asked and the way I structured the interviews became a framework that shaped the children's accounts of their experiences. I had an interview guide at each of the ten interviews which allowed me to write brief notes and wonderings while I talked with the children. The questions on the final two interview guides grew from my desire to include the children's voices in this narrative. In the ninth interview, I asked the children to share how they felt about being involved in research with their teacher. In the tenth interview, I simply asked the children to share what they would like

me to write about them. The ten interview guides are included in Appendix D. I felt compelled as a researcher to structure my interviews in this way, even though I was trying to explore children's stories. Paley (1986) suggests that true curiosity on the part of the questioner helps one ask open-ended questions that do not seek specific answers, but rather build on the ideas shared by the children. I tried to ask questions without having the 'right answer' in mind because I did not want to uncover my answer, I wanted to explore the children's stories.

In this spirit of exploration, I tried to be careful when interviewing the children so that I did not influence the content of the field texts by shaping their responses. Mishler (1986) suggests that interviews are jointly produced discourses where "respondents are invited to speak in their own voices, allowed to control the introduction and flow of topics, and encouraged to extend their responses" (p. 69). I carefully chose the kinds of questions I asked and ways in which I asked them to avoid manipulation and silencing. I reflected on the form and quality of my questions and comments to ensure that I was providing spaces for the children to share narratives of their experience by reflecting in my journal after each interview was transcribed.

Scheduling the interviews with the children was usually quite easy, but there were exceptions. The very first week of interviews, I had to juggle visits around intramural activities. Jillian and I were going to meet on a Wednesday for our first interview, but at lunchtime she remembered intramurals. I could see she really did not want to miss out on the activity, so I quickly told her we could meet during lunch the next day. With the fear of losing ground on my schedule, I decided to ask Lilly if she would like to visit with me a day early. She agreed and so the interviews began. Another problem arose when my

turn at lunch hour supervision came around. One of my colleagues always insisted she take over for me so that I could continue my work, and for that I am extremely appreciative.

From the beginning, I wanted to look at my lunch hour visits with the children as conversations where the children could tell me stories about themselves as readers. The interview blueprint was a guide for our conversations, but the children had a way of reminding me that I was an 'asker of questions'. Tucker, in particular, had a way of bringing my role into sharper focus during our visits with his oft repeated "Got any more questions?" Yet even Tucker, who was more aware of my 'questions' than any other of the children was not constrained by my agenda. I struggled with the children's conceptualization, and I constantly tried to create an environment where the children were storytellers and I was a listener.

The children and I talked about our conversations and they shared how they have come to feel about our lunch time visits. Lilly eagerly discussed the prospect of being written about in 'the book':

> Lilly: I've always wanted to be in a story, and now I am!
> Teacher: How would you describe what we have been doing?
> Lilly: We've been talking about reading. I've been telling you like where I do my reading, if I like it, if I'm averaged, poor, or good. And like who taught me reading the most. I've answered questions so you can put it in the book, and I tell you about me and reading.
> Teacher: What else?
> Lilly: I've been happy doing it. (Interview with Lilly 05/18/99)

Tucker talked about questions and answers:

> Teacher: If you had to tell somebody else about our work together, what would you tell them?

Tucker: That you have been asking me things about reading, and interviewing me, and asking me stuff. You interview me about books and ask me questions about books, and what book I like the most, and who got me interested in reading, and who taught me how to read.
Teacher: How else would you talk about it?
Tucker: I tell you stuff about the books I read, I tell you all sorts of things. (Interview with Tucker 05/25/99)

Jillian talked about the relationship that has grown from our lunch time visits:

Jillian: The interviews have been really fun, and not just because I get to stay inside when it's been really cold. And I think it's been fun for you because you ask me questions and then I have to answer them. I've told you about me and what I'm like. I've told you some of my hobbies. That my brother is a pain in the butt sometimes.
Teacher: That's right. What has it been like for you to come and talk to me at lunch time?
Jillian: It's been a lot of fun. I think it's been fun because I get to know you more and then you get to know me more. More than we normally would. (Interview with Jillian 05/19/99)

Brad was nonchalant in his description of his role during our visits, although his response also highlights the importance of relationship:

Brad: Eating my lunch, talking to you, and answering questions.

He added that I might like to visit with him at lunch for another reason:

Brad: You might get lonely and just want to talk with someone. (Interview with Brad 05/26/99)

The children's conceptualization of the interviews and our roles in the research was very interesting to me, and I would not want to concoct a singular interpretation. In reality, our conversations shifted and meandered as we took turns as question askers and respondents, storytellers and listeners. Paley (1990) reminds us "children feel rewarded by the genuine curiosity of others" (p. 23). For a curious teacher who has long forgotten

much of what it means to be a child, I was rewarded with the stories of experience that have made this journey possible.

CHAPTER 5

Narratives of Experience: Coming to Know Four Children and Their Reading Worlds

> Teacher: Do you think it is important for adults to talk to children if they want to learn about them?
> Lilly: Yes. It helps them know what children's lives are like. Like if they can't remember what it was like when they were little kids, well they probably can, but like my life would be similar to my mom's. If I told my mom, she would probably remember her life. And if I told my grandpa, he might remember a little bit too.
> Interview with Lilly 05/18/99

As an adult, I can look back on my life and remember certain things from my childhood, but I have forgotten the essence and immediacy of being a child, the "what it was like" as Lilly puts it. One of my favorite children's picture books captures this idea. In Mem Fox's *Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge* (1985), a young boy helps Miss Nancy, an aging friend, find her memories by sharing objects he collects in a basket. With each object, a portal is opened and she regains a memory from her childhood. Listening to my travelling companions has had a similar effect as I have been invited to remember, and more importantly to reflect on, what it is like for a child who is developing as a reader.

The stories other people share are often the sparks that ignite our own stories, and listening to these stories invites us to think about our own lives and experiences. Lilly knows this human quality intuitively. When I reflect on my question, I think it may have been better to ask, "Do you think it is important for adults to *listen* to children if they want to learn about them?" for it is in the listening that I have come to know Tucker, Lilly, Brad, and Jillian.

The four children I have come to know on this narrative journey shared their stories thoughtfully and carefully, and in telling my story of them I will try to write faithfully and meaningfully about their experiences. My intention is not to turn their stories into representative lives: "They do not constitute a statistical sample--only, I hope, an interesting one" (Bateson, 1989, p.16). Nor do I intend to categorize, label, or in any way suggest that these children's lives can be easily rendered. "None of us are to be found in sets of tasks or lists of attributes; we can be known only in the unfolding of our unique stories within the context of everyday events" (Paley, 1990, p.xii). I have written these stories without including dates of reference from the transcripts because I want the children's voices to be woven into my telling in a contextual and embedded way. Their words are often the starting points of my stories, and I hope that I have been able to include their voices in such a way that they are fairly represented and honored.

My Story of Tucker

September air, turning leaves, and frost-tipped school lawns signal the first day of school. On the first morning of the school year, Tucker came into our classroom and sat down at his desk. Most of the other children I knew from last year, but Tucker, being new to the school, was a mystery. When I first saw him, I thought he looked like a quiet, friendly boy who was somewhat overwhelmed by the exuberant and boisterous group of children of which he was now a part. With Tucker, the group made 31. Thirty-one small desks, 31 bags of school supplies, 31 new pairs of gym shoes, but only 30 excited voices. Tucker was tentative and reserved.

With our supplies organized, I gave everyone a letter that I had written and a postcard so they could write me back. Tucker sat motionless at his desk while around him everyone else was writing back after reading my letter. I approached him and quietly asked if he would like to read the letter to me. I was not sure if this letter writing activity was too difficult for him and I wondered if he could read. His response took me by surprise. "No! I don't want to!" I reeled. Should I force him? On the first day should I let him "disobey" his new teacher? I tried a different strategy. I smiled and asked him if he could just read me the part about my new puppy, Butler. I told him a bit about the little Boston Terrier and his interest was sparked. He regarded me suspiciously before he read two sentences, slowly and with obvious care. I wondered that first day what would make him react in that way.

After these ongoing conversations and visits, I have a better idea. Tucker came from a place of connected knowing about books, but when he entered school, he felt isolated in the classroom place. During one of our conversations, he shared how he feels about himself as a reader, and the conversation turned to his previous school and learning to read:

Tucker: When I was learning to read, I felt like I wanted to read but I couldn't. It really sucked.

Teacher: It really sucked?

Tucker: I've been able to spell my name for a really long time. When I first did it, well, I spelled it right.

Teacher: When I went to school in kindergarten, my name's Samantha, but that was too long to remember so I just had to learn how to spell Sam. When you are reading, do you understand most of what you read or is it hard to understand what you read?

Tucker: Sometimes it's hard, but some of my grade one and two teachers, they were pretty much snobs.

Teacher: Uh-oh.

Tucker: My grade one teacher would help me, but she would really yell at me and stuff.

Teacher: For what?

Tucker: Just like when I couldn't get a math problem or something, she'd yell at me. Sort of I think. But, our grade two teacher, she wouldn't help us at all. My mom said, that's what teachers are for, to help out. She wouldn't help me at all, and I needed help. She just like, sent me back to my desk and would say, "Go back to your desk and figure it out". She was pretty much a mean, fat, snob. (Interview with Tucker 03/22/99)

At our next interview, he shared more of his negative feelings about his conflicting reading experiences.

Tucker: When I first went to school, I didn't like to read in that school at all. But then, as I went through one and two, I got to read more at school and I liked it better.

Teacher: How come you didn't like to read at all when you first started?

Tucker: Cause I was used to reading with my mom. And so I just didn't like to read.

Teacher: How about later on and how you felt?

Tucker: I started feeling like I wanted to read more at school. So I started reading more at school. So now every time it's DEAR time I have time for DEAR. I'll go get a book, my DEAR book, or read my comic book. It's in my desk. Or, I might do this today if I have time, I might pull out my big book and look at all the dinosaurs.

Teacher: When you said earlier that at first when you first came to school you didn't like reading because you were used to reading with your mom, do you remember what that was like? Try to tell me more about that.

Tucker: I didn't read because I was used to being at home reading with my mom. So I just didn't read to anybody. But then when I went, cause I wasn't used to school, I went through grade one and two, and I got used to school.

I just started reading more there. But at my old school, we didn't have DEAR. In my old school, the teacher would just read to us.

Teacher: You said when we talked earlier about reading that you had some bad feelings about your grade one and two teachers. What was that like when you were trying to read?

Tucker: Well, we barely read in grade one and two. And since, well, in grade one she sort of helped us, she was just mean sort of. And our grade two teacher was really snotty. She wouldn't help us on anything. She didn't even, if we needed help on a math question, she would send us back to our desk and we'd have to figure it out. (Interview with Tucker 03/30/99)

How strange school must have seemed for a little boy who felt he was a reader by the age of three, and whose mother made him feel safe and successful as a reader. But then again, Tucker's reading world has been constructed against a backdrop of competing experiences and conflicting worlds which are difficult to harmonize as I reflect on the stories of experience he has shared.

"My mom used to read stories to me before I could even read."

Tucker would be the first one to tell you that he loves books, and that he has for some time. He talks tirelessly about cherished characters from his favorite stories. His current fascination lies in a small murky pond amidst the willows, and he loves to describe tales of adventure involving Ratty and Mole and various other creatures. His favorite picture book from when he was little, *The City Mouse and the Country Mouse* (Wheeler, 1985) is tattered and scrubby from many bedtime readings. Tucker confides that this book is also his mother's favorite, and he would know. After all, she is the one who read it to him over and over again.

Tucker's parents are divorced and he now lives with his mom, her boy friend, and his younger sister. He sees his dad, who lives a short distance away, every weekend. His mom works full time so he spends a short time in the morning and after school at a

babysitter's house. Tucker lives a relationship with readers and non-readers alike. His dad "doesn't have time to read", and his step dad just watches television all night and he "never, ever reads". His mom, however, reads "a lot" and reads with him. She did when he was little, and she continues to do so.

"I didn't really learn how to read at school."

Home is where he learned about words and stories and where he felt like a reader. At school, he had to do "sheets and stuff", activities that required gluing and colouring and reading letters. At school, he felt isolated and frustrated. His situation was not improved by his scripted role as the 'weird' boy with the 'odd' behaviors. In the classroom, he was yelled at or told to sit down and think about it. It is not surprising, then, that Tucker preferred to read at home: "I liked it cause my mom was right there to help me and stuff."

Even now, I can see Tucker fighting the confines of wood and metal. School desks, with their hard, flat surfaces are a non sequitor. He squirms, wiggles, turns around, sometimes even turns upside down, in his attempts to find comfort in his desk. Sometimes, he just needs to get up and get away from it. Tucker likes to read in a "comfy spot". At home, he can move from room to room, sit on his comfortable computer chair and spin or lounge on his waterbed, and take comfort in books without the reproachful glare of a teacher whose praise is reserved for children who are quiet and calm and studious.

"Just in case somebody wants to steal my library card, I got it in a hidden spot. It's top secret."

Tucker's books are carefully arranged between two of his favorite possessions; train bookends that his mom made at ceramics. The books form the tunnel the train

travels through on its endless bookshelf journey. He keeps his favorite books on the shelves above his waterbed where he can reach them. Tucker loves the bedtime rule in his house: He has to be in bed at 8:00, but he can stay up and read until he is ready for sleep. His light stays on and the pages keep turning until his eyelids are heavy with dreams.

He is a discriminating reader who knows what he likes. "If I like the beginnings I read them. If they're really boring I won't read them and the author just wasted a bunch of time." Good books, by Tucker's estimation, are filled with information and talk about animals and their adventures. Energetic Dalmatians, turtles that wear clothes, cats and mice that converse, and frogs that are friends with toads are found among his book collection. When he takes his library card from its hiding place, he chooses books with wonderful photographs and information about these character's real life counterparts.

Reading is not his only interest. He watches television every morning when he wakes up. He stumbles out of bed and shuffles into the living room where he sits on an oversized chair to watch cartoons while he eats breakfast. This half hour ritual is never disturbed because he needs this time to get going in the morning. After school he would rather read than watch television, possibly because he does not have control of the remote when his step dad is home. He talks excitedly about Cubs when there is a fun activity waiting at the end of the day. His Cub car and his treasured arrow head are some of the things he has brought to share. Sometimes he feels like reading and sometimes he feels like going outside to play. He practices jumps on his bicycle, refines somersaults on the trampoline, and tries to catch pigeons. He has had some trouble finding a dependable friendship, and when the opportunity to play presents itself, he is happy to share his time

with a friend. After all, he can always read later. His tunnel of books waits quietly and his library card is safe from robbers with sinister intentions.

"I never want to read in front of the class."

When Tucker came to our school, he was uncertain of his place in the classroom. He did not know his classmates or his teacher, and his past experiences made him cautious. His reading selections at the beginning of the year were dictated by his desire to understand and his fear of incurring his teacher's disfavor. He picked easy books with big words, and he read slowly and carefully, unwilling to make a mistake. Faulty assumptions lead me to believe he had little interest in books. Then I noticed that, on regular occasion, he was bringing books from home to add to our author studies and theme libraries. His own books stood in sharp contrast to his school reading choices. The colourful illustrations and rich texts were gifts which he bestowed generously on the class. He would share his books with me before putting them on the shelf, but he did not want to read his treasures in front of the class like so many of the other children.

As time passed, he started to take chances. Dick King Smith and Jon Scieszka replaced the early readers, and his feelings about reading in school went from uneasiness to enjoyment. During one of our conversations he shared that he reads at school because he wants to: "I like reading books and it gives me stories that I could tell to other people". He started to take pleasure from reading with his classmates because they share ideas and talk about books. Sometimes he would rather read by himself, but much of his trepidation about reading in class had faded. His favorite thing about reading at school is "reading lots of books". If he likes them, he asks his mom to buy them for him so he can add them to his personal collection. His least favorite thing is hardly surprising: "When I get stuck

on a word and I can't really read it, and then I have to go ask. That's the least thing." There are some things that are difficult to change.

"My brain just feels like reading."

A new book holds the promise of enjoyment that comes in many forms; a present lovingly sent from far away, a book order handed out by the teacher at the end of the day, or a faded cover from a low shelf in the town library. When his brain feels like reading, he picks up where he has left off or starts anew. His love of books is a part of who he is. A fun, irrepressible, energetic eight-year-old boy.

My Story of Lilly

Sharing is a favorite time in our school day. The children carefully select the treasures they will bring; toys, trophies, books, photographs, and hockey cards. Often, there is a mix of courteous attention and restless whispers, but when Lilly shares there is a quiet wonderment as the group waits. There was the wild jack-rabbit Lilly rescued from the fields on her farm, his back legs thrashing in the classroom. The ancient horse harnesses Lilly discovered on one of her farm expeditions, dry and crumbly with age, brought our pioneer unit to life. The sugar beet and pre-cut samples caused a great deal of excitement: "I didn't know we got sugar from *that*!" When Lilly discovered a dead baby bird, forever featherless and blind, she brought it to school to supplement our animal life cycles unit in science. The children were fascinated and I survived. She brought bunnies and a journal that she had written, complete with photographs and diagrams, detailing the small mammal's development. With each week, a carefully planned captivating moment.

The children have come to expect this from Lilly, although she seems unaware of their expectations. Lilly is as interested in a child's brief story as they are in her

seemingly limitless stash of sharing time wonders: "I went to McDonald's and I had a milkshake" offered by a blushing student brings nods of support from Lilly. Perhaps this is one of the reasons the children are drawn to her. When Lilly is a potential Story Circle partner, there is a hullabaloo in the book corner: "Do you want to be my partner Lilly?" "I asked her first!" More often than not, Lilly emerges with her best friend and two books chosen for two reasons; first, nobody else has read the book yet; and second, it is a big novel and she likes big books.

At recess time a similar clamor surrounds Lilly, but she already has a book in her hands as she heads out to the hallway. By the time she steps onto the linoleum she is back in her current story about a tree house or a slave or an enchanter. For Lilly, reading seems as natural as running in the hallway and it started with a strong curiosity about books and an early desire to understand the world around her.

Teacher: Before you could read all by yourself, do you think that you wanted to be able to read?

Lilly: Yeah, I was really excited! I always wanted to read because I saw my mom and dad reading books and it sounded interesting. So, I wanted to read some too but I couldn't. They started helping me. So did other teachers like Mrs. Weigel, you, and Mrs. Pitcher.

Teacher: When you'd see your mom and dad reading at home, what kinds of stuff would they be reading?

Lilly: Like big chapter books and I knew I couldn't read those. I probably started off with little ones and went to higher levels.

Teacher: What kinds of things did you want to read when you were little and couldn't read yet?

Lilly: Like exciting books. My mom was reading one about people going up to Mount Everest. That sounded exciting. I heard her reading that one last year in grade two. I think when I was little I used to say to my dad, "What kind of tractor is that?" because he would know. And I always remember going places. I like to know where we are so I look at the signs. I'd always

> say, "When are we there? When are we there?" so instead of saying that I just look at the signs and I see if we're almost there. (Interview with Lilly 02/03/99)

I quickly discovered a recurring theme about the importance of close relationships in Lilly's reading world. Lilly's family and friends figure prominently in her stories about reading. Looking back, I see that she talked about reading with her family at almost every lunchtime visit.

> Lilly: My mom was reading *Wishbone* to me, not yesterday but the day before, Saturday. She read *Wishbone* to me. And my dad, me and my dad, we read *National Geographic* together.
>
> Teacher: You do?
>
> Lilly: Mhmm. I always see him reading on the couch and then I come and join him. *National Geographics* are cool because they talk about different places in the world like where volcanoes have erupted. And it showed this dead person from a long time ago. They thought it was a good idea to kill somebody so they sent her up on a mountain with nothing to eat, and it talked about that. My mom doesn't read as much *National Geographics*.
>
> Teacher: What does your mom read more of?
>
> Lilly: My chapter books. And we've got books about different things. Like all the books are called *Child Craft*. They tell about fake stories, poems, and that sort of stuff.
>
> Teacher: You said earlier that sometimes you'll see your dad reading and you'll go and join him. How do you think he feels about that?
>
> Lilly: He likes it. He says, "I like when you come reading with me." So I do it lots. And me and Megan read together too, like when we're at her house we read books together. Little books and big books. When we have a sleepover, her mom says, "You can read for a while, you'll have time to get quiet." So we read. (Interview with Lilly 03/01/99)

Lilly first wanted to read signs, then cereal boxes, then "little books", and finally "big books". Her fascination with books in the classroom setting is a natural extension of

her relationship with print. She fuels her curiosity with all of the words around her and she shares her interests and knowledge with everybody, sharing time or not.

"I know that all the rest of my family likes to read good books too."

Lilly lives in a log cabin on a farm with her family. There are reading materials everywhere. The kitchen is filled with children's drawings, paintings, poems and stories. The living room is home to magazines, newspapers, and books of all sorts. The computer room down the hall has a large bookshelf that Lilly's mom arranged with little books on the bottom shelf, novels on the second shelf, and bigger books on the third shelf. The top shelf, which the children are not big enough to reach, is for decorations. Lilly shares a bedroom with her little sister, and she keeps books near her bunk bed as well.

When Lilly finishes a book, she immediately wants to share it with her mom: "This is a good story, you should read it!" she will announce. Her mom happily obliges and when she finishes, they talk about the story. Lilly also gives easier books to her younger siblings to read if she has enjoyed them. Lilly keeps her favorite stories in one area so that she can reread them when she wants to visit with the characters again. If she waits long enough, she forgets some of the story and likes to read it afresh.

The small television in the living room is rarely used. They do not have cable or satellite, but they do watch videos. "Mr. Bean" is Lilly's favorite. Lilly prefers reading over watching television anyway: "With television, with things like horror movies, it winds you up more. It doesn't unwind you." Besides which, she has other things to keep her busy. She tries to lead her alpaca everyday, she feeds her rabbit and makes her bed, and sometimes she helps her mom feed the other farm animals. And when there is

nothing else to be done and the day is winding to an end, she likes to read a good book, and the rest of her family does too.

"You can't judge a book from its cover!"

When Lilly looks for books in the school and classroom library, she is deliberate and businesslike. She usually takes three or four novels and sits down in a quiet contemplative spot. First, she reads the covers. Next, she examines the back of each book and reads the teaser. Then, she reads the first few pages. Finally, she mulls over her decision and chooses. With the exception of Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (Twain, 1986), this selection process has been reliable.

When Lilly tried to read *Tom Sawyer*, the words were "too hard and I didn't get any of it." She did not mind "giving up" on the book because, earlier, she had seen a classmate give up as well. I assumed that a child like Lilly would feel like a capable reader in the classroom setting, no matter what, and I was surprised to learn how she felt when she encountered difficulty. When she has trouble understanding something she is reading, she feels like she is "not as good" as she was before and is embarrassed if she needs to ask for help when she does not know what a word means. I did not know that, on occasion, the antagonists in her stories were the very words she tried to read. I later learned that if Lilly had not observed a classmate put *Tom Sawyer* away, she would probably have continued reading it until she finished it.

Lilly's Everest-like determination propels her forward, even when the story she has chosen is less than satisfying. Twain's classic tale aside, Lilly always finishes a book even if she does not like it because "you never know what happens in the end." She has read stories that are boring in the beginning, but being a seasoned reader, she knows that

many books get exciting in the end. She is also spurred on by the feeling of success that comes when she encounters a difficult word and she knows what it means, and she adds new vocabulary to her reading repertoire with zeal: "When I'm doing Story Circles, and I come to a big word, I know what it is." If a book is boring to the end, Lilly puts it away, but if she has enjoyed a book, she continues to think about it, usually while she tries to sleep: "When I can't get to bed, I think about all the books that I've already read." She imagines the character's lives beyond the scope of the author's words. In this way, stories never end and are not limited to the covers that Lilly disregards.

"Reading can tell you all about different things. You can go on your own little adventures, like in the forest. I always like to go there."

For Lilly, reading opens up a world of opportunities. Reading is a magical way of visiting other lands and experiencing adventures without leaving the comfort of her reading spot. Her imagination sweeps her away to forests, woods, and far away places she longs to visit like Disney World, the Himalayas, and Peru. She is interested in reading about animals, different people around the world, nature, insects, amphibians, reptiles, how to do crafts, how an egg would hatch caterpillars... her list is extensive.

The reading sheets that Lilly brought back to school hinted at her varied interests and voracious appetite for books. All told, Lilly completed 124 hours of home reading, nearly 40 hours more than her nearest classmate. The children did not know how many hours each person read over the course of the year, but each reading sheet helped us move a stuffed Velociraptor closer to his destination on a large time line that spanned the ceiling. Even though Lilly completed far more reading sheets than the other children in the classroom, she felt like she was the same as everybody else. There is nothing snobby or superior about Lilly. Whereas some of the children proudly announce their

contributions to the class and show neighbors their book mark or mini-chocolate bar (or some other extrinsic reward I find myself resorting to), Lilly quietly slipped the sheets onto my table without fanfare or unwanted attention.

This is not to say that reading sheets are unimportant to Lilly. She likes to fill up the blank spaces everyday, and if she misses a day she makes up for it by reading more the next day. Her mom helps her keep track of the time she spends reading and signs her reading sheets. She also reminds Lilly that she needs to fill in the spaces. Lilly does not care about the little treats as long as she gets another reading sheet to keep a record of her reading. Like the marathoner who keeps a detailed training log, Lilly keeps a written record of her books and stories. Even if she does not have a reading sheet, she takes a blank sheet of paper to write down book titles and chapters she has read. Lilly's reward is the journey which is carefully charted and recorded.

"When you read a hard book you can say, "Wow! I read that whole thing!"

Lilly usually reads with one other person during Story Circles. Big groups are too unwieldy with their noise and occasional disagreements. Lilly enjoys sharing ideas with a partner, but she does not like to read aloud. Only in conversation did she tell me that sometimes she gets all mixed up: "I like to read in my head because I find it harder to read out loud." Even if she can read in her head, she prefers to read by herself because she gets a lot more done. When she works with other children, she has to stop and talk about what she is reading. I assumed that Lilly preferred to work with her best friend during Story Circles because they are inseparable, but Lilly will tell you she chooses someone who "doesn't dawdle and who goes fast."

When Story Circles begin, Lilly is one of the first children who is settled into her reading, and invariably, it is Lilly who sets the agenda: "O.K., I'll read the first page." Lilly will announce. "You always read the first page" is the closest her partner will come to challenging. Lilly likes to be in control of her reading group, and her partners seem to tolerate Lilly as leader. The children are well aware of the fact that they are following her lead but they do not seem to mind relinquishing their authority. And before long, they have finished another challenging novel and they too can say, "Wow!"

"I've just got to finish this page!"

When the bell rings at the end of Story Circle period, Lilly continues to read while all around her, other children are hurriedly putting things away. She always finishes her page before setting the book into her basket. If she had it her way, she would finish reading the entire chapter, but she knows that we are moving on to math. The classroom bells that mark and interrupt our day are not in rhythm with Lilly's reading, and she quietly resists their insistent ringing.

When she is reading in bed, her mom will yell down to her, "Lilly, it's time for bed." Lilly replies, "Okay, I've just got to finish this page!" before sneaking in a few more pages. When she is reminded again, she gives the same response and continues to read well past that promised last page. When I asked Lilly if there was anything she did not like about reading, she replied, "When the story has to end. I want it to go on and on. Especially if it is a good book." Like Lilly, I also read a book to help me calm the thoughts that come to me before I ease into sleep. I often feel like Lilly who starts reading and cannot stop. The looming presence of my alarm clock has replaced my mother's sage advice, but my desire to sneak in a few more pages is still there.

My Story of Brad

Recess snacks are a precious commodity in the classroom. By recess, stomachs rumble and complain with the anticipation of a granola bar, or better yet, a homemade cookie. When the bell rings, the children rush to get their treats and head out for the playground and I head over to the shelf to retrieve my recess snack, usually a Sweet Escapes bar. I do not have a desk so I leave my treats out in plain view along with the other children's. The last Thursday in September, I was disappointed to find my recess snack had been stolen!

When the children returned to the classroom, I somberly asked everyone to come and sit at the calendar corner. I looked at their small faces and tried to imagine who the culprit might be. Was it Robert? He caused more disturbances than anyone else. Or maybe it was Sally? She never had enough to eat and did not even bring a snack to school and in that case I would want her to have it. I could not imagine who would have made this small infraction, but I was hungry and I did not want a pattern of stealing to develop. But how could I possibly get to the bottom of this classroom caper?

An avid "Law & Order" fan, I decided to offer a plea bargain: "Something has happened. Somebody took my recess snack by accident and I would like to find out who so we can talk about not helping yourself to other people's snacks in the future. I promise, that if you come forward now and tell me, you will not be in any trouble whatsoever." The children regarded me with suspicion, and a few looked worried that I might suspect them. They looked from one to the other in hushed anticipation. Brad broke the silence. "Mrs. Schultz, I'm the one. I took your snack. And I'm really sorry."

he added with an anxiety-ridden grimace. The children were almost as surprised as I was that my plea had worked.

In that simple moment of truth, a pattern of honesty and fairness was established. Brad did not get in trouble that day, and we never had another recess snack go missing. What is more, he demonstrated an unfailing penchant for truthfulness that, like his freckles and smile and love of sports, is simply a part of who he is.

On March 11th, I was all ready to meet with Brad for our second interview to talk about reading at home. He unwrapped his mini-pizza while I got the tape organized. I had the questions ready, I had written some comments to myself, and I thought about listening. Rather than ask if he read anything last night, I asked him to tell me about his day yesterday. His face took on a strangled look and the blue of his eyes deepened to an oceanic grey. Rosy spots appeared on his cheeks and eyelids as he battled the flood of tears that was waiting to escape.

"I got kicked off my hockey team last night!" He sobbed and choked, I got a Kleenex, and I listened. He had some sort of altercation with one of his teammates during his practice. There was shoving, there was checking, and then there was the ill-fated trip, poorly timed in front of the coach, and a berating that is hard to imagine for such a small lapse in judgement. He told his coach what had happened without casting blame or hiding his culpability, but the coach yelled, "You're done!" and told him he was off the team.

As he recounted the events, he was devastated. He hung his head to hide his tears and mask his shame. Brad and I talked about what happened, and I tried to empathize and soothe, but I knew how much hockey means to this little boy. I had planned to talk to Brad about reading at home. His life and his experiences are interconnected and cannot

be broken into compartments. As soon as I saw the tears, the interview questions were forgotten, but I listened all the same. I listened to a heartsick eight year old boy for whom, at this moment, reading books was the least of his concerns: "Who's gonna play defense? The season is almost over. Why did he have to get so mad at me?" When lunch was over, he wiped his eyes and blew his nose. And the day started again, broken hearts and all.

Brad was eventually reinstated, and then there was baseball and soccer and swimming... but on that day I witnessed how seriously Brad takes his sporting activities. From an early age, he wanted to run, throw, jump, and play. And when there was time to sit still, and with some coaxing, he enjoyed reading with his mom.

> *"My mom said, 'If you read so many minutes, I'll give you a chocolate chip cookie', and I love chocolate chip cookies so I just kept on reading."*

Brad learned how to read at home with his mother. When he first started looking at books, he was captured so completely by the illustrations he did not even notice there were words. He enjoyed looking at the illustrations in the first book he ever read, *Mr. Down Goes Up* (no reference found), a story about parades with colourful pictures of balloons and horses. He has ridden his own horse in many parades and was "very into parades back then." Picture books invited Brad to dream and imagine: "With picture books, you look at the picture and then you see how you want to change it and just change it in your mind. That's what I'd always do."

As he got older, his mom encouraged him to try to read words when they looked at books: "She'd always just encourage me because I'd be stuck on a word and then I'd think about it for a while and she'd go, "Come on, come on, you can do it!" and then I'd finally remember it and just say it." Brad remembers being rewarded for reading with

chocolate chip cookies and ice cream. Sweets were powerful motivators when he was little because he loved candy. Without these extrinsic motivators, it was hard to convince him to exchange a hockey stick or a bicycle for a book.

Brad moved to a farm with his mom, his step dad, his older sister and his younger half sister. His living room is filled with church magazines and large novels. The television is surrounded by videos and cartoons. In Brad's room, a small collection of unread novels sits in a cardboard bookcase depicting the famous child-like turtle, Franklyn. His mom works full time now and she does not always have the opportunity to make cookies that entice reading. She also has to drive the children to hockey practices and basketball games and dance lessons and skating extravaganzas. Brad has many interests and has no trouble keeping busy. He loves to play his Play Station video game in the basement, and when there is time, he plays ball with his mom outside. There is also the promise of adventure found on the new farm.

"When we moved out to the farm, I could kind of go on little adventures of my own cause they left a whole bunch of machinery. So I'd be running all over, jumping all over!"

Brad loves to run around on the farm. If he gets bored he hops on his bike and pedals to the far corner of the field. In this corner, a world awaits where old machinery and a farmer's scribbled notes are the springboard to an eight year old boy's imagination, and Brad spends as much time there as possible. He wanders around the pond and explores the area around the old house. In the old barn, Brad tinkers with the forgotten machinery left behind by the previous owner. The farmer did his work upstairs and would write down things he needed to remember about trucks and tractors and combines. Brad even discovered a big notebook on a well worn desk that detailed breakdowns and repairs.

This section of the farm is the backdrop to imaginative games of make believe where Brad is the hero, the explorer, or the boy of distinguished valor who encounters danger with personal bravery. After he reads adventurous stories, he feels "adventurey" and he likes to reenact the action packed scenes: "If I'm reading something like *George of the Jungle* (Nadler, 1997), I'll try and picture myself *as* him and then kinda go act it all out in my mind. I'll probably feel sort of wild. Sometimes after I read a war story, I'll want to go play with swords or something." After reading, Brad needs to unleash his energy and exercise his considerable imagination. The stillness of reading, even if the story is exciting and action packed, is a sizeable detraction for this boy who finds joy in making his own little adventures as he runs and jumps and plays. But even still, there are books that can entice him into reading.

"I like adventures and brave stories. Brave people."

Brad never misses a day of school. He arrives each morning with a winning smile and an enthusiastic sports update that he shares before he settles into his desk. When he was in grade one, he didn't mind reading the "little books" in the classroom library because he got little sour fish candies for his efforts. But when the children settled on the floor to listen to a story read aloud by the teacher, "they were never the kind that I liked, so I'd just kind of take a nap and when the story was over I'd wake up and go back to my seat and do my work."

He likes to read at school but he likes to be the one who is choosing the reading material. In grade three, he almost invariably chooses adventure novels with child heroes like Zack from *The Zack Files* (Greenburg, 1996), Sam, Joe, and Fred from *The Time Warp Trio* (Scieszka, 1992), and Wonder Kid from *Wonder Kid Meets the Evil Lunch*

Snatcher (Duncan, 1990). These brave characters capture his imagination and keep him interested. If he is reading something that he does not enjoy, he feels like quitting and trying a new book.

If the weather is hot and the outdoor activities are inviting, Brad is initially reluctant to do Story Circles. But there are also times when he is eager to get started, and once he is reading with his group, he is animated and productive. He loves to work with other children because he likes to "be around people" and he often reads with his sports teammates and friends. Brad feels like he is an average reader: "I only get mixed up on those great big words like biology." When he gets stuck on a word, he feels frustrated but he does not mind asking other people for help. He demonstrates knowledge of sophisticated reading strategies that he can use to help him with difficult words: "I'll try to sound it out, but if I can't do that, I'll think of words like it, or rhyming words. And then usually that helps me." When it is finally time to share a book with the class, Brad leads the way. He convinces his group members to role play, dance and even sing! With Brad's coaxing, even the most reluctant performers become brave people who act out stories of adventure.

"I read once in a while. It's not like an everyday thing, but I'll read."

Brad is a very capable reader and an enthusiastic student. When we started a Social Studies unit about the Blood Indians, he brought beautiful artifacts from his Grandma's house to put up with our bulletin board display. He even brought crushed rock face paint that transformed the classroom of children into a tribe of brave warriors. He is imaginative and bright and interesting. But one look at my home reading record reveals that Brad rarely reads for classroom reading incentives when he is not at school.

He likes to read with his baby sister. She fills up a bag with books and hauls them over to Brad whereupon she will look at him with her sweetest expression and ask, "Will you come read to me?" and Brad is powerless to her charms. When he gets bored of his Play Station games, or if he feels like staying up a little bit later when he goes to bed, he will pick up a book and read. There are all sorts of picture books, novels and magazines to read in Brad's house, he just does not seem to be particularly interested in reading any of them.

Both of Brad's sisters love to read books. His older sister is an avid reader who has all sorts of novels and books and spends a great deal of time reading. His little sister loves to collect her picture books and read with anyone who is willing. Brad finds that there are other things he would rather do because he gets "boring of looking at words." When he gets bored, he likes to go outside and "jump to get muscles." The outdoors call to him and he runs and plays, his blond hair and freckled complexion blending with the prairie grass.

If there is a sufficiently enticing reward, Brad can be convinced to spend time reading at home. When he was little, chocolate chip cookies would do, but now the stakes are higher. Brad was very excited about our special reading week in February when we were immersed in pirates and parrots and gold treasure. We made pirate hats and Jolly Roger flags, dressed up like pirates and served a pirate lunch. We read about pirates everyday in the library and set reading goals. Part of our goal was to read for four hours at home during reading week. If every child in the school met their reading goal, the principal was going to 'walk the plank' at the Taber waterslide. Brad had not completed any home reading sheets before that week, but for a trip to the swimming pool, he was

willing to read at home. I asked Brad if he thought he would have read at home during reading week if there had not been a big reward. In his easy, honest way, he replied, "No." He did concede, however, that he enjoyed the reading he did that week.

"Sometimes I'm too lazy to pick up a book."

Brad thinks reading is important for a number of reasons. When you go to the store, it is useful to read about the toys you want to buy. When you grow up, you need to be able to read to work so that you can make money. You need to be able to read so that you can find out how much things cost, like houses and cars. He also thought that people make fun of you if you are unable to read: "They laugh at you and say that you're dumb, dumb, dumb." Brad also thinks that reading is fun. He enjoys reading with his little sister, he takes pleasure in reading with friends at school, and he has favorite books that he wants to read again and again.

He likes to read but he does not always read when other options exist. He is interested in other things, and when he is finished the school day, he likes to play his Play Station games, or play sports, or watch a movie. He works very hard at school and when he gets home he likes to rest. Sometimes he is busy with practices or games or homework, and other times he simply does not want to do read. If his mom made him read everyday, he would read, but he would do so grudgingly: "I'd read, but then I'd be pretty mad at her. She doesn't read very often, why should I?" If he was forced to read he would feel extremely hard done by: "I'd feel like a slave!" Brad likes to play and his games and fun are not always found on the pages of books. His play is active and imaginary, and when you are busy playing, you simply do not have time to feel like a slave.

My Story of Jillian

This is a story of changing stories. There were stories I expected to hear and stories I heard that grew from the questions I asked and the answers I was looking for. My story of Jillian, based on my own narrow understanding, centered on her lack of enthusiasm about school reading. In the classroom, Jillian daydreamed while I read to the class. When I read a book that had other children rolling in laughter, Jillian sat on a chair in another time and space, removed form the storyteller and listeners. She seemed to submit to, rather than embrace, Story Circle activities.

Early in the research, I realized that I interrogated her on almost every aspect of her reading stories. If she told me she was reading a book, I wanted to know what chapter she was on. If she said she liked mysteries, I wanted to know what mystery books, exactly, have you read? I questioned her about her stories instead of asking her to tell me more, even though my interrogation quelled the discussion as she felt forced to come up with answers. I wanted her to tell me she did not like reading because I assumed that would be the story she would tell. The stories Jillian shared, however, made me realize that not only does she think reading is important, but also that she likes reading. When I put aside my research expectations, I was finally able to hear her story and think about her reading world.

Jillian's home is full of reading materials: Newspapers, novels, magazines, and children's books are everywhere to be found. Her parents value reading and encourage school activities, and Jillian is aware of their support. Her home communication book is full of messages from her mom and dad: "Try your best at school today" and "We love you, work hard" are written frequently. Yet, despite this support, Jillian reads with little

enthusiasm or regularity. My assessment of her reading before our conversations began convinced me that Jillian would share stories about not wanting to read and I was anxious to hear from a nonreader why reading was so unappealing and unimportant. I learned quickly that I was in error.

When we talked about reading during our lunch time visits, the conversation lead to stories about close relationships and reading with her family over and over again. When we talked about learning how to read, she shared how teachers and parents helped her.

Teacher: Who do you think taught you how to read?

Jillian: All the teachers that I had teached me. My mom and dad.

Teacher: How have they helped you?

Jillian: Like reading-helping things? Well, every night, we still do this now, we would sit and we would read scriptures. And she would help me read a word or a paragraph or something.

Teacher: What else do you remember?

Jillian: When I went to bed, she would always read me a little story. (Interview with Jillian 02/04/99)

Listening to Jillian, I came to know that for this young girl, her relationships with friends, teachers, and family are the most important thing. Sometimes she came to school looking tired and withdrawn and I learned that both of her grandparents are unwell and Jillian's mom had to take over much of their care. Her mom shared with me that Jillian is a worrier: If there is something to worry about, Jillian will keep it with her throughout her days and nights. She worries about her friends, her mom, her siblings, her father, and her grandparents. Her older sister, a voracious reader, will get out one of her novels and read

when her mom is away taking care of her grandparents, but Jillian is unable to quiet her mind enough to settle in with a book.

Teacher: Did you read when you were at home last night?

Jillian: No, but I read the night before. I read four pages.

Teacher: Oh yeah. I guess you had Judo last night.

Jillian: It's sort of fun because my dad, he has to work all day, and he took this whole week off, like from Monday to Saturday, he took all that off, and he got to come to Judo.

Teacher: What's he doing all week while he has some time off?

Jillian: Most of the time he's just sleeping -- he needs to rest.

Teacher: That sounds like a nice break. Your dad words hard.

Jillian: Yeah, I know. He has to work two jobs. He has to work at the potato plant the most. And it's cool because he gets to take the May long weekend off. (Interview with Jillian 05/13/99)

My story of Jillian could have been a one dimensional account of a 'non-reader' who is not motivated to read for pleasure. I still struggle with how to reconcile my assumptions with her lived experiences and the stories she thoughtfully shared about her experiences. Jillian's reading world is set against a backdrop of a child who cares deeply for others. The narrative thread of caring deeply was shared repeatedly as she told me about her experiences and as I watched her interact with other people in her life.

"I play sports. Baseball, basketball, and I do Judo."

Shiny medals hung from colourful ribbons are issued to commemorate a noteworthy event. The children in our classroom proudly bring these symbols of victory to school where they tell accompanying stories of endurance, strength, and triumph. The children are mesmerized by a gold medal sparkling around someone's neck and they

listen to the bearer with respectful awe. Everyone wants to see the engraved picture and touch the smooth cloth that was bestowed upon the victor. Some children sleep with their medals for a week. Others wear them to school, to the playground, and to the grocery store. Jillian leaves her medals at home and does not mention their significance.

When I first met Jillian, I quickly realized she has no interest in hair ribbons or pony tails or dresses. Her cropped brown hair and tomboyish wardrobe often trick people into thinking she is a little boy. She is an active and energetic little girl and long hair weighed her down. Two years ago she cut her hair short and started Judo and she is now the provincial champion in her age and weight category. Jillian, a quiet champion, does not tell people about her achievements in the sport she loves. If her mom tells me about an upcoming tournament, I have to pester and cajole to get Jillian to share her results with me.

I thought it would be possible to categorize Jillian as being interested in only sports and therefore not interested in reading. During a home visit, Jillian wanted to share something with me. I assumed it would be a Judo award -- her mom and I had just been discussing Jillian's performance in a recent tournament while Jillian worked close by, but when she reemerged from her bedroom, she held a piece of paper. She shared a letter, wrinkled from many readings, written to her by her father. She read it to me with obvious pride mixed with a little embarrassment. Her father expressed how proud he was, not of her victory, but of who she is. A collection of words captured on paper is her most valued possession and she reads it again and again. She values her letter more than the victory, and when I listened to her read I was reminded again how faulty my assumptions were.

"I'm happy that I can read because if I couldn't read,
the world wouldn't make sense to me."

Jillian is a reader. She does not read as often or with as much enthusiasm as her classroom teacher might want, but I have come to learn that she values reading, and has made reading part of her life, in her own unique ways. When she was little, she was curious about printed material and she wanted to be able to read shampoo bottles, cereal boxes, and detergent labels. She saw her parents reading scriptures and wanted to be able to read "big books" like they did. When her older sister started reading independently, Jillian was fascinated about the prospect of being able to read on her own.

Reading is important in Jillian's reading world: "Everybody learns something from reading in my family". Her dad reads about the Snap-On tools that he buys from a travelling tool truck. He also enjoys reading Louis L'amour cowboy novels. Jillian showed me a shelf full of the Western series and proudly explained that he was only missing two books. Her younger brother learns important lessons, like sharing, from reading picture books. Jillian, a child I labeled as a reluctant reader, thinks that reading is useful and important.

Jillian likes to read mysteries that have adventures like the stories that feature the oddly clad *Waldo* and the fat lazy cat *Garfield*. These are not examples that immediately spring to my mind, but Jillian would not agree with me. Her reading tastes often lean towards the ridiculous. *Captain Underpants* (Pilkey, 1997) was her favorite character, followed closely by *The Time Warp Trio* (Scieszka, 1992). The more outrageous the plot line, the better--Talking toilets that come to life and smelly giants who defeat gallant knights with a walloping burp or fart are riveting fare for Jillian. Her favorite memory about reading reveals her penchant for silliness: "When my mom took a picture of me,

well the toilet seat was down, and I sat on the top of it, and she was taking a picture of me, and I was reading a book!"

She likes to read in her bedroom where it is quiet, but she particularly enjoys sharing books with her family. When her mother is not caring for her parents, when her dad is not working at either of his demanding jobs, when her older sister is not busy with her own reading, and when her little brother is not outside playing, Jillian is able to read with a family member. And every evening, even if nobody feels like it, they open the scriptures and read with one another, and in the end, everyone is happy they found the time to read together.

"I just read for fun. Sometimes, if you want to read for fun, you learn more things and you want to read some more."

Jillian is motivated to read for pleasure until the time comes to sit down and read. The dinosaur that lives suspended above the children's desks made Jillian want to read at home and complete reading sheets. The small squares of home reading were filled in sporadically, depending on the amount of time her mom was home to encourage reading. She wanted to read and contribute to the Velociraptor's trek across the ages, but sometimes she never got around to reading despite her best intentions. "I always think, I have to go home and read and read and read. And I never get to do it because I have so many chores to do. I take out the garbage, make my bed, and then I forget about that". Her story as a reader is negotiated alongside a multiplicity of stories.

When she does find the time to read, she enjoys reading books about animals and stories with silly characters. She likes to read the comics, and she thinks that reading with her little brother is fun. She does not seem to include reading with her little brother in her own reading time: She would tell me she had not read the night before and then describe

stories she read to her little brother: "I read *A Funny Man* (Jensen, 1993) today and he had this teapot car, and his bed was on his roof". Once, she took home a book bag and read it on the trampoline with a friend. They lay outside in sleeping bags on the stretched black canvass and slipped into a world of dragons that eat library books and giant lizards that live on remote islands. In Jillian's reading world, reading is fun and enjoyable, but there are other, competing interests that interfere with her reading time and distract her from the world of books.

"I spend too much time on the television"

Jillian likes to read, but she also enjoys watching television. By her own admission, she spends too much time watching programs like *The Simpsons*, *Rugrats*, and *Pepper-Ann*. On an average day, she watches about five shows. Her mom and dad like to watch television as well. When I went to Jillian's house for home visits, the television was often the focal point in the living room. Cartoons, satellite movies, and videos are enticing when you need a break after a busy day at school or work.

If Jillian spends too much time watching her favorite shows, her mom will ask her to turn off the television and read for a while. Jillian does not mind this intrusion: "It makes me feel better." Jillian is not pressured into reading. Her mom does not think pestering and forcing will foster a love of books. Also, it is difficult to tell your child not to watch television when you enjoy watching programs yourself. Jillian thinks that she likes to read more than she likes to watch TV: "Last year, I watched over an hour a day, and when I came to school, because I watched it at nighttime, when I came to school, my brain went whack-o". She thinks that if she watches too much TV, she has trouble thinking. I have seen similar phenomenon in my classroom with other children (and I

have felt it myself on occasion!). When the weather warmed up with the coming of spring, Jillian found other things to occupy her time.

> *"When you're an adult, you don't <u>have</u> to play with friends. Like when you're a kid, you sometimes <u>have</u> to play."*

The large trampoline in her front yard became the new focal point of the children's activity as the snow melted and the grass turned green. After a winter of cold storage, the springs creaked merrily from 3:05 p.m. until supper, and again, after stomachs had 30 seconds to digest, Jillian would jump with her siblings and friends until bedtime. She might take a break from flipping and belly-flopping just long enough to roller blade or play ball. When friends are over, which is often, there is little time to read: "Usually there's a friend over and they want to jump or play Nintendo or something". She would rather go biking or roller blading than read because "mostly friends are over and they don't like to read. Because we have a tramp and we've got roller blades. And it's just confusing to read when friends are over".

Jillian describes herself as spending "a little time reading. Just a little bit". I asked her to try and think about why, when she likes to read, she spends just a little bit of time reading. If she has a book, and if it is a book she enjoys, she will read it. But, if it is not fun, "I'll just go jump. Ignore the book". She also thinks that there are "hardly any books in the house", and her older sister, who has many books, has made her bedroom off limits to Jillian. There are many books in Jillian's house. She either does not like them or does not have access to them. She does not seem to be overly concerned with this problem. After all, she is busy being an active eight-year-old girl.

Jillian does not spend a lot of time reading right now. She likes to read, or at the very least she says that she does. Her mom thinks that she likes to read, she just does not

like a lot of it. Reading is a quiet and still activity whereas Jillian is busy and moving. If Jillian's mom wants to get Jillian to do homework or read, she has to 'threaten' a bit. The difficulty is that she wants reading to be fun for Jillian, but being threatened is not likely to encourage the habit of reading. Jillian lives with a family that values childhood and children. Her mother's wish for her children is that they look back on their childhood and say, "I wish I were a kid again!" To this end, the children participate in sports, go on family outings, and most importantly, they play. She does not want them to have a childhood they would not want to repeat if they had that magical opportunity. And for now, she is an eight-year-old girl who is valued and appreciated for who she is. Perhaps with time Jillian will actually make reading a part of her routine when she no longer *has* to play with friends. Or perhaps reading is already part of her life, it is just there in ways the dominant stories of reading motivation have covered over.

"My whole family thinks I'm a good reader."

When it is time to do Story Circles in the classroom, Jillian takes her time when she gets out her materials. She sits with her basket and looks around at the activity that surrounds her. She opens her book halfheartedly and settles, albeit reluctantly, into her reading. When I watched her in the classroom, I assumed that Jillian did not feel like a capable reader. Her seeming reluctance had me convinced that she lacked confidence in her abilities. When we talked about her ability as a reader, her story stood in stark contrast to my assumptions: "I think I'm a pretty good reader. My whole family thinks I'm a good reader. They tell me when I read. My mom says I'm getting better everyday at reading". Jillian feels very happy that she can read and thinks that she is able to read almost everything they have in the house: "I can mostly, every book that I read I can

understand". If she ever has trouble with a book she is reading, she feels frustrated, but her mom is there to help her: "My mom helps me by reading half of the page and I read the other half of the page".

At school, Jillian feels like an "O.K." reader. In Jillian's mind, a good reader never gets stuck on any words and an average reader gets stuck on "more words than a good reader would". When she gets stuck on a word at school, she feels happy because she gets to learn a new word. If she has to come and ask me for help, it does not bother her. Jillian, who seems so far away from our group story reading, thinks that listening to her teacher read is fun! The reasons were astounding to me: "Cause you do voices and it can teach the whole class how to do voices and everything. And it just helps us get more interested in books and be better at reading and all that". Again, my perceptions of events and my subsequent story of Jillian were out of step with Jillian's stories of her school reading experience. Jillian thinks that she is "probably about the same" kind of reader as the other children in the classroom. She thinks that some children might be better readers, but "it doesn't really matter though. I just like how I can feel as a reader by myself. And I can feel comfortable how I read".

I know that in many instances, I asked questions with certain answers in mind. I asked questions that required Jillian to explain, fend off, and deny. But Paley (1990) reminds us that these kinds of questions may not be inherently dangerous so long as we remember that bad questions can lead to good answers. Especially if you are trying to listen.

CHAPTER 6

Understanding Four Narratives of Experience

Teacher: Do you think that what you talk to me about is important to me?

Tucker: Mhmm. Because you have to do it for school and your report. And so you can answer these questions that you're trying to ask.

Interview with Tucker 05/25/99

In the previous chapter, I shared four children's stories of their reading worlds. I am the one who composed these stories, but I tried to remain mindful that other voices needed to be heard and honored. With each child's story, "two voices are included with the teller of the story filtering, by selection and interpretation, the voice of the person the story is about" (Anderson, 1997, p. 134). As I wove each child's voice into this writing, I felt some very real limitations. Which stories would I include? How could I bring these stories to life? How could I recreate some sort of experiential whole as I represented the children's stories on paper? What did their shared stories contribute to my understanding about children's reading worlds?

Tucker, Lilly, Brad, and Jillian, all have important stories to tell. During our work together, they shared all kinds of things about their lives as readers and learners, and I tried to live an ethical research relationship as I listened to their stories and tried to hear what they were saying. Tucker wanted me to find the answers to the questions I was trying to ask. I find that I can not characterize my understandings in the manner Tucker might envision, but I can share my interpretations of these children's lives as readers. These are lives full of

complexities and, as such, I will try to move thoughtfully from shared stories to carefully qualified comment as I share my understandings in this chapter (Coles, cited in Paley 1990).

In the first section, I will share my research story and describe how this narrative inquiry shifted as I worked with my participants. In the second section, I will share my teacher story and describe how my work with these four children has reshaped and restoried my teaching relationship with, and my understandings about, children and reading. Finally, because the children are valuable sources of knowing and knowledge, I will share their written reflections.

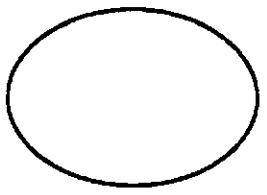
My Research Story

I set out on this narrative journey as a teacher who had an interest in doing classroom research alongside her children. Initially, my purpose for this journey was to understand children's reading motivation. As this work shifted and grew, I started to see this research as a way to understand children's experiences about reading in the larger context of their reading worlds. I was able to travel to these worlds by listening to the children's voices as they shared stories of their experiences as readers during our lunch time interviews, by watching them interact with books in the classroom setting, and by visiting with the children and their families at home. I find myself thinking about these travels as unfolding in a manner similar to the story books that I have watched the children read with a beginning, a middle, and an end. I have written three research stories to share how this narrative inquiry unfolded at various stages of my travels to children's reading worlds.

An Interview Story

I wrote this after the first interview with each of the children involved in this research:

Four Children



Peanut butter sandwiches, sloppy Joes, juice boxes
A small round circle and lunch bags
And the circle grows

Quiet smiles, thoughtfulness, careful memories
An invitation and acceptance
And understanding grows

Voices, stories, laughter in the hallways
A question asked and answered
And curiosity grows

A classroom, a teacher, four children
A place to listen and tell
And relationship grows.

Our first visits were tentative and unsure. There was an unanticipated air of intrigue associated with the small tape recorder and the use of pseudonyms. I asked the children to think of their own pseudonyms in an effort to include them in all aspects of the research. Jillian and Lilly picked story character names inspired by classroom favorite authors Phoebe Gilman and Kevin Henkes. Brad decided to use a name that is masculine and athletic. Tucker, after three or four changes of heart, finally decided on his cowboy moniker. The children were curious about what their voices sounded like on tape and always wanted to play back some of their interview so they could hear for themselves:

"That sounds weird" they would all blush. It was very hard for me to keep their pseudonyms straight, particularly in those instances when I would forget the "interview" and get caught up in conversation. If I ever slipped and called one of the children by their real name, they would cover their mouths in shock, point to the tape recorder while looking at me, or quickly say, "You mean Lilly/Brad/Jillian/Tucker!"

When I began my interviews, I somehow felt that I needed to arm myself as a researcher. The tape recorder, the extension cord, the interview guide, the clipboard, and the pencil became my research trappings. At home, the transcribing machine and my computer loomed large and unwelcome in my basement, but as soon as the children's voices filled the quiet the job became less of a chore and more of a reliving of the day's conversation. I filled up the binders I had labeled for each child with numbered transcripts and written reflections. I felt like a real researcher. Gradually, there was a shift in my focus. My work moved from being a research exercise to a genuine desire to understand and learn from the children.

I wanted to be a participant in conversations with children, but I was also an "asker of questions". I wanted to listen to the children's voices, but I also had to remember my research objective. I wanted to create a space where the children's story could unfold, but I felt tethered to a path that I had set out for myself as a researcher. Eventually, I found a way to be faithful to my research questions while also living an "ethic of caring" with the children (Noddings, 1986, p.498). It was essential to remember that my purpose for this research was not more important than the relationships that were growing as a result of working with the children.

After we had spent several lunch hours together, our shared narrative journey allowed the children and me to grow comfortable in our roles as participants in the research. The novelty of the tape machine wore off and we all started to relax. The research questions that acted as my travel blueprint became a guide rather than a script, and I tried to ask different questions in response to the stories the children shared. The children even began to ask me questions during our conversations about my own reading, about my research, and about their involvement in the research. When the children acted more like children than interview respondents, I did not worry about my questions and my transcripts. Tucker in particular loved to divert the interview to any number of unrelated topics: sunburned shoulders, plastic straws with elaborate twists and loops that suck up juice in extravagant slurps, gummy animals that can twist and wrestle before they are eaten. Brad loved to talk about his sporting exploits: hockey in the winter, soccer in the spring, baseball in the summer. He did not hide his feelings about wanting to be outside in the sunshine and fresh air when he was eating his lunch, inside, with me. Jillian loved to share stories about her family, her Judo, and her friends. Lilly talked excitedly about her upcoming alpaca obstacle courses and 4-H activities. Their willingness to stray from my agenda helped me attend to the hidden features of their stories (McEwan, 1997).

When it was time to share our tenth and final lunchtime visit I was surprised by my feelings. I had spent countless hours in my basement transcribing hundreds of pages of interviews, carefully reading and rereading the colour coded lines of text, and writing reflections that I hoped would help me keep my ideas and wonders in some sort of order. I thought I would feel an enormous sense of relief when it was time to conduct 'the last interview' with the children, but each time I started the tape and said my usual

introduction, "Interview with Lilly/Tucker/Brad/Jillian on such and such date" I was surprised at the way my throat tightened around the words. I was not prepared for the ache and melancholy that surrounded the idea of doing my last "official" interview with the children. I had been drawn into the life of each child and part of me was very sad this time had drawn to a close. It had been a great deal of work and there were times when I questioned what on earth motivated me to do this in the first place, but in the end, the children opened up my heart and my imagination. So it was really no surprise that I would feel a sense of sadness at the end of my lunch hour travels with the children.

A Classroom Research Story

My role as classroom researcher was the most troublesome part of this narrative inquiry. When I was preparing to do this research I thought that I would be able to move easily from classroom teacher to classroom observer. In a sense that is what I had done for five years: watch children interact with one another in the classroom setting. In my research proposal, I wrote that I would be wearing two hats: one of researcher, and one of teacher. In truth, I was always a teacher who happened to have a tape recorder and some scribbled field notes. Or maybe it was that my teacher hat was much more comfortable to don. I was first and foremost a teacher who was concerned about her children's growth and learning and who aslo tried to conduct research in the classroom.

In the beginning, I truly assumed that I would learn things about children's reading that I had not seen before as a classroom teacher simply because I was actively engaging in research. After a month of trying, I began to doubt the validity of this assumption and I wondered about the value of anecdotal records

when trying to understand the children's experiences. I worried about finding "useful" information about children's reading worlds from the garbled tapes and retyped field notes. I was aware of this conflict as I conducted my research, but I continued along the path I had set out for myself.

By the end of the five months of Story Circle observations, I knew that I had not wasted my time for a number of reasons. First, I had the daily opportunity to include the other children in my classroom in this research project because my four travelling companions always worked with different groups of people. The children loved being part of a taped Story Circle session and seemed to enjoy my involvement with their group as they worked together. Second, I came to see my role as a researcher in a different way than I had anticipated. I thought that observing children reading would be a useful research tool, but I quickly learned that I needed to move beyond the role of observer to one of participant in conversations to truly understand the children with whom I was working. It was primarily by listening to the children's shared stories of experience that I grew in my understanding of their lives as readers. Finally, and most importantly, I learned that my classroom routines and teaching practices and the children's response to them in the classroom setting reveals little about children's feelings about themselves as readers. When I watched Tucker struggle with print I believed that he was frustrated with reading. When I saw Jillian dawdling during reading events I believed that she did not enjoy reading. When I saw Lilly reading challenging texts I believed that she felt steadfastly secure in her reading abilities. When I saw Brad avoid home reading incentives I believed that he was a non-

reader with little desire to read. My classroom observations did not help me come to understand these four children's lived experiences as readers, but knowing the limitations of observing children's experiences has opened many new possibilities for me as a classroom teacher.

Paley (1990) writes "every child enters the classroom in a vehicle propelled by that child alone, at a particular pace and for a particular purpose. Here is where the fair study of children begins and where teaching becomes a moral act" (p. xii). From my experience as a classroom researcher, I know that I have a responsibility to the children I live with everyday in my classroom to be mindful of her words as I negotiate my place in the lives of children. I cannot claim to know children because I see them everyday in the classroom. It is an important part of knowing, but it is only a part. I am thankful for this lesson.

A Home Visit Story

Perhaps one of the most intimidating aspects of this narrative inquiry was the prospect of going to visit children at their homes. It sounded so reasonable in my proposal: One visit with each family every month for a total of four visits per family. When it was time to start my home visits, however, I was very nervous. I was moving outside of the classroom domain, and I was suddenly worried that I was intruding. I had decided to visit with families at the children's homes to expand my research and to get a detailed and contextual picture of each child's stories about themselves as readers. I did not bring a set of research questions, but I did bring my tape recorder. I simply asked families to talk with me about their child and reading.

My first visit with Lilly's family was warm and inviting. We drank coffee, talked effortlessly about a wide range of topics, and set off to see the farm after we had visited for an hour and a half. My first visit with Jillian's mom was also very comfortable because we are friends. Initially, Jillian's mom was somewhat distracted by the tape recorder but eventually the conversation flowed easily between frequent interruptions caused by her three children and what seemed like half of the neighborhood. I always felt exhausted after I left Jillian's house. My first visit with Tucker's mother was also comfortable. We sipped Coke from frosted mugs and talked at length about Tucker's love of books. For reasons I still cannot identify, Brad's family was the most difficult for me to talk with. Brad sat with his mom, dad and two sisters on the couch while I sat alone across the room. The only place for the tape recorder was in the middle of the floor between us. They were gracious participants, but we never reached the level of comfort that came so easily with the other families.

The only fathers I spoke with on the first visit were Brad's and Lilly's. After that initial meeting, I met with the children's mothers. This was not by design, and I was intrigued by how predominantly the children's moms were situated in their school and reading worlds. Tucker's father does not live at home. Jillian's dad spends so much time working that I did not expect to see him during my visits. Lilly's dad farms and works extremely long hours as well. Brad's dad had to look after jobs around their small farm while I visited with his mom. The work of talking with their child's teacher was left to the mothers.

When I wrote my research proposal I indicated I would visit each family four times. After the first two visits, I was worried that I would simply be repeating my efforts at the subsequent visits. In retrospect, I am glad to have visited so often. Looking at experience over time helps us to see what is structured and understood about our knowing. Without viewing experience in context of time and continuity, change and growth is hampered (Clandinin & Connelly, 1989). Each month brought different activities and changes in family dynamics. I felt less like an intruder and more like a visitor with each visit. When I went home after my visits, our conversations opened up new areas of possibility for my thinking about the children's lived experiences as readers.

When I look back at my field notes I see the richness and layering that was made possible by multiple visits. Other studies of family literacy have described the ways literacy is embedded in everyday life in various forms and settings (Solsken, 1993). By visiting the children at their homes, I saw the print that attracted all of the children and the ways reading was valued and promoted in each home. There were bookshelves laden with novels and storybooks, refrigerators covered with children's artwork and writing, and magazines bulging out of baskets. I also came to recognize and appreciate the connection between children's reading worlds and their relationship with and among family members. I learned the children had models of literacy that influence their reading activities, but they also showed individual ways of defining themselves as literate individuals.

Now that I have finished conducting my research, I have a richer relationship with these families because friendships have been formed. Whether it is a warm hello in the school hallway or a barbecue at the farm, I am reminded that I have been very privileged to spend time with the children and their families. I also have a new awareness and understanding about children and families. It is easy to make demands on families and it is easy to pass judgements about what families should be doing with their children. Visiting the children at their homes awakened the possibility of finding authentic ways to form meaningful, understanding relationships with the families I work with.

My Teacher Story

I find it is easy to assume that I know the children I teach simply because I spend so much time with them. When I evaluate children, I make judgements about their feelings, their growth, and their abilities. Before I started this work with Tucker, Lilly, Brad, and Jillian, these evaluations were much easier to make. The stories these four children shared of their experiences did open portals for my understanding about children and reading. It helped me to think back to my own experiences as a young reader, and to connect with some of my own teaching practices today. More than any other time in my teaching, I have found that I have grown in my understanding about children and, as a result, I question my ability to be a knower of children's lives.

My understandings have evolved in two ways. First, I will share hidden stories that reveal how four children feel about themselves as readers. Tucker, Lilly, Brad, and Jillian shared stories about their individual reading worlds that

helped me see the ways they evaluate their reading ability and their subsequent feelings about themselves as reader. This process was completely hidden to me before they shared their stories. Second, I will share stories about how my teacher evaluations of children's reading influenced my understandings of these four children's reading worlds. These evaluations were based on my classroom observations of reading, my assessments of home literacy environments, and my biases as a teacher. My evaluations underwent a great deal of growth and change as a result of listening to children's voices and hearing their hidden stories. The children helped me understand my role as an evaluator of, and my ability to pass accurate judgements about, children's reading worlds. It was in the process of our collaborative work together that the children helped me to understand how my teacher story has unfolded as I have found my place in their reading worlds (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996).

Hidden Stories and New Understandings

Tucker. Tucker's feelings about himself as a reader are difficult to understand, even after all of our conversations, my classroom observations, and my reflections. Teachers who yelled and did not help formed his early feelings about reading at school, whereas at home his mother helped him find a comfortable place in the world of books. When he came to our classroom, he was tentative and cautious when he approached classroom reading. He picked the easiest (and often least interesting) books on the shelf and read with slow deliberation. I assumed that he did not like reading and that he was not a very

experienced reader. His feelings about reading were hidden from my understanding before he shared his stories.

Tucker shared that his feelings about reading are tied to his ability to read: "I try to understand the stories that I can and when I understand I feel good inside. And I feel good if I can read it. That's how I feel if I can understand it." He went on to explain what happens when he has trouble with print: "I feel like sort of weird if I can't understand it. So I go and ask somebody to help me and then I start understanding. And then I get to feel good again" (Interview with Tucker, 04/29/99).

When Tucker is at home, he can choose reading material freely. He takes risks and chooses books that appeal to his love of animals and sense of adventure. In his reading world, you get to feel good again when somebody can help you with the book you have chosen. I thought that Tucker chose more interesting and challenging books when he grew as a reader. He seemed more capable and fluent, and I wanted to attribute this growth to my classroom practices that foster literate behavior, but his hidden story reveals a different truth. Tucker didn't change as a reader. Tucker, and his mother, shared stories that he was a good reader who did not have trouble decoding print. Tucker's literacy behavior was motivated primarily by his perception of its social risks and rewards (Solsken, 1993). He had experienced literacy interactions at school with adults as inspections to see whether he could be a reader, and he had experienced failure in the past. His classroom reading was guarded because he wanted to protect himself from mistakes that had always been met with adult disapproval. Tucker started to

choose the kinds of books he wanted to read in the classroom when he knew that he could trust his teacher and his classmates. His desire to read was there all along, as was his ability, but he had learned that it was not always rewarding to take risks in the classroom.

What would I think of Tucker as a reader if I had not taken time to know him by listening to his stories? I assumed that he struggled with print that the other children read easily. At the beginning of the year, his slow, tentative reading pace and his reluctance to attempt challenging books lead me to believe that he was a struggling reader. He did not bring in very many home reading sheets. It was easy to make judgements based on this: He does not like to read, his parents are not spending time reading with him, he does not have a home environment that supports classroom learning... His mother worked full time and was not available to participate in the classroom: Maybe she did not support Tucker's learning and did not help him with his reading programs at home. There are so many unfavorable judgements that could be made from these observations.

Classrooms are busy places, and it is not easy to find the time to understand the experiences that children bring to the classroom landscape. If I had not taken the time to stop and listen to Tucker, I may have relied on these hasty judgements about him and his family. It would have been frighteningly easy to misunderstand Tucker. He was sometimes a challenge to me with his distraction during lessons, his wanderlust and rambling, his noisemaking. He does not fit in neatly and easily into a classroom landscape. He fights the confines of his desk and the restrictions of the hidden school curriculum.

Fortunately, by listening to his shared stories, I came to understand in a more meaningful way the kind of reading world that he lives in and the many gifts that he brings to a classroom. I wrote in my journal in May:

> *If nothing else comes out of this work with the children, I hope that I can share with other people how necessary it is to stop and listen to the children we teach. (Journal Entry 05/09/99)*

When I listened to Tucker's stories, I was able to understand the experiences that he brought to the classroom. He read slowly and with caution because he did not have safe experiences in a classroom. He relied on easy books that he could read successfully and saved his preferred reading for home. He took home new book bags with great excitement and told me about all of the things he was learning about. During one of our lunchtime visits he spoke passionately about feeling sorry for the little children in Canada's arctic who did not have all of the toys he was accustomed to having after reading books from the Arctic Book Bag. He did not bring in home reading sheets, but this had little to do with the time he spent reading. He explained:

> "We forget to write them down! I'd be like on my tenth by now! But we just forget to write them down" (Interview with Tucker 04/29/99).

The reading logs were not important to Tucker. What matters to him is reading the books, not keeping a record of his reading for his teacher. Little candy bars, bookmarks, and pizza coupons are irrelevant when you love to read about magical rats, frogs and badgers in the willows. His mom may not remember to keep a record of his reading by filling the fifteen minute squares, but I know that she sends Tucker a very different message about reading: Reading is a pleasurable

activity that you look forward to doing with the people you love (Shockley, Michalove, & Allen, 1995). And how do we evaluate that?

Lilly. Lilly is much easier for me to understand because she reminds me of myself at that age. Like Lilly, I loved to read books: at school, at home, in the car, at family outings, even at recess. If my teacher had a home reading program that kept a careful record of how many hours I read, I am quite certain I would have brought in at least as many hours as Lilly accumulated over the course of the school year. I loved school, and I loved to please my teacher.

I thought that Lilly's feelings about herself as a reader would be unshakable. As a classroom teacher, I assumed that Lilly would evaluate her reading ability in the same way I did. I filled the columns of her report card with the highest evaluations, but then again, how can numbers in boxes sum up a child who has been reading since before she entered school (Jones, 1991). She reads several books a week, tackles novels intended for older children, and devours articles in magazines that take her around the world. Since stories are Lilly's play, she is intrinsically motivated to read and write stories. How, then, could a child I assumed I 'knew' have feelings about herself as a reader that took me by surprise?

In my story of Lilly, I shared Lilly's experience with putting away the novel *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (Twain, 1986). During one of our lunch time visits, I learned that if Lilly encounters difficulty when she is reading, her feelings about herself as a reader suffer:

> "I don't feel good. Like I don't feel like I'm as good as I was before. Sometimes, like sometimes you'll get embarrassed if you

> told somebody, 'What does this word mean?' That sometimes happens. I feel embarrassed because they probably think that everybody would know that, like what that word meant. I try to sound it out" (Interview with Lilly, 03/15/99).

Lilly describes herself as a good reader: "I read all the time. And it's fun. And I don't have very much trouble with words that I don't know because I've seen them in other books" (Interview with Lilly, 03/15/99). She associates reading success with reading practice. It was easy for me to assume that someone who spent so much time reading would feel successful, capable, and confident. Lilly's feelings of not being as good as she was before and her embarrassment about asking for help were completely hidden to me as her classroom teacher. Lilly's sense of initiative and agency in reading activities seemed uncoloured by her sense of embarrassment when she encountered reading difficulties, and I did not see any signs of her true feelings about her occasional struggles. Her hidden story, however, revealed how fragile even the most capable reader can be. This conversation stays with me each day of my teaching as I wonder how young children are made to feel as they read in my classroom. If Lilly feels this way, I find it hard to imagine how a struggling reader might be made to feel about themselves as they labor to find their place in their reading world.

My evaluations of Lilly were always very positive and it was easy to recognize the things that made Lilly a reader. Everything Lilly did as a reader fit together with my teacher expectations of a successful reader. She treated reading as a self initiated and self-regulated activity which served her own purposes, and she worked hard at her play in reading and writing. She came to school with so much energy and enthusiasm about books that it spread to the other children in the

classroom. She picked challenging books and shared them with her classmates using elaborate presentations, and she brought in dozens of home reading sheets 'proving' that she was indeed a reader. Her book bags came back to school with wonderful writing samples and completed crafts. When we did our pirate theme reading week, she had the "Wonderful Pig Book Bag" at home. After reading *The Wonderful Pigs of Jillian Jiggs* (Gilman, 1988), she made a wonderful pirate pig complete with a peg leg, an eye patch, and a parrot companion.

In Lilly's case, our conversations served to confirm my evaluations. The only thing Lilly does not like about reading is when the story has to end. Thinking back to Wigfield's (1997) reading motivation theory, Lilly is motivated to read for all of the reasons identified by dominant reading motivation research. She feels that she will be a better reader if she practices reading, she enjoys the challenge of reading, and she is not afraid of attempting difficult books. She is full of curiosity about her reading topics, and she sees reading as a way to learn about the world around her. She knows that reading is extremely important in that it helps you know things that will help you be successful. She is competitive, but she does not try to be better than everyone else in the class. She enjoys the positive assessments her reading generates from her teacher, and she tries to get good grades in school. She loves reading with her friends and family and sees reading as a fun social activity. But above all else, she reads because she loves books.

It is not difficult for me to evaluate a child like Lilly. When it comes time to do report cards, I know that her marks on tests and assignments are all

excellent. I can fill in squares with fours, indicating achievement beyond grade level expectation, without so much as a moments thought and positive comments follow with ease. She is the kind of child that fits in perfectly in the classroom setting because she is capable, cooperative, and successful. But there is a danger here too.

When it is so easy to pass judgements about Lilly, it is easy to overlook the many special gifts she brings to a classroom because they are assumed to be there. It is even easier to overlook the hidden frailties of a young reader who is identified by her teacher as being a capable, successful student. There are so many things that she shared with me during this narrative journey that we took together. It is not enough to be happy with Lilly because she is easy to teach, never a problem, and always a welcome addition to the classroom. If I had not listened to the stories she so thoughtfully shared, I would have missed many important insights that I have tried to share in this writing. She reminded me that reading is still a favorite 'play' activity for some children, but that does not mean that reading has to be their favorite, or only, activity. There are so many ways to play when you are eight years old. If, like Lilly, reading is seen as a form of play, children are naturally going to spend more time reading. Lilly reads because she loves to play, and for her, reading is just another form of this favorite childhood activity.

Brad. I thought that my work with Brad would help me understand a child who does not enjoy reading. In the classroom, Brad never talked about reading:

Playing with friends, working on the farm, and participating in sports were our topics of conversation. When we started our classroom reading program, Brad did not bring back any reading sheets. Months passed, and I pestered him from time to time in an effort to get him to bring in some reading sheets, but he would just grin and shrug and say, "Yah, yah, yah." And the reading sheets did not come.

I wondered why he had not developed a positive relationship with books. I expected Brad to tell me stories about reading being boring, or that he simply hated to sit with a book, but his hidden stories offered a different perspective. He came to our classroom with interests in active play with peers and in pleasing his teachers by doing what they said. Reading was part of "the second domain" (Solsken, 1993, p.82). His interest in books depends on his interest in their subject matter. Brad loves to read adventure stories, and his favorite authors are people like Beverly Cleary and Jon Sciezska. He loves books that have detail and lots of description, and most importantly, funny parts. But his life is a stage for physical action and his favorite books encounter a lot of competition:

> "If it was an adventure story, I'd read it three times a week or four times a week. But if I read it I'd probably have to read at night cause I'm filled up through the week except Saturdays and Sundays" (Interview with Brad 04/21/99).

He is filled up with hockey, baseball, soccer, and playing.

Brad enjoys reading, but he does not read all of the time. He craves the outdoors and fresh air. The call of the open air is almost impossible to resist. He comes to school five days a week and has to be inside from 8:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. with about 50 minutes of outside time all day. He sits and works, and seems to enjoy learning and being at school, but there is always the window and the

beautiful day and the promise of childhood games. When the bell rings after school, there are roughly five precious hours until bedtime. By the end of the school day, he has read all sorts of materials (novels, texts, notes, stories, poems) maybe he feels his reading, like his week, is all filled up.

Brad knows how to spend his time. Right now, he sees himself as being very busy with the work of active play. But because he enjoys reading, he knows that when he is an adult he will have more time for books:

> "I want to be an NYPD agent, so when I have breaks and stuff, I'll probably read" (Interview with Brad 04/21/99).

Ultimately, he thinks he will read more when he grows up because he will probably have "more time off" than he does right now. After so many of my conversations with Brad, I wondered when I forgot about the pressing concerns of childhood. Like Brad, I worked very hard at school and was enthusiastic about learning, but I also loved to hurry outside at the end of the day so I could play. Children love to explore and play make believe. But I think maybe life was a bit simpler when I was a child. The rules of childhood were more defined and the lines between children's and adult's entertainment were less blurred. I teach children who live in a very different world. Today, there is an ease of access to information. In the recent past, children did not know the things about the world that they do today because they did not have such easy access to adult media such as 24 hour news channels on cable, Internet, and movies. Today, adults and children have equal access, and children are exposed to things that were previously unknown. And maybe something of childhood has been lost.

Brad does not dislike reading. His relationship with reading has been influenced by his relationships with people; he values reading for the social interaction and play opportunities they engender. For now, he is an eight-year-old boy who lives on a farm in Southern Alberta and can grow up to be an NYPD agent. And when he is not so busy playing and being a child, he will have more time to read the books that he enjoys. My practice of charting children's reading time in an effort to measure their feelings about reading have fallen short when it comes to a child like Brad. It is only by listening to his stories that I have been able to see Brad as a reader who is interested and engaged with books.

Jillian. Before this narrative began, I thought that I would work with Jillian to find out why she did not like to read. Quite often, when I read a book to the class, Jillian seemed to be off in another dimension, caught up in her own concerns, or fixedly examining something that had little to do with the story I was sharing. When it was time to do DEAR (Drop Everything And Read), Jillian seemed less than interested in settling down with her book which was usually a new selection she pulled from the shelf to read for the fifteen minute period before putting it back, never to be completed. She seemed to approach our Story Circle periods with little enthusiasm. After talking with Jillian, I know that these ideas about Jillian were my *assumptions* based on my *observations*, two things that I have come to question after this work with the children.

I assumed that Jillian would not feel like a successful reader. She is a capable reader, but she did not bring in very many reading sheets and she showed

little enthusiasm for reading. I wondered if she might feel discouraged about reading at school, or if she simply did not enjoy reading. I almost set out to find these kinds of answers to my questions. When I wrote in my journal, I would often reflect on the conflict I was feeling between looking for my answers and listening to Jillian's story:

She has so many positive things to say about reading. How can I think she is uninterested in reading when she tells me reading is fun? How can I assume that she rarely, of her own free will, reads at home when she shares with exuberance stories of reading with her younger brother just yesterday? I see her daydreaming when I read to the class. We just started a book that has the children rolling in laughter, but Jillian seems unmoved. But what do I really see? How can I know for certain that I have any idea about what is happening in her experience? I am ashamed of myself when I read over this transcript. I wanted her to tell me she didn't like reading because I assumed that would be the story she would tell. I tried to get her to tell me about the things she liked doing in her spare time, and she didn't mention reading. She likes riding her bike with her family, she enjoys bouncing on the trampoline in her front yard, she helps with chores, and she didn't talk about reading. That was what I was looking for, wasn't it? I am looking at the cursor blinking accusingly on the screen. I am working with this

child so that her story can be told. Maybe I need to think about how I am listening first. (Journal Entry 03/03/99)

When I did start to listen, I heard the stories Jillian shared and realized that they paint a very different picture of her reading world than the one that I envisioned.

When Jillian encounters a word she cannot read, she is far from discouraged: "It sort of makes me feel happy because then I learn a new word" (Interview with Jillian, 03/25/99). She does not mind asking me, or anyone else for that matter, for help. I was very interested in what she would say when we talked about story read aloud time. She surprised me with her answer: "It's fun. 'Cause you do voices and it can teach the whole class how to do voices and everything. And it just helps us get more interested in books and be better at reading" (Interview with Jillian, 03/25/99). During this conversation, I kept probing to see if she thought she really listened. It did not appear to me that she ever listened. She said with a giggle, "Most of the time". She went on to say, "That's the most fun part of school, when you read to us in the morning, and sometimes in the afternoon". Her hidden story shared a very different truth than the story I had constructed, and I questioned the accuracy of my perceptions of children's feelings towards school activities. To some extent, Jillian seemed to define reading at school as a particular kind of work in the sense that classroom reading is an activity required and overseen by a teacher, rather than one engaged in for her own purposes or pleasure (Solsken, 1993). I assumed, then, that Jillian perceived reading activities as conflicting with her intentions and evoked her

responses of daydreaming and dawdling. Jillian showed me on more than one occasion that my ideas about her story as a reader are less than accurate.

When I reflect on my work with Jillian, I honestly believed Jillian would tell me exactly the opposite of what I heard in our conversations. From my observations and assumptions, I had a very different story of her reading than the one she shared in her stories. I thought that Jillian saw reading as work imposed by teachers and parents, ostensibly done to serve their own purposes rather than her own. By listening to her hidden stories, I learned that reading is an enjoyable activity that Jillian feels good about doing. More importantly, she feels like a reader. And so I have begun to revise my assumptions and biases to include a child like Jillian as a reader.

When I think about my work with Jillian, I am forced to wonder how often I have put children into plot lines that they are expected to live out, and subsequently do live out in the form of teacher evaluations. How much of a child's reading world is scripted by a one-sided review by his or her teacher? I certainly was guilty of this practice when it came to evaluating Jillian. Jillian's voice offered so much for me to think about as a teacher. For me, she challenged so many of the accepted, dominant stories of reading motivation. Reading is already part of her life. It is just there in ways the dominant stories of reading motivation have covered over. All of the abbreviated ideas of what might motivate Jillian to read do not reveal an accurate picture of her life as a reader.

As a teacher, I tried to gauge her interest in family literacy events by keeping track of her home reading hours. Jillian's apparent lack of home reading

convinced me that a pattern existed of not reading at home. Solsken (1993) writes that "patterns have their roots in family dynamics around literacy in which children establish an orientation toward literacy, a way of defining themselves in relation to other people in literacy events" (p. 10). As such, I expected that Jillian would define herself as a non-reader, and I began to evaluate her accordingly.

Looking back, I think I interpreted her classroom reading behaviors with unfair prejudice. This may have a basis in my own classroom practices that stem from my sincere desire to help children be better readers and writers. When I look back on Jillian's classroom reading, I can see that she was often interrupted by behavior management, conflict control, and negative evaluations of her reading performance as I often assumed the role of pusher and prodder: "Hurry up", "Get going", "Don't waste your time" were words that I used frequently. This is very different from her home reading environment where her level of engagement with text is accepted and praised. I think that I likely created a great deal of tension in her classroom learning, albeit inadvertently. Before we started our narrative journey together, I thought that reading was adult-imposed work that Jillian resisted. I came to realize that beneath her seemingly passive resistance to classroom reading activities, she was paying more attention and getting more involved than I was willing to acknowledge. The stories she shared about her reading world opened my eyes to the possibility that what you see is not always what you get. Listening to her lived experiences helped me understand the dangers of relying on observations and accepted reading measures without taking time to consider a child's hidden stories.

"Stories can do more than merely inform or instruct. They can transform" (McEwan, 1997, p.86). The stories that Tucker, Lilly, Brad, and Jillian shared, and which I have reconstructed in this narrative, have helped me grow as an educator by unlocking the gates to my understandings about children. For me, knowing children does not come from inhabiting the same space with them, but rather from carefully listening to their shared stories. My evaluations of children must not stem from my own judgements without first carefully considering the lived experiences children share. And I must remember the importance of being interested enough to listen.

Written Reflections

I wanted to include the children's written reflections in this chapter to share with readers what Brad, Jillian, Lilly, and Tucker wanted other people to know about them. When we sat down at our last lunchtime interview, I asked each child to write down what they would like me to write about them, and we talked about what is important for other people to know about them.

Tucker's Written Reflection

When Tucker and I talked about what he would want me to write in my "story" about him, he had very simple advice: "You should say, like after you think about it and stuff, Tucker likes reading" (Interview with Tucker, 06/07/99). Following in Figure 1 is Tucker's written reflection.

Hi my name is Tucker I
love reading. My hobies are
reading, riding bores and bikes, sumpter, fishing
playing, intendo's, play with animals,
I think reading is imortentoned
because when your an adult
you need to read oreles
you want know ahy thing
that's going on around you.
I like redding because it's
interesting, funny, sereis and fun.
I don't read book's that
are boring. I like book's
that are catchy.

Figure 1. Tucker's written reflection (06/07/99).

Lilly's Written Reflection

Lilly knows exactly what she would like me to say. She is a reader, a lover of words, and a devotee of stories. When she wrote her pencil left a purposeful trail of gray. Following in Figure 2 is Lilly's written reflection.

I like to read big chapter books with fairly big print. I like the books that are about animals. Some of my favorite authors are: Mary pop osborn, the guy who writes Misty of chinecoteague. I like to read away from all of the nosie. If I wake up erally I go up stairs and read. I read at school in our free time, at recesses, and at lunch. When I get on the bus I read and on the way home. I do more read at home then at school. Mrs. Pitcher taught me most about reading. Thats when we started reading. Mrs. Wenup taught me wrighting my abc's 123's. I am an averaged or a good. I read the books of the books to see if I like them if they are good I read the book if they are bad I read the first page if it is good I read the book. I think I am an averaged reader because I read lots. I can do it good. Reading makes me feel happy (if It is a happy story) It makes me mad and sad if some thing dies. Being part of the project made me feel good. I wanted it to be in a book.

Figure 2. Lilly's written reflection (06/03/99).

Brad's Written Reflection

When I asked Brad what he wanted me to say about him when I wrote my thesis, he smiled his mischievous smile and hit me with some Brad-Logic: "I just wrote it on the piece of paper" (Interview with Brad 06/09/99). Following in Figure 3 is Brad's written reflection

Brad is a active yung man he likes basket ball and base and he kinlove likes to read he likes to be outsid and likes school his favorit subject is Math he isbays talking with mrs. Shultze sometimes he gets in trusle but hes alway honest. He likes to explore his farm but needs to work on his pointing. He likes to talk with me at lunch. He works with others good. He dosit mind talking to me at lunch.

Figure 3. Brad's written reflection (06/09/99).

Jillian's Written Reflection

Jillian's written reflection, and our last interview together, reveal the value she places on the people who matter most to her. She talked about family home evenings, birthday celebrations, and playing with siblings and friends. In her written reflection, she shows that she knows herself as a connected person. Jillian knows that she is valued and loved by a family that is accepting and supportive. Following in Figure 4 is Jillian's written reflection.

I would like you to put that I like reading, Roller-blading, and doing things with my family. Doing and playing sports. Going to school, playing with friends. spending time with teachers and Going to where. Going to see Grandma and Grandpa. Going Shoping with mom. Playing with Robbs little girl named Allie. Playing with baby doing interviews with my book.

Figure 4. Jillian's written reflection (06/10/99).

Reflections on Reflections

When I first set out on this journey, I had an outline of what I wanted to understand about children and reading. It was not enough for me to read that girls typically like to read more than boys, or that children started to lose interest in reading as they got older. I wanted to understand the temporal, contextual, and individual differences among four children's lives as readers by travelling to their reading worlds. Journeying to their reading worlds made it possible for me to attend to the stories they were living and telling about their lives and experiences and to grow in my understanding about children and reading.

Tucker, Lilly, Brad, and Jillian shared stories which have helped me navigate my way on this narrative journey. All of the children I teach have stories that beg me to listen and it is my responsibility to show them I have heard by changing my story of practice in ways that are attentive to their stories.

Children do not fit neatly into convenient categories, and the idea of a child being a reader or a non-reader now seems ridiculous to me. I will not rely on hasty judgements based on practices that have lost their meaning for me. Keeping track of children's reading hours in an effort to measure their feelings about themselves as readers has become an ineffectual exercise. My observations of classroom behavior and subsequent evaluations will be carefully balanced with an honest intention to listen to the stories children share about their experiences. I hope that I can live a relationship with children that reflects my new understanding about the importance of listening to children's voices and celebrating the unique meanings that are shared when we are attentive to the stories children are telling and living as they grow as readers.

CHAPTER 7

Listening to Children's Voices

The 'completed' educator tends to see children as incomplete.
No need then to listen to children.
Impossible to learn from them.
(van Manen, 1986, p. 15)

There is a danger in becoming a 'completed' educator for it is by listening to children that we truly come to understand and to learn from their stories. This is not easy. When we listen carefully to children's voices, there is the very real possibility that we might learn as much about ourselves as we do about our students. In this way, "stories can help us in constructing a new language to imagine new possibilities" (McEwan, 1997, p.91). Listening to the stories Tucker, Lilly, Brad and Jillian shared with me on our narrative journey has helped me to imagine new possibilities for understanding children's reading worlds.

There is the possibility of discovering that listening to children's voices can be accompanied by the uncomfortable disclosure of a teacher's "hidden attitudes" (Paley, 1986, p.124). My biases as a teacher lead me to make faulty, maybe even dangerous, assumptions about children and reading: Tucker reads easy books that are not interesting so he must not be a capable reader; Lilly can read everything so she must always feel successful in school; Brad does not bring in home reading sheets so he does not like to read; Jillian does not look interested when I read stories to the class so she must not be interested in the world of books. When I listened to the stories the children were living and telling about their lives as readers, I started to see the ways I was not attending to the real ways that reading was important in all of their lives. My hidden attitudes, I now

realize, had me measuring children's desire to read with my classroom reading programs. If a child did not bring in home reading sheets, they must be reluctant readers. If a child did not do the activities in a book bag that I had prepared, their family must not value literacy. My travels to children's reading worlds have shown me that the most important measure has to be the stories children share about their lives as readers.

There is the possibility that the stories children share about their reading worlds can help us recognize and celebrate the ways reading is important in children's lives. I wanted to learn about children's motivation to read, but I now know that motivation shifts and changes depending on so many personal and contextual qualities. When I moved away from a narrow definitional construct about reading motivation, I was able to recognize that reading is situated in and across many aspects of children's lives. The stories they live and tell about reading are constructed against a rich, multihued backdrop that resists singular interpretations. It is impossible, then, for me to draw simple conclusions such as Lilly likes to read the most or that Brad likes to read the least. The truth is that reading is important and valued by all of the children. All I need to do is listen to their stories:

> I usually don't read *National Geographic* books, I really like to look at the pictures. I saw underground soldiers made out of stone and in the war they had tunnels that went underground. And when they went to please their god, they had to kill a little girl by leaving her up on the mountain. It showed a man who fell in a bog. He looked like stone, and he still had his mustache and hat on. I guess I just like to read. And for me, reading is fun. (Interview with Lilly 06/03/99)

> I like adventures. Like *Zack Files* and *Time Warp Trio*. It's not like a sad story, like you get flying all the way to go see your dad when you want to stay with your mom. In *Zack Files*, it's weirder so you can read people's minds and go in and out of your body. And in the *Time Warp Trio* I like it

> because you can warp in and out of time. I like to read. Sometimes I'm too lazy to pick up a book. I always like to read with my baby sister.
> (Interview with Brad 06/09/99)

> I like books that are catchy. Interesting sentences make you want to read it. It's almost like a fishing line! It gets stuck in your mouth and then YANK! And then you get hooked. Reading can be fun or interesting or serious. And it's sometimes important. Because when you're an adult you'll for sure need to read. Because when you are driving there might be a great big danger sign and you wouldn't even know it and there's a cliff! Do-do-do-do-do, and your car starts all of a sudden falling!
> (Interview with Tucker 06/07/99)

> Whenever I read with my family, like *The Book of Mormon*, I feel happy that we're spending time together because usually my dad's on night shifts. It bugs all of us. When my mom was sick I read to her out of one of the book bag things. Reading is good for us. Reading helps you learn a lot.
> (Interview with Jillian 06/10/99)

There is the possibility for teachers to listen to the children they work with and then to show them that they have heard by changing their practices in ways that are attentive to the stories children are sharing about their experiences as readers. Paley (1986) writes, "real change comes about only through the painful recognition of one's own vulnerability" (p. 123). After my work with Tucker, Lilly, Brad, and Jillian, I have seen my vulnerabilities as a teacher. With my new sense of self awareness, I have tried to be attentive by living a different kind of relationship with children and books.

I still share my love of books and reading with the children I teach, but I do not try to gauge their feelings about reading with my old and unreliable measures. Gone are the home reading sheets and incentive programs that have been the touchstone of my home reading program. There are no pizza restaurant or fast food outlet coupons given for hours of reading. There are no sticker charts on the walls intended to propel children into a world of books. Even the Velociraptor has been taken down from the ceiling. I

have started anew, and I find that I do not miss any of these things. I have made these changes in my practice quietly and without fanfare. I suppose that I am still unsure about moving away from such a prominent and accepted classroom practice of measuring children's desire to read.

With my new class of grade one children, I try to remember the possibilities that Tucker, Lilly, Brad, and Jillian have helped me to imagine: The possibility of recognizing my own biases and shortcomings, the possibility of celebrating each child's unique gifts and individuality as a reader, and the possibility of being attentive to the needs of all the readers in my classroom. The children's voices and the stories that they share of their experiences are at the heart of my unfolding understanding of their reading worlds.

"Teacher, I can read this book with my eyes closed!"

"I brought this book from home. See, it has a dinosaur just like we read about."

"Look, my name has the word *the* in it right in the middle!"

"I love this book. It's about cats and I love cats. Everybody knows that!"

"When I got this book, I could read it all by myself. Wanna hear it?"

I have come to understand children's reading worlds by listening to the voices of children. I hope that others who read their stories might find their own talismans and time portals so they too can journey backwards to the magical time when they were young and curious and just discovering their place in their reading world. The passage of time carries with it adult sensibilities and shifting perspectives, but it is by remembering our own lives as children that we can grow in our understanding. Maybe this narrative can help others seek new possibilities for changing classroom practice and connecting with the children inside them (Hollingsworth, 1991). I hope that we can listen with curiosity

and care to the children we work with in an effort to grow in our understandings of children's reading worlds. The children are waiting for us, and they will show us the way:

Teacher, come on outside!

I'll race you to the seesaw!

No, you won't fall off!

I'll show you how!

Don't be afraid, teacher.

Grab my hand and follow me.

You can learn all over again!

Albert Cullum (1971)

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Appendix A
Consent Letter for Parents

Monday, January 4th, 1999

Dear _____,

I am writing to ask for your cooperation and permission for your child to participate in a study I am conducting about children's reading. I am doing this research as part of my Masters of Education thesis at the University of Lethbridge. I am interested in learning about children's motivation for reading, and as such, I would like to observe your child reading and talk to your child about his/her experiences as a reader. My study will be completed at the end of this school year. I will be doing three things to collect information:

1. I will interview your child about his/her reading experiences two times each month during the lunch break. We will eat lunch in my room and talk about reading. I would like to tape the interviews, and I will also be making transcripts of the interviews.

2. I will include observations of your child's classroom reading. Once each week, I will tape record and observe your child's reading group during Story Circles.

3. I will visit with you and your child at home at least four times to talk about reading. We can arrange these visits at times convenient to you and your family.

Please note that all reports of these interviews, observations, and home visits will be written in such a way that you and your child will remain anonymous. You may withdraw your cooperation at anytime without prejudice to your child.

I thank you very much for helping me with this study. If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to call me at 381-1427, or my thesis supervisors Dr. Pamela Winsor at 329-2444 and Dr. Leah Fowler at 329- 2457. Also feel free to contact the chairman of the Human Subjects Research Committee, Dr. Richard Butt, at 329-2434.

Sincerely yours,

Sam Schultz

I agree to allow my child, _____, to participate in the thesis research concerning reading being conducted by Mrs. Sam Schultz as part of her graduate study at the University of Lethbridge.

Name (please print) _____ Signature _____

Date signed _____

Please return this page to me at your earliest convenience.

Appendix B
Consent Letter for Children

Monday, January 4th, 1999

Dear _____,

I am writing to ask if you would help me learn more about children and reading. I am starting to write something called a thesis. It is kind of like writing a book. I am interested in learning about children and how they feel about reading. Before I start writing, I want to talk to you about your reading.

One of the things we will do is talk about reading. I would like to visit with you at lunchtime twice each month. We can eat in the classroom and I will interview you. I will tape our interview, and later on I will type the things we talk about. I will also sit with your Story Circle group once each week with a tape recorder. I will also come and visit you at your house so that I can talk to you and your family about reading. When I write about you, I won't use your real name. You can help me pick a name to use. If you decide you don't want to do this, you can change your mind anytime.

Thank you for helping me learn more about children's reading. I think that it will be fun getting to visit with you and talk with you about your reading.

Yours truly,

Mrs. Schultz

I agree to work with Mrs. Schultz and help her learn more about children's reading.

Name (please print) _____

Signature _____

Date signed _____

Appendix C
Interview Blueprint

Interview Blueprint

Guiding Question	Theoretical Issue	Importance	Interview Question
Learning to Read	Children's perceptions about how they became readers	To determine how children remember their early reading experiences	1. When did you learn to read? □
			2. Do you remember how you learned to read? □
			3. Who do you think taught you how to read? □
			4. Before you could read books by yourself, did you want to be able to read? □
Narrative Text and Reading	Motivational factors related to reading narrative text	To determine how and why children choose narrative texts	1. Tell me about the most interesting story or book that you have read lately. ❖
			2. Why was this story/book interesting to you? ❖
			3. How did you know or find out about this book? ❖

Informational Text and Reading	Motivational factors related to reading informational text	To determine how and why children choose informational texts	1. Think about something that you learned recently, not from your teacher or from television, but from a book or some other reading material. What did you learn about? ❖
			2. Why was this book (or other reading material) important to you? ❖
			3. How did you find out about this information book (or other reading material)? ❖
Home-Literacy Environment	Parents influence on book reading	To determine if/how child is encouraged to read in the home	1. Did you read anything at home yesterday? Tell me about it.❖
			2. When you do read, where in the house do you like to read? ☐
	Social reasons for reading		3. Do you read books or other reading materials with anyone in your family? ☐
	Importance of reading		4. Do you think reading is important in your family? ☐

			5. Does anyone at home encourage you read? ☐
Perceived Reading Ability	Competence and efficacy beliefs	To determine how child perceives his/her ability as a reader	1. Do you think that you are a good reader, an average reader, or a poor reader? ☐
	Reading efficacy Reading challenge		2. When you are reading, do you understand most of what you read or is it hard to understand what you read? ❖
			3. After you read a new book, how do you feel? ☐
			4. After you read a book that you have read before, how do you feel? ☐
	Reading work avoidance		5. Is there anything that you don't like about reading? ☐
	Reading efficacy		6. Do you think reading is easy or hard? Why do you think that? ☐

School Literacy Learning Environment	Classroom learning and influence on book reading	To determine how the classroom literacy environment has influenced child's motivation to read	1. Do you think your teacher thinks you are a good reader, an average reader, or a poor reader? ☐
	Reading recognition/ Reading for grades		2. How do you know your teacher feels this way about your reading? ☐
	Reading involvement		3. When your teacher reads aloud to the class, do you enjoy it or do you not enjoy it? ❖
	Competition in reading		4. Do you think you are a better reader than other students in your class or that you are the same? ☐
	Reading compliance		5. Do you read at school because you want to or because you have to? ☐
			6. Do your feelings about reading in school change? ☐
	Social reasons for reading		7. When you are in groups talking about stories, do you talk about your ideas? ❖
			8. When you are at school, would you rather read by yourself or with a group? ☐

Reading Interest	Child's interest in reading Reading curiosity	To determine the nature of child's reading interests	1. What do you like to do for fun? ☐
			2. What do you like to read? ☐
			3. What do you think makes a something good to read? ☐
			4. How would you feel if you got a book for a present? ☐
			5. When you are relaxing at home, would you rather read a book or watch television? ☐
			6. When you grow up, do you think you will spend a lot of time reading or very little time reading? ❖
Reading Motivation	Child's motivation to read Reading curiosity/ reading involvement	To determine the nature of child's motivation to read	1. What are some things that get you really excited about reading? ❖
			2. Who gets you really excited about reading books? ❖
	Social reasons for reading		3. Do you like to read by yourself or with other people? ☐
	Importance of reading		4. Do you think that reading is an important activity? ☐

Conclusion		To wrap up each interview session	1. Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

❖ Questions that have been adapted from the Motivation to Read Profile (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996). Questions were selected from this instrument that provide useful information about the individual nature of students' reading motivation.

☐ Questions I designed.

Note: Where applicable, I have included the reading motivation described by Wigfield (1997) that I am trying to understand in the "Theoretical Issue" column.

Appendix D
Interview Guides

General Interview Guidelines

Before the interview

- Clearly convey the purpose and goals of the interview (what I hope to accomplish)
- Ask if I may tape record (explain how data collected during interview will be used)
- Discuss confidentiality (who will and will not know what we talk about)
- Discuss how long the interview will take
- Ask how she feels about participating in the interview
- Encourage honesty, but provide an opportunity to legitimately refrain from disclosing information (If I ask you about something that you don't wish to discuss, just tell me)
- Explain expectations for the general responsibility for the interview (I'm really going to depend on you to do most of the talking here. I'm going to ask you some questions about things I would like to learn about, but then I'm going to spend most of my time listening)
- Explain about wait time (As we talk, every once and a while it is going to get kind of quiet. I'm not going to say anything when it does because I'm just waiting to hear what you're going to say next)

Remember to tell him/her that he/she is doing a really good job at different points during the interview! (You're doing a really good job talking to me)

Guide for Interview 1

Topic	Tentative Sequence, Transitions, Alternate Wordings	Objective Met	Probes Used
<u>Interview #1</u> Learning to Read	• When did you learn to read? • Do you remember how you learned to read? • Who do you think taught you how to read? • Before you could read books by yourself, did you want to be able to read?		

Guide for Interview 2

Topic	Tentative Sequence, Transitions, Alternate Wordings	Objective Met	Probes Used
<u>Interview #2</u> Narrative Text	• Tell me about the most interesting story or book that you have read lately. • Why was this story/book interesting to you? • How did you know or find out about this book?		
Informational Text	• Think about something you read in an information book recently… What did you learn about? • How did you find out about this information book? • Why was this book important to you?		

Guide for Interview 3

Topic	Tentative Sequence, Transitions, Alternate Wordings	Objective Met	Probes Used
<u>Interview #3</u> Home-Literacy Environment	• Did you read anything at home yesterday? • When you do read, where in the house do you like to read? • Do you read books with anyone in your family? • Do you think reading is important in your family? • Does anyone at home encourage you to read?		

Guide for Interview 4

Topic	Tentative Sequence, Transitions, Alternate Wordings	Objective Met	Probes Used
<u>Interview #4</u> Perceived reading ability	• How do you feel about yourself as a reader? • Do you think that you are a good reader, an average reader, or a poor reader? • When you are reading, do you understand most of what you read or is it hard to understand what you read? • After you read a new book, how do you feel? • After you read a book that you have read before, how do you feel? • How do you feel about reading? • Is there anything that you don't like about reading? • Do you think reading is easy or hard? Why do you think that?		

Guide for Interview 5

Topic	Tentative Sequence, Transitions, Alternate Wordings	Objective Met	Probes Used
Interview #5 School Literacy Learning Environment	• Do you think your teacher thinks you are a good reader, an average reader, or a poor reader? • How do you know I feel this way about your reading? • When I read out loud to the class, do you enjoy it or do you not enjoy it? • Do you think you are a better reader than other children in the class or that you are the same? • Do you read at school because you want to or because you have to? • Do your feelings about reading in school change? • When you are in groups talking about stories, do you talk about your ideas or do you not talk about your ideas? • When you are at school, would you rather read by yourself or with a group?		

Guide for Interview 6

Topic	Tentative Sequence, Transitions, Alternate Wordings	Objective Met	Probes Used
Interview #6 Reading Interest	• What do you like to do for fun? • Do you think that you like to read for fun? What do you like to read for fun? • What do you think makes a good book? • How would you feel if you got a book for a present? • When you are relaxing at home, would you rather read a book or watch television? (Or something else… probe other activities like playing, chores, TV games etc.) • Do you think you spend a lot of time reading or very little time reading? • When you grow up, do you think you will spend a lot of time reading or very little time reading?		

Guide for Interview 7

Topic	Tentative Sequence, Transitions, Alternate Wordings	Objective Met	Probes Used
<u>Interview #7</u> Reading Motivation	• How do you feel inside when you read? • What are some things that get you really excited about reading? • Who gets you really excited about reading? • Do you like to read by yourself or with other people? • Do you think reading is an important activity? • Finish these sentences: *I think libraries are _____. *I think reading is _____. *I like to read about _____.		

Guide for Interview 8

Topic	Tentative Sequence, Transitions, Alternate Wordings	Objective Met	Probes Used
<u>Interview #8</u> Reading Curiosity	• If you hear about something interesting in school, from a friend, or on TV, do you try to read more about it or not? • If you are reading something that is very interesting to you, do you ever lose track of time? • If there is a topic that is interesting to you, do you try to learn new information about it? How? • Do you have a hobby? What is it? Have you ever read about your hobby to learn more about it? • Do you like to learn about new things? Like what? Have you ever read about new things? When? • Do you enjoy reading about people or things in different countries? Tell me about something you enjoyed reading about another country.		

Guide for Interview 9

Topic	Tentative Sequence, Transitions, Alternate Wordings	Objective Met	Probes Used
<u>Interview #9</u> Research Relationship	• What did you think when I asked you if you wanted to be part of this research project? • How would you describe your role in our work together? • What has it been like for you to come and talk to me at lunchtime? • What has it been like for you when I come to visit with you and your family at your house? • What do you think I have learned about you? • Do you think the things you tell me are important to me? • What do you think adults can learn from you about children and reading? • Do you think adults can learn from talking to children? • How has it made you feel to work with me on this research?		

Guide for Interview 10

Topic	Tentative Sequence, Transitions, Alternate Wordings	Objective Met	Probes Used
<u>Interview #10</u> Conversations Children's Voices	• Talk to me about the kinds of things you would like me to write about you when I write my thesis. * Build on children's written reflections		