A Netnography of Posts on Literacy Assessment
in a Publishing Company’s Social Media Group for Teachers:
The Plurality of Potential in Neoliberal Times

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Abstract

This research study was a netnographic exploration of teachers’ attitudes and perspectives regarding running records, a ubiquitous literacy assessment in many elementary classrooms. As education reform centers testing and excessive forms of accountability, the running record, designed as a qualitative teaching tool, has instead entered the ranks as a standardized assessment tool, leading to a narrow view of literacy and reductive discourses of reading and readers. Pre-packaged materials saturate the curriculum, and professional learning within schools is centered around training for materials rather than teacher learning. As such, teachers use social media communities to pursue their own learning needs and to collaborate and connect with other teachers. By exploring one such social media group on Facebook, this study employed a discourse theory and queer theory lens to investigate the ways in which teachers take up discussions of running records and how those discussions circulated dominate discourses of schooling, situated within the broader context of neoliberal education politics.

The social media group was observed May to December 2022, and I observed 240 posts in the group pertaining to running records. Data analysis included both topic analysis and discourse analysis. Teachers discussed a wide range of topics regarding running records within the group. Queries about how to administer running records were most frequent, which highlighted the de-professionalization of teachers and the framing of teachers as followers of manuals. Questions about customer service for curricular products were also among the most frequent, which highlighted the role capitalism plays as a force in neoliberal education policy.
and its influence on standardization. Throughout teachers’ posts and the ensuing comments on posts, a discourse analysis of many posts revealed the stealthy ways in which dominant discourses of education circulate in common language throughout the group.

This study adds to the still nascent body of research on teacher learning on social media as well as the body of research on teacher education and the field of literacy. Teacher educators, facilitators of professional development, and school and district leaders should be mindful and planful for the reality that many teachers will look for community and “professional learning” on social media. Additionally, they should leverage these opportunities while simultaneously designing learning experiences for teachers that build capacity in teachers rather than assuming teachers lack knowledge and “need training.” Education researchers and state and district leaders should continue to mine social media to further examine teachers and their perspectives on literacy education as it offers windows into the issues teachers are facing and may offer guidance on how to support teachers and their students.
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Dedication

To my former selves:

You kept going and somewhere along the way in these last five years, you found yourself.

Here’s to the journey.

To Vincent:

You saw me before I knew myself and embraced me each step.
Preface

Picture an elementary school classroom. Children are around the room, some lay on their bellies, books in hand, while others sit and read at their table spots. I sit close with one child, listening to her read aloud, while I mark up the text on an assessment form, a running record. The running record is a reading assessment in which a student reads aloud while a teacher marks up the text with check marks for words read correctly and codes any words that vary from the printed text. Accuracy, the percentage of words read as printed, is calculated, along with a consideration of the child’s fluency, self-monitoring and comprehension. Then, the teacher makes instructional decisions based on the information gained from the running record (Clay, 2007).

The student reading, Alexis (pseudonym), is a Black third grader; as such, Alexis speaks and reads with Black Language that is different, albeit no less valuable or less rich, than the white mainstream English of school and the curriculum, though it is essentially erased and punished within school (Adger et al., 2007; Baker-Bell, 2020). I sit, marking up Alexis’ oral reading and its variation from the printed text, holding onto what I know is an assessment that without a culturally and linguistically relevant lens of analysis, is inherently designed to favor the English of schooling, and label people whose language practices are not white and middle class, as poor or struggling readers.

After reading aloud and discussing the text with me, I thank Alexis and send her off to continue reading from her independent reading books. I add up the variations of Alexis’ reading from the printed text, and the accuracy score of the text shows that this is a frustration level text for her, and thus it is too hard. I feel otherwise, however, especially as I consider her comprehension and look at the kinds of miscues (errors) she made. Alexis understood the text
well. She had insight into the characters. Her oral reading was consistent with her daily language practices. Should I continue to teach Alexis at a lower level because she omits possessives in reading in the same way she speaks? Doing so would ultimately expose Alexis to lower-level content and less challenging texts. However, the school has a strict policy that requires teachers to adhere to the assessment guidelines for administering running records, and these assessments are tied to teachers’ evaluation ratings and thus may be audited by district officials. I sigh as I cover my frustration with a smile and move across the room to open up our read aloud text. It is racist to limit her experience with texts and discount her language. I let out another sigh as I open up the read aloud and gather the children on the rug next to me, my brain elsewhere, contemplating that the running record is no longer a tool for guiding instruction but instead an assessment that determines the fate of children and teachers. I know that if I care about and want to engage in anti-racist teaching, then running records need a second look.

Later, after school, I return to Alexis’ running record. I decide to mark Alexis’ reading according to school and district policy, a policy that is inequitable and racist, but decide that within the walls of my own classroom, I will keep a different record, one that does not hold Alexis back because she’s not white. Another sigh as I know this ultimately is not a solution to a much bigger problem in my school, district, state and United States at large where assessments are used as the sole determinant of children’s learning and teachers’ effectiveness. Teachers across the U.S. mention these same struggles on social media, both in Facebook groups I participate in and teachers I follow on other social media such as Twitter and Instagram.

This vignette captures but one scene of many where I feel trapped, frustrated, angry, and powerless in a system that has for years discounted teachers’ own knowledges and
professionalism--a system that has from the beginning worked to deskill and de-professionalize teaching by creating manuals and guides for curriculum that constrain knowledge and learning.

Knowing I had so many feelings, questions, thoughts, and tensions about running records, I looked to the research on running records. I found that while scholars have troubled running records and leveled reading, there is little research on teachers’ own perspectives on running records, the people who are in classrooms every day giving these assessments. I began to wonder why there was not more research that centered teachers’ voices on running records or that sought to listen to teachers for ways to reclaim and repurpose running records in light of the critiques of them and leveled reading. Given the prolific nature of activity of teachers in online spaces, I envisioned these online spaces as a rich research site in which to learn from and listen to teachers.
Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Many teachers are surprised to find that a printed text [for taking a running record] often will not allow all of the child’s behaviours to be recorded. This is because a Running Record is not just about right or wrong words; it is about a lot more than that. ... A Running Record needs to capture all the behaviour that helps us to interpret what the child was probably doing. Everything the child said and did tells us something...”

--Marie Clay, developer of the Running Record in her book, Running Records for Classroom Teachers, 2000

The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers’ perspectives about the Running Record literacy assessment in a social media space within the broader climate of neoliberal school reform, characterized by standardization and competition for funding and resources (Au & Ferrare, 2015; Hursh, 2007; Lipman, 2011). Within this climate, states, districts, schools, administrators, teachers and students compete with one another (for funding and resources) via high-stakes testing since one of the main tenets of neoliberal policy is deregulating and defunding government institutions while promoting the private sector through ‘choice’ (Au, 2011; Au, 2016; Au & Ferrare, 2015; Darling-Hammond, 2004; Dutro, 2010; Hursh, 2007; Lipman, 2011). At the same time, teachers are distrusted by policymakers and deskilled by the manuals and pre-packaged materials they are handed. Teachers are seen as assembly line workers within the factory of schooling and incredible pressure is placed on them to ensure students do well on assessments (Au, 2011; Britzman, 2003). As curriculum has been mandated and standardized, the content children are expected to learn is reduced or narrowed in ways that teach to the assessments (e.g., Ascenzi-Moreno, 2016; Costello, 2012; Ford & Opitz, 2008; Kontovourki, 2012; Yoon, 2015). Overall, neoliberal education politics have exacerbated what was an already inequitable education system in the U.S. (Hursh, 2007; Lipman, 2011). As teachers feel silenced and find that their professional learning needs are unmet, they take to online spaces to seek their own learning (Carpenter & Krutka, 2015).
This study endeavored to examine teachers’ casual talk in the “second teachers’ lounge” (Carpenter & Morrison, 2018, p. 1), or online teacher communities. Teachers' online participation within this largely untapped social media space surfaced teachers’ perspectives on running records as a tool of assessment as well as insights into its relation to neoliberal education reform.

**Background**

In order to understand the current restrictions and standardization of neoliberal education reform, this section outlines a brief history of standardization in public schools and how it has contributed to controlling and narrowing the literacy curriculum. I then define neoliberalism and its role in education reform, as well as its relation to curriculum, assessment, and literacy.

**Standardization and Narrowing of Literacy**

Standardization, testing, and controlling students and teachers is not a new concept in U.S. public schooling, and the underlying cause has always been the economy (Au, 2011; Collin & Apple, 2007; Kliebard, 2004; Lipman, 2011; Popkewitz, 2018). Both standardization and standardized testing have been well established since public school expanded rapidly in the early 1900s (Au, 2011; Kliebard, 2004; Lipman, 2011), though the amount of testing has increased exponentially since the 1990s (Au, 2007, 2011). Moreover, the standards and objectives of the curriculum are unsurprisingly those of the white, English speaking middle class (Castles et al., 2018; Collin & Apple, 2007; Monaghan & Saul, 2018).

Schooling functioned to systematize the organization of society and help produce the different kinds of workers necessary for the economy (Au, 2011; Collin & Apple, 2007), which in effect created a new dichotomy of educated or uneducated, creating “a new form of increasingly powerful social control...exerted through the school curriculum” (Cook-Gumperz,
2006, p. 32). Literacy became defined narrowly, whereas before public schooling, literacy was usually acquired in the home and community and literacy itself had no single definition but a multiplicity of definitions; people became literate in order to participate within social groups and communities, where literacy was often taught in homes and informal groups (Cook-Gumperz, 2006, p. 29). However, “schooled literacy” (Cook-Gumperz, 2006) is the “white, middle class institutional cultures that served... to (re)produce through struggle both a stratified labor force (privileging the middle white class) and the disparate literacies necessary for the functioning of the industrial economy” (Collin & Apple, 2007, p. 438).

Public schooling “provided the organizational conditions for schools to become arbiters of literacy standards...” (Cook-Gumperz, 2006, p. 39). Ultimately, the standardization of schooling and the controlling and narrowing of curriculum in the early-to-mid twentieth century produced a labor workforce, while simultaneously maintaining opportunities for wealthy white people (mostly men) to access universities, despite the claim to educate all with its promise of literacy as a meritocratic savior (Popkewitz, 2018). Graff (2010) describes this as the literacy myth, the belief that literacy acquisition is the precursor to economic success and upward social mobility. When schooling is mandatory and learning is reduced to pieces which can be assessed, individuals who do not meet the measure of the assessment are labeled as failing. It is an individual's fault when they do not do well.

This construction of failure has largely been accomplished through the deskilling of teachers through pre-packaged curriculum and assessment (Au, 2011; Collin & Apple, 2007; Cook-Gumperz, 2006). Basal readers were a major ingredient in the narrowing, controlling, and standardization of literacy and schooling during most of the 20th century because they could be purchased large scale for schools and districts, and provided teachers with a ready-made, easy to
follow teaching manual (Martinez & McGee, 2000). Monaghan and Saul (2018) traced how curricular materials dictated the content and methods for teaching, finding that by the 1970s, most pre-packaged curricular resources did not even include the pedagogical theory upon which the curricular content rested. Instead, the focus was how to “deliver” it. Put plainly, teachers were meant to follow and do what the manual said to do.

Neoliberalism and Education

Presently, standardization continues to thrive in our current era because of the proliferation of neoliberalism: policies rooted in deregulation, competition and privatization (Collin & Apple, 2007, p. 443). Neoliberal education policies posit schools must adapt and change their curriculum in order to prepare students to work competitively in a globalized world, yet the enactments of the neoliberal policies via standardized testing and high levels of regulation, force schools to do what they have always done: teach the narrow curriculum of the white middle class (Hursh, 2007).

Neoliberal policy is viscerally felt in schools. In neoliberal politics, “the individual is conceived as an autonomous entrepreneur who can always take care of [their] own needs” (Hursh, 2007, p. 496). Put a different way, neoliberal policy puts forth a notion of objectivity and leaves it to the individual to do their best. If an individual does not succeed, it means they made a bad choice (Hursh, 2007, p. 497).

Education reform in the neoliberal era uses testing as a tool of objectivity and as a measure to determine which schools, teachers, and students are ‘successful.’ Standardized testing is a way to mark deviance, put surveillance in schools, and determine who passes or fails (at all levels: student teacher, school, district, state) to see who is rewarded and who is sanctioned (Au, 2011). Standardization and standardized testing must assume that local factors have no impact on
student performance in order to claim objectivity (Au, 2011) leading to decontextualization of students, teachers and schools as numbers, objectified by the tests and scores. These tests create pressure on schools to narrow their curriculum to just that which is on the test since funding depends on test results; inevitably, these tests encourage “less emphasis...on fostering the kinds of powerful, non-standard literacies valued in the new economy and increased attention is given...to improving test scores through standard, traditional instruction” (Collin & Apple, 2007, p.445).

The extreme level of scrutiny and surveillance of standardized testing on states, districts, schools, and especially teachers and students has profoundly negative effects. Teachers become inundated with manuals, pre-packaged materials, and training and are not given autonomy or space to use their own knowledge or expertise (Au, 2011). A metasynthesis of 49 studies on standardized testing found that standardized testing affects teachers’ curriculum by organizing the curriculum in relation to the high-stakes test, not in relation to other subject knowledge. These “systems of educational accountability built on high-stakes, standardized tests are in fact intended to increase external control over what happens in schools and classrooms” (Au, 2007, p. 264). In a large-scale survey of teachers, 76% of state testing grade (and 63% of non-state-testing grade) teachers reported state testing led them to teach in ways that contradict their own notions of sound practice, and further, 41% of teachers felt pressure to increase scores with little time to teach anything that was not on the test (Abrams et al., 2003).

Neoliberal policies enact a heavy reliance on surveillance while rhetorically advertising that individuals are equal and that tests are objective. These policies have deskilled teachers, caused a reliance on pre-packaged curricula, and seriously narrowed curriculum in a way that is antithetical to the notion of preparing learners for the idea of a so-called new economy.
Statement of the Problem

As Nieto (2011) reminds us, “Much of what we know about education runs counter to current reform efforts in U.S. education, and, as is often the case, the most powerless and marginalized, both students and teachers, are the greatest victims” (p.1). This is a quote I come back to again and again because it so succinctly describes the problem; teachers (and students) are powerless in an entangled web of bureaucracy and politics, and it feels like it is becoming more so day-by-day. This is the case in our current neoliberal education reform that forces nearly every aspect of schooling to be outcomes-based and puts schools and states in competition for funding and resources, accomplished largely through high-stakes standardized assessment that in turn standardizes and narrows curriculum in harmful ways. This has been particularly true since No Child Left Behind and the more recent Race to the Top policies from Bush and Obama, respectively.

There has been backlash to some of the consequences of high-stakes testing, such as laws, for example in New York, dictating that students’ state test scores cannot be used for teachers’ evaluations. While that legislation was a win for rejecting state standardized assessment as a measure of teacher effectiveness, it led to other, more insidious ways of measuring teacher effectiveness. Instead of state assessments being used to measure teacher efficacy, schools were required to form committees to measure students learning in an alternate way, which was to be used for teacher evaluation (New York City Department of Education [NYCDOE], 2019, p.11). Running records are one such option in New York City public schools: “Schools that select Running Records ... must establish structures for school-based distributed scoring of these assessments at the end of the year. This includes investing time in norming scoring practices, scoring assessments, and submitting student results in relevant data systems” (NYCDOE, 2019,
This means that when schools select this option, they are using the running record in the same way high-stakes state assessments were previously used. Teachers are not allowed to score their own end of year running record assessment (NYCDOE, 2019, p.17), meaning that the running record is entirely as a tool of evaluation and not that of an instructional tool. While this example is specific to New York, many districts (and nations) have policies that use Running Records as evaluation tools for students and teachers (Blaiklock, 2004; Pearson et al., 2014).

This appropriation of running records in New York City I have discussed is one specific example that stems from the larger national education reform that focuses on accountability and teacher effectiveness vis-à-vis assessment and data (as noted earlier in this chapter). In the neoliberal school, the focus is less on learning and more on outcomes.

The heavy emphasis on testing and data collection in the current education reform era has created a discourse that views the use of running records as a standardized assessment as normal. In the current context, running records are constructed from an assumption of a monolingual reader that constructs “reading” as reading words accurately as they are printed (Harmey & Kabuto, 2018), much like how the narrowing of literacy and the use of basals constructed reading failure throughout the twentieth century. Further, there is a discourse resulting from a standardized and outcomes-based approach to running records that reduces students to their “level” (Dzaldov & Peterson, 2005; Glasswell & Ford, 2011; Hoffman, 2017).

The use of these assessments as evaluation tools detracts from teachers’ own agency in that the guidelines and administration manual take precedence over teachers’ own knowledge (Glasswell & Ford, 2011). Policymakers prefer pre-packaged materials because they find a lack-of-complication attractive and inherently do not trust teachers to teach well without them (Chen & Derewianka, 2009). This is consistent with the de-professionalization of teachers within the
US. Teacher professional development has almost exclusively focused on training and how-to’s on implementation of specific products rather than knowledge of pedagogy and content (Au, 2011; Britzman, 2003; Monaghan & Saul, 2018). “The vocational model of teacher education poses the process of becoming a teacher as no more than an adaptation to the expectations and directives of others and the acquisition of predetermined skills” (Britzman, 2003, p.29). In this mode of teacher development, knowledge is viewed as being received rather than as developing within or from experience (Britzman, 2003; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1992). A survey of K-2 teachers concluded that overwhelmingly they felt extreme pressure and anxiety around testing and assessment, even though these teachers are not in grades where there is state testing; teachers reported these feelings due, in part, to the trickle-down effect of state testing from upper elementary grades but also because of the myriad other assessments and trainings on assessments those teachers reported as required by their administration and districts (Saeki et al., 2018). In this era where more pressure is put on students and teachers due to the way assessments are used to ascribe merit, value for students and teachers (and schools and districts), teachers’ voices are often silenced or left out altogether in decisions.

**Purpose of the Study**

The study was an exploration of teacher’s voices about running records in an effort to understand the kinds of topics and issues that arise. With the Running Record being a quotidian form of assessment in the elementary classroom and such pressure put on its use, teachers likely have opinions and perspectives that could significantly impact or highlight poor policy. Further, because running records have been transformed into tools for evaluation of teachers and students, the purpose of this study was to investigate teachers’ perspectives through their posts about running records on social media. What are teachers saying about running records and what might
their language about running records reveal? One such space teachers ask and share questions is in online teacher communities. Digital communities have become a source of professional development in our modern age, and teachers frequently post questions and share resources on social media sites (Carpenter & Morrison, 2018; vanDijck & Poell, 2015). Through a netnographic, unobtrusive participant observation of an online group of literacy teachers, the study investigated the following research questions.

**Research Question**

1. What is the nature of elementary teachers’ posts about running record assessments within a social media space?
   a) What topics do teachers bring up when discussing running records in an online literacy community where teachers post and respond to one another?
   b) How do neoliberal discourses prominent in schooling and schooled literacy (e.g., standardization, commercialization, and accountability) circulate in teachers’ posts about running records within the group?

**Theoretical Framework**

I bring discourse theory and queer theory perspectives to this study; the data in this inquiry included written language, images, and videos produced within a community of teachers on Facebook. Thus, my approach to language and its construction played a big role in how I viewed the data. Put simply, discourse theory assumes that language works to construct situations and that language functions as a medium that reveals purpose, power, action, and meaning (Wetherell, 2001). I also drew on queer theory because it offers additional tools that are congruous with tenets of discourse theory. And, while queer theory may not seem applicable to a study on investigating teacher’s perspectives within neoliberal education reform discourses, I
argue that it is paramount as a lens because queer theory, among other tenets, posits that multiple, potentially contradictory truths can all be true simultaneously. In this next section, I outline my theoretical framework of a discourse theory and queer perspective.

**Discourse Theory Perspective**

Discourse theory acknowledges how language itself constructs situations and ways of talking about particular situations, contexts, constructs, and identities. It also accounts for the ways in which language is used for social action and is, therefore, relational. While there are many facets to discourse theory, these three tenets are of particular importance to this inquiry.

**Language Builds**

A discourse theory perspective acknowledges that situations themselves are built through language. That is, realities and meanings are all constructed through language, and as a result, discourse theory studies language in action (Gee, 2005; Wetherell et al., 2001). “We always actively use spoken and written language to create or build the world of activities... identities... and institutions...around us” (Gee, 2005, p. 10). Said another way, “words are about the world, but they also form the world as they represent it” (Wetherell, 2001, p. 16). Language is also social, involving ways of speaking and speech communities (groups of people who share some identity and way of speaking [Fitch, 2001]) that shape identities and communities and ways of producing knowledge within those groups.

While language builds situations, the discourses constructed from language build over time and vary in context (Gee, 2005; Hall, 2001). Although it may seem that activities themselves construct language, this is because as situations become established over time, they become routine (Gee, 2005); these are referred to as discursive practices, or accepted ways of talking
within a particular context, situation, time or space. However, power plays a role in discourse, so not all discursive practices are treated equally or recognized as significant.

As accounts and discourses become available and widely shared, they become social realities to be reckoned with; they become efficacious in future events...enter[ing] the discursive economy to be circulated, exchanged, stifled, marginalized, or, perhaps, comes to dominate over other possible accounts and is thus marked as a definitive truth. (Wetherell, 2001, p.16)

Some discourses and ways of talking and constructing meaning become hegemonic; as I have highlighted in this chapter, the discursive practice of standardized assessment is pervasive and normal, just as reading and writing in white, middle-class English has become the dominant discourse of literacy in school.

The construction of language situations that become routine, that is, accepted and put in use over time make discourses powerful. Discourse “…defines and produces the objects of our knowledge. It governs the way that a topic can be meaningfully talked about and reasoned about” (Hall, 2001, p. 72). At the same time, discursive practices also rule out ways of knowing or talking about something since language is used to construct and define the acceptable ways of building meaning about a particular topic.

**Language as Social Action**

Discourse theory also recognizes that language is used as social action to accomplish some goal whether explicitly or implicitly. People use words and language to accomplish things. “How do people coordinate their talk? How are intersubjectivity and mutual understanding accomplished? What are people doing with language? How do they work it and use it to present themselves and accomplish social life?” (Wetherell et al., 2001, p. 5) These are just a few questions discourse theorists take up as they seek to understand language in action.
Discourses are often functional (Wetherell, 2001). That is, people use language for a variety of purposes, including personal pursuit of wants and needs, building and forming relationships, dissent, affirmation, politics, and so on. The structure/syntax and vocabulary of language that people choose, along with the particular discursive practice they choose often reveal insight into the intention behind the language used (Gee, 2005; Kress, 2001). There is a different purpose, syntax and vocabulary of chit-chat before a business meeting and during the presentation of a colleague during the actual meeting (Gee, 2005) because the function is different. People switch between various discursive practices based on the contexts of the situation and their own intentions for the activity. While there is a discourse of a professional workplace as just suggested, a colleague who gave a presentation using the discursive practices of casual chit-chat to make their presentation instead of adopting the professional discourse of the workplace may be using that language in order to gain something (build relationships, ease tension, etc.) though this choice may not succeed.

While a large group of people may speak the same language (e.g., English), each carries with them various social languages of English that are specific to them based on their culture, geographical location, place in time, and so on (Gee, 2005). Everyone switches back and forth among their social languages depending on their environment and who they are with (for example, just as the informal chit-chat switches once the official formal business meeting begins) and depending on what they are trying to accomplish and communicate.

**Language is Relational**

Language and meaning from language are relational in several ways. First, language used is often relational. Gee (2005) offers the example of entering a room: there is no clear front or back to a room, yet we construct the concept of a front and back by naming it through language.
Once the significance is assigned, it creates ways of knowing and talking about the room in a particular way. At the same time, the concept of a front is only possible through the concept of its opposite. The designation also carries power since it shapes the ways in which the room is now oriented. Meaning made from language is relational (Wetherell, 2001).

Another way in which language is relational is context and locality. Different words and discursive practices have different meanings depending on where they are used. Within my own study, when I say text levels I refer to Fountas and Pinnell’s text gradient from A-Z; however, staff at the College Board writing the SAT likely mean Lexile levels when discussing text level. Thus, language and the meanings generated are always locally situated, even when many may take up the same language.

**Conclusion**

In short, language and discourses are ways of talking, doing, and constructing teachers’ social worlds within local and national institutions. As I have outlined in the historical background and context setting for my study, there are discourses around talking about readers and running records, such as referring to readers by their text level (Kontovourki, 2012) or the construction of the good and poor reader (Allington, 1980). For example, the concept of reading failure was built with language, used over time (becoming a common discursive practice), and is possible because of its relation to discursive practices that defined a successful reader.

A discourse theory perspective acknowledges the importance of the history of these discourses and practices and the role history plays in shaping individual and collective ways of talking. In this study, the history and development of the running record assessment has shaped a

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1 This is developed in Chapter 2
lot of the discourse around the ways in which teachers and educational professionals talk about
the assessment, readers, and reading.

Several constructs from queer theory align with discourse theory, such as how language
constructs power and is relational. Below, I outline why queer theory belongs in education
research outside of LGBTQ+ issues followed by some queer tools that fit within a discourse
perspective.

**Queer Theory Perspective**

“Queer is itself a lively mutating organism; a desiring radical openness, an edgy protean
differential dis/continuity…” (Barad, 2012, p. 29). Because queer is such a queer word in itself—
ever morphing, polysemous, and syntactically flexible, queer as a critical, poststructural theory
seeks to interrupt and transgress systems of power that produce normalizing hegemonic
discourses.

Dilley (1999) traced the origins of queer theory claiming it originates from French
poststructural theory (such as Foucault’s [1980] work on concepts of power and language) and
critical theories and methods of deconstruction. “Deconstruction, simply stated, is a social
analysis of who, why, and what produced a text [or discourse or set of language]: an analysis of
what is said—and unsaid—through the language, form, structure, and style of a text” (Britzman,
1995, p. 153). Queer theory offers methods of critiques to mark the repetitions of normalcy as
produced through language. Queer theory is not a theory of simply making a critique but is a
critical theory of action. “Queer, as a term, signals not only the disruption of the binary,” (Fuss,
1991, p. 1) but works to deconstruct concepts to the point of collapse.

Scholars have problematized the roping off of queer theory to only queer projects.
Rasmussen and Allen (2014) argue that...
the metaphor of the cul-de-sac is that of sectioning off and othering, a space where queer theory is isolated and other researchers and their projects might enter but are forced to turn around, abandoning it. “What we seek is a “radical openness” to the concept of queer as productive for thinking and doing educational projects that reach beyond the subjects and objects of sex, gender, and sexuality (Rasmussen & Allen, 2014, p. 442)

Since queer theory aims to transgress normalcy, queer theory belongs in education because “both [critical pedagogy and queer theory] critically examine processes of normalization and reproductions of power relationships” (Shlasko, 2005, p. 125). As I have outlined in the background of this study, standardization and the production of normalcy are the bedrock of public schooling and education legislation in the US. Thus, queer theory is a theoretical tool teeming with possibility for this study. I have constructed a queer toolbox to work in concert with discourse theory and analysis. In other words, the constructs below are tools that help illuminate everyday practices, thoughts, and assumptions in our schools that go unnoticed, perpetuating the normalcy which queer theory seeks to disrupt. These tools are presented in no particular order or hierarchy.

**Concurrence**

Concurrence, as the name implies, is a tool that allows one to see with multiplicity. Queer theory’s productivity lies in this double impulse of production and deconstruction, in its “‘both...and’ structure” (Luhmann, 1998, p.124). That is, we can allow multiple readings and realities all at once. Britzman discusses this technique as well using a mapping metaphor: “an impossible geography—impossible not because it does not exist, but because it exists and it does not exist exactly at the same time” (Britzman, 1995, p. 155). For example, I, as a teacher, can hold true Marie Clay’s words about the highly qualitative nature of the Running Record and the importance of close observation and taking notes as part of the running record, while it is also true at the same time that the use (whether intended or not) of running records quantifies reading.
Epistemic Symbiosis

Epistemic symbiosis refers to the mutuality and dependence of concepts to one another in order to exist. For example, in queer terms, homosexuality is only intelligible as a foil to heterosexuality (Luhmann, 1998), just as the front of something is only intelligible because of the back. Britzman (1995) makes a similar argument with the relationship between ignorance and knowledge: “...the relationship between knowledge and ignorance is neither oppositional nor binary. Rather they mutually implicate each other, structuring and enforcing particular forms of knowledge and forms of ignorance” (p. 154). To take this concept outside queer bodies, consider the follow example. Success is defined by failure; failure is only possible because of the construction of success. Consider the construction of the successful reader and the struggling reader. They depend on one another mutually in order for the meanings of those terms to have any stability, though neither are stable as the criteria for both are constructed by a use of a third material: curriculum and assessment, which invariably enact the possibility of both terms. What is a struggling reader without the archetype of the successful reader? And the opposite?

Queer as Verb

The word queer takes on several parts of speech, one of which is a verb: to queer. As I have defined queer theory as action to disrupt normalcy and the processes of power by which normalcy is created, I view ‘queer as verb’ as a tool of its own right. The urge to queer practices, beliefs, and ideas in education is “spurred by the desire to create more interesting forms for thinking” (Sumara & Davis, 1999, p. 202) and the ontological belief that by queering something “the possibilities for what might count as knowledge are broadened” (Sumara & Davis, 1999, p. 192). Moreover, queer as verb is more than just the hope for broadening knowledge. Queering involves deconstructing the process of subjectification and how limits are placed around identity,
practices, and ideas (Mayo, 2007). In current education more broadly, queering is apt for transgressing the rigid standardization of neoliberal school reform. In neoliberal reform, “children who embody certain kinds of diversity have become the problem”, and standardization has become the ‘fix’ (Genishi & Dyson, 2009, p. 10). This is a case of normalization—there is a hegemonic discourse that there is one kind of successful student; you can fit the mold or fail.

“With neoliberal discourses of rights, privatization, and assimilation creating increasingly powerful pulls for political claims-making on the basis of categorical identities, [a queer] trajectory offers possibilities of creating different habits of thought and areas of inquiry in educational research” (Talburt & Rasmussen, 2010, p. 11). In order to combat this neoliberal standardization/normalization, we can consider how strange some of its policies are in order to consider some other forms of thinking (Sumara & Davis, 1999). For example, consider the construct of reading accurately (words as printed on a page). I personally do not read every word exactly as written. I substitute words and put words in. I flip dialogue tags (e.g., said Mom versus Mom said). I combine or separate contractions. I do all these things because I am a fluent reader. Fluent readers will read with inaccuracies because they are reading efficiently. So, accuracy is a queer concept - it defines a successful reader on a running record, yet is also the hallmark of a fluent reader. By queering the taken-for-granted, these everyday language practices could reveal important revelations about the nature of teachers’ beliefs about running records.

**Significance of the Study**

This study is significant and contributes to the field of literacy in several ways. While running records have been studied and critiqued and scholars have investigated the effects of assessment and leveled reading (e.g., Dzaldov & Peterson, 2005; Fawson et al., 2006; Glasswell

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2 E.g., children who are not monolingual, white, middle class, heterosexual are situated as ‘problems’
previous research has not directly addressed teachers’ perspectives on running records nor interpreted what those perspectives might reveal about teachers’ beliefs about literacy and learning in our current neoliberal political landscape. In this sense, this study adds to the body of research on neoliberal education reform and its intersection with literacy pedagogy and assessment. Moreover, because this study involved internet research, it also shed light on the possibilities of online teacher communities in future research. Finally, by taking up a discourse and queer perspective, this study closely examined teachers’ language in ways that queried and examined how that nature of teacher talk (online or in person) might reveal underlying tensions, questions, and beliefs within the larger discourse and power structures of neoliberal education in a way that accounts for and acknowledges the multiplicities of ways of knowing, especially given the historical and contemporary de-professionalization and silencing of teachers.
Chapter 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In the first chapter, I argued that the running record has been taken from its original intended purpose and transformed into a standardized assessment; at the same time, teachers are overwhelmed with assessment and the bureaucracy of neoliberal education reform (e.g., Au, 2011; Collin & Apple, 2007; Lipman, 2011). Further, teachers are not viewed as professionals with specialized knowledge but rather as technicians; that is, deskilled and treated as though they are not knowers and therefore knowledge must be handed to them through training (Britzman, 2003; Chen & Derewianka, 2009; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1991; Dooley, 2005; Lytle & Cochran-Smith, 1992; Saeki et al., 2018). As a result of a standardized curriculum, over-assessment and lack of meaningful professional development, teachers have taken to online spaces, such as professional groups on Twitter and Facebook, to engage in professional development of their own making (e.g.: Carpenter & Morrison, 2018; Lynch & Mah, 2018; Van Dijck & Poell, 2015). This study explored the ways in which teachers discuss running records within an online Facebook community.

Therefore, this literature review is informed by three major bodies of research literature. The first is a critical examination of Marie Clay’s theory of literacy learning and the running record. Second, I review the literature on the running records literacy assessment within the elementary school, arguing that while assessment is framed as an instructional tool, it functions as a tool of regulatory control. Third, I review the literature on the nascent field of research on teacher communities and professional development within social media spaces. Similar to the argument that queer theory is not relevant outside queer spaces (Rasmussen & Allen, 2014), it is assumed that social media as a location is neither a worthwhile space for professional development and teacher collaboration nor for education research (Snelson, 2016). Yet, as my
review of this literature will show, these online spaces are rich and active sites of professional learning and therefore, rich spaces for research.

Running Records

In this section, I define the constructs of a running record as developed by New Zealand scholar Marie Clay. I discuss the significance of and influence of her work as well as critically examining the running record, which will show how neoliberal school reform policies transformed Marie Clay’s intended purpose for running records.

Marie Clay’s Theory of Reading

Clay (2001) asserted that two views of children’s progress in literacy dominate the field of education. The one that was and is most common in schools historically and presently is external progress, that is, a benchmark is set and children’s progress or lack of progress is evaluated based on that benchmark. The inherent design of this view propagates a deficit discourse around learning since the construct of a test/benchmark is that some students will do well and some will not. Discourse theory accounts for this; as language is used to build the test and its features, that language becomes an inescapable and powerful discursive practice (Hall, 2001). At the same time, success on benchmarks is only possible because of its binary opposition of failure; meaning is only made from success because of its relation to failure (Britzman, 1995; Wetherell, 2001).

This is in contrast to Clay’s view of literacy progress which is child-centered and developmental (Clay, 2001; McNaughton, 2014). Clay called it the “literacy processing” view of progress. This requires teachers to have a deep understanding of how children learn to read and write, and Clay intended for this theory to “stop teachers from preconceived ideas” (McNaughton, 2014, p.89) about children’s learning; in other words, to prevent teachers from
bringing a deficit discourse to the assessment of children’s literacy. Clay believed that “a highly effective teacher could not be like a technician following a largely prescribed set of procedures” (McNaughton, 2014, p. 91). Clay positioned herself as valuing teachers’ knowledge, intelligence, and professionalism. Thus, her theory of reading is complex, and she believed teachers should develop specialized knowledge around the development of children’s literacy.

Clay’s theory of literacy acquisition supposes that “as learners engage in reading and writing activities, they assemble a system of perceptual and cognitive competencies that helps them solve problems as they arise” (Konstantellou & Lose, 2009, p. 65), which she referred to as a self-extending system. In short, readers and writers build up and then draw upon multiple sources of information in order to solve problems they encounter when reading or writing texts. Clay referred to three kinds of information children use when interacting with text: meaning, structure, and visual (MSV). Meaning refers to the meaning of the text, which can include cues from illustrations, the plot, and a child’s own schema. Structure refers to syntax, that is, the grammar of a sentence; did the reader arrive at a word because it fit syntactically? And visual refers to the print itself, from patterns of letters/sounds within words down to the phoneme, or individual sound within a word. “Learners pull together necessary information from print in simple ways at first…but as opportunities to read and write accumulate over time the learner becomes able to quickly and momentarily construct a somewhat complex operating system which might solve the problem” (Clay, 2001, p. 224).

Clay positioned her theory within a sociocultural perspective, understanding and accounting for children to construct their own meanings with print and text as well as that children will come to texts differently based on their own lives, experiences, cultures, and so on (Clay, 2001; Schmidt et al., 2005). Furthermore, Clay believed that this process was
developmental and that there were multiple paths to becoming literate (Clay, 1998, 2001; Johnston, 1999; Konstantellou & Lose, 2009; McNaughton, 2014; Schmidt et al., 2005).

**Clay’s Running Records**

Because Clay acknowledged that there were multiple paths to becoming literate and that literacy acquisition is developmental, she created a battery of assessments called the Observation Survey (Clay, 2002), which includes assessments of discrete literacy skills, such as alphabet knowledge (identifying letters and sounds) and high frequency words (reading lists of words that appear frequently in texts). The running record is the integrative assessment in the observation survey, providing a way to capture evidence of “how well children are directing their knowledge of letters, sounds and words to understanding the messages in the text” (Clay, 2000, p. 3) as opposed to discreetly measuring letters, sounds, and words out of the context of a book. Running records were designed to serve several purposes, including guiding teaching, assessing text difficulty, and recording a child’s progress over time.

In Clay’s (2000) practice of running records, a child reads aloud a text while the teacher marks checks for each correct word read on either a blank sheet of paper or a pre-printed form. When the child’s oral reading varies from the printed text of the book, the teacher notes it through a coding system Clay developed. Variations from the printed text are called errors. When a child makes an error but corrects it, it is called a self-correction. Clay stressed the importance of reviewing a child’s errors and self-corrections to infer and try to make sense of how a child arrived at their response to the text. After the running record, a teacher analyzes which sources of information (MSV) the child tends to use and which they neglect. As children gain more exposure to language and print, they develop control over these three cueing systems (MSV), developing what Clay referred to as inner-control (Clay, 1991); not all children develop
this integration of all three cueing systems (MSV) at the same rate or along the same trajectory (Clay, 1998).

Thus, Clay stressed the importance of teachers keeping detailed records of their children’s literacy behaviors in order to notice how they change over time. Clay also emphasized the importance of qualitative observation and recording anything a teacher noticed about the child, such as comments the child made, which pictures the child attended to, and so on: “Everything the child said and did tells us something” (Clay, 2000, p. 5). This practice, as developed, both relies on standard codes of marking up the text based on the child’s responses and taking thorough notes of what a teacher observes the child doing. The coding (along with the general protocol) did and does, however, keep to a standard set of procedures so that teachers can communicate with one another about their practice and their students’ reading as well as comparing an individual child’s reading over time. Still, the process is designed to be highly qualitative and dependent on teachers’ keen observation of the child overall (Clay, 1967; 1968; 2000; Johnston, 2000). However, Clay’s approach to running records also quantifies a child’s reading. Clay arrived at measures of accuracy (the percentage of words a child read accurately as printed) to determine if a particular level of text is too easy, too hard, or in a range where the child can read it with coaching from a teacher.

At the same time Clay was developing this tool, another researcher, Kenneth Goodman, was developing an assessment of his own. In Goodman’s theory (1979), variations from print are not errors but miscues, that is, an unexpected response. While the terms may appear synonymous, they reflect different epistemological standpoints about the role of accuracy in reading. For Goodman, they are miscues and not errors because a variation from print may maintain or approximate meaning in a way that does not detract from the text; Goodman was not
concerned with accuracy, but rather with the processes and strategies that produced miscues and the cueing systems readers may have relied on (Goodman, 1982; Goodman, 2015). This distinction between errors and miscues has eroded over time, and teachers often use both error and miscue interchangeably when discussing errors/miscues on running records.

Prepackaged Running Records

In the 1990s, decades after Clay’s research and work with running records, two scholars, Irene Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell, drew on their experiences as Reading Recovery teachers (an intervention program developed by Clay [Fountas & Pinnell, n.d.]) and began to work on both a text gradient for teachers as well as approaches to small group reading instruction since Reading Recovery was designed as one-on-one instruction. They created a gradient of texts that spanned from Kindergarten through high school, beginning with text level A (beginning reading) and ending with Z (adult literature) (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006a, 2006b). About a decade later, in the mid-2000s, they published a pre-packaged Running Record assessment with two books per text level (A-Z), one each for fiction and nonfiction (Fountas & Pinnell Literacy, n.d.); the assessment was called the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System (BAS) which was originally published in 2007, with second and third editions published in 2010 and 2016, respectively (Heinemann, n.d.). Like Clay, the BAS running record quantifies accuracy, variations from print are called errors and is built on the three cueing systems (MSV). Other pre-packaged reading assessment systems are similar (e.g., the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project running records [TCRWP, 2021] and the Next Step Guided Reading Assessment [Richardson & Walther, 2014]). These boxed assessments were mass-marketed, which made it possible for districts and schools to purchase and enact a system-wide approach to assessing children’s reading by text level (Fawson et al., 2006; Harmey & Kabuto, 2018).
Review of the Literature on Running Records

Having established a foundation of the development and ontology of running records in the preceding section, I now move to a review of the research literature on running records. Since this study is a netnography (Kozinets, 2015) seeking to gain and learn from teachers’ perspectives on the running record within current neoliberal politics and policies, the research reviewed was narrowed to focus on research that dealt with or took up running records and their consequences, effects, or discourses and the ways they shape language around reading and literacy learning.

Therefore, while there is an extensive body of research on running records, the focus here is more narrow. I excluded research whose focus was primarily on students and observing students’ reading behaviors. For example, this includes studies that addressed student progress or growth via running records or analyses of children’s errors/miscues. Instead, I included research that primarily focused on states’, districts’, and teachers’ use of running records, such as research that focused on running records and text levels, the reliability of running records, discourses and ways of knowing produced by running records, and teachers’ practices around running records.

Additionally, in my literature search, I included both practitioner (teacher) oriented journals (e.g., The Reading Teacher, Language Arts) and journals written primarily for professionals in academic spaces (e.g., Reading Research Quarterly, Journal of Educational Research). My rationale for including practitioner-oriented journals is because my proposed study is to seek out perspectives from teachers themselves. The research and conversations presented in practitioner-based journals may be influential in the ways in which teachers discuss running records since these journals are published for an audience of teachers. Moreover, I reject the dichotomy of what counts as good or rigorous research or the belief that the content of
teacher-oriented journals is not as important because it is written for teachers. This assumption continues to circulate within the academy, and is a clear example of the ways in which academic institutions themselves continue to exacerbate the false notion that teachers are not professionals, lack knowledge, or are not researchers themselves (Britzman, 2003; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1991). Because I position myself as a teacher first and believe that teachers/practitioners are academics who have immense professional knowledge, I include work from these practitioner journals to disrupt the continued arrogance from the academy and education policymakers that teachers lack knowledge.

This review included nineteen research articles. Of the nineteen, 13 were empirical research articles, and six were theoretical/argument-based research articles (all of which were published in practitioner journals). Many of the empirical research studies were situated within a sociocultural perspective on literacy and often employed case study or ethnographic methodologies (e.g., Comber & Nichols, 2004; Dooley & Assaf, 2009; Kontovourki, 2012; Yoon, 2015). Two studies were qualitative interview studies of teachers (; Ascenzi-Moreno, 2016; Kraayenord et al., 1999). Costello’s (2012) study was self-practitioner/teacher research of implementing running records and guided reading, and another study was a qualitative large-scale survey of 1,200 elementary teachers' perspectives on guided reading and assessment (Ford & Opitz, 2008). Dzaldov and Peterson (2005) took a sociolinguistic qualitative analysis of leveled texts. Only two of the research articles were positivist, quantitative and experiment-designed (Fawson et al., 2006; Ross, 2004). Below I examine the trustworthiness of the research before presenting the findings.

Both Yoon (2015) and Kontovourki (2012) conducted ethnographic case studies to explore the power of the discourse of assessment. Their studies had multiple data sources (e.g.,
observations, interviews, field notes, assessment documents and data) and were also nested case studies. That is, within their studies, there were layers of phenomena they explored and analyzed. For example, while Kontovourki observed two third grade teachers and a class as a whole, she also focused on a particular student within the class to elicit the ways in which the discourses of reading assessment pervaded the ways in which reading was constructed in a rich, descriptive way. Yoon similarly observed and participated with a Kindergarten team for four months and then explored the writing and literacy development of children in one particular classroom in order to explore the ways in which the children were negotiating learning within this context of neoliberal education and over assessment. Overall, these two studies were rich with theory and description of their particular cases because of the explicit ways in which they articulated their underlying epistemological perspectives executed through these nested ethnographic case studies. Similarly, in Dooley and Assaf’s (2009) case study of two reading specialists in two different schools and districts, the multiple perspectives from both teachers allowed for a broader understanding of the ways the two negotiated running records within their contexts.

This is in contrast to, for example, the survey study of 1,200 primary grade elementary school teachers (Ford & Opitz, 2008). This study, while it had a large number of participants produced data in a somewhat reductive way. For example, the survey questions were multiple choice and not open-ended, which leads to some uncertainty about the reliability of what teachers reported since their answers had to fit within the predetermined choices of the researchers. Ford and Optiz themselves recognized this as a limitation since there was not always clarity in the survey questions clearly defining the practices they were inquiring about. For example, they did not distinguish between running records as a daily formative assessment
teachers might use and running records as mandated benchmarks; thus, it is hard to infer or know which teachers refer to when they report the frequency in which they did running records.

The two quantitative experimental studies in this review (Fawson et al., 2006; Ross, 2004) orient from a different paradigm and contribute to the fetishization of science within education research. The notion that running records need to be studied to test their reliability supposes that running records lack merit as qualitative tools. Moreover, the research question to test the tool’s reliability supposes that it needs to be reliable in order to evaluate and compare children’s progress, which is antithetical to the original design of the running record, which was to record progress of individual children (Clay, 2000). The research questions to test the reliability of the assessment reflects the decision to standardize the running record and use it as a form of “big data” in schools. As such, these two studies treat education reform as neutral or without challenge.

With these critiques of the research in mind, I organized findings by themes. The first theme I drew was that these assessments are over-mandated and over-used. Second, the heavy use of running records (and other literacy assessments) narrows the definition of literacy and reading down to the constructs of the assessment itself. Finally, running records produce a specific discourse and way of knowing about literacy pedagogy and content. These themes are interrelated, and it would be naive to discuss them as stand-alone pillars; thus, I have ordered the themes in such a way that they should build onto one another, demonstrating their interconnectedness. After the review by salient themes from the research, I offer up a discussion of this corpus of data through a lens of discourse and queer theory.

**Mandating Assessment / Overassessing**
The first theme that emerged across the corpus of research literature was the ways in which running records and literacy assessments are often mandated for teachers and how frequently teachers are required to administer them. As Glasswell and Ford (2011) state: “reading becomes a curriculum bully,” (p. 211) encroaching on other subjects because of its importance in policy and thus time spent teaching and assessing. This theme of over-assessment was discussed in the research in three ways: the amount of time spent assessing, effects on teaching personnel as a result of over-assessment, and assessing to be compliant as opposed to informing teaching.

**Time**

A common thread across the research was the sheer amount of time teachers spend assessing and how long it takes for teachers to give mandated running records to all the students in their class. In Kontovourki’s (2012) case study of a third grade inclusive classroom with two teachers (a general teacher and a special education teacher) in a large city, the two teachers of focus reported rearranging their daily schedule to account for the amount of assessment they were required to do, including running records and state testing preparation; “...all we do is test them,” one teacher reported (Kontovourki, 2012, p. 160). Similarly in Dooley & Assaf’s (2009) case study of two reading specialist teachers, both teachers reported that they themselves found the amount of time administering running records detracted from their instructional time. Yoon’s (2015) fourth month case study of a kindergarten team of teachers and their students observed that teachers’ time was spent assessing early literacy skills and meeting about the assessment data in ways that curtailed their time spent in their classrooms with their students; the teachers participating were on several occasions offered substitutes to teach their classes so they could pull students out and assess them.
In an interview study of 115 teachers across 12 schools in Australia (Kraayenoord et al., 1999), a number of teachers reported that recording their data and recordkeeping for their running records and other literacy assessments took a significant amount of their planning time, curtailing the amount of time they had to plan lessons. Unfortunately due to the way the findings were reported (the researchers selected only a handful of key quotes from themes they identified), it’s not clear the precise number of teachers that reported such feelings. In a survey study of 1,200 K-2 teachers (Ford & Opitz, 2008), 65% of teachers reported giving running records every month or more than every month; however, the researchers failed to distinguish between running records as benchmarks or running records as daily classroom formative assessment. On the other hand, Ford and Opitz noted that they should have inquired about how teachers use the results of these assessments as a limitation of their survey study.

In a positivist, experimental design to ‘test’ the reliability of running records (Fawson et al., 2006), teachers participating in the research were required by their district to administer running record benchmarks at least three times per school year and their class sizes were significant (>28 students). The findings of this experiment showed that, despite the mandate and large class sizes, teachers needed to administer each student at least three running records each round of assessment in order to have validity in determining a student’s reading level. By giving at least three running records, teachers could be sure that they found the appropriate text level. In a similar study, Ross (2004) designed an intervention research study to show that more frequent assessment would lead to better literacy outcomes. Ross framed their work from an epistemology that aligned with the agenda of neoliberal school reform and No Child Left Behind; ultimately, Ross argued through their research that more assessment would free up teachers to have more instructional time as it would allow teachers to plan instruction...
responsively. Along those same lines of thinking, Rubin (2011) argued that in order for teachers to avoid a deficit discourse of students based on a single assessment, they should offer batteries of assessments to students, yet they failed to acknowledge how teachers should account for the time to give additional assessments.

**Personnel**

Two of the studies reviewed explicitly discussed the ways in which the mandate and over-assessment of running records affected personnel. In the case study of two reading specialists (in different schools), there was a stark difference between the two schools. One reading specialist had three paraprofessionals to help manage their caseload, while the other reading specialist (who worked in a larger school) had no paraprofessionals. The reading specialist with no paraprofessionals had a second reading specialist in their building, but administration moved the second reading specialist into a non-student facing role to support classroom teachers in managing their literacy assessment administration since teachers were overwhelmed with the amount of assessments they were told to do (Dooley & Assaf, 2009). And, as mentioned in the previous section, a team of kindergarten teachers were given substitute teachers on several occasions so that they had time to complete all of their early literacy and math assessments for their students (Yoon, 2015).

**Mandated Assessment as an Act of Compliance**

Several studies also brought to light the notion that teachers perceived assessments as a chore or job to do for their district or administration by a certain deadline. Teachers in Yoon’s (2015) case study of discourses of assessment in Kindergarten reported that all the assessments felt like they were done to prepare for their principal and grade level meetings rather than to serve their instructional planning. A Canadian teacher, in a teacher self-inquiry, studied their
own implementation of their district’s balanced literacy curriculum, of which running records were a large component of the curriculum (Costello, 2012). Costello kept memos of the implementation process noting the frequent meetings they attended with administrators and district staff to discuss data; Costello’s reflections mention that the purpose of the meetings was less focused on student achievement and more so on implementation of the balanced literacy program and running record assessments. An interview study (Ascenzo-Moreno, 2016) of 20 bilingual education teachers designed to describe the practices of teachers with running records and informal reading inventories noted that frequently teachers were scrambling to finish assessments by a deadline for other school/district staff.

Overall, the research corpus pointed toward the ways in which teachers are burdened by assessment to the point that it is not helpful but a hindrance. This was summarized by Ascenzo-Moreno (2016, p. 298): “[overassessment]... creates an antagonistic relationship between assessment and instruction for teachers. This is contrary to the intention of educators that formative assessment can powerfully impact instruction.”

**Narrowing of Curriculum**

The second theme that emerged from this corpus of research reviewed was the ways in which overused and mandated running records worked to narrow the meanings of literacy and reading. In a research-based essay, Hoffman (2017) argues that literacy is a goal and not a tool. “The moment you ignore or downplay the importance of context, content, problem posing, motivation, and human interaction in meaning making and place literacy as the goal, the more likely you are to lose authenticity in teaching and learning” (Hoffman, 2017, p. 267). Within this overall theme, some studies discussed ways in which running records continued to narrow literacy by perpetuating monolingualism and white-middle class English and values. Much of the
corpus of research discussed and questioned the construct of text levels that are a product of the running record, and many studies also discussed the ways in which the assessment fragments instruction as opposed to supplementing the curriculum.

**Narrowing Literacy as Whiteness**

In a qualitative analysis of a collection of leveled texts in which researchers looked at various text features for the similarities and differences among a collection of leveled texts, Dzaldov and Peterson (2005) commented that, “The attention to the book levels appears to be underpinned by a belief that the diversity of students’ social, cultural, and experiential backgrounds can be whitewashed when matching readers to books” (p. 222). In other words, their study found that the collection of texts they studied offered little variety of interest/topic or cultural diversity, and in a classroom where students read texts based on the reading level from their running record, children are sent the message that who they are and what they care about matters less.

Two groups of scholars critiqued the ways in which the use of running records uphold monolingualism and white middle class English. People read orally within their language practices (speech), so running records inherently punish readers whose languages are outside of white middle class English and do not account for the comprehension of taking printed text and translating into one’s own dialect/language (Vriend Van Duinen & Wilson, 2008). In another article, Wheeler et al. (2012) discuss the ambiguity of administration manuals when accounting for dialectical differences, specifically Black English. Running Records privilege middle class white English and put speakers of Black English and those who speak other dialects at a disadvantage; the construct of the assessment is inherently biased since accurate reading insists on reading the printed text verbatim. This ultimately constructs Black readers as poorer readers.
Wheeler et al. (2012) suggests teachers should take a students’ language into consideration and not mark language or dialect related miscues as errors. Harmey and Kabuto (2018) discuss this as one of the main differences between running records (developed by Clay and then pre-packaged by others) and miscue analysis (developed by Goodman) in their metatheoretical analysis between the two assessments. Goodman’s work, even in the 1970s, accounted for dialectical differences (Goodman, 1979, 1982; Goodman & Buck, 1973/1997).

In the interview study of 20 bilingual education teachers, participants reported assessing students in both English and Spanish, but only two of the teachers spoke about looking at the two assessments (English and the other language) together to construct a more holistic view of students’ reading and language development. “In essence, the teachers in the study describe their use of [the assessments] monolingually...without attending to the fact that students are learning to read in English and Spanish and without acknowledging that these two language systems nurture each other” Ascenzi-Moreno, 2016, p. 295).

Text Levels Narrow Reading

Many studies within this corpus of research reviewed discussed the ways in which text levels narrowed the kind of reading students were able to do. While it was not the intention of the running record to prescribe children to only read texts at their level, both Dzaldov and Peterson (2005) and Glasswell and Ford (2011) argue that using running records to match readers with texts at a level they can read independently has become a near mania, a good idea gone bad. Instead of offering students texts based on interest, students in classrooms where texts are leveled are limited to titles within their bin of books at that level. They are told, for example, “read only books from the G bin.”
The restriction to a particular bin of books at a particular level arose frequently throughout the literature. In the survey of 1,200 K-2 teachers (within balanced literacy curricula), 66% reported that they change their small reading groups less than once a month, meaning that students are only exposed to texts at a particular level for long periods of time. This not only limits readers’ exposure to a variety of texts but also reinforces fixed ability grouping (Allington, 1980). Students in an integrated inclusive classroom also were relegated to reading books on their level (Kontovourki, 2012) and came to identify themselves and their peers by the letter of the level they were expected to read (e.g., “I’m a G”). One of the two reading specialist participants in Dooley and Assaf’s (2009) case study also told students that they could only read books within their level, which was consistent with the findings of the case study of Kindergarten teachers (Yoon, 2015).

In Costello’s (2012) self-study of their implementation of a new curriculum and running records, they recount how one particular student was not progressing (on running records). Costello wondered if it might be because they could not connect with the texts. Knowing the student liked horses, Costello offered a text about horses at a much higher text level and the student read it with accuracy, comprehension and enthusiasm. Costello’s frustration with the limitation of text levels based on running records, and children’s resistance to this limitation demonstrates that text levels were restrictive for both children and teachers.

**Fragmenting Instruction**

In their article “Let’s Level about Leveling,” Glasswell and Ford (2011) argue that knowing students’ reading levels from a running record is not the same as knowing their reading needs. They argue teachers narrow what they teach when limiting the assessment to a vehicle for finding a child’s text level or treating text level as one-size-fits all readers within a level. Several
studies discussed the ways in which instruction became fragmented or broken into discrete parts.

Three ethnographic case studies of teachers all narrated in rich description the ways in which teachers negotiated (or re-negotiated) their curriculum in order to address the constructs of the running record (Dooley & Assaf, 2009; Kontovourki, 2012; Yoon, 2015). For example, in the third grade inclusive classroom, teachers were pressured to both teach to what students needed to be successful and move up levels on the running record as well as the state test; the teachers altered their schedule to replace read aloud with test prep and often used instructional time during reading to assess children’s reading (on running records) instead of conferring or working with small groups of children (Kontovourki, 2012). In another example, the reading specialists in Dooley and Assaf’s (2009) case used running records and made groups based on discrete skills (e.g., fluency, retelling, solving multisyllabic words); although they were using the assessment to teach in response to students’ needs, they focused solely on the skill the students needed to ‘pass’ the next text level and did not attend to reading more globally/authentically. Furthermore, in this case study, children tended to only read texts that were about the length of the running record text, thus limiting them from reading longer texts, trade books, and chapter books. Ultimately, children were denied access to reading rich texts because of the skill-and-drill approach to responding to the assessment and preparing children for texts similar to the assessment text.

In a case study of one teacher (Comber & Nichols, 2004), researchers observed and also heard the teacher discuss the pressure she (the teacher) felt around running records. Because of the pressure, she altered her instruction from more open and inquiry-based to more closed. For example, texts were taught as though they had one particular interpretation. This same teacher also created fixed groups, thus pigeon-holing students into one kind of instruction for long chunks at a time.
Similarly, Costello (2012) describes their district’s approach to balanced literacy as aligned with direct instruction (e.g., explicit teaching of discrete skills). Costello aligned constructs of the running record with discrete skills to show how the running record was used as a tool to isolate and target specific skills. This approach is a clear departure from Clay’s original intention of the running record being an integrative assessment (Clay, 2000). In this context the running record was framed as a vehicle for direct, skills-based instruction, and Costello accounted this was the case because there was a history of framing instruction in their district through direct instruction. Genre is also a way instruction became fragmented. In the survey study of 1,200 teachers, the majority of teachers reported they assessed reading with fiction passages; thus, they taught nearly exclusively with fiction texts (Ford & Opitz, 2008).

Overall the fragmentation of instruction that was discussed in this literature fits with the broader conversation of neoliberal education reform and standardization. Au’s (2007) metasynthesis of 49 studies on high-stakes standardized testing sums up this problem of fragmentation: “Structure of knowledge itself is also changed: ...content is increasingly taught in isolated pieces and often only learned within the context of the tests themselves” (Au, 2007, p. 263).

**Discourse of Running Records**

This section discusses the ways in which running records create discourses or ways of thinking, talking and knowing (Gee, 2005) as positioned within the body of research reviewed. Two salient subtopics emerged within the ways running records produce discourses. The first is the notion of the text level becomes a marker of the reader’s identity (readers and teachers talk about themselves and students as a level or part of the assessment). Second are the ways in which
running records perpetuate a long standing deficit discourse and the construction of the poor or struggling reader.

**Reading Identity**

“Readers take up levels as their reading identity” (Hoffman, 2017, p. 266). In classrooms it may sound like children saying, “I cannot read that book. It’s an O, and I am J!” Dzaldov and Peterson [2005] and Glasswell and Ford [2011] discuss this in ways similar to Hoffman’s critiques of leveling. This was the case in the third grade inclusive classroom; students knew their reading level from the running record, the bins in the room were labeled, and they were instructed to shop from those bins. Students referred to themselves as their letter reading level, and teachers talked about readers as their level (“She’s a K [reading level].” [Kontovourki, 2012]). At the same time, the teachers in this case study commented on the problem of reducing children to their levels, even shaming another teacher who publicly displayed children’s reading levels on a bulletin board. These teachers discussed their belief that reading levels were a private matter just for the student, yet failed to acknowledge their own participation in the very thing they were criticizing. The discourses of the assessment are powerful because they are so prominent; it becomes nearly impossible to talk in ways outside the language/constructs of the assessment itself. Kontovourki’s Foucoulidian perspective on power highlights this in her analysis of this case. Similar findings to Kontovourki’s were reported across the literature (Dooley & Assaf, 2009; Kraayenord et al., 1999; Wilson et al., 2005; Yoon, 2015).

Another example of shared discourses among teachers and students is with the language from the running record of whether texts are independent, instructional or frustration. One reading specialist explicitly designated whether students were reading an independent book
(read on their own without difficulty) or an instructional book (read with teacher support or guidance). Not surprisingly, the children would ask if it was an “independent” day or an “instructional” day (Dooley & Assaf, 2009). The language used to construct the dimensions of the assessment have had powerful discursive implications for the ways teachers identify students as readers and how students self-identify.

**Deficit Discourse**

In one of Costello’s (2012) reflective memos, they wrote:

> I feel horrible. I know that the reading levels of some of my students are not high. I can try to explain the reasons for the lower levels. ... I don’t want my students to be judged. Is this atmosphere of competition healthy or helpful? (p.78)

Here Costello is reckoning with the notion of the construction of poor/struggling readers that are a result of fixating on text levels from the running record. In their own classroom and in the data meetings with administrators and district staff, Costello noted the ways in which students were being labelled as struggling readers, the focus always on what they could not do rather than what they could.

This example from Costello fits within the argument Hoffman (2017) makes: an over-focus on levels leads to deficit discourse (poor readers) and fits within much of the other research reviewed. The team of kindergarten teachers and their administrator, for example, often referred to students “on the fringe” or their “lowbies.” (Yoon, 2015, p. 382). The focus of their data meetings was always like emergency room triage, trying to rescue the struggling students; not once in the four month case study did the team study or look at the results from the early literacy assessments through the lens of “What’s going well? What can students do?” This is not to blame the teachers but rather to point out the cocktail of assessment discourse and neoliberal
education reform pressure. Yoon (2015) succinctly stated that discussions of students’ differences always meant deficient.

Perhaps the most salient example of the ways in which running records may contribute to a deficit view of readers is the inherent research design of Fawson et al.’s (2006) study to determine reliability and validity of the running record. Once the researchers had selected teachers for their study, they instructed the teachers to choose a sample of students in their class representative of the poor and strong readers. The researchers did not acknowledge the ways in which they were contributing to the deficit discourse (likely because, again, discourses are often so powerful and unmarked that one is not aware they are participating). Overall, this deficit discourse of readers as constructed through the running record is consistent with previous and older literature on assessment and ability grouping (Allington, 1980; Stanovich, 1986).

**Discussion**

The themes that emerged within this collection of research on running records and literacy assessment are congruous within the larger discourse and literature on standardization and assessment. Studies within this body of research ranged from ethnographic case studies to teacher inquiry to interview studies to positivist experimental design. Below I offer a reading of the research from my theoretical perspective and then what I perceive as some gaps in the literature.

**A Theoretical Reading of the Literature Reviewed**

Language builds over time to create discursive practices but the research here also reinforces how local contexts matter (Gee, 2005; Hall, 2001). For example, in Yoon’s (2015) case study, the deficit language was not “struggling reader” but instead terms created by the people in one specific context, like “on the fringe” and “lowbie” (p. 382). These are deficit
discourses but particularly confined to one specific context within a school built by the recurring language of the people involved. Similarly, in the teacher-research on implementing running records, the teacher carried previous discursive practices from the local context into the discourse of running records (Costello, 2012). In this context the running record was framed as a vehicle for direct, skills-based instruction, and Costello reflected that this was due to the school’s history of framing instruction in their district as direct instruction. Both of these examples demonstrate how particular environments with repeated language over time construct powerful discourses that shape reality. This points to the importance of understanding the specific context in which a researcher studies, its history, the people who inhabit it and their local ways of building through language.

The research reviewed also highlights how language builds significance. As language is used to build significance, it becomes established and creates stringent ways of being and knowing. Language in running records depends on terms like accuracy and text levels, and as these practices become established, they dictate the construction of reading itself: readers are levels, and books are levels. This was strongly demonstrated in the case of the third grade classroom (Kontovourki, 2012) and the power of the discourse of levels is often one of the critiques of the text gradient (Dzaldov & Peterson, 2005; Glasswell & Ford, 2011; Hoffman, 2017). Pre-packaged running records produce letter (A-Z) text levels, and are given such significance because one of the purposes of the pre-packaged running record is to produce a child’s reading level. However, it is uncertain within the research reviewed here if teachers have a shared understanding of the meanings of terms within shared discourses. Because text level letters are such a hegemonic and powerful discourse in elementary teaching, many teachers use
them, yet, could there be multiple meanings of the characteristics of these levels among varying, more local contexts?

Teachers use reading levels as a way to communicate information about a child’s reading. “Sam is a level K.” The function or intended social action of that utterance is to communicate to someone else some information about Sam’s reading abilities (or perhaps if said to Sam directly to signal which books are appropriate to read). Yet, the meaning of level K depends on knowing to whom it is addressed and assumes some sense of shared understanding about what a level K is. When said to Sam, it assumes that Sam has some idea of what is K-ish about books. (Although, as the corpus of research suggested, it often just dictated a bin of books with children unaware of what the letter meant.)

In this way, text levels are quite queer, or strange. They attempt to make efficient some sense of shared knowledge about a particular band of texts or, as often more used, the behaviors of particular readers (e.g., Hoffman, 2017), yet their meaning depends somewhat on individuals’ perspectives and interpretations of those levels. What level K means to one teacher likely varies depending on their own learning and understanding of the levels and whose epistemology of levels they’ve learned or taken up. While Fountas and Pinnell (1996) created the A-Z text gradient, many other educators have taken up describing these letter levels, and there are myriad professional resources on how to interpret these levels (e.g., Fountas and Pinnell, 2017; Richardson & Walther, 2014; Serravallo, 2018). So, while the discursive practice of using text levels to identify readers and the texts they should read is powerful and prolific, these levels and this practice also quite lack meaning. There are polysemous understandings of these levels, yet they share the same identifiers (A-Z). Zooming in on this particular example of language demonstrates the crucial role language plays in confining and building the ways in which
teachers are able to talk about reading and readers. There is a shared discourse of letter text levels but their meanings are not fixed by space and time but rather how teachers take them up individually and collectively within various contexts and spaces. This will be an important feature to pay attention to within my own research site as teachers will be coming from settings and contexts all over the U.S. but still have some shared understandings of running records.

**Gaps in the Literature**

However, a critical eye at the body of research demonstrates gaps in the literature. There are three main gaps within the body of research reviewed here. First, the studies as a whole failed to address how teachers were supported (or not) with this assessment work. While Dooley and Assaf (2009) observed that one reading specialist’s colleague was moved to a position to support classroom teachers with assessment, this is genuinely the only mention of this within the research. Understanding the kinds of support and professional learning or lack thereof may help illuminate how teachers feel, react to, and use running records as well as how they respond when their needs are not being met.

Secondly, there was limited discussion of how teachers are utilizing running records as part of their practice. While some of the research did articulate that teachers view these assessments as work to complete for administrators or an act of compliance, how teachers use running records was not discussed outside this framing. Understanding more about the ways in which teachers use running records may help to better describe the relationship between running records and the standardization and de-professionalization of teachers.

Finally, the body of research literature did not address the ways in which teachers may resist the mandating of running records or alter practices in order to make them work for their contexts and workloads. Research that investigates ways in which teachers resist or push back on
policies that overassess children or mandate running records may help policymakers understand what’s working and what’s not working in regard to these policies. Further, as teachers are professionals with knowledge and experience, understanding the ways in which teachers enact these mandated practices and make them work for their contexts may also help policymakers and leaders better understand the negative effects of such policies.

**Teacher Communities and Professional Development Within Social Media**

Despite a cultural trope that social media is for fun and play, social media is entangled in professional spaces (Van Dijck & Poell, 2015). Thus, it is also relevant when considering how teachers use social media for professional uses. Based on the review of the literature on teacher communities within social media, this area of research is nascent and thus still under-researched. We know that teachers are using social media as a form of professional development… yet “there is limited robust evidence identifying the characteristics of social media PLCs [professional learning communities] that impact on teachers’ learning and practice.” (Goodyear, Parker, & Casey, 2019).

Thus, I included research across education (such as music education, higher education, etc.) and not just within literacy education in order to widen the search since this field of research is still quite incipient. In the same vein, research reviewed also looked across social media platforms, mainly Facebook and Twitter. I identified seventeen research articles. The corpus of research included studies where teachers were interviewed about their experiences within teacher social media communities, and studies where the data produced was observed directly from the social media groups themselves, or some combination of interviews and internet observation. Most of the research was qualitative, while a handful of studies involved mixed methods.
The majority of the research was conducted using content analysis, a method of data analysis in which researchers look at their data and, through open, inductive coding or predetermined conceptual codes, organize their data around commonalities/themes. For digital content analysis, the focus is “more specifically on the description and understanding of the meanings and practical uses that social actors assign to and make of texts, as well as on the cultural narratives naturally emerging from them” (Caliandro & Gandini, 2016, p. 193). The commonality of content analysis in this literature review is consistent with Snelson’s (2016) analysis in their synthesis of twenty social media community research studies which also found content analysis was a primary vehicle for analyzing social media groups and spaces.

Research within the literature review that offered up an additional layer of analysis in addition to content analysis or used a different methodological approach altogether often richly described how teachers were engaging or using those online spaces. For example, Moore-Russeo et al. (2017) used a case study approach in their study of pre-service teachers in a Facebook group since the purpose of a case study is to explore a particular phenomenon (Yin, 2009). Because of this, the description of the interactions and content of what was shared in the group illustrated the ways the space became and functioned as a community. Similarly, Rodesiler (2017) took an ethnographic approach to their study of a five week online course within a Facebook group. Using netnographic tools such as observations, field notes, reflective memos, content analysis, and discourse analysis, the research was presented in a way that again gave the reader the image and feeling of being in the space with the teachers, including their discussions and ways of interacting with one another. This differs from a purely content analysis approach since content analysis seeks more to answer the question of “What is here in this space?” rather than investigating what is there and interrogating why it was said and articulated in a particular
way and what the experience and feeling of those online conversations felt like for the researcher.

I identified the following themes regarding social media as a site of professional learning for teachers, looking across the corpus of research. First, much of the research addressed teacher motivation for choosing to participate in these social media teacher groups and communities. These communities allow teachers to meet their own professional needs, and they also offer autonomy. Secondly, these online spaces offer a sense of community. Some of the research addressed the notion of work; in these studies, researchers argued that the teachers participating in these social media groups were doing work that is often not characterized as work since it is outside of the school setting, work day, and is not mandatory.

**Teacher Motivation and Autonomy**

Much of the research addressed teacher motivation for choosing to participate in these social media teacher groups and communities. The decision to participate in teacher groups on social media may be a response to the way teacher development is approached in schools; for example, teachers are handed pre-packaged curriculum (Au, 2011) and training instead of professional development (Britzman, 2003), which positions them as vocational technicians who are following proscribed steps rather than knowledgeable professionals. Teachers are not seen as knowers and are frustrated by the mistrust placed on them by policymakers (Britzman, 2003; Monaghan & Saul, 2018). Thus, this theme of autonomy fits within the narrowing of curriculum and deskilling of teachers that has amplified over the course of the twentieth century and continues within neoliberal education reform. Within the research, the online space of social media communities is constructed as a space of autonomy for teachers to learn because the
physical space of school is constructed or believed to be an unproductive space for teacher learning or a setting where teachers lack control over their teaching and learning.

This binary construction is succinctly described by Carpenter and Morrison (2018): social networking sites offer ways for teachers to engage with the topics and issues they care about whereas traditional (in-school, district, etc.) professional learning is often “done to teachers” (p.1). One study in particular illustrated this binary; in a survey of 494 teachers, respondents compared their experience on social media as better than ‘traditional’ professional development (Carpenter & Krutka, 2015). Meanwhile, in a netnography of two teacher discussion groups on Facebook, researchers found that teachers explained in these social media groups why they were there: their needs were not being met nor were they being heard by school, district, and national leadership (Lynch, 2014). However, as the corpus of research suggests, the concept of autonomy and teachers using social media groups for their professional learning is multifaceted, despite the reductive binary opposition of professional learning in the school building versus digital communities.

First, teachers have autonomy over the kind of learning they want to do. There are many online teacher communities across social media platforms, and teachers choose which they will participate in. For example, some teachers may seek subject-affinity groups, such as math, literacy or history. Teachers may choose to join private or public groups, and those groups may be run by and for teachers, or may be managed by a publisher of curriculum. And, then, within groups, teachers have choices over how they engage and participate: observe, respond to posts by liking or resharing posts, respond with text or pictures (a comment), or actively post their own questions/opinions and respond to others. Teachers may join only one group or participate in several across different subjects and social media platforms.
After analyzing over 900 Tweets from 100 participants and following up with interviews with 18 of the participants, Goodyear et al. (2019) identified ways of engagement as either active or observational. They found that teachers could give as little or as much as they want within the group; some people participated often and were regarded as leaders, while others lurked or observed to gather resources without reciprocating the labor of others by sharing their own resources. Again, this binary of online participation as either always actively posting or solely lurking is perhaps reductive, since it is quite likely that the ways teachers participate is more nuanced than either always participating or solely lurking. This is especially true in a social media space in which participation can include posting your own content, commenting on others’ posts and replying to commenters, and resharing, liking, and saving others’ posts.

In a study of an online community of music teachers, Bernard et al. (2018) framed engagement in a similar way, noting how teachers chose to participate; teachers used the “like” feature as a way to show solidarity, even if they themselves did not contribute questions, ideas, or resources to the community. And, in a study of teachers in a 5000+ Facebook group (Bissessar, 2014), teachers reported that synchronous and asynchronous participation allowed them to participate when they felt inspired, unlike in-person professional development spaces where people were constrained within a particular time frame/environment and often were forced to participate.

Teachers enrolled in a five week social media group centered around workshopping children’s literature (Rodesiler, 2017) described the five week experience as a way to have their needs met; they had the opportunity to steer the direction of the five week “course,” raising topics and issues they cared about since there was the absence of the dichotomy between presenter’s agenda and the grassroots approach of raising issues that felt relevant to the
participants. Finally, an analysis of Canadian Kindergarten teachers’ comments in Facebook groups posited that, “internet media may be an especially useful way to seek more reflexive and authentic responses because users have ownership over the direction of the discussions” (Lynch & Mah, 2018, p. 747). Teachers in these groups were frustrated by their lack of opportunity to engage with decisions affecting the programming of their school day and used Facebook and comments on news media about the change in their district as a way to raise topics and questions that they were not given the opportunity to do within physical spaces of their schools and district. So, in addition to an increase in ways to participate and engage, teachers also reported having autonomy over the content of their learning and aligning with their perceived needs or desires in social media groups.

**Teacher Social Media Spaces as Building Community**

The next theme that emerged across the corpus of research reviewed was how these spaces offer up community to teachers. This theme is framed in the metaphor of social media as a "second faculty lounge...a place where educators talked shop and found [a] community that counteracted the isolation long endemic to the profession" (Carpenter & Morrison, 2018, p. 1). Social media is inherently dialogic (van Dijck & Poell, 2015) since it involves the sharing of text, video, or other media to elicit responses from others. Many of the studies reviewed expressed the sense of community teachers reported or that researchers observed within these social media spaces.

One concurrent theme that emerged from the research literature was the notion that teacher social media groups are both professional AND social spaces; I consider this important since it suggests that there are multiple reasons teachers may choose to join or stay in the group and participate. This multiplicity is also consistent with the queer framework I brought to this
study in that it seeks complexity in its analysis, not reduction. For example, within a 5000+ member community on Facebook in Trinidad and Tobago (Bissessar, 2014), it was observed that teachers shared both professional resources and questions but also quite frequently shared memes, jokes, and videos about the struggles of teaching or the joys of teaching; there was a sense of humor sprinkled throughout the rest of the posts which were more resource sharing or seeking. In a study within a course on higher education (Moore-Russo et al, 2017) in which the professor encouraged the use of a Facebook group for students to study, share readings and resources, and support one another, graduate students reported how the Facebook group gave them time to connect socially with their peers outside class which led to more risk-taking during class sessions. In a study of 117 teachers’ participation across four inter-related Facebook posts about mathematics pedagogy (Patahuddin & Logan, 2019), a similar discourse among participants was reported: “The level of interaction and engagement afforded by the posts in the Facebook environment opened opportunities for conversational writing as well as professional learning dialogue” (Patahuddin & Logan, 2019, p 117). The ‘both…and’ nature of these online spaces as both professional and social/amiable is significant because, even though it is an online space, teachers regard it as humanizing as evidenced by the conversational discourse and sense of humor shared in the two above studies.

At the same time, several other studies commented on the nature of how ideas were shared among participants, noting how people sought out different perspectives in addition to social media groups in which people shared their views yet another example of concurrence within this body of research. While these studies examined how ideas were shared within social media groups in which teachers participated, all suggest that there is a diversity of ideas and
ways that ideas are shared within groups, contributing to the sense of community these social media spaces encourage.

In Carpenter and Krutka’s (2015) study of nearly 800 elementary, middle, and high school teachers of teachers’ Twitter use, the majority responded positively that the online space connected them with both like-minded teachers and people whose practices were different than their own. Similarly, in an online ethnography of a group of music teachers Facebook group (Bernard et al., 2018), researchers observed both conflict and mentorship. Teachers did not just share resources but critiqued one another’s resources and practices; however researchers noted that their discourse analysis of the online conversations did not reveal rude or threatening comments but instead supportive comments, even when there was conflict. Another social media group with over 1,000 members was observed specifically to investigate the diversity of ideas within the group of teachers and teacher educators (Kelly and Antonio, 2016); the group centered around solving “real” problems teachers were facing, and as such, there was a diversity of ideas presented within the group since participants each voiced their opinions about how they would approach their colleagues’ problems. Kelly and Antonio (2016) developed a framework of community based on their online ethnography of a large teacher Facebook group; within their research site (the Facebook group), they found that community was established in six ways: providing feedback, modeling practice, supporting reflection, relationship building, socialization (sharing politics, jokes, the stress of the job), and pragmatism (urgent needs/questions).

Finally, time itself was discussed across some of the research reviewed as a vehicle for building a sense of community. In a group of teachers coming together for a five week course on a social media site, teachers were cheering one another on and encouraging one another to try
new things by the end of the workshop (Rodesiler, 2017). Similarly, in a two year observation of a popular teacher hashtag on Twitter, it was observed that over time teachers who participated within the hashtag formed relationships with one another and would retweet one another’s posts and resources as a form of solidarity and encouragement (Goodyear, Casey, & Kirk, 2014). Retweeting tweets and resharing posts was also found to be a tool teachers used to show appreciation and encouragement for colleagues in a study of the activity of 16 teacher Twitter hashtags (Carpenter et al., 2020). All three of these studies (Carpenter et al., 2020; Goodyear et al., 2014; Rodesiler, 2017) also observed that the participants within these spaces/groups or hashtags were consistent, which they posited over time led to a sense of rapport and trust within the group; this is consistent with the findings of Goodyear, Parker, & Casey’s (2019) investigation of a PE teacher hashtag, where they observed that the same participants were generally consistent and that when new teachers would join in the hashtag, it was usually in the form of retweets until the new teacher participants in the hashtag had been participating for some time. This notion of time and the establishment of trust and rapport within a Twitter hashtag community or in a Facebook group is rather queer or strange itself because these spaces are public spaces where anyone can see the activity and content of others, and arguably, anyone who felt inclined could participate. As Kozinets (2015) also argues, these online spaces are not places of culture or community but places of consociality - where people meet over what they share but for brief moments of time; nothing is static or permanent in these online spaces, yet people often feel connected.

**Concept of Work**

Teachers participation in teacher social media groups is a form of work. This is misunderstood because of the asynchronous nature of how social media is used. It is often
assumed that because teachers would presumably be using social media before or after school (or during lunch), time spent in these spaces is often discounted as a professional space (Carpenter & Morrison, 2018; Lynch & Mah, 2018; Van Dijck & Poell, 2015).

As discussed in the preceding sections, numerous examples from this body of research literature have pointed to how teachers are doing professional development on social media, albeit without pay and outside work hours whether it be a group of PE teachers sharing instructional resources or ways to get children moving (Goodyear et al., 2019) or two elementary teachers who, on their own volition, started a five week social media course on children’s literature for other teachers, all of whom volunteered and participated without pay and on their own time (Rodesiler, 2017).

One study reported that teachers themselves did not view their participation in social media sites as work, despite the fact that they reported how they answered other teachers’ questions, uploaded and shared resources, and sought out information themselves. While teachers may not view their participation in Facebook groups as work, it is a kind of work that produces new knowledges and resources, along with a sense of autonomy and ownership (Rensfeldt et al., 2018).

**Discussion**

As this is a nascent and growing field of research, I am cautiously critical since internet research methodologies are ever-growing and changing as technology and social media changes. However, I highlight two big ideas through a discourse/queer reading of this research as well as suggesting the need to situate future research in teacher learning within social media in the broader context of education reform.
Binary terms of participation are problematic and should be resolved in future social media research. Researchers choosing the binary language (language that is dependent on its relational meaning to an opposite term) reduces the discourses or ways of discussing participation. By positioning teachers within spaces as either active or passive, there is less description and acknowledgement of the ways in which teachers actually make use of these spaces. For example, it could be that a teacher is planning a new unit and in the course of planning, spends more time within the group asking questions and gathering resources from colleagues. Once this teacher gets what they need, perhaps they are less active but liking and sharing posts occasionally. What I am trying to illustrate within this example is that participation is not fixed, but, instead, dynamic and likely to change over time depending on myriad factors affecting the user of the space. And, as I stated within the findings earlier, the binary of active and passive is also reductive since it does not acknowledge the multiple ways people can participate online. Participation in online spaces is more than just posting your own content and commenting on others; it can include liking, sharing, and saving posts as well. Yet, it is difficult to account for these possibilities of participation when the language design of the study prohibits it.

Reducing the discourse about professional participation in social media to a binary can also be seen in the way researchers describe the dichotomy between professional learning in person and online. While teachers’ needs may not be met within in person professional learning, it is unlikely that teachers gain nothing from it or perceive it as a total waste of time. Furthermore, it also seems problematic to assume that when teachers turn to online spaces, this is where the bulk of their learning occurs. Overall, within the research, the two modes of learning (in person and online) are pitted against one another in ways that don’t allow for nuance or the
possibility that there are other spaces for teacher learning as well. Future research might attempt to reframe this dichotomy of teacher learning in person versus teacher development in order to open new possibilities for ways of understanding why teachers come to these online spaces.

However, in contrast to reductive binaries used in some research studies, it is also clear that other studies took expansive, concurrent approaches to analyzing the ways these spaces are used. These research studies treated social media as both professional and social spaces (Bissessar, 2014; Moore-Russo et al, 2017; Patahuddin & Logan, 2019), and emphasized that they are also spaces for sharing beliefs as well as dissent over practice (Bernard, Weiss, and Abeles, 2018). Acknowledging and accounting for the different ways people interact with one another in these spaces is important since research on teacher learning on online spaces has the potential to influence revisioning teacher learning in physical (in person) spaces.

Finally, although all of the research reviewed in this chapter focused on education, few of the studies situated their work within the context of broader school reform and policies. While some studies alluded to or named problems teachers may face (such as a loss of autonomy) and why they may seek out learning in an online space, the studies themselves were not situated within that framing. This is likely because the purpose of these studies was narrower, focusing on how teachers operate and interact within spaces rather than putting those interactions within the broader context of neoliberal education reform. Additionally, with the exception of one study (Lynch, 2018), this corpus of research did not offer up ways in which these online spaces may be spaces for social action or resistance.

**Summary**

In the course of this literature review, I have traced Marie Clay’s work on the running record, demonstrating how it became mass-marketed with the advent of running record
benchmark systems. I also reviewed the research literature on running records and the research literature on teacher professional development in online social media spaces.

In the review of the literature on running records, studies reported findings that are consistent with the history of public schooling: assessments are tools of regulatory control and aid in standardization (Au, 2007, 2011, 2016), including the running record. While this was not the intention of the assessment as invented, it has been the use of it, especially within neoliberal education reform that insists on high levels of scrutiny of students, teachers, and schools. The review demonstrated that running records are frequently administered and mandated, that they narrow the curriculum, and create powerful discourses that are difficult to exist outside of. The regulatory control vis-a-vis running records is one more way that teachers are restricted in having autonomy in their classrooms to make their own professional decisions as well as a method of scrutiny of both their teaching and students’ performance.

The research literature on teacher professional development in social media spaces demonstrated that teachers often choose to engage in social media spaces with other teachers as a way to have the professional learning needs met and to have autonomy over their professional learning. These groups and spaces are forms of legitimate work and learning that go unrecognized as work. The research of teachers and these spaces is still relatively new and under-studied.

Given that teachers are not treated as knowers and are seeking ways to support their own learning, a social media group focused around literacy is an apt place for observing and listening to teachers as they negotiate the neoliberal politics of the running record as a form of standardized testing and big data.
Chapter 3: METHODOLOGY

The use of running records as standardized assessments is a consequence of the heavy emphasis on testing and data collection in the current education reform era. In the current context, running records assume that “reading” is the act of reading words accurately (i.e., as they are printed) (Harmey & Kabuto, 2018), and the “typical” reader is a monolingual speaker of English. Running records are often mandated and overused, and rather than being a tool to help teachers guide their instruction, running records work to narrow the curriculum (Dzaldov & Peterson, 2005; Hoffman, 2017). Moreover, the standardized and outcomes-based approach to running records produces a deficit discourse that circulates and reduces the possibilities of understanding and supporting children’s reading practices and identities (Dooley & Assaf, 2009; Kontovourki, 2012; Yoon, 2015). In all of this, teachers are not seen as professionals who can use their own expertise but rather as technicians implementing the next reform or mandate that comes down from the top. Teachers are often silenced or not consulted (Britzman, 2003).

However, one space teachers go to offer their opinions, ask questions and share their learning is online teacher communities. Online social media groups are sites for teacher-motivated professional development that provide a platform for teachers to post questions and share resources, often because they feel their in-school professional development does not meet their needs (Carpenter & Morrison, 2018; Van Dijck & Poell, 2015). Thus, an online social media group devoted to teaching literacy in elementary schools was a rich site for investigating teachers’ perspectives and attitudes about literacy assessment, especially in a group managed by a corporation that develops and markets pre-packaged curricula and assessments frequently used by schools.
This inquiry sought to explore and understand teachers’ perspectives on running record literacy assessments in a social media group on Facebook at a time when the education landscape is shaped by neoliberal policies that valorize standardization and accountability. The following research question guided this study:

1. What is the nature of elementary teachers’ posts about running record assessments within a social media space?
   a) What topics do teachers bring up when discussing running records in an online literacy community where teachers post and respond to one another?
   b) How do neoliberal discourses prominent in schooling and schooled literacy (e.g., standardization, commercialization and accountability) circulate in teachers’ posts about running records within the group?

In this chapter, I outline the rationale and logic of the methodological decisions I made in designing and conducting this study. I articulate the rationale for designing the study as a netnography (Kozinets, 2015), situate it within the literature on ethnography, and discuss the methods I selected for producing and analyzing data through a dual lens of discourse and queer theory. Finally, I estimate the trustworthiness of this methodological approach, including an analysis of my positionality, and consider the limitations of the study.

**Rationale for Netnography**

This inquiry was designed as a netnography, a term Kozinets (2015) developed in the mid-1990s by combining internet and ethnography. In this study, I specifically use the term netnography because my inquiry relied solely on data available on the internet, whereas other terms, such as virtual ethnography or online ethnography are more general and can refer to more traditional ethnographies examining how groups of people use the internet (Hine, 2015;
Kozinets, 2015). While netnographies are a form of ethnography, they also depart from traditional ethnographies in several ways. Below I describe the logic of netnography, placing it within the broader field of ethnography, while also explaining how a netnography was most appropriate to this particular inquiry and my underlying theoretical framings.

Ethnography, broadly, is a form of qualitative inquiry that focuses on a culture-sharing group in order to discover shared patterns of beliefs, values, and behaviors among its members (Cresswell, 2014; Eisenhart, 2018). Various theories of culture have guided ethnographic inquiry over time, and the concept of culture has been critiqued and challenged over the course of the latter half of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century. While the concept of culture was originally that of a fixed set of beliefs shared by a group of people, contemporary perspectives on ethnography take a broader view of culture as unstable and unfixed since we live in a dynamic world where people and groups of people frequently cross spaces and paths both physically and online (Eisenhart, 2018; Kozinets, 2015). The underlying beliefs of netnography also challenge and reframe the concept of culture. Netnographies are (almost) exclusively done online, and do not seek to understand or interpret culture. Rather, netnographers view culture and community not as ascribed characteristics of groups but rather features that are produced by the groups or spaces themselves; that is, culture and community are neither fixed nor permanent but contingent upon online participation and thus temporary. Put another way, netnography does not seek to study a culture or sense of community but rather consociality (Kozinets, 2015), a process of accounting for the ways in which people come together temporarily. The ties of consociality are not fixed or formal but feel natural despite their uncertainty and instability (Kozinets, 2015, p. 11). I chose to design this study as a netnography because the methods and analysis usually associated with the netnography align with the aims of the online space to be
investigated, that is, consociality. In this study, the participants are teachers who voluntarily participate and come together in an online space with a common interest in literacy teaching; they gather in the space atemporally and without any particular agenda or bonds other than literacy teaching and the likelihood they use some curricular materials from the company which operates the group.

Ethnographers and netographers are similar in several ways. Ethnographers study particular groups and spaces of interest for their line of inquiry. “Although the context may already be somewhat familiar, ethnographers attempt to render it [the space or group] ‘strange,’ that is, they try to understand it in a new way, especially by drawing from the perspectives of regular participants” (Eisenhart, 2018, p. 3). Additionally, the goal of an ethnographer and a netnographer is to spend sufficient time in the space to be able to interpret it by constructing a thick description (Geertz, 1973) from an emic (insider) perspective (Eisenhart, 2018; Kozinets, 2015). However, because netnography does not take up the study of culture, the rich descriptions offer up ways in which people are consocial atemporally in the space. There is not fixed or bound ways of knowing or sharing knowledge or behaving within the space, but the space feels as though it does because of shared language and practices from teaching experience and language and ways of knowing from the company’s curricular materials. As I negotiated the tensions of neoliberal politics within education, the overuse and misuse of assessment, and the de-professionalization of teachers, my aim as a researcher was to make my lived experience as a teacher in the present time strange by studying it closely through an inquiry of teachers’ perspectives on the topic of the running record assessment. I paid attention to the ways in which it brought teachers together into what feels like one conversation but is actually
consocial: atemporal, unfixed and unfinished since anyone could pick up the thread again at any given time.

A netnography includes the observations and immersive time spent in an online space, along with the autoethnography of the researcher themself (Costello et al., 2017; Kozinets, 2015). “Netnography begins and ends with an explicitly human window into the rich communicative and symbolic world of people and groups as they use the internet ...and social media” (Kozinets, 2015, p. 90). So, while there is a bias or assumption that internet research is just about collecting what is available in spaces on the internet and analyzing it, netnography accounts for the role of the researcher. My presence is a component of the data, and netnography acknowledges the presence and perspective of the researcher.

In netnography, researchers can take active or passive roles with regard to their observation of the online space (Kozinets, 2015; Pollock et al., 2014). Netnography relies on the “unobtrusive and non-influencing [observation] of the communication and interaction of community members to gain practical insights into their...behaviour.” (Costello et al., 2017, p. 3). Data analysis for netnographies often include a thematic analysis of content, an analysis of the language used (such as discourse analysis), and analytic and reflective memos (Costello et al., 2017; Janta et al., 2014; Kozinets, 2015; Kulavuz-Onal & Vasquez, 2013). This is in contrast to social media network analysis or social media discussion analysis which usually relies solely on a thematic or content analysis (Kozinets, 2010; Pollock et al., 2014) Such methodologies would have been antithetical to this inquiry since I sought to bring a wide angle lens of discourse and queer theory to the research site and what I learned from spending time there.

Additionally, the theory undergirding my inquiry regards human interpretation, understanding, and construction of language as paramount. This study took up a discourse theory
and queer theory approach that posits the importance of language to build and construct situations; as these situations become established, language practices become established as ways of being and knowing within particular situations and groups (Gee, 2005). Further, ideas (which are expressed through language) are often relational in meaning or situated in ways that ideas/constructs only exist because of some other idea opposite to it, for example a front of a room only becomes viable when we theorize simultaneously where the back of the room is. Without one, the other is not possible. Acknowledging this epistemic symbiosis pushes toward a deconstruction and making strange of these ideas and language that constructs them (Barad, 2012; Britzmam, 1995; Fuss, 1991; Shlasko, 2005). Queer as a critical, poststructural theory seeks to interrupt and transgress systems of power that produce normalizing hegemonic discourses. Together discourse theory and queer theory were ripe for theoretical imagination in this study since this study addresses teachers’ perspectives within a context of normalization and standardization within a neoliberal education reform context and is concerned with language within the group and what it may reveal.

Furthermore, I am and was personally and professionally entangled in this inquiry. All researchers are personally invested in their studies and shape their research; ethnography and netnography and the whole of qualitative research account for the role and bias of the researcher in both the methodological choices and the ways in which the data are constructed (Bogden & Biklen, 2007; Costello et al., 2017; Cresswell, 2014, Eisenhart, 2018; Kozinets, 2015). However, in this particular case, I was especially so. I am both an elementary school teacher/reading specialist who has had myriad experiences with running records (and problems with their use across schools in which I have taught). I am also a member of the particular social media group which I selected as the site for my inquiry. This aligns with my methodological
stance as a netnographer since netnography, “... should be analyzed autoethnographically...while acknowledging the background they bring to their netnographic research and interpretation of netnographic data” (Costello, 2017, p. 7). I cannot and did not separate myself and my reactions from data, and thus this netnography acknowledges both the content I observed on the Facebook group and my reactions, emotions, and reflections to it as sources of data. Ultimately, the construction of the findings of this netnography described the happenings of the group alongside my own experiences of observing the group and its relation to my lived experience as an educator.

**Research Design**

**Overview of Research Design**

This netnography explored an elementary teacher-focused literacy group on Facebook over a period of eight months (May 2021 to early December 2021). This Facebook group is managed by a major publishing company that is well known in the U.S. for its catalog of literacy curricula and assessment resources.

Methods of producing data included unobtrusive observation through collection of Facebook posts and comments in the group, field notes, memos, and a researcher journal. By unobtrusive observation, I mean reading posts without liking, commenting or posting myself—just reading the posts without any interaction whatsoever. While this kind of observation I used as a researcher is undoubtedly a form of participation on social media (people join social media apps and/or groups and lurk without interacting or posting themselves), I did not count lurking observers as participating in this study because it is not visible to me as an unobtrusive participant. I could only see the group members who were posting and replying. Data analysis
was ongoing and iterative (Eisenhart, 2018; Kozinets, 2015). Data analysis included topic content analysis as well as discourse analysis (Caliandro and Gandini, 2016; Gee, 1999, 2005). While preliminary data analysis (coding, annotating, reflecting) was ongoing throughout data collection, a holistic topic analysis was conducted once all the data were collected. That is, the data produced from the Facebook group were read and coded based on topics that emerged from the posts produced during the timeframe of the study (Bogden & Biklen, 2007; Caliandro and Gandini, 2016; Cresswell, 2014). Further, to address the research questions and explore teachers’ perspectives and attitudes, I employed discourse analysis as well. Because I was not interested in just summarizing what teachers “say” about running records (topic content analysis), this additional layer of analysis was critical, since discourse analysis examines how people use their ‘language-in-use’ to accomplish social acts (Gee, 1999). Gee’s discourse analysis tools and how they map onto my queer toolbox are discussed later in the chapter. The goal of this two-fold approach to data analysis was ultimately to unpack what teachers’ posts and comments might mean in the context of neoliberal education reform.

**Research Site**

The research site was selected based on several criteria. Kozinets (2015) outlines six criteria for selecting sites for study, arguing that they should be: (1) *relevant* to the research focus and questions; (2) *active*, with recent and regular communications; (3) *interactive*, having flows of communication between participants; (4) *substantial*, in terms of numbers of users; (5) *heterogeneous*, involving different participants; and (6) *data-rich*, or spaces that have high traffic and volume of activity. Below I explain how this site met these criteria.

The research site for the nonparticipant observation was a large, literacy-focused online teacher community on Facebook. Created in 2016, the group is public -- i.e., content can be
viewed by anyone, with or without a Facebook account, though only group members can post -- with approximately 60,000 members. While demographic data are not available on the group, based on their posts, it is clear that group members have a wide variety of years of experience teaching and are from all over the United States. I cannot comment on race or gender since those constructs cannot be visibly observed. To become a member of the group, you have to be approved by the moderators and cannot post until you are approved; however, even if you are not a part of the group, you can see all of the posts and replies to posts. For ethical reasons, the group’s name and identity of all participants were anonymized in this study; members of the group were given pseudonyms, and I refer to the Facebook group as “Facebook Literacy Group.”

The group is managed by an organization that publishes pre-packaged literacy curriculum, and describes the purpose of the group as a community space to share challenges and successes, ask questions, and share resources (the company’s purpose statement is paraphrased to maintain anonymity). Like any Facebook group, there are administrators who manage the group and monitor participants’ posts to ensure decorum as well as respond to group members’ queries; the five administrators for this group are educators the publishing company has selected based on their knowledge of the literacy curriculum and teaching. Generally, teachers post questions on a range of topics from read aloud to writing instruction to assessment, such as running records. Posts to the site take different forms: some are text only, while others posts include video, photos, memes, links, file attachments, etc.

To briefly highlight the prolific activity of the group, there were 240 posts across the period of data collection with a range of numbers of likes and comments. The months with the highest number of posts (May, June, October, and November) reflect the ebb and flow of a
school year and the use of running record benchmarks as they are usually administered in the beginning, middle and end of year. Some posts within the group received no likes or comments, while others received up to 1000 likes and 170 comments. The research site was chosen during an exploratory pilot study I conducted during the spring and autumn of 2020.

Data Production

Data produced from the Facebook Literacy Group included posts and comments on posts group members posted on the topic of running records. Each post and its subsequent replies were considered one incident. Data was collected for eight months during May-early December 2021 (during the school year when teachers are likely most active; no data was collected in July 2021 because of summer vacation). I chose to observe the group in real time for two main reasons. First, with the netnographic approach, my participation (observation of the group) was a critical part of data production. By observing in real time, a few times a month, over a several months, I was able to spend time in the group and not only observe the posts and replies within the group but gain a more intimate sense of the social media space itself and its ebb and flow. I also, over time, was able to attend to my own feelings and emotions to the group and the content therein. Secondly, a retrospective analysis of posts would be difficult within the platform itself; while one can search for older posts, it is not an easy task, and so observing in real time was more feasible and more organic to the way in which users use the Facebook app. The table below captures the number of posts read each month, along with the range of comments and likes on the posts. (The months with the least number of posts are also the months I observed the group less frequently; however, during five of the eight months [May-June and September-November] I was consistent with the number of observations made).

Table 1. Overview of Data Produced.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Number of Days I observed</th>
<th>Total Posts</th>
<th>Comment Range</th>
<th>Like Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>6-149</td>
<td>1-81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>4-93</td>
<td>0-236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July (no data collected)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7-41</td>
<td>0-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>0-170</td>
<td>0-541</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>0-35</td>
<td>0-149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>1-60</td>
<td>0-1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3-16</td>
<td>0-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>33</strong></td>
<td><strong>240</strong></td>
<td><strong>0-170</strong></td>
<td><strong>0-1,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In alignment with Facebook’s terms of service (Facebook, 2020) and recommendations on ethics from the Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR, 2020, p. 14), Facebook does not allow its content to be scraped, or extracted, through a third-party software or digital tool. This meant I had to take a manual approach in my data collection, though this also fits within a netnographic approach of observing closely and recording field notes of what was observed and how it struck the researcher. Each time I sat to collect and produce data for the study, I opened a document where I collected my field notes, observations and reflections as well as a spreadsheet to manually capture the posts and data about the posts. Columns in the data collection spreadsheet were as follows: content of post, date posted, date observed, number of likes, number of replies, poster’s name, pseudonym assigned, URL to post, and miscellaneous notes. Before engaging with the group, I would write a quick and short memo about what was going on with me personally and professionally that day as an audit trail to capture how my personal experiences may have influenced my reaction to what I observed in the group. All field notes and memos were time stamped so that I had a record of how long I spent each observation/data
collection session. Once that quick memo was written, I opened the Facebook app, went to the Literacy Facebook group, and would begin reading posts in the group from the top of the feed. I would reach each post. If it addressed running records in some way, I would collect it in the spreadsheet and write a field note about how it struck me. If it did not relate to running records, I skipped over the post and continued reading. At the end of each data collection session, I would write a quick summary memo with my reflections about that day’s experience and note the time I finished with the data collection session. The table above demonstrates the number of sessions each month; sessions of data collection ranged from 45-120 minutes.

In this study, a post and all its comments were considered one incident. Within each incident, there were segments. Each post and its subsequent comments were labeled as a segment. Each reply was counted as a new segment. In order to make the logic of the comments clear, I also included the level of the post/comment. So, as an example, in the post below (see Table 2), there was the original post from Anita L (all names are pseudonyms) and one comment to the original post from a representative of the publishing company that runs the group. No one else commented on the original post or replied to the comment. This post had a total of two segments.

**Table 2. Anita L’s Post.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segment</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Post/Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1       | Original Post (OP)     | Anita L  
I’m in need of some clarification….  
When completing running records for English Language Learners, when they make mistakes with endings, do those count as errors?  
Ex: student says elephant for elephants OR jumps/jumped for jumping  
Thanks for your input!                                                   |
| 2       | Reply to OP            | Literacy Facebook Group Representative  
Errors are coded and scored the same for all readers. Keep in mind though that we make placement decisions for instruction based on our  |
analysis and not accuracy scores alone. Look beyond the numbers to the analysis of reading behaviors to determine a placement level. There is a section on English language learners in the FAQ section of your [brand name of assessment manual] that may be helpful to consult for more information.

Each time I observed the group, I entered a memo of observations in my field notes journal. The field notes were a place to record my own responses and reactions to the posts. This was important because, while I recorded posts in the spreadsheet to document them, keeping a field notebook allowed me to pay attention to other particulars of the group and situate what people were bringing up in the posts within my own experience as a teacher. The field notes journal also allowed me to create an audit trail of my thinking and decision making as I conducted my research.

**Ethical Considerations**

Working with online data, even when these data are public, brings up important ethical considerations about privacy and consent (AoIR, 2020). Below, I outline my ethical considerations for this component of data collection. As noted above, the Facebook group is a public group that anyone (with or without a Facebook account) can view, so information within the group is already public and therefore it is not necessary to announce my presence as a researcher (AoIR, 2020). As I employed an unobtrusive method of nonparticipant observation (Chen, 2017; Hine, 2011; Kozinets, 2015; Lee, 2000), I did not engage with the members at the research site (i.e. the Facebook group). Unlike research on some social media sites where people share sensitive information such as their health status, the content posted in this group is career-related and not particularly sensitive, and participants posting in the group should be aware that what they share in a public group on a social media site is, in fact, public.
The AoIR’s guidelines (2020, p. 10) for Internet research ethics state that researchers ought to pseudonymize their data and be diligent about ensuring that direct quotes used in the reporting of the study do not identify anyone’s identities. Thus, to protect the participants in the group, I have chosen not to disclose the official name of the Facebook group. Participants were given pseudonyms. Finally, when direct quotes from the group are used to illustrate the study’s findings, I ran internet searches to ensure that the quote does not produce any search results which might identify the identity of the group or the participants.

I did not collect demographic data from any of the Facebook group members since doing so would require me to contact them; moreover, race, sex, and gender identity cannot be observed from a profile picture, name, etc. As my research question is centered around how educators discuss running records, and I observed a group of teachers, more information did not feel warranted about the participants and would have been inappropriate to collect since I did not obtaining individual consent from the groups’ members.

Data Analysis

Throughout the study, data analysis was an emergent process and took the form of field notes and researcher memos during data production (Charmaz, 2006; Cresswell, 2014). Qualitative researchers ought not wait for analysis until post-data collection since ongoing analysis during data collection could inform or alter the course of data collection itself (Bogden & Biklen, 2007; Cresswell, 2014; Horvat, 2013). In the next sections, I discuss the two broad approaches to data analysis used in this study: topic analysis and discourse analysis, as well as my decision making for choosing topics and posts to highlight within the findings I present.
**Ongoing Analysis**

I drew on the data analysis methods outlined by Charmaz (2006) and Cresswell (2014), who recommend note-taking, coding, and writing memos; these practices fit within the manual method of data collection I employed and are common practices of netnography (and most qualitative research). My role as a netnographer was to spend sufficient time in the field (Facebook group) while inductively examining the data to see what emerges, understanding that the process of data production and analysis is iterative and circular. Thus, throughout the data production process, I maintained a research journal to document my thoughts, feelings, reactions to data, and reactions, questions and wonderings about the data collection process and to record and make explicit my decision making throughout the study. This created an audit trail of my own feelings and positionality, an important form of data (Holly et al., 2008; Markham & Baym, 2009).

**Topic Analysis**

Topic analysis is a categorical analysis which pulls out the main topics and ideas participants bring up in their posts. As data are collected, read, described and reacted to, topics, keywords, or codes are developed in response to the data (Caliandro & Gandini, 2016). “Coding is the process of organizing the data by bracketing chunks and writing a word representing a category in the margins. It involves taking data...and labeling those categories with a term” (Cresswell, 2014, pp. 197-198).

Once all the data were collected, I reread the posts to get a sense of the range of topics and to continue to get to know my data well. As I reread the data corpus as a whole, I began to code the posts by topics that came up within the posts. Over time within even this first read of the data corpus, my language for the codes for topics started to become consistent. While data
analysis is not linear, coding was an entry point and opportunity to read through the data corpus as a whole and begin to notice trends and outliers. Coding was both top down (from my research questions and queer/discourse theory perspective), but also bottom up as codes emerged from my reading of the data (Cresswell, 2014). As I read through more of the posts collected, codes began to organically emerge. I then reread the corpus two more times, revisiting the codes I used and making adjustments to the codes to keep my language consistent across the data. Unlike some data coding processes in which the goal is to read, code, and then reread and condense codes until there are just a small number of codes, I allowed myself to keep a fairly large number of codes as I am looking to account for the actual topics teachers brought up in the posts dealing with running records without narrowing or reducing in a way that obscures what teachers talked about. This open approach to coding (Caliandro & Gandini, 2016) was fruitful in allowing a bird’s eye view of the data and getting a sense of what came up over the course of the seven months I observed the group. Of course, social media operates on an algorithm, so the topics I discovered may not account for the full range of topics discussed since there may be other posts that I did not see or that the algorithm did not push to my feed.

Coding was not the answer to my research question but rather a starting point as it gives entry points to highlight examples of the findings to illustrate how being in the group feels pertaining to what is discussed. Also, I was cautious to rely too heavily on coding as my goal was to be expansive and explore possibilities within my data, not to reduce it. Thus, posts were coded with multiple codes (e.g., if a post addressed multiple topics, it was given all codes that applied).

This level of analysis was of particular importance to my research question as I hoped to explore what teachers “talk” about when discussing running records and consider how it relates
to our current context of neoliberal education reform and the social media group. Multiple topics/themes were possible for each post since the length of a post was not limited, thus allowing space for posts to be complex and address multiple ideas.

**Selecting Posts for Discourse Analysis**

Once the entire corpus of data from online observations of the literacy Facebook group was read and coded by topics, I used those codes to generate preliminary interpretations and responses to my research questions through a series of analytic and interpretive memos. These memos allowed me to consider some of the major themes, topics, and feelings teachers expressed in the group.

To get a visual sense of the topics from the 24 codes from the 240 Facebook posts, I entered the codes and the frequency of the codes into a Word Cloud (https://www.wordclouds.com/). Even though I had already calculated the frequency of the number of times a topic came up, this visual representation allowed me to reflect on what seemed to take up the most and least space in the group, and to make choices about which topics to include as I present the findings since it was not feasible to do discourse analysis for all 24 topics. To make the hard decisions about which topics to investigate through a deeper discourse analysis and include as I tried to represent the landscape of the group both in terms of the consociality and dynamics of the group (Kozinets, 2015) as well as the content, I relied on wonder. As this was a netnography in which my human and personal view of the data was centered in the analysis, the topics to include to represent the landscape of the group and then to select posts for discourse analysis were chosen through what MacLure (2013) refers to as wonder, which they defined as:

This potentiality can be felt on occasions where something—perhaps a comment in an interview, a fragment of a field note, an anecdote, an object, or a strange facial
expression—seems to reach out...of the data, to grasp us. These moments confound the industrious, mechanical search for meanings, patterns, codes, or themes; but at the same time, they exert a kind of fascination, and have a capacity to animate further thought. (MacLure, 2013, p. 228).

**Figure 1. Word Cloud of Topics.**

![Word Cloud of Topics](image)

Using the word cloud (see Figure 1) and a lens of wonder, I narrowed the topics I would include for discourse analysis. To demonstrate the landscape, I chose to highlight the posts that took up most of the space during the time I observed the group (administration guidelines and customer service, for example), but I also chose some that were less frequent and still visible within the cloud, such as “kid talk” and “too much time.” Finally, I chose some that cannot even be read in the word cloud because so few posts addressed a particular topic, yet they felt very big to me (e.g., dialect and the science of reading). These are hot topic issues within education policy.
and schools, and it was surprising to me they took up such a small amount of space within the context of the group.

Once I established these broad topics of the content within the group to highlight, I chose posts within each topic to look at further and scrutinize using discourse analysis. In other words, the posts I chose for the discourse analysis were grounded in my process of narrowing of the topic analysis. Using the word cloud and a lens of wonder, I also considered the intersection of topics (as I had coded posts with multiple topics if the post addressed multiple things) as a way to include a more holistic landscape of the group. My goal in presenting the result of my choices was to demonstrate the phenomenon of the group: everything is multiplicitous. Rarely, did I encounter a post as I observed and feel like it was just one thing. Within most posts, multiple topics often arose and intersected and these surfaced the many underlying assumptions and discourses from which teachers oriented.

In other words, I selected several posts from each topic by reading the posts within each topic and looking for moments of wonder that feel particularly illustrative of various topics. As I reread posts within each topic, I asked myself, “Which posts feel representative of this topic and offer an example that feels typical?” Highlighting posts that felt typical of a particular topic arguably would give a sense of the group’s dynamic. At the same time, I also asked, “Which posts within each topic stand out as an anomaly in some way?” My queer theoretical perspective invited me to see posts in multiple ways but to also juxtapose posts.

I also asked, “Which posts address multiple topics that will allow a window into the complexity and breadth of the group since I am not intended to do this deep analysis across all 24 topics individually?” By doing so, I was able to account for the complexity of the group rather than reducing it to a set of neat topics since topics often intersected. I also considered both my
emotional response to a post (did it make me angry? frustrated? melancholy? excited?) and the emotional response and engagement from group members in the comments. By being conscious and reflective of including posts that demonstrated complexity among issues and topics, I feel that I have constructed a portrait of the group and its dynamics that reflects the complexity of the group.

By allowing myself to remain human and present in my research by being fascinated by specific points of data, the selections for discourse analysis allow me to describe the group and their discussions in more impactful ways since I can offer up my auto-ethnographic explanations for why those posts resonated within each theme.

**Discourse Analysis**

In this netnography, because my queer theoretical framework acknowledges contradiction (i.e. that someone might feel or hold contradictory ideas all at once), I needed to account for ways in which contradictions might exist within a post in the Facebook group. To do this level of discourse analysis, I used tools from Gee (2005) that also map onto the queer tools outlined in my theoretical framework (see Chapter 1). In other words, I chose these specific tools because they align with my ontological approach to the study (see Table 1). Gee’s discourse analysis tools and their alignment with my queer framework are discussed below.

**Table 3. Defining Queer Tools.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Queer Tool Construct</th>
<th>Brief Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concurrence</td>
<td>This tool allows for “both…and” (Luhman, 1998, p. 124) or the idea that multiple ideas can coexist, even when contradictory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epistemic Symbiosis</td>
<td>Language is unstable because concepts depend on one another in order to be constructed (failure exists only because success is defined and vice versa [Britzman, 1995; Luhmann, 1998]).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Filling-in Tool. What a speaker says (or types) and the context in which it was said usually suggests what the person meant (Gee, 2011, p. 11). However, context is often left to be assumed by the listener and reader. The Filling-in tool is a discourse analysis tool used to help “fill in” missing context from the speaker so as to make an interpretation about the meaning. Some guided questions for this tool are “What is missing here needed to achieve clarity? What knowledge, assumptions, and inferences do listeners have to bring to bear in order for this communication to be clear and understandable and received in the way the speaker intended it?” (Gee, 2011, p. 12). As mentioned earlier, I cannot know much or infer much beyond what is shared in the posts since I am not interacting with members of the Facebook group. However, my positioning as an elementary reading teacher and a member of the group means I have schema and an orientation that will allow me to do this interpretative work. “Using [the fill-in] tool, you ask what information, assumptions, and inferences are needed for understanding not just what people mean in any narrow sense, but what they are trying to accomplish with their language, what their purposes are, what they are trying to do” (Gee, 2011, p. 17). This tool speaks to the notion of concurrence. Listeners who do not fill in may have different interpretations than those who do fill in, and even when “filling in” what’s missing, different people, depending on their own context, may interpret what’s being said differently. This level of analysis was important as I considered multiplicity as opposed to narrowing an interpretation.

The MakingStrange Tool. Similarly, the making strange tool maps onto my queer framework as queering something refers to the work of deconstructing it and making it strange. To make something strange, we read or listen to language as an outsider. A key question for this
tool is to ask, “What would someone (perhaps even a Martian) find strange here (unclear, confusing, worth questioning) if that person did not share the knowledge and assumptions and make the inferences that render the communication so natural and taken-for-granted by insiders?” (Gee, 2011, p. 12). As previously mentioned, I shared knowledge with both the topic (literacy assessment) and the group, so it is critical for me as a researcher to really examine the data from the Facebook group in ways where I try to think outside of the shared knowledge I may have. In this sense, the making strange tool helped me think about what needed to be “filled in” in order to interpret the post. This tool also speaks to the notion of epistemic symbiosis as by making strange what was said, there’s an opportunity to look for language constructs that are unstable or depend on another term in order to exist. Furthermore, one of the goals of ethnography is to make strange what is observed (Eisenhart, 2018), and thus this tool is appropriate.

The Doing and Not Just Saying Tool. As I examined teachers’ attitudes and emotions about running records (not just what they say or the topics they bring up but HOW they say it), the doing and not just saying tool became a critical component of data analysis. “Because language is used for different functions and not just to convey information, which is but one of its functions, it is always useful to ask of any communication: What is the speaker trying to DO and not just what is the speaker trying to SAY?” (Gee, 2011, p. 42). In other words, this tool pushes the researcher to not just think about what is being communicated but the function of the language. For example, a teacher querying about the administration of a running record could be seeking information on how to perform the assessment or could be seeking to confirm that their administration is not administering the assessment correctly. Again, this tool alone would not allow me to make that interpretation but by considering the tools as a whole, I may be able to
imagine some possibilities of the function of the language. This tool speaks to the idea of concurrence, once again, as what a speaker is trying to do could be multiplicitous, notwithstanding that there could be many interpretations of what the speaker was trying to do.

**The Why This Way and Not that Way Tool.** This tool is one more way to do some interpretive work to consider what the speaker/participant means. For this tool, you ask: “...how else this could have been said and what the speaker was trying to mean and do by saying it the way in which [they] did, and not in other ways” (Gee, 2011, p. 55). By considering why a person chose a particular way to share something, this helps in thinking about what it is that that person was trying to accomplish with their language. People use language to show rapport, to appear professional, to express frustration or dissent, and so on. Looking at why a participant chose one way to say something over another is critical in considering what may be their feelings about what is communicated. This tool, like the others, builds on the other tools.

**The Significance Building Tool.** What we communicate as significant or insignificant is constructed through language. This discourse analysis tool looks toward the words and grammar of what is shared in order to investigate what is foregrounded as significant and what is backgrounded. Gee gives the following example, which illustrates this:

In a sentence like “While I know I did wrong, I am basically a good person,” the clause “I am basically a good person” is the main clause. ...thus it is the asserted information...A sentence like “While I am basically a good person, I know I did wrong” reverses the foreground and background. Now “I know I did wrong” is foregrounded and asserted and “I am basically a good person” is background and assumed or taken-for-granted information. (2011, pp. 92-93)

How language is constructed together is one way we can think about what is significant about what is being communicated.

**Doing Discourse Analysis**
Once I selected the posts for analysis, I recorded written or voice memos with my wonderings about the post and its comments through the lens of Gee’s tools outlined above. In some cases, I used Padlet (www.padlet.com) as a tool for mapping and dissecting ideas with Gee’s tools. From these memos, voice memos, or Padlet maps, I then organized my thinking and drafted the analysis. For example, below is a Padlet I made for one of the Facebook posts with my rough draft thinking with Gee’s discourse analysis tools.

Figure 2. Using Padlet to Assist with Discourse Analysis.
Researcher Positionality

Qualitative researchers must be reflexive as they are “understood to be the instrument of data gathering and analysis” (Luttrell, 2009, p. 3). That is, qualitative researchers must continuously do a lot of identity work - identity work that is not static. In fact, I am of the mind that one’s positioning and identity is highly protean, and ever changing in relation to one’s environment, context, time, and learning or unlearning. So while researchers can generally claim certain positions, they ought to account for how those positions may be more or less present in different times/spaces and must also account for the fact that positions/perspectives can change. I am cautious to claim a fixed position but have attempted to outline one here. Below, I loosely use Milner’s (2007) positionality framework of researching the self and researching the self in relation to others to consider how my unique positioning and perspective will play a role in my research in visible and invisible ways, and by being open about some of my own biases.

First and foremost, as stated earlier on, I am a member of the Facebook group (and have been since it was created in 2016), though I have not made a post or comment myself since I began my doctoral studies in autumn 2017. These days I am what internet researchers refer to as a lurker in the group (Kozinets, 2015). I believe that being a member of this group has its own benefits. For one, though I do not presently post in the group, I can personally recall what motivated me to post questions or resources in the past. I can speak to my own experience of how it felt to be a part of the group and the feeling of how it felt to be affirmed within the group and to have disagreements. I also recall what sorts of posts motivated me to respond to someone (usually when I felt like I had the knowledge to answer or share my experience or when I had a volatile reaction to something I saw as bad practice). Netnography positions the human
researcher at the center of the research, and I think especially as I am part of this group, my own reflections of being a member of the group alongside the data produced was valuable.

More broadly, I am a queer, white teacher, who has taught and worked in various communities. I grew up in the Appalachian Mountains on a farm with parents who did not graduate from high school but indoctrinated my sister and I with the belief of a meritocratic society - that if we worked really hard, our lives would be better.

Coming from Appalachia, I have witnessed and experienced the discrimination of dialect-preference; institutions and people assume that my family is not intelligent because of the way that they talk, read, and write. I also bore witness to this as a teacher of Black students in New Orleans, who were brilliant thinkers but whose language use did not match the monolingual, “standard” English (i.e., white) dialect of the curriculum and assessment. It is a resistance to and disruption of normalcy of our language that brings me to this work around problematizing running records within our current education reform and my curiosity around how other teachers take it up.

In considering this problem and questions within this study, my queer identity pushes me to disrupt binaries and the notion of either/or in almost every way. My intent is not to say that running records are good or bad or that the way teachers talk about running records is positive or negative. My aim was to examine the layers, nuances, ambivalence, and multiplicity of it all.

**Trustworthiness and Credibility**

Qualitative research must account for the trustworthiness and credibility of the research; Cresswell (2014) identified eight validity strategies relevant to qualitative methodology, arguing that using multiple strategies would help justify the research’s trustworthiness and credibility.
Below I discuss 4 of the eight components: (1) presenting discrepant information, (2) clarifying bias, (3) using thick, rich description, and (4) spending sufficient time in the field.

First, this study does not attempt to report the findings of the study in a neat package. Instead, it seeks to offer multiple ways of viewing the data, including presenting information that is outlying. When data will not neatly fit, it will not be discarded, but rather included as a counterpoint in order to establish nuance. Further, the queer theoretical framework grounding this study establishes the notion of concurrence, which as the name implies, is a tool that allows one to see with multiplicity. Queer theory’s productivity lies in this double impulse of production and deconstruction, in its “‘both...and’ structure” (Luhmann, 1998, p. 124). That is, we can allow multiple readings and realities all at once.

Second, one system of accountability in the research process is disclosing and documenting researcher bias and positionality. Clarifying a researcher’s bias through both disclosure of the researcher’s positionality and consistent reflexivity throughout data collection, analysis, and the study as a whole develops the trustworthiness of the research (Cresswell, 2014, p. 202). Markham and Baym (2009) discusses issues of standards and reliability/validity in online qualitative research, emphasizing the importance of documenting the research project, justifying choices and changes made and a researcher’s reactions to them as critical to making claims about reliability. My whole self was present and documented in this research project as was my decision making regarding methodology.

As such, any time I visited the Facebook site to observe, I journaled and wrote memos to describe what I did during that sitting, as well as personal reflections about my positioning, thoughts I had about the data collection or any other thinking that may have occurred during my thinking or work during that sitting, particularly since I am also a member of the group. Changes,
enhancements, problems or troubleshooting to my methodology were recorded and justified in this journal (and are reflected in this chapter), along with self-reflexive memos about my own reactions to the data.

Third, the data were analyzed with the goal of creating rich, thick descriptions (Cresswell, 2014; Geertz, 1973). As a netnography, the goal of responding to the research questions was not merely to report out the topics or themes I deduced from the data but to offer many perspectives by describing Facebook group in great detail, including use of direct quotes from the content of the Facebook group, and actual images or descriptions of images from the Facebook group. The number of posts collected were included so the reader has a sense of the size of the corpus of data, the larger focus is on the nuances of the data. These thick descriptions bring alive the data to readers in light of my conclusions/findings.

Finally, the study was designed with trustworthiness and credibility in mind as I spent sufficient time in the field. I observed the online group for seven months until there was sufficient saturation in the data (Charmaz, 2006). That is, I observed the group online until “fresh data no longer sparks new insights or reveals new properties” (Creswell, 2006, p. 189); additionally in late November 2021, the moderator of the group posted that the group was on vacation for the last week of November for the Thanksgiving holiday, meaning they had disabled people’s ability to post within the group. When I checked back in the group in December, there was still very little activity. By spending what is essentially a semester in the Facebook group (the end of a school year and the beginning of another), there has been enough opportunity to capture the ebb and flow of teachers’ thoughts and feelings regarding running records across half a school year.
Overall, the study was designed with these constructs in mind in order to help establish trustworthiness and credibility while also making the intentionality of considering credibility transparent. Moreover, considerations of ethics were discussed in regard to data collection procedures and how information would be reported. While the role of the researcher will always affect the data collection, analysis and findings, and the researcher is part of the research themselves, these constructs are of paramount consideration in establishing trustworthiness and credibility.

**Limitations of the Study**

This study also presents several significant limitations. One major limitation has to do with the nature of the data within the Facebook group. This is a limitation for several reasons. First, I obtained data from only one Facebook group, albeit a prolific one. Researching a second or third Facebook group may very well yield different data and thereby analysis (Kozinets, 2015); however as a solo researcher, this did not seem feasible for a dissertation. Second, the Facebook group is directed by an education publishing company and thus conversations within the group are often geared toward these products; an investigation into a Facebook group of literacy teachers not run by a publishing company may very well look different. Because this group is one of a particular “brand” of literacy curriculum and running records, teachers who use other curricular “brands” of running records likely are not represented in this study. Third, this is a public group. Because it is public, it is possible that group members may have censored themselves to a degree in this space for fear that their administration or other work colleagues may see it (I do not suspect this to be the case based on what was shared). A private group where teachers need not worry about what they share may very well look different (though, again, to research in this kind of group, you would need to announce your research which would also alter
the course of what is shared). Fourth, research in this Facebook group privileges teachers who have access to tech and who choose to participate in social media; teachers who do not have or use technology or do not participate in social media are not represented in this study. Finally, because I did not want to disrupt the natural ebb and flow of the Facebook group and observe it unobtrusively, the nature of the study did not allow me to follow up with any of the educators posting within the Facebook group or to obtain any demographic data that they do not openly share within the posts in the group. While I believe that unobtrusive observation in order to maintain the regularity of the group produced data that would have otherwise been skewed by participants knowing a researcher was observing, an opportunity to follow up with participants could potentially be valuable. Moreover, because online spaces for educators are “a second teachers’ lounge” (Carpenter & Morrison, 2018, p. 1), I believe that the choice for unobtrusive observation superseded the opportunity to follow up.
Chapter 4: “IS THERE ANY EASY WAY?” AND “STILL DOING TOO MUCH”: EXPLORING TEACHERS’ POSTS AROUND RUNNING RECORDS

On a drizzly autumn afternoon in early November 2021, Election Day, to be exact, I sat at my dining table, phone in one hand, an iced coffee in the other, with the Literacy Facebook Group open. It had been almost a week since I had last opened the group to observe the goings on of the over 55,000 teachers who make up the group, and I was excited to catch up on what I had missed in the last week of October. Almost immediately upon opening the app on my phone, I see a photo of a team of teachers, wearing the same color t-shirts, all donned in leggings and running shoes, with vinyl records hanging from their necks. The caption reads (paraphrased): “Our grade team dressed up as running records!” I laughed out loud at the cleverness of this physical word play, and my jaw dropped when I looked at the like count and number of comments. The post had 1,000 likes and 60 comments. This post, so silly and seemingly trivial, had certainly received a lot of attention from the group. Even more surprising, three of the 60 replies were from other teachers who wore a similar costume! Other comments were wonderstruck: “You win!” “You can’t beat this costume!” “Mary - We HAVE to do this next year!” While initially shocked at the post and the attention it garnered, I reflected in a memo in my field notes later that evening that this fits with what I know about social media: “Posts with images seem to get more attention…and a post that can make you laugh or smile in year three of pandemic teaching is probably warmly welcomed.” As trivial as this post is, it felt significant to me because it speaks volumes about the powerful discourses surrounding literacy assessment and reading levels. I reflected on this in my field notes on November 2, 2021:
Are running records such a part of a literacy teacher’s identity that one would literally dress up as one? Do running records take up so much space in our schools that one turns a dress up day at school as an opportunity to become one? Is teaching so hard and often so joyless and do we over-assess kids so much that this is an opportunity to laugh to keep from crying?

This post is one of 240 I read in the Facebook group across a span of seven months in 2021. And as unusual as the post is, it speaks to the heart and flow of the group: a space for educators to share anything and everything.

**Organization of Findings**

The data produced in this netnography were 240 posts from a large Facebook group for teachers run by a company that publishes a balanced literacy curriculum, along with pages and pages of field notes with my observations, wonderings and personal experiences in relation to what teachers shared in the group. Data were produced from May 2021 to early December 2021. Below I outline my rationale for the construction of the findings as related to my theoretical framework, research questions, and the existing body of literature on literacy assessment.

The overarching research question guiding this project was, “What is the nature of elementary teachers’ posts around running record assessments within a social media space?” My sub-questions focused on what teachers brought up about running records and how long-standing discourses circulated within these posts and discussions. So, the findings are presented loosely by topic to explicitly address research sub-question 1a, however, within each topic I examine, I present a discourse analysis of the posts and discussions (research question 1b). I then present a summary of the discourses to explicitly address sub-question 1b and conclude the chapter with an overall summary of the findings.
Selecting Posts to Present in the Findings

It is important to note that the data produced reflects what the Facebook algorithm chose to show me on the occasions when I signed on to the Facebook group and thus do not necessarily reflect the totality of posts regarding running records. Additionally, while I read through all the posts in the group each time I observed the group, I only captured posts that dealt with the topic of this inquiry, running records, and did not capture the myriad other topics and issues that people post about in this group (e.g., read aloud, small group work, spelling, writing).

I used content analysis to get a sense of the range of topics and issues teachers brought up within the space regarding running records, as outlined in detail in chapter 3. Coding by topic produced 24 unique topic codes. Some codes were only applied to 1 post, while others were applied to many posts. Several topics emerged and reemerged across the period of observation of the group. Most of the posts were about how to administer running records. Customer service, or seeking help from someone who works for the company that manages the Facebook group, was also frequent. Overall, posts about administration guidelines for running records, coding running records, customer service requests, what children said during running records (kid talk), students’ comprehension, and that running records take too much time to administer were among the most frequent across the span of the netnography. The table below includes the topic, the number of posts the topic occurred in, and a brief description of those posts.

Table 4. Topics Teachers Discussed in the Facebook Group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Frequency (number of posts)</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Posts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer service</td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running Record Coding</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kid Talk</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment Frequency</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too Much Time</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress Monitoring</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with Disabilities</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Management</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cold Versus Warm Read</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergent Bilinguals</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Posts queried for help or support with print or digital materials related to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the company’s running records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posts are a subset of “Running Record administration guidelines” that dealt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>specifically with coding a student’s oral reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posts discussed the comprehension component of the running record or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discussed how students made meaning from the text, including retelling,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inferential and evaluative thinking, and making connections with the text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posts shared things students said during a running record (usually humorous,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with one exception)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posts discussed how frequently or when running records should be administered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e.g. beginning, middle, end of year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posts discussed that running records consume too much time when teachers are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>required to do them for the whole class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posts sought suggestions for resources or materials stating they were</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>planning to present PD in their school or district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post discussed ways to monitor students’ progress between running records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or how to use running records for monitoring students’ progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posts addressed using running records with students with disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posts discussed routines or procedures for what students do when running</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>records are administered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posts discussed students reading a text cold (for the first time) or warm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(having read the text before) during a running record</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>These posts discussed emergent bilinguals with regard to scoring or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interpreting running records or how to use running records with emergent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bilinguals. (None of the posts referred to these students as emergent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bilinguals but</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
instead used English Language Learner (ELL); I make this distinction with my code in order to highlight the strengths of these students and not orient from a deficit perspective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Posts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Science of Reading (SOR)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posts highlighted the latest debate in literacy education, SOR, and how it fit or did not fit with running records</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benchmarks</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posts discussed when students should be at a particular reading level (e.g., first graders should be at J by end of the school year)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Running Records</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posts addressed doing running records on a device or app instead of paper/pencil</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running Record Alternatives</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posts discussed alternative assessments or ways to imagine running records differently</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Strategies</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posts discussed plans of action about teaching based on information gleaned from a running record</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment Validity</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posts questioned or discussed the validity or trustworthiness of running record results</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialect</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posts discussed the role of language variation/dialect in understanding or scoring a student’s oral reading [accuracy]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pushback</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posts discussed teachers’ resistance to administering running records</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research-based practices</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posts queried about the research on which running records are based</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dress Up</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This post discussed how a team of teachers dressed up as running records for Halloween</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running Record brands</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The post queried about differences among running record benchmarks offered by different companies/organizations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part of the rationale for the methodology of netnography is that I am inherently present among the data and entangled in the group as well as entangled more generally as I live the life of an elementary school educator. My perspective and experience of teaching literacy in this era of neoliberal education policy is a bias but an incredible strength as well. In the way that teachers
of very young children can often look at a child’s writing that is nonsense to the unassuming eye and understand the message the child intends to convey, I, too, feel that I possess the ability to “fill-in” (Gee, 2011) and understand the nuances of what teachers discussed and queried in this space because I know the curriculum, the tools, and problems they write about well. As discussed in Chapter 3, I have carefully analyzed the data and constructed the presentation of findings in a way that attempts to breathe life into the posts such that the reader has a real sense of the landscape of the group in regard to how running records are discussed by the members. As there were 240 posts collected which I ultimately coded as spanning 24 topics, it was not feasible to discuss all 240 posts or even present examples of the 24 topics I named. Instead, what I have chosen to do is to present topics and posts that reflect the range and dynamics of the group. I offer up examples of topics that surfaced frequently, infrequently, and in-between. And, because posts are never just about one thing or topic, I often chose posts that intersected with several topics. The purpose of choosing posts that intersected topics was two-fold: first, teaching is complex and that is reflected in the posts; and, second, showcasing and highlighting posts that intersect multiple topics allows the reader a window into topics I did not include in the presentation of findings. In other words, I coded the posts to get a sense of issues and topics that appeared within the data corpus, but the reality is that the posts themselves can rarely be contained, as they reflect complexity and messiness - just like schools themselves. Ultimately, attempts to organize will always fail in that sense - nothing is truly a binary, which is again why I orient from both a queer theory and discourse theory perspective. Our language and thereby construction of meaning is created from those language patterns, habits and language-in-use over time. Often language is intended to make sense of complex issues and does so in a way that attempts to fit concepts and ideas within categorical, often binary, boxes. This is why I am
drawing on queer theory as a lens because I am looking for moments of both/and (Luhman, 1998). By being open to the complexity, or messiness as I am embracing it, I present the data by topic but in a loose sense. Within each discussion there are moments where other topics surface as well as an analysis that highlights the multiple discourses prevalent within discussions of the group.

**A Slice of the Literacy Facebook Group**

Phone in hand, laptop in front of me, an iced coffee or seltzer depending on the time of day, I open the Facebook app on my phone, and I click on the Literacy Facebook Group. What juicy drama, what funny story from something a child shared, or what heartbreaking reality will teachers share today? I toggle back and forth between phone and laptop as I read, collect the posts about running records, and jot notes. Below is not a day in the life of the group, but it is a pulse over eight months’ time that creates what one could possibly see in one sitting within the social media space situated within my own experience and response as an educator myself.

**How Do I Administer Running Records? How Do I Code Oral Reading?**

72 of the posts I observed in the group posed questions about the standard procedures for administering a running record to a student. 30 of those posts were about the standardized protocols for coding a student’s oral reading. There are several “brands” of running record benchmarks, and within each brand, there are often multiple editions, published every few years, in which protocols (guidelines for conducting a running record) slightly change. The mix of multiple assessment tools for running records and various editions floating around schools and districts unsurprisingly leads to confusion at best, and heated debate over the “right” way at worst. The frequency of posts around this topic also may suggest that there is a lack of professional development within schools and districts around running records and their uses. The
frequency and tenor of these posts also suggests the consociality of the group – people come to the group during their lunch or prep or after school, hoping to get a query answered quickly. Pragmatism felt abundant across topics but particularly so here. These queries about the administration of running records also vary from big picture questions to more minute details. These issues are evident in the four posts below.

For example, in December 2021, Sue W (all names have been anonymized) posted the following (paraphrased so the post is not searchable on Google):

Let's talk formal running record benchmarks. Our district is wanting to have teachers do at least one formal running record and then continue to progress monitor throughout the year with informal running records. If you had to pick one time to do a formal running record when would it be and why? Fall, Winter, or Spring and why?

This post is a big picture post regarding running record administration. Sue is concerned with when running records should be given within the school year. In September 2021, Farah C posted,

Hi all- Question about benchmarks. For BOY [beginning of year] assessment on students who were given running records at the end of last year, where do you start? And if, for example, what was their reading level at the end of last year, is now hard, do you continue to assess backwards to get their current reading level or use the highest level from last year? Thanks for your thoughts.

This post takes up the issue not with when to assess but with how to know where to start. Farah is planning to assess students at the beginning of the school year but does not know what the procedure is for determining which level to start a student with at the beginning of the year or how to make judgment calls if/when a student’s reading level is lower than it was at the end of the last school year.

There is also range within the posts about coding running records well. Deidra H posted the following question in May 2021: “Counting errors. We only count names one time. Is that true of all proper nouns?” This is the nitty gritty of running records; here Deidra is seeking
clarity about the rules for counting errors when the word a student misread is a proper noun; unfortunately, it received no responses. In contrast, Libby M posted the following in May 2021 five days after Deidra and received a response from the group moderator and others.

**Table 5. Libby M.’s Post About Administering Running Records.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segment</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Post/Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Original Post (OP)</td>
<td>Libby M Hi. I need help with a running record. When a child inserts a word, do you do a MSV analysis on the error? If so, how does it get coded if it makes sense and is structurally sound? Thank you!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Reply to OP</td>
<td>Karen D No...no MSV for omissions or insertions 😞</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Reply to Karen D</td>
<td>Barbara S @Karen D never seen that written down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Reply to Barbara S</td>
<td>Debbie G this is the correct procedure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Reply to Karen D</td>
<td>Literacy Facebook Group Representative It doesn't need to be written down though it is somewhere in Marie Clay's original work but I can't give you a page. The process of analyzing for sources of information used involves comparing the word said to the word in the text. In the case of an insertion or omission, there is no word to which you can compare. It is not analyzed also because majority of the time it is using meaning and structure - it is often a result of the child's oral language, so there is no meaningful information gained therefore not a useful way to spend your time. You can analyze it but it won't change anything in terms of instruction. Hope this helps! 😊</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Reply from OP to Group Representative</td>
<td>Libby M Thank you. Okay. An insertion is usually the result of the child's oral language. That makes sense.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Reply OP</td>
<td>Leja W Used MS. Did not use V.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discourse Analysis: Libby M and Help With a Running Record

Among the four posts within this topic, I chose Libby’s to dive deeper with discourse analysis. I chose Libby’s because there are several moves at play within this post that illustrate frequent tensions within the group. Broadly, Libby indicates the child made an insertion, a word that was not on the printed page that the reader inserted between two printed words. But, Libby is unsure of the next part of the analysis, the MSV analysis and whether or not it is possible to do MSV analysis on an inserted word. MSV analysis is an analysis teachers use to review a child’s miscues/errors during their oral reading to make inferences about how the reader was processing text and which cueing systems they used: meaning (M), syntax (S), or visual (V) (Clay, 2014).

Within this post, there is a heavy tone of pragmatism, which suggests that one of the functions of the group is to get an answer quickly - perhaps more quickly than checking a manual or other professional resource or emailing the publishing company. However, concurrently embedded within this urgent pragmatism and quick responses to a question is an internalized discourse of teachers as technicians and “rule following” (e.g., Au, 2011) as opposed to teachers as professionals and thinkers (Britzman, 2003). Finally, the power dynamic of the group representative reifies this narrative in addition to creating a group environment whereby members of the group are expected to believe whatever the publishing company or its representatives say without any evidence.

Using Gee’s (2011) tool of Doing and Not Just saying, where one asks, “What is the speaker trying to DO and not just what is the speaker trying to SAY?” (Gee, 2011, p. 42), I infer
that Libby is in the throes of administering running records and looking for a quick response. In segment 1, she begins with a polite but quick, “Hi. I need help.” In the original post (segment 1), Libby also asks a yes or no question with a follow up question that if the answer is yes, how? Libby’s post is short and to the point. It seems she is here in the space looking for a quick answer to a question regarding running record analysis. In turn, commenters match Libby’s concision with even shorter replies. Segments 2, 4, and 9 all respond letting Libby know you cannot do an MSV analysis on a word a child inserted into the sentence while reading. In segment 9, Kate B responds with only “No MSV.” Filling-in (Gee, 2011), I assume Kate meant “No MSV analysis on inserted words.” This type of post really highlights the language that people within the group share and do not share. Kate assumes that Libby will understand what “NO MSV” means, based on her question and the assumption of shared language, a result of shared practice with running records. While there is some shared language and understanding, there is not necessarily shared agreement, or otherwise Libby would not be questioning what the right move is with regard to MSV analysis. This is a good example of how some shared language may cause people to assume shared knowledge, which is not necessarily the case. The sheer number of posts regarding questions around the administration of running records speaks to this. If there were shared knowledge around administering and using running records, it might seem logical there would then be fewer technical questions regarding scoring or giving them. Still, segments 2, 4, 7, and 9 are all replies to Libby’s query that I would presume were meant to be supportive in helping her find her answer.

In this post, Libby is asking about the rule for analyzing a word inserted during the child’s oral reading (segment 1). From the post, Libby reveals that the child’s insertion while reading maintained meaning and fit syntactically (segment 1: “if so, how does it get coded if it
makes sense and is structurally sound?”) but wants to ensure they are marking it correctly on the form. While the replies in segments 2, 4, and 9 give the correct information to Libby that you do not do MSV analysis on insertions (Clay, 2014), as does the group representative in segment 5, the function of Libby’s query is about the procedural and following the standard protocols correctly. Of course, it is a professional’s job to know and follow guidelines. However, in this case, the focus is on the procedure of getting the coding right as opposed to inferring or thinking about supporting the learner who made the insertion. Overall, the technicality of the query in the post reiterates the discourse of teachers as technicians (Au, 2011; Collin & Apple, 2007). Teachers are doers who enact policies and procedures because others have told them to do so. This is particularly highlighted in the response from the Facebook group representative.

The response from the group moderator answers the question but also asserts the company/representative as the authority without needing credibility. The opening line of their reply of segment 5 “It [the rule about MSV analysis and insertions] doesn't need to be written down though it is somewhere in Marie Clay's original work but I can't give you a page” is loaded with assumptions. Using Gee’s (2011) significance building tool, beginning the response with “it doesn’t need to be written down” assumes that the members in the group should believe what the publishers say outright without any research or literature to document it. In other words, what is significant and stressed here is the authority of the representative. Filling-in (Gee, 2011) what is implied, “I can’t give you a page” also seems to indicate that the moderator felt the need to reply in the moment but could not be bothered to go as far to find relevant literature or resources to support the original poster’s query. Overall, the moderator’s reply was a reminder that power is always present in any space but that the moderators of the Facebook group are inherently experts on the subject who have the right opinion with or without giving any evidence for their thinking.
This reply did not honor Libby’s experience or question but shut down the conversation. This kind of response from the representative is rather typical throughout the group and the posts I have observed; they function to regulate and assert their power as the sole expert. And, this power move from the company representative operates again to position teachers not as experts or knowers but as enactors of procedures.

72 different posts across several months are seeking clarification on aspects of how-to administer running records. The heavy focus on queries about when and how to administer the running record assessment could not be overlooked as I mined the data.

“May I Speak to a Representative?”

Another group of posts that appeared quite frequently during my observation of the group were what I coded as customer service requests. This was an important reminder that this is a group for teachers but operated by representatives of the curriculum developers and publishing company, so people come to the space for customer support. Below are three examples of these posts.

1. Mary J, June 2021: Please remind me, is there an online component for running records?

2. Marissa E, June 2021: We just got the [running records]. Is there any easy way to download all of the running record forms at once?

3. Sharon S, September 2021: Is there a difference in the running records from the first edition to the second?

These customer service requests are posted for anyone in the group to respond to (a representative of the company or other teachers in the group). All the customer service queries do have responses from the company representatives, but most also have responses from teachers.
in the group as well. While I did not anticipate that this type of post would be so frequent, the fact that customer service appeared so frequently regarding running records within the group is a strong reminder that the group is managed by a publishing company that created the assessment and other curricular materials. More than that, however, the frequency of customer service requests also demonstrates the entanglement of capitalism and education for profit that is a product of neoliberal education policies.

**Discourse Analysis: Marissa E and the (Un)ease of Use**

To illustrate the entanglement of capitalism within education, I chose Marissa E’s post about downloading all the forms because it has ample engagement and is also very typical of this topic (saving time and trying to manage materials online or physically). It had 28 replies from people in the group. Replies from teachers on this post have one common thread: trying to help. One person who replied to Marissa offered to email Marissa the “master pdfs” of all the forms they had downloaded in order to save time (segment 9). Three other teachers replied to that comment with their emails asking for the file as well. A couple of others replied to Marissa’s post with “hacks” about organizing file folders and sheet protectors to keep the master copies of the forms organized once they were printed (e.g., segments 2 and 5). There is a sense of collaboration and collegiality in the comments on these posts; as with Marissa’s query, group members seem enthusiastic about sharing what tips or tricks have worked for them.

**Table 6. Marissa E’s Post About Aid Downloading Forms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segment</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Post/Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Original Post</td>
<td>Marissa E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>We just got the [running records]. Is there any easy way to download all of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>the running record forms at once?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Reply to OP</td>
<td>Risa S</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
You can access all the running records and other assessments as PDF’s. I did this for our building, naming them by title, F/NF [fiction/nonfiction] and level, saved to Drive. Printed out a master set, then a few paper copies for the kits. On one of each of the copies that we put in the hanging folder kits, we write a big “M” (master) with highlighter, so teachers don’t use that one, and make a few copies. The yellow highlighter doesn’t show up on copies. I’ve started using my iPad, opening the pdf in Adobe Acrobat and filling it out with something like an Apple Pencil. It’s nice to share with other staff that way, too, in Drive. I also use the voice recording feature, because sometimes I don’t catch all the repetitions or attempts, and can go back and listen again.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3</th>
<th>Reply to Risa S</th>
<th>Marissa E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lots of great tips! Thank you!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4</th>
<th>Reply to Marissa</th>
<th>Risa S</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sure! It does take time to download things and get kits set up, but it’s nice to have digital access:)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5</th>
<th>Reply to Alison</th>
<th>Alison I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I made master copies and put them in a clear sleeve. I keep copies of the forms in a file cabinet in the office for teachers to pull from.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6</th>
<th>Reply to Alison</th>
<th>Marissa E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>That's what I was thinking of doing. Thank you!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7</th>
<th>Reply to Alison</th>
<th>Joan C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I did that with second edition. It takes a long time. Contact them [the company] &amp; they will give you access on line!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>8</th>
<th>Reply to Joan</th>
<th>Alison I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>you can find a code for online resources in the front of the assessment guide that's in the box.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>9</th>
<th>Reply to OP</th>
<th>Claire B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>if you would pm [private message] me your email- I’ll send the file on Monday.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>10</th>
<th>Reply to Claire</th>
<th>Stacy R</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I would love a copy as well! We are just beginning and I need all the help with resources I can get!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>11</th>
<th>Reply to Claire</th>
<th>Emily H</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I would really appreciate that too, please! [email address]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>12</th>
<th>Reply to Claire</th>
<th>Wendy W</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I would greatly appreciate this file as well! [email address]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In segment 1, Marissa asks a yes or no question, but, considering Gee’s (2011) tool for “doing and not just saying,” Marissa does not intend for a yes or no response. Instead she is looking for tips or help on how to make this process of downloading forms more efficient. People who commented understood this was also not literally a yes or no question and responded earnestly with their advice. Risa S in segment 2 gave extraordinarily detailed advice going so far as to share that yellow highlighter does not show up on a master printed copy of a form when run through a photocopier.

In segment 9, Claire B is generous enough to offer to email all the forms she downloaded to Marissa. It is unknown if Marissa took Claire up on the offer; presumably if Marissa did, she followed Clarie’s instructions to privately message an email address. Ironically, three others publicly commented on Claire's request for a private message, sharing their email addresses publicly in hopes of getting master copies of the forms without having to download them all individually themselves.

This post is not about using the online materials but simply being able to locate and download them. What these exchanges on this post reveal is that a great deal of energy is spent on unpacking and organizing and navigating all the materials that come with these published and pre-packaged assessments and curricula. I cannot help but make the comparison to buying self-assembled furniture, receiving a sparse set of instructions with just pictures, and frustratingly attempting to put it together. Marissa has just received her furniture and is looking to see which pieces go together and how. This is a teacher level manifestation of the neoliberal capitalist school: material published by the corporation is purchased and sent with the expectation that it is used but without district or school-level support or the amount of time necessary to set it up. In
an attempt to figure out basic orientation to materials, Marissa relies on colleagues within the

An attempt to figure out basic orientation to materials, Marissa relies on colleagues within the group for answers. Furthermore, some segments of those post/comments reveal the enormous amount of time teachers spend on organizing assessment materials (segments 4 and 7 explicitly do). While I can only infer the amount of time these kinds of tasks take, I assume it comes at the expense of time for other things, like planning or looking at student work. Using the queer tool of concurrence (Luhmann, 1998; Britzman, 2005), the responses in segments 2 and 5, which detail systems teachers have developed to manage the materials (e.g., clear sheet protectors, highlighting the master copy with yellow highlighter so the word master does not appear when photocopied) doubly demonstrate the consequences of teachers burdened with an enormous amount of materials management. On the one hand, as previously mentioned, it highlights the burden and squeeze of time that are effects of curriculum for profit. However, it also highlights the incredible ingenuity and creativity of teachers to adapt and set up systems even under intense demands of overassessment and curriculum.

These lower level activities like organizing papers and files for assessments are part of the larger neoliberal agenda that positions teachers not as experts of professionals in executing pedagogy but rather as technicians who fulfill external requests for data and output from district, state and national parties. Using Gee’s discourse analysis tool “making strange” (Gee, 2011), is it also not a bit queer that there is no pushback or call out for the company to make the materials more accessible? Consistently throughout the post and comments, there’s never an onus on the company to make the materials more easily accessible so teachers are not wasting time downloading and saving materials individually; instead, teachers just acknowledge the enormous amount of time required for these low-level procedural tasks and express gratitude to the company for having digital access available; in segment 4, Risa says it takes time but “nice to
have the online access.” In the neoliberal school, it is common for teachers to take on administrative tasks like materials management and organizing paperwork and not be given time or compensation for doing unacknowledged work.

**Comprehension**

I was surprised that 24 posts in some form addressed students’ comprehension or the way students did or did not make meaning from the text. In my own experience, colleagues tend to discuss accuracy and oral reading miscues much more than students’ comprehension, a discourse that views reading as decoding words (e.g., Wheeler et al., 2012; Yoon, 2015). These posts ranged from sharing quotes of student responses to text (these were also always coded as kid talk, which I will address later in this chapter) to problem solving student-specific issues to queries about scoring children’s responses to comprehension questions. Below is an example that also takes up the topic of working with students with disabilities.

This post popped up on my feed in early November 2021 but was posted in January 2018; a group member had recently replied to the post, which I infer is why it appeared on my feed as I was observing the group. In this post, Kathy N is explaining that she has an autistic student who reads with accuracy but struggles with comprehension questions and is thus not sure of the child’s reading level (this post also falls under the special education topic). At the time I viewed the post, it had 28 replies with what I reflected as “collegial conversation and debate” in my field notes. However, when I returned to the post in 2022 to analyze it again, all but a handful of the comments had been deleted. Below is Kathy’s post and the remaining comments. The post is still representative of a collegial conversation and reflects the tensions of using an assessment that is not designed for students with disabilities, as well as what I would consider a broader debate
around how comprehension can be measured or whether measuring comprehension solely via oral expressive language is limiting.

Table 7. Kathy N’s Post about Running Records and Students with Disabilities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segment</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| 1       | Original post (OP)             | Kathy N  
I have a question about using [a running record] on a kindergarten student who is on the autism spectrum. He can read accurately at level C, but when asked comprehension questions he mimics the questions back. He is unable to articulate responses due to his communication issues. He does have an IEP and language goals. How do I find a true [reading] level that our district requires us to record? |
| 2       | Reply to original post from Kathy | (This comment thread is from 4 years ago.)  
Amy J  
You have to look at reading behaviors, so it’s possible he is much lower than a C. My son, a kdg-er [kindergartener] who is also on the spectrum (who also happens to be hyperlexic) can “word call” and accurately decode words at a level C, however has no skills in regards to comprehension, so he is an AA, or pre-reader based on the continuum. Long story short, your students need to be recorded as a non-reader. |
| 3       | Reply to Amy’s comment         | Camie M  
A practice to approach with great caution given that the individual can read but the ability to assess comprehension due to communication issues is lacking. To say their comprehension is lacking is an assumption based on a finite testing process that does not account for open ended questioning and language processing and or expression delays. Holding one back from experiencing richer texts can have far greater negative consequences than intended. Monitoring interest in text over time, encouraging and teaching social skills to help foster deeper connections to text and connecting real experiences to text would be far more important than defining their reading ability based on a single assessment process even one done over time. |
| 4       | Reply to Amy’s comment         | Pat K  
Amy, would you mind sharing what type of therapies and/or reading support your child receives for
hyperplexia? Asking as a mom who's son exhibits such symptoms and is diagnosed ASD.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>5</th>
<th>Reply to Camie’s reply to Amy</th>
<th>Ashley R</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Camie, yes, yes, a thousand times, yes. 😊</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6</th>
<th>Reply to Pat</th>
<th>Amy J</th>
</tr>
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|    |               | Pat, at this time, he isn’t receiving anything specific for the hyperlexia. His IEP goals in reading comp include using PECs (Picture Exchange Communication) cards to assist in reading comprehension. The end goal, of course, being that he will answer the question independently, but right now, he answers about the text questions with a field of 2 options to choose from, with. The hope of being at 5 by the end of the school year. My son is mostly non-verbal and echolalic, so he is a “repeater” of questions instead of an “answerer”.

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<tr>
<th>7</th>
<th>Amy replies to Camie’s comment</th>
<th>Amy J</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>Camie, I’m curious what others do in situations similar to this. In our building, we struggle with this, and I’m not always confident in how to work through this issue.</td>
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<tr>
<th>8</th>
<th>unclear</th>
<th>Pat K</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thank u!!</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<th>9</th>
<th>Reply to Camie’s comment</th>
<th>Pat K</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Camie is right on. I just have to say that before I had a son with ASD, I had many students diagnosed as such. Even as an educator I couldn't possibly have understood the incredible communicative differences that children diagnosed with ASD have. There will never be a standardized test that will accurately assess my son-who was very echolalic and is only showing traces now, who was having meltdowns because he didn't know how to regulate feeling sad, or angry or disappointed, but now can find the words to say so...and he hasn't had a meltdown in a year. How can we assess a child on how a character is feeling when they cannot interpret, regulate, process their own feelings? I'd walk around in a t-shirt campaigning for [running record publishing company’s name]-- I take issue, not with this assessment but with a district looking for a one-</td>
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size-fits all report. Who's to say he isn't making sense of what he's reading? If he isn't able to verbalize it then we need to consider what supports we are putting in place to help him do so, and that should be reflected on his iep.

10  Reply to original post  [This comment below is from November 2021; no one responded.]
Sherry K
I know this is an old thread, but I am currently struggling with this. Did anyone come up with some alternative way for atypical communicators to be assessed for comprehension? My district feels that we should not offer multiple choice responses because it doesn’t allow students to think deeply and truly respond. The students I’m concerned about require multiple choice options in most other areas - not just academics, but functional things as well. I am looking for ideas to present to the IEP team to accommodate/modify this assessment for these types of students! Any resource is welcomed!

**Discourse Analysis: Kathy N and the True Reading Level**

This post takes up several dominant discourses around reading and pedagogy: the discourse of the neoliberal agenda of standardization and accountability through data and the discourse that kids are their reading level.

Embedded throughout the post and comments is language that signals standardization and accountability. For example, in segment 1, Kathy N asks, “How do I find a true [reading] level that our district requires us to record?” Using the significance building tool (Gee, 2011), the phrase “our district requires” signals and makes important that Kathy is not even here on her own behalf but because she needs to enter a letter reading level for this child because data is due to the district as per some district mandate. However, in segment 9, Pat K questions this data mandate: “I take issue, not with this assessment but with a district looking for a one-size-fits all report. Who's to say he isn't making sense of what he's reading?” Making strange and building significance (Gee, 2011), the phrasing here is interesting because the problem is that, per
assessment administration, the child is supposed to give an oral account of the text they read and cannot, yet Pat “does not take issue with the assessment” but is challenging why the district needs a reading level for each child. It appears that in a sense, Pat is coming to the defense of the assessment and its constructs, even though it is the construct of the assessment that has shaped and limited the potential to understand the child’s comprehension.

The post itself and one of the comments take up the assumption that readers’ identities are their levels, a common critique of running records and the overreliance on reading levels to group readers or texts (Konovourki, 2011); this is a discourse within the broader discourse of schooled literacy (Collin & Apple, 2007; Cook-Gumperz, 2006), the idea that students should read and speak in so-called standard English. For example, filling-in (Gee, 2011) in segment 1, Kathy N’s query is knowing which level to say the child is (“he can read accurately at level C…”); this, I infer, means Kathy N is equating the ability to read to reading the words. Meanwhile, Amy’s reply in segment 2 directly states that a reader is their level: “he is an AA.” Making this language strange (Gee, 2011), one might ask, “What does that even mean?” What does it mean to be an AA? Previous scholarship on reading levels and running records have demonstrated the instability of definition of these levels (e.g., Glasswell & Ford, 2011; Hoffman, 2017; Kontovourki, 2012). The understanding of “AA” is dependent on knowledge of its relation to “A” and “B” and so on, yet, the levels are vaguely defined.

Later on, there is a degree of pushback against this discourse in the comments. The commenter, Camie M, in segment 3, pushes back against this leveling: “To say their comprehension is lacking is an assumption based on a finite testing process that does not account for open ended questioning and language processing and or expression delays.” In segments 8-9, Pat K endorses Camie’s reminder that a limited/narrow assessment of what counts as reading
should be challenged for children who have disabilities. Again, considering concurrence (Britzman, 2005; Luhmann, 2018), this was an important moment within the data as it demonstrated a simultaneous interaction of problematic and limiting discourse around reading as well as examples of teachers acting with agency and professional acumen to call out and problematize constructs within the assessment.

At the same time, Kathy N is inherently relying on the pervasive and powerful discourse that surrounds book leveling: that readers are their levels and that leveled reading is an exact science (Glassswell & Ford, 2011; Hoffman, 2017; Kontovourki, 2011). By grounding the query in the word “true” when asking how to find a true reading level for this student, Kathy N implies that there is some objective and identifiable reading level out there that this child is. Using the building significance tool and the doing and not just saying tool (Gee, 2011) to foreground the word ‘true’ suggests also not that running records and book leveling are perhaps an imperfect system but that somehow this child is an anomaly. This belief that there is a single, true reading level for a child also highlights another phenomenon that results from the internalized discourse of leveled reading, which is that the running record results supersede teacher knowledge or perception of a students’ reading. In other words, by querying how to assess the child to find a true level, Kathy places trust about determining the student’s reading ability in the assessment rather than one’s own knowledge as a teacher. This again is an insidious way the discourse of teacher as technician and not as professional with knowledge manifests in the neoliberal education landscape.

Overall, this post is interesting to me because it discusses the role of comprehension in reading (Amy in segment 2 going so far to suggest that the child discussed in the original post is a nonreader because he does not comprehend), but it also speaks to issues of standardized
mandated assessment and the limitations of an assessment that relies on oral retelling as the way to measure comprehension. Meanwhile, the narrowing discourses of literacy via running records (e.g., Hoffman, 2017) as well as discourses of teachers not as knowers (Au, 2011; Britzman, 2003) circulate within moments in which other commenters step outside these discourses and criticize the assessment.

**Kids Say the Darndest Things**

As a teacher myself, I keep a file folder in my classroom where I keep copies of the unexpected and often hilarious things children write or say. It brings me joy on tough days, and there have been a lot of those hard days since 2020. 24 of the posts about running records that I observed within the group were similar to my file folder I keep in my desk: a written record of funny or unexpected things children shared during a running record.

In October 2021, for example, Rhonda F. posted a story about what a child said to another teacher during a running record about genre. The post garnered 149 likes and 9 people commented on it. This is an interesting post because it got quite a bit of attention but is obviously not a particularly academic post or any sort of inquiry about practice whatsoever; to me, it suggests that part of being in the group is sharing humor and joy: teaching is hard, and teachers need to laugh. Even more suggestive of this is that Rhonda heard the story from a colleague in their building and decided to come to the group and post it so others could get a laugh, too. In segment 1, Rhonda says, “Yesterday one of my colleagues,” which signals it’s a share from something that happened to someone else. Below is the post and replies.

**Table 8. Rhonda F’s Post About Really Old Stories.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segment</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Post/Comments</th>
</tr>
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113
|   | Original Post (OP) | Rhonda F  
Yesterday one of my colleagues was doing a running record. When she asked him about the genre he said folk tales are really, really old stories that were probably written back in the 90s. 😂 |
|---|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| 2 | Comment on OP     | Dani N  
Too funny, but maybe he meant the 1890's! |
| 3 | Comment on OP     | Georgia B  
[GIF of Snoopy (the Charles Shultz character from Peanuts) laughing text over the meme saying, LOL] |
| 4 | Comment on OP     | Jake P  
The 90s were a long time ago lol 😂 |
| 5 | Comment on OP     | Jessica R  
Ssssttttaaawwwpppp!!!! 😅😅😅 That makes me feel so old! 😞واشن |
| 6 | Comment on OP     | Melody R  
@Sara K 😅😅😅 |
| 7 | Reply to Melody R | Sara K  
@Melody R saw that, felt instantly old. |
| 8 | Comment on OP     | Bethany W  
It could be the 1690s… |
All the group members commenting on the story of what the child said about folk tales being from the ‘90s commented in some form to share the laugh. Three folks added that this made them feel old (segment 5, 7, and 9), and this post had two comments which were entirely GIF memes. Dani (segment 2) and Bethany (segment 8) are both commenting and, while possibly giving the benefit of the doubt that perhaps the child meant the ‘90s of a previous century, are more than likely being facetious and sharing in the humor. All of the other posts in this topic category (kid talk) are the same in weight and tone: humor from something a child said. There was one exception to this focus on humor, which discussed how a running record led a student to share some hard things they were going through at home. This post from November 2021 had 67 likes and five comments. Because this was the exception to the category and because the others...
so obviously carry a tone of humor and relatability about the funny things kids say, I chose the following post for a brief discourse analysis.

**Table 9. Kelly A’s Post about a Child Sharing Something Emotional.**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segment</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Post/Comments</th>
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| 1       | Original Post (OP) | Kelly A  
Anyone ever administer a running record and during the comprehension, the student responds with something that reveals a lot about what he/she may be dealing with personally?  
I tested a new 5th grader a few days ago…When I asked her the authors message she said, "change happens and we have to accept it". I asked how the message applied to her life. She said, "well, my mom doesn't have much time for me and my younger brother since we've moved here (from Arizona). She's always busy working or dealing with my youngest 2 brothers (toddlers). But I have to accept the change."  
I wanted to stop the test and go 😞. Geesh. These children come to us with so many situations we never know they are dealing with. It always amazes me how books bring out hidden treasures and/secrets. |
| 2       | Reply to OP Facebook Literacy Group Administrator | How wonderful that she trusted you with that insight! And has been clear she needs someone to see her and give her some attention! Yes books often give us a way to share our lives. And what a blessing you are to her to care! Thank you! |
| 3       | Reply to OP Mary Q | She is wanting your attention. I hope you can give it to her. Do you have a counselor? Kids need to feel seen and loved. I’m so glad you heard her and she said something. |
| 4       | Reply to OP Amelia M | Small group is such an important time for me and I believe the kids. I feel it allows me to not only teach them how to be a better reader but it allows relationships to grow and connections to be made with one another. |
| 5       | Reply to OP Mary S | Listening is key!!! |
**Discourse Analysis: Kelly A and Books as Window to Students’ Lives**

From comments of solidarity (Kate W’s heart emojis [segment 6] and Mary S’s “Listening is key” [segment 5]), the comments offer up support to Kelly, the original poster. This post stood out because it was the only post in which I reflected in my field notes that it felt like it was a discourse of teacher and students as human (and not as technicians). Additionally, it is the only post I remarked in my field notes that seems to position reading as involving and interacting with the reader itself.

Kelly A (original post author) ends her post with “It always amazes me how books bring out hidden treasures and/secrets.” When considering the discourse analysis tool of “Why this way and not that way” (Gee, 2011), I believe ending the post in this manner suggests that Kelly is accounting for the role of the self and how it interacts with text. Kelly could have just ended the post with a comment about how kids are often going through a lot but instead opted to make the explicit connection to how texts interact with readers to elicit particular responses. I infer that Kelly is making the connection here that there is an exchange/interaction between and among texts and readers; I am cautious to suggest or name a specific heuristic of reading that Kelly A. may orient from, but the acknowledgement of the self is not unlike the RAND heuristic for reading which accounts for the interaction between text, environment and reader (RAND, 2002). Furthermore, a similar sentiment is echoed back to Kelly by the representative from the Facebook group in segment 2, “Yes, books often give us a way to share our lives.” And, further, from the discourse of acknowledging the reader as a component in the theorization of reading is a discourse of seeing children and teachers more broadly as human. In segment 4, Amelia shares
that “small group [work]... allows relationships to grow.” This highlights and centers the significance of rapport and relationships teachers build with their students. In segment 3, Mary said something similar: “kids need to be seen and heard.” This was the only post I noted that conveyed anything like this. This was a refreshing discourse to see in the data since most posts around running records tended to focus on deficit discourses around leveling readers and restricting access to texts. Perhaps there is possibility for spaces and consocial moments within these corporate/neoliberal social media spaces that are not situated within discourses of schooled literacy and teacher as technician.

**Too Much Time!**

18 of the posts during my time spent observing the group were posts complaining about how running records take up too much time for teachers. As someone who has taken a lot of running records with students, this was unsurprising; they do take time, and time is a precious commodity in school.

Tamara W shared the following post in September 2019; it got 22 likes and no responses (it appeared in my feed in August 2021). While it is not clear to me why this problem of time Tamara presented did not receive any advice or feedback, this post does illustrate what is likely a reality for many teachers: being told to monitor students’ progress weekly but not being supported in arranging how to do so. It is also evident that Tamara is operating within the discourse of students as reading levels.

I am confused about running / reading records. I was told for the past several years that I was to do one quick running record per group each day and that would get everyone done in a week. I was told it would take about five minutes per child. I have never figured out how to do that. When I do a reading running record, it takes a minimum of 10 to 15 minutes. They have to read the whole passage and then respond to some of the questions for me to judge their comprehension. Yes, I do count what they said the day before during guided reading. I teach 2nd grade and I have students on levels c, d, g, h, i, j, k, l. They are grouped into 5 reading groups. All my students except for 4 must have weekly
running records. My problem is that the running record takes up the whole reading group time. What suggestions do you have?

While Tamara posted to the group for advice on how to work with the time crunch and how to figure out how to make running records take less time, Kelly Z, who posted in September 2021, has decided to abandon running records and instead use scores from other assessments to determine a child’s reading level in order to save time, which generated a lot of debate and feedback in the comments. There were a total of 91 comments on this post; for brevity and to maintain readability, I highlight the following below which are the “top comments” the algorithm Facebook used to decide which comments to show first.

Table 10. Kelly Z’s Post About a Time Crunch.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segment</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Post/Comments</th>
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</table>
| 1       | Original Post (OP) | Kelly Z  
So I don’t have time to keep assessing every student in first grade to find out what level they should begin at. Is it okay to use MAP scores, Dibels information and my discretion based on their performance to just assign their level? I have a chart that correlates MAP scores. I have a chart that correlates MAP scores to their reading level. I figure I can adjust as needed when listening to them read. |
| 2       | Reply to OP | Mia W  
Stop leveling kids. Teach systematic and explicit lessons in phonics, phonemic awareness with connected text. Keeping students in “one level” “gives the kids in lower reading groups a steady diet of less challenging texts. Over time, this tends to become a self-fulfilling prophecy, as lower readers don’t catch up to peers. Hence the common refrain coined by Alfred Tatum, “Leveled texts lead to leveled lives.” |
| 3       | Reply to Mia | Jessica R  
@Mia W AR levels, Lexile levels, Flesch-Kincaid Levels, ATOS levels, and guess what… grade levels are all levels. Systematic phonics instruction is a thing, it just ain’t the only thing. 😊 |

119
| 4 | Mia replies to Jessica | Mia W  
@ Jessica R right, but to put a student into these boxes only confines them. Teaching the foundation skills has been scientifically researched on how the brain learns to read. It’s not the only thing, but it is where every teacher should start and if they don’t they are not providing all students with adequate tools to be lifelong readers. |
| 5 | Jessica responds to Mia | Jessica R  
@ Mia W which boxes? Just the guided reading level boxes or leveled boxes in general? Also, while phonics may be taught in the word work/study part of a guided reading lesson, it’s not the primary purpose of guided reading. The teaching of comprehension strategies or skills is the main function of guided reading…to make meaning. Comprehension instruction is backed by “the science.” |
| 6 | Mia responds to Jessica | Mia W  
@ Jessica R I agree that comprehension is the ultimate goal, but if you can’t read the words what is there to comprehend?  
“There is no comprehension strategy powerful enough to compensate for the fact that you can’t read the words.” -Dr Anita Archer |
| 7 | Mia responds in a separate comment to Jessica | Mia W  
@ Jessica R it’s a quote from Dr. Anita Archer., not merely a meme and it sounds like we agree! It does have to be both. Comprehension is taught through read alouds (when students can not read the words themselves). Once they are reading independently, then they can start to attach these skills to the text they are reading. |
| 8 | Jessica replies to Mia | Jessica R  
@ Mia W I know who it’s from. But it’s been “memed” to death. You’re good. And still DTM. [Doing Too Much] |
| 9 | Grace L replies to OP | Grace L  
Does anyone have any activities for book clubs that allow them to stop and talk? Questions, ideas, facts? |
Discourse Analysis: Kelly Z and the Assessment Time Crunch

This post highlights consequences of mandated overassessment of children and teacher decision making. It also highlights the decades-long discourses around approaches to teaching children to read. Within this single post, several commenters engaged in arguments that were micro-recreations of the reading wars. Additionally, this post also suggests again that this is a corporate space where money is the bottom line.

While Kelly Z seems quite certain that they will use the MAP scores to determine letter reading levels instead of spending time on running records, they ultimately do ask, “Is it okay” in the original post. Considering the “doing and not just saying” tool (Gee, 2011), I infer that Kelly may be questioning if this is a good decision or not and is perhaps hoping someone will confirm it is permissible to do. Unfortunately, Kelly did not receive a clear answer but instead initiated a debate about leveling and different perspectives on literacy pedagogy, including the “science of reading” or “SOR” as it is referred to commonly as well (5 other posts also discussed SOR). The Science of Reading refers both to a body of research literature stemming from cognitive science around the reading brain as well as a political movement/ideology of educators and policy makers who propose that explicit instruction in phonological awareness and phonics and use of decodable readers is the most effective way to teach reading (Gabriel, 2021); additionally relevant to this study is that researchers and authors aligned with the science of reading reject Marie Clay’s theorization of reading and the three-cueing system (MSV).
While there were many debates happening in the comments, I chose to highlight one in particular as it felt representative of the kind of back and forth happening at large in the comments as a result of Kelly’s post. Mia originally responded to Kelly with a stance against using assessment to level kids and instead focus on systematic phonics (segment 2). Then, in segments 3-8, Jessica and Mia spar over leveling and the role of phonics and comprehension in literacy instruction. The conversation was quite circular and it does not appear they ever reached a common ground or were actually listening to or open to listening to one another. Jessica tells Mia by the end that she is DTM (internet speak for doing too much). Interestingly, the moderators chose not to engage in that discussion between Mia and Jessica whatsoever.

In segment 2, Mia quotes Alfred Tatum “Leveled texts lead to leveled lives” insinuating that instead of grouping students by reading level or giving children texts that they can read or nearly read with independence, teachers should use grade level texts only - no leveling at all. Additionally, while Mia does not explicitly refer to the science of reading movement in her reply, I can fill-in (Gee, 2011) that Jessica inferred that is where Mia orients from since in the retort in segment 3, Jessica responds to Mia that “comprehension instruction is backed by ‘the science.’” Mia then responds with a meme image of an Anita Archer quote “There is no comprehension strategy powerful enough to compensate for the fact that you can’t read the words.” It’s then that Jessica replies Mia is DTM (doing too much).

When you look at the replies from Mia and Jessica to one another through the lens of “doing and not just saying” (Gee, 2011), it becomes clearer that this is not really a conversation but rather a stating of one’s position broken into a series of exchanges between two people. And in making this exchange strange (another tool of Gee’s [2011]), this comment thread on Kelly’s post about skipping running records and going off MAP scores seems totally unrelated. In some
ways, it feels like Mia and Jessica are sparring over phonics versus comprehension and leveling versus not leveling readers in response to a very different post. Kelly’s post was the vehicle for these two people to share their stances regarding reading instruction. I was not shocked at all when Kelly, the original author of the post, did not engage with these comments since they do not answer her question whatsoever. The discourses Mia and Jessica bring up in this online debate are representative of years-long debates over literacy instruction: code-based versus meaning-based. In a series of just a few Facebook comments, Mia and Jessica have summarized the Reading Wars, which apparently are not over. While their posts did not appear to reach an understanding, what I did reflect on in my field notes was an appreciation for their fervor and stances. In a public schooling system that often positions teachers not as thinkers (Au, 2011; Britzman, 2003), I saw what happened in the comments here as evidence of their pedagogical commitments.

Even more strange perhaps is Grace L’s comment, which again, feels like a comment in response to a very different post! Grace did not respond to Kelly’s question of whether or not using MAP scores and correlating them to reading level was ok. Instead, Grace asks where to find materials for her book clubs. While the Facebook group moderators did not engage with Mia and Jessica, they responded to Grace and explained how to find the resources. The publishing company also publishes the book club resources. Taking a step back, the choice of engagement may reveal that what gets a response is money. Grace is using a product she paid for and so she gets customer service (as discussed earlier in the chapter). Mia and Jessica are arguing over phonics, comprehension, and leveling more theoretically (not tied to a specific product/curriculum for purchase) so they get no response. Considering what the representative is doing and not just saying (Gee, 2011) by choosing to response to Grace, the representative
responding to this comment demonstrates that this space is a profit-center; although this is a
space for teachers it is also a commercial space where teachers utilize (very expensive) materials
that were purchased by their schools and districts.

So, did Kelly use MAP scores to determine a student’s benchmark letter reading level?
She never followed up on this post with a final decision, but this post demonstrates some
consequences of (mandated) overassessment and not enough time to do them all, such as the
misuse or attempt to correlate results from very different measures as a way to gain back lost
instructional time. Additionally, this post relived the decades-long discursive divide within
literacy curriculum: code-based instruction versus meaning-based instruction, which is nested
within the broader discourse of schooled literacy, the commonplace but hegemonic ways of
talking and acting with regard to how we teach students to read as white and middle class (Cook-
Gumperz, 2006; Collin & Apple, 2007). Concurrently, there was also the possibility that teachers
could position themselves as thinkers within the post, as the debate demonstrated strong
positions from each of the respective teachers.

**Pushback**

Explicit discussion of pushback only appeared twice across the length of time I observed
the group, and it surprised me because in both instances it appears it was not a teacher who was
resisting or questioning running records but rather an administrator or other out-of-classroom
person discussing getting pushback from teachers when they requested teachers administer
running records. In May 2021, as I was just beginning my research, Cynthia J posted the
following to the group. It received only 16 likes but 149 comments; unfortunately commenting
on the post has been turned off because there was a lack of decorum in the group; the only
comment that remains is one from a moderator.
Table 11. *Cynthia J’s Post about Pushback from Kindergarten Teachers.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segment</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Post/comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1       | Original Post          | Cynthia J  
We are getting major push back when asking Kindergarten teachers to administer running records at the end of the year. It is the only time we are requiring them to do this. The teachers said they do not see the value of taking the time to do this. If you are a kindergarten teacher who uses and values the information you get from this assessment, would you please tell me why so we can justify our request? |
| 2       | Reply to OP from moderator | Literacy Facebook Group Moderator  
Comments on this post have been deleted and turned off as the conversation was not professional or respectful. We understand that this is heart work and sometimes our emotions get the best of us, but that does not excuse being rude. Please be reminded to follow community guidelines when responding. |

**Discourse Analysis: Cynthia J and Looking for Reasons to Assess**

While it may seem unusual to make the choice to choose or highlight this post where the comments were removed, I do so for several reasons. First, the fact that the comments were removed indicates the post was controversial within the group and sparked a strong emotional response from group members. It is also a reminder that power is always at play and that the group moderators exercise power of what can be shared and what cannot. In a way, removing comments that people took time to write out - even if they were not kind or polite is a form of censorship. At the same time, comment sections on social media can also be very hostile spaces. I consider both of these statements to be concurrently true at once (Britzman, 1995; Luhmann, 1998). Secondly, the issue at hand in this post is complex and highlights some of the consequences of mandated assessment, especially in kindergarten.

Though the comments are no longer available, I did record reflections of this post in my field notes when I saw it in May 2021:
I am not surprised these teachers do not want to do a running record assessment if it is only at the end of the year to show which students are reading and which are not (not that relying on running records really shows that). In this era of teacher evaluations tied to student reading levels, I understand why this is a hot issue for K teachers. … These comments from K teachers are heated… there’s a clear divide among how the K teachers in the group feel about whether or not “formal” reading instruction should be included in Kinder. “What happened to playing? What happened to joy?” one commenter lamented. …There’s a distancing effect that comes from the opening line “We are getting major pushback” so it seems the poster is distancing themself from being a teacher. I also assume that K teachers responding recognize this is a principal or administrator posting and may be being brutally honest to a principal online since they may not feel comfortable being so honest with their own principal.

So, while the post itself dealt with teachers pushing back against administration around doing the running records, the comments did reveal that there were teachers who oppose running records in kindergarten because they do not believe that Kindergarteners should be reading or receiving formal reading instruction.

As I stated in my reflections from my notes, the use of ‘we’ here achieves a distancing effect when we consider the “doing and not just saying” tool from Gee (2011). It does this in two ways. For one, it seems to clarify that the person posting is not one of the teachers. ‘We’ refers to someone or some people who are not teachers but are requiring teachers to administer running records at the end of the year in Kindergarten. Secondly, ‘we’ is plural, so it again distances the person posting from being entirely responsible for the mandate of the running records; it insinuates it was perhaps a couple of people or a group who made the decision. This is significant because the post was met with heated debate that ultimately got all the comments deleted due to lack of decorum. In some ways, Cynthia J may have anticipated a negative response and consciously or otherwise made the decision to speak from ‘we.’

If we queer or make strange this post (Gee, 2011; Sumara & Davis, 1999), it is unusual that Cynthia did not ask about why teachers may not want to administer the running records but instead asked people to help justify why the teachers Cynthia works with should do it. Using the
doing and not just saying tool (Gee, 2011), Cynthia’s ending query: “If you are a kindergarten teacher who uses and values the information you get from this assessment, would you please tell me why so we can justify our request?” implies that Cynthia is not asking for responses from people who disagree but only from Kindergarten teachers who will help justify that Cynthia’s teachers need to accept the mandate. In other words, Cynthia does not validate or seem interested in understanding why Kindergarten teachers may resist the assessment but is instead looking for rationale to persuade them to do so. Between the lines it seems that doing the running records is not optional – these teachers will administer them, but Cynthia hopes to accomplish it by convincing them it is worthwhile. Perhaps even more strange is that Cynthia (and her colleagues if the “we” is truly plural and not just a distancing tactic) are requiring the assessment and do not have their own rationale for the request. Instead, Cynthia entered this group looking for reasons why Kindergarten teachers should do this. This hints at the neoliberal discourse of assessment for assessment’s sake. I reflected in my field notes that the post could have been written more simply from Cynthia J as: “We don’t know why we are assessing these kids, but we are going to assess them, goshdarnit!” This is particularly alarming given that a running record’s original purpose was to guide teaching, not to evaluate kids or teachers; even at the big picture level, asking teachers to do an assessment meant to guide instruction at the end of the year is a marker of assessment for assessment’s sake.

Nested within Cynthia’s request for a rationale to convince teachers to assess is also a deficit discourse of teachers not as professionals (Britzman, 2003). Cynthia, at best, is looking for an argument for pulling the wool over teachers’ eyes to get them to administer an assessment they apparently do not see the value of: “The teachers said they do not see the value of taking the time to do this.” What I infer here, however, is that perhaps the teachers are knowledgeable and
know the purpose of the assessment and are not interested in giving it when it does not prove useful to them if only administered once. I also would infer that teachers may not be asking to administer the running records more frequently either because they are likely already overburdened with other early literacy assessments, such as screeners of phonological awareness or early print concepts. While this hunch is highly speculative and cannot be inferred based solely on what is shared in this post, it reflects the reality of every school I, and colleagues I have worked with, have experienced.

Clearly since the comments were deleted this post is an example of intense conflict within the group. When people disagreed in a way the representatives of the group did not deem appropriate, the ability to comment was then shut down and the conversation stifled. This is significant because it is a reminder that while people can come to the group and share openly, the publishing company has the power and ability to control the narrative. The publishing company wants to sell more of its running record products and so the space is not one where heatedly saying it is not useful will be tolerated. While the conversation was largely negative and people were quite vocal, there is a danger in the solution being to decide that this conversation is not worth having. This heavy hand of power display from the group representative was a throughline as I observed the group and ultimately silenced teachers, maintaining the hegemony of teacher as technician, not as thinker.

**Dialect as a Factor in Oral Reading**

One of the factors around oral reading and the construct of reading accuracy that I reflect on a lot in my own practice is the role of dialect and how it affects how we translate the printed word and what we say when we read aloud. Growing up in the Appalachian Mountains and working with students over the years who speak many different Englishes, particularly Black
English (Baker-Bell, 2020) has led me to often personally question the role of accuracy in determining a student’s ability to read, particularly if their miscues from the printed word maintain meaning and fit grammatically within the language or English they speak. Put plainly, we tend to read the way we talk!

Given my personal fascination with dialect and how rigid attention to following protocols on a running record can often cause teachers to limit students’ reading (in my experience with teachers across the schools in which I have worked), I was taken aback when dialect as a consideration for students’ reading only came up twice, especially given one of the posts I saw was from 2017. (And, again, this does not necessarily mean this topic does not come up more frequently, but this is all I saw as I was observing the group.) The first post is from Mary R in 2017, which I observed in June 2021. It had 4 likes and 12 comments. Below I highlight the “top comments,” which are the comments Facebook recommends to the reader based on engagement.

**Table 12. Mary R’s Post about Dialect and Scoring.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segment</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Post/Comment</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| 1       | Original Post (OP)      | Mary R
Is there literature about scoring based on a student's dialect? I had a student read "snippin" for "snipping" and "trimmin" for "trimming" in [title of running record text]. I coded them as errors. Another teacher said that when they used Dibels, that wouldn't be coded as an error. So is it an error and where can I find the literature to show the team? |
| 2       | Reply to OP             | Vivian K
I wouldn't call those errors.                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 3       | Reply to OP             | Damian D
Words that are mispronounced due to a student's Speech patterns and /or dialect are not errors if that is how they normally speak. I can't give you a page number offhand but I know it's in the assessment guide. |
|   | Reply to Damian from Post Author | Mary R  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Thank you! I'll look there!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 5 | Reply to Mary R                  | Thelma B 
|   |                                   | Page 25 I believe         |
| 6 | Reply to OP                     | Rose S  
|   |                                   | Accounting for culture and EL there is research that says not to count drop endings as errors |
| 7 | Reply to own comment with screenshot | Rose S  
|   |                                   | [Screenshot of assessment manual explaining that dropped endings should not count as errors if part of the student’s regular speech pattern.] |
| 8 | Reply to Rose S from Post Author | Mary R  
|   |                                   | This is very helpful. Thank you! |
| 9 | Reply to OP                     | Esther V  
|   |                                   | There is a video about errors that talks about this. They are not errors. |
|10 | Reply to OP                     | Literacy Facebook Group Representative  
|   |                                   | They are not errors IF that is the child's speech or dialect. |
|11 | Reply to representative from Post Author | Mary R  
|   |                                   | Thank you! |

There is no debating or insistence that any deviation from print is an error but instead a resounding affirmation that dialect-influenced miscues/errors should not be counted against the child. Rose S even helps Mary, the original poster, by commenting with a picture of the manual stating such (segment 7). There is a sense of collaboration and support embedded here. In segment 5, Thelma directs the post author to the appropriate page in the manual. In segment 7, Rose S shares a photo of the assessment manual in an attempt to help clarify the scoring of dialect-influenced miscues. In segment 10, a representative from the publishing company confirms this is true! In my career, I have had some extremely heated debates with colleagues
over not counting dialect-influenced miscues against students, so I reflected in my field notes how refreshing this affirming, collegial recognition of children’s languages was.

This, however, was in stark contrast to the other dialect-related post, in which a representative from the group contradicts their own manual and insists that running records are a standardized assessment and any deviation from the printed text must be marked and scored accordingly. The post is from September 2021 and received 5 likes and 21 comments. In this post, the original post author, Carrie K, is querying about the consideration of Black English (which is referred to as African American Language in the post) when marking errors on students’ oral reading and is met with a much different response than the previous post. I chose this post for a more thorough analysis because the conversation is much less collegial or affirming and stands in such stark contrast to the previous post. Comments included below are the “top comments,” as indicated by Facebook based on their engagement metrics.

Table 13. Carrie K’s Post about Features of Black English and Scoring Running Records.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segment</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Post/Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1       | Original Post | Carrie K  
|         |             | When analyzing RR, if a student “miscues” a word because they used African American Language, is that counted as a miscue? I know what the guide says about dialect, but I was wondering about this. An example was my student read “…said Kate teacher” instead of “…said Kate’s teacher”. Leaving off the possessive (‘s) can be common in AAL. Should we consider other features of AAL? I just need to understand how this impacts their score. Thanks! |
| 2       | Reply to OP  | Phyllis Q  
<p>|         |             | Wouldn’t that also be the same for an EL…many of my EL students do that. I would count as an error. The RR guides my instruction and would show me what to teach/focus on. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reply to OP</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Cindy J</td>
<td>I wouldn't count that as a miscue, rather note the error so you can address it in future lessons.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Rebecca K</td>
<td>I personally wouldn't count as a miscue. You may note it, but I wouldn't focus on it as a main teaching point because that's how your student speaks at home and there is a certain level of cultural identity connected to their fluency as a reader. However, if it were a speech concern, that would be a teaching point.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Tammy F</td>
<td>I have a very educated Chinese friend who never uses past tenses even after more than 25 years in the US.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Marcy Q</td>
<td>At a workshop, I learned that if EL type errors or using AAVE are the majority of errors made, you note them as errors, but do not hold it against them in terms of moving up a level. The person who studied children who made such errors but controlled other aspects of literacy saw a reduction in those kind of errors over time at higher levels.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Literacy Facebook Group Representative</td>
<td>HI...I definitely appreciate your concern but it is stated in the Assessment Guide that this is a standardized assessment and all children are to be assessed in the same way. You can then use teacher judgment in determining the Placement Level also discussed in the Guide. To do otherwise leaves a wide range of possible responses based on each individual teacher's perspective and decision and therefore loses all validity as a standardized tool. Scores could not be used in the way they are intended to be able to track class progress, school progress or even the progress of individual children from grade to grade. etc. Scoring the assessment in a standardized way is never &quot;holding it against&quot; a child. That would be a testing mindset as opposed to an assessment mindset focused on gathering information to help us most effectively address the needs of students. Hope this clarifies. I would also be concerned as to how this sets up children for difficulty/inconsistency with other teachers who expect, sometimes based on state standards, the use of standard English. That will certainly be the expectation later in their school lives and probably professionally. Something to consider. Thank you again for caring.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discourse Analysis: Carrie K and Racist Assessment Rules

In my field notes, I recorded the following reflection after reading the post by Carrie K, which I observed in September 2021 after having read the other post in June 2021.

I cannot help but notice the marked difference in folks’ responses to a question of dialectical difference among these posts. In Mary R’s post where they do not refer to the specific race or dialect of the child, all the comments agreed that a child’s dialect or speech should not be a factor. In Carrie K’s post, which is specifically about the dropping of the possessive in Black English, the responses to her query are much less supportive and seem to favor counting them as errors…the elephant in the room here for me is Blackness. This feels like a blatantly racist response.

Consider the Facebook group’s representative's response. They say it is an error and go so far as to say that all children need to know “standard” English (segment 7). Regarding “standard” English, the representative replies, “That will certainly be the expectation later in their school lives and probably professionally. Something to consider.” The “something to consider” seems to function as a way to soften the subtext here, using “why this way and not that way” (Gee, 2011). By saying it is only something to consider as opposed to using more commanding or assertive language, the language feels gentler but the subtext and message remains the same: Black English is not professional or appropriate; it is wrong. There is a clear deficit discourse from the company representative’s perspective that participates in and reinforces schooled literacy or literacy as white property.

On the contrary to the representative, Tammy F seems to imply that dialect-influenced errors are not a problem by giving an example of a Chinese friend; however, when considering “why this way and not that way,” (Gee, 2011), even this show of solidarity feels couched in schooled literacy or the idea of white respectability, education and class. It is okay that the Chinese friend speaks the way she does because Tamara knows the friend is “well-educated.” Tamara very well could have affirmed it should not be a miscue by explicitly saying such but
instead chose a personal example of the friend instead that conflates oral language use, education and (implicitly) intelligence/education. This deficit discourse around Black English from these comments reifies schooled literacy and the narrow view surrounding what counts as English.

Examining the comments from the Facebook group representatives also reveals a heavy discourse of standardization surrounding the running record. The representative makes it clear that the publisher’s stance is that running records are a standardized assessment tool and that children should all be scored the same way in order to maintain the validity of the assessment (segment 7). While the representative discusses teacher judgment in determining a placement level for the student’s reading level, they are firm to score all children the same way (again - in direct contrast to the comment in the other dialect-related post I observed).

In segment 7, the representative from the group goes on to say toward the end of their comment, “Scoring the assessment in a standardized way is never "holding it against" a child. That would be a testing mindset as opposed to an assessment mindset focused on gathering information to help us most effectively address the needs of students.” It is clear in this sentence that the person posting is marking distinction between a test and an assessment, however they do not particularly explain the difference and instead assume to the readers that their distinction between test and assessment is clear. Making this strange, a tool for discourse analysis from Gee (2011) begs the questions: are test and assessment not synonyms? In my interpretation and through the lens of the doing and not just saying tool (Gee, 2011), the confusing distinction between test and assessment feels like it functions to gaslight the author of the post by accusing them of a “testing” mindset rather than an “assessment” mindset while claiming that running records must be administered exactly the same way for each child. Further, the display of power from the group representative, here again, plays into the discourse of teachers not as thinkers but
as doers – the company and its representatives hold the “right” knowledge and are here to inform and enforce schooled literacy, even if it comes at the expense of contradicting their own work.

Overall, these two dialect related posts are quite antithetical in many ways due to the responses. This topic and the way the representatives from the company responded - contradicting their own manual - leave me with a lot of questions about the danger of relying on social media spaces like this as places for professional learning, especially when the “authority” goes against their own published word elsewhere. How do you know what to trust (a common and modern problem with news and misinformation on social media in general)?

**Teaching Strategies**

Three posts specifically discussed teaching strategies they employ based on the results of a running record. Again, the low frequency I saw this kind of post stood out because my personal orientation to running records is that they are a useful tool for making some goals and decisions about what a child needs in order to grow as a reader. In other words, my own orientation to doing a running record with a child is to think about what strategies I would teach next to help that child along.

In October 2021, Joanna S posted asking for help with prompting and teaching strategies for a student. Joanna referred to the miscues as being grammatically incorrect and shared that when she conferred with the student the student either denies reading it that way or says what she read sounded right (despite Joanna telling her it did not sound right). The post had 6 likes and 35 comments. Below I share the post and what Facebook calls the top comments (which it refers to as the most engaging comments) in order to manage the readability of the post and demonstrate a feel for the conversation that took place. I chose this post because all three of the posts were similar in topic and content but this one had more engagement.
Table 14. Joanna S's Post about Prompting a Native English Speaker.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segment</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Post/Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1       | Original Post (OP) | Joanna S  
I'm looking for suggestions for prompts to use with a student or teaching points. She is a native English speaker and does not make grammatical errors in conversation. However, she makes several grammatical errors when reading. When I go back to it and remind her what she said and ask her if it sounds right, she either said "I didn't say that!" Or "Yes, that sounds right." I've told her that it doesn't sound right and said how it should sound but this is a consistent error pattern. She's scoring at the independent level, decent fluency, good comprehension. Thanks for the feedback!  
[Image of running record as the child in question read it] |
| 2       | Reply to OP    | Literacy Facebook Group Representative  
Hi Julie...she is using meaning and visual information and in most places the grammar is correct at the point of error. She just needs to monitor more closely. Is this a familiar read at an instructional level? After she sounded out bragged, did she repeat the whole word? For the sentence with underground, your coding shows that she SC [self-corrected] at the point of error and then reread. Is that what happened? How are you approaching her noticing these errors after the read? |
I have a student who is doing the same thing in reading, but has speech issues having to do with language. I'm a sped teacher. My suggestion is to run this issue by a speech pathologist to see if they can give you insight. If there's nothing going on there, then it boils down to accuracy—slow down and focus because she thinks she said it correctly makes me think she's hearing it in her mind correctly, just misspeaking. Does that make sense? Basically fluency practice needed.

Literacy Facebook Group Representative
she reads this at an independent level. There is far more read correctly than incorrectly. She just needs to monitor more closely.

I was also wondering about language. It is often overlooked as an issue

**Discourse Analysis: Joanna S and Reading the Words White**

In the original post from Joanna, the making strange tool from Gee (2011) allows for a queering of a couple of taken-for-granted words Joanna uses. She stresses that the child as a native English speaker does not make grammatical errors, only so when reading. What does Joanna mean by native? A white person with no particularly influenced dialect? In other words, I wonder if Joanna considers speakers of dialects of English, such as people from the Appalachian Mountains or African Americans to be native speakers. By foregrounding that the reader is a native speaker, Joanna shirks responsibility from considering or being open to the idea that the child’s reading may be influenced by culture, environment, or dialect and participates within the discourse of schooled literacy.

And, furthermore, what exactly does Joanna mean when using the word *grammatical*? Looking at the photo of the running record up to the point of error (which is what you do in Marie Clay’s version of miscue analysis) in segment 1, the child’s reading is “grammatical.” For example, “I will run under” fits English syntax up to the point of error and
after the error. “I ran fast” is also syntactically sound up to the point of error and only breaks the grammar of “standard” English syntax when analyzed with what came after (“I ran fast than the…”). However, there is also a line-break, so it is possible the child may have thought the next line began a new sentence, in which case, the sentences would not violate the syntax as read.

These choice words, in juxtaposition with the photo of the child’s reading on running record, suggest that Joanna S, probably unconsciously, is relying on the deficit discourse of schooled literacy (Collin & Apple, 2007; Cook-Gumperz, 2006). The child’s reading needs to match exactly as the words are printed in order to demonstrate proficient reading.

Throughout Joanna’s post and the comments there is also a discourse of reading as “reading the words correctly.” In the end of segment 1, the original post, Joanna shared that the child read with good fluency and comprehension. While I am certainly not insinuating that accurate reading is unimportant, I do believe that the goal of reading is to make and construct meaning, which Joanna said the child does. Thinking of building significance (Gee, 2011), Joanna foregrounded the child’s problems (inaccurate oral reading) and mentioned good comprehension as an afterthought at the end of the post. By focusing on accuracy and ignoring that the child understood what they read, Joanna takes up a deficit discourse around the child’s performance and also communicates that reading is primarily about decoding with accuracy, not an uncommon consequence of running records (Dooley & Assaf, 2009; Kraayenord et al., 1999; Wilson et al., 2005; Yoon, 2015). The comments carry this throughline. In segment 3, Lana J said, “it boils down to accuracy” and ended with “Basically fluency practice needed” (even though Joanna did share the child reads with fluency in the original post). The discourse of reading, then, “boils down” to a construction of reading as accuracy, or reading the words correctly, an integral construct of the discourse of running records.
In the construction of accurate reading, correct reading and errors rely on one another to coexist. That is, an error in reading cannot exist without the construction of what counts as accurate reading. This epistemic symbiotic relationship (Britzman, 1995; Luhmann, 1998) erases speech patterns and dialect as factors in reading or the possibility of expanding accurate reading to include dialectical differences as long as a reader constructs and builds meaning.

**Circulating Discourses of School and Neoliberal Policy**

Teachers take up a complex array of often competing and contradicting ideals stemming from pedagogy, publishers, and neoliberal policies. While teachers may orient from different perspectives, there are shared discourses among teachers within the group that are cited over time by shared language, culture, and national education policy. These discursive practices, or accepted ways of talking within a particular context, situation, time or space, are established over time and become routine through the repetition of language built and constructed to purvey a particular meaning (Gee, 2011; Hall, 2001; Wetherall, 2001). These discourses become taken for granted ways of knowing and being but are produced through language over time; usually, the ways these discourses circulate become so everyday that people are not aware or keen to the fact they are participating in or operating from or within a particular discourse (Hall, 2001).

The posts within this influential publisher-owned Facebook group and the comments teachers leave to one another demonstrate the ways that teachers are not inherently individual actors but instead enactors of socially constructed discourses over time. These posts demonstrate myriad examples of the very real ways in which teachers are positioned as technicians (Au, 2011), as lacking the ability to have professional knowledge and the autonomy to make their own decisions (Britzman, 2003). What I observed in the group also highlighted the ways in which neoliberal policies use accountability and data to reinforce and recreate schooled literacies
While discussing the topics of teachers’ posts and the discourses that dominated these posts in the preceding section, below I offer a summary of the history and positioning of these discourses that circulate within schools, districts, policies and the teachers’ posts I have identified in the preceding discussion.

**Teacher as Technician / Teaching as Procedural / Standardized Schooling**

There is a long history of the discourse of the standardization of schooling and thereby the teacher as technician rather than as thinker or knower. Both standardization and standardized testing have been well established since public school expanded rapidly in the early 1900s (Au, 2011; Kliebard, 2004; Lipman, 2011), though the amount of testing has increased exponentially since the 1990s (Au, 2007, 2011). Public schooling “provided the organizational conditions for schools to become arbiters of literacy standards” (Cook-Gumperz, 2006, p. 39), which is directly tied to and has been accomplished through the deskilling of teachers via pre-packaged curriculum and assessment (Au, 2011; Collin and Apple, 2007; Cook-Gumperz, 2006).

Monaghan and Saul (1987/2018) traced how curricular materials dictated the content and methods for teaching, finding that by the 1970s, most pre-packaged curricular resources did not even include the pedagogical theory upon which the curricular content rested. Instead, the focus was how to “deliver” it. Thus, there is a history of the discourse of teachers not as thinkers or professionals making informed decisions about their content, pedagogy and students but rather as doers of bite-sized procedural tasks (Britzman, 2003). Teachers are overburdened and inundated with manuals, checklists, and procedural training at the expense of their autonomy to make decisions in their classrooms (Au, 2011). Again, this is such a well-established way of thinking and talking about teachers, schools, and teaching that it is hardly noticeable; it feels like a normal colloquial way to talk about schooling; it is insidious. Yet, as demonstrated in the preceding
presentation of findings, there are pockets of teacher participation in the group that hinted at or even explicitly pushed outside these discourses, such as the post where Kelly A discusses the interaction between text and reader and eliciting emotional responses.

**Schooled Literacy / Narrowing of Literacy as Whiteness**

Relatedly and not unlike the discourse of teacher as technician, schooling has from the beginning taken up a discourse of literacy and reading as that of the white, able-bodied, heterosexual, and middle- and upper-class (Collin & Apple, 2007; Cook–Gumperz, 2006; Kliebard, 2004). The discourse of “schooled literacy” is in part a product of standardization: the standards and objectives of the curriculum are unsurprisingly those of the white, English speaking middle class (Castles et al., 2018; Collin & Apple, 2007; Monaghan & Saul, 1987/2018) since our public education system was built and made for the upholding of white supremacy. This is yet another hegemonic and insidious discourse: it is an inherent component of schooling and thus the ways in which people speak of literacy as white is rarely named so brazenly. It sneaks up in the subtle and the micro, a comment about ensuring children learn standard English so they have more vocational opportunities, for example. Again, there is a need for nuance; not all members of the group consistently participated in this discourse; recall the post from Kathy N discussing how to identify a reading level for an autistic students. Within that post, a commenter resisted the positioning of reading and defining it by a single assessment so narrowly: “connecting real experiences to text would be far more important than defining their reading ability based on a single assessment process even one done over time” (Table 7, segment 3 from Camie M).
A Discourse of Running Records

Within the use of running records themselves, the language of the assessment shapes the way teachers and professionals discuss and construct both reading and the reader. First, running records shape reader’s identities in a narrow way such that readers are their levels (Hoffman, 2017; Kontovourki, 2012). Kontovourki’s (2012) case study in a third-grade classroom highlighted the discursive power of the running record and reading level; children referred to themselves as their level (“I’m a level D reader”) and so did their teachers. Secondly, the constructs of the running record define what counts as reading; reading is often reduced to the correct pronunciation of printed words on the page because the running record relies on accuracy as a significant component of the assessment (Clay, 2014). Finally, running records, like all assessments, work to categorize children as proficient or poor readers and contribute to a long-established deficit framing of “struggling readers” (Allington, 1980). Again, while there is nuance within the data corpus, the language and constructs of the running record shaped the ways teachers defined reading.

Summary

The group members of the Facebook Literacy group discussed running records in 240 posts over the seven months of data collection and brought up various and often overlapping topics as they did so. This chapter discussed several of those topics in an effort to build a portrait of the ebb and flow of the group. From Halloween dress up joy and sharing silly things kids said to racist judgments around what counts as reading based on children’s oral language and dialect, there is breadth among the issues that teachers bring up in regard to running records. Teachers came to the group for help: “Is there any easy way?” (Table 6, segment 1 from Marissa E) and supported one another, while teachers also often expressed strong opinions about their beliefs
and orientation to literacy and assessment, which led to confrontation and conflict, occasionally accusatory: “still doing too much” (Table 10, segment 8 from Jessica R).

At the same time, across all these topics, there is evidence of the influence of neoliberal education policy, the de-professionalization of teaching, and the narrow discourse of reading shaped by the history of schooled literacy, and the procedures and constructs of running records themselves. Teachers’ discussions revealed the departure from Marie Clay’s original intent of running record as an instructional tool for teachers. The buying and selling of “pre-packaged” boxed sets of running record assessments is tied up with the commercialization of education and education for profit, and this social media space is both a place for teachers to share and ask questions and, a virtual customer service center for curricular products from the company. Of course, this corporatization of running records for profit and the use of running records not as instructional tools but as standardized assessments is entangled in the privatization of education embedded in neoliberal education policies.

Power also circulated and the regulatory power of the curriculum company’s representatives was felt vividly from shutting down conversations by positioning themselves as the “real” authority to deleting comments they decided were not appropriate.

Ultimately, the discussion within the group reflected the overall experience of working in a school. There are colleagues you disagree with philosophically and thus engage in heated debates. There are teachers you rely on and count on to share advice and materials. There are teachers who push back on policies and question practices and curriculum design, teachers who follow the script, and teachers in between. Teaching can be a lonely endeavor as much of teachers’ time is spent in a classroom alone, and this space, like the teachers’ lounge during a prep period or lunch, mirrored the landscape of the teachers’ lounge (Carpenter & Morrison,
2018): silly stories, gossip, and exasperated teachers looking for help or support with students or negotiating the burden of overassessment or curriculum.
Chapter 5: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND POTENTIAL OF SOCIAL MEDIA RESEARCH IN LITERACY EDUCATION

I entered this study as an elementary school teacher and reading specialist on the brink of burnout, not because I do not love working with children but because the heavy weight of neoliberal policy was pressing hard on me. I knew assessments like running records were only useful as long as they were used to guide instruction and kept to a manageable number, but my colleagues and I were being asked to assess more than teach. I struggled to justify the mandated assessment to my students, who often felt overwhelmed by the testing, too. My broad question, “What is the nature of elementary teachers’ posts about running record assessments within a social media space?” arose from that experience. I entered the study curious but suspicious that I was not the only person feeling this way as my experience with over-assessment and neoliberal policy was apparent in each of the three states in which I have worked. I was led to the research site of a social media community because I knew it would be an atemporal gathering place of people working in various contexts (public, private, charter, multiple states) which seemed ripe for getting an idea of what teachers are saying from a view broader than a local context or geography.

I also believe that my entry into and experience with this inquiry shows how teachers’ limited actions within an entangled web of systems and bureaucracy may appear as “the unthinking teacher just following the rules and implementing mandates and curriculum” when I am, in fact, a highly intellectual teacher who views teaching and reflection on my practice as its own form of action research. But like all teachers I must exist as a public school teacher; being both highly aware and critical of the systems does not mean I can avoid the mandates that govern schools. The research literature I have relied on in this study discusses the positioning of teachers
as technicians and the de-professionalization of teachers, but there is an important clarification of which to be mindful when recognizing these realities. Teacher as technician was not a willful choice by teachers to be just doers and manual-followers but a consequence of a broken system. This is why discourse analysis was an essential tool in analyzing the teachers’ posts. Teachers ARE professionals and thinkers, however, that is often not explicitly evident or highlighted within the confines of a factory-like, neoliberal public school bureaucracy. In other words, teachers are both and their positioning shifts in relation to the myriad of particularities that construct their teaching. Teachers have been deskilled and positioned as technicians, and while some teachers may have internalized these positionings and do not see themselves as knowers, there are also teachers who recognize teaching as a highly intellectual pursuit. This was evident throughout this Facebook group.

Data analysis focused on both the content of what teachers posted and how the powerful discourses of schooled literacy and teachers-as-technicians circulated stealthily as they had become normalized. The topics teachers discussed as well as the common, everyday language used within the group demonstrated both the continued way policymakers and curriculum developers position teachers as not-knowing as well as instances of teachers’ using the space to demonstrate their professional acumen. The juxtaposition of both a deficit discourse of teachers as technicians AND moments that showed teachers as thinkers in the group highlighted previous findings that teachers often end up contradicting their own beliefs and principles because of powerful, external mandates that they are given no choice but to follow (Abrams et al., 2003); that is, teachers are intellectual and have beliefs and opinions but also often contradict them because of external pressure. Posts within the group also highlighted a potential lack of district- and school-based professional development and learning that supports the needs of teachers as
they self-reported or sought resources within the group. This is evident in one of the most common topics teachers raised within the group, namely, guidelines and protocol for administering and scoring the assessment. This fits within the larger research literature that shows that pre-packaged curricula and, by extension, teacher professional development focuses on implementation rather than building teacher content knowledge and critical thinking (Britzman, 2003; Monaghan & Saul, 1987/2018; Popkewitz, 2018). Several posts also shared humor and amusement from things children shared within the running record assessment, and some posts shared the joy and camaraderie of teachers. This demonstrated the social media group as a space of community building and finding connection, a theme highlighted in the current body of research on teachers’ use of social media spaces (Bissessar, 2014; Kelly & Antonio, 2016; Moore-Russo et al, 2017; Patahuddin & Logan, 2019).

While no one in the social media group ever came right out and named the harmful and reductive effects of over-assessment and standardization as articulated in plain language in the reflection I gave testimony to in the opening of this chapter and more academically in the introduction and literature review of this dissertation, this study contributes to the understanding of teachers’ perspectives on running records in the neoliberal context. In this chapter, I discuss the findings of the study and how they contribute to and expand on the current body of research on literacy and teacher education as well as the research literature on social media spaces as sites of professional development. I then discuss the implications this study has for teacher educators, facilitators/leaders in teacher professional development, district/school leaders, and literacy education researchers. I end with a concluding thought about the multiple possibilities of potential for professional learning with social media spaces.
Discussion

This study built on and contributed to the fields of literacy education, teacher education and research on social media in several ways. Based on my data analysis and experience living within the group for seven months, I present a discussion of how this study builds on the current body of research in the field.

Literacy

*Teachers as Technicians and Followers of Procedures Rather than as Professionals?*

Since the 1970s, there has been a focus in teacher learning on “delivering” curriculum via manuals and pre-packaged products rather than building teacher capacity to align content and pedagogy (Monaghan & Saul, 1987/2018). Furthermore, because the function of public schooling in the United States is to maintain a stratified labor force for our capitalist economy, the role of teaching has mostly been reduced to implementation of standardized and constricting curricula, the vehicle for recreating and maintaining the stratification of class (Au, 2011; Collin & Apple, 2007; Popkewitz, 2018). Thus, teachers are not positioned or considered as professionals with a vast knowledge base to make informed decisions about their students (Britzman, 2003; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1991) but, instead, as technicians, as followers of manuals to implement a rigid curriculum (Au, 2011). Of course, this is not to suppose that teachers are not professionals or thinkers but, rather, due to a burden of curriculum to implement and an onslaught of policies to abide by, teachers are afforded little voice, space and opportunity to enact agency (Abrams et al., 2003; Hursh, 2007; Lipman, 2011).

The review of the literature on running records also brought to light the research on teachers’ use of running records, which shows that often running records are used not as instructional tools but as acts of compliance from state, district or school mandates (Ascenzo-
Moreno, 2016; Costello, 2012; Dooley & Assaf, 2009; Ford & Opitz, 2008; Kontovourki, 2012; Kraayenoord et al., 1999; Yoon, 2015); in other words, teachers are giving the assessments not necessarily because they believe in it or see value in it but because they are mandated to do so.

The fact that most of the posts within the group focused on questions about the procedures for administering running record assessments suggests that teachers have internalized this identity of technician, likely unconsciously. Of course, there is no harm in asking a question when one is not sure or new to the assessment but focusing on the procedural aspects rather than how the assessments inform instruction suggests that administering the assessment correctly and following the rules is the priority. An alternate interpretation is also feasible: because the assessments are mandated and reported to school and district leaders, teachers may be facing tremendous pressure to “give the assessments correctly” since the assessments may be audited by leaders for accuracy since they may also be tied to teacher evaluations. This is not surprising given the current context: student placement and grades are determined by the results of this assessment as are teacher evaluations in some contexts (for example, in NYC [NYCDOE, 2019]).

Outside of queries about particulars for the directions of administering the assessment, there were several posts that focused on gathering, organizing, or managing materials. Sharing tips and tricks related to organization is productive, but like the focus on the how-to guidelines for the assessment, organizing materials is ultimately about implementation and procedures. These posts demonstrate the burden of teaching in a time of neoliberal school “reform”: there is no end in sight of rudimentary administrative tasks, leaving little time for the intellectual work of planning curriculum responsively to build on students’ strengths and address their needs. On the other hand, the tips and tricks offered by teachers to one another in some ways represent the
creativity, ingenuity and extraordinary capacity of teachers to create and manage complex systems (even if the systems serve the neoliberal agenda for data).

Additionally, there were moments within the group I observed when teachers did express their thinking, opinions and pushback against assessment or other practices. This is important because it highlights the need to honor that the Facebook group is not generalizable as a space of circulating hegemonic, deficit discourses about teachers as well as the fact that not all teachers accept their positioning as technicians. A major moment of this was the debate about reading perspectives that occurred in the comments section of the post in Table 10. Conflict in and of itself is not inherently unprofessional and the specific points each teacher made during the debate indicated aspects of their content knowledge (e.g., the importance of phonemic awareness). In the next two sections, I highlight other moments in which the hegemonic discourses circulated but without suggesting that all teachers cited these discourses.

**The Pervasive, Hegemonic Discourse of Defining Literacy with Whiteness**

Literacy has been defined narrowly as the practices of white middle class communities since the early days of public schooling in the U.S. (Collin & Apple, 2007; Kliebard, 2004). Scholars have referred to this as “schooled literacy” (Castles et al., 2018; Collin & Apple, 2007; Cook-Gumperz, 2006). Many studies of running records in schools have demonstrated the ways in which running records work to maintain the hegemony of whiteness as it relates to what policymakers, leaders, teachers and schools count as literacy (Ascenzi-Moreno, 2016; Dzaldov & Peterson, 2005; Harmey & Kabuto, 2018; Vriend Van Duinen & Wilson, 2008; Wheeler et al., 2012). By insisting on accuracy and reading the words as printed, the assessment does not account for the role of an individual's language uses/dialects and funds of knowledge.
The findings from this study fit within this body of research as the discourse analysis revealed the commonplace and subtle language teachers used to maintain the idea that reading is reading the words exactly as printed. For example, in Joanna S’s post from October 2021 (Table 14), Joanna queries about how to support a student but clarifies that the student is “a native English speaker and does not make grammatical errors in conversation.” In the post, Joanna goes on to explain she has been coaching the student to think about whether the words the student says sound right (e.g., are they syntactically acceptable in English?). The unintended consequence of this is that it supposes there is one kind of English and English syntax, the syntax and ways of talking of the white middle class, the so-called “standard” English. This was even more exacerbated in Carrie K’s post from September 2021 (Table 13) in which she tries to clarify the nuance in scoring running records for Black students who read in Black English; the comments, including the one from the company representative, positioned Black English as inferior to “standard” (white) English and contradicted previous work by the publisher.

The binary position of white, middle-class syntax and language over the many other dialects of English has been problematic but also positions any dialect of English that is not white and middle class as deficient and unacceptable in school. Research has demonstrated that we tend to read how we talk in our daily oral language (Reaser et al, 2017; Vriend Van Vuinen & Wilson, 2008), yet, literacy curriculum and assessment, stemming from our education policies and standards, continue to favor and uphold reading as white property. Thus, the conflation of literacy with whiteness is reflected by teachers as they discuss running records since that is the system within which they work. At the same time, I interpret the two teachers posting queries about dialect (Tables 12 and 13) as acknowledging that ignoring a child’s language practices is problematic and leads to a lower score; neither explicitly pushed back on the assessment or
named how the assessment upholds literacy as white property, but I think the questions they had about the role of dialect itself suggests they recognized the limitation of treating accuracy as a major construct of the running record.

**Running Records are Misused Due to the Commercialization of Curriculum**

It is well documented in the current body of literature how the discourses of running records and corresponding reading levels narrowly define reading (Dooley & Assaf, 2009; Glasswell & Ford, 2011; Hoffman, 2017; Kontovourki, 2012; Wilson et al., 2005; Yoon, 2015). I would argue that this discourse and narrowing of reading took hold because of the U.S. public school system’s relationship with capitalist profit via curriculum publishers. As I argued in Chapter 2, Marie Clay’s original work around running records was transformed into a neatly packaged box that could be sold for the purpose of assessing young readers; these assessments claimed “standardization” because they provided a manual with directions so that teachers would consistently use them the same way. A consequence of this was that running records were taken from their original purpose; the commercialization allowed for the assessment to be used widely and in ways that allowed districts to compare students’ and teachers’ performance.

The results of my analysis support my argument that running records have been and are being misused and that the influence of for-profit publishers is a factor. Throughout my observation, I was keenly aware of the presence of the company representatives in the group: how they positioned themselves, and how and when they responded to posts and comments. For example, in one such post from Kelly Z about not having enough time to do running records, a commenter asks an off-topic question about another curriculum product and gets a response. Customer service for purchased products seemed to always warrant a response. The company also, at times, was quite explicit in its stance on the standardization of the assessment: “HI...I
definitely appreciate your concern but it is stated in the Assessment Guide that this is a standardized assessment and all children are to be assessed in the same way” (Carrie K’s post in September 2021 in Table 13). The company consistently messaged that the assessment was meant to be administered this way so that scores could be compared across children within a class and the school. This is in sharp contrast to Marie Clay’s original intention which was to monitor an individual child’s progress and use of strategies over time (Clay, 2001).

The majority of the posts demonstrated that the burden of using running records for big data led teachers to specific questions about the administration guidelines. This does not necessarily correlate per se to the idea that teachers believe or buy into these practices; it more likely reveals that teachers had no choice or say in the matter and are now negotiating the consequences of decisions policymakers and state/district leaders made. In addition, I would also argue that there is more explicit evidence that not all teachers buy into or mindlessly abide by the misuse of running records. Several moments within the data indicated otherwise. For example, a teacher questioned reporting data to the district for a child who lacks expressive language to be able to respond within the constraints of the assessment, which I would argue recognizes some problems with the assessment, in addition to a commenter making the case one assessment alone is likely not indicative of the range of the students’ skills (see post in Table 7). Another example of this occurred when a teacher acknowledged the role of both the reader and text as part of how reading elicits emotional responses; by acknowledging the connection of reader’s schema and personhood with a particular text, the teacher suggested an ontology to reading that acknowledges the interplay of text and reader situated in a particular context (see Table 9). Yet another intellectual moment occurred in the two posts regarding dialect: both posters (in Tables 12 and 13) acknowledged in their queries that dialect plays a role in a child’s
oral reading of printed text as opposed to assuming or operating from a position that ignores the role of the reader and instead assumes that a child’s language practices or culture are not factors related to reading development.

**Teacher Learning and Social Media**

*Social Media as a Cautious Space for Professional Learning*

The body of research reviewed has suggested that social media is a ripe space for teachers to engage in professional development and learning, although it may look very different from more traditional brick and mortar professional learning environments such as consultants or coaches presenting and facilitating workshops (Bissessar, 2014; Carpenter & Morrison, 2018; Lynch, 2014; Lynch & Mah, 2018; Kelly & Antonio, 2016; Moore-Russo et al., 2018; Patahuddin & Logan, 2019; Rensfeldt et al., 2018). At the same time, however, this is a burgeoning field of research and, while the research indicates that teachers are using social media as a site of learning, evidence of the impact of the professional learning on social media is limited as it is understudied (Goodyear et al., 2019).

The findings of this study suggested that, like most things, the reality of whether social media spaces are rich opportunities is much more complex than just teachers taking to social media and developing their practice. There are a range of factors that likely contribute to the success of the space and whether teachers feel it is a space that develops their practice. These include: the moderator of the group and their facilitation, knowledge, and tone; the members of the group and members’ knowledge and levels of interaction; the framing and mission/objective of the group; the social media platform itself; whether the space is private or public; whether it is corporate/publisher-owned or teacher-run; among others that inevitably contribute to the envisionment of what successful and productive teacher learning may look like on social media.
While I do agree with the social media research I reviewed that there is potential for social media to be productive and generative spaces for teacher learning, I make several observations about some of those factors mentioned above. First, the fact the group is run by a publishing company inherently shaped the space, its purpose, and how interactions happened within the space. While anyone can join the group, it is designed and labeled as a group for educators who use the specific curriculum. Thus, across the posts and comments, teachers often referred directly to the titles, components, and products that are a part of this publisher’s curriculum. Moreover, this tended to recreate conversations that have been observed for decades: teacher learning often focuses on training and figuring out how to implement a specific curriculum purchased by the state, district, or school (Cook-Gumperz, 2018; Monaghan & Saul, 1987/2018).

Secondly, the facilitation of the group by the publishing company’s representatives affected the space significantly. As the data analysis showed, there were instances of the moderators deleting comments when the moderators disagreed with or felt there was too much conflict. Representatives also exercised their authoritative power regularly in reductive ways that positioned the company as having all the knowledge and disseminating and imparting it to teachers. The most striking example of this was at one point when the representative said, “It doesn't need to be written down” in response to a teacher claiming they had never seen a particular principle written down in the curricular materials before. The translation of this, of course, is “this company is the authority; it is true because I said so.” While some teachers did specifically post to ask the representative to respond (and the representative usually did respond), I noted several times in my field notes how being a member in the group always felt like Big
Brother was watching - at any time, the representative could comment to correct you, to criticize you, or delete what you had taken time to share.

Notwithstanding the power asserted by the moderators, the members participating are a significant part of the space and its composition. The knowledge, participation, and language of the members who participated build the space. While the company created the group, it depends on the Facebook group members to share ideas and questions. Ultimately as well, the concept of teacher learning depends on the individual and what they glean or take away from their time reading, posting, and commenting within the group. Since I was unable to follow up with participants given my methodological choices, I cannot comment on whether the teachers in the group felt it was a productive or useful space for learning. However, as discussed in Chapter 4, I saw evidence of teachers’ internalization and participation in the Discourse of teachers as technicians rather than as knowers, so I am skeptical that teachers perceived themselves as engaged in intellectual work. Yet, there were posts in which teachers did seem to be engaged in intellectual work. Posts in which teachers challenged one another's perspectives on reading or questioned some of the procedural standards that did not acknowledge the ways children brought their language and funds of knowledge to the act of reading, for example, indicated that the group does not necessarily share the discourse of teachers as technicians, even if the bulk of the posts felt as such. I also question the binary that circulates in the research on social media space, as it assumes that the space can be a site of productive learning or not. My analysis suggests that a social media space can be both. Based on the myriad topics that teachers posted and the various responses they offered to one another’s posts, I would argue that a social media space can simultaneously be productive and unproductive, generative for learning and harmful, and many other things all at once. Certainly, that was the impression I left with after months in this
particular Facebook group. For example, some teachers named the work of scholars in the field and held their ground as they debated their orientation to reading. In another post, a teacher was attempting to make false correlations between running records and an online assessment to be used to screen children’s reading, while in yet another post a teacher was sharing a humanizing story of an emotional moment a student shared in response to text. Ultimately, interactions that occur in online spaces, like those experienced in brick-and-mortar schools, are a complex array of productive and reductive. There are myriad pieces in play all at once as I have attempted to articulate in this section.

**Social Media as Social Community Space**

While the body of research on teacher learning and education within social media discusses the possibilities of social media as fruitful places for teachers’ professional development, these spaces were also characterized as a “second teachers’ lounge” (Carpenter & Morrison, 2018) in which teachers mingle and share a social space. Van Dijck & Poell (2015) argue that social media is inherently social and dialogic since producing posts or shares invites a response from others, whether that is a comment, a like, a share, or something else. The body of research suggested that community was an important aspect of teachers’ participation within social media. For example, it was observed that frequently teachers would share jokes and memes in a group of 5000 teachers on Facebook (Bissessar, 2014) suggesting that while these spaces may be professional, they are also social. Additionally, several studies discussed the evidence of the mentorship and support observed within their particular social media spaces (Bernard et al., 2018; Moore-Russo et al, 2017; Patahuddin & Logan, 2019).

This dissertation study supports this previous research. 10% of the posts I captured during my observation period were posts of teachers sharing amusing things children said to them
during a running record, not unlike the sharing of jokes and funny work-related stories Bissessar (2014) observed in their study. At the same time, there was also evidence of mentorship and a willingness to help one another as group members responded to one another, which also fits with the research mentioned in the preceding paragraph. A striking example of this was Marissa E’s post in June 2021. When Marissa queried how to find a way to access online materials easily, comments poured in with tips, tricks, and offerings to email the documents to Marissa. The willingness to help out a “colleague,” or what is in reality a stranger on the internet, was palpable. On the other hand, while the group generally oriented toward a sense of mentorship and aid to one another, there were also moments of intense debate (which in Cynthia J’s case resulted in the comments being deleted by the moderator) and in another instance resulted in a head-to-head reproduction of the reading wars (long-standing debates over the “correct” way to teaching reading) that ended with one member accusing the other of DTM (doing too much). This is important to consider because it is a reminder that both/and (Luhman, 1998) is almost always at play. The online space studied in this dissertation was often supportive and collegial, but also quite tense at moments. This also more closely mirrors the reality of an actual school building staff and being human; conflict is natural and unavoidable, and there are colleagues whose beliefs align with yours as well as those with whom you disagree.

**Implications**

This study led to implications for teacher educators, facilitators of professional development (PD) for teachers, distinct and school leaders, and other education researchers.

**Teacher Educators, Facilitators of Professional Development, School/District Leaders**

Professionals working in higher education within teacher education programs and those working at the state, district, school-based or consulting level who facilitate PD should take heed
of the activities of teachers in social media apps. At a minimum, these stakeholders should be planful in their adult learning design that the teachers they are supporting are likely to engage with other teachers in some way, whether it is participating in a Facebook group like the one in this study or following “teacher influencers” on Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter. By bridging the gap between in-person adult learning (whether in higher education spaces or PD in schools), teachers are likely to see that the people supporting their more formal learning account for the learning that happens outside of the traditional four-walls of the classroom. When professors and PD leaders acknowledge the power and influence of teacher activity on social media, the implicitly and explicitly count social media as a legitimate space of teacher learning.

While I am hesitant to suggest or recommend that facilitators of adult learning make participation in social media mandatory, there are other ways that professors and PD leaders can acknowledge social media and also situate teachers as knowledgeable and professional. For example, a professor or PD facilitator may design a case study of an anonymous teacher’s query within a social media group and ask teachers to craft a response based on their knowledge and their knowledge of the literature in the field. However, I think it is also important to state clearly that teacher educators, PD leaders, and school/district leaders need to carefully consider the role of power and ethics when participating in or observing teacher participation in teacher communities on social media. For example, consider this scenario. A school leader sees a teacher in their building share about their practice or thinking; what the teacher said was not inappropriate, but a practice the leader disagrees with. Teacher educators, PD leaders, and school/district leaders need to develop and be aware of their biases in order to not make personal judgments or evaluations about what teachers share. However, valuing teachers as knowers does not mean accepting or ignoring any and all beliefs teachers hold; leaders and others should use
what teachers share on social media to inform their professional development in person, but again, there is a delicate balance of power and ethics to be considered.

Additionally, it is important for teacher educators to be planful of their adult learning design more broadly since discourses that circulated among this Facebook group often demonstrated a deficit view of teachers as technicians and not as professionals or critical thinkers. Teacher education curriculum that focuses solely on “training” rather than developing teacher autonomy, creativity, and critical judgment will continue to position teachers solely as question-askers to make sure they are “following the rules.” In other words, teacher educators, PD presenters, and district/school leaders should be intentional about the framing of their work and development of teachers in ways that center and build on teacher knowledge (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1991) and in ways that recognize that teaching is intellectual work.

Moreover, teaching is inherently political (Au, 2008; Hursh, 2007; Nieto, 2011) and explicitly naming it as such should not be taboo. Culturally sustaining and relevant pedagogy must continue to foreground teacher education work, and professional development, even PD focused on more technical aspects of teaching such as administering running records, must be intentionally planned, framed, and actionable by the inclusion of students who are diverse learners: the consequences of not doing so is too dire and has perpetuated literacy as white property since the inception of U.S. public schooling. For example, New York State released a guidebook in 2019 titled the NYS Education Department's Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework. However, as I sat writing this chapter, I counted on less than five fingers the number of professional development opportunities I have attended since the document was released that addressed this framework or made connections between this framework and the pedagogy discussed at the PD workshops I have attended. The discourse of schooled literacy is
powerful and embedded within the system of our education; it will take loud voices and action to create change and again empower teachers to see outside this discourse and recognize the political and intellectual work required to disrupt the narrow definition and property of literacy as whiteness.

Relatedly, while we discuss media literacy for children, we also ought to consider embedding media literacy within adult learning as well. Within this study, for example, there was a moment where the publishing company’s representative contradicted their own manual for assessment administration to favor a racist linguistic practice. Teachers sparred over philosophies of teaching reading. In an era where we tend to read something online and assume we can trust it, it is important to emphasize a healthy amount of skepticism and the appropriateness of vetting sources and information online. In a way, I again see this as potential for teacher educators to position teachers as knowers instead of technicians. Just because someone posts or positions something as “best practice” does not necessarily mean it is so. Many schools of education libraries have research guides for graduate students to evaluate sources, but I would argue there is value in bringing this into the teacher education classroom, specifically investigating claims teachers and education experts make in policies, within schools and PD workshops, and on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok. Again, teaching is intellectual work, and teachers should be encouraged and empowered to think critically and evaluate the often competing research and information that buzzes through education spaces in person and online.

Finally, teacher educators and PD leaders should be aware of the teacher activity and the goings on of teachers online because what teachers share, what they query, and what they debate may suggest learning opportunities within the more formal bounds of teacher learning in higher education and school and district-based PD.
Education Researchers

This study also has implications for other education scholars doing research. First and foremost, as the nascent field of social media research and internet research within education reviewed for this study suggested, this study, too, highlighted social media as a rich research site to learn about and hear from teachers and get a pulse on what it is that teachers are facing in current contexts.

A first implication for education researchers interested in teacher learning on social media is to articulate and consider what counts as learning for teachers in these spaces. How is “successful” teacher learning conceptualized or measured? Moreover, it is critical to theorize “successful” or “productive” teacher learning in a way that does not rely on a false and idealistic binary of “this social media space is a productive, ripe place for learning” and “this space was not a good place for teachers to learn.” A worthwhile endeavor for education researchers interested in teacher learning and social media would be to postulate a framework for understanding teacher learning in social media spaces in an expansive, complex way that recognizes the multiple dimensions at play that create the experience and environment for learning (or not) on social media. Avoiding generalizing and making broad statements about social media and its relationship with and to teacher education remains an important consideration for researchers, and one in which I struggled with as I analyzed my own data.

Relatively, at several points throughout this study, I questioned the role of misinformation and the possibility for social media spaces to exacerbate racist, classist, and other non-inclusive practices. For example, in one post, a teacher shared about a problem of practice assessing an autistic student, and a comment was made on the post that essentialized the student as a nonreader. In another post, a discussion of accounting for Black English and dialect within the
running record assessment perpetuated that the only English that counts is white English. While the research literature suggests that social media sites can be opportunities for building community of teachers and professional learning, I think it equally important for future research to also investigate the ways in which these spaces may, like all social media, do harm and spread misinformation and discriminatory practices.

Conversely, I think it is equally important to mine teacher activity on social media that shows the radical potential for humanizing students and teachers outside of deficit discourses around reading and positioning teachers as technicians. While I only observed a handful of instances in this study, I recall in my field notes how much those moments impacted me. It seems a worthy endeavor to investigate and look for these moments and to inquire how we might cultivate more spaces like them.

Methodologically, there were also some limitations to this study that may inform other researchers’ social media research. First, this study only examined one particular group. Future researchers may find it productive to examine and compare two Facebook groups, or perhaps even more forward-thinking, to examine and compare teachers’ participation and interaction across different social media apps. In other words, how is the conversation teachers are having similar or different across Facebook groups? What and how does teacher voice and participation look similar and different across social media platforms? Do certain apps (Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, etc.) afford or shape the conversation differently? Another limitation was that this was a social media space heavily influenced by the publishing company. While that allowed a window into the nexus of how capitalism and standardization intersect, it also shaped the group in ways that may not be so in a group composed of teachers outside the realms of a specific company or curriculum. Furthermore, this study took up unobtrusive observation of participants
as I did not announce my presence as a researcher; future studies may take up a different method that allows researchers to interview and interact with participants in order to better understand how and why they participate within various social media platforms.

**Final Thought**

The tone of “potential” is often a positive one. As a culture, we seem to collectively see potential as a “looking forward,” as a “possibility of something better,” or as “an innovation.” Certainly, this is the tenor of the current body of research literature reviewed for this study in relation to social media spaces as sites of teacher professional development (e.g., Bissessar, 2014, Carpenter & Morrison, 2018; Rodesiler, 2017). And, I do not disagree with the research literature. I view social media spaces as sites of teacher learning, as sites of community building as the body of research literature suggests. I feel I witnessed moments of both within the group.

Returning to the concept and connotation of potential, I situate it as I situate my understanding of power. Power is always present. Power is not inherently negative (Gallagher, 2008), though, that tends to be our cultural understanding of power. And, like power, potential is not inherently positive or negative, and it does not appear only when we are expanding or adding on. There is always potential, and potential is protean in its tone and consequences.

And so, while there is a continued need for researchers to examine and interpret the interactions related to teachers using social media to build community and as a space of professional learning for teachers, the potential is multiplicitous and therefore complex. Moments of productive thinking and reclamation of teachers as professionals may arise from these spaces, while simultaneously, moments of positioning teachers as doers of procedures and of following directions in a curriculum manual may also result. These moments could happen at the same time within one group or across social media spaces. I reflect on my months of
observation within this corporate run group and the observation of Rensfeldt et al. (2018) that posting, sharing, and replying to others in these spaces is a form of labor/work of teachers. I worry about the potential for teachers to continue to be expected to be underpaid and work nights and weekends outside of school while other professionals do not face the same demands on their own personal time. Within social media spaces monetized by publishers, I worry about the potential for the continued positioning of curriculum developers as experts who expect teachers to turn the page and follow curriculum or directions without critical thinking and query; I worry about the shutting down of conversations and the messaging that teachers should be quiet and listen to the experts when the reality is that teachers are the people interacting with children every day. And at the same time within social media spaces, I hope for the continued sharing of joy – the joy from the camaraderie of colleagues dressing up and the laughs of joyful and amusing things children say. I hope for the continued humanizing discourses around teachers and children and understanding that there is an interaction between readers and texts. I hope for the continued motivation for teachers to reach out and ask questions, to not feel alone behind a classroom door. I hope for teachers to feel connected to other teachers and see one another as colleagues and professionals. I hope for teachers and their students.
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