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Professional Identities after Critical Events i

Likewise, opinions differ about when an individual becomes a librarian. Although the American Library Association (1991) declares that individuals cannot be librarians without a Master's degree in library and/or information studies, not all public and independent schools require their librarians to hold (or earn) a Master's degree. With or without the library profession's credentials, feelings of loneliness, self-doubt, and defeat can make the process of becoming a

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Specifically, I used a variation of the narrative inquiry tool *Mystory* (Denzin 2003; Ulmer 1989) in an attempt to understand the novice school librarians' CEs. Gregory L. Ulmer (1989, 1994) developed the concept of *Mystory* out of his frustration for traditional academic writing that focused on expressing absolute truth. He designed these electronic unconventional texts to connect and, ultimately, synthesize disparate discourses and the notion of truth. These discourses included: personal discourses using autobiography, popular discourses derived from oral history or from local or national culture, and academic discourses from experts. Providing no examples or models to aid his students' exploration, Ulmer intended for *Mystories* to be used to explore the arts, literature, and language as a learner instead of as an expert. *Mystory* involves each participant's creating a single autobiographical narrative that defines a turning point or a crisis, beginning with the "sting of memory" (Denzin 2014, 32). The written narratives are called "critical event narratives." After dramatically describing the critical event in a written text and integrating voices that define the experience, each participant performs the interactive narrative in front of an audience. In concert together, both participant and audience reveal oppression found in the *Mystory* and envision a more hopeful future in systems and/or relationships.

For the purposes of this study, I used a series of questions to facilitate a discussion at the performance between the audience and the participants about the participants' critical events. Audiences were invited to participate in the creation or recreation of the *Mystory*'s meaning. From this discussion, the participants recognized the cultural representations and voices that defined the critical event. After the performance, the participant produced another written text for the purpose of reflecting on the deconstruction of the critical event narrative and lessons learned. I supplemented *Mystory* with semi-structured interviews both before and after the writing of the *Mystory*.

Participants

format printer but receive no training on how to use it, **Ginger addressed her concerns with her administrator. After feeling silenced and, ultimately, ignored by her administrator,** Ginger resigned from her position. She believed she was a “school librarian, not the Kinko’s copy girl” (March 29, 2012).

Case Study #2 Lucy: School Librarian, Not Interior Decorator

Lucy was hired as a credentialed school librarian, as defined by her job description and her Master’s degree in library science, at Prescott High School on the East Coast. She was hired because the school was seeking reaccreditation and needed a school librarian in place before the accreditation review. In spite of Lucy’s desire to teach information-literacy skills and promote recreational reading, the state of the print collection was outdated, disorganized, and dusty. Furthermore, the school had allocated no budget to improve it. Lucy was in the middle of organizing and weeding the book collection to improve book access for students, and she had a few piles of books stacked on the shelves and the floor. Some piles were books that needed to be reshelved

According to Webster and Mertova (2007) there are four stages of Critical Events Analysis: (1) Analysis of Criticality; (2) Event Structure Analysis; (3) Identity Analysis; and (4) Modified Content Analysis. The focus of this paper is the third stage.

Stage three of Critical Events Analysis fuses the events of the narrative with the motivations and intentions of the narrator. This fusion allows the analysis to not only focus on what happened in the story, but also to give insight on the character and nature of the storyteller. Building on Yi-Ping Huang and Phil Carspecken's theory of identity claims, I read through the full CE narrative that each participant wrote and performed (2013, 264). Then, I identified the parts of the narrative that revealed a claim about the school librarian's identity and synthesized a statement of the claim. For example, one participant's narrative stated: "I came out of graduate school with the ambition to conquer the school librarian world..." to which the following identity claim was ascribed: *I am professionally ambitious*.

When repetition or close similarities occurred with identity claims, the assigned claims were edited to create broader identity categories. For example, one narrative revealed the following identity claims: *I want to be supported as a teacher* and *I want to be supported as a school*

made a difference through her work. After the CE, Ginger continued to believe that she could and would make a difference in her professional life—but in a different school. Before Izzie’s CE, that f 130.8-6(i)-2(e)4(’)3(s Td (a)4(ke)4(a)4(di)-2(f)-7(f)3333333333]/B)-2(f)-7(e)]ffebut in a differ

Locus of Control: Izzie

Two years after her CE, Izzie discussed the transformation in her identity claims and to whom she attributed the shift in her professional identity (see Appendix C, table C-3). Izzie claimed to have recovered many of the self-affirming identity claims that she made before her CE. While the CE did temporarily negate some of the most positive characteristics of her professional identity, the passing of time and physical distance from her employer allowed her to restore much of her original identity. Even though she continued to work for the same school district, Izzie's new job out of the library environment was instrumental to her healing process.

Izzie accepted the majority of the responsibility for the deterioration of self-perception that affected her professional identity. The one identity claim that Izzie found difficult to overcome entirely on her own related to her lack of confidence. This identity claim obviously did not simply emerge at the moment of the CE; instead, it was a facet of her identity that Izzie has fought for nearly twenty years. Dependent on the praise of others, Izzie noticed that her confidence level increased. She reflected,

I am more confident about how I performed in my first professional job at PGHS. Just because I was not beloved by the principal, it doesn't mean that I'm not good at being a librarian. [Although her job title was library clerk, Izzie self-identified as a school librarian based on her Master's degree in library science.] But, I needed other people saying that there wasn't anything more I could have done to let myself off the hook. I got good feedback from others, and I did a good job. I believe I can make a library functional, and I left the school ultimately saying that I was worth more than \$8.35 per hour. That's confidence, right? (May 16, 2013)

Perhaps because of Izzie's long-term struggle with confidence, she could change her self-perception only with the help of other people. They had to tell her what they saw in her CE, and some even pointedly addressed the errors in her thinking.

Discussion

Introduction

The first question this study explored was whether CEs created and/or shaped the professional identities of novice school librarians. As previously described, four identity claims emerged as commonalities in the findings: (1) identity claims related to professional impact; (2) identity claims related to professional respect; (3) identity claims related to leadership; (4) identity claims related to professional confidence.

Professional Impact

Preparation programs train pre-service school librarians to administer twenty-first-century libraries and serve as instructional leaders (Church 2011). University program supervisors work diligently to coordinate positive internships for school librarian candidates. During internships, librarians-in-training can participate in library programs that are positively contributing to their school communities. Prepared by their academic work and internships, novice school librarians are often excited and anxious to make an impact in their first library. However, these case studies

Perceptions of School Leadership

These case studies reveal that school librarians invested various amounts of time in building their relationships with their administrators. However, none of them saw a positive return on their investments. Participants' CEs shifted their thinking about administrators as potential partners to considering administrators to be adversaries. In professional settings, novices tend to avoid people who cannot be trusted. Avoidance, however, nearly guarantees ineffective relationships, a circumstance that hinders the school librarians' abilities to emerge as educational partners or leaders. Moreover, this distrust toward administrators might prevent school librarians from

experiences could potentially allow novice school librarians to feel more prepared for their work in schools as teaching librarians and perhaps their professional identities should, in turn, be more stable. However, the novice school librarians in this study all lacked undergraduate coursework in education and formal positions as classroom teachers. They claimed that they were not prepared for their roles as school librarians through informal/formal observations or professional coursework. While this is a frequent complaint that educators have about their academic preparation programs, the perceived lack of preparation for the school librarians in this study could be because the participants did not have typical educational backgrounds. It is difficult to imagine that the foundation their library science program offered, namely twelve to fifteen credit hours in education followed by a brief student-teaching experience, could solidly prepare school librarians—and certainly not instructional leaders or instructional designers.

If library science programs offer alternative paths to librarianship, they have a responsibility to their students and to the library profession to ensure that preservice school librarians have had opportunities to form strong professional identities that can sustain them through their early career CEs. Among the many approaches include: (1) designing mentoring programs with vetted mentors who provide novices with experiences to negotiate and contribute to school culture (this is explained further below); (2) providing active, preservice librarianship experiences to collaborate with school personnel—especially principals—in school settings every semester of coursework; (3) observing and evaluating preservice librarians teaching/collaboration/management progress more than just once or twice during a final phase of coursework (i.e., internship or student teaching); (4) employing at least one tenure-track faculty member with a background in school libraries who can teach, conduct research, and mentor preservice school librarians. In fact, ALA accreditation or reaccreditation could depend on these criteria.

Also, graduating school librarian candidates who subscribe to and perpetuate the belief that their professional identities are primarily defined by external forces places a great deal of power in people who have not been trained as librarians, and who may know very little about school librarians' value to student learning and to institutions. To provide K–12 students with the effective school libraries they need and deserve, educators of pre-service school librarians must equip them with a capacity to acknowledge and exercise their internal locus of control. This internal locus of control will help novice school librarians use what they know to be best practices.

To be most effective, pre-service librarians—especially those without teaching experience—should have a grounding in systems thinking. Wig i wi. Wigms-1(houl)-2]TJ -0.00ns. Tms use what they kn-12

Appendix A: Summary of Participants' Identity Claims

The participants' identity claims, as revealed throughout their CE narratives, are categorized in the tables below. Next to each claim is a number that indicates the number of times the participant's narrative overtly or covertly claimed it.

Table A-1. Ginger's Identity Claims in Critical Events Narrative

Identity Claims about Herself	Identity Claims Related to Her Needs from Others	Identity Claims Related to Work Environments
<p><i>I am deserving of professional respect. (10)</i></p> <p><i>Others take advantage of me. (6)</i></p> <p><i>I privately question authority. (5)</i></p> <p><i>I believe I can make a difference. (4)</i></p> <p><i>I am solitary. (2)</i></p> <p><i>I am professionally ambitious. (2)</i></p> <p><i>I am honest. (1)</i></p> <p><i>I don't know how to set professional boundaries. (1)</i></p> <p><i>I want to do everything, but I get burned out. (1)</i></p> <p><i>I do not always communicate my needs clearly. (1)</i></p>	<p><i>I want to be supported. (5)</i></p> <p><i>I want to be accepted. (2)</i></p> <p><i>I want to be informed. (1)</i></p>	<p><i>I want professional stability. (1)</i></p>

Table B-4. Izzie's Identity Claims after Critical Event (in Critical Event Narrative)

Altered from I am hopeful to I am regretful. (10)

Altered from I am confident to I am not confident. (7)

Altered from I believe I can make a difference to I don't believe I can make a difference. (7)

Altered from I trust people in leadership to I can't trust people in leadership. (13hip.vd57.ArtifactEMC /H3 <

Appendix B: Summary of Participants' Post-Performance Identity Claims

During post-performance interviews, all participants explained the changes and/or transformation in their professional identities and what or whom they believed caused the changes. In the tables below these shifts are labeled for each participant

Table B-1. Ginger's Post-Performance Identity Claims

I No Longer Identify with This Claim Because I Made a Change.	I No Longer Identify with This Claim Because a New School Culture Changed This for Me.	I No Longer Identify with This Claim Because a New Administrator Changed This for Me.
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Others take advantage of me.

I don't know how to set professional boundaries. phanged me.

Thsithers take advantage of me.

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