

and preservice teachers to reach out to parents and the larger public to create a more accurate understanding of literacy learning in schools.

Fleischer's book introduces teachers to the wider world of community organizing and shows how teachers can use the concepts and strategies from community organizing to better inform parents and the larger public about literacy learning in schools. She demonstrates how the time teachers spend in parent outreach is, "in effect time spent developing and realizing effective instruction for their students and time saved in working through misunderstandings and handling problems." This is a very timely and useful book for teachers.

JULIEANN KNISKERN, *Brandon University*

MARIE M. CLAY. *Change Over Time in Children's Literacy Development*. Auckland, NZ & Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann (2001). 328 pp. \$29.50 (ISBN 0-325-00383-1 [0-86863-300-3 in New Zealand]).

In her meticulously documented book, *Change over Time in Children's Literacy Development*, Marie Clay provides the reader with an honest, non-intrusive but provocative alternative to conventional support for early literacy. Dr. Clay, whose work began in New Zealand four decades ago, is the founder of Reading Recovery, the foremost researched early intervention program in the world today. Reading Recovery (RR) has been launched successfully on four continents and delivered in both English and Spanish. RR is currently being developed in French for implementation in all parts of bilingual Canada. She writes, "This early intervention is like a standard boat tossed into several turbulent rivers and struggling to master the rapids and stay afloat in each of them" (p. 298). Clay challenges early intervention reading professionals, tutors, and researchers alike to ask more questions in order to continue the search for even better solutions in their work with children. In this book Clay succeeds in silencing the critics who have misconceptions of early interventions. She believes that "sound research" is essential to sustain support for early intervention programs such as Reading Recovery.

There are eight distinctive chapters in *Change over Time*. The author presents so much of her valuable acquired knowledge in this one publication that I believe this is the foundation for a "pandect" or complete digest on Reading Recovery.

In chapter one, the author challenges parents, teachers, and reading researchers to think about the "common ground" that beginning reading and writing share, regardless of the reading approach employed currently in schools. Clay insists that when children fall behind their classmates who

learn faster, it is really important to work with reading and writing simultaneously. The guiding question research proponents should be directing to a sample of children's work is: "Which features of this extremely complex activity is this child attending to?" (p. 13). Clay recommends several published works to which teachers can refer; but it is she, herself, who is the acknowledged authority on this subject. As a researcher Clay discusses what "children reveal" as they explore their own reading and writing in the first year of school. What these children reveal is similar to the "tell back" system used by coaches with student athletes who are taught to build from strength to strength. The whole idea is "to make links between what they say and how they might create a record of it" (pp. 34, 35). Reading then becomes talk written down.

In chapter two, "Acts of literacy processing: an unusual lens," Clay poses three incisive questions: "What do 'proficient' young readers do as they problem-solve increasingly difficult texts? What evidence do we have of sequential changes in their proficiency? In what ways do proficient readers and writers make use of information from print as they read?" (p. 43). Clay states that if she is to make a strong case for a new set of hypotheses concerning how literacy processing "changes over time," hypotheses which could be useful in future research, then a careful, detailed review of original studies must be done by "revisiting the history of evidence we collected when we attended to the detail of beginners trying to read and write texts" (p.41). Her own research covers a span of some forty years, commencing with studies of what independent readers actually do at age eight, in order to identify some of the components from which effective functioning was likely constructed.

What seems to be clear to Clay in her view of the research is that the literacy process 'constructed by learners' during their early literacy is seen to be profoundly influenced not only by their school curriculum's expectations, but by the teaching practices of their teachers. Using her knowledge of psychology, she proposes an 'alternative view' which is referred to as the "literacy processing view of progress during literacy acquisition" (p. 42). She affirms, "I believe it is the processing view of progress that is the main reason why Reading Recovery (RR) teachers consistently get good results with individual tutoring across the world in many different education systems, child after child, year after year" (p. 42). When we look at how 'children work on texts' as they read and write, regardless of how teachers are teaching, we come to a different conclusion of how each pupil progresses.

Change over time suggests "a record of acts"; i.e., transcriptions of precisely what each child said and did. In her researcher role, Clay calls this a "Running Record" (p. 45), and it is only one example of what she focuses on as "an unusual lens". The detailed Table 1, "Hypotheses about possible

progressions in acts of processing occurring in early reading and writing for tentative and flexible discussion" (pp. 84, 85) is excellent.

Chapter three displays Clay's usual thoroughness in describing the "three" sides of an issue. The parts that caught my eye are: 1) her detailed account of literacy awareness and orienting to print as she reports a fascinating case study (Bissex 1980) of a child's reading and writing progress, which began at age two with a *Curious George* book that had been read over and over to "Paul." This child handled the book many times, turning the pages and telling the story that went with the pictures; 2) her emphasis on the value of storytelling and storybook reading, in that this "provides many kinds of preparation for learning to read and write" (p. 116).

Clay always leaves the reader with "room for growth" in investigating "change over time." Chapter four, "Adjusting the visual working system for literacy: learning to look at print," is the chapter that takes the biggest quantum leap on the "road to recovery" in reading. Clay gives us much "food for thought" in reading didactics, even as we approach research into reading electronic text. Clay is to be congratulated for having the courage to criticize reading teachers because she does so correctly, with reason, ". . . they too often overlook the obvious, that children must be able to find out which visual hooks to hang their phonemic awareness on . . . teachers often give too little thought to how we perceive the things around us. . . . how we see the printed page, and how we hear the spoken word" (p. 146). She has aimed this section at the practitioners of early intervention themselves in order that they may have a pragmatic approach to visual right-brain systems.

The section on 'complex perceptual decision-making' is fascinating; Clay challenges the reader to observe carefully the process involved in one's own visual behaviour, for example, when driving a car or when attempting to learn a new symbol system of an unknown language. I found her examples excellent, in that adults are forced to really experience what children are "expected" to do. She writes, "Driving and literacy processing both involve complex processing of sequences of information leading to fast decisions" (p. 150).

In chapter five, "Self-correction in text reading: research and theory," Clay forms the basis for scholarly discussions on the topic; in particular at a graduate level and certainly, among educators who are serious in their search to understand children's processing strategies. This chapter raises cogent and cogitative questions that could initiate important research studies.

Chapter six discusses "lessons in becoming constructive and the link with prevention." Clay argues that the difference between what is traditionally referred to as remedial literacy programs and an early intervention program such as Reading Recovery, is that remedial programs tend to focus on a

limited range of tasks dealing with learning 'items' of letters, sounds, and words. Reading Recovery, on the other hand, is designed to diminish the incidence of reading difficulties, thus providing insurance for progress that would follow. This difference is significant, as it contrasts an item and skills-based theory to a literacy processing theory. She argues, "Obviously literacy professionals across countries operate effectively using a skills-based, surface behaviour approach; my argument is that a theory of literacy processing is, to date, more helpful for teachers of young children having severe difficulty learning to read and write" (p. 235). In other words, "A preventive approach. . . requires a developmental perspective" (pp. 236-237).

Chapter seven explores the potential of research to contribute to the future of RR. As in most cases, funding remains a key factor. Clay points to what could very well be a barrier; she writes, "If the guillotine of cost effectiveness falls too early as new developments struggle for resources, this deprives us of new solutions to old educational problems" (p. 248). RR's history clearly reveals that research which evaluates an early intervention must respond to four aspects: "the learning of the children; the training and practices of the teachers; the quality of the implementation in the system; and the longitudinal progress of the children in subsequent years" (p. 248).

Clay's final chapter details a "biographical sketch" of the driving forces which directed her career path as a developmental psychologist that led her to Reading Recovery and beyond. The section in chapter eight on "What enables RR to work in educational settings internationally?" (p. 298-301) sums up the author's message beautifully.

Not surprisingly, and in Marie Clay's inimitable style, she includes, after her main text, her reactions to the questions raised by the reviewers of her manuscript who "gave me food for thought" (p. 302). But she ends with yet one more page: she cautions us by stating, "All research data, experimental or descriptive, is contaminated by the education programme the children have passed through, because the programme constrains the opportunity to learn" (p. 306). She closes with the following description of a goal for literacy teachers that could also be the goal for early intervention teachers: "There is no better system to control the complexities and intricacies of each person's learning than that person's own system operating with genuine motivation and self-determination within reach of humane and informed help" (Holdaway, 1979, p. 170).

Change over Time. . . . confirms the necessity for early intervention programs to be delivered by highly-trained teachers who are keen observers of children's literacy development, who then interact with children based on what the children say and reveal about their own knowledge and accomplishments. Clay clearly states, "There has (sic) to be opportunity, interaction,

and assistance. If the child has not had this support, the early years of schooling must provide the tutors and the models, and the early intervention teacher has to be exceptionally helpful if the child is to gain control over the writing system. There also has to be an active, constructive child working on the challenges (with an observant teacher at his or her elbow)" (p. 35).

Change over Time in Children's Literacy Development is a tribute to Marie Clay's illustrious career. Her work "over time" should find its way into the hands of everyone involved in and concerned with the future of the printed word. In the upcoming French adaptation of Reading Recovery, let us hope that we can finally deny the age-old French saying, "plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose."

HELEN AMORIGGI *McGill University*

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PAUL SARGENT. *Real Men or Real Teachers: Contradictions in the lives of men elementary school teachers*. Harriman, TN: Men's Studies Press, (2001), 248 pp. \$24.95 (ISBN 0-9671794-3-2).

We all have a starting point from which we build our awareness, experience, and analysis of gender. This, although many would have us believe otherwise, does not begin at birth (or conception if you are of that belief) as either a male or female. Rather, the awareness of gender as a social construct begins when others' opinions and expectations regarding our masculinity and/or femininity contradict all experiences leading up to that moment. For those men aspiring to be elementary school teachers and those who are already practicing teachers in the early elementary grades, gender boundaries and sex-role stereotyping would have become blatantly conspicuous through a similar kind of disruption in their everyday social experiences: whether it be in the form of suspicion or unfounded concern from the parents of students in the classes in which they teach, where as Paul Sargent suggests in *Real Men or Real Teachers* there is a "men don't belong stereotype," or as a result of the isolation of being the only male staff member other than the custodial staff in an elementary school. Working through the problematics of sex-role stereotyping and the hegemony of socially sanc-