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DIFFICULT KNOWLEDGE AND SOCIAL STUDIES (TEACHER) EDUCATION

By

H. James Garrett

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ABSTRACT

DIFFICULT KNOWLEDGE AND SOCIAL STUDIES (TEACHER) EDUCATION

By

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Social studies education is a field in which those involved – teachers and students – encounter what can be called "difficult knowledge". Difficult knowledge is a theoretical construct suggesting that when an individual encounters representations of social and historical trauma in a learning situation there exists a host of emotional and pedagogical complications. This dissertation investigates difficult knowledge, its complications and implications, within the field of social studies teacher education.

When learning to teach, the student/teacher is already going through incredibly complex learning environments. But in social studies education, where the curriculum is often marked by studies of war, famine, genocide, slavery and lynching (to name a few), learning to teach becomes complicated by dealing with these traumas. There becomes a layered problem: making sense of the traumatic essence of history and then helping others do the same through curricular and pedagogical practice.

As such, this study examines six individuals at various stages in a secondary social studies teacher education program as they encounter difficult knowledge in various settings. The focus of the study is on the processes that the participants use, the language they employ, and the discursive routes forged in their articulations about their experiences teaching and learning about difficult knowledge.

Methodologically, this study brings psychoanalytic theory to bear on qualitative education research. The study takes as given the existence of the unconscious and then

proceeds to examine the data as being influenced by the vagaries and uncertainties of knowledge, the ways that learning can be traumatic, the manners in which personal histories cloud and color current perceptions, and the protections that we all use against psychic discomfort and pain.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

One of the things that I brush up against in my life and in my academic work is that language often, and ultimately, fails. In our day-to-day conversations spoken language functions just fine. But when it comes to expressing the more important things, language simply comes up short. Words of thanks, gratitude, and indebtedness for the patience, grace, and kindness that I have been fortunate to have received exist but fail to capture...

Logan, thank you for the partnership, support, and belief. Avner, for not providing answers. Susan, for making sure my priorities are straight. Kevin, for hours of help with the concepts. Marini and Stef, for the camaraderie. Kyle, for the confidence. Suzanne, for keeping my confidence in check. Lynn, Patty, Grace, Eva, George and Ben, for your time. Sandra and Bill, for your mentorship. Deborah, for your ideas and inspiration.

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Introduction

"What do you see when you look at this image?" I inquired.
"I hate you for showing me this photograph", she said.

It is a Pulitzer Prize winning photograph taken by Kevin Carter in Sudan. A young Sudanese boy is curled over on the ground. A vulture is looking over him as though ready to prey. It is an image I use frequently in the teacher education courses for which I serve as instructor to allow students opportunities to engage with the broad range of emotions that are provoked through the engagement in pedagogy with representations of social and historical trauma, what Pitt and Britzman call "difficult knowledge" (Pitt & Britzman, 2003). It is also an image to which I refer several times in this dissertation. I usually ask a series of questions about the photograph to engage ethical, political, and moral issues inherent in teaching. Who is doing what to whom? There are two objects in the photograph, the boy and the vulture, but there is an author – the photographer – who is certainly present. What separates the photographer from the vulture? Where are the boundaries of responsibility? It serves as an in-road to discuss difficult knowledge, as was the case here: I was a guest speaker in a doctoral level qualitative methodology course when the above articulation of hatred – *I hate you for showing me this photograph* – was offered in my direction. The topic of the session that evening was the use of psychoanalysis as a methodological approach in teacher education. The woman directing her hatred toward me was a student in this course, herself a teacher educator, and a public school administrator.

Why was this hatred directed at me? Yes, I showed the photograph and asked for responses. However, I had only asked what people saw, not what they felt. Why

did she not say that she hated the photographer for taking the photograph? The people with whom this child was moving that seemingly left him behind? The entire socio-political structures in place that sustain the kinds of systems and processes that are represented in the photograph? Further, and moving away from the specificity of this moment and into the broader domain of teacher education, what are the consequences of such a reaction as they are transposed into work done with pre and in-service teachers? How do their emotive reactions of love, hate, guilt, shame, and joy refract and reframe their understandings of that which they are presented to learn in their teacher education? And what is more, what about when what is learned in their teacher education moves to their own practice with their own students? Put differently, how does one's education become another's? These are the questions that provide an umbrella for this study. These questions are asked in order to orient an investigation into the ways that individuals concerned with social education - its content, those who learn as well as teach it – make meaning out of personal connections to historical, social, and cultural information and then how these meanings are deployed in teaching.

In place of answers to these questions – and others – I offer speculations supported by psychoanalytic theory. Psychoanalytic theory provides the theoretical groundings for my analysis of teacher education (considered broadly) and social studies education (more specifically). An answer in the analytic setting – between a doctor and a patient – is nothing more than a response by a doctor to which meaning is given only in terms of the manner of reaction to it by the patient. Truth is felt as what might, and temporarily, feel "right"; in other words, a speculation. It is a reordering of events, a shifting of meaning, where memories are elicited, shuffled, and laid face up on the

table. Of course, when the session is over, the patient takes his cards and goes about his day. No action is taken, no promises are made. What psychoanalysis can offer education is the gift of a pause, a time to think about the rearranging and reshuffling of the deck before getting back to the lectern, the desk, the power point slide.

An individual's upbringing has a strong bearing on the ways a teaching identity is enacted. This is not a controversial assertion in teacher education. Lortie's (1975) notion of "the apprenticeship of observation" suggests that prospective teachers already possess the bulk of the information that they will use as they enter and carry out the profession of "teacher." Because of the fact that all teachers have been students *of* teachers throughout their lives, these (now) teachers feel as though they "know" what a teacher is: either the reproduction of the "good" teachers they have had or, alternatively, as a reaction to the "bad" teachers they had throughout their scholastic experience. Formal teacher education is located, then, in a tremendously disadvantaged position, effectively being tasked with helping students "unlearn" – or at the very least rethink – their observations of teachers in terms of any array of theoretical considerations.

Aronowitz and Giroux (1993) suggest that education (and I take the liberty of discussing this in terms of teacher education) helps to develop a "language of possibility" where individuals can consider their practice outside of their own experiential history. In such a view, teaching is more directly tied to identity politics, issues of power and representation. How teachers enact their curricula has material consequences for the students in their classrooms in broad socio-political ways, adding to the curricular outcomes that generally dominate discussions about education. Freirian conceptualizations of teacher education, for another example, suggest that

"banking models" of teaching – the didactic interaction where the students learn what the teacher teaches in an unproblematic and linear fashion – give way to pedagogies that are based upon the historical conditions of the student, allowing them to work toward more just and equitable social relations in and through their education. Lortie, Aronowitz, Giroux, and Freire all locate a problem of teacher education in what has come before the actuality of such an education.

Psychoanalytic theory does the same thing – differently. Psychoanalysis shares the common assumption that what comes before the moments of a classroom interaction in a teacher education program *matters.* Those moments before influence the moments therein. However much I agree with the above ideas (I do), though, I make an assertion in this study that may be met with a bit more skepticism: that the "unlearning" and "learning" (as well as the resistance to learning – the desire to "not know") that happens in teacher education – and more specifically within social studies teacher education -bears a tremendous cost to the individuals experiencing this education and that those costs are influenced by the unconscious. Learning is viewed as a trauma, where an individual must come to terms with a realization that what they knew before is insufficient. Learning indicates a fundamental deficiency; and coming to new awareness means a confrontation with that deficiency. But we only realize these deficiencies after the fact. We can prepare for some of these confrontations. But we cannot prepare for all.

The notion that encountering traumatic histories constitutes a unique experience, theorized as "difficult knowledge", has specific consequences for social studies education due to the vast majority of social studies curriculum having to do with war,

famine, slavery, conflict, genocide, and continuing structural violence. While psychoanalysis, in its clinical setting, involves two people and two people only, its theoretical settings and elaborations provide ways to conceptualize the individual as connected to, and influenced by, broader social and cultural phenomenon.

Taking place between the spring of 2009 and the spring of 2010, the dissertation study was comprised of face-to-face interviews, museum visits, discussions of film, and phone conversations with six participants from different phases of their teacher education. These participants, two male and four female, offered their insights about the ways they remember their own learning about "the terrible" and the ways that they think about "new" knowledge. They discussed their own emotional reactions to their teacher education, and as they moved into roles as practicing teachers (as interns or full time staff members) they continued to provide their reactions and thoughts about their own teaching of social studies content.

What is to come

Chapter 1. In the first chapter of the dissertation I identify the crucial issues at stake in it, and provide a theoretical framework for undertaking their examination. We will further our relationship with Britzman, and be introduced to Lacan as two teachers who will serve as our guides throughout a great deal of the dissertation. Teacher education, psychoanalytic theory, social studies education, and difficult knowledge are the broad domains of investigation therein. I will contend that there are sufficient overlaps and connections between and among these fields to warrant their being investigated together. Beyond the established connections between teacher education and social studies education – the academic fields in which I am rooted - I will borrow

from psychoanalytic theory in order to conduct this qualitative investigation. Notions about the unconscious, the symbolic chain, defense mechanisms and the transference are all explained and related to teacher education. The terms of difficult knowledge and their connections to social studies education are delineated.

Chapter 2. Understanding that there are unconscious components to actions within and beyond classroom life yields assumptions about what we might find in an investigation into difficult knowledge and provides motivation for this dissertation study. Chapter 2 describes the methods implemented in it. I then move slowly through a consideration of just what a psychoanalytically informed methodology deployed in education research entails with a specific attention paid to how I do so in the context of this dissertation. I work to help the reader understand the criteria by which such a study might be evaluated, and then close the chapter with an introduction of the participants.

Chapter 3. The problems of learning from difficult knowledge are first encountered through a consideration of the participants' visit to a Holocaust museum and our subsequent conversations about it. Most generally, this chapter is about the ways that learning events are largely structured "before" the event even takes place, the ways that those "befores" are rewritten and re-constituted through the Freudian concept of deferral of knowledge, and the ways that understanding traumatic history is wrought with the tensions of family and personal history. What can we learn about the nature of learning from difficult knowledge when the moments of learning – what has come before, as well as what are anticipated to come later – blend together? How can we make sense of the suffering of so many innocent people? I approach these questions by

keeping in mind the metaphorical parallels of this museum visit with any and all encounters with difficult knowledge in the social studies curriculum.

Chapter 4. I invited participants to view and discuss the Spike Lee documentary *When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts*, and this chapter uses those interactions as its foundation. The content of the film is difficult – there are testimonies about the loss of family and home, loss of trust in government, and the ways that race still matters in the United States. The ways the participants of this study reacted to the film are analyzed in terms of the circuitry of difficult knowledge. I employ the notion of *routing* and *re-routing* difficult knowledge to elaborate on the processes of difficult knowledge that siphon away its concurrent discomforts. These ideas are based on the Freudian articulation of mechanisms of defense. I argue that there is often a movement away from that which makes the individuals uncomfortable toward placing that discomfort within more well tread discourses. I take up three different routes: routes away from race, routes away from the self, and routes toward complexity. Each route is then examined for its importance within the fields of teacher education and social studies as well as how each helps us understand the encounter with difficult knowledge.

What comes to light in this chapter is that while the students in our teacher education are introduced to issues of race, representation, power, and how to help circulate complex understandings about society through their coursework, it might be that we are forced to structure these encounters differently. Because of the ways that resistance and rerouting occurs, and because everyone (all the time) is subject to the forces of the unconscious, the question becomes how to allow those defenses to serve as productive mediators of knowledge rather than prophylactic or preventatives.

Chapter 5. While the analysis of encounters in the Holocaust museum and *When the Levees Broke* reveal how the participants learned about difficult knowledge, this chapter examines their talking about teaching difficult knowledge. The question that this chapter engages is how issues of difficult knowledge (social and historical traumas) are remembered and explained to a researcher. In other words, the importance here is not on explaining and evaluating "how" difficult knowledge is taught in social studies classrooms. Instead, it is an investigation into how those experiences are framed in conversation, what impressions are left from these classroom experiences, and how those impressions might help us to understand the processes of difficult knowledge. My discussion of the data demonstrates both the tremendous tangle between personal history and notions of teaching social studies as well as the ways that pedagogy, content, and intra-classroom relationships interfere with one another in the pedagogical encounter.

Chapter 6. In this concluding chapter I summarize the work that is done in this dissertation. I then argue for the consequences of what I have found through this study as they relate to social studies teacher education, what doors the study has opened for me in terms of thinking about further research, and what limitations I have encountered throughout the process.

Notes of Disclosure

I conclude this introduction with a few notes of disclosure. First of all, this dissertation takes the work of Deborah Britzman as its starting point and frequent frame of reference. Difficult knowledge, after all, is a term she has developed. She has been a

major contributor to bridging the work of psychoanalysis with the work of teaching and teacher education. While leaning heavily on her work, I hope for this dissertation to extend and enrich it, at is takes her – and others', of course- work in psychoanalytic theory and education further into the empirical realm than other studies have done. This comes with many pitfalls, and I imagine at the outset falling into many but hoping to avoid my share as well.

Second, a note about who I am and about my position as it relates to this project. Looking back from where I sit now, the clues came early. I came to the field of teacher education through a belief that public education is a fundamental and foundational function of a healthy society, along with concurrent doubts about what education and/in our society has become. I had hoped that through enacting critical pedagogies with the mostly white, mostly middle-to-upper-middle class teacher candidates with whom I worked that I could solve their problems of "false consciousness", help them to see injustice, inequity, and the perpetuated systems of violence in their lives, their communities, and in the world. It is my belief that confronting these issues is the task of social studies education. I do not believe I have always done a good job in my teaching. At times I remember "teaching angry", wanting with an almost violent desire to have students come to the conclusion that social studies teaching should be done with the express purpose of raising social consciousness. However, social studies teaching is at its best, in my estimation, when it allows complex ideas and systems to be understood in complex ways. It provokes experiences of ambiguity within that complexity and fosters a tolerance of living with the ambiguity. I discuss these issues in greater detail in Chapter Two, but in my own practice as a social studies teacher, I was surprised at

how angry such an approach made students, how resistant they were to such ideas, (also surprising was how angry their anger made me, hence the "teaching angry") and how easily it was for them to remove themselves from being implicated in broad social problems. At these times it was also easy for me to disavow my own psychic investments in this process. Psychoanalytic theory – and my own personal analysis -has aided in my understanding of these processes, my successes in the classroom as well as the many failures. In this dissertation I will be exploring the terrain of social studies teacher education by utilizing psychoanalytic theory. I appreciate the degree to which psychoanalysis may seem a strange lens with which to examine these fields (teacher education, social studies education, social studies teacher education), but I have found the examination to be both relevant and illuminating in my work as a teacher educator and researcher.

The Two Postulates

I remember doing geometry proofs in the tenth grade. My favorite part of writing the proof was writing down the postulates; those accepted truths and upon which the rest of problem rested. The postulates, I thought, were signposts of an acknowledged complexity that we just did not have time to get into. I like the honesty of pointing out that truths are postulated. Naming something a "postulate" is an indication that someplace, somewhere, there is a group of people debating those postulates. But in that moment, we did not concern ourselves with that debate, because we were trying to bisect a circle or some other such thing. Here, just as there, I offer two postulated "givens" that underlie the proof of this dissertation. In this dissertation, just as in geometry, there are uncertain things considered as temporary certainties and

one is the idea that public education can and should serve as an intervention and location of potential solutions to problems of race, class, gender, sexuality, inequity, and access. I understand that there are competing modes of thinking about the roles of education (see Labaree, 1997), but I take as a starting and ending point that a vibrant and rich democracy depends on a liberally – even critically – educated population. My work in the field is undertaken toward those ends.

The second postulate has to do with the veracity and power of the unconscious. That is, I do not question the existence or the influence of the unconscious as elaborated in psychoanalytic thought. What that particular assumption means has significant consequences for this research. It means that there are desires, drives, fantasies, and wishes that I have for the participants, for the research, for the reactions I hope it gets, for the service I hope it provides. There are assuredly projective moments in my reading and analysis of the data, just as there are sure to be traces of self-doubt, inflated hopes, and suspicious self-criticism. While I can disclose that these processes occur, I cannot tell you when or where to look for them. That's the problem with the unconscious; it cannot be immediately accessed or understood through self-reflection. It is revealed through mistakes and slips, reversals of intention, contradiction, and flights of fancy – all of those are going to be in this dissertation. My belief is that these processes exist in all research (indeed, all interactions in life, all the time), and that psychoanalysis can help keep our expectations and evaluations honest when it comes to our teaching and research. With these notes of disclosure in mind, then, I turn to a consideration of the theoretical landscapes upon which this study is based.

In essence, the problem for us in social studies, and, thus, the focus of the dissertation, is that because the curricular and pedagogical life is full of events that constitute difficult knowledge that there are always going to be some underlying, perhaps invisible, unconscious, processes pulling and tugging us away from the kinds of discomfort that might provoke meaningful and productive conversations. These events instantiate an amazingly complex array of emotional reactions that fuel perceptions and understandings of the world. I take up the conversations that arise from these encounters. Those conversations are crucial to the overall project of social studies education, and highlight equally crucial issues in the field of teacher education, to provide and promote opportunities where students can become positive contributing members to a democratic society.

Chapter 1
Section One

How Psychoanalysis Matters to Teacher Education

The Anxieties of Teacher Education

Quite the mystery, this thing called teacher education. It is difficult to separate the two words – teacher and education – that tangle up to constitute this mystery. After all, formal education most often occurs in the company of a teacher. Our formal educational system – the school – entrusts teachers, indeed holds them to quite strenuous account, for the education of their pupils. Teachers, of course, need to be educated in order to accomplish the important task of embodying the role of the "teacher" so that they might educate others. While it may seem simple – although I am not sure to whom it would – the training of teachers is imbued with all sorts of wonderful complexity. To begin with, some of our best teachers (Socrates and Freud, to name but two), those to whom we might look for examples of the pedagogue *par excellence,* rely on anti-teaching in order help in their students' education (see Felman, 1987). The best teaching, for them, is to resist teaching all together. Whether or not we might agree with such a stance, in teacher education schools we don't find people learning how not to teach. No, but we do not find a host of other things one would be comforted to find within the field of teacher education. To wit, we do not find clear delineations of what good teaching is, nor do we really know how good teachers are educated, nor can we find any empirical evidence that who a teacher is even matters to students' academic performance (Cochran-Smith, 2005).

In the wake of No Child Left Behind, teacher education has become part of "a neo-liberal response to changing global economic trends purportedly calling for the

introduction of markets, managerialism, and a weakening of classification between education and the economy" (Barrett, 2009, pg. 1018). Teacher education, in other words, is in the midst of a broader discursive moment marked by the language of globalization: efficient, controlled work-flow, and a focus on technical skill (see, for examples, Apple, 2004; McLaren, 2007). These are the meta-conversations that set the tone for all others; teacher education is given no quarter. Programs are expected to "do more" with "less". As state spending on social services decline, there is less and less funding for colleges and universities. There is no question that other discourses influence the field of teacher education (i.e. various philosophies of education), but as the discourse of neo-liberalism is taken up by liberal and conservative policy makers, competition becomes the silver bullet and thus: alternative certification programs are seen as viable – and popular – avenues to get "the best teachers". In other words, our fate as a field is very much an open question.

Much of the research that dominates teacher education journals is about identity work, reflective practice, and navigating test-driven curricula (Fendler, 2003: Hatton & Smith, 1995; Helsing, 2007; Sonnino, 2010). Cochran-Smith (2005) notes, though, that "at the end of the day...we do not know what effective teachers do, know, believe, or build on, nor do we know the conditions that make this possible" (pg. 7). I find this a striking statement, particularly in an era when teacher education programs come under increased pressure to justify their existence through being able to demonstrate their ability to produce effective teachers. But as Cochran-Smith shares with us, we know very little about the knowledge and beliefs of effective teachers.

And it is little wonder that such a friction would be anxiety producing. Success is supposed to be measurable. Practices are supposed to be research based and supported by evidence. But if we take Cochran-Smith at her word, then we are not at all sure that what we do is making the kinds of differences we want to make (whatever difference that may be). We are left – as a field – to justify our existence within a dominant discourse bent on such justifications and come to rather uncomfortable conclusions, such as the realization, as one professor at Michigan State University has said casually to me, "that what we do, *when we are at our best*, is a weak intervention".

The most recent *Handbook of Research on Teacher Education* can be read as a manifestation of several anxieties in the field if the volume is read in a certain way (Cochran-Smith, et. al. 1998). Within psychoanalytic thinking one of the foundational principles of analysis is to "give a different reading to the signifiers that are enunciated than what they signify" (Lacan, 1975, pg. 37). I return to this idea as it relates to my methodology in chapter two. What this means, though, is that intended meaning – a speaker's intent – is not important. What happens is that an analyst – or in this case an author – listens with an ear toward psychic processes that reveal anxieties and pathologies. This is to say that going in to the substance of the handbook is not my purpose here. Instead, I note the very posture that the handbook takes. In this edition, the research is presented in response to a series of questions, and for my purposes the following questions (all from the table of contents) stand out: What's the point? Why

educate teachers? What should teachers know? How do people learn to teach? How do we know what we know? And finally, what good is teacher education?[1]

In its preface the handbook is presented as the "unhandbook" and is intended to "simulate a broad conversation about the foundational issues, bring multiple perspectives to bear...provide new specificity to topics... and include diverse voices in the conversation (Cochran-Smith 2008 pg. xxxiv). In my reading of the volume, I find it to accomplish its goals, and framing the sections as questions is an appropriate and generative editorial decision. So while I completely understand and am sympathetic to the questions that are listed as those guiding the handbook of research on teacher education, I also find them revealing of anxiety. The simple act of framing what means to be a rather definitive volume of the field through – not just any, but these specific – questions is revelatory of some kind of uncertainty.

One of these questions, as mentioned above, is: "what's the point?" In the context of the handbook this question leverages discussions about the purposes and aims of teacher education. But "what's the point" is often used differently, as an articulation of existential crisis, some other times as a rhetorical suggestion of futility. Could it be that teacher education research time and time again results in products that defy our wishes about it? That what we do in our research and in our classrooms is difficult to prove "effective"? Or worse, that maybe it isn't effective at all? Of course, I do not *believe* that teacher education (or education more generally) is a futile pursuit,

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[1] An alternative reading to this is that the field of teacher education is sufficiently well adjusted to tolerate ambiguity and uncertainty about the nature of the field and what it knows. However, put in conversation with all of the other stresses (economic and politics), it seems to me more anxious than comfortable.

and I believe my scholarship and teaching to have some kind of positive benefit in the world, but giving rise to a question "what's the point?" opens up an avenue into which we can wonder about the difficult notion that what we do, the way we spend our energy, our time, and to which we devote our passion, might not have any kind of measurable benefit. Measurable benefit, after all, is how we are judged in the eyes of the population more generally. This of course is despite the fact that nearly every one that you can speak to has been touched, changed, inspired by some of the teachers with whom they have engaged in pedagogical settings throughout their lives. Where experiences become gripped with such ontological tensions, anxieties fester.

Similarly, the invocation of questions about why to educate teachers in the first place, what they should know, how people learn to teach, and how we know what we know about all these questions reveal a fundamental uncertainty about what it is that we do and why we do it. The field of teacher education is tense and anxious– if personified and understood in the above ways. But it is not just the field that marks the tensions of teacher education. It is also in the moments of encounter between an individual and their becoming a "teacher". Learning to teach has been shown to be amazingly complex and stressful for those learning to teach as well as those who "teach the teachers". Qualitative studies of learning to teach (i.e. Britzman, 2003; Segall, 2002) where teacher candidates' struggles with knowledge are highlighted and where a clear focus is placed on the degree to which these teachers desire the formation of a practice that meaningfully engages students indicates a place of frictions and tensions.

How can psychoanalysis help?

Generally, what psychoanalysis contributes to the understanding of social and personal

phenomenon is a certain type of interpretation about experience that holds to account the interferences, defenses, and troubles associated with learning and the contexts in which it happens. As noted above, our current political conversations around education generally, and teacher education more specifically, are those that are set on quantifying, predicting, and creating certain outcomes (or, alternatively, how to offset such practices). The considerations arising from psychoanalytic theory, though, focus on the particularities and mysteries that cloud such certainty. It is, therefore, already marginalized from the predominant discussion about education. But it is also uniquely suited, as I will illustrate below, to look at the cracks and fissures in the edifice of teacher learning. It is a theory of relatedness and relating, of the ways in which we find, make, and recreate meaning, and makes significance out of the mistakes, slips, and twists that are generally discarded as extraneous to the puzzle of our lives.

Many curriculum theorists – those who use psychoanalytic theory and those who do not -find that learning defies direct description and exists in spaces between other, similarly complicated, phenomena. A teacher's education is a battle between students' fantasies of teaching and the will of the teacher educator – vis-à-vis our own fantasies (Britzman, 2006). There is no simple relationship between teaching the curriculum and what it is that the individuals learning it take away and inject with meaning as they live their lives. There are incredibly complicated spaces between (and within) all parties in the schooling process; the curriculum writer, administrator, teacher, parent, student (Bullough, 2007). These are inherent critical issues in the process of a subject learning to become a teacher (e.g. Segall, 2002). But they do so with their own personal histories, their own systems of making meaning based on these histories, informing

which meanings individuals make and which they refuse (or are unable) to make. This is the foundation of what psychoanalytic theories can help those of us in education understand: despite wishes and fantasies that teaching and learning are directly related (a fantasy at play in "outcomes" based measures, for example) and that we can some how know the results of our ("best") practices, that these wishes cannot be anything but a fantasy assigning certainty to radically uncertain processes.

In the last twenty-five years, a number of education theorists have taken up psychoanalysis to confront the challenge of understanding learning, teaching, and learning to teach. Felman (1987) provides an explanation of the project psychoanalysis inaugurates in terms of the idea that truth escapes the subject as they attempt to speak to it:

> Psychoanalysis...profoundly rethinks and radically renews the very concept of the testimony, by submitting, and by recognizing for the first time in the history of culture, that one does not have to possess or own the truth, in order to effectively bear witness to it; that speech as such is unwittingly testimonial; and the speaking subject constantly bears witness to a truth that nonetheless continues to escape him, a truth that is, essentially, not available to its own speaker (pg. xx).

Truth exists, in other words, but it is slippery. It exists in relation to, rather than in static absence from, contextual forces. Truth is here and then gone. Psychoanalysis rethinks the "very concept of the testimony"; spoken language (always testimonial to something) is given the utmost priority.

In our culture we see testimony in reality show confessionals, social networking status updates, instant video uploads. It is an outward, projective act where "we" want "you" to know what we are thinking, seeing, feeling, doing, and being. It might be

thought of as a sort of plea to be paid attention to, to be noticed, to have care given, if only in short iterations manifested as comments on a webpage. These kinds of new technologies are given considerable attention in postmodern literature, particularly in terms of the idea of "the spectacle" (Boudrillard, 1994) or "the image" (see, for example, Barthes, 1981). What Felman would have us consider via psychoanalytic theory is not so much attention on the status of the technology in question but on the articulations that people offer through them. Lacan suggests that in psychoanalysis spoken language (speech) is given "back its dignity, so that it does not always represent for them those words, devalued in advance, that force them to fix their gaze elsewhere" (Lacan, 1973, pg. 18). We are asked to think not about the act of speaking itself (not just the intended meaning), but the difference that act, or knowledge, or statement makes (Felman, 1987, pg. xx). Giving speech back its dignity means that speech is doing more than communicating discreet facts, and that giving value to speech begins with the presumption that what we say carries with it a desire to communicate something else, something else that might be outside of conscious awareness. We say more than we know.

For Felman, all speech, any time we attempt to communicate, is testimonial. It allows a listener an avenue toward understanding. To explain this a bit further, consider the courtroom conceptualization of the testimony. A person, a witness, is called forth to offer their version of an event, to testify. Those spoken words are not just communicated between the witness and the lawyer (he/she who has asked the question). The effects of speech are in the responses of the jurors, the rulings of the judge, the further questioning enacted by the lawyer, the responses by others, and the reactions by

others in the courtroom. Felman's discussion of psychoanalytic thoughts about speech as always testimonial highlights a similar process. Speech is given a weight that is measured in its consequences. In essence, speech is always testimonial.

The movements toward and around these moments of testimony can be found in what we say in daily conversations, in lecture halls and seminar circles. To put this all rather crudely, psychoanalysis asks us to listen differently. But for what is the listener listening? What understandings can be found because of this consideration? Atwell-Vasey (1998) has one idea of how to approach these questions, and writes of how psychoanalysis can serve as an injunction in what she characterizes as the more common manner of talking in education:

> Psychoanalytic discourse challenges the talk we are used to in education, which funnels meaning into static and controlled positions beyond the reach of projections, introjections, reversals, representations, and fantasies of real humans who strive with and against the limits of biology and culture (pg, 9)

Atwell-Vasey highlights here the processes we, as subjects, use to navigate the crises resulting from the frictions between self and other in educational settings. But she indicts the normative discussions of school for their neglecting of the processes at work, at all times, in all of us. Those processes become the focus of the investigation as individuals wrestle with their worlds (biological and cultural). The point is that while social studies education is usually focused on the outside – the narrative of history, "them" and "there"– "psychoanalytic research posits education as an exemplary site where the crisis of representation that is outside meets the crisis of representation that is inside" (Pitt & Britzman, 2003). Meanings are considered simultaneously personal and

social.

So it is not the case that psychoanalysis is just about the individual. So far we have seen that psychoanalysis is about a speaker and a listener equipped with a particular strategy for listening. Now we add this more broadly social component. In some ways we can think of the social component as history. History – the stories a society tells about the past – becomes the framework through which the second nature of common sense is developed. Kincheloe and Pinar (1991) explain:

> Second nature, as described by Freud, refers to that part of the psyche constructed by historical forces. To the individual, it appears both rational and natural. The psychoanalyst reconstructs the life history of the patient; the understanding that emerges serves to deconstruct the once impenetrable second nature (pg. 2).

One of the key issues facing teacher educators, particularly in the area of social studies, is helping students in this deconstruction. The purpose of exploding the edifice of common sense is so that it can be investigated as a social product, not a natural force. The problem, as I will describe and explore throughout this dissertation, is that this kind of deconstruction is often resisted and avoided. The edifice is often rather strong.

The edifice of common sense, our lay understandings, is a result of the psyche allowing conscious awareness of some things and disallowing others. Those "other" things are hidden because they might be too painful, they might weaken that edifice, they might be sufficiently complex so as to instantiate anxiety if brought to awareness. In other words, they are not felt as acceptable. So, as Salvio (2007) writes, we create hiding places "that enable us to hoard the past and keep ourselves from coming to know its import" (pg. 59). If the past is considered as the infinite number of events from

which histories are constructed, then in order to restructure the second nature understandings, the past must at some point be taken out of that hiding place. And that is what psychoanalysis can help us do; be comfortable in taking the past out of hiding and provide a language to provide such comfort.

Britzman (2006) explains the psychoanalytic project relating to education in terms of education's need of a theory to help understand the kinds of discomfort associated with being in classrooms and the demands that lie therein. Of course it is not just psychoanalysts who notice that classroom life can put (to state it mildly) odd expectations and rules into effect. Students are asked to sit quietly for extended periods of time, defer their pleasure, follow arbitrary directions, and most of all to "behave" (see Eisner, 1985; Jackson, 1968). But psychoanalysts read these oddities differently. Britzman (2006) explains how early psychoanalysts noticed that young patients could often not bear going to school (pg. 169). "In education," she writes, "little scenes of civilization and unhappiness were being played out" (pg. 169). Psychoanalysts had doubts about education as a cure-all benefit for society because of the ways that these odd rules instantiated pulls and tugs on the psyche of the students. The concern is that classroom life is marked by conflict, not just between teacher and student, but also between and also within students. These are familiar questions in a classroom: am I doing this right? Is this good enough? May I have permission to go to the bathroom? May I speak at all? These questions indicate psychic struggle about the worth of our work, about controlling our instincts, about learning that our ideas are not always welcome. All of these struggles are rooted in early life encounters and are replayed in the classroom. Putting these concerns together with those of Salvio (above) would

indicate that part of the past that needs to be unearthed and deconstructed took place in classrooms. Teacher educators, if we extend this thinking, might then benefit from a theory of learning that takes into account the pain, conflict, joy, guilt, ecstasy, or eroticism that happens in schools. Clearly, if we are to take these claims and concerns seriously, teachers might need to be equipped with more than a lesson plan and management strategy.

In an attempt to characterize a set of essays in an edited volume, Boldt and Salvio (2006) have this to say of the authors included in their book: they all "understand that the social and the political are inseparable from the ambivalences, needs, and desires of the adults and children who are brought together in the shared and furious space of teaching and learning" (pg. 4). This is an understanding that is informed by psychoanalytic theory and a stance that informs this dissertation.

Now that we have been introduced to a few ways that psychoanalytic thought has been taken up in education, ways that acknowledge the sociality of learning but are attuned to the inevitability of conflict between wish and reality, knowledge and resistance to it, and the ways that these are part of the classroom landscape, I will move now to introduce the specifics of a few psychoanalytic ideas and discuss their relation to teacher education.

The Unconscious and Teacher Education

The proposed existence of the unconscious was/is psychoanalysis' radical contribution. If this is at work in all of us, then it is certainly a foundational aspect of what happens in our classrooms. If there is a crisis involved in the encounter with new

knowledge, then the unconscious is the mediating filter that facilitates its accommodation.

The unconscious is much more social than the common-sense and popular cultural notion of the unconscious as the person-inside-the-person secretly telling us what to do. The unconscious can be thought of as "structured like a language", as Lacan repeated throughout his seminar. Languages have grammar, syntax, rules, usages, but they do not have the ability to make sense of themselves: they are not internally coherent. Language needs a speaking being, and "it is in the consequences of what is said that the act of saying is judged" (Lacan, 1975, pg. 15). Similarly, the unconscious is impossible to know directly, it can only be known by the consequences it manifests, and similar to the way an astronomer investigates a black hole. The unconscious is considered by its effects within the analytic situation, only by triangulating and predicting the ways that defenses work through language can we "look around the corner" and investigate the unconscious through its effects. The mishmash of drives and memories are routed by its pull, and is exhibited through social interaction.

According to Britzman, "we are closest to our unconscious when it can be witnessed by another, when the Other puts us on notice, gives us back our conclusions so that we can redo them again" (2006, pg. 39). Consequently, our unconscious is never "inside" of us. More so, it exists in our relations to the Other, particularly when we are forced to reconsider that which has been stable knowledge. When Britzman points to the proximity to the unconscious being smallest when asked by the Other to re-do our conclusion, it is exceedingly close to Lacan's notion of the unconscious being

structured like a language. They both suggest that the unconscious, while housed within a single person, is a product and determining force of social experience.

Considered in light of a teacher's education, the notion of the unconscious highlights the degree to which acknowledging the broader society's discourses impacts the psychic lives of the people that inhabit the classroom. This is not at all dissimilar from the ways that, say, a critical perspective would consider the dominant discourse influencing the consciousness of the students/teachers learning to teach. In psychoanalytic terms, though, the idea is not of some "false consciousness" that is to be corrected. Instead, these societal discourses *become* the unconscious. This points us to an incredible problem, that if that which is to be confronted is not conscious, we must find other access roads to it.

If one is to find these access roads to these unconscious processes, it is through analytic discourse that we get there. This leads to the second order of relation between these ideas of the unconscious and teacher education based on the idea that analysis is predicated upon spoken interaction; it is often referred to as the "talking cure". If we bring this into the field of teacher education this means a focus on talking through problems, allowing students the opportunity to pretend, and fantasize, in class; allowing students the time to think their violent thoughts about their own students, to consider them in terms of broader social phenomenon, and to perhaps approach their unconscious desires and wishes. This is the hope of the analytic treatment, that as a result of this approach a wider range of options for interpretation of the social and personal world are available. The idea is not to make a couch of the classroom, but to be able to allow teachers multiple strategies for reading their classroom experiences.

The unconscious is already in classrooms, and it is already in education research. Many studies in teacher education elicit the kinds of articulations that can be – but are not - read psychoanalytically. Notice how a participant in Santoro and Allard's (2005) – as but one example - discusses their history of interracial relationships:

> I graduated high school with 83 students. Eighty-three of which were White. But out at Jemison (a field placement) it was a whole new experience for me. I had never had any experiences with different races as far as teaching. This was good for me to get that experience. (pg. 322)

Santoro and Allard discuss this participant's experiences as being grounded in literature read in class that corresponded with their field placements. The exemplary component of this quote, as it relates to unconscious processes, is the difference between this articulation of being with only white people in *his own schooling*, but then qualifying the newness of his experience with different races *in terms of teaching*. This is a slip, of course the student hadn't any experiences "as far as teaching", as this was his first field experience in teacher education! We cannot know exactly what this reveals, but it this kind of slip, where the tongue betrays intent and gives us opportunity to question further, in this case not only why this might have been a good experience for his teaching, but also why this might have been couched in those terms. Why didn't he refer back to his own schooling? Might this mask some other, perhaps less acceptable view of this experience (i.e. "I sure am glad my school wasn't like that")? Of course we cannot know. What we do know, though, is that the unconscious pulses and permeates our talk and, if attentive, we can mine these spurts for further conversation about what it means to be teaching; to be "teacher", to be someone to an

Other. We can see how the unconscious acts socially, by finding ways to alleviate such tensions in settings where it is hoped that the Other does not give them back to reconsider and reorganize.

But perhaps more important than the unconscious' sociality is the consequence of its troubling resistance to signification, especially the consequence that this has in education. Consider that

> the unconscious is its own reason and cannot know its own grounds...an education that centers this paradox must also be prepared to engage displacement and connotation in terms of its psychical consequences, its defenses, and its resistances to insight. And this approach renders education interminable (Britzman, 2006, pg. 165).

What she argues is that in light of the workings of the unconscious, knowledge (and education) must not be considered as an end in itself, it must be thought of in terms of the difference knowledge makes. This is a significant pedagogical concern. If we cannot know the unconscious directly, how might we proceed? Felman helps answer this question, by suggesting that "instead of asking, what is the content of the knowledge that Freud has bequeathed us, instead we ask: What is the difference this knowledge makes" (Felman, 1987. pg. 56)? To wit: now that we have considered the unconscious as part and parcel of learning to teach, what difference does *this* knowledge make?

This difference would ultimately rest in the meanings that are attached to this knowledge, and these attachments would be radically personal, contingent upon the individual's unconscious, and as such, socially mediated at that. This, I think, is a significant leverage point to help students and teachers be cognizant of making conjectures as to the importance of what comes of the knowledge in classrooms. One

cannot know these as certainties, but perhaps a focus on the ways learning and knowledge can make a difference, and by paying attention to the particular ways in which these differences unfold over time, noting slips and lapses, could help teachers and students on the road to being that Other who confronts students with their own unconscious.

The Symbolic (or Signifying) Chain

Lacan's notion of the symbolic chain helps color in the picture of what happens for students when learning to teach. I take up the idea of the signifying chain in great detail in chapter 3. The symbolic chain, those constellations of meanings that –in part – structure the subject's linguistic and conscious possibilities, moves us toward such an understanding of this reluctance, these affects, and resistance to change. Specifically, I suggest that the symbolic chain helps us to consider the psychic processes and costs associated with ignoring the suffering and violence that occurs on a daily basis in our world.

As with constellations of stars, for example, the signifying chain is significant not only in the ways that individual signifiers indicate and confer meaning, but instead on how meaning is indicated and produced based on the relationships between them. Lacan (2006) illustrates the concept of the symbolic chain in his "Seminar on the Purloined Letter," in which he reflects upon Poe's story of a stolen letter used in a blackmailing scheme. For Lacan, the stolen letter exemplifies the signifier, circulating through the story from character to character. What Lacan (2006) offers via this lecture is the idea that the signifier, in its displacement:

> determines subjects' acts, destiny, refusals, blindnesses, success, and fate, regardless of their innate gifts and instruction, and regardless of their character or sex; and that everything pertaining to the psychological pregiven follows willy-nilly the signifiers train, like weapons and baggage. (p. 21)

To exemplify this situation closer to the familiar settings of classroom dynamics, we point to the signifiers – and the positions within the signifying chain they occupy – of "teacher" and "student". In our observations of pre-service teachers in the field, we see them demanding student attention when their lesson might be boring, bemoaning the quality of student work, being amazed that students have not done their homework, and disappointed with their students' focus on grades over idea exploration. Then, when these same subjects shift their location in the signifying chain from "teacher" to "student" for their methods courses, we find they too are bored, having come to class admittedly not having read the assigned readings, and asking detailed and prolonged questions about the grading criteria on particular assignments. We should also note the fact that we are not innocently placed in the signifying chain either, as researchers we can expect that our ideas will be read from outside and expounded upon, subsequent judgments upon these expositions will be rendered...all from the determining locations from which they emanate: the reviewer, the discussant, the audience member. The point here is that "the subject is nothing other than what slides in a chain of signifiers, whether he knows which signifier he is the effect of or not" (Lacan, 1975, pg. 50).

The primary pedagogical question becomes how these symbolic chains might be momentarily, fleetingly, broken, or perhaps when the subject becomes aware of which signifier he is the effect. Because it is in these moments of disjuncture, in the pause between being confronted with a psychic truth that has been defended against (I present

a case in Chapter 3 where this happens in the context of listening to the testimony of a Holocaust survivor) and being able to articulate rationalizations for actions that learning exists. It is correct to find similarities between this idea and confronting the critical language of the "dominant discourse". The difference, though, is that the symbolic chain is a constitutive component of our inherent frustrations and inability to communicate our experiences: because of the limits placed on our articulations, language always fails. This inability highlights the psychic costs associated with being spoken by the symbolic chain: we are speaking through constructions of meaning that do not allow for the attendance to that which we deny or of that which remains outside of our awareness. But it also points us toward a hopeful moment, where those signifying chains that "speak us" due to their preexisting our entry into them are shifted, when discourse is able to be changed. These moments are what, I think, we strive for, when students' experiences and perceptions are held up to dis-confirming – and discomforting – information that forces a choice between a way to accommodate this newness and ways to avoid it.

The Trauma

If the unconscious, structured like a language, is influenced and conflicted by the symbolic chain and its mandates, a psychoanalytic reading of trauma points us toward what is at stake when we try to temporarily find fissures in the symbolic chains (see Caruth, 1996; Felman & Laub 1992). For Lacan, trauma is an encounter getting close to the Real (that which is taken in by the senses and before it has been filtered through discourse, language, or symbolization). The Real, for Lacan, is impossible: it is pre-linguistic and pre-discursive. It literally makes no sense; because once sense is "made"

from this conglomeration of events it becomes part of one of the other two components of the Lacanian triad (the imaginary or the symbolic...we can save this for another time). Now, to think of trauma, we need to think about those incidents or events that approach the Real – the as-of-yet-unspeakable. If I offer a fairly comfortable illustration of a traumatic event – something like sexual assault – we can see this notion of trauma play out. We need not usually approach the Real (for Lacan, we can never actually get "there") for there are usually symbolic structures in place that allow us to articulate what it is that we see and feel. But in a trauma, we are in a place that defies symbolization. The unconscious, then, works to siphon off this experience that refuses meaning, into the existing symbolic structures – discourses, manners of speaking, languages, customs, etc. – that help to repeat the experience in refracted instances.

Extending the sexual assault example, we would recognize the individual "acting out" or "holing up" into seclusion as ways that this person is dealing with the trauma. In fact, what this indicates is the subject NOT dealing with the trauma, but avoiding it all together. The trauma is not the experience; it is the experience's wake. These are the trauma: the ripples and waves left behind the experience and the ways that these get taken up into language, the ways that they become signified. If the person were able to accommodate events into their already existing frames of understanding the world this event would not have become traumatic. But when it happens that these events are taken up into language, and able to be signified again, the trauma is hidden in the significations.

For example, Schweber (2006) theorizes a kind of learning about the Holocaust that avoids the traumatic. She discusses Holocaust Fatigue, a phenomenon where

students are no longer willing to give reverential treatment to this topic because of its constant appearance in curriculum. It is certainly a possibility that students become desensitized to the Holocaust. Perhaps, though, this fatigue is a result of the increasing sublimation occurring through popular, sometimes comedic, sometimes trivialized, representations of the Holocaust. Perhaps this fatigue is a result of the guilt that we in the United States have in our complicity in the Holocaust, a guilt that remains hidden in our jokes and laughter. All of these could be considered repetitive moves toward, and with relevance toward, the trauma of the Holocaust.

Again, the questions asked of teacher education when employing psychoanalysis might open discussions about the unseen, imagined effects on the students and teachers in studying difficult and tragic knowledge through a conception of history that is less about understanding events contained in chronologically sealed off space and more about a history that continues to effect an individual's psyche in the present. The resistance here is one that works to hide concern, which works as a barrier to confrontation with the ways that an individual might be implicated in the tragedies of genocide or injustice.

What this has to do with education is the idea that if we take Lacan's notion of trauma as an encounter with the Real, as an event that resists signification, then we can think of learning as a fundamental trauma: the moments when no available symbolic chain can accommodate experience. I want to be extraordinarily careful not to leave the impression that I find rape and learning to be closely related. I am using trauma here as a specific term as taken up by Lacan and others to highlight the significance of learning and the trauma inherent in it. It is a trauma in which it is a circulation of knowledge

that does the cutting and undercuts the moorings from which we anchor our understandings of the world. When students, or teachers, are left without speech due to their experience in the pedagogical encounter, this is the same psychic phenomenon. Perhaps the guilt and resistance that is often found in difficult conversations are these waves and ripples left in the wake – the trauma – of having this pre-discursive experience, of not being able to accommodate their experience into language. Todd (2001) is writing of nothing else in her discussion of guilt in the pedagogical arenas of social justice education. She writes heuristically of three different ways students experience guilt in the face of being exposed to representations of the Other's suffering (see pages 599-601). It is an invocation of a psychic defense (guilt) that marks such incidents as traumatic, for if there were no cause, there would be no symptom.

The Ego's Defenses

Up to this point I have discussed how the unconscious is impossible to know directly, how the symbolic chain limits and shapes the ways that we interact in the world through language, and how trauma is a result of the inadequacy of the symbolic chain to accommodate the event. Sigmund Freud's speculation as to the existence of the unconscious and the ways by which we can access it provide the foundation for all of psychoanalytic theory. His idea is that there is an unconscious component to the self that resists awareness, that is marked by conflict between innate drives and social pressures to curb them, and that serves as a kind of governor of an individual's understanding of, and action in, the world. Now I introduce the idea that the unconscious is equipped with a circuit of defenses that itself is governed by the pleasure principle, a desire to avoid psychic discomfort by rerouting such discomfort into ways

that are felt as "safe" (Freud, 1961). The substance of chapter 4 is focused on this very routing.

If it cannot be directly observed, it must be accessed in some way. There has to be some mapping of the routes taken in this circuit of defenses. Above, I mentioned the idea of the Freudian Slip, the idea that our spoken mistakes are not slips or mistakes at all. Rather, they are access points to our unconscious desires. Or, borrowing from Lacan:

> Impediment, failure, split. In a spoken or written sentence, something stumbles. Freud is attracted by these phenomena, and it is there that he seeks the unconscious. There, something other demands to be realized – which appears as intentional, of course, but of a strange temporality. What occurs, what is produced, in this gap, is presented as the discovery (Lacan, 1973, pg. 25).

If the unconscious is to be found in the opening and closing of this "gap" between the intention in language and the failures that occur therein, then it becomes important to discuss one category that researchers have found there and that has a significant place in this study: the ego defenses.

Anna Freud (1967) formulates the basis upon which psychoanalysts first understood "ego defenses" as follows:

> When repudiating the claims of the instinct, its [the ego's] first task must always be to come to terms with these affects. Love, longing, jealousy, mortification, pain, and mourning accompany sexual wishes; hatred, anger, and rage accompany the impulse of aggression; if the instinctual demands with which they are associated are to be warded off, these affects must submit to all the various measures to which the ego resorts in its effort to master them, i.e. they must undergo a metamorphosis (pg. 32).

These affects, as Freud describes them, need to be warded off by the ego (the self) because of the degree to which they are felt as frightening or threatening. Britzman (2006) helps develop an understanding of the ego defenses in terms of commonly experienced problems faced by teacher educators including the frustration of hearing students' resistance to theory on the basis of its lack of practicality and use in the real world of teaching. Students may, for one example, enjoy discussing something like critical theory, but quickly move away from it by articulating some sense that in the real world of their classrooms there exist sufficient demands – common or standardized exams, for example – to remove the theory from their practice. Britzman discusses mechanisms of defense as attempting to "mediate the ambivalence, but its attitude is precocious in that it relates and equates the psychical and the social, even as it tries to protect and resolve...anticipations that threaten to undo our observations, coherence, and standing in the world" (pg. 77). To put this somewhat differently would be to say that an unconscious premium is placed on the security of a view of teaching that is already in place and predicated upon latent understandings of classroom life developed throughout one's life. As a result of this premium, when one is asked to reconsider, or when one is presented with a dissonant view of learning, teaching, or any other social phenomenon, the defenses are instantiated.

Anna Freud codified several defenses, among them: denial, displacement, repression, sublimation, rationalization, regression and intellectualization[2]. The idea is that the psyche has at its disposal several strategies allowing the metamorphosis of unwelcome affect to proceed. It might happen that a lesson plan fails miserably. A

[2] For concise definitions of these, see http://allpsych.com/psychology101/defenses.html

teacher may have spent several hours coming up with resources and designing an activity, but the activity may be flawed and the lesson may instantiate acute frustration. Yet the teacher may project the idea of their own fallibility onto their students, who "didn't follow directions" or "were too apathetic to get it" (these are examples from my own history of teaching). A teacher might rationalize a poor lesson by saying something like, "well, it was just after lunch and students weren't ready to focus". A teacher might deny that a lesson went poorly all together, particularly in the case of being observed and evaluated ("no, the lesson went well!").

Later you will meet the participants in the study and I will explain some ways in which they exhibited similar psychic defenses. The idea here is not to pathologize them, nor is it to suggest in any way strategies for circumventing the defenses any learner exhibits. Instead, ego defenses are noteworthy for teacher educators because they allow for an additional mode of understanding the difficulty of teaching people who are learning to be teachers. In my best estimation, knowledge of ego defenses allows a teacher and a learner to take a patient stance toward the educational endeavor; it acknowledges that there will be moments of frustration and even anger in them. Teaching can be so frustrating that it makes us cry or act out (regression), and if we fail to understand these emotions as predicated upon other, earlier, instances of, and relationship to and with, frustration, the possibilities of navigating such frustration are foreclosed.

The Transference as it relates to teaching and learning

The transference, put most simply, is the process by which individuals replay past conflicts, histories, and present desires in current situations. It is instantiated whenever

there is "a subject presumed to know". The subject presumed to know is a position that an individual occupies when being looked to for answers. In our early childhoods, our caregivers provided the models for those presumed to know. We imagined that they knew everything about us, when we were hungry, when we were sad or happy, and how to soothe us in times of distress or discomfort. In elaboration, Zizek explains that

> to produce new meaning, it is necessary to presuppose its existence in the other. That is the logic of the 'subject presumed to know' which Lacan isolated as the central axis, anchor, of the phenomenon of transference: the analyst is presumed to know in advance – what? – the meaning of the analysand's symptoms. This knowledge is of course an illusion, but it is a necessary one: in the end only through this supposition of knowledge can some real knowledge be produced (Zizek, 1989, pg. 210).

Zizek articulates the idea of the transference in terms of the subject presumed to know. New meaning is perceived to be "held" by an "other", the analyst. The subject thinks that this other, this subject presumed to know, has knowledge about what that subject lacks. It is almost as if, in this process, we *imagine* the other, the subject presumed to know, to know our secrets because, in reality, the subject presumed to know does not hold any privileged access to any information about the person. The reason this is the beginning of the transference, the grounds upon which it is traveling, is because of our (unconscious) assumption that the other knows the dramas inside of us. We act in terms of this assumption, our actions replaying those conflicts, making splatters out of the overflowing containers of our old relationships, conflicts and desires onto the fresh canvasses of present experience.

But it is not so simple as to be able to claim that the transference is easily identifiable in our interactions. It is a theoretical claim upon which we can predict the ways in which people might relate to current and future situations based on their

explanations and recollections of the past. The theoretical contribution is one that investigates what gives rise to the analysand's desire for knowledge as well as what gives shape and texture to that desire: for knowledge, for the "cure", for comfort. "Transference must", Britzman (1998) elaborates, "be imprecise for its relational reach exceeds conscious intentions and its movements are back and forth and conjure a panorama of affective ties" (pg. 33). The transference instantiated by the presence of the subject presumed to know and is ambiguous, difficult to identify in any specificity, and defies the comfort of ties to temporal linearity.

The significance of the transference is transposed in and relevant to teacher education in several ways. One of these ways is fairly obvious (I think); that because the teacher is often looked at as a "subject presumed to know", students can be expected to enact the transference onto their teacher. What this means for teachers is that they might benefit from an understanding that the relationship between teacher, student, and content is also modified by the history of students' relationships with trust, love, guilt and other affects throughout their lives. Another way the transference might be of relevance to teacher education is to suggest that the transference also moves the "other" way. It isn't a one-way street. Often called "counter-transference", the teacher transfers their psychic past in their interactions with students. As teachers, our own needs of love and recognition get re-instantiated as learners seek us out for direction and advice. Once again, it is crucial to understand that I do not offer the transference as something to overcome. To do so is impossible. My suggestion is that this psychoanalytic concept helps understand the complexities of learning and teaching because of the ways it helps frame our perceptions and actions in terms of past relationship and experiences. That

kind of thinking, as I have mentioned elsewhere, is not at all foreign to teacher educators prepared with such ideas as the apprenticeship of observation, the implicit curriculum, critical considerations of discourse, or even postmodern projects of genealogy.

Why look to psychoanalysis? Why not? There is an assumption in the dominant notions of education and teacher education policy of a clean and simple vision of teaching and learning, a closed circuit of information and skill transfer, to which no one person could ever admit to being close to their own realities of how, when and what they learn in life. Terribly disturbing for those of us in teacher education; we recognize this kind of measurement as being rife with its own impossibilities. It is also disorienting, an angling of our attention away from injustice, away from suffering, and obscuring our view of what an education for ethical subjectivity might become. This disorientation is the bedrock of the crisis marking teacher education; on top of which any number of conversations add layer and complexity. Why not look at psychoanalysis?

With all of these psychoanalytic notions in mind, I will remind readers that what I am doing is most certainly not psychoanalysis. Rather, I am thinking psychoanalytically about teacher education, about social studies, and about what it means to engage in qualitative research with an eye toward the ideas I have just elaborated. It is important to demarcate the boundaries between psychoanalysis and research that considers its topic psychoanalytically. Psychoanalysis is a particular relational experience. What I am doing in this study is also relational, but the end goal of this work is to make some claims about what we might think about as teacher

educators working in the social studies help our students navigate complex spaces around difficult knowledge. In psychoanalysis the end goal is about helping a patient construct a conscious reality that sufficiently reduces anxiety and pathology in the relationship between self and other. In other words, in psychoanalysis the focus is on the patient. This study is not about the participants (there are no patients here). It is about what happens when we consider some instances with psychoanalytic concepts.

For further clarification, let us take a statement as an example. "My mother was a teacher and so I feel like teaching is just part of me". Statements like these are offered in many of the teacher education courses I have taught. Psychoanalytic theory places a great deal of importance on the ways that meaning is constructed around parental allusion. Also, focus is placed on what it is that we consider "inside" of us (teaching is part of me) and, alternatively, what is beyond our "outside" of us. In an analytic setting, an analyst would ask the person articulating this statement to freely associate around images of the mother, or teaching, or about body parts inside and body parts outside. In the research I conduct, I feel as though I might ask similar questions (What else comes to mind when you think of your mother? What else comes to mind when you think about teaching? What else is a part of you? What isn't a part of you?). The difference between psychoanalysis and psychoanalytically inflected research is on the usage of the responses. In analysis, those responses would be used by the analyst to help the analysand contextualize and connect the associations offered to others made in previous sessions and in those to come later. In research, those statements and answers are used to help us wonder about the effects of the psyche on our classroom lives. Research goes

out to a general audience. Psychoanalytic practice – that between doctor and patient – stays within the room.

Section Two
Difficult Knowledge in Social Studies Education

In the introduction to this dissertation, I described a photograph shot by Kevin Carter in 1994, and its accompanying narrative. As I mentioned there, I show the image each year in one of the first few class sessions of the social studies methods course for which I serve as instructor and many times in presentations and guest presentations. I ask the students to describe what they see, what range of emotions they feel, what range of emotions they imagine others could feel because of viewing such an image. Students will produce a not surprising list; they see despair, sadness, and loneliness in the photograph. They speak about their desire to scoop up this child and give him food and shelter – the rescue fantasy, the maternal instinct, the colonial lens of paternalism, and the altruistic urge. After this, I tell them the story of the photographer, who won a Pulitzer Prize for the image, about how he had to wait for several moments to get this shot, how he struggled with depression, how he eventually committed suicide (perhaps not because of the photograph, but we cannot know). Finally, I ask the students to put themselves into the position of the photographer and ask them what they would have done if they were in the situation. Most students express considerable anger at the photographer for "not doing enough", for not serving the needs that were so obviously right in front of his face. "By show of hands," I ask, "how many of you would have helped this person if you were in that situation?" The vast majority, time and time again, will raise their hands. "By show of hands", I then ask, "how many of you have walked by a homeless person in the last month and done nothing"? There is a distinct pause here. It lasts no more than two or three seconds, after which the class comes to

life with students offering justifications, rationalizations, the vast distinctions between the two cases, the ways that one does not equate with the other. Of course there are differences between these situations. In no way do I find them to be the same. However, there are some similarities, and I try to implicate students into a situation from which they may have separated themselves before. This moment, this pause between being implicated in traumatic situations, as being part of the trouble – albeit unwittingly – can be described as an encounter with difficult knowledge.

Drawing from Werner (2000), the "purpose of social education is to help students acquire rich conceptual tools for thoughtfully reading their cultural world and acting within it" (pg. 195). Through, and because of, such acquisition, students and teachers in social studies classrooms are asked to take significant risks. After all, this "cultural world" is not always a postcard of peace and prosperity. Being thoughtful, then, means being able to tolerate thinking about the suffering of others, others to whom we may or may not have personal connections. It means having to come to terms with the suffering propagated throughout history, and acknowledging that despite crimes against humanity being unconscionable, they are nonetheless consciously committed by humans. In other words, in being thoughtful about our social world we must acknowledge the capacity for doing terrible deeds, the ways in which individuals work against daunting circumstances and finally about the ways that we, as individuals, will act in the world. What becomes clear is that the thoughtfulness Werner asks students to have about the social world necessitates a thoughtfulness about the individual's world; that we must not only attend to the world "out there" but to the world "inside".

In its attention to this inner world (the unconscious and its processes), psychoanalysis can offer the field of social education a consideration of the ways in which those comprising our classrooms struggle with knowledge not in terms of how it becomes an answer on a test, but how it becomes a part of the prism that shapes human experience. Psychoanalytic theory allows for an examination of the ways in which those involved in such encounters make new meanings of the pain and suffering of others. While psychoanalysis may seem at odds with the educational project in general, the theories elaborated by Sigmund Freud, Anna Freud, Klein, and more recently, Lacan, have been used in education research in order to complicate and look anew (or, askew) at what it means to be involved in education, both as a teacher (e.g. Salvio, 2007), and as students (e.g. Pitt and Britzman, 2003; Todd, 2003). Social studies research is a rich location to employ such a methodology to shed light on how traumatic learning "works"—not "what" students understand but "how" they understand, the manner by which meaning is made out of experiences (like the Holocaust) that were never meant to be educational.

Difficult Knowledge

There are difficulties in learning. And then there is difficult knowledge. While each is implicated in the other, it is the latter to which I most specifically attend in this dissertation. While education is always bothersome to the psyche, then, and while learning is always difficult (both to experience and to qualify/represent), there is a particular kind of encounter with a particular kind of knowledge to which "difficult knowledge" refers. *Difficult knowledge* refers not just to this general psychic difficulty in learning but rather to difficulty of a more specific order. Pitt and Britzman articulate

difficult knowledge as signifying "both representations of social traumas in curriculum and the individual's encounter with them in pedagogy" (Pitt & Britzman, 2003). The difficulty of difficult knowledge is multi-faceted. The notions about the psychic difficulty in learning (and all of the processes that constitute it) are already implicated in difficult knowledge. Difficult knowledge is that which is experienced by an individual (teacher, student, or researcher) when in a pedagogical space concerning social traumas in such a way as to undercut, or counter-cut, a previously held notion about the world, the way it works, or the way the individual fits into it. It is a feedback loop of meaning making where our understanding of other people (regardless of subject position) and our own personal histories interfere with one another. What results is a refusal of meaning in the moment; meaning is deferred, displaced, and transferred. In other words, the experience is put away in our minds, outside of our awareness, to be dealt with in other ways at other times. How this refusal manifests itself is in individual reactions that allow the individual to "stay safe" and to regard himself or herself as intellectually stable. Britzman (1998) coined the term "difficult knowledge" during an elaboration on the pedagogical issues inherent in Anne Frank's diary. Here I quote Britzman as she inaugurates the term:

> The term of learning acknowledges that studying the experiences and the traumatic residuals of genocide, ethnic hatred, aggression, and forms of state-sanctioned – and hence legal – social violence requires educators to think carefully about their own theories of learning and how the stuff of such difficult knowledge becomes pedagogical. (pg. 117)

There are warnings within this description of the landscape of difficult knowledge. One such warning is the suggestion that teachers for whom these tragic human events

comprise the curriculum "think carefully". The thoughts that accompany difficult knowledge, then, can be conceptualized as constitutively distinct from the "normal" thoughts of anticipatory sets, structured classroom activity and assessment. The assumption here is that there is a cost incurred from learning about the pain and suffering of others. In this sense, the use of difficult knowledge rests on an ethical premise to acknowledge that these educational "lessons" were never meant to be educational – or at least in the ways we think of them as such. Britzman thus continues:

> This exploration needs to do more than confront the difficulties of learning from another's painful encounter with victimization, aggression, and the desire to live on one's own terms. It also must be willing to risk approaching the internal conflicts which the learner brings to the learning. (pg. 117)

Here Britzman makes the move from outside to inside, bridging the foci of examination between that of the war, the violation of human rights, the propagation of social violence, and that of the internal struggles that are housed in the student and teacher. These are mutually constructed phenomena within the discourse of difficult knowledge: the social events that constitute the historical/social trauma and the affective consequences of learning from them through school curricula. In short, inquiry utilizing difficult knowledge as a construct, asks us: "What happens when that other war, the war within, meets the conflicts and aggressions enacted in the world outside" (pg. 119)?

In the eleven years since this work was published, difficult knowledge has gained footing in education research as a lens to understand the complex work of students' (and teachers', and researchers') engagement with these issues. Salverson (2000) makes use of the term to elaborate on a play about land mines that she found

particularly troubling. This play was troubling to her as an audience member precisely because she did not sense any notion of personal implication on the part of the writing, the actors, or the audience. The theater is no stranger to portraying violent historical events, and in this piece the questions revolve around a pondering of what-needs-to-be-in-place in order for students, for an audience, to adequately "bear witness". Salverson submits that engagements with difficult knowledge "have the potential to set in motion dynamics of identification and defense that play out the uneasy negotiation between one's own experience of loss and another's account" (pg. 63). Identifications, the way we unconsciously make cohesive narratives of ways we are similar – even across radical differences – and defenses, those siphons of unconscious energy into the socially acceptable, are thus dangerous. They preclude an individual from confronting the vulnerability associated with the human condition. Attention to these processes brings such vulnerability into focus.

Salvio (2009) takes difficult knowledge outside of the classroom and into the darkroom. In her analysis of the war photographs of Lee Miller, she deploys the construct of difficult knowledge to represent the complexities associated, and invited, with photographs meant to portray messages from war. Troublesome for Salvio is the observation that "the narrative practices associated with documentary realism, while exciting for teachers and students on many levels, can unwittingly reduce what are often traumatic experiences to consoling narratives that fit neatly into the structure of normalizing and stigmatizing discourse" (pg. 526). The use of difficult knowledge is a theoretical lever that allows the movement from these troubling narratives of consolation toward a consideration of these images as ways to "challenge

understandings of nationhood, citizenship, and norms of social belonging" (pg. 526). This points out again the tension between, and attention to, the broader world of events outside and the affective torrents occurring inside (at least as posited by psychoanalytic theory).

Farley (2009) initiates a further inquiry of difficult knowledge by putting this idea into conversation with others that have emerged out of psychoanalytic thinking. She finds that encountering difficult knowledge might be considered as developing "a capacity that both requires hope and makes hope a radical project for history education" (pg. 538). At stake in Farley's project are ways that teachers of history experience pulls and conflicts along tensely felt obligations between student understanding, their own professional responsibility, and an appropriate representation of historical content. These pulls are further features of engagements with difficult knowledge.

Of course, Britzman has not been silent on these matters since she coined the term in 1998. Her work has since confronted the issues of difficult knowledge in several ways; inquiring into dilemmas of representing it (Pitt and Britzman, 2003), reconsidering traumatic histories in terms of the trauma of learning itself (Britzman, 2003), and more generally in terms of the difficulty of coming to terms with "the confusion of our times" (Britzman, 2006). Her work has given foundation to these and other studies, and it is this idea that I hope to mobilize further in an empirical setting in this study.

The substance of difficult knowledge has a considerable amount to do with the project of understanding trauma in pedagogical settings. Other scholars study this kind of process without necessarily referring to it as "difficult knowledge". Many of these

studies have to do with the work of mourning, loss and remembrance as pedagogical endeavors. If that sounds a lot like fulfilling the criteria of difficult knowledge as I have just laid out it is for good reason, it's just that these authors do not use Britzman's term in their work.

Simon (2000) suggests that the issue "is not only what gets remembered, by whom, how, and when, but, as well, the problem of the very limits of representing and engaging events that in their extremity shock and resist articulation into already articulated discourse (pg. 7). In other words, there is a fundamental problem in learning about mass social trauma, and the problem is that because of the inadequacies of language these issues are in and of themselves difficult for anyone to convey an understanding. Simon continues to explain the ways that learning about such human events pull and tug on the psyche. He recognizes the consequences of seeing media images, photograph, film, or text that bear witness to such issues as slavery and the Holocaust as naturally instantiating an avalanche of affect: sadness, despair, confusion. But the problem, as Simon frames it, has a great deal to do with the ways that most common social studies education uses these kinds of texts with already established purposes. "On such terms", Simon writes, "traumatic memories of others become object lessons meant to illustrate some significant historical moment, social process, or change and to provoke a compassionate helpful response" (pg. 18). The problem, as Simon notes, is that such lessons are meant (most often, anyway) to help students remember content, to understand history, and do not attend to what such remembering does to the learner. Throughout the dissertation I attempt to confront this problem: the difficulty of difficult knowledge and how it affects the learner.

The Difficulty of Difficult Knowledge

While trauma is one difficulty in difficult knowledge in that the pedagogical spaces in which it is engaged both study and produce trauma, difficult knowledge also exposes an individual as incomplete or in some way insufficient in her ethical relations in the social world. In other words, difficult knowledge is less a thing than a situation. This situation may occur when encountering information about how society operates with institutionalized forms of racism, classism, and sexism (to name a few). It is, as Todd (2001) writes, an interaction that can produce affective feelings of guilt in students where the guilt "signals to the self, in the moment of articulation, that one is implicated in a wrong committed against another". Whether the guilt manifests itself as feelings of having not done enough to help, feeling undeservedly privileged, or being made to feel guilty unnecessarily, "guilt carries with it the devastating idea that one has the potential to harm others without intention, and that this idea is itself too painful to bear" (pg. 604).

There is another difficulty at play as well. It has to do with the enjoyment that teachers have in teaching events like the Holocaust or September 11th. In a recent conversation with a preservice social studies teacher, I was struck with how happy he was after students had listened to Holocaust survivors give a presentation at his school. He reported how his students told him that they had never learned so much about social studies, history, or human interaction in one setting before in their lives. Indeed, there is little question that these are incredibly powerful testimonies that students should hear. What is difficult about this wonderful student engagement is how not-wonderful the world has to be in order to provide this great learning opportunity.

Difficult knowledge is that situation which destabilizes our understanding about how the world works. What becomes difficult is that in making this point clear and present to an individual something gets in the way of "the ego's wish to ignore and to flee from what is felt as un-pleasure and danger, and the unconscious wish for something without consequence" (Britzman, 1998, pg 8). Therefore, not only is it difficult to identify, it is also difficult to engage due to the natural tendency to flee from discomfort. It is uncomfortable and, indeed unpleasant, to think of our most powerful lessons, the ones we enjoy and tell to colleagues, as relying on the most putrid and petulant features of human behavior.

But there are amazing possibilities in engaging with difficult knowledge, which is a further facet of its difficulty. Laub (1992) argues that the Holocaust is a microcosm of human experience and that our engagement with it brings us face to face with questions we often are able to ignore.

> The listener can no longer ignore the question of facing death; of facing time and its passage; of the meaning and purpose of living; of the limits of ones own omnipotence; of losing the ones that are close to us; the great question of our ultimate aloneness; our otherness from any other; our responsibility to and for our destiny; the question of loving and its limits; of parents and children; and so on (pg 72).

What Laub argues is that the hope of this engagement is that students will talk about their affective attachments to the testimonies offered as texts, articulating what they find difficult, and in this speaking they play with new meanings and new attachments to them. While acknowledging the abhorrent nature of an historical trauma like the Holocaust, there is a simultaneous acknowledging of the way this engagement can serve

to cultivate an examination of the great existential questions of human life. In my experiences with secondary and post-secondary social studies students, there is often anger in these moments of encounter with difficult knowledge, not necessarily when discussing the Holocaust but with more contemporary examples of difficult knowledge such as structural inequality or institutional racism. When the goals of disquieting a student's sensibility about the world are met, the disquieted individual seeks to steady themselves and their now turbulent footing in the way they experience the world. This steadying is not always pleasant. It can be anger, directed at the teacher, manifested as accusations of bias and ideological play. It can be sadness in lamenting the loss of human lives. It can be happiness and comfort to realize that it is "they", not "us", who are suffering. It can be a profound confusion about what to do now. It can be, as described above, guilt. Importantly, it is not just a function of the defense of the students, though, it is also dependent upon the ways in which teachers are prepared to teach these topics, respond to students, and the degree to which they choose to engage or move on when the class gets confused, guilty, or angry. But if the goal of a social education is to promote the development of ethical subjectivities (i.e., the good citizen), it is imperative that we look not only at the ways in which sadness or guilt come into play when engaging difficult knowledge, but also at the ways in which students resist this kind of development and the manner in which teachers avoid fostering it. In the following chapters of this study, I will offer ways in which these things happen.

Finally, difficult knowledge is not only difficult to deal with, it is also difficult to represent (Pitt and Britzman, 2003). I will discuss this further in the methodology chapter, but Pitt and Britzman remind us that individuals speak through mechanisms

such as deferred action and transference, filters of the unconscious, and that because "knowledge is lost and found in these psychical dynamics, they leave traces in narratives about knowledge" (pg. 757). The idea of deferring meaning refers to the way in which an individual consistently revisits "old" knowledge and makes "new" meaning of it as their life takes new (and revisits old) encounters with other people and information. For the institution of education, this deferred meaning highlights the complicated and uncertain outcomes of schooling, for it means that teachers cannot know what comes of their activities, their curriculum, or their course after (and during) their students' experiences with them in the moment of their occurrence. The deferral of meaning is also the framing lens around which I explain one of the research encounters; the experience of participants of this study at a Holocaust memorial. It becomes difficult to represent these encounters because their effects will inherently change and morph through time. As I conduct this study I have been challenged with this difficulty as I cannot, nor can anyone, get "inside" an individual's not-yet-lived-history to observe these changes over time. The importance here is in the acknowledgement that difficult knowledge renders claim-making tendentious and temporary. In this study, then, the inherent difficulty of learning is always going to be present. However, the focus is on individual encounters with difficult knowledge, the meanings these individuals make from it for themselves, and the effect that these meanings have on their vision of what it means to be a social studies teacher in the moments of their articulations.

Difficult Knowledge: The "stuff" of social studies research

In examining social studies goals statements from state and national curriculum documents, it is apparent that the field hopes to foster certain sensibilities that encourage ethical civic participation (e.g. Michigan Grade Level Content Expectations, 2007). Since it is often the case that in the course of attempting to reach this goal social studies education confronts students head on with uncomfortable subject matter, it becomes imperative to note the ways in which the individual interprets and makes meaning from these experiences. Much of the knowledge discussed in social studies classrooms is what can be termed "difficult knowledge". As students progress from elementary to secondary classrooms, they encounter - indeed, are required by the curriculum to encounter – topics such as genocide, war, terrorism, and racism. All of these are inherently difficult topics, not only because they portray death, destruction, and violence, but also because, when taught well, students are asked to implicate themselves, their community, and their country in that knowledge and the meanings they make from it.

Brophy and Alleman (2007) suggest a reconceptualized goal of social studies education as " introducing students to fundamental understandings about the human condition" (pg. 445). As social studies educators, we must ask ourselves what such understandings involve. While the answers to such a question would obviously vary, each would entail introducing students to topics that are not pleasant. Not too far into any discussion about the "what's" and the "how's" of a curriculum that confronts the human condition would be concerns about topics from which students need to be protected, for what they are "ready", and what would count as "available" for elaboration in a classroom setting. While Brophy and Alleman do not discuss what the

costs of such an introduction would be, it is clear, based on the definitions and elaborations of difficult knowledge, that such understandings would be an appropriate addition to the conversation. This is to say that much of social studies is the "stuff" of difficult knowledge.

Using Brophy and Alleman's stated goal as a beginning, then, I look here at other examples from the last three years of *Theory and Research in Social Education* – our flagship journal – to further illustrate the relationship between difficult knowledge and social studies education (and the research within it). Some of these examples are obvious, such as when researchers and scholars in the field take on trauma on a mass scale like the Holocaust (e.g. Misco, 2007; Schweber, 2006). In this research, the authors focus on the ways that curriculum is delivered, how it comes to be "the" curriculum in a given context, and what this curriculum then "says" about those who teach it. What we do not see in this research are the ways in which students or teachers face these histories. These are, indeed, incredibly important conversations to be had.

Other studies include encounters with difficult knowledge as part of their methods. In these studies, mass trauma is used as a tool to elicit data for other purposes. Metzger and Suh (2008) investigate the use of film in the history classroom. They engage in an inquiry about the benefits and perils of feature films in terms of historical understanding. However, the films themselves represent such things as slavery and racism. These topics carry weights that are alluded to as part of this work. For example, one of the teachers, a participant in the study, felt "it was important for her students to visualize slavery and understand why it was brutal and wrong, but she did not want to openly address this painful historical issue with her young students or

explicitly connect the problem of slavery and racial violence with social problems in the United States today" (pg. 102). What a methodology that mobilizes psychoanalytic theory and the idea of difficult knowledge would enable is an interpretation as to why this avoidance takes place. The point would be to speculate about the avoidance, to carefully examine the investments these teachers have in imagining what would happen if these same young students were to make such explicit connections.

In Saye and Brush's (2007) study about using interactive technology to bolster students' engagement in problem based learning, one of their hypotheses is that "more realistic, vivid representations of reality encourage learning engagement and empathy". Their case study is a unit about the civil rights movement. The focus is on the technology. In considering such an encounter psychoanalytically, though, we would assume that this is not just about technology. This is about the ways students are able to hold these realistic and vivid images in their minds, and to what other images and memories those are linked, and finally to what differences those groups of images point. Here, questions might be asked about the nature of the realistic and vivid representations that are called upon to initiate problem-based learning. It also points us to questions of our own desires, as researchers, to confront people with vivid and realistic portrayals of violence (e.g. the prevalence of the first 30 minutes of "Saving Private Ryan"). We can imagine images of lynching, of police brutality, of the emotional worlds of those represented as well as those encountering those representations. Hicks and Doolittle (2007) offer a similar situation in a study regarding the process of historical inquiry. They ask students to imagine themselves as living in the Great Depression or a volunteer in the Spanish American War. In other words,

students are being asked to imagine themselves in situations of profound despair and/or violence.

Consider the list of experiences students are asked to have in this cursory review: slavery, racism, war, genocide, and economic plight. Think about the kinds of things individuals are witness to when "in" such situations: violence, murder, despair, misery, suffering, hunger. If these are the components of the human condition, and therefore serve as the foundation upon which students are to base their understandings of the social world via their time in social studies classrooms, how are we to keep from sliding into despair ourselves? How might we learn to tolerate these realities? This is all to say that there is, indeed, a case to be made for utilizing a psychoanalytically informed notion of difficult knowledge in social studies research where difficult knowledge is the bridging construct between psychoanalytic theory and social studies education.

Still, we should be careful to understand difficult knowledge as a process of engagement rather than an identifiable and quantified notion. In other words, it is hard to pin difficult knowledge down; hard to say "this" is difficult knowledge and "that" is not. Difficult knowledge helps focus on the nature of learning from others' trauma. It is a theoretical construct that provokes a certain kind of examination of the learning encounter and it seems to me an emergent and discursive notion. That is, it can only be understood in its processes and its effects, much as any investigation into the cloudy area of the unconscious can be. The function of the concept of difficult knowledge, then, is to bracket a set of historical representations and individuals interactions with

them so that we can examine them in particular ways. These particularities are the content of the study.

Significant work has been done within the broader field of social studies education that examines the way students understanding historical content. Wineburg's (1999) study about "historical thinking" investigates the rational sense that students make of history, the nature of their understanding of historical content, and how these are informed by the classroom and popular media texts. Seixas (2004) elaborates on "historical consciousness" and contextualizes his inquiry within the framework of collective memory and broader national narratives that frame the ways that students are to make sense of the events around them. While the idea of difficult knowledge, or the theoretical frameworks of psychoanalytic theory do not enter this work, they certainly lend sophisticated understandings about what happens in the pedagogical encounter in history classrooms. The work I undertake here, though, means to insert those theoretical frames into that encounter. In other words, it is not just cognitive sense making in which I am interested. Rather, I am interested in the routes and strategies through which such sense making is created as they pertain to specific encounters in the social studies classroom, those that do deal with difficult knowledge.

While what textbooks offer are mostly sanitized versions of history, many popular resources are available that make wonderful complexity out of it. For example, Brown University's "Choices" (www.choices.edu) curriculum offer social studies educators curricular units that afford students the opportunity to engage in perspective taking and policy making based on those perspectives. The topics are, indeed, imbued with difficult knowledge: slavery, genocide, the Iraq War, and terrorism to name a few.

Websites like "Facing History and Ourselves" (www.facinghistory.org) provide resources that work to confront students with difficult knowledge –again without using that language – in that they aim to provoke students' thinking about their relationship to unknown "others" within the context of current socio-political topics as well as helping them consider the moral implications of decisions made throughout history.

These are wonderful resources from which social studies educators can and do draw. But if we are to take Britzman's notion of difficult knowledge seriously, complete with its psychoanalytic underpinnings, then those resources, and that historical consciousness, instantiate a host of odd affects and reactions to the social studies curriculum. This dissertation is an investigation into the complexities of learning from trauma. From here I move to the study of difficult knowledge in social studies teacher education.

Chapter 2

There is no pure essence, no reality to be secured and repeated through the problem of representing experience, no ultimate transcendence made from the capture of observation, and no safe passage that opens direct access to pure meaning (Britzman, 2009b, pg. 388)

Methods and Methodology

As described in chapter 1, that which constitutes social studies curriculum is also often the "stuff" of difficult knowledge (wars, genocide, famine, etc.). Individuals learning to teach social studies are often asked to engage in similarly complex conversations about social and historical traumas. This is the case, at least, in the social studies teacher education program that served as the setting for this study, which I describe later. Confronting such subject matter can be intensely complex for anyone. However, there is an added layer of complexity for individuals who are in a social studies education that asks them not just to learn, but also to learn with intent toward helping others learn. Not only do they need to make personal meanings of such texts and representations, they also are required to make such knowledge pedagogical. This kind of translation, as Atwell-Vasey (1997) illuminates, is often difficult for teachers.

Because of these overlaps and conditions and my interest in their exploration, I chose to examine secondary social studies education students in moments of encounter with representations of social/historical trauma. I attempted to look at the ways in which individuals both come to individual terms with various texts and situations, but also how those became pedagogical. Put most simply, I collected and analyzed pre-service social studies teachers' stories of their past and present experiences with difficult knowledge – in and out of the teacher education classroom -- and the ways that these stories and experiences impact the ways that they conceptualize what it means to

teach social studies. Further, I invited participants to engage in situations – film viewings and museum visits – that were selected because of their content having to do with social and historical trauma. The discussions that followed these experiences were recorded and transcribed to be used as data. The broad questions, then, that guided this study are:

1. *How do individuals learning to social studies engage with difficult knowledge?*
2. *To what extents do personal meanings made from such engagements influence how they imagine teaching social studies?*

There were four different components to this study that I will describe briefly here before elaborating on each. The first is a semester long observation of a secondary social studies methods course in the spring of 2009. The remaining components were completed with volunteering participants from the methods class (two women) and from a separate population of those who had just completed their internships (two women and two men) in the spring of 2009. The second component, then, is the participants' personal histories – with a focus on their memories of encounters with learning about traumatic events in history - that were gathered in individual interview sessions. These semi-structured and active interviews (Holstein, 2002) were conducted in college of education conference rooms due to their ease of access for both the researcher and the participants. The third component was a visit to a Holocaust memorial and museum and a subsequent conversation about this visit. The fourth component is a viewing of a documentary film about Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath, followed by another in-depth interview regarding this film.

In many, if not most senses, this is a relatively traditional field study. I am conducting field observations and interviews about "the field" of social studies

education and learning how to teach within it. The participants are/were students in a teacher education program and I was inquiring into their experiences within it. The strangeness is invited by my use of a theory that beckons discomfort and resistance as part of its process. That is, I attempt in this study to develop and use what I will call a Psychoanalytic Discourse Analysis. In chapter one I delineated my thinking about psychoanalysis. Discourse, writes Britzman (2000), "constitutes, even as it mobilizes and shuts out, imaginary communities, identity investments, and discursive practice. Discourses authorize what can and cannot be said" (pg. 36). And rather than performing an analysis of the data with more traditional lenses (i.e. grounded theory, feminist, postmodern, post-structural ethnography or field study) I am interested in leveraging psychoanalysis as a qualitative research methodology in education research.

I break this chapter into two parts. The first part is an elaboration on the methodological issues imbedded within this research project, beginning with an articulation of how I have conceptualized a deployment of psychoanalytic theory in a qualitative study in education. In that section I offer theoretical justifications for using a psychoanalytically informed methodology and describe how data comes to be analyzed within such a methodology. That is, I speculate as to what a psychoanalytic methodology looks like – or at least how I attempted to read the data psychoanalytically. Part two, then, discusses the settings of the study and includes elaborations on the methods course, descriptions of the texts used to engage participants with difficult knowledge, and biographical sketches of the participants who comprise the study.

Part I: Psychoanalytic Methodology in Qualitative Education Research

What are Data and How is it Read?

Early in 2009 scientists had quite the trouble as they were trying to figure out whether or not the moon contained traces of water – and, perhaps, traces of life. Water on the moon, scientists thought, was a distinct possibility, but they could not observe it directly. The water there is not accessible to researchers in any direct way. There isn't a lake they can see. There exists insufficient funding or public will to send scientists to the moon to set up a laboratory and drill down into the core of the moon to investigate this problem. They had to do something that education researchers do all the time - come up with a way to observe the immediately unobservable. Much like we have to come up with some way to conceptualize and theorize what learning "looks like", scientists had to accept that they had to investigate the existence of something beyond simple or direct observation. Their solution is, in my mind, rather brilliant. They decided to smash a projectile into the surface of the moon. In the instant the projectile meets the surface of the moon a plume of debris and "stuff" is released into the thin atmosphere of the moon. The scientists capture this debris – this "stuff" - for the traces of chemicals that would indicate the presence of water on/in the moon. Their access route to investigation was in that which is an immediate outcome of a collision between something intended to cause the moon a disturbance in its previous state. The disturbance produces some observable thing that is not really too special (a big cloud of dirt), but what the thing *indicates* is the significant finding. There is, scientists found, a fair amount of water on the moon. But they didn't collect it in a bucket. They deduced this because of the ways that light refracted through the "plume" that was produced upon impact (Chang, 2009).

Why all of this about the moon and water? In a study of the ways in which social studies teachers engage with and work through difficult knowledge, a similar phenomenon takes place. Instead of asking how to find the water on the moon by shining light through the particles that are kicked up upon a heavy and fast moving object slamming violently into the surface, in this study I shine the theoretical light of psychoanalysis upon the articulations that participants make upon their engagement with representations of social and historical trauma. There are psychic phenomena that are not immediately observable. One has to look at clues. As I have described, difficult knowledge is a psychical engagement between a person and information that has to do with the suffering, pain, and trauma of others. It has a concurrent problem as elaborated by Pitt and Britzman (2003) that difficult knowledge resists articulation and, thus, as a researcher, what I want to be able to investigate cannot be observed directly. The unconscious is not directly knowable. What I am left to do, then, is to investigate the particles that arise from the collision between pedagogical projectiles and the surface of the individual. Here, the projectile is a difficult film, photograph, or even memory that comes to mind through discussion. The "affective plume" (as I call it) that arises from the initial contact is emotion, or affect. In psychoanalytic theory, affects and emotions are the clues, the indicants, which help demonstrate the ways in which people make connections to objects in the world.

Investigating this affective plume can provide ways to make sense of the issues that frame how individuals understand and experience the world of

difficult knowledge. Revealed through articulations both physical and articulated, emotions perform. That is, they have functions that are not immediately self-evident. For an oversimplified example of how emotions have function, consider the worn out lessons on the homophobic student's show of disgust or anger at a same sex couple in his or her school. In this story, the disgust performs as a mask for the student's own sexual insecurity. Of course, without knowing something of the individual's history it is a dangerous speculation as to what, exactly, that anger or disgust connects. Nonetheless, it reveals a provocation, a reaction, and a question as to how all of those relate and make sense together.

In the social studies, where issues of race, sexuality, class, war, violence, and politics dominate the curricular terrain, the emotional outcomes are sure to arise. My own speculation is that through acknowledging the staggering complexity of the reactions to these curricular projectiles, we (teacher educators in this case) can come to terms with the uncertain landscapes of the classroom. Often I hear anecdotes from teacher candidates who are upset and frustrated by students' anger at learning a particular topic. Similarly, these teacher candidates are pleased when their students are sad, or angry, when their students laugh at a "serious" part of a text. In chapter five we will see this sort of testimony in more detail. The kind of consideration of affect being undertaken here allows those of us in classrooms to acknowledge the individuals' psychic needs to deal with difficult knowledge. The data and it's analysis in this study are often

descriptions of that emotional plume and an illustration of the ways emotions and affect "work".

As I described in Chapter 1, investigations of the unconscious is precariously complex. After all, there is never any certain or "correct" finding of an answer, nor is there any certainty, only interpretations. This is because the unconscious cannot be known directly. It can only be known by the consequences it manifests, similar to the way the NASA scientists "discovered" water on the moon. The unconscious is considered by its effects within the analytic situation, only by triangulating and predicting the ways that defenses work through language can we "look around the corner" and investigate the unconscious through its effects. I shine a psychoanalytic light on the dirt that is elicited by the projectile of difficult knowledge. That dirt, the plume, is the data that I analyze in this study.

Data, as all data are, are radically dependent upon researchers' perceptions and reactions (Denzin, 1995). Therefore, I fully acknowledge my own defenses, predispositions, attachments, and wishes that have a heavy influence on what is written in this dissertation. While I can disclose my status as a researcher – a white, upper middle class, heterosexual, able bodied male – and all of the power and effects on the research setting that such a status confers in our culture, I cannot speculate as to the ways that my own psychic defenses play out in research. One cannot analyze one's self; psychoanalysis is not a reflective endeavor. Rather, I can only posit the fact that this process is, indeed, happening, just as strongly in me as it is in my analysis of the

data. In acknowledging these processes, I do not mean to disavow or neglect this issue in any way.

And while data begin as voices in a room, data is most assuredly not a person's voice. In our day-to-day lives, conversations begin and end, and exist only as snippets in our memories. Of course, in an age of increasing surveillance we can be fairly assured that our phone conversations, our comings and goings from our workplaces, and our electronic communications live on in vast databases mined for all sorts of who-knows-what purposes. By and large, though, we are not ever confronted again with representations of the interactions with which we engage. This is all to say that data are created and manufactured through the recording, transcribing, and analysis of what was, at a singular moment in time, a human's voice. At the time of articulation, what eventually ends up as data is offered as a response to a question, an assertion, or a statement of personal disclosure. Once the reverberations of those articulations are said, they cease to exist. The job of the researcher is to resuscitate these voices and put them to use for our own purposes.

Data is then read and interpreted. What "counts" as data in a clinical psychoanalytic setting is "analyzable material", which is basically anything, but comes most often from dreams, wishes, manners of speaking, mistakes, and pauses. In an analytic setting, those data are taken out of their immediately spoken context and placed into further questioning in relation to other associations. Data is transplanted and transposed and offered back to its original speaker to be elaborated upon further. In a psychoanalytic methodology, a similar phenomenon takes place.

My research borrows from and reflects those criteria. It marries the transposed responsibilities of the analyst to that of the education researcher. The analyst's job, according to Lacan, is to "give a different reading to the signifiers that are enunciated than what they signify" (Lacan, 1975, pg. 37). What this means is that the articulated speech of an individual is read as saying more than it contains. The basis upon which such an analysis – that we never mean what we say – can be made is found in psychoanalysis' heavy reliance on language, as discussed in Chapter 1. In a clinical setting the analyst will listen to the narratives of the analysand, provoking and prompting the analysand to say more, to freely associate, and to propose thematic connection for further speculation and talk. On and On it Goes.

The different reading that is given in an analytic setting, according to Lacan, is to "hystericize discourse". What this means is that "it turns him into this subject who is asked to abandon every other reference than to the four walls that surround him and to produce signifiers that constitute this free association" (Lacan, 2007, pg. 34). I do not do this in the interviews conducted in this study. Rather, I consider the data generated as *having already done so*. In other words, the researcher hystericizes not the person, but what began as an articulation in an interview setting and has now become data for a research project.

The focus of the analysis is on interpretation. I am careful to couch my claims in terms of the tendentiousness and impossibility of finding certainty. After all, "to interpret", Lacan said, "and to imagine one understands are not at all the same things. It is precisely the opposite" (Lacan, 1988, pg. 73). I take Lacan to mean that interpreting is the best that an analyst can do, because to imagine one understands has a tendency to

preclude revision and promote certainty. Psychoanalysis, Freud claimed, is interminable, and therefore must remain open to re-thinking, re-interpreting, and re-theorizing.

If that is the role of the analyst in a clinical psychoanalytic setting, I offer that the role of the education researcher employing a psychoanalytic methodology is in many ways similar – at least insofar as the focus on interpretation goes. A significant difference between psychoanalytic analysis of speech and, say, phenomenology is that psychoanalysis prescribes a reading that diverges from the intended meanings of the speaker. Here, articulations are viewed as more than simple one-to-one communication and are viewed as containing, or at least pointing towards, psychic investments that the speaker maintains.

This kind of inquiry has consequences for how data is read. First, I theorize that all of the participants' statements and stories are "analyzable material". I take them to mean something other than was said. I think about the data as though they were produced like free associations. Free association asks an individual to – literally – say whatever comes to mind, be it nonsense or jibberish, recollections of dreams or childhood disappointments. Speaking from experience, it is a skill to learn just like any other. Also speaking from experience, it does make one feel rather hysterical. We are trained from our initiation into language to "make sense". To produce comprehensible, mostly linear arguments is our calling card within the academic field, and to abandon those symbolic structures is difficult. Yet, the unconscious pulsates through those associations, what feel like the speaker to be mistakes, disconnected ramblings. It is through the interpretations of these pulses that the analytic situation can thrive. And so,

in analysis, the material to be analyzed comes from what the analyst might identify as one of those pulsations. In education research, such as what is being presented here, that material is identified in the transcribed interviews that took place as the data was generated.

One substantiation for such a theoretical claim is that all language is provoked by absence (Britzman, 2009). In order to provide for that which is not present, we must enter in to language, we must symbolize, to make connections between what is felt inside and what is longed for outside. In the research settings here, most everything discussed was physically absent. Participants conjured, through the narrative tropes of recollection and anecdote, their parents, various trips, their past teachers, and their current students. Because none of these people were present, and because these past events are not available except through memory and telling, they are considered to be the equivalent of a fantasy. That is, they are products of imagination. When a participant is speaking about a lesson she has taught, for example, the data is read for the ways students are discussed, and then connected back to look for similarities between that discussion and other stories she has told; about her parents, about her travels, about her romantic partner.

A second way to justify such a reading is to consider data analysis as somewhat like a literary critique in that I read data as though I am reading a novel. In literary critique, texts are read closely, carefully, for the nuances and shifts within characters, settings, and articulations. I look for the ways that the participants' move toward and away from questions I ask. I investigate the thematic connections between narrated events about the past as they get closer in temporal proximity. Kristeva (1995) describes

the way novelistic fiction works. "As an imaginary activity, novelistic fiction makes use of the codes of representation and the available ideologies that screen individual fantasies" (pg. 137), and because I am reading the data as such a novelistic endeavor, I can view such data as a source for looking at these "codes of representation". These codes represent the ways we speak, act, and understand which after all, are the ways by which we enter into the world.

The Anxieties of Psychoanalytic Research and the Role of the Researcher

Within the postmodern turn in qualitative research a "crisis of representation" has been identified and elaborated in many ways. The crisis grows out of theories that identify truths as multiple and contingent, rather than singular and stable. This crisis has had significant impact on education research. The role to be played is one of creating a web of interpretation grounded in theory and couched with humility that data and locations could be read in any number of ways and yielding any number of conclusions. Britzman (2000) writes about the problematics of education research from a postructural perspective (in this case) but makes a call toward psychoanalysis as a possible theoretical injunction into the crisis of representation. She inquires:

> Are there ways to think the unthought of ethnographic narratives? That is, is there an ethnographic unconscious that marks its constitutive limits? Is there a knowledge that ethnography cannot tolerate knowing? (pg. 30).

In approaching such questions Britzman is calling forth psychoanalytic ideas to get at elusive phenomenon in ethnographic research. Such research projects are ultimately limited by the cacophony of voices and stances and the ability to tell only part of the story. While personifying ethnography – as constituted with its own unconscious – is a

dangerous endeavor (how does one personify a research design?) it points to several of the anxieties that I have dealt with and experienced in my own research design.

One of the most heavily felt anxieties I have experienced is that of maintaining an ethical practice in the generation and analyzing of data along with a desire to produce a "quality" product; one that is compelling, internally logical, and representative of the rich complexity that I experience as a student of teacher education, social studies education, and psychoanalytic theory. While I am not an analyst - although I am in an analytic training program - and I do not intend in any way for this study to be a means for psychoanalysis in any clinical fashion, I use psychoanalytic theory to explore the data collected in this qualitative study. In other words, I do not see myself as the participants' analyst. To maintain this ethical stand, I have returned my analysis of participants statements for their comments, several of which I include in subsequent chapters in helping me further illuminate their narrations.

A second anxiety I experience relates to the claims I make about the data. It is not as though I feel they are irresponsible, my worry is that they are felt by the participants to be "wrong" or "off base". In psychoanalysis the claims are – I feel – much more dangerous than those that are made in, for example, a critical discourse analysis. There, the connections being made, while rooted in participants' comments, are to large systems and societal operations and processes. While a participant might disagree with a researcher's conclusion, it is not an immediately personal topic. In psychoanalysis, and despite the ways that we are all socially influenced products of the languages, discourses, and symbolic structures that essentially "speak us" (Zizek, 1998), the analyses that I draw are, I worry, felt in rather uniquely personal ways, as I am

making connections about participants' recollections of their childhood with the stories they tell about difficult knowledge as well as their own teaching practice. This is a second reason why I have chosen to return this writing to the participants for their comments and that I have included – also as data – in the chapters. In many ways this research practice follows the work of Segall's "second text" and draws further inspiration from Lather & Smithies' "Troubling the Angels" (1997).

Further, as the "crisis of representation" gets taken up in education research and interpretive research proliferates along those fault lines produced by this crisis, attention to criteria of responsibility, ethics, and quality become necessary sources of anxiety for researchers, lest we fall into an "anything goes" morass of relativism. These anxieties do not indicate doing something inappropriate or wrong, rather they serve as a continuous call to attention that I, in the position of the researcher, am taking appropriate measures to maintain high ethical integrity in serving the purposes of qualitative research, which is "not to confirm or disconfirm earlier findings, but rather to contribute to a process of continuous revision and enrichment of understanding of the experience or form of action under study" (Elliot, Fisher, and Reney, 1994 cf. Lincoln, 2002. pg. 31). Lincoln (2002) takes up this issue and identifies criteria for these emerging forms of qualitative research. Here, I use several of these criteria to elaborate my own research positions as I develop and utilize a rather novel research methodology. For while psychoanalytic theory has, as shown in Chapter 1, contributed in significant ways to education theory and teacher education, there is very little in the way of qualitative research studies that merge psychoanalytic theory with empirical data (for notable exceptions, see Atwell-Vasey, 1998; Pitt and Britzman, 2003; Pitt, 2004).

The first of these criteria upon which I will elaborate identifies the "community as arbiter of quality" (Lincoln, 2002, pg. 334). Because research is written for an (or a few) academic or intellectual community(ies), it is imperative that those communities become involved in the evaluation of what might count as quality research. In a doctoral program, such as the one for which this dissertation serves as culminating body of work, there are built in community "checks", most notably the dissertation committee. In my case, though, my committee members are experts in fields of teacher education, social studies education, and philosophies of education. They have varying degrees of interest in psychoanalytic theories and the ways that those might be brought to bear on education research, teacher education, and social studies education.

Therefore, I sought out expertise and more formal training within the field of psychoanalysis. In addition to my position as doctoral candidate at Michigan State University, I am also an academic fellow at the Michigan Psychoanalytic Institute. As part of this fellowship I am matched with a psychoanalytic "mentor" who helps read through my work and help me with the more nuanced aspects of the theory that I am deploying within my writing. While my committee members would certainly be able to identify problems with the degree to which my conclusions are structured well, logical, plausible, and internally persuasive, I still might be able to misinterpret and incorrectly implement a psychoanalytic concept. The purpose of having the psychoanalytic mentor is my attempt to adhere to making sure the community is as best an arbiter of the quality of the study as possible. The experience at the Michigan Psychoanalytic Institute has also allowed me the opportunity to enter my own analysis, a topic I visit in more detail below.

Two other related criteria that Lincoln identifies are that of "reciprocity" and "sacredness" (pg. 337). The idea of reciprocity holds that research must articulate the ways that both the researcher and the participants constitute the terrain of the study and acknowledge that research should be mutually beneficial and reflect the ideal that high quality qualitative research is built on trusting relationships. As this chapter moves forward, and I introduce readers to those individuals who serve as the research participants in this dissertation, I discuss how I invited several of these people due to my desire to speak further with them. Without being too presumptuous about their feelings about me as their instructor (some for two school years) I have a feeling that these desires were reciprocal, and that the conversations we had – about teaching, learning, and the constituent parts of their experiences with difficult knowledge – were meaningful in ways that transcended the purposes of research. In turn, the "sacredness" discussed by Lincoln is reflected in this mutual respect and, if I may, admiration for each other.

Part Two: Methods

Components of the Study

There are five components to this study. The most substantial components, those around which the bulk of this dissertation is organized, were a visit to a Holocaust museum, a viewing of a documentary film about the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, and a discussion about participants' teaching of difficult knowledge. I will discuss these shortly. The other two components, observations of a social studies methods course and interviews eliciting participants' personal histories, largely serve as foundational experiences for my further analysis and thinking about the latter three.

I solicited participation from individuals who were at different stages in the teacher preparation program. I invited participants from the observed methods class as well as students who had just completed their internship. The reason why is that I was looking for different kinds of interactions in large group settings (the methods course), small group settings (the museum visit) and individual settings (one on one interviews). These different interactions were designed as part of the study because difficult knowledge is experienced, articulated, incorporated, or rejected in different ways based on the different positions and places occupied. Further, the use of participants from various stages of the teacher preparation program could allow for patterns to emerge across the entirety of it.

I chose these multiple settings (the methods class, small group interviews, individual interviews) and methodological set-ups (interview, autobiography, various

media text presentations) in order to place myself and participants in situations that generated encounters with difficult knowledge in ways that are congruent with the theoretical frame. First, observing a classroom allowed me to investigate how engaging with difficult knowledge works in larger group settings and to theorize the implications and consequences of such interactions. Next, in the focus groups and individual interviews, I added in autobiographical prompts to encounter in a different, more intimate setting, the content of the methods course, the experience of student-teaching, and the ways in which difficult knowledge is experienced and made sense of (or not).

All of the participants we will meet in this study are white, middle to upper middle class students who were either enrolled in the methods course that I was observing for this study or had just completed their year long internship program. The two participants from the methods course – Lynn and Patty -- were the only volunteers from that course who consistently were interested in continuing our conversations. By that I mean that they responded to emails, went out of their way to schedule meetings with me, and seemed genuinely interested in the conversations. There were other volunteers, but throughout the semester they became less and less responsive.

The other four people, Grace, George, Ben, and Eva had just completed their internship and were students in a different methods course than Lynn and Patty, one for which I served as instructor. Grace and Eva were students of mine the year before as well. Because I was their instructor and therefore had an established relationship with these students, I invited them to participate in the study personally. That is, I did not extend a population-wide invitation for people to volunteer. Instead, these four individuals were invited for reasons revolving around what I noticed to be a willingness

to engage and be thoughtful about issues that I would be asking them about in this study. And, in full (or partial) disclosure, these are individuals whom, for one reason or another, I admired and/or by whom I was intrigued. In short, I wanted to speak with them further.

What I have to come to find out through the analysis of their statements in our interviews is that what initially attracted me to these individuals, what compelled me to ask for their continued generosity of thought, emotion, and time, does not necessarily make for "good" data. I mean here to acknowledge that my choice of participants might be seen as "stacking the deck" – I hand picked my participants because I thought they would be willing and helpful – but that despite the intention to do so (I fully admit this), these people (all people) are sufficiently complex that these attempts, I now see, were thwarted.

There are, however, reasons to have made such invitations. For Lynn and Patty, I had observed them over the duration of the semester. I had observed them in their methods course. We had several interviews where we got to know, and become comfortable, with one another as our relationships developed. With the four students I invited, though, I had already developed what I felt were sufficient relationships to move directly into discussions of difficult knowledge. Because they had just completed their internship program, and because I waited until I was no longer their instructor to begin their participation in this study, we did not have time to forge those relationships anew. They were, after all, done with their teacher preparation program and preparing to move to begin teaching jobs. As I introduce each of the participants individually, I will provide brief biographical information as well as a basis to begin my elaboration.

I met with Lynn and Patty three times during the spring semester of 2009 in one on one interviews, and once in a meeting where the three of us were all present at the Holocaust museum. With George, Ben, Eva, and Grace I had an in depth interview, an individual interview about their viewing of *When the Levees Broke*, and a group meeting at the Holocaust museum - a separate visit from the one I had with Lynn and Patty. Finally, in the spring semester of 2010 I conducted a final interview with each of the participants to discuss the participants' experiences with teaching difficult knowledge. In this interview I did not interview Grace because she had left the field of teaching.

I. Observations of the Methods Class

The purpose of these observations, which took place during each class meeting during the spring semester of 2009, was to generate data from settings in which a large number of people are involved in discourse. According to a copy of the syllabus that I attained from the instructor, students in the methods class are asked to read several texts that offer engagement with difficult knowledge. Many of them are related to the Holocaust and at the outset of the study I was focused on their reading and discussion of Eli Wiesel's Night. The students in the class also participated in "literature circles" where they discuss common texts that relate to the Holocaust.

While these discussions and literature circles are locations within the course where difficult knowledge is rather explicitly dealt with, there were reasons for observing the class throughout the semester. First, these students were also discussing their field placements, where they observe practicing social studies teachers as well as

teach lessons that they have designed. It is my guess, based on experience both as a pre-service student and as a course instructor, that issues related to difficult knowledge do not just result from the syllabus or specific lesson plans. They come up in surprising and unexpected ways and unforeseen times. Any time issues of race, class, gender, global poverty, or representation (to name a few) arise in the context of the methods course there are opportunities to read these discussions within the theoretical framework described above. I took field notes that focus on the interpretations and associations that I made as I observed.

In the end, though, this study does not draw directly from these observations. That is, the observations do not directly inform the dissertation. What I came to realize is that in order to do the kinds of things I felt important for the study I needed to be in more intimate settings than a full classroom would offer. I needed to be able to ask direct questions. The data that "counts" in a psychoanalytic study, I came to recognize, is best elicited by questions, responses, and in conversation comprised of two people (or at the very least in small groups) rather than observation.

II. Contextualizing Individuals by Eliciting Personal Histories

With this being the case, then, I began to interview the participants from the methods course in an individual setting. I was able to have several of these conversations with Lynn and Patty over the course of the semester. These interviews took place in Erickson Hall meeting rooms, each lasting between 45 and 90 minutes in length[3]. In these first

[3] The other four participants, those with whom I had worked during their internship year, discussed their personal histories before our interviews about the documentary film.

interviews – those that occurred "before" any of the encounters with difficult knowledge that I had set up - I asked participants to talk about their personal history with topics related to difficult knowledge. Autobiographical speaking was used to generate further questions in subsequent interviews. I was able to connect these questions to individual participants' articulations about the texts with which we interacted later (Pitt, 2003). I inquired about memories of their encounters with, reflections about, and their current thinking on traumatic topics. For example, participants spoke about how they came to learn about the Holocaust, or racism, or other instances of genocide and what they remembered thinking and feeling around those topics. I encouraged them to talk not only about their introduction to these topics but also about their current thinking about them. The use of autobiography here is intended to open conversations in the subsequent interviews and will also be used as analyzable narratives in and of themselves. Autobiography is not used as a direct representation for participants' thoughts about their lives (other than when I used their voices to introduce them), but rather as metaphors for it (Atwell-Vasey, 1998; Salvio, 2007).

As I spoke with these participants about their own personal histories, and as I went back to look at these histories as data that connected to what they spoke about as they toured a Holocaust museum or reflected on a film that I asked them to view, these recollections became foundational for establishing patterns and themes for each of the individuals.

III. The Museum Visit and Interviews

I had not visited the Holocaust Museum and Memorial in Farmington Hills, MI before the two separate occasions with two groups of participants for this dissertation study. The first visit was with Eva, Grace, Ben, and George. On that occasion I drove down with Eva and George, meeting Grace and Ben in the parking lot. The second was with Patty and Lynn, who drove together and met me in the parking lot.

After we arrived but before we entered the museum I asked the participants to write about their expectations, feelings, excitements, anxieties, or anything else they chose. The purpose of this exercise was to generate data that allowed me to understand the frames of mind with which participants entered the experience. Second, we toured the museum. Rather than give directions as to how participants should or should not engage with it, I asked them to take notes while they toured the museum in any way they felt appropriate. Third, when all participants were finished with their museum visit, we had a group conversation about reactions to the museum exhibition and a Holocaust survivor, the notes that each of them took, and other thoughts they had as they reflected on their time in the museum. We held these conversations in meeting rooms on site at the museum, with museum personnel having given me permission to use these spaces. Finally, two weeks after this visit and discussion, I returned a transcript of the discussion to each participant and encouraged them to make comments on it.

IV. The Film Viewing and Interviews

As a basis for this component, I had participants view *When the Levees Broke*, a documentary film directed by Spike Lee about the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans. It is a contemporary example of social/historical trauma that has potential

to foster dialogue about how individuals fit into society. It also has the potential to highlight the difficulties of social studies education: choosing what information to include for students, how this information should be presented, and the goals of such presentation. These dilemmas becoming increasingly complicated for the issues – injustice, death, racism – that are brought to light in this film.

I set out to ask students about their reactions to the film, focusing on their affective responses. I provided copies of the film for them to watch on their own. Before we met for the interviews, I asked participants to select two or three short clips from the documentary film that they wished to discuss. After viewing their choices as an opening into the conversation, I asked the participants to talk about not only how this film impacts how they think about what it means to be a social studies teacher, but also about their own personal reactions to difficult knowledge.

V. *The teaching interview*

In the prior two components – the museum visit and film viewing - I looked for how participants personally respond to them and compared that to how they imagine (or not) engaging their own students with such information. In other words, I asked how the participants allow (or imagine allowing) their encounter with difficult knowledge to become pedagogical. Still, the focus was specifically on those topics. Therefore, at the end of this study I decided to conduct a final round of interviews with each of the participants that focused exclusively on their teaching of difficult knowledge.

These interviews lasted around an hour. I met with Lynn, Patty, Ben, and George in local coffee shops and because Eva had moved out of the state we conducted

that interview over the telephone. I did not conduct this part of the study with Grace because she left the teaching profession. This was the most direct of all of the interviews. Where in the other interviews I allowed the conversations to meander and move, where I was willing to let the participants talk cross topics, in this interview I wanted to focus specifically on times when difficult knowledge came up in their teaching. While I did not have an interview protocol *per-se*, I did have clear topics in mind for these interviews: asking them about difficult knowledge generally, about times when controversy arose in their teaching, and times when emotions "ran high" in their teaching (either theirs or their students', or both).

Data Analysis, Coding, and Selecting Themes

I recorded each of the interviews as .mp3 files and transcribed them. While transcribing these interviews I would write brief analytic memos using the "comments" tool in Microsoft Word. After the transcriptions were complete I went back through each and added more to these comments as well as creating additional ones.

As I wrote in the methodology section, I think about the analysis of the data as shining a psychoanalytic light through the affective plume arising from an encounter with difficult knowledge. The metaphorical projectiles in this study are the broad topics that serve to structure the three chapters that follow. In other words, there is a chapter examining the experiences of the Holocaust museum, one about the film viewing, and another structured around their conversation about teaching difficult knowledge. There were, of course, alternative ways to structure the dissertation, ways that were more "thematic" in nature, but also posed the danger of focusing the study more on

psychoanalysis and less about social studies teacher education. The reason why I chose to structure the work the way that I have is because it allows me to focus on what I find to be topics specific to social studies: race, class, gender, genocide, and teaching difficult knowledge

The theoretical constructs that guide the analysis are the psychoanalytic terms that I detailed in the first chapter (the unconscious, the symbolic chain, trauma, transference, and ego defense mechanisms). The "coding" of the data was a process undertaken to investigate the evidence of these various ideas. I thought about coding as a series of several thought experiments. In other words, as I read and re-read the transcripts, I would do so holding one or two of the psychoanalytic processes in mind, investigating for ways that they either emerged or seemed distant, all the while trying to think about how a chapter utilizing those constructs would "work". The writing, then, was marked by a series of starts and stops, experimenting with framing their experiences around and through these various concepts. Through these thought experiments, the themes that structure the chapters emerged.

Introduction of the Participants

In order to introduce the participants of the study I will do two things. First, I will include their own introductions that I solicited from them (only George did not respond to this request). I will follow these with my own introductions of them.

Lynn

I'm a 26-year-old post-BA student. I'm from a small town in northern Michigan and went to Catholic school for 13 years. I achieved my BA in History from MSU in 2005 and then moved to Hawaii for a year and a half to work as a tour guide on the Battleship Missouri in Pearl Harbor. It was there I realized

that I wanted to teach and began making plans to move back to Michigan to continue my education at MSU.

Currently I'm interning at Williamston Middle School. My minor was English, so in addition to teaching Geography to 7th graders, I also teach English occasionally. As my lead teach starts, I will be teaching one English class and two Geography classes (3 of the 4 total classes we teach a day).

My goals as a social studies teacher include creating a deeper awareness of the different cultures and countries in the world. I also want my students to begin thinking more critically about wealth distribution, differences between countries, inequities within nations, and potential solutions to some of the bigger issues that plague the world (energy prices, resources, water issues, poverty, immigration, etc).

Until my internship year, I hadn't loved my teacher education program. While I have made some really good friends throughout the classes, I never really felt like I had a good idea about what I was supposed to "do" every day as a teacher. There were so many unanswered questions, and questions that really can't be answered outside of actually teaching. I also really had no idea how much work and how HARD teaching really is. I got some sense of that when I did my lessons for 407 and 408, but there's nothing like doing it every day and facing the daily challenges and realities of teaching in a classroom. This year has been incredibly eye-opening and rewarding. I have learned so much more about teaching - practical strategies, challenges that arise, parental involvement, importance of building relationships, importance of knowing my teaching "philosophy", honing my teaching style, getting comfortable with wait time, asking follow up questions, playing devils' advocate, etc. I really feel like this year I have learned "how" to be a teacher - and am still learning. While I think the assessments in our 803 and 804 classes are important things that all reflective teachers should do, I can't help but feel incredibly overwhelmed and feel like some of it is busy work. I also have a hard time finding that balance between doing my personal best and being the best teacher I can. I feel like my kids deserve me at my best and that always gets the most energy. At the end of the day, there's only so many hours I can work and devote to school, so sometimes the MSU stuff doesn't get the priority I'd like to give it in an ideal world. So that's frustrating.

I'm not really sure why I agreed to be part of the study. Originally I thought it was just going to be about the Holocaust, and that's something I'm really interested in, so I agreed to sign up. Once I got into it, I thought it was a really interesting spin on focusing how loss has affected teaching, especially about difficult topics. That's something I struggle with in teaching 7th graders. They are so egocentric, which isn't necessarily their fault, but it's hard to convey to students that life is not easy and sometimes difficult and painful things happen to people. It's hard to convey that sympathy to students - most of whom have never had something tragic happen to them.

Lynn was a member of the social studies methods course that I observed during this study and she volunteered to be a more involved participant. She had graduated from the same university two years before returning as a post-baccalaureate teacher candidate. In the time between graduating and returning to pursue her social studies teaching certificate she worked as a museum guide in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Although a self described "history dork", she did not necessarily always want to be a teacher and elaborated on her eventual reasoning to become a teacher:

I realized that I liked standing in front of people and telling them things I know about, and I also realized that people are really ignorant about our own history and that was very sad to me. Maybe it's because I

was raised in a small town with traditional beliefs but I really feel like people have to have love of country and know your...what your government does, your basic rights as citizens.

The above statement implies and alludes to a pedagogical motive of the instillation of a sense of "love for country". In various interview settings, Lynn was often speaking in terms of military servicemen and servicewomen: for them, about them, and in their defense. She explained her connection to the military through familial as well as professional ties. For example, in a discussion about interrogation techniques, or torture, I noted that she was speaking about people who served in the military monolithically. All soldiers, she seemed to be saying, feel that what happens in places like Abu Ghirab and Guantanemo Bay are, while not pleasant, acceptable and necessary. I asked her about whether or not she was comfortable with such generalizations.

Yeah I guess so. I mean yeah there are dissenters who got in so they could get their free education and then leave, or whatever. But I mean, having lived in Hawaii, I worked on a military base and spoke to lots of military people and 98% of them agreed with the war. And they wanted to be a good soldier and wanted to be a good sailor. So I can pretty accurately say that they support what is going on.

This strong identification, the apparent certainty with which Lynn could speak about these issues is characteristic of much of her articulations about most topics. There was very little room for ambiguity during these first interviews. Where room was open for interpretation, as we will see when we find Lynn in search for how to teach the Holocaust, she is looking for more certainty and definition.

It was apparent immediately that Lynn did not find the teacher education program to be of value to her. I find it interesting that in her own introduction she seems to have been affected by some of her experiences learning to teach during the internship year. In our interviews, she would often critique the courses, the instructors, and the political leanings of the program as being irrelevant to her practice as a social studies teacher. Most of the time her critiques were sarcastic in nature, although in

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separate occasions she felt singled out in class in personal ways and in those cases was serious and direct in expressing her concerns. Despite our political differences – which are many – Lynn was generous with her time and thoughts. In particular, she was open about a family tragedy in which her brother died in a motorcycle accident. I asked her to write about this incident, and she agreed to do so. I include here a lengthy excerpt from that piece of writing:

> As the two-year "anniversary" approaches, I find myself becoming more and more melancholy and listless. I miss him so much sometimes it hurts so much I don't know how I can go on. He was my only sibling and we went through a lot together when we were growing up. My dad was an alcoholic (he's since quit), but Tony always stood up for me and took the brunt of my dad's anger and frustration. I always said "I love you" whenever we hung up the phone, so I know that was the last thing we said to each other, but it still hurts. So, his death put a lot of things in perspective for me. I realized life is too short to take for granted. That's why I always try to be nice to people because you really never know what kind of battle he or she is fighting. Now I know that those who mean the most to us and the ones we think will always be there can be snatched from us in an instant. I have a lot of anger...at the motorcycle dealership, at the circumstance, that I never got to say goodbye, that I have to live the rest of my life without my big brother by my side. I think about all the things and events in my life for which Tony will never physically be a part of. I feel cheated. And it is certainly not fair.

The reason why I find this to be an important section of Lynn's writing to include when introducing her is because of the ways in which anger and frustration play a role in many of our conversations: about the teacher education program and its personnel, the films we viewed, and topics I brought up for conversation. These frustrations and places of anger, in this study, are thought of and theorized as being related in fundamental ways, as I will discuss as we get to know Lynn further. She was always generous with her time and willing to engage controversial issues despite our obvious disagreements about them.

Patty

Patty's Introduction:

My name is [Patty]. I graduated in 2008 from Kalamazoo College with a BA in History and an American Studies concentration. I am now in the midst of my second (and last!) year at Michigan State University getting my teacher certification. While here, I also received an English minor and Social Studies endorsement. As a student teacher I am currently teaching 10th grade World History, and it has been quite the experience, both positive and negative. I feel that I have been spending a lot of time trying to figure out what I want out of my position as a social studies teacher, and often coming up with more questions than answers. An ultimate goal of mine is to be the kind of teacher I loved in middle and high school, but the struggle comes with trying to figure out who that is while remaining true to myself. I want to help students learn to love the social studies the way I do, but this early on in my experiences, which is a goal that still alludes me. Thus far I have been taking my teaching (and my self-reflection) one day at a time. I think I have yet to figure out who I am as a teacher and what precisely I want students and myself to get out of my experience as a teacher, but it is a fun--if exhausting--adventure to be on!

Patty grew up in an affluent suburb of a large post-industrial town. She received her undergraduate degree from a smaller liberal arts college before being accepted as a post-baccalaureate teacher education student in the program that housed this study. An extremely bright and intellectually curious person, Patty has had a number of international experiences during her undergraduate education. Her recollections, as she described in our first interview, of schooling are strikingly positive and relatively unique in tone, particularly as it relates to issues of equity and social justice.

I stared out in public school and in 3rd grade started in an experimental school, not religiously affiliated but it has a Jewish slant because it was founded by Holocaust survivors. It had a focus on social progress and social justice so a lot of my views I really recognize that I'm a product of my schools. So I think of teaching as a way of thinking about social conflict and peace and stuff like that.

As a student in the methods course, she was a thoughtful participant at all times, and seemed to be more invested in the course content than many of the other students. While many of the students would talk about their social lives or other classes during small group time, Patty was generally on task and working on the assigned prompts. She was self-aware of this trend as well. She would remark to me that while many of her classmates would bemoan readings, discussions, or assignments, she did them gladly and found them helpful in her thinking.

A great deal of the time we spent in our interview settings – those that weren't related to the museum visit or the film we viewed - revolved around two issues: teaching and learning about the Holocaust and about her study abroad experience to Spain as an undergraduate student at a nearby university. Patty, being Jewish and attending a Jewish private school, was exposed to learning about the Holocaust at an early age. She recalls the difficulty of learning about this genocide in light of having to read the book Night once again as part of the methods course:

I wasn't ever looking forward to this section. I really have trouble with Night. I find it an incredibly difficult book to read. I don't like even opening it and looking at the words on the page if that makes sense. It's the one book...and when I found out at the beginning of the year that we'd be reading Night together I was like, "could we have picked something else? Anything else?"

I just find it the most painful book to read ever. I find it so sad. And I read it when I was too young to have read it for the first time, so I feel like I was a little scarred by that. I remember being...I was in fifth or sixth grade. And in the first like thirty pages he talks about men throwing babies up and using them as target practice. And I was just shattered. So I have bad associations with the first couple of times reading it.

But I think...I thought about this actually. I was talking about this with my boyfriend. And I was bawling the whole way through it. I think I put myself into it, and I put my father into it as his father, and it's just like, I don't know I can't even read it. So every time I open the book I think of my own father suffering.

What I learned about Patty because of insights such as those above is that she is able to articulate a sense of her struggles with knowledge, and in particular with the difficult knowledge of learning about the Holocaust. She speculated that her trouble with the Holocaust was related to her own Jewish heritage. Since we can never untangle our pasts with the views we hold of the present, this speculation is not arguable, but it is worth recognizing these connections and patterns, particularly when individuals recognize them in themselves.

Further, what Patty demonstrates here is her ability to articulate the ways she experiences learning in terms of first person affect, which is to say she recognizes and

puts language to the emotional aspects of learning – at least about this particular topic of learning.

George

George was a member of a social studies methods course I taught during his internship experience. In class he was mostly quiet, but his contributions were thoughtful and insightful, in that his contributions would often arise out of frustrations with other classmates dismissing an opinion or wanting too quickly a "practical implication" of a topic of conversation. Or, as he explains:

> And so I get frustrated when I see people in my classes who are really against what is being...they might take offense to what is being said in the classroom, and taking offense at the ideas and make it more personal. Whereas I try to internalize it and struggle with it internally. So I genuinely think I've become a better human being out of the social studies program here. That's why I really appreciate it because I feel I've seen evidence that when people have strong convictions and they are presented with evidence that is to the contrary their convictions harden because they get defensive about it. And I feel, when I think about it, that wasn't the case with me. I really tried to play devil's advocate with my own thoughts.

George describes himself as a normal middle class child of working class parents. He grew up in the suburbs of a post-industrial metropolitan city, a child of a strict conservative father. George's childhood reminds me of the dominant national narrative of a romanticized neighborhood, as he made it sound as though he experienced it in rather idyllic ways. He discussed the ways that school always came very easily to him and enjoyed the entirety of his formal schooling experience. Since then, and through his education, he has come to see his growing up in this "small-town-next-to-a-big-town" as more problematic, an idea that I return to later.

As noted above, George was also forthcoming with a sense that the teacher education program had "made him a better human being", which is certainly not what I had come to expect to hear about the program over my five years working in it. He

referred several times to "the way MSU does social studies" and crediting such a stance with such bettering of his life. I will offer further interpretations later in the study about the line of reasoning that George used to support this claim. Curiously, though, he was vague when I asked him to explain why he wanted to be a social studies teacher:

So I could have gone any direction I wanted to...had a really good ACT score...but for whatever reason I just enjoyed social studies the most: geography and history...and the classes I took though did not have the mindset that MSU's social studies program takes: with making meaningful knowledge or critical thinking and that. I mean geography was OK...remember...make a map of Africa, here's what people in different African countries do. Remember the globe kind of thing. When I was in elementary school we had a computer game that had to do with geography and I remember I loved playing that game and remembered all the questions and answers and stuff. So that's what I remember the most.

George, who was to be married in the weeks after our series of interviews, would often refer back to his family history and his relationship with his fiancé to explain himself. We spent a great deal of time in our interviews discussing his views of his hometown, the way he sees it changing, and the way he thinks about race both in his hometown as well as in relation to society as a whole.

Ben

Ben's Introduction:

My name is Ben and I'm a lifelong learner who just finished the teacher education program at MSU with a major in history and a minor in religious studies. I'm not always sure why I decided to become a teacher but somehow my experiences led me to a career I have loved since the first day I entered a classroom with the intention of teaching it. I'm currently teaching World History and Western Civilization at Charlotte High School in mid-Michigan and working hard to contribute to the learning community of my school. I'm constantly trying to refine and address my goals but right now I define them as becoming a professional in my school and through learning networks, always keeping my teaching oriented toward the needs of my students, and establishing a big picture for where I want my students to be when they are done with my classes. I had a great experience with the program at Michigan State. I'm not sure I would have been ready for my current situation if not for the year-long internship and discipline-focused classes. I got involved in this study because it resonated with my goals and what I had been doing in my U.S. History classroom at the time with World War II. I was grateful for the experience because it allowed me to participate in something professional and academic outside of the classroom. Our work also pushed my own thinking further and I greatly enjoyed the opportunity to interact with social studies minded people whom I respect greatly. There was also a free meal.

Ben is an incredibly dynamic young teacher, and often would speak in this manner of widely disparate topics and subjects merging together in one short thought or phrase. I invited Ben to participate in this study because of his habit in class of getting incredibly upset with himself when he would come to realize a view that he held was one that he no longer wanted to hold. An example of this was when a guest speaker questioned and critiqued the way he conducted a lesson (that he was sharing in class at the time). The lesson had something to do with getting students to understand a conflict, and so he had students pretend that their classroom was one nation, and that the neighboring classroom was another, and then proceeded to personify the war in those terms. The guest's critique questioned the degree to which Ben actually wanted to simulate the murder and killing of the people in the next room. Ben, having not thought in these terms, was incredibly – visibly – upset. I thought his anger was directed toward the guest speaker. After class, I asked him if he was alright after telling him that I noticed he was upset. I was surprised to hear his strong *self*-criticism. This kind of willingness to engage and articulate himself in that type of situation was attractive to me for the purposes of this study, as he would be able, I thought, to think through difficult issues in similar ways.

Grace

Despite getting certified to teach, I decided not to go that direction for now, if ever, always being more interested in broader education reform. In the meantime, I am doing a year of service with AmeriCorps VISTA, doing community outreach work for a youth philanthropy program called Penny Harvest. Through the program, youth in 65 Seattle area schools collect spare change (79k this year), then turn that money into grants for community based organizations and non-profits, based on problems they identify and want to address, such as homelessness, hunger, animal welfare and global warming.

What drew me to the program helps explain some of my goals in the field of social studies and education. For one, the program's focus on nurturing a relationship between youth and their communities, and a sense of empathy and agency toward those in need was encouraging. I feel that the values expressed in our education system currently are not only misguided but completely unjust in that they have socialized

us to treat many of our fellow human beings with at best disregard and at worst contempt and violence in any number of forms (verbal, discrimination, physical), through lack of direct education on issues of power, privilege and oppression. I'm bothered by the amount of unnecessary suffering an ethos of every man for himself has allowed and am therefore interested in using the education system to explore alternative ways of being, of treating one another and ourselves.

Secondly, the program focuses on getting to the root of a problem, as opposed to any number of its symptoms. This is huge. Too often in our society we focus on reacting to problems (for example donating to a homeless shelter) instead of working proactively to end them (asking why homelessness exists in the first place and then working to cut the problem off at its source through, perhaps, reformation of the countries housing policies). In summary, my goals in the field of social studies are to help encourage a new narrative for how human beings treat one another, themselves, their environments (etc), and in doing so, question the very societal structures, policies and modes of thinking that have perpetuated injustice for so long.

My thoughts about teacher education more generally, express the same frustration given my belief that the first priority of education should be to question the social systems that are keeping so many people poor, discriminated against, hungry, in pain etc. Therefore, those courses that dealt with education policy reform, asked questions regarding the purposes of education and how we are or are not meeting them, and discussed the disparities both present in the system itself and perpetuated by the outcomes of the system, were enlightening and enjoyable. I realize this is not only antithetical to what many educators believe about their field but that it's maybe even impossible to teach a hyper critique of policies and structures created by the same governmental institution through which the education system itself is structured. I'm not sure how you deal with that but I wish more people were trying.

I agreed to be a part of this study because there's a big part of me that enjoys struggling with philosophical dilemmas, and thinking about how society manifests itself based on what side of each philosophical dilemma a few people with power in that society have decided to come down. When it comes to such traumatic matters as homelessness, hunger, war (etc) there are huge philosophical debates happening there: Whether or not one life is more valuable than another, under what circumstances, if any, war is justifiable, whether those without dinner tonight have done something personally to deserve that... The way we answer these questions has a direct and tangible effect on all of us. I was interested to discuss how such decisions get made (often without seeming like "decisions" at all), and how the values that often (at least partially) cause traumatic events, get disseminated throughout a society.

Grace, one of the participants for whom I served as a course instructor for two years, was not a vocal participant in the courses I taught. Through her writing, though, as exemplified above, and completing of course assignments, she demonstrated an ethic of thinking that had to do with the ways in which thinking about teaching in terms of social justice – or teaching as a humanitarian effort – was often daunting and overwhelming, what are also adjectives that she might apply to her own history of learning:

I've always been really frustrated in school. I don't know when it started but I got this ...crisis of confidence I guess you could say. Like I never felt academically strong or anything like that. Which is bizarre really cuz my parents were always very supportive and read to me. I was in the environment

where you'd think I would thrive and have confidence in my abilities and things like that. But I don't know I never did. And I did fine...

In my academic experience with Grace, her work was exemplary. Her struggles, though, as we will see, did not have to do with ability but more to do with her feelings about what she was learning and, eventually, what and how she was teaching.

She grew up in a small urban setting north and east of the university where we shared a class. Her mother and father made a choice to locate the family in an urban setting rather than "out in the township" because they wanted their children to see "reality in the world." While Grace discussed the ways that growing up in that particular place was frustrating, she seemed to recognize that her parents choices – not the least of which was the location they chose to live – influenced her in mostly positive ways.

Early in the first year that I worked with Grace, she lost her mother to cancer. During our conversations her mother would come up often. Just as often, I would sense that Grace, while speaking about something or someone else, would be thinking about her mother. Sometimes, as you will see, I ask her about my impressions and at others I do not. As it relates to this study, then, Grace taught me a lot about what it means to tolerate what is perhaps the most difficult of knowledge.

Eva

I have always enjoyed being a student. In my undergraduate and graduate education I became fascinated with the construction of knowledge and the construction of relationships between teacher and student, student and student, and student and world. I am a 2008 graduate of Michigan State University and after spending my student teaching in a small rural community in Michigan I took my first teaching job in a suburban/urban district in Lexington, Kentucky. I am teaching ancient world history to 7th grade students this year. Ancient history seems so distant for my students and so with each part of my core content of studies I have to stop and think about what does this mean to my students, and how can I teach them in a way that is meaningful and encourages them to question the world in which they live today. Most of my students believe that their lives are completely unaffected by the world around them, so my goal is to make past and present connections for my students and to also encourage them to think about where their history comes from and how that affects what they know.

I agreed to be a part of the study to see what a doctoral study was like and I also thought it would be interesting to see you focus. I thought the experience, in Jim Garrett fashion, was fabulously difficult, and uncomfortable and it definitely made me think about how we and my students may experience shock and trauma differently.

For further introduction, I recall the first meeting I had with Eva during her senior year. She was talking to me about her initial skepticism about whether or not she wanted to continue in the teacher education program. She then talked about her first practice teaching experience and how she then thought she was beginning to fall in love with teaching. This phrase has stuck with me ever since, as I had often thought about relationships with students, and between my interests and content, but I had not ever conceptualized a relationship with "teaching" itself in the way Eva did. Her contributions to class were generally variations on the theme of relationality, whereas her written work indicated a struggling through "bigger ideas" – like globalization, race, and postmodern society – as they related to teaching her eighth grade social studies students.

Eva grew up in a tourist town on Lake Michigan. In our interview conversation she recalled her childhood, particularly in schooling, as largely positive and laying the groundwork for her interest in social studies education, but in telling this also revealed interfamilial political dynamics that help to understand some of the issues that come up around her teaching:

I remember, [my hometown] is homogeneous. It's very community based, though. Everyone cares so much about their kids and their education and where they're going. School was...I mean I absolutely loved school. But I had a teacher, and this is probably why I teach history. I had a teacher in High School and I, my family is very conservative, at least my step-dad is. My mom? Because I've come out of my shell a little bit at home, my mom will be like, (whispers) "ohhh...don't tell your dad".

In this brief recollection, she communicates implicit concerns with race, pedagogy, political affiliation, and the degree to which she is comfortable to perform certain

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identities around her mother and step-father. These are issues that connect with themes that emerge with her more direct talking about teaching and issues of learning about social and historical trauma.

The risks involved – and those that evolved.

There is, of course, a possibility that in these exercises and conversations students will disclose their own histories with trauma. While this may be uncomfortable for them to write and difficult for them to discuss, I offer safeguards against harm coming to participants due to their participation. One safeguard is the confidentiality measures I have undertaken as part of the data gathering and analysis process that include using no identifiers of individuals. Data has been, and continues to be, stored on a password protected computer or locked the principal investigator's office. A second safeguard rests in the diligence I used to keep these interviews focused on the connections of the participants' offerings – no matter how personal to their thoughts about teaching social studies concepts/content. This, at times, was difficult. And, at times, I was not able to make such connections. Significant, troubling, and sad testimony was offered regarding personal traumas by several of the participants. There was never a requirement that any participant disclosed anything with which they were uncomfortable. Most frequently, they offered these personal histories without my prompting.

Finally, to increase my fluency in psychoanalytic theory, I applied – and was accepted – to the Michigan Psychoanalytic Institute (MPI) first as an academic fellow and now as an early entry academic candidate. This position is designed for people working in academic fields to be provided a mentor who serves, in my case, as an

expert in psychoanalytic theory. We attend courses in psychoanalytic training. In most cases, we will take all of the courses that clinical students take and only forego the clinical hours that those individuals complete to get their clinical degrees. The work I have done thus far through the MPI has been a theoretical (and personal) benefit to this dissertation study.

I am committed to using these complex theoretical constructs in the most responsible ways possible. Along these lines, there is a steadfast rule that every clinical (and all academic candidates) analyst must undergo their own psychoanalytic treatment as part of their training. While I am not, as I have already stated, psychoanalyzing people (rather, it is data) in this study, I have undertaken my own personal analysis in lines with the requirements of the academic candidate program to further attempt to engage these topics with the utmost attention to ethical considerations.

Prelude to Chapter 3:
The Holocaust and Museums

In Chapter three you will read about the six participants' reactions to a visit to a Holocaust memorial and museum near Detroit, MI. The focus of the dissertation is not about the Holocaust, although it is an area in which I am interested. In a broad sense, my interest in the Holocaust is driven by the ways that it serves as a Rorschach blot in which any number of narratives, ideologies, and opinions are projected onto it, are appropriated by it, or overtake it. That is, I wonder about how the Holocaust is appropriated by popular culture, by philosophy, film, theater, poetry, and, of course, psychoanalysis and social studies education. The very notion of "difficult knowledge" is itself inaugurated by Britzman (1998) in relation to the problem of interpreting and reading a Holocaust text: Anne Frank's diary. The same thing happens with the Holocaust generally. In other words, whatever a person's working – or even lay – theory about the world, the Holocaust can and often is appropriated. How else can we explain both George W. Bush *and* Barack Obama being compared to Hitler? Odd indeed.

Of course there is no "one good way" to teach and learn the Holocaust. Indeed, there are hundreds of Holocaust Studies centers, departments, and organizations that devote vast resources to developing a great variety of curricula intending to address this topic. One way to teach it is to use the "grand narrative", what Seixas (1997) calls the best story approach, through which most history curricula operates, and in which the Holocaust is taken up in a fashion concerned with dates, names, and places. It would introduce the students to the numbers: of Jews, of concentration camps, of furnaces, of graves, of the dead and of events and dates occurring between 1939 and 1945. One

discourse, that of chronological, linear history, devours another, that of the Holocaust. It turns the experiences of victims and their families – for one example – into a traditional history.

The Holocaust is indeed brought up in schools in a variety of ways, though often in this manner of the "best story". There are hundreds of curricular units available on as many websites, but there are ways that such curricula avoid the Holocaust's attendant issues in order to serve any variety of separate pedagogical intents. Britzman (2000) writes that a study of Anne Frank's diary might be used to become attendant to the profound senses of trauma and loss that are part and parcel to an encounter with these issues. She claims that potential purposes and consequences of reading and learning such a terrible history begin with students' opportunities

> To make from the diary new meanings in their own lives; to become attentive to profound suffering and social aggression in their own time; to begin to understand the structures that sustain aggression and hatred; and to consider how the very question of vulnerability, despair, and profound loss must become central to our own conceptualizations of who we each are, not just in terms of reading the diary as a text but also in allowing the diary to invoke the interest in the work of becoming an ethical subject. (pg. 47)

What Britzman maintains, though, is that the diary is most frequently read without sufficient context and instead individualizes the story into one of an adolescent girl separated off from the broader contexts of anti-Semitism or even the concentration camps that awaited Anne Frank. Here again, discourses of adolescent identity, narrative writing, and individual stories take a driver's seat in determining the ways that students are positioned to experience the events of the Holocaust. When the Holocaust is reduced to the numbers and dates, does this same thing happen? Are we looking at the

Holocaust without really doing so?

Schweber (2000) demonstrates the ways that the Holocaust is taken up in different narratives by elaborating on the study of the Holocaust in a private Christian school. She uses the Holocaust as a site to investigate the experiences in pedagogical situations with "abstracted others"; in this case fundamentalist Christian students learning about Jews in the Holocaust. She writes

> Over the last few decades, the Holocaust has become a dominant metaphor, a cultural touchstone and a moral reference point for widely disparate groups (Novick, 1999), each of which employs the Holocaust toward radically different end. The Holocaust has thus become or shown itself to be eminently flexible, its meaning determined by its contexts. Such plasticity provided a rich venue through which to study students' religiously influenced perceptions. The teaching of the Holocaust, in other words, formed the vehicle through which to study the inculcation of collective memory. (pg. 1695)

Schweber's study recognizes the ways the Holocaust is taken up into various narratives and contexts. The study is about the ways other people take the Holocaust narrative up into their already existing world views, but it is also an example of the Holocaust being taken up into academic discourses as well. Schweber acknowledges the Holocaust to be sufficiently flexible to do just that. In the chapter ahead, the Holocaust serves a similar function. While it is "about" the Holocaust it is also "about" some fundamental processes at work in all spaces of learning. The Holocaust – and in a specific instance of a visit to a Holocaust museum - is representative of the encounter that social studies teachers had with difficult knowledge and the ways that these already existing narratives, sometimes related to the Holocaust and sometimes outside of that topic, are enacted through the articulations of the social studies teachers who are the

participants in this study. These are issues that the more traditional ways of studying the Holocaust, as described above, might miss.

Museums

Museums are spaces where meanings are negotiated between viewer and exhibit; public places that are looked to for authoritative knowledge and meaning. Museums are invitations to come and look, ask questions, and find answers. From roots in empire building to their current status as places of learning and high culture, museums constitute a space outside the most common pedagogical setting: the classroom. That is, museums become a space separate from the classroom as we augment curriculum. Even though museums are extra-curricular from a certain view, they can also be considered as curricular in and of themselves. That is, museums are pedagogical in the ways that they construct a story for a viewer, invite certain understandings, and preclude others – just as any curriculum does. Also, each museum and/or social studies curriculum has implicit messages about how they consider the individual and the degree to which their histories, experiences, and expectations should be privileged parts of the encounter.

In an elaboration on the history of the public museum, Willinsky (1998) focuses on the ways that, in their origins, museums helped to structure the understandings of the public. They were pedagogical in the sense that they were teaching a justification of the imperial project. Objects, sometimes people, were displayed and explained so as to garner and maintain support for continuing foreign involvement. The history of the museum, in other words, is marked by a desire to train visitors in the habits of mind surrounding issues of how the individual fits into relationships with the state and the

world (pg. 65). It assumes a passive recipient of knowledge who comes to a museum or any pedagogical encounter without a "before". Such a view of museums, where visitors are passive recipients of this kind of message, is one that Willinsky himself notes has been challenged over time, as curators and architects deal with the same kinds of crises of representation that education researchers and theorists of all disciplines have struggled to accommodate during the "postmodern turn" in research and philosophical thought. Put most simply, such a consideration would suggest that there is more to the story of interaction between artifact and viewer than a simple transaction of information.

Instead, museums are places where meaning and identity become contested. For example, Trofanenko (2006) contends that museums should not "solely [be] a place to learn through objects, labels, exhibition notes, and curatorial expertise, but as an arena where questions of cultural production and knowledge-creation can, and should be, asked" (pg. 50). There should be, in other words, spaces and pedagogical design where museum visitors are asked to critically engage with the museum, asking questions of representation, voice and gaze. The purpose of such an encounter would be to allow those visitors an explicit opportunity to engage in issues of identity politics and national memory, hopefully to challenge the dominant narratives that underlie those practices that still seem to dominate the public imaginary about museums: that they are vessels of truth and authority. This kind of questioning makes use of the ways that social understanding is dependent upon issues of representation and implicated in relations of power.

If museums and curricula are to be considered as positioned in relations of

power, it is also the case that the individuals coming to these locations are similarly positioned; by their race, class, sexual preferences, and others. Those issues that predate the pedagogical encounter – what I will reference as the "befores" of learning – gain in importance. And it is not only curriculum theorists who are "in" on these kinds of conversations. Museums – their architects and curators - themselves seek to trouble the strange connections, imbued as they are with traces of power and influenced by the multiple and competing narratives that circulate through society, between history and the present, between exhibit and viewer. Citing but one example from my personal experience, the Red Location Museum – an Apartheid museum in Port Elizabeth, South Africa – does just that. The museum focus is not on providing the visitor with a coherent or linear narrative about the Apartheid, the violence associated with it, the struggle to overcome it, or the move toward democracy. It is instead a place of troubling the very notion of knowing Apartheid, its history, and its experience. As Steenkamp notes of the Red Location Museum, "The function of the museum is to offer a space in which the present can be negotiated and the future be imagined through formal representations that deal with the complexities of the past as a rich and diverse lived experience" (2006). It is, indeed, a place of troubling the very idea of what it means to "know" someone else's experience; to know history at all. It is worth quoting the Red Location Museum (http://www.freewebs.com/redlocationmuseum/index.htm) at length:

> Visitors are not treated as consumers but active participants. The conventions of representing history as a single story are challenged through the design of the Museum spaces. The past is represented as a set of memories that are disconnected yet bound together by themes. The concept of the Memory Box is used to

> achieve these ends. These boxes are inspired by the boxes that migrant workers used to accommodate their prized possessions when separated from their families. These memory boxes were highly treasured. The Museum comprises a series of 12 unmarked, rusted boxes offering a set of different memories of struggle in South Africa. The boxes are housed in the main exhibition space and each box is 6 meter by 6 meter and twelve meters tall. The contents of the boxes are revealed only on entry - there is no sequence - the contents and themes of the boxes are juxtaposed - the experience in each box is a total one. The spaces between the boxes are spaces of reflection - what Huyssen calls the twilight of memory.

The memory boxes dominate the used space in the main exhibition hall. They create a striking image. They are rusted corrugated metal and stand separate from one another in a strikingly large and otherwise empty space. While they represent the memory boxes that individuals would pack and take with them when displaced from their homes, they also remind the visitor of homes themselves, standing on their ends, as the homes within the Red Location are made from the same materials. The museum curators extend the idea of "difficult knowing" in that one can only enter them through a small entry way. One cannot see what they are "getting into". No process invites the visitor from one memory box to another, nor is there a suggestion as to how to experience – to reflect – in the "spaces of reflection" between them. But from what material do visitors instantiate this reflection? Might these reflections become refractions, bent through the prisms of understandings influenced by the confluences of personal and social histories? Museums like these acknowledge the messiness of the endeavor to understand history.

The Holocaust seems to be one of the messiest to understand. The Holocaust Museum can, in and of itself, be considered a subcategory of museums, as the last 25 years has seen a surge in the construction of, and attendance to, Holocaust museums. There are more than 100 Holocaust Memorials in the United Sates (Zaslow, 2003). Indeed, one of the issues always present in considering this type of museum is the curiousness of why so many Holocaust museums exist in the United States to begin with. What cultural assumptions are here? Why do Holocaust memorial and museums spring up like mushrooms in a place thousands of miles away from the site of their actuality? Why do we so readily appropriate this genocide and not that of the Native Americans or the effects of the slave trade? Is it because we might be more directly implicated in these latter examples in ways that we would rather avoid? What does our interest in the Holocaust mean? What might we be able to learn from the ways in which people interact with/in these spaces about who we are as a culture and what we might need to think about should the promise of Holocaust education – "never again" – be fulfilled? How is it that museums that deal with social and historical trauma "work" on, in, through us as we enter, encounter, and leave these spaces? This litany of questions is all to focus us on the idea that because there are so many of these spaces, it is worth considering some of the different ways that the "befores" of the encounter are considered and privileged as they relate to the pedagogical address of the museum.

Various Holocaust museums are set up pedagogically to include these "befores" and "afters" in different ways. Many, if not most, include areas that consider the Holocaust more traditionally. That is, there are exhibits, timelines, exhibits that are meant to be broadly informative about the "facts" of the Holocaust. Most also burn

eternal flames as personal places for reflection. The question then becomes: to what degree are these reflections a manifestation of what a person saw in the museum itself and how much of this reflection comes from someplace else? What tools do they have to view these images and representations? It is not as though anyone can come to a Holocaust museum without some predisposing "before", just as a U.S. History student cannot study the "opening" of the West without some baggage from the Hollywood western. Different curricular endeavors, as one would expect, treat these "befores" differently.

The United States Holocaust Memorial and Museum in Washington D.C., for example, asks the visitor, in essence, to leave "the self" behind upon their entry. That is, the visitor is given an identity to assume, a name of a Holocaust victim whose experiences the visitor follows. While impossible to separate the visitor's "self" from their given identity, such an invitation is provocative in that it assumes such an experience is desirable and affective as a person encounters representations of the Holocaust, particularly as it is read against the USHMM's mission statement inclusion of their desire for visitors "to reflect upon the moral and spiritual questions raised by the events of the Holocaust as well as their own responsibilities as citizens of a democracy" (www.ushmm.org). On one hand, then the visitor is given this "identity" as they enter the museum. On the other hand there is a concurrent, although implicit, assumption that the visitor will also bring their own views and psychic energies to their encounter. Ellsworth (2005) writes about the ways in which the visitor also must re-visit their experiences due to the ways in which the memorial foregoes the kinds of certainty and

finality that many expect in the comfort of the traditional museum/curricular narrative. She writes:

> By embracing the impossibility and undesirability of offering its visitors a fixed or knowable address within the constellation of meanings surrounding the Holocaust, the pedagogy of the exhibit opens the door onto the possibility of something else. It opens the door to the possibility, the paradoxical possibility, of a narrative without closure. (Ellsworth, 2005, pg. 104)

Because there is not a fixed narrative into which meaning can rest, the latent message of such a claim is that experiences are visited and revisited, but never can the narrative close. If the narrative cannot close, if meaning is meant to stay sufficiently unstable so as to have an individual continually circle back to reconsider experience, there is a message about the ways individuals struggle with meaning. It means that we make and remake meanings over time. Again, I make the argument that the ways that social studies education considers issues of trauma and loss might be considered similarly. Not that social studies curriculum is written to open the possibility for interpretation, most of it is not, but that despite these lacks in narrative invitation, individuals are nonetheless predisposed toward making meanings in precisely these interminable ways.

The children's portion of the Yad Vashem in Jerusalem is an example where the individual is given a much different treatment. While the main museum is more factual – again, the historical narrative, the traditional artifactual presentation – the children's museum is a darkened triangular room. In the center are one hundred candles that are reflected infinitely in triangulated mirrors. The idea is to disturb the senses and evoke the feelings of darkness, disorientation, and directionless-ness that must have occurred for the 1.5 million children murdered in the Holocaust. The point here is that there is

not a traditional, print/image/artifact, narrative structure to follow in this exhibition. There is only the visitor and his/her experiences as they look at reflected and real candles.

My purpose in this visit to the Holocaust memorial is not to investigate its pedagogical address or discuss what I perceive to be the intention of the architect and curators of it. Instead, I have been using the above examples to illustrate how the befores, the in-the-midst-ofs and the afters are considered and positioned differently, and I presume, to different effect. While much attention has been paid to the *physical* manifestations of museums, specifically those pertaining to the Holocaust, I give attention instead to the *psychical* landscapes that surround and fill it.

The Holocaust Memorial in Farmington Hills, MI

The Holocaust Memorial and Museum in Farmington Hills, Michigan is, in renovated form, the first free-standing Holocaust center in the United States. They contextualize the commemoration of the Holocaust in the following terms:

> Witnessing the horrors perpetrated by the most educated society in Europe brings the rude awakening that education, including religious education, is no barrier against hatred and violence. The education that one absorbs in the HMC veers one towards constructive social consciousness. By highlighting and disseminating knowledge of the acts of the righteous and their constructive consequences, the HMC serves as a powerful antidote and countervailing force to the hatred and evil forces of destruction (http://www.holocaustcenter.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=55&Itemid=10014).

While the original Holocaust Memorial Center was established in 1984, it moved to a fourteen million dollar structure in 2004. It is located on one of the busiest

roads in Michigan's most wealthy community (Zaslow, 2003). The structure of the building evokes a Nazi concentration camp, with structural allusions to barbed wire, guard towers, the striped prisoner uniforms, and six spikes to represent the six million murdered. These architectural features are viewable by the nearly 50,000 cars that travel this stretch of road every day. As I discussed above, the purpose of the visit was not to investigate the pedagogical address of the museum nor to offer a critique of its exhibitions, displays, or architecture (Ellsworth, 2005). Instead, I focus on how the participants' experiences are structured, understood, and interpreted in relationship to their own "befores" and their imagination about what comes after.

Chapter 3
Retroactive Meaning and Difficult Knowledge in a Holocaust Memorial

Introduction

While the chapter revolves around a visit to a Holocaust museum, the visit is used to highlight issues common to social studies education and the education of its teachers. One of these issues is the degree to which expectations – the "befores" of learning – are intermingled with the "durings" and "afters" of it. This is to say that meanings are deferred, made retroactively and retrospectively, an idea that has consequences for how we think about curricular design and pedagogical practice in social studies education. A second idea is that there is a social component to these expectations that is often outside of conscious awareness and difficult to articulate. If social studies education is to make good on its promises of social awareness and thoughtful action, these unconscious voices must be given their due attention. Third, during the visit to the Holocaust Museum a Holocaust survivor gave her own testimony that provides an example of how the symbolic chain might be momentarily broken – and how in these momentary fissures of understanding can be found important pedagogical opportunities to help students acquire different and more sophisticated awareness about their own understandings of the world.

How the Holocaust Memorial was Pre-Viewed

I love "Night and Fog". - Lynn

I saw it [Night] on the syllabus and thought, oh God. Anything but that. - Patty

The way-before

What do these statements, imbued with feelings of affinity toward, and avoidance of, studying the Holocaust via related texts reveal? What might we learn from such statements as they relate to the ways that individuals prepare themselves – and how they feel they need to prepare themselves – before their encounters with difficult knowledge? The above quotes indicate that the idea(s) of the Holocaust have entered the individuals before they have even entered the museum.

Of course we know that all students, all teachers, all individuals bring a host of experiences, memories, and expectations with them to any pedagogical encounter. Often, educators speak of engaging students' "prior knowledge" on a topic before beginning a lesson. In my practice with social studies teachers, though, the prior knowledge being discussed is specifically related to the social studies content. In learning about the Vietnam War, for example, a teacher might ask students about what they know about that particular war from other classes, from film, from family, or music. The assumption is that students have had some exposure to the Vietnam War in some way or another. The hope is that when a social studies teacher elicits these latent ideas from their students that they will be able to build from these; either directly or in an effort to correct false assumptions. Less frequently, though, do I hear about prior knowledge referring more tangentially, but not less importantly, to the topic. Questions eliciting ideas about war, aggression, death, and justice are less frequently heard. These ideas certainly will influence the ways that individuals experience information about the Vietnam War. If a student, for example, has a family member in the military service currently, that could be considered prior knowledge. What is interesting to me, though,

is that those more intimate experiences are less likely to be considered "prior knowledge" than those described as more academic.

Similarly, in my interviews with Lynn and Patty, who claim to either "love" or be intimidated by, the Holocaust was a topic that emerged in several ways, as they were reading various Holocaust materials in the methods course in which I was conducting part of the research for this dissertation. The statements made above, and those on which I draw here, were made months before our visit to the Holocaust museum, but still are evidence of the educational residue that will play out in the eventuality of their trip to the museum. Earlier, in chapter two, I discussed Patty's recollection of her first reading of Night and then drews those experiences into her current reading of the text. I use this example again, here, to demonstrate the ways that these early learning experience come back to have significant impact in the present.

I read it when I was too young to have read it for the first time, so I feel like I was a little scarred by that. I remember being...I was in 5th or 6th grade. And in the first like 30 pages he talks about men throwing babies up and using them as target practice. And I was just shattered.

Patty senses a learning that happened "too soon". What can be gathered from this statement is that when she was a student in elementary school she had an experience with Night that has stayed in her memory. Of particular interest to Patty are these images of infanticide. She uses strong terminology of "shattering" and "scarring", both terms that elicit a sense that there are consequences to such an early reading that have yet to be resolved, if they ever can be. She brings these experiences with her to her development as a social studies teacher.

We all know and recognize that what students bring with them to the classroom affects their learning, the ways that they are motivated to learn, the ways they interact with their teachers and peers (see, for example, Lareau, 2000). But if social studies

curricula generally, and museums more specifically, are to be locations where students can engage with the task of interrogating cultural and knowledge production, it must also be the case that they (or at least their teachers) are aware that mediating such an interrogation are the personal histories with learning about trauma and the ways that these interactions can be traumatic in and of themselves. Patty, still talking about the reading of Night, illustrates this point, although this time her most recent reading. In this quote presented below, the word Night is not present, but through the ellipses, the hesitations, the way she speaks, the traumatic essence of that first "shattering" becomes evident.

Patty: I saw it on the syllabus and I was like. Oh no. Something else? Anything else? But I think...I thought about this actually. I was talking about this with my boyfriend. And I was bawling the whole way through it. I think I put myself into it, and I put my father into it as his father, and it just like, I don't know I can't even read it. So every time I open it I think of my own father suffering

There are several "befores" that intermingle here. First, there is her history of reading Night early in her academic career. Then, there is the anticipation of reading Night again in her social studies methods class. And finally, there is the anticipated "before" of her father suffering. All of these are intertwined and create a fabric through which meaning is woven and fixed, a way for the Holocaust, her reading, and her familial relationships to be understood.

Patty's description is emotionally charged, calling forth images of crying in the moments of imagining her father suffering. She does not say that she pictures her father suffering in the exact same way as the father in this Holocaust memoir, so we do not know what images she holds in her mind as she makes such allusions, only that she is emotionally compelled to be drawn to an emotionally disturbing place. She alludes to disturbing images of infanticide that have stayed with her into her adult life. She

invokes images of family, and in particular her father, and implies that her academic reading and personal memory cannot be separated from one another.

I frequently find in my work with social studies teachers that they hope what students learn in their classes will directly help their students deal with the world beyond the classroom. The above quote from Patty offer us a good deal of trouble on that point. Even though Patty has read Night on at least the two occasions she reports here, and has studied the Holocaust on other occasions, it seems as though not much if anything has been resolved. The wounds are still open; study and learning have neither provided a solution nor closure for Patty. Despite having read this text and studied the Holocaust on numerous occasions there are still problems. This is certainly not to say that Patty has failed to understand or that her education has failed to adequately address such issues. It is to highlight that any and all learning happens in similar, interminable, ways. Patty is not just – or simply – reading Night, she is also reading her imagination of what it will be like to lose her own father, to witness his suffering, a fear she discusses as one of her greatest.

Lynn provides a quite different example of the ways that these participants' engagement at the Holocaust museum is pre-conditioned. Whereas Patty articulates trepidation and sadness about confronting this mass trauma, Lynn is, in fact, rather enamored of it. One of the reasons that Lynn agreed to be part of this study, recall, is her academic interest in the Holocaust.

Lynn: I don't really remember learning about it that much in high school. I asked my teacher one day in class because he had traveled to Auschwitz and he spent a day talking about it. But I mean we didn't get to WWII in high school most of the stuff I learned I learned on my own. And then I took a Holocaust class here [at this university]. It's always been one of my favorite things...I think it's just fascinating.

Jim: What about it fascinates you?

Lynn: You take a westernized country that...only 65 years ago...that completely changed...they allowed one man to come into power and basically persuade a vast majority of the population that these people are evil and need to be killed and whatever. And not only do you have one man doing this, he has an entire system set up for mass extermination. And this happened in the 20th century. I can never imagine what it must have been like. But for people to hear these rumors [the "crazy" man in Night who warned of death camps] and then still believe in the innate goodness of people. Like they can't possibly to do this, they can't possibly put us into gas chambers and kill us. So I think it's kind of interesting. Why would they willingly go? I mean, we have the benefit of hindsight also. It's just like the whole thing...the state manufacture and then you have the resisters and I don't know...it's fascinating to me.

There are obviously quite a few things to say about this quote. One is the idea of fascination with the Holocaust and its relation to what Patty said earlier. How can it be that one person is so horrified, and other so thrilled, by it? I will obviously get to that momentarily. Before, though, a few other issues ought to be addressed.

First, I find it strange that she claims to have not studied the Holocaust in High School. I don't know of any history class that does not teach the Holocaust. It could be the case that Lynn has forgotten about how this was encountered in her high school curriculum. It could also be the case that she is correct in her recollection, which would still be a strange omission from the curriculum. What I find interesting is her language around the topic that stands so far apart from Patty's: she uses words like interesting, fascinating. These are words that take emotion out of her learning, hover over and through the topic, and also connect to how we generally teach history without the emotional connection.

But obviously what is most striking is the difference between Lynn and Patty's statements. In Lynn's statements we have a stark comparison to Patty's early experiences with, and continued interest in, learning about the Holocaust. Where Patty exhibits reluctance to enter into reading a narrative such as Night along with a concurrent personal and familial identification with the text and topic, Lynn suggests that the topic of the Holocaust is one of her favorite things to learn about. Her

fascination is not articulated in terms of the ways it amplifies the relationships she has with her family. This is something I find particularly interesting considering Lynn's own recent experiences with the loss of a family member. She does not – in most of the study at large – consciously associate that experience with her academic or intellectual endeavors. Instead, it is done so in terms of the political and social psychological processes at work. She is pointing to an interest in studying the Holocaust as a way to call attention to what happens when power is left unchecked, and also the ways that people conform to such power. These are crucial topics for social studies teachers to consider and are particularly important as they are approached with their own students.

Having learned from Hollywood, or our families, or any other of the ways in which the Holocaust is encountered, we have an expectation that we will be emotionally moved by its study. But that movement is based on our location within this symbolic structure. For Lynn, whose politics default toward the conservative, and whose thinking about the world is often in terms of systems and the individual's responsibility in it, this position allows for the allure that Lynn exhibits. I am not sure that as a society we are in love with the Holocaust – Lynn, in an earlier interview said that she "loved" studying the Holocaust -, but we are certainly infatuated with it, drawn into at least a cursory glance at that which we would rather hide away. Our president lays a wreath at Buchenwald. Oprah interviews Eli Wiesel and travels with him to Auschwitz. Steven Spielberg directs a blockbuster Hollywood film and sponsors a project recording survivor testimony. Our news personalities use Hitler and final solution as the benchmark test of moral equivalence for issues such as torture, abortion, and international policy. Notice that Patty did not refuse to read Night, ask for an alternative

text, nor did she balk at the idea of participating in this part of the dissertation study. Her position as a Jewish woman, who has been located in a somewhat different orientation as it relates to the Holocaust, is still- at least in this sense - overridden by these dominant narratives that locate her in the symbolic chain.

As we arrived

Similarly, before arriving at the physical structure of the museum, all of the participants bring with them their own history of learning about the Holocaust through their formal and information social studies education. That is, where the above statements were taken during interviews with Patty and Lynn long before I had decided which museum I would be using to house this part of the study, these next statements are taken in the moments before we entered the museum. We were standing outside of the entry when I asked the participants to find a place to sit and write down their thoughts before they entered. For a first example, George wrote:

I have an idea of what to expect. I get "surprise emotional" when I experience things like this and I do my best to hold it in.

Elsewhere, George has mentioned his trips to Dachau and how much he learned in his visit to an actual concentration camp. Still, there is a basic irony in his statement of having an idea of what to expect yet attributing surprise to the emotions that are stirred up. And why does he feel like he should "hold it in"? In whose eyes would that look strange, I wonder? Ben included sentiments that are in some ways similar to George's

Why do I immediately feel the need to turn the music down or off? (written about his drive to the memorial)

I fear not being able to 'measure up' to the memory. The Holocaust is intimidating, and so this place is as well.

Ben articulates fear and intimidation, as well as evidence of his bracing against an anticipated experience. This anxiety manifests itself as being compelled to turn down or off his music. Who told him that this was the way to be appropriate as he approaches this museum? There was not a sign on the freeway that asked all those going to visit the Holocaust Memorial to turn down their music, and there was not a passenger in the car who would have been able to report the kind of music he had been listening to. In essence, though, *there is* someone else in the car with Ben. Again these questions come to mind about in whose eyes he would need to measure. This process underscores the functioning of the symbolic chain, in terms of the degree to which something beyond conscious awareness compels our actions. This means that we are in so may ways compelled to action because of our location in these symbolic coordinates, and because of an unconsciously interpolated message about what it is that we should or should not do. It is reminiscent of the ways that Big Brother operates in *1984,* and further about the notion of governmentality vis-à-vis the panopticon in Foucault's elaborations. The point here is that there is a structured understanding, a bracing for an event, which predetermines the experience. We must imagine that as students enter our methods courses, or as their own students enter their classrooms, there are similar over-riding predeterminations that structure their experiences.

As a third example I turn to Grace. Grace's over-riding predetermination is articulated in terms that might seem more personal and individual. Remember that it has been less than a year since her mother died from cancer at the time of this study. Her awareness of the ways that this experience will effect her museum visit again stands in comparison to Lynn's disassociation from her recent loss of family.

I expect to view a lot of the stories and exhibits through the lens of my own mother's death, a death that was not as atrocious, but which taught me nonetheless about being separated prematurely from someone you love deeply.

I make these observations not to say that one person is doing something right and another is doing something wrong. It is, in fact, precisely the opposite and should help us understand that there is no simple understanding of topic, student, or the pedagogical encounter. And as we can see here, we cannot even claim that when a person has recently experienced a tragic loss that such a loss will lead to any one certain predisposition. What makes these differences? This is something we cannot know, but we can know that the weight of loss, the baggage of family history, is something that we cannot leave in the car or at the coat check.

If George already knows what to expect, if Ben has anxiety about his presence in the face of what he anticipates in this encounter, there are necessarily components that lie outside the interaction between viewer and museum, student and curriculum. It seems George and Ben already "know" what will happen to them, that their time in the Holocaust museum is in many ways predetermined by their expectations. It is built out of the heap of memories of their own personal experiences and mediated by broader social discourses. Indeed, these statements seem to be imbued with a sociality, a contextualization of self in relation to an other- other experiences in Holocaust museums, and perhaps other experiences of being able to "measure up". While Grace's expectations are no less clear, she helps us understand the ways experiencing difficult knowledge are predicated upon both their location in the symbolic field (as demonstrated by George and Ben) and other experiences with loss and mourning in

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more immediately personal contexts (which, of course, are not themselves without a symbolically situated component).

Below I will discuss a room in the museum called "The Abyss" in which footage from the Allied arrival at the concentration camps is shown. It is closed off from the rest of the museum and the visitor is not told what is coming by any sign or warning in the museum itself. Still, Lynn says:

> I didn't even need to go into the room to be moved. It was like because of the lighting and where we were that I knew what I was going to see.

Here, Lynn explains that she already "knew" what was going to happen once she entered the room in the museum called "the abyss". First of all, her knowledge was only confirmed as such upon her actually entering. The importance here, though, is that she perceives her "knowing" to predate the experience, when in actuality it could not have. Once she was in the room, though, she recognized the film from earlier studies of the Holocaust that she had had throughout her academic career and said that while she didn't want to sound like she had "been there and done that", she did not feel the need to stay in the room for very long.

In these examples, the participants are "spoken" by their location in the symbolic chain: individual viewer in a Holocaust museum. In these examples above, we see how the participants are spoken by the symbolic structuring of the Holocaust, those over-determining narratives that structure understanding. As with constellations of stars, for example, the signifying chain is significant not only in the ways that individual signifiers indicate and confer meaning, but instead on how meaning is indicated and produced based on the relationships between them. Lacan (2006) illustrates the concept of the symbolic chain in his "Seminar on the Purloined Letter," in which he reflects

upon Poe's story of a stolen letter used in a blackmailing scheme. For Lacan, the stolen letter exemplifies the signifier, circulating through the story from character to character. What Lacan (2006) offers via this lecture is the idea that the signifier, in its displacement:

> determines subjects' acts, destiny, refusals, blindnesses, success, and fate, regardless of their innate gifts and instruction, and regardless of their character or sex; and that everything pertaining to the psychological pregiven follows willy-nilly the signifiers train, like weapons and baggage. (p. 21)

As it can be brought to bear on what we have seen from the participants thus far – turning down the music, the "odd" emotional surprise, the knowledge beforehand of what to expect – are determined by location in a signifying chain. In some senses, then, we are trained to hold the Holocaust as reverential, a topic to illicit quiet, reflection, and, of course, "never again". As alluded to above, the participants all had expectations of what they would encounter in the museum based on their previous experiences with the Holocaust, or with loss and trauma more generally. Ben wrote about how he felt compelled on his car ride to the museum to turn down his music. He noted that he felt nervous about his entry into a Holocaust Memorial and was immediately taken with the architecture of the building: brick and thick wire representing the walls of concentration camps. Grace also wrote about her feeling about the appropriateness of music on her car trip to the memorial and braced herself – as noted above – to feel the weight of the death of her mother in her witnessing of other peoples' loss.

These statements reflect a third term – one that exists outside of the viewer/exhibit exchange - that mediates the encounter with the Holocaust memorial. It is as if, in some ways, the experience has already happened, or at least in some ways the visit that is yet to come has come already as the teachers brace for what they "know", or anticipate will be, a deeply moving experience. In essence, the symbolic structuring is "the theater in which your truth was performed before you took cognizance of it" (Zizek, 1989, pg. 26), as evidenced – at least alluded to – by the assumptions that these teachers had going into the museum.

Of course, one might argue, people have expectations before they enter any kind of situation. I agree. And the point here is not whether or not their expectations were met –they largely were - or contradicted, but that the "prior to" of a museum visit counts just as much as the encounter itself. It orients the visitor in particular ways, and this is crucially important to consider if we are to understand the broad complexities of learning within specific spaces of museums that are constituted by difficult knowledge.

The Museum Encounter: Strains in the Chains

Any and all learning is traumatic. New knowledge displaces and reorganizes old knowledge, carrying with it the message of our incapacity to know everything and undercutting our notions of certainty. Even though we do not invoke Freud or Lacan, it is a process that happens everyday in social studies classrooms. Of course, there are different orders of trauma. Because trauma is that which resists signification, the order of the trauma corresponds with the severity of that resistance. That is, the trauma largely corresponds with the availability of other narrative structures into which the new knowledge or experience can be accommodated. Where the resistance to signification

is most slight, there are readily available storylines or discourses into which an experience can be told. Within the moment of encounter where the "befores" come to act in the "present" (they always are, after all), there is a tug on the chains that structure meaning but the chains are not broken. In other words there is some kind of discomfort expressed by the participants, but not to the point where signifying that discomfort is made less possible. Indeed, there are ways – readily available and at hand – within which they can explain themselves. These strains are exemplified below as the participants describe their museum experiences.

Knowing before and after Knowing

In reading fiction or watching film, before a double cross, or a flash back, or any variety of narrative trope, I am educated to believe in a character's goodness when, in fact, this character turns out to be a villain. The truth in the moment of the experience changes our perception after-the-fact. All of the events in which I was witness to that now-evil-then-good character are reread, reviewed, and revisited. When viewed psychoanalytically, any and all learning happens prior to, and retroactively after direct experience. In our education, knowledge is not only enacted in the moment of interaction: it is deferred, and not only until the end of a unit test.

In other words, there are strange relationships between past and present. There are connections, blindspots, revisions, and repetitions. The ways that these relationships and processes play out do not just have consequence on the couch of psychoanalysis. These are, it seems to me, the same concerns of a social education. Social studies lessons often ask students to speculate as to cause and effect and place historical events into fabrics of meaning in order to learn specific "lessons". Via history curriculum, for

example, we ask students to learn from the mistakes of history – even as those mistakes are being repeated and reenacted within our current socio-political milieu.

This idea, the deferral of knowledge, what Freud calls *nachträglich,* is a key to understanding the experiences that students and teachers have as they are called to the task of attending to difficult knowledge. As Britzman (2003) articulates, education is a "play between the present and the past, between presence and absence, and then, by that strange return that Sigmund Freud describes as deferred: it is registered and revised by repeating, and working through" (pg. 1).

A first series of examples of this deferral in the memorial comes from the first exhibit: a contextualization of the Jewish Diaspora juxtaposed with other "big" events in world history within a relatively small circular room. Eva and Grace describe this room. The teachers here are talking about the ways in which knowledge is brought to light for them. They express being troubled by the linear narrative of history, the juxtapositions of what they recognize as "normal" historical timelines with the history of anti-Semitism, and by their own histories of learning.

Eva: The first thing that I noticed when we were in that circular room were all the world events that we teach were on the bottom. And then like all the details that they were talking about that we...miss...about all of the rest of the world? Yeah. I mean the things we teach are about the rest of the world. But it's like those...that history....ummm...that leads up to...I don't want to say it leads up to, because I got that feeling a lot as we were going through the museum. The sense that this leads to this. It was very linear. But like all that stuff – I didn't know. I don't know. It was very weird to see "the civil war ends", "slavery ends", and they coin the term anti-Semitism. So it was just weird to see. Oh it was the telephone was invented and there were these switches to more prejudice and discrimination was developing too. So it was weird to flip back and forth.

Eva approaches several important ideas related to social studies education and to the Holocaust. First, she highlights the idea of "absence" as a curricular issue by calling attention to the events that "we miss" in teaching. I take her to mean that information

has been interpreted by her in a way that amplifies the idea that what is absent from the curriculum confers meaning about what is, and what is not, important to be studied in the social studies classroom. While she would generally recognize the invention of the telephone as a mark on the timeline that would get attention in most curricula, she is making an inference that prejudice and discrimination were building into toxic anti-Semitism, and that this topic might be more "important" to discuss with students that the telephone. At the very least, she recognizes her own predisposition to thinking about one as more likely to be discussed than the other. What was not weird before is weird now: old knowledge comes back and in its return new awareness takes on the feel of new knowledge. Grace continues this exchange:

Grace: It makes you realize the...not bias...but the limited scope of what you learn, or what I learned, in my academic career. There's not really an awareness of...what was maybe the more important event besides the invention of the telephone. It made me feel like in schools we should be talking about the global perspective and the global human race instead of this focus on nationalism and what is going in your bubble.

Here, Grace is considering the ethical and political effects of including and excluding particular topics in the curriculum. Thoughtful reading of the social world and acting within it requires attention to these issues. As we know from her introduction in the methods chapter, Grace is disposed toward thinking in critical ways about the ways that schools are not working on behalf of the issues that she believes should be of great importance. She is not only articulating a pedagogical stance that places importance on multiple perspectives, she is also politicizing these perspectives through the pejorative phrasing about the focus on "nationalism and what is going on in your bubble".

Their statements turn into doubled versions of themselves. Not only are the teachers attuned to the ways that the memorial is set up for our understanding of the

Holocaust but also keen to the pedagogical implications that they have on their own understanding of the world, and their place in it as social studies teachers. What I mean is that Eva is both commenting on an experience with a museum exhibit (the timelines) as well as on a larger social narrative with which she seems uncomfortable: that of linear inevitability. But there is a curiously personal way that this discomfort is discussed in the description (the repetitions of "I don't know" and "weirdness") of the museum, which speaks to the encounter with representations of social trauma that constitutes difficult knowledge. As discussed above, when Eva says that "it is weird" to see knowledge arranged in this way, she is articulating a new awareness of old news. It is as if the world history she knows has suddenly changed. The symbolic structure that held her understanding in place was troubled by the juxtaposition of events on the time line. Importantly, much of this information is not "new" –some is -, rather old information takes on new meaning as the symbolic structure shifts. It is not the oldness or newness of the information that is of issue here, it is how they are experienced to be different. We do not know, but can assume that she knows about the invention of the telephone. From her statements, she had not previously encountered the historical situation of anti Semitism. What happens is that this "old" and "new" mix and mash to make something of a new meaning. Felman (1987) helps us to understand this process and explains that learning is "what is returned to the self from the Other...the forgetfulness of its own message; a reflexivity, therefore, which is a new mode of cognition or information gathering" (pg. 60). Eva has a forgotten set of messages returned anew. She is able to accommodate these ideas, though, through the narrative strategies of taking up a language about presence and absence in curriculum. These

deferred meanings, where the "befores" of her understanding come in contact and conflict with her present make a difference in her current understandings.

In Grace's comment is a similar moment of *deferred meaning* in action. Neglected information is called to consciousness, altering the ground upon which meaning is stabilized. Similarly, the memorial exhibits are more than they contain, dependent on the visitors as they construct meaning retroactively through the prisms of their own understandings. For example, Grace's recognition of the "limited scope" of her education *is only made limited in retrospect*; only after she has this new information, this new framework into which she can place her subjectivity. Zizek articulates the way meaning is constantly made again by explaining how re-positioning oneself within the symbolic chain (that constellation of signifiers which confer meaning onto the world) "changes retroactively the meaning of all tradition, restructures the narration of the past, makes it readable in another, new way" (1989, pg. 58). Once Grace becomes confronted with this awareness, she reconstitutes the whole of her own education in terms of this shift in narration. It is not the case that these events are rare, indeed it is that this happens all the time as we learn. The Holocaust memorial is not only about the Holocaust, or Jewish history, it is also radically about Grace's own history and education, and then about how these components interfere with one another.

The museum's next exhibit is a large open room with several well lit displays of Jewish family life. Jewish cultural history is offset on one wall: panels, back-lit in deep red, explain the history and timeline of anti-Semitism. It is around this wall that one turns to find a descending ramp, with little light, with an enormous photograph of Hitler from floor to ceiling at the bottom of this ramp. The memorial exhibits in this lower

level are darker, marked with imagery from the gates of Auschwitz, a reproduction of a train car that transported Jews from ghetto to death camp, and several short films for visitors to sit and watch. Ben describes this area of the museum as a metaphor toward the genocide:

When you're moving through the section after the Jewish history area and before the catwalk you're walking a very winding path and there are holes in the walls so you can see farther ahead into this area.

In a way you're walking two paths. On one hand you're walking with the victims as they go through this very confusing process. On the other hand, you're snaking through the museum just as the Nazi plan was moving in one direction then shifting in another radical way. All along you can see different aspects of what is coming. From the victim's perspective, as you descend towards the ghettos you can see the leaders and boxcar, which will lead to your ultimate fate. As a Nazi, you can see these same things but from the perspective of a goal that this snaking path is leading to eventually.

Ben takes on multiple perspectives and voices to identify what he sees as architectural and curatorial foreshadowing in this part of the museum. Not only is this description rich in metaphor, it allows us to understand that whether or not the architects and curators of the museum intended the dual meaning, individuals make their own meaning, read their own text, in any museum – or pedagogical – encounter. As a social studies teacher, this is an important skill to be able to enact. That is, he takes a critical stance toward "reading" the place as pedagogical in and of itself, in that it lends to stories from multiple perspectives. Also, and underscoring the point of retroactively knowing the "truth" of the situation is that Ben only could know this understanding by having walked ahead to know to where these paths were leading: eventually toward the "abyss" –
what Ben refers to as the catwalk. The point here is that Ben could only make sense of his "before" after having an experience (in this case knowing what was coming ahead) at a later time. While this case of deferral does not seem to produce friction in the symbolic structuring, there is evidence of some kind of anxiety for Ben. His use of the

word snaking conjures up images of a predator in wait, he notes the confusion of walking these paths of the museum, and his allusion to the fate of the Jews are all evidence of discomfort with what is happening to him in this experience. This is all because he knows "what is coming", and these could all be potential braces for an anticipated shock or trauma.

The Abyss and Leaving Quickly

While the exhibits described above – the timeline, the large representation of Hitler, the movement toward the final solution – are all examples of times when there is conflict between past learning experiences and new information, these participants' description of the exhibit called "The Abyss" points us to a somewhat different order of difficulty in articulating their reactions. That is, the symbolic chains are pulled a little more tightly. There is, despite every one of us knowing this would be part of our museum experience, a great deal of traumatic material in this room and it unsettles the participants.

The Abyss is a black room through which a visitor walks on a narrow catwalk. The light is provided by the projection on five large screens of footage – gruesome – taken upon the liberation of the camps in 1945. The screens are placed in a seemingly chaotic order, all different sizes, and all displaying different images simultaneously. The film loops every 11 minutes, and despite the five screens has only one narrated soundtrack. At the end of the catwalk, before the visitor ascends out of "the Abyss", burns an eternal flame encased in dark stained glass. The effect of this is disturbing and disorienting, as the viewer does not know to which terrible image on the screen goes the narration. Eva and Ben have an exchange after our tour about this room. Ben responded

to a question that I asked about this particular room to elicit the participants' reactions to it. Eva's comment follows immediately after Ben was finished speaking, as though Eva was excited, even anxious, to articulate these thoughts.

Ben: You can't take in every single image at the same time. I had to look away a couple of times. Especially when they were handling the burned corpses. There's something about them, I don't know what they're doing, but I think they were getting teeth out and working with the heads. I couldn't handle watching that. I mean it's shocking.... you can't believe that people would do that to other people. That's the one thing that keeps running through my head. I mean its there, its real, its there and its not made up. And you can't believe...uh...when they're throwing the limp bodies into the truck and that. You can't...uh.... it's hard to even process when you're watching its just terrifying. It wasn't done by a process or a machine but by other people. And a lot of other people, and that's the worst part for me.

Eva: There was a man who had his legs up, and his legs were so skinny...it was a little kid actually.and the images beneath that...I wonder how they ordered it too. But there were dead bodies that they had the same legs. And I wondered, I'm staring at this person and I'm like I wonder if he wishes he were dead. And I thought about that the whole time as they were showing these clips. Was their suffering worse, was it so bad that it's like...you don't wish people to be dead, but like for some of the people I was looking at I was like would it be better for them if they were the people in the other part of the video? This side is showing me the bodies and this side is showing me the suffering and I don't know where I can sit with either. But that was very difficult for me.

So many hesitations, starts and stops, their articulations are staccato notes and seemingly out of key. The thoughts do not build off of each other. It is as though each of these people is talking through, talking to structure their own coherence. There are times in this exchange where Ben and Eva mention the ability or inability to look, the desire to avert their eyes, to deny what is directly in front of them, to retreat. There are allusions to the dead bodies, the alive bodies, and the thin line that separates them. And there are odd shifts in speaking in first and second person. Their linguistic capacities are overloaded. For Eva, she "doesn't know where to sit" and Ben having to avert his eyes. There are questions of belief, aversion, shock, reality, euthanasia and terror. Patty, in her visit to the Abyss, recalled feeling like she "wanted to throw up" and was "overwhelmed by the images" there.

What I find so compelling here is that these images should not be in any way surprising. George is shocked to see the "limp" and emaciated bodies of the victims of genocide. Any study of the Holocaust will show similarly atrocious images, or at the very least allude to them. Yet the participants do not seem to have the capacity to deal with them in ways they find comfortable. I am not suggesting they should, but instead point out these tendencies in their speech acts to underscore the interminability of learning through and about trauma. The lesson in the Abyss is shot through with trouble that began as a "before" and is not settled in the moment of, or reflection upon, encounter.

All of the participants recall images from "the Abyss" of emaciated and dead bodies; suffering. As I previously suggested, this type of representation is common in social studies classrooms. If a Holocaust documentary film is not shown, then perhaps the ever popular first battle sequence from *Saving Private Ryan* is. Frequently, the student teachers with whom I work want to show these films to students so that they can "see what it was really like". Not only do these types of shocking images have a precedent in the social studies curriculum, they also have a broader historical precedent, as Grace elaborates during this conversation:

> I kept thinking about the Susan Sontag book, Regarding the Pain of Others, she talks about how after WWI somebody compiled several pictures from the war and put them in a book and the purpose was to shock people into thinking "we can't ever let this happen again". Ya know, "look at how atrocious this is", sort of thing and that's how I felt watching that. It was designed to scar people. And I don't know that that's...I don't know if that's good or bad. I think it's probably somewhat effective but obviously not effective enough. This sort of thing continues to go on.

Once again Grace is troubled by the knowledge that just will not settle. What she discusses here is that this experience was successful and not successful, effective but not, illustrating a tension brought forth by this encounter with difficult knowledge. Not

only do the photographs and images have an historical precedent as elaborated by authors like Sontag, Roland Barthes, and others, but these kinds of images allude to an encounter with what Kristeva (1982) calls "the abject", what I theorize to be part of the difficulty of difficult knowledge, and to which I devote more specific attention in the next chapter. What Kristeva theorizes around the abject is that there are parts of the human condition, of being alive, that must be thrust aside from awareness. These things are those that are revolting: feces, death, vomit. In other words, they exist outside of the bounds of the symbolic structures: there is no place for them in the ways we construct meaning in the world as they unsettle the very illusions of a comfortable, and socially acceptable life. But just aside from the revolt is an odd intrigue, a tense beckoning to look, "like an inescapable boomerang, a vortex of summons and repulsions" (Kristeva, 1982, pg.1). It is not simply that abjection is a reaction to things unseemly or disgusting, but point to that which disturbs our sense of order; disrupts the systems by which we make sense of the world (pg. 4). In this case, the abject is expected, almost seeming to be craved, especially in the case of the Holocaust survivor, which I explain in the next section.

After this part of the museum the exhibits turn to the aftermath of the Holocaust: the displacement of Jewish families, stories on several tall columns of orphaned children, the Nuremburg trials, and the establishment of the state of Israel. There is one more corner left to turn, and here the ceiling is perforated by six sky-lights, offering light as the visitor ascends out of the lower level into a final bright room of reflection. Ben commented on the ascent from the Holocaust exhibits to this final room.

So now we're emerging. And I was thinking...oh OK, now this room is bright and the other one was so dark. And I was thinking that isn't really effective at all because what are we emerging from? There's

still stuff going on. And they're just saying here we go into the, whatever, the "righteous room". It's nice and uplifting but there's still plenty of problems and plenty of things that need to be done. So, I don't know, it's not as meaningful as it seems.

I read a curious disappointment in Ben's statement, combined with thoughts that the museum is not adequate in helping visitors turn their attention to the suffering and violence that continues to be perpetuated in the world today. It is as if the Holocaust is not a sufficient reminder of the propensity for humans to defy the narrative of progress and that a more effective pedagogy would be to inundate and barrage the museum visitor with allusions to whichever genocidal process one can imagine. Ben discusses the meaning as illusion, and if this is the case then we are privy to the ways that knowledge does not leave us settled or comforted. In this case we see Ben wanting different knowledge, more knowledge, anything but the knowledge of which he was just in the midst.

Ben's statements echo Grace's where, in her discussion of the Abyss, she says that "these things continue to go on". Indeed. A great deal of the conversation the teachers had after the visit kept coming back to the issue of how current violence should be (or questioning whether or not it should be) represented in the Holocaust museum. The anxiety that this line of inquiry provoked had to do with the indeterminacy of such a proposition: that if one begins to represent a system of violence that continues in the world, then there would be considerable difficulty ceasing such exhibitions. How and where do you draw the line?

The dominant narratives of progress seep into these conversations and structure the remainder of the conversation the participants had here. What became apparent for these teachers was their own need to address suffering in our time, and that honoring the victims of the Holocaust was more about giving space for reflection about our current

socio cultural situations than it was about mourning the specificity of the Holocaust. Again, we do not know the degree to which these individuals are able to take this sentiment and desire for such modes of thinking and transposing such a desire into a pedagogical register in their own classrooms. It should not be surprising then, that before we had even physically left the museum – our conversation in a room adjacent to the lecture hall in which they listened to a Holocaust survivor – they had already left the topic to move into how they could "make things better". In no way am I intending to paint such a desire in a negative light. Of course we want people to be working toward more just, tolerant, and equitable conditions in the world, but my hunch is also that there is a tangential awareness that despite any amount of work, there will still be atrocity. Indeed, it seems to be part of the human condition to commit terrible acts (for an elaboration, see Todd, 2009). It might be, then, that these individuals could not find a place for their thoughts about the Holocaust to settle other than in a response to conversations about current socio-political injustice. Such a process is itself a trace of difficult knowledge.

In the introduction to this chapter I suggested that socially constructed discourses influence our perceptions in ways that elude conscious awareness. The above trends, where the participants were so eager to move from thinking about the Holocaust to thinking about how to address the current situations in the world are examples. The dominant narrative that is carried through the symbolic field is imbued with that unspeakable sense of meaning that guides us and has a constituent component of the "narrative of progress". This symbolic field, after all, is society's unwritten rules, and the narrative of progress is one of those compulsory stories that we are told from

early childhood (The Little Engine That Could) and through our formal social studies education. It becomes that which stands as the third term in otherwise dyadic relationship between the individual and the museum itself. The idea is that "things should be better than they are".

The Holocaust Survivor: Breaking the Symbolic Chain

Where the above examples of the timeline, "The Abyss", and the sudden movement to "make things better" are used to demonstrate the strains placed on the symbolic chain, here I offer a case where I theorize it was momentarily broken.

It is often reported to me in conversations in and out of the formal classroom setting that listening to the testimony of a Holocaust survivor is one of the most memorable events of peoples' experience with learning about this genocide. One student-teacher in the social studies methods course that I taught a few years ago was excited to share his experience as a teacher who was able to bring in a Holocaust survivor to speak with his students. I remember being troubled by how happy he was about the degree to which his students were affected by the survivor's testimony. As social studies teachers we all, I think, crave and wish for our students' emotional investments in the material we teach. However, a question remains as to how we deal with the idea that such a "good" lesson comes at such a high cost. Regardless, the Holocaust survivor – as a social studies resource – is important, and for whatever reason helps students connect in different, more heightened ways, to the content.

The experience of hearing the testimony of a Holocaust survivor at the museum provides an example of a time when the symbolic chains were momentarily broken. The Holocaust survivor participants listened to at the end of their tour was also

presenting to two other groups of school children that were on field trips. At the beginning of the tour, I had asked one of the docents whether it would be all right for us to listen to the survivor with these other groups. She gave me the time that it would begin, and I gave the option to the participants as to whether or not they wanted to time their tour of the museum so that they could listen. They all agreed that it was important to them to structure their time accordingly. Below is the conversation that unfolded about the Holocaust survivor. Throughout this chapter there have been examples of deferred meaning, and in those moments there are certainly times when these participants had their knowledge called into question about what it meant to know Jewish history or to know their own education differently.

Here, though, we have an example of how these four individuals (on one day, and two individuals on a separate visit) are called to question their own assumptions in terms of a break, a fissure, in the symbolic chain. The Holocaust survivor did not "fit" into their already existing understanding of what Holocaust survivors are supposed to look like, what they are supposed to say, and thus defied their expectations of what they were supposed to feel in response. George, in fact, speaks of being disinterested at the "lack of Hollywood feel" in this survivor's testimony.

To be honest, I wasn't really interested in what the speaker had to say. I thought what she had to say was valuable but I wasn't interested in what she was saying. And I don't feel bad about that. And maybe it's because I'm hungry or tired. I'm thinking well how many of these students have this same feeling and if you project that over the whole day how many would just kind of talk to their friends and walk through the museum if they didn't have anything guiding them. And it might be sad but if she had some breathtaking story about going through camps or something like that. I mean when you really think about it her experience doesn't have the Hollywood feel.

Generally, after someone hears the testimony of a Holocaust survivor, we might expect to hear reactions of sympathy or empathy. We might expect that an individual feel a sense of good fortune for not having been borne into a situation in which he/she would

have had to confront those feelings of utter despair and desperation. Oddly, though, George does not feel this way. He speaks of a desire to have his breath taken away by tragedy, as though in some way craving that kind of emotional experience, as though that is the emotional experience one is supposed to have in relation to a Holocaust survivor's testimony. But the desire is not being met. The Holocaust survivor was not "really" a survivor. There is a resistance to hearing a story of escape; a latent idea that her ability to testify to surviving the Holocaust is lessened by not having been to Auschwitz. This individual had not been to Auschwitz, tattooed, nor been witness to the murder of parents or siblings. Instead, she had survived the Holocaust by first being sent to Russia and then escaping to Costa Rica. This, we are to understand from the participants, is not what Holocaust survivor *really* mean. Ben elaborates:

Ben: You hear Holocaust survivor and you're like someone who went through the camp, or something! And then you get there she was with the Russians and then she went to Costa Rica and it was, OK, this is something and she's definitely a survivor of the time period. But when you think about Holocaust survivor you think of something specific. And then I was thinking in terms of the students hearing that they think of something much more specific. And we're much more, you know, this isn't something that I thought it would be but that's fine. When they get there I wonder what kind of frustration that it is for them.

Here, Ben is articulating expectations about what Holocaust survivors experienced and the stories he expects them to tell. Put in common classroom language, Ben's "prior knowledge" was troubled, disconfirmed, and therefore expresses a worry that the students who were listening to the speaker would be frustrated.

As I think about Ben's worry about the other students' frustration with hearing this type of Holocaust survival story, I wonder if that is not a projection of his own frustration. Similarly, Eva expresses concerns about "the girls in front of me getting really fidgety". These may or may not be projections. However, there is little doubt that there is something outside of the one to one relationship between audience and speaker.

There is clearly a mediating influence that sets up certain expectations and defines criteria for satisfaction; which does not include, it seems, a time in Russia followed by an escape to Costa Rica.

At this point in the conversation I disclosed my own feeling about the speaker, as I was similarly surprised and curious at my own longing to hear the story – the one I knew, the one I wanted to listen to – as told to me by someone who had been in all of the places that I have learned about the Holocaust and those who survived it.

Jim: And I wonder about...did I want to hear? I think I did. I wanted to hear a fairly awful story. You guys would agree? What is that craving? You know when you're going to see a Holocaust movie is there some kind of excitement about being bothered in this way?

George: I'm not a big psychology person, but we have this fascination with death. You think about a car wreck...it's the same thing you see that and you slow down and you want to see what's going on. Here's the same thing, it's a slice of what happened and it's like the ultimate car wreck. This death urge in us wants to know what's going on there, wants to see what it's like to be that close.

Eva: And her story would have brought that breath of life to those images too. It makes it even closer and even more real and makes all of these things....into a human form.

I recognize a multitude of processes happening in this brief conversation. One of these is the characteristic of the abject I mentioned earlier: that of the beckoning call to look at that which most disturbs our sense of safety and comfort. This is particularly evident in George's endeavor into, as he says, the psychology of the car crash. Second, each of these participants, including myself, are confused that our experiences can not be easily articulated. We make caveats for our emotional reactions of boredom, of wishing to hear a narration of the horror we had just finished seeing.

But the evidence for why this is a break in the symbolic chain is because of the ways that social "others" are referenced. Hollywood, students, car crashes, movies, and concentration camps all call forth narrative that predates each of our entrances into the

museum and into the lecture hall where this speaker made her presentation. They call to a narrative that exists in our socio-cultural landscape and becomes an over determining factor in what exists to us in this conversation as common sense. It sets up boundaries for what counts as a Holocaust survivor and for whose narrative we do not want to lend that label. Patty said that she has an image of what story a Holocaust survivor should tell, saying that she "already had the story written for [the speaker]. She was going to not get out, her family was going to get denied their travel visas, they were going to go to a camp, and she was going to escape while many of her family members would die there". But this story was disconfirmed. And there was a curious disappointment that all of us felt there. This is, I think, evidence of a break in the symbolic chain. It is a case where once the existing narrative was broken, there was not another one in which these participants could readily find comfort. The event, a trauma, resisted signification.

In social studies education there is a desire to introduce students to the idea that multiple perspectives around social and historical issues circulate and compete with one another. In some ways, this break in the symbolic chain is nothing more than that which must come before the introduction of any alternative perspective. It is in the recognition that what stood firmly as "the" story, in that fleeting moment before that firmness gives way to something more flimsy, that we find the traces of the unconscious voice: the Big Other. When teaching and learning about Christopher Columbus, about US foreign policy in Latin America during the Cold War, about the degree to which corporate news media place profit over principle, before any alternative perspective can be introduced, the old story must be felt on the part of the learner to be fragile. It takes a break, and in

the case of this visit to the Holocaust museum, the break came in the form of a survivor testimony that did not conform to that which circulates in our society as a "real" one.

Turning and Returning
and making this chapter its own "before"

Grace reminded us above, referring to genocide, "this sort of thing continues to go on". Indeed. Among the goals of social education the hope that atrocity might be avoided by a generative and progressive democratic praxis within formal schooling (and more informal spaces of public pedagogy) might be one of the more ambitious and far reaching. Grace is certainly mindful of this in the moments of her articulation of the memorial visit. The idea is that given enough exposure in schools, museums, and other places of learning, that students will be able to develop ethical capacities as subjects in the world that are predisposed toward just and human action. This idea is indeed hopeful, although has fallen – at least thus far – unbearably short. Proponents of critical pedagogy and education for social justice are of the most vocal proponents for education along these lines. But there is a one place in particular where this goal is readily apparent: study of the Holocaust. Indeed, many a Holocaust Studies center, curricular unit, museum, and memorial are framed by a mantra of "never again". Studying the Holocaust, indeed any mass trauma highlights the idea that "we can make education from experiences that were never meant to be education" (Britzman, 2003, pg. 1). This is one reason why using this topic and museum as a case example provides for a place of analysis. Such a statement – never again - refers to the desire to wash away the human tendency of destruction and intolerance and to do so through the study of a series of events and contexts that are the antithesis of such hopes. The statement

implies an idea that such a goal, to eradicate mass violence, is attainable and desirable. And while this is certainly a desirable outcome, it is uncertainty that we are met with when considering the degree to which it is attainable. That kind of uncertainty unnerves the social studies.

Therefore, it is with caution that those of us in social studies education should think about such a goal, what it entails, and wonder what, exactly, it is that should never happen again, and to whom it should not happen? This particular question arises from the observation that such "never again" language *does not* provide the context for units nor museums (should any exist) on The Atlantic Slave Trade, nor for units on imperialism/colonialism whose history provides the set up for current and ongoing atrocities in Rwanda, Sudan, and other countries around the world.

The "never again" idea that underpins such Holocaust Museum construction does not provide the same foundation for thinking about (or building museums to remember) the study of South America during the cold war, a time in which the United States supported autocratic regimes at the expense of thousands of innocent lives. Indeed, there are more than 100 Holocaust museums and memorials in the United States. There are very few dedicated to these other atrocities. This pattern necessitates two interrelated questions that, for now, remains rhetorical: how can pedagogy, remembrance, and trauma come together to somehow induce some kind of preventative, some antidote, to the human processes that sustain mass violence and aggression? And, does the pattern also underscore the continuing fascination we have with the particularity of the Holocaust and indicate a preference for the consideration of some suffering of some people done at the hands of some systems and groups? Obviously,

the other side of this is that there is a preference of avoiding the consideration of other kinds of suffering, happening currently to hundreds of thousands of people around the world. After all, "adaptation to reality is always painful" (Klein, n.d., cited from Britzman, 2003, pg. 156).

Therefore, I use the case of the Holocaust and a visit to the Holocaust museum to not only illustrate how we learn, what we refuse, and what we accommodate, but also as an illustration of how difficult knowledge is engaged through the deferral of knowledge, the ways that old stories and narratives have been interpolated into the fabric of our conscious selves to position our understandings, and how these understandings, when troubled, can be variously taken up with comfort into other narratives or be left without narrative anchor.

While this is only an example of one topic, we need to ask ourselves how these patterns play out in our social studies classrooms. What histories are present before us, to which we are ignorant and perhaps positioned to continue to ignore? When our students know that there is a unit on slavery upcoming, which of these students will think "oh god, why slavery, why not anything else"? Which will "turn down their music" on the way to school in an effort to brace themselves against the knowledge being circulated in those lessons? As teacher educators, how might we think about the degree to which we want to trouble, indeed introduce new traumas, into the lives of pre-service teachers? I will further engage these questions in my concluding chapter.

Prelude to Chapter Four

Media, Film, and *When the Levees Broke*

One reason for using film in this study is the prevalence of this genre in social studies teaching. One of the ways that social studies teachers often present curriculum to students is through the use of film. In my experience as a methods instructor and field supervisor for social studies teachers, films like "Dances With Wolves", "Saving Private Ryan", and "Schindler's List" are often used as historical documents to engage students, to motivate their interest, and to foster senses of historical empathy and understanding. While these Hollywood productions are utilized to different effects, and with a host of issues being considered in the literature on social studies research, documentary film is another genre of film that is a substantially utilized resource in social studies classrooms. Studies have been conducted as to how films are used in classrooms (Marcus, 2005), the accuracy of Hollywood films (Metzger, 2007), and also about ways that various vocabularies from media and cultural studies can be brought to bear on viewing film and other media texts (i.e. Buckingham, 2001).

I use film in this study with the tenets of media education in mind as a backdrop for its use. The goals of media education and social studies education are overlapping. Indeed, my interest in media education is what lead me to psychoanalytic theories of learning to begin with. As I became fluent with the ideas of media education, it became clear that not only is *information* about the world mediated through various media and the inherent ideological and political issues of representation, but that all *knowledge* is

mediated to begin with. For me, and particularly as it plays out in this chapter, psychoanalytic theory extends those issues of media education.

Examples exist in the social studies that point us toward a study of media that allows for personal complexity. Authors make arguments that highlight what it would mean to engage all knowledge as mediated and argue that such understandings equip a more sophisticated citizen. Robert Bain's (2006) study demonstrates how students "face hidden authorities" in the history classroom, and provides a glimpse of how the tenets of media education (all media messages are constructed, are purposeful, create winners and losers, etc.) can be extrapolated into other situations besides these popular media texts and how we can have students deconstruct media messages (Bain, 2006). His study does encourage students to be questioners of authoritative texts with the purpose of helping students acquire the skills necessary for a critical democratic social studies project (Kincheloe, 2001). Helping students do so through an examination of textbooks does not need justification of the dangers of "new" media. Segall (1997) argues for social studies teachers to interrogate the films and texts used in classrooms for the underlying cultural assumptions implicit within them. Walt Werner (2000) extends this argument in "Reading Authorship into Texts" in explicitly borrowing terms and questions that inform media and cultural studies and inserts them into specific classroom contexts in terms of how they play out via social studies textbooks (Werner, 2000). The intent of these pieces is to position students as active readers of these texts as opposed to passive recipients of knowledge considered as neutral or a-positional.

These media educators/researchers working within the social studies go beyond having students deconstruct media messages for their own sake and hope to extend this

knowledge into the realm of democratic society and cultivation of students' critical capacities. Here, the purpose of media education is often political, although the extent to which politics are engaged differ. Some might couch this democratic project in terms of traditional democratic behaviors like voting (Kubey, 2004). In Kubey's study a critical engagement with news media seeks to make students more comfortable with decoding and discriminating between "good' and "bad" media. This comfort, in turn, should assist young people in becoming more engaged in the political process as it, and the delivery of it through mass media, becomes de-mystified. The importance of such work should not be understated.

Others, though, still concerned with this idea of progressive (critical, radical) democratic education leverage media studies differently (Buckingham, 2003b; Giroux & Simon, 1989; Stack & Kelly, 2006), but mostly from beyond the disciplinary confines of social studies education. While still concerned with individual agency, these authors see democracy as more than voting and media education as more than inoculation. These authors share the idea that democracy goes beyond the voting booth, and as also operating inside of a house, at a dinner table, for example, where democracy is less of an action and more a discourse to be fostered. While many of these authors provide valuable insight as to what and how social studies educators might use the critical study of mass media, an issue that the literature has in common is a lack of attention given to subjective experiences of pre-service teachers as they work through the process of being introduced not only to the critical study of media, but also to various media texts themselves, and then what these experiences mean when brought to bear on questions of

personal significance and the effect that has on what it means to teach about these issues. This research hopes to bridge that gap.

When the Levees Broke

The pedagogical invitation offered to elicit these processes was, in this part of the study, a viewing and discussion of *When the Levees Broke – A Requiem in Four Acts*, which is a documentary film that confronts the impact Hurricane Katrina had on the people of New Orleans. Directed by Spike Lee, and presented in two parts on back-to-back nights on HBO in 2006, the film is provocative in its portrayal of the victims, and also the manner in which the "natural" disaster (the hurricane itself) gives way to a human crisis underwritten by human error. It is, in essence, a film in which the viewer is confronted with a disturbing picture of race and class relations, the inadequacy of our government in responding to crisis, and the inequitable ways in which those facets (government response, class and race) relate.

The film itself is comprised of news footage shot during the hurricane and its immediate aftermath as well as interviews of those who live, and have lived, in New Orleans[4]. The viewer is asked to confront several tragic stories; a man watches his mother die while waiting for assistance to arrive at the New Orleans Superdome, a husband watches his wife carried away in the flood waters, elderly without medicine, children without clothes, and families without homes. Race, of course, is foregrounded as an issue in the film and is both present and avoided in the discussions the participants

[4] Social studies educators at Teachers College constructed and freely distributed curricular materials that correspond with the film. See www.teachingthelevees.org for the curriculum itself.

and I had about it, as you will see in the chapter. New Orleans itself is what we might call an African-American city – 60% of the population of the city is African American – but in the most vulnerable parts of the city the population becomes decreasingly diverse, and in the lower 9th ward (the area most terribly affected in the flooding) the population is 98% African-American. Most of the speakers in the film are African-American, and a great deal of specific attention is given to the ways that this group was, and has been, wronged in various situations related to the hurricane as well as other historical processes in the United States.

Because the dissertation is concerned with difficult knowledge, the above-mentioned sections of the film are appropriate fare. It presents the participants with representations of social/historical trauma. It is a contemporary example of a time where (at the very least arguably) a population was treated in such unjust ways as to have profound consequences on those who did not have sufficient power, access, or attention to be in a position of priority. It is a current social manifestation of historical processes in the United States – slavery, civil rights, racism, classism – and as such presents viewers with a counter narrative to that which dominates the terrain of most social studies curriculum and textbooks.

Chapter 4

When the Levees Broke:
The Routing and Re-Routing Of Difficult Knowledge

Introduction

When driving on a freeway we try to take the most direct route to our destination. We are trying to get "there" as quickly as we can. However, there are often construction projects that make the road difficult to pass in our vehicles. There are detours and so we are re-routed. We will see the signs that alert us to an upcoming road closure and allow those to direct us to the place where we are trying to go. We follow those signs. Of course, we could try to navigate the construction zones in our vehicles, but there would be significant problems. The workers on the construction project would tell us we are doing something wrong. Our vehicles would be subject to driving over terrain for which they were not designed. And so, the easier and smoother route would be found if we follow those detour signs and simply go around the trouble spots. Something similar seems to happen in the encounter with difficult knowledge. But in the routing and re-routing of difficult knowledge, we take these detours without being cognizant of the signs. Our desire to take the exit and go around whatever is in the way is not thought about, it is a sort of automated process, an unconscious GPS navigator, that protects the driver from that which is ahead that might upset the driver. Our unconscious navigation system takes over so that we are able to avoid knowing that our vehicle is unequipped to deal with the upcoming terrain. We are spared from

acknowledging that trouble. So, we are routed and re-routed in our encounters with difficult knowledge, toward some considerations and away from others.

This chapter is based on a viewing of *When the Levees Broke* and an in-depth interview regarding the participants' reactions to it. What I will present here is a less visible description of the ways that the participants in this study – themselves social studies teachers – approach some topics and stray from others. These articulations are meant to explore a two parted problem: one dealing with the ways that difficult knowledge is difficult to discuss in any direct manner, and the other with how difficult knowledge can bring into focus the kinds of issues that teachers will be more or less likely to engage with their own students in their social studies teaching. It is an exploration of those unacknowledged street signs that re-route our journey of learning and a mapping of how we find the detours and the meanings we make along the way.

I distributed copies of the film to the participants in the Spring of 2009 and asked them to watch the film on their own (the film is four hours long, to watch in a group seemed to me a bit impractical), to note their reactions, and to be prepared to talk about their reactions in individual interview settings. What I hoped to find out is whether or how their reactions to the film varied, the degree to which they were engaged emotionally in it, and whether and how they implicated themselves, social studies issues, and their teaching. After all, "what educates is not the person but the emotional experience of relating that becomes the basis for further meaning" (Britzman, 2006, pg. 166). In light of these emotional ways of relating that provide the groundwork for further meaning, and – I think – further teaching, I wanted to know whether and/or how the invitations to knowledge presented in the film were taken up, which were accepted

and which were rejected, and how they were discussed. What I will focus on in this chapter are several instances of "engaging" and "avoiding engaging" that occurred during the interviews. I refer to the ways of engaging and avoiding engagement as different ways of "routing" and "re-routing" the effects of difficult knowledge. These routes are most often outside of conscious awareness.

Three Routes

Route 1: from student to teacher to student

One of the expectations in teacher education is that teachers should think about their own learning, their teaching, and their students. Students in education programs are asked to write educational autobiographies in order to become aware of their predispositions to schooling and learning. Later, we remind our student-teachers that they are not teaching content, that they are teaching students *about* content. Learner-centered instruction is put at a premium. Teaching is, in this sense, about the students. And what the participants talk about here - Eva and Ben in this section- has a great deal of focus on their students. But as I will show, moving quickly from "self" to "student", while obviously something we want to have happen, also prevents some other forms of thinking from happening. In this movement from self to other, are some things lost? Can that desired result of teacher education also manifest itself as a retreat from certain issues, an avoidance, and a place where the difficulties and complexities that are incurred as a result of learning might be placed upon students rather than dealt with by the teachers?

Psychoanalytic theory lets us investigate such questions. While I use the language of routing and re-routing, these are processes that involve the ego defense mechanisms I

described in chapter one. These defenses are the road signs and detours, the strategies by which we avoid the uneven terrain of the construction zone that is being made from the mix of our past experiences and how we variously engage and avoid them. One of the ways that difficult knowledge and the knower get re-routed, one potential detour, is by placing our uncertainties on to others. Again, this is something every one of us does, every day, indeed all the time. Instead of tolerating ambiguity and complexity, admitting to ourselves that things might be more or less troubling than we previously imagined, we allow ourselves certainty and (basically) give the complexities to some other. This particular difficulty of difficult knowledge is itself multi-layered, particularly when considered in the context of a student/teacher. The encounter is at once felt to be of consequence for the self and for their students. It is a task of making some kind of sense of the trauma being engaged, and then trying to navigate the complex and ambiguous task of making that trauma into pedagogy, into a lesson to be learned by others.

Eva, for example, explains how the film raised a series of questions that she claims to not be able to answer. She wonders how it could be that the structures put in place to protect people failed so miserably in New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The re-routing works in the beginning of this exchange through the ways in which Eva avoids answering the questions she poses to herself. She is eventually able to offer answers. To do so, however, she has to imagine answering to her students.

Eva: I ask questions about how something like this could happen and exist without anyone doing anything. And it makes me think: So they should die? Because they can't swim? So I didn't...I just...why to them, why here, and why didn't we fix this?

Jim: Can you answer any of those questions?

Eva: No.

Jim: Maybe not definitely ...but how would you answer those questions?

Eva: I picture students coming to me and saying "Ms. Eva, why didn't anyone take care of those people?" And I can't answer that question.

Jim: Really?

Eva: Because they didn't care.

Jim: That's an answer.

Eva: They don't care. They were in Iraq. And Louisiana didn't have what they were concerned about. That's how I feel.

What we see in this encounter are Eva's struggles in dealing with what she saw in the film and, mostly, with how to address that "seeing" in a pedagogical encounter. She has encountered difficult knowledge—difficult in its very imagery and difficult to address pedagogically—and is unsure how to engage it in the context of the pervading narratives within social studies, ones that, more often than not, portray government as a force in-the-know, one who is responsive to its citizens and treats them equally and fairly.

But as we delve more deeply into this dialogue, more becomes apparent: One may ask, as I, using the lenses of psychoanalysis, do, why is it that Eva first claims the inability to answer the questions? And when she does give herself permission to answer the questions, in many ways (at this point) superficially, she has to do so imagining her students being those who pose the questions. She also implicates herself in the problem in her interrogating why "we" did not do anything to fix the problem or address the issue. Immediately after this she contends that she cannot answer those questions that she has posed. She moves from the inclusive "we" to an unnamed "they", removing herself from implication in the process, a first routing away from the self and onto the other.

She also marks a distinction between "knowing" and "feeling", delineating a separation between the affective world of emotion and the desire for stable and certain knowledge. The difficulty here has to do with the way that Eva takes her uncertainty, her initial inability to answer, and re-routes it into the circuitry of the learning encounter that she imagines happening with her students. Something gets in the way of her answering her own questions to herself, perhaps acting to protect some belief or disposition that may lead to discomfort. Her eventual response, that perhaps those in power "care" less about those who do not have valued resources to offer, might provoke some anxiety. After all, this kind of thinking explicitly counters the narratives - the egalitarian and meritocratic ideal - that most commonly circulate about our society. As I described in the previous chapter, this kind of counter narrative can be troubling, particularly if there are not other narrative structures in which to place the discomfort. It seems here that Eva takes this discomfort and uses the narrative structure of the pedagogical encounter with her students as a location in which to place it.

Below, Eva continues by alluding to a part of the film where several citizens of the lower 9th ward of New Orleans claimed to have heard bombs going off at the time the levees broke. This section of the film is suggestive of the idea that in 1927 the local government decided to explode the levees in a particular way so as to flood the areas of town with lower property values; keeping the large and higher valued homes and families safe. The proposition of this happening has a clear impact on Eva's thinking about society, and the ways that different individuals are treated in it. What she says here continues directly from the above exchange.

Eva: When I heard in the section that talked about the flood of '27 and questions about intentional bombing.... Does this happen? If it does how do I not know about it? If it does, how do people sleep? If it does, does our democracy work? Or do you as a president get so far removed from your people that you don't think about these things. And you think of resources instead of lives? So I think I could answer personally how I feel to students, but I don't know if I could...are they the right answers? Is this really what happened?

What Eva does here is ask several critically important questions. She is posing questions whose answers could take direct aim at knowledge that could potentially open conversations about the nature of our society, the way it works, and the relationships between government and citizen. Those are important topics for social studies teachers. But the questions seem to be imbued with an anxiety, and they could even be read rhetorically as indicating Eva's beliefs here: that "this" does happen, that our democracy does not work, and that our government places higher value on resources than people. It seems to me that the anxiety present here is not centered on thinking about the fate of the citizens of New Orleans. It is not about being able to correct an issue; nor is it the assignment of blame. Because when Eva asks, "How do I not know about this?", she is giving voice to an anxiety about what are felt as truths (at least suspected truths, she only approaches them through questions) outside of her conscious awareness. Her suspicions are routed into questions to be taken up as issues to confront with her students.

Eva does experience the possibility of a concrete government policy to destroy life and property as a topic to be debated in a social studies class, but it is experienced as "feelings", in some ways intended to be off-limits in her pedagogical life. Yet it is clear that in Eva's own learning, the knowledge that makes a difference is felt as emotion; something beyond rational. However, if we recall that earlier distinction between "knowing" and "feeling", and the attendant complexities that this distinction

raises for her pedagogy, she is not only resisting her own affective knowing, she is also resisting the possibility of uncovering her students' emotional worlds. Such a distinction marks a desire to avoid the kinds of conflict that are instantiated upon the introduction of complexity into classroom life. What about this kind of conflict allows Eva to foreclose such complexity? Further, what are the consequences this pattern of thinking would have on what Eva would and would not engage with her students in her own social studies classroom?

Britzman (2004) notes "students are suspicious of any knowledge that bothers their wishes for certainty and control, even as many also can admit their discomfort at feeling controlled by others and the pleasure that they make from the experience of doubt" (pg. 77). When Eva is resistant to answering the very questions she poses to herself, I see evidence of both such a suspicion and a wish for certainty. She seems to be caught in a negotiation between those feelings and a concurrent wish to share those feelings with her students, complete with the ambiguities and pleasures made from doubt. Yet she is uncertain in her struggles with whether or not the latter wish could be fulfilled in pedagogy due to an anxiety of what such an act would provoke in the classroom. Put differently, just as she is reluctant to acknowledge the propositions forwarded in the film as truth rather than feeling, she is similarly reluctant to share those kinds of propositions with her students. I ask her why.

Jim: And why are you reluctant to share these feelings with your students?

Eva: Because...I'm not afraid to make them upset and I'm not afraid to make them uncomfortable...but is there a problem with presenting something if you don't know that it's true. Is there a problem with saying, "people question whether our government would blow up a levee?"

Jim: Are you asking me that question?

Eva: Yeah...is there a problem with telling students this?

As a social studies teacher educator I am delighted to know that individuals serving as social studies educators are struggling with the ways that information comes to awareness, the Freirian conscientization that is a fundamental underpinning of overcoming oppressive structures. I am also pleased when students ask me for advice in that I find such requests to be an affirming residual of some kind of relation of trust. I am able, in other words, to aid in Eva's development as a critical social studies educator. In the process of this, though, there are moves that Eva makes that preclude the consideration of some of the consequences that this kind of thinking has on Eva herself.

Once again, the consequences of her knowledge are voiced in terms of her imagined students. She is not able, willing, or perhaps not properly incited to think about the effects that these questions have had on her own thinking. In her insistence on not being afraid to upset or cause discomfort in her students ("I'm not afraid to make them upset"), it is possible that she is saying the opposite of what she intends to mean, something that often happens with ambiguous, confusing, difficult knowledge. It is also possible that what is experienced in her viewing and discussing of WTLB are feelings that she would rather avoid. If that is the case, then what she is saying here might be an avoidance of that discomfort erupting and being directed back at her, the teacher. She is, in other words, worried about the anticipated re-routing of difficult knowledge that might happen in her own classroom.

Another part of what Eva is upset about is having information withheld, of being left in a state of ignorance (why didn't I know this before?); an experience where the trauma was not just on the order of seeing fellow human beings in suffering, but as a

personal threat to a previously stable worldview. And she ends this section by directing the question back to me, the interviewer, her former teacher, and she wonders if there is something wrong with posing particular questions to her students. Such a line of questioning is a further manifestation of moving her complexity someplace else.

For Eva, then, difficult knowledge is routed from self to her students so that it can return to her once again under the guise of mastery ("can I tell them something if I do not know that it's true?). In this return, she is able to articulate her feelings in terms of what she would tell (or withhold from) her students.

While Ben's impressions of the film differ from Eva's, his descriptions of WTLB indicate a similar kind of re-routing that takes the information from the film and directs it quickly into helping "teach a lesson" to others without understanding first what the lesson might be for the self.

In our conversation, Ben stated that he did not cry when he watched WTLB and was surprised at why. What was interesting for me as I listened to Ben's initial reactions of the film is his notion that a "crying" response to the film would have been the "correct" one, so I asked why he thought it was the case that he didn't. He responded by saying:

> I was really confused as to why that happened. I think part of it might have been that I was at my parents' place in the living room rather than in my own room on the computer or in my own home in my basement. It was strange, especially like, seeing a montage of dead bodies like that there would be this really real connection for me. And when the guy was talking about his mom and how she passed away he had to wheel her off to the side. I remember watching that, and thinking, OK, here it comes...and it was nothing. I have a little cold, maybe that's it, maybe my tears are all dried up. I don't know it strange! I'm usually very emotional about that kind of stuff. It just didn't connect the way I would expect it to.

Ben is juxtaposing the connections and responses he says he expected to have while viewing these images and testimonies with a description of a lack of emotional

connection. He mentions specific scenes to which he anticipated having different emotional reactions than he ended up having. He tries to justify his lack of tears in terms of his having a cold that had perhaps blocked his tear ducts or something. Still, I cannot help but to notice the invocation of his parents. What would the difference have been if he had not been at his parents' house? Do his parents not like it when their son cries at movies? Are there some ways that he feels as though while he is watching the film that he is also being watched, perhaps judged, by some other people, in this case his parents? These are questions that I cannot answer. However, I did have a possible reason why he might not have connected to this film, why his emotions were routed away from those avenues he expected his emotions would run. I wondered about whether his raced and classed position (remember, Ben is an upper-middle class white male) in society might have had something to do with the lack of emotional connection to the suffering portrayed in the film. As I researcher, I am also white and from an upper class background, so I cannot claim to be free from these tangling layers of social signification either. Indeed, it may influence my own questioning and examining of this particular topic.

Jim: One thing that I have to ask is: is it hard to see yourself in that film? Being from where you're from, being who you are, and I don't mean this to be accusing in any way, could that be part of it?

Ben: Maybe I don't see myself in it. That's interesting...maybe that is part of it. That is something I have thought about, not even just in teaching but just talking to people about poverty and oppression, I wonder how I can ever understand that because the only thing I've ever been is a rich white boy. And you know, so is it the same to be able to teach it and not be able to connect to it like that, so maybe that is part of it. And I know that is something that I was thinking about too, that some of the people in the film just seem like caricatures in the way that they act and I just remember wondering if I could take them seriously. So yeah, maybe that's part of it, and that is troublesome. I hadn't really looked at it that way, its totally possible, I'm not going to say, "oh yeah, that's totally it".

In the statements above I find Ben working through a new idea. He is able to acknowledge that as a self described "rich white boy" he may be differently equipped to confront issues of poverty and race with his own students. That he is able to voice his reactions in terms of uncertainty and consideration is, I think, quite a sophisticated move for a social studies teacher to be equipped to make. We want our social studies teachers to be able to consider openly the effects of race and class on their (and their students') teaching and learning. Still, there is a significant re-routing happening here. We have an example where Ben moves quickly away from the question I had asked. I asked about seeing himself in the film, and he moved to consider his own students and the lessons that might or might be learned from watching the film in his class. It is a rapid move from self to other. Ben routes a consideration of the ways his race impacts the way *he learned* during the encounter with this film and instead discusses the way it impacts *his teaching* of the content. He is talking about race and class, issues central to what I consider to be a good social studies education, but he is deflecting the conversation away from self, and onto the "other" of his imagined students and the ways he imagines their interactions with the individuals in the film.

Throughout the above exchange I see evidence how these different routes might be working through some of emotional baggage of this engagement with difficult knowledge. He moves away from crying and toward counting ("the first time they showed a dead body. I was like, 'you know what? I want to see how many dead bodies they show. I noticed they show 1, they show a couple more, then they show 25 in a row."): away from that which is felt irrationally and toward what can be tallied and concrete. Feeling the gaze of his parents, Ben explains away his emotions in terms of his teaching and his students. He

does so, and this is an example of the re-routing of difficult knowledge. It is not always obvious or immediately felt. Instead, the re-routing is often what Lacan (1987), while discussing the specifics of resistance (a particular mechanism of defense), terms "a strategic compromise". While discussing topics and issues crucial to social studies education – the critical analysis of text, the ways that class and race impact pedagogical possibility – his talk would seems to be completely "on topic". But the topic taken up in his speech during this interview protects the self in many ways. While we cannot know what it is exactly Ben is avoiding without further analysis, there is certainly evidence that he moves away from implicating his own ideas and thoughts.

Seeing a route taken toward the very important issues of Ben's own race and class but, at the same time, also a re-routing of difficult knowledge to keep him safe from a perceived threat, I asked Ben about his lack of emotional connection to this film.

Ben: I'm surprised to say that it wasn't. And I don't know why. Like...not to be creepy, but I filled out a "movies that made you cry" survey, and I saw that after I watched it. And I didn't cry, and I'm surprised by that because I cry pretty easily when it comes to that kind of stuff. During my WWII unit we watched, Pearl Harbor, WWII, and Band of Brothers. It was really hard for me, especially the Band of Brothers lesson. I was like "this is going to be a tough lesson. You need to get out of this, like you need to be strong for the students". Because when I watched it the night before I got done and just sat for a while, because it really engaged me. And so I was kind of shocked that I didn't get really upset by this because I watch a lot of documentaries and they usually do.

A few issues are worth mentioning. If Ben was not emotionally engaged by this film, that would be absolutely fine! He could have said something like, "you know what Jim? I was not moved by this film." What takes on significance here is the degree to which Ben qualifies his lack of emotional connection. First, he seems to draw a direct tie to emotional connection with the physical act of crying. I did not ask him (at this point) whether or not he cried while watching the film, yet he moves quickly to his not doing

so. Further, and again exemplifying the detour away from the self he quickly moves from the particular content of this film to other films that he uses in his own teaching, films that did, I suppose, move him closer to the tears that connote (for him) emotional connection. But as he continues to discuss those films he uses in his own practice, there is an added layer of prevention on his physical expression of emotions: his students.

The significance of placing uncertainty onto the student

What we've heard thus far from Ben and Eva are not refusals, nor confrontations with the teacher or researcher, they are strategies that reroute discourse away from the traumatic, but still within the confines of the investigation. In their movement from self to other, Ben and Eva remove the ambiguity of feelings and emotions from themselves in exchange for considering ambiguities only in terms of their students.

As I have written repeatedly, social studies education is often the stuff of difficult knowledge. At the same time, though, social studies curriculum asks students to undertake all sorts of conversations that help to avoid difficult knowledge and the concurrent confronting of our ultimate vulnerabilities and our uncertainties with the world. One of these avoidances, mentioned in the introduction, happens because of strict state and/or district standards. There are others, though. Mock trials about the teaching of evolution, debates about abortion and the death penalty, structured academic controversy about the dropping of the atomic bomb – each of these, more often than not, takes a route away from thinking about the actuality of these events. By focusing on whether or not the atomic bomb should have been dropped, for example, we often avoid the consideration of what happened to the hundreds of thousands of people on

whom the bomb was (despite whatever structured arguments are made about it in a classroom) dropped. This kind of re-routing carries with it an attractive logic: that we can take the trauma of the past and, through rational debate and procedure, prevent future ones from taking place.

That is, whether or not we acknowledge the traumas of the past as such, they are there, and more often than not are avoided. They are taken up within other, more readily available discourses, just like the social studies teachers in the Holocaust museum in the previous chapter were able to take up their experiences –although difficult – in rather easy ways until they got to the Holocaust survivor. As I demonstrated above, Ben and Eva take what I consider to be their own discomfort and re-route it into the discourse of their students. It is a release valve for difficult knowledge

The issues of avoidance and resistance take on a different order for a social studies teacher who does, in fact, confront these issues in a more direct manner. These kinds of teachers are asking their students to do something that is somewhat unnatural, "to confront perspectives, situations, and ideas that may not be just unfamiliar but appear at first glance as a criticism of the learner's view" (Britzman, 1998, pg. 11). In other words, in considering multiple perspectives, particularly as they relate to the issues of race, class, and systemic violence, the student may feel as though their own perspective is flawed. The implications, then, become the greatest for those social studies teachers who – if I may – teach the way we want them to teach.

Route 2: From Race to Class

One of the things about difficult knowledge is that the lessons do not fit nicely into what we already know about the world. And when things do not fit we have to find some

place for them to fit. Sometimes the knowledge gets rejected ("that can't be, I don't believe that"), sometimes it is accommodated, and sometimes it is siphoned away and rerouted.

The processes of engaging new and difficult knowledge happen all the time, we all encounter them in our daily lives, in school, and most often in social studies because of the content that is so traumatic, so often. In this section, and as an illustration of the above, I take up the specific issue of race. This is not a new area of study. Several education researchers have taken up the idea that race is an issue of consequence for social studies education (see, for example, Epstein, 1995) as well as something that is avoided and circumvented in similar ways to those I will describe below.

For example, Dickar (2000) deploys a Foucauldian understanding of discourse to aid in the understanding of how race continues to remain an oppressive force in education. While she does not couch her findings in terms of psychoanalytic theory, there are certainly overlapping interests in that she explores the ways that race is "deflected", "evaded", and placed into individualistic discourses. Similarly, Haviland (2008) categorizes the ways that race talk is avoided within a critical discourse analysis focused on illustrating how race and power interrelate and overlap. She finds that white teachers avoid race by using several strategies, including "avoiding words, false starts, letting others off the hook, and changing the subject" (pg. 44). My consideration here corroborates the findings of these studies, but offers a focus not on the fact that race is avoided, but instead on the processes involved in such avoidance.

Of the issues, scenes, and emotions that the participants shared with me in our conversations, there was one common denominator: Each of them made at least a passing reference to Kanye West and his appearance in the film. Let us remember that Kanye's Hurricane Katrina moment came during a national telethon when he went off-script (this before "going Rogue" was en vogue) and said, "George Bush does not care about black people", while standing beside a shocked and speechless Mike Myers.

When the Levees Broke is nearly four hours in length, and is filled with testimony from citizens famous and anonymous. That Kanye West makes unprovoked appearances in the participants' reactions, then, is noteworthy. It begs several questions. First, what is the degree to which our popular culture informs what we find important or worthy of comment? Some of the participants, like Ben for example, found it odd that West appeared in the film at all. His concern was whether all celebrities would get equal treatment or if West would be showcased or highlighted for some reason. Patty, who sympathized with West, was concerned with how we were not privy to the rest of the context of West's comments. West makes a most provocative statement about race. In the United States the topic of race and its history is constituted of a set of difficult knowledge unto itself. Forced migrations, servitude in slavery, injustice of Jim Crow, the public scene of lynching, and the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina serve as reminders that despite our election of an African American president, the issue of race is far from settled. In these interviews, though, the topic of race is re-routed toward the issues of class.

West's statement was heavily treated in the popular media; in fact Grace makes the hypothesis in our discussion that for most people in the United States, Hurricane

Katrina was synonymous with West's statement, indicating the kind of iconic moment his statement has come to take on in the years since. What is important here, though, is that while West's statement directly and explicitly invokes the notion of race being of the utmost importance to the conversation about the aftermath of Katrina, and while all of the participants commented on his appearance in the film, they also avoided discussing race. In order to begin to illustrate this rerouting, I borrow from my discussion with Lynn. I asked her what she found interesting about the clip she chose as one that she wanted to discuss with me.

Lynn: Well I just think it's really interesting that like, Kanye says "George Bush does not care about black people", they show the clip, and then they show three people who are automatically like, "Well he's saying this because we have to see where he's coming from, he was just trying to speak from the heart". These sound like excuses to me. And for Al Sharpton to say that he was saying something constructive. Like how is that constructive? In juxtaposition to that, when Bush is clearly speaking without a script, without a teleprompter, and he tells Michael Brown he's doing a great job, we don't hear, there's nobody on the right...or nobody to defend Bush coming in after playing that video clip and saying "well he meant this, or he is speaking off camera, or he was trying to relate to the people". You don't have any of that.

Lynn is concerned about the treatment Kanye West received in the film. She seems frustrated and upset that there was not a voice that represented the idea that George Bush did and does, in fact, care about black people. I take Lynn to understand Kanye West's statements as a mistake, something that needed to be corrected or apologized for. Perhaps because of this, she seems to view the subsequent speakers in the film (all praising West's statements) as apologizing for Kanye West. Lynn is equating what she perceives as West's misstatements with Bush's comment that has been played and replayed in which he commends then director of FEMA Michael Brown.

Each of these might be fair interpretations of these scenes in the film. What she does not do, though, is take up the issue that was explicitly addressed by West, that of the treatment of African Americans in New Orleans following this hurricane. This is

fine. What I am choosing to focus on here, though, is the immediate move away from the issue of race. The topic of race is rerouted into a discussion about how West's statement was destructive. I asked her why this was the case. She responded by saying:

Clearly people are already angry in this situation. So all he is doing is polarizing people, which he said it did, there was definitely a tension in the room. And its not solving a problem, it's just complaining about it. If you think George Bush doesn't like black people, then whatever. But is that really the platform that you should be using when people are suffering? Whites and Blacks? I think that turns it into a race thing. It turns it into a race thing.

In Lynn's elaboration here she is laying claim to a position that race should not be an issue that is used divisively. If focus is placed upon race, she seems to be saying, there is more - not less - trouble. I use this exchange to highlight the ways that Lynn moves around race, toward but then away from it. I then asked to her consider Kanye West's statements as a perspective worthy of taking seriously. She notes the anger that was being exhibited throughout the film, but race seems to be off limits as part of the equation of this anger. I wondered, then, how this anger should have been expressed:

I guess he could make it more of a general statement. Like the government doesn't seem to care about us. Or, the government is acting ineptly and people are dying because of their mistakes. I think that would have been a valid point of view.

Notice that Lynn's recommendation for how to make a more constructive argument is to remove race altogether. Race is made silent; it is removed from the statement. More than this, though, any reference to an individual is taken out of this statement as well. Rather than mention George Bush, Lynn would prefer Kanye West to have implicated "the government". Instead of talking about black people, West should have simply used an inclusive pronoun. While acknowledging that people are losing their lives in the process, Lynn takes the individual, and their race, out of the equation.

Where Lynn is angered by the ways that race is taken up and would rather it be absent from the conversation about the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, Patty reroutes race in a way that places it into a context of class and unrestrained capitalism. She uses Kanye West's statements as a way to allude to race without really investing in this as an issue. First, Patty responds to a question of how she personally felt in response to West's statements. Earlier in our interview she described the movie as being about the way that race played a crucial factor in the government response to the situation in New Orleans and that statement serves as the departing point for this exchange.

I feel lucky I guess. I mean just I think it's in the last act where one of the guys that's wearing tinted glasses brings his mom back to her house and she just breaks down. And it's like, I'm never going to have to know what that feels like. I don't live in a place where that would happen and I'm the right class and race for all of that.

Jim: It's interesting because you described the movie about race. In many ways it is. If you or I were African American, would you describe the movie differently?

Patty: Maybe. But I think it was just as much about class as it was about a race. But I think that if I were talking to a black person that I would include a comment about race. There's an awful lot of pissed off black people in this, and I agree with them to some extent.

Jim: But not all the way?

Patty: I mean, there were an awful lot of white people who lost everything too. And so I hesitate to say it's just a race issue when you've got the woman who just has a tent on the foundation of her house, ya know. And it's I think that New Orleans is a diverse enough city that it was poor people of every race that were affected.

Jim: Definitely

Patty: But I also don't like making things about race. I don't know. I hate to say that it's just race, because I feel like there's more to it.

Patty is obviously correct that the problems in New Orleans were not just simply about race. But what is interesting here is not Patty's ability to parse social problems into their constituent parts, although it is certainly important for social studies educators to be able to do so. Instead, it is in her disposition to avoid the particular aspects of the situation that do have to do with race.

According the US Census Bureau, African Americans account for 67% of the population of New Orleans. Further, according to data published by the GNO Community Data Center, African Americans account for 98% of the population of the Lower Ninth Ward, the area that was most heavily affected by the breach of the levees (http://www.gnocdc.org/orleans/8/22/people.html). So while Patty is correct that there were plenty of white people who were affected by the flooding, African Americans were disproportionally represented in the areas where the consequences of the broken levees were most dire. Had I presented her with this data, she may have reconsidered her views. The point here, though, and Patty even articulates this desire, is that she has a preference for not "making things about race". She also admits to her race contributing to her perception that a situation like this would never happen to her. So it is not the case that Patty has a conceptual framework that prevents her from seeing her whiteness as a privilege. Despite this acknowledgment, and perhaps because of this privilege, she is able to not make things about race in ways that she might revise in the company of an African American person. In other words, she seems to avoid race as a compelling issue to take on as a singular topic because she can.

Maybe what is occurring here has something to do with an inability to distinguish between the experiences of others and the experiences of the self. Or, as Britzman (2004) offers, "something difficult occurs in helping relationships. We are apt to forget our differences" (pg. 6). When we enter into a relationship in which our conscious motivation is to educate, our tendency is to think of the other as we think of ourselves. It is common in methods classes to hear students/teachers talk about the creation of an activity or lesson that they remember being significant and successful in their own

learning. These activities similarly ignore the differences between self and other and preclude the teacher from being able to consider the individuals under his or her care as having their own situations, desires, and histories. This might help explain why these white, relatively affluent, individuals can easily (or so it seems) avoid discussing race. Grace articulates

> Hurricane Katrina was Kanye West going on TV and saying that George Bush hates black people and that's how it was portrayed and that's how people remember it: you know the terrible conditions that black people were living in this country. And I never really understood the racial aspect of it; I just thought it was more of a class thing. So I've been sort of resistant to the idea that this is the shining example of race in America. Yes we've got this under layer of society that we are not caring for, but that is more so about greed and unrestrained capitalism I would say.

As was the case with Patty, Grace attributes the problems of New Orleans with unrestrained capitalism. She acknowledges West's assertion about race and then immediately moves away from race and toward class. These statements, while avoiding race, still are important indicators that these future social studies teachers are considering issues as interrelated and perpetuating social inequity. Still, it is curious that while class can be taken as a singular issue, race, for these participants, cannot. Part of this, of course, is based on the well tread terrain of white privilege, but part of white privilege is an avoidance to understand the white self as raced and, vis-à-vis this particular race, positioned in advantageous ways.

The Significance of Routing Away from Race:

There are many ways to discuss Hurricane Katrina, yet all of the participants chose to focus, at least for a moment, on the scene with Kanye West. Why is that? In what way does this focused attention operate? I find that this focus is a way to route themselves away from Hurricane Katrina. After all, Kanye West was talking about race, and did so during a telethon to raise money for the survivors of the flood. In a way, what the

participants are doing is talking about *someone else* talking about Hurricane Katrina and the way the he felt it highlighted an ongoing racial issue in the United States. It is not only a route away from race, but also a route away from talking about the specificity of Katrina to begin with. It is a movement away from discussing Katrina and its aftermath to a discussion of talk about it. The signifier (the talk) becomes the signified (that which took place) and, in the process that which is signified (Katrina) takes a back seat to its representation. It becomes a form of discourse about discourse rather than a discourse about the event the discourse is attempting to describe—a way of avoiding the discussion about Katrina through a privileging of a comment about a response (or lack there of) to it.

This, to me, is surprising. These are students who have taken courses that specifically address race and privilege (a required course called TE250) and whose methods courses ask them to confront similar issues through the works of authors like hooks (1994), Ladson-Billings (1995), Villegas (2002), and Epstein (1985). Despite all of this work, the participants here avoid race for various reasons that we do not know for certain. And the reasoning is not the issue of import here. Instead, the issue is simply in noting the patterns, the fact that routing and re-routing occurs based in some kind of psychic formula designed to protect the self from the kinds of discomfort that are anxiety provoking in that they reveal the self to be in some way implicated in the suffering, pain, and loss of others.

In this sense, then, this section does not reveal new issues. It is not a novel observation that white people have difficulty understanding race and its effects in pedagogy (see the entire body of research on Culturally Relevant Pedagogy). What it

does, though, is attempts to leverage open the lid that contains and obscures the processes behind such avoidances and resistances. What I mean here, couched more psychoanalytically, is that Grace and Patty get close to race, even mention it specifically, before quickly reorienting the conversation to other issues, and therefore is evidence of the instantiation of some mechanism of defense, those mechanisms that act as the re-routers of difficult knowledge.

> A mechanism of defense attempts to mediate the ambivalence (between the passionate desire for knowledge and ignorance), but its attitude is precocious in that it relates and equates the psychical to the social, even as it tries to protect and resolve, at least at the level of phantasy, anticipations that threaten to undo our observations, coherence, and standing in the world. (Britzman, 2004, pg. 77)

What Britzman helps us to understand here is the curious movement toward and away from an issue, in this case race. It could be, based on this thinking, that this re-routing comes just as the individual recognizes, anticipates, that going any further would jeopardize the coherent understandings that underwrite the ways in which the individual functions in the world. If that is the case, then rerouting is a way to avoid consciously confronting that which is provoked, and in this sense is a trace of difficult knowledge.

Race matters in social studies education. To think about race in the classroom, though, means being able to talk about it openly and honestly. The re-routing that takes place here indicates to me that further work must be done in various pedagogical locations to help white teachers engage with race as a singular issue. In my final chapter, I make suggestions as to how such a confrontation may be taken up in social studies methods courses. The significance of this re-routing lies in the ways we can

note the ways that certain topics are more or less comfortable to be treated in their practice. After all, if these participants are rerouting their thoughts away from race onto other political and social issues in these interviews, I conclude that similar things will happen in their classrooms.

It is also worth noting the routing instantiated by the researcher. Indeed, the routing becomes the research. There are issues to which I react strongly, and these are certainly instances of my own predispositions, levels of confort and discomfort, operating upon my writing and in my interviewing. In no way should we forget that as researchers or as teachers that we are exempt from these routes and reroutes. What I argue for here is an awareness of the features and tendencies of the way we direct our energy, not to lay blame or identify weakness in pedagogy or methodology, but instead to enrich our understand of practice.

Route 3: The Routes Taken: What Connections are Made?

While Anna Freud identified mechanisms of defense, those untidy processes responsible for the re-routing under consideration here, she did not intend for them to be understood as exit ramps in the road toward new understandings. Simply, it is not the case that defenses are "bad". Britzman (1998) reminds us that Anna Freud "considers these first responses necessary because the ego must attempt to defend itself from what at first glance seems senseless, dangerous, and worrisome" (pg. 10). These kinds of re-routing, then, are signposts that information has been encountered that sufficiently disturbs, troubles, or shifts the latent frames of reference that constitute an individual's

world view. In other words, that's good. The question is, once that happens, then what?

It would be much too simple to say that before the individual teacher can help others learn from difficult knowledge they must do so themselves. As we have seen, education and experience does not let learning rest; meanings continue to circulate as they are exchanged between speaking beings in and out of the classroom. And what happened in our conversations about WTLB is far from simply being cases of white social studies teachers not being able to talk about (their) race. As we have seen above, they are able to make connections between the broader workings of global capitalism on a macro scale and what happened in New Orleans. They are able to acknowledge the tangling of social issues like race and class. But what we have seen should also serve as a reminder that the crises provoked by difficult knowledge are at once felt "inside" as well as "outside". Ben and Eva are resisting implicating themselves into the difficulty of this knowledge by bringing in other characters to help them; their parents, their students, their friends, West, individuals who are there only by manifestation in their imaginations. Lynn struggles to articulate an empathy that does not compromise her self-delineated role of "conservative", but in doing so cannot formulate her thoughts in ways that feel sufficient to her.

Participants did say some things that capture a complex understanding of the simultaneously personal and social components (indeed, this distinction seems to collapse altogether) of teaching and learning social studies imbued with difficult knowledge- its traces as well as its more direct manifestations. Again, I turn to Britzman's (1998) reminder of the conceptualization of the psychoanalytic cure: "the

capacity to risk love and work" (pg. 18). Through the actualization of this capacity - transposed into the context of social education, individuals struggle to accommodate difficult knowledge through allowing what is social and historical to be concurrently, and deeply, personal. This is the process of "working through". If social studies education is to be a "working through" of the faults and fissures of the social order (wars, famine, genocide) then attention should be paid to the ways that those encountering these situations make sense of them. In the interviews with the participants about WTLB, I see instances where this "working through" was evidenced, where the speaker was indeed willing to take risks - toward sadness, toward not being able to understand - and at times be able to dissolve the usual separation between self and other. The first example is George's final comments about the film and the way he settles in to complexity.

Soledad Obrien [from CNN] said that she had better intel than FEMA, and so even with these people, these agencies, with all of their resources, had little knowledge. Now whether it's because they didn't want to know or whatever...so then just your average person caught in that, how could they know? I mean, total uncertainty. So even if you know, they, wanted to help themselves they have no fucking idea where they are, or where their family is. Even when people got carted out of the busses out and then planes out, they didn't know where their family was.

I still don't get that. I don't get what the need was to separate people out. I never got a rationale for that, I don't know if I just didn't catch that. I just didn't get that why you would separate people out. And again I have a hard time believing it was the airport personal were sadistic...or maybe they just had the mentality of...well you're being helped so beggars can't be choosers. I don't know..umm..In this case I think there were a lot of victims for a lot of reasons and its difficult to get your head around. Like we talked about it doesn't it make it simple the more you know it makes it more complex, this film made things infinitely more complex for me.

What George articulates here is in everyway an acknowledgment of uncertainties, of unanswered questions, and an address of the ways that such uncertainty is felt as complexity. At other times in the interview he did make moves similar to those above, but here he says "I still don't get that", referring to the ways that survivors of the flood

were evacuated and separated from their family members. He acknowledges the difficulty of getting his "head around" information, and that the more that he knows the more complex the issues get. George seems to be recognizing the idea that for the individuals caught in the floodwaters there was a disorientating nature to their experiences and that, at least in these utterances, that George feels disorientation as well. In other words, George doesn't know "where the fuck" he is, or where he can look for comfort of understanding, just as those he watched in the film could not find their way out of their terrible situations. The route George takes here leaves him mired in some kind of space of non-closure and is able to avoid the danger that Salvio (2009) identifies in confronting documentary genres, which she offers as being able to

> unwittingly reduce what are often traumatic experiences to consoling narratives that fit neatly into the structure of normalizing and stigmatizing discourses. Moreover, documentary realism too often obscures the particularity of difficult or traumatic experiences and in turn forecloses on discussions that may in fact challenge understandings of nationhood, citizenship, and norms of social belonging. (pg. 526)

Instead, George is refusing to reduce these traumatic narratives that are contained in WTLB to some clear lesson to be learned. That is, he does not jump to assign blame or claim to understand the experiences of the others he encounters via the film. In fact, just as Salvio warns that such movement toward these normalizing discourses can lead us away from complicated discussions about the way the individual relates to their socio-cultural world, that George acknowledges uncertainty would lead to questions that could engage those issues in ways that may open possibilities for reconsidering how individuals and groups are treated in the United States. For example, in the above

excerpt, George mentions his confusion at how a news organization could have better access to information than the government agencies that are, in fact, tasked with aiding those facing crises. This confusion, if actualized into interrogations, would approach issues of just who *is and is not* privileged with rapid response to emergency.

For the second example of this kind of routing toward complexity and toward a way of attending to suffering with compassion I turn to Grace's response to a question I posed to her about the ways she thought about her mother's death during her viewing of WTLB. It is, to me, a powerful example of what it means to "risk love and work". I often think that when people read about love as it relates to education, that reading instantiates a whole set of resistances unto itself. But notice how the personal (love of family) and the social can in no way be extricated from each other in Grace's account:

> Any time family was discussed in any way shape or form I thought of my mother. I mean, the stories about "I needed to leave my mom sitting in a corner with a blanket over her face and came back two weeks later to check and she was still there". Or people who come home to find their loved ones still in the house 6 months later...endless number of these terrible terrible stories. I mean I think when you have...I mean my mom died in the way that she wanted to. She was in her home surrounded by people she loved and who loved her so it was a very humane, I guess...But still, you're watching somebody that you love die. I just can't fathom how those people are still...still haven't...I mean maybe they have...would need serious therapy. And when they were saying, "I can't sleep now without these medications" its like, "Of course! Of course"...it's...and then...and they're talking about PTSD, it just hit me that this is essentially a war zone. You just...so yeah...and then the other thing that I continually come back to as far as my mothers death and this sort of thing is....and I think about it with the Paul Farmer book too...is how angry it makes me that so many people have to...uhh...can't have an experience with death like my mom had, you know what I mean? It's like everybody should be able to go through...what must be a terrifying experience...you know...in a comfortable way with people around them.

For Grace, issues of war, justice, trauma, loss, and love are all collapsed and woven together as she works to communicate the way that she experienced this film, and vis-à-vis this film, the way that she experienced the death of her mother. Grace sees herself as extraordinarily fortunate to have had a loved one confront their final days in what she says was "the way she wanted". Grace says above that she is angry that not everyone "can have an experience with death like my mother had". It strikes at the

heart of the intimately connected ways that social traumas are also, and always, personal. Indeed, the wonder of Grace's testimony above - combined with her indictment of global capitalist injustices - is that the knowledge that people in the world are prone to suffering and vulnerable to loss in ways she finds detestable is able to be held in awareness - without judgment or making suffering into a hierarchy - with her own suffering and loss. She does not imagine one to be worse than the other. She is "talking through" her most intimate relationships by using a network of understandings of how systems that structure and underwrite the enduring suffering and plight of unknown others operate on and through these individuals with whom she will probably not ever have immediate contact.

The Significance of Routing Toward Complexity

Bonnell and Simon (2009) offer an idea of intimacy that correlates to both George and Grace's articulations of complexity and considering of the other as something that is both outside of the self and also worthy of their attention. They propose that the reason for undertaking and advocating such a position lies in the possibility for new insights into the way the world works. Such a practice is predicated upon doing what Grace does here, and what George does above, and that is acknowledge the incommensurability of trauma and the interminability of understanding and learning.

> In the relation between the viewer and the experiences of others presented in an [encounter with difficult knowledge], intimacy suggests an act of acknowledgement—an openness and acceptance of the other as such—that resists attempts to reduce the other's experience to something graspable or containable. In this act of acknowledgement lies the possibility for insight; the

> possibility of a transformative critique of one's way of understanding the world. (pg. 69)

Similarly, in "Love, Guilt, and Reparation", Melanie Klein helps to teach us the lesson of why these intimate feelings, fears, and instances of anger and frustration are important to the project of social studies education. "With the capacity for...identifying himself with others," Klein writes, "a capacity which is a great characteristic of the human mind, a man can distribute to others the help and love of which he himself is in need, and in this way can gain comfort and satisfaction for himself" (pg. 341). It is this distribution to others that is exhibited in Grace's recounting of frustration at the inequitable access to the experience of a dignified death. It is exhibited in the way that she has chosen to forego a career in the classroom and instead work at a non-profit company in order to work to promote social justice. Similarly, it is this kind of capacity for empathy and identification that underwrites a consciously acting individual to be a "citizen" who acts in a way that resists injustice and inequity. Perhaps the personal accentuates what is already social inside of us. Possibly it is the other way around. Or maybe the dyadic separation between the two is antiquated by the time anything of significance happens anyway.

While the previous sections demonstrated how the participants rerouted difficult knowledge away from locations that are important to "route" them back toward thinking about in specific ways, in this section I propose that while re-routing can be in some ways problematic, the routes that difficult knowledge takes can also be pedagogically productive. That is, and I reiterate for clarity, the notion that individuals re-route is in no way an accusation, a pathologizing, or something that can be overcome. We are all,

always, and forever, going to be going toward and away from different frames of awareness. The point is that we should be paying attention to such processes so that we can understand what senses students are making from their encounters with difficult knowledge in nuanced, complex ways so that we might be able to equip ourselves (and our student teachers) with as large of an arsenal as possible when dealing the variety and vagary of student reaction to social knowledge. It is crucial that social studies teachers be able to open, rather than foreclose, possibilities for complexity.

Conclusions about rerouting and further questions

There is an interesting paradox in this chapter, particularly as it relates to the issue of race. The participants seem to be making the statement that "this movie is not about race". I demonstrate that this is a kind of re-routing, a resistance, to articulating ideas that may put them at some self-perceived risk of feeling discomfort. At the same time, I now suggest, even in light of these assertions that this chapter itself "is not about race". Just as the Holocaust was used because of the various ways it gets taken up into discourse, I look at the ways that social studies teachers approach and make detours around certain topics in the curriculum. In this particular case, it was an issue of race that teachers avoided discussing. However, what I contribute here is not only germane to a discussion of how white teachers avoid race. Instead, my work here has a broader implication of asking us questions about just how it is that any kind of knowledge is worked around, bypassed, and circumvented through subtle slips and turns of conversations. All of these teachers took TE250, all of them seem to have concerns about issues around race, as well. But what consequence does attention to these processes have for those of us who teach courses that hope to heighten the attention

given to issues of race and equity? It seems as though their talk is sufficiently "critical" yet I wonder if their unconscious fears protect them from certain kinds of talking and thinking about what was brought up for them in their viewing of WTLB as well as our conversation after them. Might it mean that we need to teach differently? Attend to different issues than we might generally think of addressing?

Moving away from race, I am interested further in the pedagogical ramifications of the kinds of routes that I demonstrated through the stories of George and Grace; those that seemed to rest in a complex and uncertain place. I wonder if the degree to which an individual can tolerate that kind of complexity has some consequences for the capacity they have to introduce difficult knowledge in the classroom in ways that open, rather than foreclose, considerations of other human beings. Certainly it appears that the death of Grace's mother is part and parcel to her understanding of difficult knowledge and, further, the nature of her work in general.

Finally, the importance of these considerations and speculations that I make here also respond to the following issue: We want our social studies teachers to confront those issues that are "critical", we want them to introduce to students issues of injustice and inequity so as to bring them to awareness. I think this is what WTLB does/did for the participants of this study. The problem, though, is that there are consequences to this kind of pedagogy. The consequences are neither meant to be warnings against nor reasons to avoid, but they are important. In other words, what if we get what we want? What happens when students in our teacher education programs "do" the things we want them to "do"? Then what? In the final chapter I will attempt to answer that

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question by suggesting consequences for social studies teacher educators, their practices, and thoughts for furthering it.

Chapter 5
Teachers talking about teaching difficult knowledge.

Introduction

I have employed several analogies in this dissertation to help sharpen the picture of what it is that psychoanalytic theory does, how it operates, and how it might bring certain parts of the picture of difficult knowledge and social studies into different focus (constellations, black holes, finding water on the moon). Allow me one more. This time, I depart from astronomy as I recall a scene from the film "The Big Lebowski", a postmodern detective story in which the main character is a middle-aged burnout caught in the midst of a case of mistaken identity, blackmail, and kidnapping. In one scene, the main character – "the dude" – is sitting in the living room of a man who he suspects is involved in the kidnapping part of the caper. While "the dude" is sitting on a couch trying to get information from this man, the man is writing in pencil on a note pad. "The dude" is curious about what the man is writing, but before leaving the man tears the written note off the pad. Using his detective's intuition, "the dude" walks over to the pad, grabs the adjacent pencil, and lightly shades the entire sheet of blank note paper that rested just under the note, thus revealing the contents of the note.

In many ways I do something similar in this chapter about the ways that social studies teachers talk about the their practice as it relates to teaching difficult knowledge. In this case, I am investigating the impressions of their experiences teaching students about various social studies topics, but also their experiences learning about them, their histories of relating to other people, and their notion of what it means to teach and learn at all. Because I am left with impressions (indeed, impressions of impressions) rather

than an explicit message, I shade them in with the literature and theory that informs discussions of difficult knowledge.

Recall that the problem with difficult knowledge is layered. First, there are issues of encountering historical trauma with the intent of learning some lesson. We saw in Chapter 3 that learning about difficult knowledge is in many ways mediated by the already existing discourses that shape our understandings about the social world. We saw how the "pre-viewing" of the Holocaust museum was predicated upon prior experiences learning about the Holocaust as well as upon personal histories with trauma and loss. Those personal histories became even more apparent in Chapter 4 as the participants struggled to accommodate the difficult knowledge of Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath. While those two chapters were about the ways in which the social studies teachers who are the participants in this study encountered difficult knowledge, this chapter explores what happens when they discuss their teaching of it. In other words, this chapter addresses the second part of the dual layered problem of social studies education and difficult knowledge and attempts to begin to answer the question of what happens when the stuff of difficult knowledge is meant to become the stuff of pedagogy.

As one might expect based on previous chapters, what happens as they discuss their teaching is curious and is marked with hesitations, jumps in logic and thought, and imbued with traces of psychic conflict. These are consequences of the difficulties of difficult knowledge that Farley (2009) describes as follows:

> [Difficult knowledge] is difficult not only because of its inclusion of traumatic content in an otherwise-sanitized curriculum, but also because it poses a challenge to teachers and students, who, in

> efforts to understand such knowledge, may be confronted with affective traces of an *internal* history made from primal helplessness, disillusionment and crises of authority and (not) knowing" (Farley, 2009).

Farley's comments foreshadow several of the tensions that arose in my final interviews that focused exclusively on eliciting participants' experiences with teaching difficult knowledge. One element Farley highlights is that traumatic content is – as became apparent through our conversation – often sanitized and so issues like war or the spread of empire is somehow devoid of death and violence. Some of the participants - now speaking from the position of social studies teacher rather than mostly as a learner- discuss their curriculum as not being at all able to accommodate such discussions of difficulty. Those comments generally are wrought with frustrations over the pressures of a curriculum that asks what is variously felt as too much (content) or not enough (time).

The second issue that Farley identifies for us is that when such trauma is being called forth in the classroom it is likely to be marked with all sorts of seemingly inappropriate reactions. Those are the traces of a history that all people have: of learning to cope with frustration, tensions of intimacy and dealing with vulnerability. When the teachers do engage topics they view as carrying the baggage of trauma or difficulty, the kinds of affective traces that are elicited are often troubling to them. They report students getting angry with them, laughing in the face of gruesome representations of violence, and resisting meaningful engagement altogether.

I acknowledge that social studies teachers do not necessarily think of their jobs as helping their students understand difficult knowledge. I understand that that is a term, concept, and theoretical construct that I am superimposing, or shading onto the

impressions they leave about practice. And, I recognize that one way to read each and every one of the teachers' stories here is simply a question of finding the "right" methods of pedagogy and classroom management. But my purpose here is not about evaluating academic success or failure. It is about questioning what we can learn if we consider difficult knowledge to be a provocateur of something that escapes the boundaries of the classroom. Therefore, I am interested in their descriptions of teaching the episodes in history that constitute difficult knowledge.

Hearing from Each Teacher: Difficulty and Difficult Knowledge

To begin these final conversations I told each of the participants that I wanted to talk about their own teaching of difficult knowledge. Early in the study the participants and I had had in-depth conversations about their own engagements with difficult knowledge in the Holocaust museum, watching *When the Levees Broke*, and in other contexts. But we had not discussed their teaching of these and similar concepts. That framed the purpose of the interview. Next, I asked them to discuss the "difficult" concepts that they had taught over the last school year. In asking this question, I reminded them of our earlier conversations but suggested that they answer the question in any way they liked. The topic itself was re-routed in three (Lynn, Ben, and George) of the cases. These three teachers chose to take up the idea of difficulty in terms of issues that presented procedural problems rather than a focus on how their teaching confronted issues of trauma, its representation, and how students understood these. These are parallel to the instances of routing and rerouting that we saw in the previous chapter and so I begin my analysis of the five teachers' interviews with Lynn's, Ben's, and George's cases before moving to Eva and Patty.

Lynn. Lynn began our conversation by talking about having students learn to use scale to measure distance on a map. I had just asked her to describe the difficult topics that she has taught over the course of her internship. She chose to discuss her recollection of teaching students how to read maps.

Lynn: I think teaching the very beginning of the year the map reading skills was really really hard for my students because I don't know if they necessarily ever really, I'm sure they had to do it for something, but never had to use a scale to measure distance. It was hard for me because I never had to teach a skill necessarily. Like over and over again in a way that 6th graders would understand. I found myself being like, "Ok how do I explain this? Let me just do it."

Students in social studies classrooms are commonly tasked to learn about how to read maps and measure distances on them using scales. The question she poses – "how do I explain this?" – is an important one for teachers to ask themselves, and hopefully they can resolve a solution that avoids the teacher doing the skill for them.

It is not that Lynn cannot discuss difficult knowledge, rather that there is an initial avoidance of it, and it is the nature of that avoidance that I wish to highlight here. An intended conversation about difficult knowledge gives way to a story that forecloses the complexities of learning and negates the potential for her students to have their own struggles with knowledge. It should not be surprising to learn, as we will see shortly, that Lynn tends to avoid controversy altogether in the classroom. After all, eliciting controversy rests on the ability to allow for a diversity of opinions, a fundamental expectation of individuals "doing it" themselves.

As our interview progressed, and as I asked her questions meant to elicit her experiences with teaching social and historical trauma, she made it clear that engaging her students with difficult topics was not a part of her social studies practice with the sixth graders she teaches. Naturally, I was curious about this. Lynn explained that this

was the first time that this particular curriculum was being taught in her school, and so she had to rely on the curricular materials that had been agreed upon by her department colleagues.

Part of the problem is the awful curriculum that does these case studies from different regions. And, I don't want to say we, but the district lets the textbook really drive the curriculum as opposed to letting the state standards drive it. So that's sort of been the challenge.

Here, Lynn defers her curricular decisions to the social studies textbook. Difficult knowledge was not present in the textbook, she claims. However, in the English class that she teaches, Lynn taught a lesson about memoir in which the text under examination was "Baseball Saved Us", a book about Japanese internment during WWII. In the lesson about this book Lynn incorporated aspects of the Holocaust. As we know, the Holocaust is a topic in which Lynn is highly interested. She describes this as a great lesson, and remembers it as follows:

I read that book to them and there's an author's blurb about how the Japanese were interned. So I read the book first, and I asked what questions they had. And there were a few kids who were like, cuz the blurb talks about how in '42 the order was past and they were sent to camps and no one apologized until 86 or 84. So one of the kids was like, "so they were interned for like 40 years?" And I was like, no, so explained it again. And then it was like, "question: was it the same as concentration camps in Europe? Who is Hitler, all this stuff?" All these questions. It was really awesome. And I had a really hard time...it was so...I anticipated some questions, but it was like, OK, how do I explain a concentration camp to 7th graders without ___?

Jim: How did you?

Lynn: I said that they were these places in Germany and other places that were...they had two purposes. One was extermination camps, the other was a labor camp where they were worked to death or starved to death. That was kind of where I left it, I didn't go into the specifics. Without being so graphic, and without saying like..

Jim: Why not be graphic?

Lynn: I guess I wasn't comfortable because my mentor was in the room. And I could tell that she was watching and listening to see how I was going to explain things. So I felt this extra pressure, and I wanted to make sure I said it in a way that explained what it was accurately and truthfully but it wasn't.... I don't want...I think she thought is wasn't on topic, she was annoyed...because the lesson was about memoir.

Initially Lynn recalls her having to correct historical misunderstandings about Japanese

internment. After this correction, she reports her students initiating questions that compare Japanese internment to the Holocaust. The story Lynn tells about this lesson also reveals some tension in the relationship between she and her mentor teacher. It is this tension to which Lynn attributes the methods by which she explains concentration camps. She is happy ("it was awesome") that her students had these questions because of the connections they were making between the memoir and their prior knowledge. But there is a concurrent displeasure expressed in that she feels a pressure from her mentor teacher to "stick to the script" of the lesson. It is evident through her testimony that the students were incited to ask questions that Lynn found important.

Yet her uncertainty about how to explain this awful episode of human history is revealed through questioning how to teach this to her seventh grade English students. I am surprised by the fact that Lynn, who is so incredibly interested in the Holocaust, had not thought about how she would teach it to her students. In talking through this lesson, she described how she avoids the graphic and specific detail of what it was that occurred during the Holocaust. Why this worry? What prevents her from showing graphic images or talking about the specific details of the Holocaust? To engage this issue further, I wondered what would have happened if she hadn't avoided these details.

I think they would have had a lot more questions about like, "how" and "why". How did this happen? Why was it able to happen? Why didn't people leave? Why didn't they do abc, and I'm sure they would be completely shocked.

Jim: Think so?

Lynn: I do...don't you?

Jim: I don't know, that's why I'm asking. I can imagine a whole host of reactions.

Lynn: I mean, we're hoping in English to do our next section. We have an entire closet full of Holocaust books. I want them to read those because they are about kids their age, and it's a really teachable moment, and it's going to correlate really well with us doing the European section. But the other English teachers want to teach "The Outsiders", so I'm not sure if we'll be able to.

Lynn imagines the difficulty that students would have learning about the specifics of the Holocaust. She has the sense that it would provoke a series of extraordinarily difficult questions about how such atrocities can occur. Not just any questions, either. The questions she imagines students having are quite specific. But while it seems to me that these questions (how and why this happened) are productive and appropriate for students in a social studies classroom to both pose and attempt to answer, Lynn took steps to avert these questions before they were asked. Her students, she said, would have been shocked to learn about the Holocaust, so she chooses to keep this information from her students.

I am sensitive to the allusion to the "closet full of Holocaust books". It strikes me that this knowledge remains hidden away, out of sight, in a similar way to the way that Lynn herself hides the specifics of the concentration camps from her students. In both cases there is a wish to have students engaging with knowledge that for some reason is being prevented from seeing the light of day. There is a moving toward and then a pull back. What is it that prevents this desire from being fulfilled? Why is it that Lynn is not allowing her students to have the same kind of opinions that she is always willing and ready to share with others? In our early interviews Lynn would repeatedly remark on her displeasure when her course instructors would not allow or honor her opinions on topics. It seems that there is some sort of mitigating factor that lies between Lynn's history of learning and her imagination of what it might mean to teach the Holocaust with specific detail. What we are seeing is this kind of conflict play out in her articulations.

As our interview progressed, and I was trying to engage her in conversation about

teaching difficult knowledge, I asked her for examples for times in her teaching when things had gotten controversial. She shook her head so as to say that things had not gotten controversial. And so in what eventually turned out to be the middle of our interview, I thanked Lynn for her time and all of her work on this project. I thought our talk was over and said, "I think that's about it". What happens in the exchange below – I include a lengthy excerpt – follows a series of questions that arise from her surprise that I was concluding the interview and ends up eliciting Lynn's concerns and anxieties about teaching uncertain, ambiguous, difficult knowledge.

Jim: What else should there be? You should tell me.

Lynn: Well I thought there'd be more controversy, more questions.

Since she seems to desire some further conversation, I decide to present her with what I am thinking about her responses and why I thought that we might not be able to go any further. I re-open the questioning.

Jim: Well it's hard [to continue the conversation] if you haven't done controversy or avoided these topics. One thing I might say is that you're avoiding controversy and I wonder why.

Lynn: Ok.

Jim: Or that in some way you're not letting your students voice their opinions so that you would notice the controversy that is no doubt there. Because you have to assume that everyone in there has a history and opinions and that they're bound to be controversial. So my question would be: Why the avoidance? What do you worry about?

Lynn: Well I'm not consciously avoiding, I don't think. I'm not like, "Oh I'm not going to talk about this because it will be controversial." I don't know. Part of it is because it is not comfortable to do, so I'm not sure quite how to navigate that yet. And I think part of it is that I don't feel like I can so much, because I don't feel like it's my class. How do you do it? How do you push back on students without making them feel bad about their opinion but making them think? How do we talk about prejudice and racism in South Africa without a fight erupting or something?

Jim: Well I don't think you can!

Lynn: I don't know if my kids even have the knowledge. They are all white, middle class.

Jim: Does that mean that they don't have a race?

Lynn: No, it doesn't, it means that they have never experienced. They've never had to think about the

world as being an unjust place when it comes to race.

Jim: Probably not.

Lynn: I certainly didn't have to growing up. And so if I were to present them an argument, like the curriculum of TE250 they would just disagree with me. And that's fine. But how do I get them to see that it isn't all the same? I just have a hard time with these really big ideas. How do I translate it to seventh graders?

The above is a lengthy exchange and so there are several issues upon which I will elaborate. At first I explain to Lynn my question about the degree to which she avoids controversy in her classroom. What I am trying to explain is the idea that complexity is already in the social studies curriculum, whether we acknowledge this complexity or not. I try to make the point that avoiding complexity does not eliminate it, particularly when it is not only the curriculum but also the students' thinking about it that is sure to have a multitude of interpretations.

But beyond this restarting of the conversation, Lynn begins to expand on why she does not engage these topics. Her elaborations help us understand the processes of difficult knowledge. When Lynn asks me how you push back on students without making them feel bad about their opinions, she seems to anticipate or imagine several reactions. One of them is that a fight would erupt in the classroom, and that such conflict is a negative outcome of a lesson. Another is that her students would not be able to understand, or that she would not be able to "get them to see" what she wants them to see. Further, Lynn invokes her own teacher education (TE250 is a class about power and society). She worries that her students would disagree with "her", rather than with the ideas she is presenting, indicating an odd collapsing of the space between idea and person.

Knowledge is also circulating in this exchange in terms of Lynn's perception that

students do not have sufficient amounts of it to engage in certain kinds of conversations. After she imagines the worry that introducing controversy would elicit, she moves the focus of attention to her students and says, "I don't know if they even have the knowledge". I think what she means is that because they are all white and middle class they have not had sufficient experience to even begin a consideration about identity politics. Notice the subtle friction between what is certain and what is uncertain here. Lynn does not know if they "have the knowledge", but she is certain that they are all white and middle class. Wouldn't this mean that the students would certainly not have the knowledge? In that very small linguistic contradiction lies an important consideration: that the tension between certainties and uncertainties demarcate the terrain of ambiguity in teaching difficult knowledge.

Lynn helps us to understand that difficult knowledge is not only evident in what gets taught in the classroom. It is also about what does *not* get taught, what gets avoided, and why. What Lynn helps social studies teacher educators think about is that while the curriculum orients and positions teachers to include and exclude certain topics, there is another part of the equation that governs these choices. This other part is constituted by the worries and anxieties of the teacher. Lynn seems to be saying that the weight of difficult knowledge would come back from students and be directed at her personally. She describes that anticipation as being sufficiently worrisome so as to avoid that possibility. But there is obviously a worry, and so underscores the idea that difficult knowledge circulates within the classroom dynamic despite it not being explicitly evident in Lynn's teaching practice.

Ben. Ben begins in a way similar to Lynn by choosing not to engage with difficult

knowledge right away. Where Lynn discussed map reading skills, Ben focuses on the difficulty he has with teaching the curriculum more generally because of the large amount of content that he is expected to cover.

I guess I'll start with the first idea with what is hard to teach. Maybe it's because of what we're doing now. We've just started our world religions unit. I struggle with that because there are a lot of concepts that I want to hit on. And I feel like...it's hard for me to pick and choose. I don't want to overwhelm them. We just did Hinduism, and I don't want to overwhelm them with all these different terms and all these different ideas. But I feel like to leave out one piece, to not paint a whole picture for them, is a mistake. And I struggle. In my department we have to teach to these power standards. The most important standards that you have to hit on according to the district. Those are the power standards. And my curriculum now is more or less defined by these power standards. Like each of my units, more or less, is a power standard being addressed. I've been told I have to do this. So I feel like I have just have to get through all the material. You know, I'm going to talk at you for 40 minutes and you're going to listen to me and hate your life.

Ben, like Lynn, is articulating assumptions about what his students can handle. For example, he discusses not wanting "to overwhelm" his students. He recognizes that because of the "power standards" he feels a pressure to rely on lecture in order to "get through all the material" and that in this kind of situation students will be unhappy. In fact, he goes beyond notions of happiness and makes a strong statement that students will "hate their lives". If hatred of living can be attributed to the actions and decisions of the teacher, this places an incredible amount of responsibility on his shoulders. Unlike Lynn, though, who seems to not find the material terribly exciting (at least the scale and distance idea), Ben does not mind having a great deal of material to cover. Indeed, his trouble is with what to leave out because painting anything but "a complete picture" of a particular topic is a mistake. It is also impossible to do, another wish impossible to fulfill.

While Ben initially chose to discuss topics that were difficult for him to teach as opposed to talking about difficult knowledge per-se, and after talking through the difficulties he is finding with teaching his world history curriculum he talks about a

lesson he teaches about torture. He described his lesson about torture as "his most popular lesson". I was immediately interested in his description about it being most popular. What would be popular about torture? What does a popular lesson mean to Ben or to his students? While we don't know whether popular in this case means fun, exciting, interesting, or engaging, teaching about torture is certainly a topic that provokes an emotional reaction in Ben's students. They groan, they laugh, they *enjoy* talking and learning about torture (I take up the issue of student laughter in greater detail below).

Ben: They love talking about the torture.

Jim: And you like talking about the torture?

Ben: Yeah I do. Maybe that's part of it too. It's all about my...uhh...I definitely enjoy the sage on the stage approach. I'm hilarious, I'm good looking, so it all works for me. That's one of those ones.... again.... I know it, because my mentor last year I've seen him do it. Now I've taught it several times and it's engrained.

Jim: What's the lesson? Walk me through it.

Ben: It starts with the Church during the Middle Ages. And we talk about the developments of monasticisms and all those fun things. That leads into the Inquisition. And then we get into torture. We connect it to modern day torture. I don't bring that up the whole time, and then we get to the end and ask: it's so barbaric right? These are savages, its horrible, right? And they're like yeah it's horrible. And then I describe how we do water boarding. I show a clip of a news guy who let himself be water boarded. And I say all right let's talk about this. Are we worse than them? Are we just as bad as them? Can we use these terms of worse and better and what's our context? And I let it go where it goes.

I do follow up with Ben about these lessons, but before I get to the continuation of this exchange I want to highlight two components of Ben's description of teaching difficult knowledge – in this case it is torture – that have come to light so far. The purpose, it seems, is to lead students into a mode of thinking that elicits a negative judgment on torture so that they can be implicated in a conversation about torture and interrogation that occurs today.

Is Ben using the suffering of others to bolster his own sense of well being in the classroom? Ben enjoys the lesson because he can garner and maintain student attention.

To be precise, there are strange articulations of love that are reminiscent of Lynn's comments of loving the Holocaust (from Chapter 3). Ben admits to feeling gratification in these instances. He calls it the "sage on the stage" approach and enjoys feeling students' attention directed at him. However, there does not seem, at this point, to be an evaluation of the quality of the engagement and toward what end this engagement is productive. It seems that attention paid is a sufficient criteria for what is felt to be successful. To extend this line of thinking, while Ben makes the joke that he is "hilarious" and "good looking", I wonder how much of that joke is actually part of the appeal of teaching this lesson. Or, alternatively, from a purely content-based perspective, might it be that this strategy is actually effective insofar as students will probably remember this lesson?

The second issue here is that Ben is demonstrating a capacity to connect the topic of torture in the Middle Ages to the current socio-political issue of interrogation within the context of the so-called War on Terror. When Ben says, "I let it go where it goes", I take him to mean that he is open to student comments and reactions at that point in the lesson. In other words, he seems to be open to a variety of potential reactions that students might have. I find this a nice pedagogical strategy. He has graphic representations of torture devices through which he lectures the students. He then transposes the conversation into current political questions surrounding what some call enhanced interrogation and what others call torture. I wonder how the students react to this lesson.

Jim: What are some things that they say? Are you showing them images?

Ben: Yeah I have images of all kinds of different ones. The saw, where they saw them in half. The Judas Cradle, where it's like a triangle. Anal or vaginal penetration with a large triangle that was oiled and

lined with cayenne pepper or something. The pear. Are you aware of the pear?

Jim: No.

Ben: It's this device that opens and if you were a gossip they'd put it in your mouth and they would start twisting. Or again, it could be an anal or vaginal thing. All kinds of fun ones like that and they just go crazy.

Jim: How do students respond to those?

Ben: Ohhhhhh nooooo!!! And some laughter.

Jim: Can you explain that? Break that reaction down. What do you imagine going on in their heads?

Ben: It's one of those where it sucks because on the one hand they're into it. And I'm like, "they're into it, I'm doing something and they love it". On the other hand it's really disturbing that they love this. At the same time, I guess I kind of address how we have this fascination with death and dismemberment. And we see that in our media and movies we make. And what is the nightly news? It's all bad things that have happened to people. It's out there, I don't understand it though. I don't have the background to understand why we have that fixation but...

There is an oscillation in this passage between pleasure and displeasure, between the allure of what Kristeva calls the "abject" and how it could also be repellant. He feels some kind of conflict between the high level of student engagement that he seems quite satisfied by and an uneasy feeling that perhaps such lessons should not be so enjoyable. Also, Ben is articulating an awareness that students have probably interacted with media representations of "death and dismemberment" from popular and news media.

There is an unspoken sadistic element in this fascination phrased in terms of the pleasure Ben feels in the attention that is paid both to him and to the traumatic content. It is hard to determine the tone, but it seems Ben does take some satisfaction in describing these devices to me and to his students and therefore reflects the satisfaction that his students seem to find. I am interested in the ways he is willing to show his students graphic depictions of the torture devices used in the Middle Ages and includes allusions to anal and vaginal rape. The attention to detail indicates a desire to provide a realism to students. There are several dangers, though, in providing such graphic detail. Salvio (2009) discusses one of these:

> Documentary realism too often obscures the particularity of difficult or traumatic experiences and in turn forecloses on discussions that may in fact challenge understandings of nationhood, citizenship, and norms of social belonging. (pg. 526)

The connection that Salvio makes highlights a hope of what engaging with difficult knowledge can "do": to provide some critical challenge to learners in their consideration of what it means to live among an indefinite number of others. What she warns of, though, is that providing documentary realism can do something else altogether. It seems as though this is a danger that Ben identifies as well when he discusses that his students are interested in the topic but cannot understand why it is that they are engaged in these ways. I am struck by the degree to which he is able to elaborate on the specifics of the torture devices about which he lectures and, conversely, about the little attention he gives to the ways that students respond to the modern implications and invocations of torture. While Ben seems to be attempting to do what Salvio articulates as a potential benefit of engaging difficult knowledge through graphic images, the focus of Ben's talk is more about his concern with student attention rather than the nature of their engagement.

Below, we will see Patty revealing a concern that her students do not feel the content as sufficiently traumatic. Ben had experiences with teaching torture and slavery that were sufficiently traumatic. Here, he discusses his showing of a clip from the film "Amistad". The portion of the film to which he refers is a graphic depiction of brutality and mass murder aboard a trans-Atlantic slave ship.

I think words are powerful. I think that images are more powerful. Because the first thing I do is have them read a passage from Zinn where he talks about the middle passage. And we discuss it and they are struck by it and say, this is not great, this is horrible and then I say now we're going to watch this clip. Then it's profound silence. They are traumatized by it, much more so than the reading. And then I feel that we're able to have an even bigger conversation about how we prevent these kinds of things, and how do we address these things have happened. With the Zinn reading it was, I read this part here, that

sounded pretty bad, I didn't like that. But after we watch it is, Ok what do we do? And so just...the images for some reason hit them so much more. I don't know why that is.

Jim; What I hear you saying is that the big kind of payoff is that seeing something that traumatizes them allows you to have a conversation that is different than conversations you'd have otherwise.

Ben: And it sticks with them too. They wrote about, in their reflections, how they'll never forget that. It's not like they just say, I'll never forget how horrible that clip was, they say I'll never forget slavery and the whole process of enslaving another person. I think it's interesting cuz they'll talk about this in all of their social studies classes, but then they'll say, "I've never been exposed to it in this way. I never realized until now just how bad it was".

Ben is describing the use of sophisticated pedagogical strategies. Above we see evidence of textual and film analysis in which the teacher elicits students' thoughts through discussion as well as through written reflection. There is acknowledgment that he has traumatized his students in a way that corresponds to the notion of trauma conferring the status of an affect without the luxury of a symbolic referent. I think he may have done the same thing when he was delivering his torture lecture as well, but the result of the lessons is felt much differently. Where the laughter was something of which Ben is wary, the silence is powerful and is interpreted as appropriate.

In Ben's talking about teaching we have an example where a social studies teacher seems willing to take the risk of presenting students with difficult knowledge. He sometimes seems to take pleasure in it. He even goes so far as to wonder about the ethical dilemmas of using such lessons because of the lack of understanding he has about the ways that students enjoy the torture lesson or the lesson about slavery. In short, Ben's case indicates to me that teachers in general might be encouraged to think through their use of graphic images in complex and patient ways. In his own words, his worry is that he does not want to "bash kids over the head" with violent histories. He therefore indicates a wish for a pedagogical alternative.

George. George, like Lynn and Ben, also resists a direct discussion but does so by

articulating a thought that there simply is not too much difficult knowledge in the curriculum to begin with. George's opening comment is about what he taught during his long-term substitute position in a suburban middle school.

> In seventh grade they had finished Mesopotamia. We did ancient Egypt, India, China, and then I left midway through ancient Greece. The class is set up as a survey. We had common assessments, so I pretty much used the lesson plans from the other teachers there. We looked at the geography of the regions, country's names, mountains. That was mostly on their own times at home. We would spend a day on it, they would study it at home, and they would have a quiz on it. For Egypt we looked at mummification...it was kind of...it was just a survey, covering more than 1000 years of history for each one in two weeks. But it never felt super in depth. Just, there's so much. We always talk about it, there's so much pressure to get through so much. There was some higher order thinking going on, but I don't know if I would consider it difficult knowledge.

George's comments here are in some ways similar to Ben's insofar as his focus on having to "get through so much". George's statements seem to be communicating, though, that he would have had a variety of anecdotes had difficult knowledge been part of the curriculum. And while higher-order thinking was part of the curricular design, difficult knowledge was not. One thing that could be happening here is that George is acting in good faith to the research project: trying to make the researcher happy by apologizing for his lack of "good stuff" (this was a concern that he reiterated several times throughout this interview). It also reveals that George does not see the content as including any representation of social and historical trauma. We will soon see that he remembers, seemingly out of no place, several examples of them. Once again, these issues that are imbued with highly emotional topics (for students and teachers) are not immediately accessed in our conversations.

So to begin with, George described how the curriculum he was tasked to teach in his long-term substitute-teaching position foreclosed the possibility of engaging difficult knowledge. While this was his immediate reaction, it was not entirely true. That is, while it was the case that the curriculum as it stands does foreclose many kinds

of conversations – not just those related to learning something about society via the engagement with difficult content – there are times when the kinds of conversations that pass for "difficult knowledge" for George did occur. In a first case, he was discussing the Bill of Rights and in particular the focus of the class was on the death penalty. The nature of capital punishment itself holds several ethical and political questions and dilemmas within its purview. Among them are issues of violence, reciprocity, and what constitutes a "life worth living" to begin with. Here, George describes his attempt to engage this conversation.

But we talked about cruel and unusual punishment. We talked about what was cruel then, what is cruel and unusual now. And you get kids all over the spectrum. So on one side you had people who believe it is never acceptable. Like you could have a person who committed the most violent crime you can think of and it's not acceptable to kill them. And I worded it to intentionally, like, in an extreme way. Like a person could commit the absolute most violent crime you could ever imagine.

Jim: I'm interested because you said you described the most awful violent crime in great detail, but when you described the detail you used some vague terms like "most violent".

George: I said it in one class, if somebody killed a bus full of kids. And kids were like, "what"? and so the next class I decided not to use that phrase.

Jim: Why not? What do you imagine their reaction was in that class when they were like 'what'? What do you imagine going on in their brains?

George: I picture them imagining that and how awful that is. And I really think the reason why I chose to say that is...just...almost this desensitization. I just...kind of the shock and awe thing.

Jim: You wanted them to pay attention.

George: Yeah I did. I mean you have, I swear to God, 90% of the students play Modern Warfare 2 in that school. And they have tactical nuclear weapons...there is no sense of what that is that is going on. You die and come back to life.

Jim: And you were trying to shift that a little bit?

George: Yeah. But then there's the thing about escalation, like how far would you have to escalate to get them engaged.

Jim: But then you moved away from it.

George: Yeah, I just. I guess I got the feeling that I went too far. I still used the phrase "the most violent thing you could think of". Maybe it's because I said "kids", and its them, they ride the bus to school every day. So that example is different to me and you because we don't ride the bus. I don't know, it's just what I use. And I would say that in 8th grade social studies I don't really approach difficult knowledge.

Most teacher educators would find this a quite thoughtful reflection on practice. I think it is. George is struggling with ethical considerations in pedagogy. How far is too far? How do I, as a social studies teacher in a formal education setting, compete with the images and representations that my students encounter in much more engaging and personally relevant ways via multi-media and video games? George is certainly positioning his teaching as a practice imbued with ethical and political considerations.

I am not only interested in the ways that George moved toward and away from such a topic, but also the way that he claims that this was not difficult knowledge ("I don't really approach difficult knowledge"). At some point in his teaching, George felt that he had gone too far, that there was some boundary line in his implication of students' own imaginations. Or, as Britzman suggests often happens in the encounter with difficult knowledge, "the educator's worries transfer into an ambivalent pedagogy that wishes to protect adolescents from – even as it introduces adolescents to –these representations" (pg. 119). This ambivalence is noted when he wanted to "escalate" in order to get students engaged in the lesson, but there was something sufficiently uncomfortable in this "shock and awe" that he only used his strategy in one of his classes. George is frustrated in this tension because he notices their desensitization (Patty notes this as well) to violence; their propensity to enjoy violence in simulated form via their video games and does not know what is appropriate in confronting it. And then, at the very end, an oddly personal testimony is offered: "In 8th grade social studies I don't really approach difficult knowledge". The veracity of such a statement is far from certain, though. In fact, he has been talking about nothing else than an

implication of students in a violent history – in this case, violence against children – that is often reserved for justifications of the death penalty. It is, I think, an appropriate topic of conversation. So why is it felt to be at once "too much" and "too little" to break students out of what George senses to be a student population desensitized to violence? Here, as with Lynn and Patty, we have the expression of some underlying assumptions about what kids can and cannot handle – are or are not ready for. We have, in other words, a case where difficult knowledge creeps into a curriculum that is initially felt to be devoid of it. Yet it seems that difficult knowledge is always there.

Eva. As we have seen, three of the five teachers I interviewed about their practices regarding teaching difficult knowledge initially avoided the topic. However, Eva was able to begin immediately in her description of what it is like for her to teach difficult knowledge. In our conversations earlier in the study, Eva, as I explained in Chapter 4, had expressed a feeling of guilt for introducing difficult topics with her students. Her struggle was related to introducing ambiguity and uncertainty about the degree to which our society "works" and was reluctant to engage these topics. Now, though, it seemed that she was intent on confronting her students with what she referred to as the "human" elements that are left out of the standard curricular materials and specifically the textbook; what I call difficult knowledge. Something had changed. As we began our conversation, she said that just that day she had taught a lesson about war. I asked her to describe the lesson:

> The lesson plan wasn't talking about a specific war, I don't have all kinds of time to spend on this specific one. But we read [the textbook] together and I said, "What's missing?" and they were all looking at me like, "what do you mean what's missing"? And I said, they make it seem so simple, they form a navy and they get really strong, they battle for twenty years and then it's over. And I said, you know what's in the middle here? And that's a moment where they'll look at me and it's like: "they didn't talk

about what happened to the people did they?" And they said, "no!" And so we have conversations about what is missing from the text.

So far, Eva is practicing a pedagogical strategy that aligns with Werner's (2000) suggestions for how to "read authorship into texts". This strategy was forwarded in an article that she had read in a class for which I served as instructor during her certification program. Werner's piece forwards the idea that all texts are positioned and positioning within and towards various ideological and political stances. It seems as though Eva has adopted this as an effective pedagogical strategy in her own teaching. Interestingly, though, Eva does not report asking her students to do the critical analysis on their own. Instead of asking further questions about this absence, and the consequences that it has, Eva then continues to teach her students.

I highlight for them what about the people who didn't win, what happens with them, what happens to their city that we know were destroyed by, basically, biological warfare. We have conversations like about how people do that today and if that's wrong if that fits in rule of warfare. One class is really icy about what war should be and what war shouldn't be and they had a really cool conversation back and forth today. Some kids are like, "well no matter what you should be able to do whatever you want to anyone". And then another kid would raise his hand and say, "would you want someone to be able to do anything to you and your family?" And so those are conversations that I love to have with students but they don't fit in their textbook. But one question like that (what's missing?) is a way I bring my students to have those conversations. Some classes like to do and some are like, "this sucks."

Eva describes her pedagogical practice of engaging issues of difficult knowledge by asking students to think about the accounts, the voices, and the representations that are excluded from the textbook. She is evoking a picture of "the people who didn't win, what happens to them". She begins to elicit an exploration of the "human face" of war but very quickly slides into describing the discussion of an abstract ethical debate about the rules of warfare. Eva acknowledges that some of her classes do not engage in the ways that she wants them to, and that while this is a practice she has adopted and seems to have a certain level of commitment to, the results are not always positive.

Despite this honest assessment, there are things left silent. What is left unsaid?

Does Eva ever say that these people lost their lives? Does she allow students to engage with the idea that such loss of home and life might hold some sort of relevance in their own lives? Certainly, she is introducing important topics and questions to students, but it seems as though – at least in this account – it is still the teacher, still Eva, that is doing all of the thinking. She asks the question: what is missing? This is a fantastic prompt. But Eva does not tell a story of her students answering the question. Instead she describes how she calls their attention to these absences, the ways that the text leaves out possibly disturbing narratives of those who lost family members, and then engages them in conversations about the practices of war. I wonder what would happen if Eva were to ask students to imagine what this would be like, to have them write fictional narratives from the perspective of those who, as she says, "didn't win", and what consequences that would have for her teaching and for her students. How would, or how do, students react?

Her students "get mad" at her for such practices, she says. Eva elaborates:

> They don't get mad at me as in they don't like me, they get mad as like that I don't have a lot of complete answers for them. They don't like that, they're not used to that. They don't like being uncomfortable. They're not used to thinking about why they think things. So what they don't like is that I challenge their ideas.

It seems as though Eva understands that learning "demands both a patience with the incommensurability of understanding and an interest in tolerating the ways meaning becomes, for the learner, fractured, broken and lost" (Britzman, 1998, pg 118). While she is interested, though, she does not seem to elicit those breaks and fractures. In other words Eva seems to have found some kind of comfort in provoking a kind of discomfort, one that arises out of her creation of an educative space that does not provide answers for students who seem to desire them. She is finding her way towards

tolerating the breaks and fractures demanded from a learner, but I am less sure about the ways that her own learners accommodate those demands. I asked her what happened for her students when this kind of activity is undertaken in her practice.

It's not that they don't talk, but they want to know...it's almost like me when I got to a certain point in college and I was like, "why didn't anyone tell me this before?" It's kind of like some of their moments of realization and they are like "why is it this way in our book if that's not the case". Does that make sense?

So they struggle with that, and I do too with them, because I went through that too as a student and I still go through it as an adult. Why does...why do certain people say one thing and that's not the case? So the frustration was more angry at the beginning, and now it's like, "yeah why is it like this?"

I am interested that Eva begins answering by saying "it's not that they don't talk". I wonder if this is a time where articulations mean the opposite of what is stated. My experience is that there are often silences when students are presented with uncomfortable material. While my experiences are not Eva's, and while it may be the case that her students do, in fact, begin articulating their questions with immediacy, it could be the case that Eva considers silence a negative characteristic of a classroom and, thus, attempts to comfort herself with her own speech.

The very next statement ("they want to know") highlights a crucial pedagogical concern. What Eva is describing is an event where students are presented with material that defies immediate understanding. There is uncertainty, and the students want it resolved. In the description Eva is revealing the ties between personal histories of learning and the pedagogical present. Because we do not know if Eva's students are feeling the same tensions that Eva felt when she came to certain kinds of knowing in college (she mentions them), we can make a speculative observation that in cases of learning to tolerate complexity and ambiguity, Eva's own struggles are transferred to her students. We must wonder, then, if she is talking about her own development or that of her students? After all, in our initial interview Eva said the following in relation

to her first learning about the Holocaust:

> And we read Night and discussed the Holocaust in world history. I was like, where was this (in the curriculum before). How did I not know that this existed before!

I am fascinated by the fact that Eva identifies the exact same affect occurring in her and her students. These conversations are separated by close to a year. Questions like this, and because of the repetition of "why didn't I know this before?" reveal the fragility and temporality of knowledge. The line of thinking that might constitute such an experience is that if "I" did not know "this" before, and where "this" is felt to be of particular significance, then there must be other things that I did not know. Knowledge is felt in the present and brings into focus a past ignorance. It is, in other words, an example of education bringing the learner to confront their own ignorance, their own deficiency of knowledge, a time where learning is felt to be traumatic. And, as we know, a mark of trauma is in its repetition. Could it be that we are witness here to a traumatic repetition, this time being played out in terms of Eva's own students? While these questions cannot be immediately answered, we can certainly note the traces of these events in Eva's talk.

The issue here is not whether or not there is evidence to support Eva's students being mad at her or not or whether or not they have the same existential questions about their experiences with new knowledge. Rather, the focus is on how she thinks about presenting her students with the ambiguities and complexities inherent in teaching difficult knowledge. Her perception is the issue of import here, and she perceives that her students are averse to the kinds of intellectual challenges that she poses for them, but that over time they have come to a sort of welcoming, mirroring her own history of learning.

Despite Eva's willingness to disturb and provoke her students, to make them uncomfortable with their knowledge, there are limits to what and how she will do so. I asked Eva if she had shown students any graphic images depicting the loss and suffering promised to her students. At first she responded that because the topic of study was ancient civilizations that there were not any photographs or images to document anything too graphic. She immediately reversed course and made the following statement:

> But I guess even in the conversation today I could have shown them slavery or shown them children in slavery because we talked about how children today were enslaved. I could have shown them images like that. But I really think having them have conversations right now is a good step. And I don't know if I'd be willing with 12 year olds to go there.

What happens here is that Eva shifts her explanation of why she has not used graphic images with her students from a lack of resources to an issue of age-appropriateness. There are definite political stakes to engaging with texts of any kind, whether they are the ideological stances inherent in them or the potential push back from students, parents, or administrators. But it also marks a question that Eva must struggle with: What can my students handle? How much is too much? And, if these are questions that grip Eva's imagination, then there must be an imagined effect. In other words, it might be the case that Eva imagines adverse reactions to certain things. To conclude, while Eva expresses the desire to confront her students with difficult knowledge without guilt, there is a limit. There seems to be a relationship between what is going on here and Eva's earlier statement's regarding "why haven't I learned this before?" Perhaps all of Eva's teachers prior to college also decided that she was not ready, old enough or mature enough to handle the kind of knowledge contained within Night and Holocaust studies. In some sense, she's going against the grain of her experience as learner but

also conforming to it in her role as teacher. In social studies education teachers are faced with decisions such as these all the time. The important message I take from Eva's statements here is that what to include and exclude is not only a political maneuver, it is also one that is imbued with unarticulated worries about what happens in the face of difficult knowledge.

Patty. Patty, like Eva, was quick to move directly into a conversation about teaching traumatic histories. The difference, though, is that while Eva's students were able to proceed in a way that was satisfying to her, Patty's students and their reactions are perceived in altogether different ways. Put differently, Patty wants to have the kinds of conversations that she remembers having in her own education (recall the "shattering" reading of Night) but cannot find the ways to invite her students into having them. Here, Patty describes the nature of her frustration. She begins by alluding to the difficulty of making the traumatic nature of the history she is teaching in any way real to students. These are the first statements from our interview:

With what my lead teaching has been there hasn't been much that has been difficult knowledge because I'm teaching world history 'A' which is prehistory to 1500. And there's a lot of awful stuff that happens in that time period but it all feels so distant to the students that it's hard to even make it feel traumatic to them. It's hard to make them understand.

Jim: Like what for example?

Patty: Like the Mongols killing everyone. And we started the reformation today and I was trying to get them kind of excited and understanding about the fact that Protestants and Catholics were burning each other alive and all the other stuff that is with that. And they were just like, 'Oh whatever. That's COOL!'
Yeah, and I went into this description of the Tower of London and how horrible it was and all the people that were put there unfairly and unjustly for not doing anything except for disagreeing with someone, and how they were tortured. And they were like, "that's awesome, that's like the movie Hostel".

I wondered how Patty makes sense of these reactions, and asked her so. But before I move to providing her answer there are a couple of issues worth noting. First, Patty helps to teach us a lesson about difficult knowledge itself. Notice that she says that

there has not been much that has been difficult knowledge. She acknowledges that "there's a lot of awful stuff" that happens in the time period that might potentially be difficult knowledge, but without sufficient understanding, without a certain kind of engagement, it fails to meet some sort of criteria. She mentions the awful stuff of world history but that it is felt to be sufficiently distant to the students that the content does not seem at all relevant. This is a common pedagogical concern for history teachers. The question can be variously asked about how content can be framed in such a way as to engage, motivate, or provoke a sense of historical empathy in students (see, for example, Barton and Levstik, 2004). Another issue, though, is the language with which Patty describes her desire to make students feel trauma. What does it mean that it is "difficult to make it feel traumatic"? And then, she says, "It's hard to make them understand". These are commands: forcing students to feel trauma, forcing them to learn. Some of the frustration may come from a place of what Philips (cf. Britzman, 2006) calls "the furor to teach" where the teacher wants so badly to teach a specific lesson that she ends up forgetting the students have emotional and psychical lives of their own. It reveals a similar wish to the one expressed by Lynn and Ben to "make teaching simple". I asked Patty to elaborate on what she thought might be potential roadblocks to her students feeling these events as traumatic.

I haven't really tried to think about it yet. It sounds cliché, but they do watch all these movies. I mean their first reaction was like, that sounds like "Saw", that sounds like "Hostel". I haven't seen them, but I can only imagine...so to them it's not even a difficult thing to talk about torture. It's mostly a joke with them. Like, suicide bombing, they'll say, "ha ha ha."

We do current events, and I'll say there was another suicide bombing in Iraq today and they'll say, "Oh those Iraqi's. Those Muslims". And slavery too, we watched a movie about slavery. I didn't teach the lesson, so I don't have much experience with it, but obviously is a traumatic thing to teach. And we watched the movie that showed horrible images and everything, all those classic things, and they were laughing through it. And I don't think it was laughing because it was uncomfortable, I think it was laughing because they don't care. That's the sense I get.

Jim: So this troubles you it sounds like.

Patty: I am. I am very bothered by it.

Patty's attempts to deconstruct students' lay theories about the world and about history end up making Patty feel in some ways inadequately prepared to teach her students in the way she desires teaching them. She begins by thinking through the effects of Hollywood slasher films like "Saw" and "Hostel". She theorizes that the viewing of such films leads to a desensitization to speaking in meaningful ways about issues like slavery, torture, and suicide bombing. I find Patty to be rather disillusioned with herself, her students, or teaching in general; it is difficult to distinguish which might be the case. She states matter-of-factly that she is bothered by these reactions. She acknowledges that students might laugh as a reaction to psychic discomfort, but she does not claim this is as a legitimate theory in this case. In her attempts to engage students in important ways, it is not only her students that are, to put it casually, missing out on some crucial issues. Patty also seems to lose some of her confidence in her students and thus might question the role of her own teaching. Patty continues:

I get so angry and then it's really funny to them that I get angry. Like it's amusing to them. And I get so pissed off. Especially the seniors. They're like, "Oh Miss Patty is pissed again".

So I'm like, of course I'm angry, do you realized you just said, "this this and this" and like as a woman I'm insulted or a Jewish person I'm insulted, or as this or this. And you should be insulted, and they're just like, 'whatever, forget it Miss Patty".

Several things could be happening here. One, of course, is that as a student teacher Patty has not established herself as an authority figure. Students might not see her as "the" teacher and therefore find pleasure in making her upset. Stories like these are not altogether uncommon. Patty seems to understand that students know how to make her upset and it becomes a game. And, what is more, it seems that the more seriously Patty wants her students to take a topic the greater the resistance becomes.

Beneath the surface, though, seems to be a kind of sadness in Patty's articulations. This sadness is not evident in her words, but in her tone of voice. As she describes the way her students deflect her intentions, her words are inflected with a disappointment or sadness. She seems to desperately want her students to feel something appropriate in the face of what she wants so badly to be difficult knowledge. Farley (2009) writes:

> To teach history is to introduce a world that can startle the student's (omnipotent) illusions of self and other in the world. But even in that very moment, the student's vulnerability finds the vulnerability of the adult, and so the teacher, too, may be faced with her own disillusionment in the very effort to instruct others. (Farley, 2009, pg. 544)

Indeed, graphic imagery of torture, slavery, and suicide bombing would startle students. Whether or not it is the case that students are desensitized to these kinds of violence, and whether or not the student is engaging with a consideration of the relationship between self and other, it is certainly the case that the attempts that Patty makes to engage her learners has taken a toll. I take Patty to be asking a question that reveals a remarkable existential dilemma and that is, "can these students actually be taught? Can I actually teach them?" Perhaps Patty is yearning for the ability to produce an education that helps students "think through their own affectation made from social breakdown, profound hatred, and woeful disregard in relation to the affections of others no longer present" (Britzman, 2003, pg. 31). We have seen Patty struggle with her own learning about the Holocaust, but how is she to counter her students' disregard for those lost to the Holocaust or to slavery? Patty is certainly disturbed by what she sees as the inability of her students do engage with the content in the ways she desires. She goes so far as to explain a kind of fear in the very act of opening conversations about what she finds so

important to social studies education.

I'm afraid of their reactions. I really hate getting angry at them, and I feel like it would make me extremely angry if it was a struggle to get them to care about these things. In some ways it feels like it's exerting too much of my own personal energy on them when it's like, ummm, to me...they...if they were moral beings they should just...it shouldn't be a struggle to get them to understand that slavery was bad and not funny. And so in some ways it just turns me off that I would even have to. So I like, have this sort of a wall that makes it hard for me to think about how to do it, because I'm angry that I have to do it in the first place.

Jim: You're angry that you have to do it in the first place, and you imagine being angry if you did try to engage it further.

Patty: Right. Yeah and I see myself angry at them for not reacting the way I want them to react after the fact.

Fear, hate, anger, and struggle dominate Patty's talk here. Could these emotions be reaction to the way students react or do not react to Patty rather than the way they react or do no react to the material? We cannot know. While we could certainly consider Patty's problems to be related to a lack of classroom management strategies to keep students on task or behaving in appropriate ways, I find a conflict between a desire for engaging students and an anticipation of emotions towards students that we are trained to not have (fear, anger, and hate).

Testimony of this kind raises amazingly complex issues for social studies teachers and those who teach them. What we have here is a case where a teacher is attempting to do *what we want them to do*; engage with the serious issues of our time. What is more, it is not felt to be successful teaching. In essence, it might mean that teaching a "simple" or "traditional" social studies (focused on names, dates, and linear chronology) is not only easier to implement because of the pressure it would relieve coming from administrators and colleagues. It is also easier because it avoids the kinds of confrontations that Patty describes above as eliciting unpleasant emotional and affective conditions. As I describe in the next chapter, it implicates the social studies teacher educator in a problem of helping teachers find some kind of strategy for understanding

and working within and through these kinds of tensions with students.

Shading in Broad Strokes

The processes involved in difficult knowledge begin and end in pedagogy. That is, difficult knowledge asks us to learn about, and learn from, the pain and suffering of others. And then, when we become teachers we are tasked to have others learn from our own learning. Therefore, our lessons are imbued with the mishmash of anxieties and tensions that result from lessons we have already learned, the ones we wish to teach but of which we are also afraid. Those wishes and fears play out in contexts with 30 other people, and the results can be quite worrisome. Eva's guilt, Ben's torturous fantasies, George's feeling of going too far, Lynn's avoidance, and Patty's disillusionment are comprised not only of relations to the social studies content or their students. They are also re-runs and refractions of episodes from another time. The tensions that the teachers reveal through their talking about teaching difficult knowledge provide evidence of these processes. I have presented each participant individually in order to sufficiently demonstrate the ways that difficult knowledge is operationalized or variously shut down and avoided.

Above I described the way that the participants of the study responded to the questions I asked them about their confrontation with difficult knowledge in their own teaching. Several things came to light as a result of these interviews. One of them is that difficult knowledge is, in and of itself, difficult to talk about.

There are two things that each of those short beginnings of avoidance have in common. One of these is that each chooses to focus on something besides difficult knowledge: what I want to talk about. This is not to pathologize them. Indeed, an easy

interview might be indicative of my own fantasy of "easy research"! The other, though, is that their talk is marked with a desire for the impossible in teaching. Lynn wants to "do it for them" and Ben wants to paint "complete pictures". While their teacher education and early professional experiences seem to have given them a language to discuss these particular pedagogical issues, there is a less readily available language to discuss difficult knowledge. This indicates that the teachers were not prepared to think of their teaching of difficult knowledge in ways that would attune them to the processes that I have highlighted in the previous two chapters. Instead, they say that is the kind of procedural things that are difficult. Things that are difficult to teach are by nature operational rather than emotional or psychical. This is not surprising because, after all, this is the language of teacher education.

There is obviously a lot going on here: the participants' desire, what the participants see as the students' desire, what the participants see as my (the researcher's) desire. That being said, one consequence of the wishes and desires to which their opening statements allude is that they siphon away the complexities of teaching and learning, and so whatever tensions are arising as a consequence of the social studies materials are left invisible. While they are invisible, we can be sure that they are present. Put differently, the significance of these impossible wishes is that they make teaching and learning seem rather simple, and so the complexities that are inherent in the pedagogical encounter – particularly those in encounters with difficult knowledge – are left to manifest themselves in other ways, ways that feel foreign, ways that might end up with students hating their lives.

That kind of simplicity, if these indeed are the teachers' wishes, would help us

understand at least one reason why difficult knowledge would be difficult to discuss. Those topics, as we have seen, are rife with ambiguities. To confront those topics would run counter for their wish of a simple education. It is important to note that I do not imagine any of these teachers ever saying, "teaching is easy", or even conducting their practice in overly simplified ways. Lynn and Ben are both open to complexity and as we saw they did take up difficult issues in conversation. These statements, though, when read psychoanalytically, reveal something else: the wish to simplify a complex endeavor. Ben and Lynn are revealing something to us about their wishes for teaching, and thereby circumvent an immediate discussion of difficult knowledge. Somewhat differently, George averted the conversation about difficult knowledge by saying that there was not any "there" to begin with.

For Ben, Lynn, and George, it was difficult to even begin a conversation about difficult knowledge. Before issues of loss, love, trauma, and reparation can even be begun there is a first step of engaging these topics in the first place. That is why paying attention to such instances of avoidance is important. In one way this is surprising. After all, each of the participants had been willing to engage the questions and prompts that emerged from their experiences in the other research sites. There is a difference, though, in this situation, one that makes this initial avoidance not as surprising, and one that is significant for social education. The difference is that while in our other conversations these participants were speaking largely from the position of learners, here they are talking from a position of "teacher". In other words, while to greater or lesser extent they were able to consider the complex issues of Katrina in complex ways (acknowledging, of course, the degree to which these were rerouted through the

circuitry of difficulty knowledge), they are less able, at least immediately, to discuss these issues in the context of their teaching. What is it that happens in this turn from experience to pedagogy? Why is it that the kinds of powerful learning experiences that they have described in their own histories of learning are not designed and provided for in their own classrooms?

In Chapter 3, I discussed the ways that the symbolic chain works to structure participants' understandings of the Holocaust. These symbolic constellations, remember, worked to hold together conceptions of what the Holocaust is, and even what constitutes a "real" Holocaust survivor. A similar process is highlighted here. There is a sufficient lack of a discourse into which they can think about and place their own affective worlds as it relates to their teaching, not to mention a lack of a way to think about their students' encountering of it. Let me be clear, though. These statements were made within the first five minutes of our conversations. It does not indicate a lack of thoughtfulness, nor does it indicate bad teaching practices. I simply wish to highlight that there are other more immediate ways that these specific teachers were able to contextualize what kinds of difficulty they face in their teaching.

Turning now to the ways that difficult knowledge was engaged, I elaborate on the importance of the ways the teachers talked about it. First, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the traces of difficult knowledge are "in" their classrooms via discussions of war, torture, and social issues such as the death penalty or, alternatively, through their avoidance. It is there. Because of its presence, sufficient attention should be paid to the concurrent processes that it instantiates. To begin this discussion, I return now to the literature on difficult knowledge to understand and contextualize some of these

processes that came to light. To begin with, Simon and Eppert (2005) explain that

> Historically traumatic events summon forgetting and remembrance simultaneously. In their shock and extremity of horror, such events impel a forgetfulness or displacement at the same time they repeatedly return on emotional and ethical terms for private and public consideration. (pg. 51)

In attending to the teaching of traumatic events, then, there is an expected exhibition of both push toward an engagement with horror and push against it. We have seen these pushes and pulls as the social studies teacher desires a certain kind of engagement that they mostly focus on failing to locate or produce. But when George evokes imagery of violence perpetuated against his students, or when Ben presents his students with devices that are meant to initiate genital mutilation, there seems to be something missing. It is, as Simon and Eppert write, a kind of forgetting that is taking place. In Ben's case, he forgets that his students might have their own experiences with torture. If we are to believe statistics about child abuse, and particularly sexual abuse, then at least one of Ben's students will have had experience with a kind of violation. As he describes the mutilation of the genitals that is part of a self-described powerful lesson, what might be evoked in his students? For such a student, how does the emotional baggage of sexual aggression play out in this public social studies education? For them, what becomes of the verbalized fascination with torture devices that is sanctioned by such a lesson? Finally, what would a pedagogy intent with recognizing the existence of such psychic struggles mean for Ben – or for any of us?

It seems as though all of the teachers in some way or another forget, or ignore, that the students they teach have their own thoughts, their own compositions, opinions,

and their own right to knowledge. Lynn is afraid of what would happen if controversy were allowed in her classroom, the same thing that she rages against in the teacher education program. George, in his editing out the call of imagining the vulnerability to violence in the case of the hypothetical school shooting, concurrently edits out his students being able to voice their own worries. Patty worries about the reactions her students have, the ways they make her angry, the way they laugh and that which she wants them to take seriously.

And now a few words on laughter. I was surprised at how often laughter came up in these discussions of difficult knowledge. Ben's students laughed at torture. Lynn's students laughed at a photograph of a resident of Mexico City. George's students laughed at the ethnic cleansing of the Balkans in the mid 1990's. In each case the laughter was met with surprise and a corrective action taken to make sure such laughter was known to be inappropriate (exception being Ben's mention of student laughter at torture). This laughter is often a form of psychic resistance and may actually indicate that the students' encounter with the material has touched a raw spot. It is understandable that the participants do not read it this way. Britzman (1998) help us understand this kind of student reaction during what is her initial consideration of difficult knowledge.

> At the heart of psychoanalytic work is an ethical call to consider the complexity, conflicts, and plays of psyche and history. These are the conflicts – Eros and Thanatos, love and aggression – that education seems to place everywhere. And then these forces seem to come back at education as interruptions, as unruly students, as irrelevant questions, and as controversial knowledge in need of containment. These are felt as aggressive returns when education conducts itself as if the separation of good and

> bad were not a dilemma for the learner and the teacher and as if stories and their conflicts somehow end on the last page and do not reach elsewhere. (pg. 133)

Britzman is teaching that what is generally thought of as "outside" the curriculum will always find its way into the classroom. Emotional experiences of hate or anger are certainly not found in curricular documents or mandated lesson plans. When students laugh, when they resist, when they make a game out of the teacher's anger, we have seen that they are indeed felt to be aggressive acts undertaken by students in the classroom. And when the teachers who are the participants of this study are attempting to engage their students in meaningful ways, by getting them to feel some modicum of pain, it is Britzman's contention that the "good and bad" parts of the lesson cannot be separated. When Ben does not know how to evaluate the allure of his lesson on torture, or when Patty acknowledges her anger with students, the play between love and aggression are felt in acute ways. This play is provoked by the encounters with difficult knowledge.

Social studies teacher educators are faced with several questions arising from this analysis of their teaching of difficult knowledge. If social studies education is to be considered as helping students understand the composition of the social world, then it necessarily requires s a capacity to teach about difficult knowledge.

What this chapter has highlighted is that the difficulties of difficult knowledge, while multiple, are present within the practice of social studies education. How, then, are we to help pre and in-service teachers to understand their own latent notions of what it means to teach, how those notions are informed by their own theories of learning, and how their own students will be unpredictable in their own learning? Further, what does

it mean for social studies education in general that difficult knowledge presents such conundrums? How can we meet students where they are, when this location is not often easily known and a place that – at least for these teachers – they are not happy with? I move toward the concluding chapter with these questions in mind.

Chapter 6
Thoughts in Motion

Summary of the Data Chapters

Atwell-Vasey (1998) suggests that psychoanalytic theory generates metaphor, "in that it relies on the imagination of its users to see that we can only include some elusive phenomena in our talk by letting other things, more sensible to us, stand in the position of the more elusive phenomena" (pg. 11). She writes that "metaphors invite comparison, not complete identification" and, as such, we can use psychoanalytic theory to mine the comparison between experiences and naming experiences (ibid.). In this study the tensions that comprised the spaces between experience and language, between metaphor and phenomenon, were named with the language of psychoanalytic theory. The intent in using these particular labels is neither to prescribe treatment nor provide certainty, but instead to see that pedagogical encounters in social studies classrooms (all classroom, really) are, to use Grumet's (in Salvio, 2007) words, "saturated with past experience, ideology, personal desire, and self justification" (pg. x).

This study, titled "Difficult Knowledge in Social Studies (Teacher) Education", took place in the spring and summer of 2009, concluded in the spring of 2010, and focused on the past and present experiences of six students enrolled in the secondary social studies teacher education program at Michigan State University. In this dissertation, I have elaborated on the ways participants encounter, make sense of, and make pedagogical, representations of social and/or historical trauma: what Deborah Britzman has called "difficult knowledge". These encounters took place in several locations. One of these was a viewing of a documentary film about the aftermath of

Hurricane Katrina. A second location was a Holocaust memorial and museum that the participants and I visited together. Finally, and at the end of the study, I interviewed the participants to elicit their reflections about their own teaching of difficult knowledge.

As a social studies educator at the middle, high school, and university level, I became concerned with the prevalence of topics like war, famine, genocide, and slavery in the social studies curriculum and the ways that these issues are taken up by students and teachers. My practice and thinking about education is informed by scholars like Kincheloe, McLaren, Segall, and others who suggest that confronting issues such as inequity and injustice should be undertaken as part of the curriculum –within and beyond the social studies - with the intent to bring new awareness and social justice; a curricular eye toward social repair and community action. But when confronted with what I consider to be cases of inequity and injustice – lynching photographs, violent news footage of conflict zones around the world, slave narratives, and others – I was (and continue to be) surprised by the degree to which students would be nonchalant in their engagement with these issues. Is this because of the prevalence of violence in our media, I wondered? Is it a function of some kind of faulty pedagogical practices on my own part? Each of these could be part of an explanation of this phenomenon. However, in this study I considered these kinds of learning experiences to be places where the drama of our own, personal histories become intermingled and intertwined with the drama of our cultural/national histories and the narratives that shape them.

What I mean by this is that in confronting the ways in which people are lost- to death, to incarceration, to slavery, to state sponsored violence - the lesson will beckon the learner to their own experiences with loss, trauma, being vulnerable, or otherwise

being subject to the power of others (Ben's parents, Patty's shattering). This invitation, though, is not one that many people would voluntarily, consciously, consider. We would rather avoid the unpleasantry of imagining the death of our loved ones (as was the case with Lynn), or imagining that we might be complicit in the loss of someone else's (Eva's guilt). The end of a textbook chapter does not typically settle this "difficult knowledge", nor does an end-of-unit test, nor the completion of whatever academic program the student/teacher is working on at that time. These related sets of problems – the interminable nature of learning, the problem of learning from others' suffering, of bearing witness, of the high volume of such encounters within social studies education – are those upon which I focused in my dissertation.

Because psychoanalytic theory provided the framework through which difficult knowledge can be understood, I began the dissertation with a discussion about potential ways that psychoanalytic theory can be helpful to those of us in the broader field of teacher education and curriculum studies. I explored the concept of difficult knowledge, its history and the ways it has been taken up in the literature, and made a case for its importance to the specific field of social studies education. Indeed, without being named as such, difficult knowledge is already there.

In the methods chapter (chapter 2), I introduced the six participants – two male and four female – and elaborated on how psychoanalytic ideas were deployed in this qualitative study. Chapter 3 was an elaboration of how the participants bring things beyond their awareness to their visit to a Holocaust memorial and museum. Chapter 4 investigated issues of resistance as it relates to their discussion of a documentary film about the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. While the chapters set around their museum

visit and film viewing were focused on these student/teachers' *learning* about difficult knowledge, chapter 5 elaborated on how they discuss their *teaching* of it with their own students in social studies classrooms.

In essence, the problem for us in social studies, and, thus, the focus of the dissertation, is that because the social studies curriculum is full of events that constitute difficult knowledge that there are always going to be some underlying, perhaps invisible, unconscious, processes pulling and tugging us away from the kinds of discomfort that might provoke meaningful and productive conversations. Those conversations are crucial to the overall project of social studies education, and highlight equally crucial issues in the field of curriculum studies, to provide and promote opportunities where students can become positive contributing members to a democratic society.

Implications: A Modest Contribution to the understanding of Difficult Knowledge

At the beginning of the dissertation I explained that the work of Deborah Britzman would provide a frequent frame of reference for the theoretical underpinnings as well as the empirical analysis that I undertake in this study. The small but growing cast of intellectual characters (Alice Pitt, Paula Salvio, and Lisa Farley) who have worked with the topic of "difficult knowledge" has also played a large role in substantiating my work. But while on the one hand my study rests on theirs, I have also (I think) been able to extend their work in significant ways.

First, I have deployed what is mostly a theoretical construct into an empirical study. While Pitt and Britzman's (2003) difficult knowledge project is notable

exception, most other work utilizing difficult knowledge takes a more broadly theoretical approach to their scholarship. What they offered in their analyses therein is crucially important, that in the very act of empirically investigating difficult knowledge something slips out of our grasp. Our questions are not answered in ways we want them to be. There are dangers and difficulties in even attempting to represent learning through difficult knowledge with any kind of clarity or certainty. Yet my claim is that I have offered a glimpse into what might constitute some of the psychic processes of difficult knowledge as they played out in these particular contexts with these particular individuals.

What comes clear to me through this study, and what I offer as a first significant contribution to the consideration of difficult knowledge is that when teachers are at their best, when the stakes of learning reach their highest points, the attention to those psychic processes become the most visible and most acutely felt by teachers. My opinion is that they should be adequately prepared for their students' and their own emotional and affective reactions to the content of their courses. These affective plumes, as I have taken to calling them, are comprised of pulls from and pushes toward ignorance, traces of conflicted pasts, and are felt as confusion, anger, joy, love, hate, and guilt. They are the psychic processes of difficult knowledge. And while these affective reactions occur all the time in a variety of contexts, in and out of the classroom, it seems that they are acutely felt in the time of learning about and from trauma.

Second, I have demonstrated that the connections between the "personal" and "the social" are so intricately tangled as to make distinguishing between the two rather

problematic. The personal histories of individuals in learning about the Holocaust, for example, are not even really personal to begin with, at least not entirely. They happen in social contexts of their own (prior experiences with texts, teachers, and students). What is more, we saw that before individuals even entered into the Holocaust museum that their understanding was in many ways prefabricated from the symbolic chain. Personal thoughts are imbued with a sociality. It is not the case that this is in any way a new thought in education, but I think that the examination of difficult knowledge makes for rather sharp cases where this issue can be examined.

Still, there are questions that are left unanswered about difficult knowledge and the investigation of the traumatic baggage of learning about it. To be sure, what constitutes a trauma is slippery. And in this study the idea takes on orders of complication. A teacher learns about another's trauma. Such learning may or may not be traumatic in and of itself. That teacher is then tasked with helping students learn about that trauma, which could also be traumatic for the teacher and the students. But I am left wondering about the degree to which historical and social trauma is inherently traumatic for students and teachers within a classroom context. It seems as though we can assume that the more questions we ask and the more conversations we have in our classrooms about how learning is felt and experienced, the more we can learn about the traumatic essence of difficult knowledge. These questions move us toward complications that make the terrain of learning even more uneven than it already is.

However, just because the separation between self and other gets confused or even breaks down does not mean that we cease discussing the issues with pre-service teachers. To do so would be a mistake. We should still discuss their apprenticeship of

observation, and we should continue to help them understand how broader discourses shape society and politics. My argument is that something good might happen if we also help our teachers understand their own understandings of learning about these issues. It comes back to one of the original points of psychoanalysis: that what we are after is not so much knowledge, but a consideration of the difference that knowledge makes. What I think I have found through this study is that these "made differences" are felt as emotional and affective. And so we could perhaps make spaces in our pedagogy for that part of the pedagogical world. This might be called, as Britzman suggests, a pedagogical project of thought.

Implications: Pedagogical Projects of Thought

Nowhere does this question of what one should know and how knowledge might matter take on more poignancy than when nations decide to confront and work through their own buried pasts of human devastations and genocide. Simply put, if we can bear to learn from history, all that we know about history requires reconstruction, not just of texts and contexts, but also of intimate identity and what might be included under the name "potential." From the South African Truth Commission, where victims and perpetrators face each other, to the Israeli-Palestinian peace accords that have set in motion revisions of education; from the house arrest in London of Chilean General Pinochet and the Chilean court's decision to bring to trial those previously granted amnesty, to the recent art exhibit in Colombia called "Art and Violence in Colombia since 1948" that calls citizens to confront the nation's demise; from the spate of national apologies, in the case of the United States for enslaving Africans, in the case of the Pope, for the history of anti-Semitism in Catholic liturgy, to the problem of present responsibilities; and, from renewed discussions on Germany's reunion and the move of its capital city back to Berlin, to new and more devastating acknowledgments of the reach of the Holocaust in our own times, the violence of the national repressed returns what Caruth (1996) calls "unclaimed experience." These are all pedagogical projects, not of management, but of thought. (Britzman, 2000)

There are considerable questions about whether or not we can actually learn from history. As Patty has helped us understand, studying the Holocaust, even repeatedly, does not leave history settled. In fact, at least in her case, history keeps her unsettled.

Perhaps this is the kind of unsettling that we need to encourage in our own students; a suspicion of certainty and a keen eye toward what it is that causes us confusion in the classroom. What I hope to have highlighted in my work here is a foundation for what Britzman calls a pedagogical project of thought.

Such project avoids dictating some kind of solution to the problems of difficult knowledge in a field where high premiums are placed on solutions. I remember teaching a psychology class to high school students and focusing our unit about social psychology on the questions raised by the Holocaust. One of the lessons that experimental psychologists learned after the Holocaust is that humans have an amazing propensity to conform. These tendencies played out in all sorts of conformity experiments – Asch, Milgram, the Stanford Prison Experiment – and left students quite perplexed. I remember the desks being in a circle and a vibrant discussion about conformity taking place. And I remember a student asking, "how can we stop this from happening in the future?". As I look back, this question might be rephrased to ask something like: how can we fight human nature? The answer I gave then is one I come back to often. I told the class that maybe we should not do anything, but that the knowledge of this tendency was in and of itself an act of resistance. That perhaps the next time they felt themselves strange or disquieted in a social situation that they might be more aware of what was happening. In essence, they could *think* differently.

Similarly, I am often confronted with student teachers' desire for an answer of how to "fix" a problem. How do we get students to understand what we want them to understand? Why won't they follow directions? Why do they laugh when I attempt to raise the stakes of learning? Now that we have a preliminary understanding of how the

processes of avoidance and resistance seem to work, and now that we have seen how knowledge is reconstituted through the processes of knowledge deferral, ego defenses, and the symbolic chain, what should we "do" in our teaching?

Perhaps a pedagogy of thought would avoid the desire to teach a lesson and, instead, provide new opportunities and avenues of thinking. Salvio writes:

> While we may have the best intentions when offering students our insights, orientations in taste, advice, recommendations or academic material, we may very well be sabotaging the possibilities for working with them to cultivate – through reading, writing, and deliberation of all sorts – their own internally persuasive voices (pg. 53).

I take Salvio to mean that the desire to teach a lesson is dangerous because of the position we occupy as "teacher" and all that this position confers in terms of authority and desire. What I mean is that in teaching someone a lesson there is a danger of closure. When we say something like, "I learned my lesson" it implies some kind of certainty about what we will, will not, or differently "do". A pedagogy of thought would help defer the desire to teach a lesson, and in the space that such a deferral provides, rest and find some kind of comfort in a space that recognizes learning as indefinite, interminable, and without closure. Therefore, the observations and analyses that I have made in this dissertation lend themselves to such a pedagogy of thought, one that hopes to avoid a heavy pedagogical hand and is oriented toward a non-coercive consideration of the fragility of the entire process of learning to teach – and then teaching – social studies.

Implications: Critical Pedagogy and Social Justice Education. What happens when we get what we want?

Suppose for a moment that we get what we want from social studies teacher education. That is, we get a teacher who is willing to present their students with topics from history in ways that attempt to get them to engage with a broad range of information: multiple perspectives, critical readings, emotional testimony. The critical "project is the construction of an education practice that expands human capacities in order to enable people to intervene in the formation of their own subjectivities" (Giroux, 1992). My hunch is that in these situations my work here will have the most relevance to practitioners.

Let me explain further. The tenets of critical pedagogy or social justice education suggest social studies teachers present their students with information that would help them to rethink their socio-cultural locations with the intent of their becoming agents of change in making those locations more just, equitable, and humane. This entails that they are able to come to grips with the inadequacy of their prior knowledge. It asks students "to leave home, as it were, since our homes are often sites of racism, sexism, and other damaging social practices" (Kaplan, c.f. Giroux, 1992, pg. 104). In some ways, then, critical pedagogy is not just an indictment of the capitalist structures, it can be felt as an indictment of the self and the spaces from which the self was produced. Eva demonstrated this in our interviews when she explained her struggles with coming to know "new" information. It leads her to wonder: if I did not know this, what else do I not know? What if what I do know is not enough? In Patty's case, her coming to know the Holocaust was "shattering". And in the end of this study, we saw that Lynn had avoided any and all controversy in her teaching in an attempt to avoid the kinds of conflict that she herself felt so often in her own college and teacher

education. What can teacher educators do, then, to help prepare their students (and their students) to engage in these conversations? Getting students to leave home is already difficult.

In an introduction to a volume concerning education for social justice, Maxine Greene (1998) writes about "the persistence of injustice, unfairness, and particular experiences of violation and manipulation and lack of care" in societies past and present (pg. xxvii). She begins her essay with several examples of just such injustices. What she writes after this initial list is critically important, that teaching for social justice "is not only to assemble the particulars, significant though they are...They do not, in and of themselves, help people understand what social justice means for everyday collective life" (pg. xxviii). It seems to me that Greene is offering a thinly veiled critique of traditional history education, often comprised as a litany of separated and discreet events. The study of history is often explained as a preventative measure protecting us from past mistakes. But what Greene would have us consider is that if such protection is a goal that we might begin to realistically entertain then we must draw some particular connections so that students might understand a rich notion of social justice in collective life. What happens then? We get difficult knowledge.

Greene is already close to the idea of difficult knowledge. The lesson she teaches is an important one. It is not sufficient, she seems to be saying, to bombard students with testimony to the terrible. And I think this is one large implication of the study presented in this dissertation – students (teachers or otherwise) must be helped to develop alternative narratives into which they can place new understandings, new knowledge. Remember that there was no existing narrative structure into which the

participants could place their reaction to the Holocaust survivor who was utterly dissatisfying to them. That person had not been to Auschwitz, was not tattooed, had not lost family, and did not have a harrowing story of loss to tell to the audience. And the audience did not know how to consider that narrative. Instead of being able to say something like: "isn't it wonderful that she and her family escaped", they said, "why did they get her and not a real survivor?" The narrative structure was sufficiently strong so as to orient them in such a way. I wonder if something similar is happening in Patty's classroom when the students laugh at her whenever she tries to raise the stakes in her classroom. I wonder what would happen if Patty, from the outset of her practice, set students up to understand several competing narratives in the world and if that would have helped her students to engage in the content.

If we just focus on the particulars, if Ben just shows his students the horrific images of torture, if George talks to his students about school violence (and then recoils), then we will not have a sufficiently well paved road for that new knowledge to travel down. Remember that difficult knowledge is routed away from discomfort. The more we can put in place comfortable modes of communication about discomfort or controversy or emotional reactions, the more well suited we will be to help teachers accommodate the psychic landscapes of the classroom. On the other hand, ignoring these detours and re-routings will give way to the lay notions that arrive in the classroom. It will not prevent them from occurring, of course they happen all the time, but the ramification of my analysis would hold that we first acknowledge those processes and then work to recognize them in the moment.

It is not, again, about pathologizing students or trying to stop resistances from happening. I am not offering any kind of corrective strategy. I am suggesting an attention to where knowledge "goes" once it is deployed in the social studies or teacher education classroom. Indeed, Lacan (1988) discusses his teaching as "a refusal of any system. It uncovers a thought in motion" (pg. 1). Thoughts are always in motion, particularly in moments of resistance to learning (what I call rerouting) and in moments where knowledge is influenced by the symbolic chain. The strength of the motion is strongest when the thought is closest to the structure of individual's perceived identity. Therefore, the more significant the information, the more crucial it is, the hotter the fire ignited within the individual learner.

Lacan (1988), in his first seminar, takes up the problem of resistance in analysis in a way that holds a great deal of importance in dealing with the results of a critical pedagogy in social studies classrooms. He says, "meaning must not be revealed to [the patient, in this case the student], it must be assumed by him...It would thus be paradoxical to place in the foreground the idea that analytical technique has as its aim to break down the subject's resistance" (pg. 29). What Lacan helps us understand within the register of critical social studies education is that the point is not to avoid resistance, nor is it to implant understandings about the injustices of the world. Instead, it would be to present alternative frameworks that might help individuals understand the world and their place in it, and then it would *help students map their reactions* to these understandings. It would map those thoughts in motion, the final purpose of which would be to "establish a perspective, a perception in depth, of several planes (Lacan, 1988, pg. 42). With these perspectives and perceptions in mind, a critical education

becomes more vibrant because of the increased possibilities for students to understand new information in a multitude of ways.[5]

Teacher educators in social studies must be willing to risk provoking emotional conversations about politics, history, race, class, and all topics "social studies". This is the risk we run in a critical education. The risks we run are in some ways illuminated by the social studies teachers' talk in chapter 5, that there might be confusion between just whose anger, whose guilt, desire, or shame we are encountering when students get upset in class. In short, we must be willing to introduce new traumas to future teachers. Education must not be easy. I do not mean to say that we "raise the stakes" of teacher education programs by making its curriculum more theory laden, nor adding more practice to their credentialing process. Adding more coursework does not necessarily make for the kind of difficulty I am after. Instead, within the courses we do offer for our future social studies teachers, we must ask questions of them that highlight the difficulties already present. I am not proposing an addition to the curriculum. I am, though, asking us to pay attention to that which we might be inclined to ignore or avoid. Not only must we recognize the routings of difficult knowledge, but we also must help our students understand these processes in the moment. This can lead to conflict in the classroom, and so another consequence of the attention to these difficulties is being able to tolerate controversy in the classroom.

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[5] Still, Lacan (1975, pg. 42) offers a piece of advice for "leftists" to interrogate their own investments in the critical project, something that should not be lost on us here.

Implication: The need for attention paid to resistance and uncertainty in the social studies

Above I discussed the ways that difficult knowledge might be most productively considered within our thinking about critical and/or social justice education. Obviously not all teachers or all students have such pedagogical inclinations. However, all teachers and all students are subject to the psychoanalytic notion of resistance. While the notions of routing and rerouting were undertaken in this dissertation, there is still a great deal of investigation to be done in regards to the consideration of resistance in education. Where resistance can be, and often is, considered a conscious effort towards social change, for psychoanalytic theory it means a deflection of knowledge because new knowledge asks us to change our attachments to objects in the world that represent and constitute a reality (Todd, 2001). What happens in the pedagogical encounter is that we ask students to break these attachments. When George articulated an incommensurate uncertainty in the face of the difficult knowledge encountered via his viewing of *When the Levees Broke*, there is a trace of those broken attachments. I find this to be a productive uncertainty, just as I find Lynn's realization of her avoidance of controversy in her classroom to be a productive realization of a problematic practice. A potential conclusion I draw from these examples is that those productions of uncertainty must be privileged in teacher education. If this is to be done, then what we are asking is for human beings to do what they are designed to resist doing, and that is to make the constitution of their reality unstable.

Social education (indeed, all education) insists, demands, that students make something other, more, of themselves than they already are; that they break with the

meanings they attach to the trauma of others and in so doing are reconstituting their reality. Social studies education further asks students to learn about the mistakes made by their own representatives (or by their complicity in social structures) often resulting in the pain and detriment of so many others. The resistance to these imperatives comes in various forms of not doing what the teacher wants; writing notes, making jokes, becoming angry with the teacher, and silence. Resistance becomes both ally and foe. We saw this happening in so many cases in this dissertation.

Students are not the only resisters. Teachers resist as well, since resistance, when viewed psychoanalytically, is a desire for a lack of awareness. One case of this happening is what Britzman describes as the teachers' "furor to teach". Britzman (2006) explains this resistance in the first person:

> My ignorance was performed through a pedagogy that tried to insist that works of art are communications to be received and corrections to be made. It took me many years to see this wish something manic, a teacher's defense against encountering both the literary and its excess and the students. All of whom had their own mind...and what now seems monstrous was my incapacity to mourn the loss of omnipotence that I wished the teacher's role promised. (pg. 115)

Here Britzman describes a resistance that manifests itself as a denial of her students' humanity. The resistance here becomes something other than a conscious way to fight against, or correct, social ills. Instead it is a push against knowledge; a refusal to know that the students are individuals. This kind of resistance happens when a teacher is so consumed by the lesson plan, or by an ideological stance, that he or she looks past the idea that the students are individuals who might not be responding in the manner anticipated. Perhaps these are the kinds of processes that are highlighted by Patty's anger at students' laughter in the face of traumatic histories. Perhaps this resistance

occurs when Lynn wants to *teach* the students without allowing for their *learning*, as I suggested was the case in her talk about measuring scale and distance. The significance of an understanding of these processes lies in making sure that we all know and recognize a paradox: that there is a radically individual component to the learning process, but at the very same time these very same individuals are subject to broad social narratives that coerce understandings into certain and specific spaces. So we are left with a "both/and" relationship between students' psychic and social lives, where one is always the other. I wonder whether or not the tensions that are inherent in that relationship might be a component that instantiates the resistance Britzman wrote about above.

Resisting, when viewed psychoanalytically, is more than a pedagogical outcome, as it is part of what happens in any context of learning. It is not something to avoid, but a process to which we can attend and a question we can always ask. As it relates to difficult knowledge, then, it is a highly personal encounter of meaning making, resistance to meaning making, and the creation of loving attachments to objects in the world. For it is not only teachers who have the authority over the pedagogical encounter, it is also the students, their individual histories, and the way that these all interact together that create the complexity, difficulty, of the schoolroom.

Limitations and Weaknesses

There is a limit to the use of psychoanalytic theory in a qualitative study in education. I cannot, as I am not a trained analyst, write of stories where I asked participants to free associate, to talk of their dreams, to bring non-sense into the focus of

conversation. In other words, once psychoanalysis is taken out of the confines of the relationship between analyst and analysand, things get treacherous. And so I feel as though this study's primary weakness is that it risks offering inappropriate understandings or, in another sense, felt as inappropriate by the participants themselves or readers in wider audiences.

There is a danger that in commenting on a text, or in interpreting data, that I have gone beyond what is in the discourse of the subject. How much have I read in to the data that was in this beyond? It is particularly difficult to engage this question. It highlights an inherent limitation within psychoanalytic work: that understanding is something of which we should be suspicious. I wonder if a weakness in this study is predicated upon my own supposed understandings of the phenomena that I observe taking place with the students.

A related weakness is the insufficient presence of the researcher in this study. Of course I am "in" the study as the author, questioner, and provider of data analysis. But I am sure that my own desires as a researcher and author, my own history of learning, carry a weight that I cannot measure and cloud what is written in a multitude of ways. In other words, I show what I want to show in this text. I mentioned this as a note of disclosure in the introduction, but feel as though it is sufficiently important to reiterate here. The doctor and the patient in an ongoing exchange between interpretation and elaboration negotiate the analytic relationship. This kind of negotiation is precluded by the medium of written language. While I make one step in this ongoing exchange by returning my work for the comments of the participants, such an exchange cannot be indefinite: dissertations at some point need to be finished.

I pose the following questions in acknowledging the limited presence of the researcher in the text: to whom am I writing? At various times I can imagine that I was writing to myself, to Avner, to my parents, to Suzanne, Kyle, and Susan, to my analyst, to Logan, to various friends, to imagined audiences and imagined responses, and to the participants. On what basis was I attracted to these participants? And on what basis were they attracted to me? There has to be some level of need and desire on both parts, and these are questions that I am sure to have tried to answer, though unintentionally, through my writing the dissertation. In the story that I tell, where are my own interferences? Pitt and Britzman (2003) elaborate on this problem:

> While the content of the story tried to settle the meaning, the structure and dynamics of the story hinted at the intrusion of another time: when meaning had lost its valency and when phantasy both propelled and impeded the construction of knowledge. Here, language becomes implicated in the communicative performance: there may be no words or too many words. (pg. 763)

The above quote could be read in relation to the data that I produced and analyzed, but here I use it to think about the inherent limitation in understanding and meaning. I certainly move to bring at least some semblance of stability through the writing of the dissertation. There is no question that through the writing of this dissertation there were times when I was faced with my own feelings, oscillating between fears of inadequacy and illusory feelings of self-aggrandized mastery. Most simply, the dissertation is limited by its incompleteness and stands as evidence of its own difficult knowledge.

In a related way, the study is limited in the lack of ongoing dialogue that is represented. In other words, while I have offered the dissertation back to the participants for their comments, further conversation and exchange of ideas,

impressions, and reactions would both strengthen the study and concurrently allow me to hold more closely to the psychoanalytic principal of ongoing, prolonged, interaction. Those interactions are not present.

A final note.

Living in the 21st century is complicated. I believe there is a psychic toll we all pay for living in a hyper-connected world. I have, although I do not always attend to, knowledge of death happening at every moment that could, theoretically, be prevented by the exercise of the power and resources of the country that I live in. Whether or not the students in our social studies classrooms, their teachers or their administrators acknowledge these occurrences, they are part of our social reality. Students must know that the world around them is complicated. When presented, though, with that which complicates it (structural processes that consolidate power in the hand of few at the cost of many, for example) many students become angry or guilty. What I have done in this dissertation is elaborate on the processes of the encounter with such difficult knowledge. Where this comes from is a detachment of meaning in the encounter with difficult knowledge. But when meaning becomes detached, it must reattach somewhere, and in these reattachments – if we are sufficiently prepared for them - we might hope for some productive outcomes.

I recently was reading a student's paper about his perceived inadequacy in teaching about the ongoing conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. I share this anecdote to elaborate on the idea of detached meanings and what I mean by a sufficient preparation for them. While this student was pleased that his students were able to

recognize competing perspectives on history and politics in nicely sophisticated ways, he was bothered by the idea that at the end of the unit his students had come to a rather hopeless conclusion: that the problem was sufficiently large and complex as to hold no possibility of peaceful resolution. They had become apathetic in the face of complexity. Yes, they were able to tolerate holding multiple perspectives as "true" and simultaneously being irreconcilable. Meanings here were "detached" in that students were able to come to a new awareness about an important ongoing geopolitical conflict. However, those meanings were not able to get reattached into an alternative framework that allowed for a way forward. The question that drives me forward, then, is just what techniques we might cultivate to help our students find narrative structures that allow for a productive "way out", a reattachment of meaning within frameworks that not only acknowledged cultural capacity for harm, but also the possibility of reconciliation and reparation.

To say this somewhat differently I conclude with Lacan's distinction between full and empty speech. Empty speech is defined as the system "in which the subject loses himself in the mechanisms of the system of language, in the labyrinth of referential systems made available to him by the state of cultural affairs to which he is a more or less interested party" (Lacan, 1998, pg. 50). Empty speech is talk as simple mediation within what Lacan would call the "master's discourse", or what a critical theorist might call the dominant discourse. It is that discourse which lays out the common sense understandings that have become naturalized through their circulation and implementation with relation to power and society. It is the familiar and traditional response highlighted in the examples of the symbolic chain above. Full speech, on the

other hand is that "which aims at, which forms, the truth such as it becomes established in the recognition of one person by another. Full speech is speech that performs. One of the subjects finds himself, afterwards, other than he was before" (Lacan, 1988, pg. 107). Full speech recognizes a spoken encounter between subjects that leaves one changed, closer to the truth of their subjectivity. If meaning is to be reattached into narratives that allow for reconciliations and reparations, then this idea of full speech might be an important stepping stone for our preservice teachers to place in their pedagogical paths.

It is precisely these conversations that must be acknowledged with our future and current teachers if we are to aid in their development into educators who stand for an ethical pedagogy as it relates to fostering equitable relationships between people with whom they share space. I hope that my work here helps to answer the question of why and how the discomfort of having these difficult conversations arises. But more than that, I hope it offers an understanding – via these empirical glimpses – of the defenses students might exhibit vis-à-vis the trauma of difficult knowing. Just as we work backwards from what we wish students to know "at the end", we work backwards from the defenses to investigate the kernel from which these traumas originate.

My work involves these ideas, is concerned with the crisis of producing a kind of social education that might inaugurate a more ethical subject, and, as such, draws heavily from education research concerning psychoanalytic themes in education. The intent is repair: not in "solving" crises but finding ways to understand and act within them. There is no solution to the human condition. But I do think that awareness of ambiguity, tolerating complexity, recognizing our ultimate vulnerability, and cultivating

adequate ways to accommodate our responsibilities for others is a project that is of great worth to social educators.The anxieties that underlie those conditions simultaneously inhabit and comprise the classrooms in which we strive to take stock of what difference it is that we, ourselves, are making.

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