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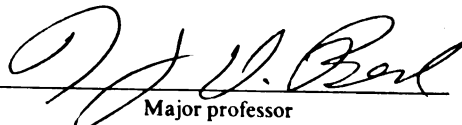
**SALVATION AND ALIENATION: TENSIONS IN THE
RELATION OF LEARNING AND IDENTITY**

presented by

Mark Robert Gover

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for

Ph.D. degree in CEPSE


Major professor
King D. Beach

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**SALVATION AND ALIENATION: TENSIONS IN THE
RELATION OF LEARNING AND IDENTITY**

By

Mark Robert Gover

A DISSERTATION

**Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of**

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Counseling, Educational Psychology and Special Education

2001

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ABSTRACT

SALVATION AND ALIENATION: TENSIONS IN THE RELATION OF LEARNING AND IDENTITY

By

Mark Robert Gover

There is an obvious relationship between learning and identity, between how and what we come to know and who we are becoming as persons. Particularly within the family, it is thought that early learning lays the foundations for personal identity. However, in the transition to formal education, the definition and structure of learning change in such a way as to obscure the relationship between learning and identity-making. Although our perception of it may be obscured, the relationship remains. The only difference is that we no longer acknowledge it as quickly or as readily.

This study explores the published autobiographies of three public intellectuals: Mike Rose, Jill Ker Conway, and Richard Rodriguez. Using a hermeneutic approach, these texts are interpreted in terms of the relationship between the authors' learning, on one hand, and their efforts to construct an integrated identity within mainstream academic culture, on the other. In various ways, in their journey toward becoming highly educated persons, all three authors struggled to learn within academia's accustomed ways of thinking, acting, and talking without, at the same time, disowning vital aspects of themselves and their past.

Three themes emerged from these narratives. Each of them seeks to address a fundamental tension between learning and identity-making that seemed to carry across

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the autobiographies of Rose, Rodriguez, and Ker-Conway. *Stability and change* refers to the tension in these stories between a sense of personal continuity and becoming something new or different. *Affiliation and separateness* represents the tension between the authors' need to feel that their learning and their identity were connected in important ways to people, things, events, and ideas outside themselves while also retaining their own sense of individuality. Finally, *immediacy and reflection* refers to the movement in these authors' stories between two ways of knowing or experiencing the world. It is argued that none of these tensions seem to have been a product of formal learning *per se*. Instead, they seemed to emerge most strongly in the authors' on-going transition between academia and other life contexts. Further, though at times difficult or painful, there were ways in which the tensions themselves were productive, providing fuel for the authors' movement through significant periods of educational and life change.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I would like to express my gratitude to King Beach, my advisor, for his continued guidance and support over the past five years. Also, to Steve Weiland, whose enthusiasm was invaluable when I'd lost my own. Thanks to Rick A. Smith for encouraging me that it was impossible *not* to write something. To my friends, especially to David Pearson for his considered presence. To my family, especially to Jim Gavrilak for his heartfelt thanks to Jim Gavrilak. To my friends, especially to Jim Gavrilak. To my friends, especially to Jim Gavrilak.

For Diana
Her Love, Patience, and Forgiveness

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to King Beach, my advisor, for his continued guidance and support over the past five years. Also, to Steve Weiland, whose enthusiasm was invaluable when I'd lost my own. Thanks to Susan Florio-Ruane for reminding me that it was impossible *not* to write something that was uniquely mine. I'm grateful to David Pearson for his considered insights and encouragement in this work. Finally, my heartfelt thanks to Jim Gavelek for opening a door and to David Cooper for keeping it open.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The main thing about schools is that they are one of a very few remaining public interactional spaces in which people are still engaged with each other in the reciprocal, though organizationally patterned, labor of producing meaning - indeed, the core meaning of self identity.

- Philip Wexler (1992, p. 10)

It seems intuitively plausible to expect that education, however objective the domains it may negotiate or the criteria to which it may be subject, should engage and in significant respects transform the selves of pupils (p. 171).

- John Dunne (1995, p. 171)

Learning is the transformation that continuously takes place in an individual's identity and ways of participating through his or her engagement... with others

- Gordon Wells (1999, p. 22)

Education is not a preparation for life; education is life itself.

- John Dewey

A century and a-half ago (a period coincidentally encompassing the advent of mass education), the university where I work began as a small agricultural college. A clearing had to be made in the Michigan forest. Tribes of Ottawa and Chippewa still camped along the banks of the Red Cedar river. Now this river winds through a sprawling college campus, one containing the largest student housing system in the world. On this cold February morning, a steady stream of students walk past my office window. A few press cell phones to their ear. Some are in groups, others in couples. Most of them walk alone, hatless, heads hunkered down into their parkas.

Beyond their identities as students, who are these people? If you were to ask them, I imagine they would likely define themselves in terms of their future, in terms of

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what they are here to eventually become (*What's your major?*). Some would be certain about where they are headed. Others might express some anxiety or confusion. Still, for most of the year, the majority of them live here making the transition to a working life, one they presume will be different than what their high school diploma alone might offer them. A prolonged adolescence some have called it. A reprieve before assuming their full identity as adults.

But I also must acknowledge an important sense in which most of these persons have left home long ago. It began the first day of elementary, the day marking their official entry into the institution that would occupy them for the next decade or two: education.¹ Further, I must acknowledge that this intertwining of their efforts to learn and their efforts toward identity-making is also nothing new for them.² They have lived in the confluence of these two fundamental aspects of life for a long time. In the transition to college it has only become more explicit. (They are here for the expressed purpose of *becoming something* after all: a teacher, engineer, business person, nurse, et cetera.) On a fall day maybe fifteen years prior, each found him or herself nervously sitting in the first public institution of their lives. Perhaps they had arrived by bus, the building located in a neighborhood far from home. Or, like myself, maybe they had only to cross the street. They may not have known another person in the room and had only the vaguest

¹ *Education* or *formal education* and are used broadly to denote the formal institution of education as it exists from grade school up through higher education.

² *Identity-making* rather than *identity* is sometimes used in order to stress the dynamic aspects of identity construction.

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idea of what would happen there. But they at least knew that it would be about ‘learning’ (parents asked *What did you learn today?*).

Previously, the ideas these people had about themselves had been a function largely of their membership in a particular family as well as in the larger groups to which their family belonged. They were sons or daughters, part of a specific ethnic group, socioeconomic class, church, and so on. These connections structured their lives. They were who they were and did what they did by virtue of them. Now, in school on that first day, these relationships could suddenly no longer provide an explanation for why they were there. The only commonality was that everyone had come ‘to learn’ and everyone, no matter who they were, had that right.

At the same time, it is obvious that the onset of learning is not marked by the start of one’s formal education. Although schools are that one social institution whose specific mandate is to teach and educate, there is clearly much one learns in the years prior to beginning any kind of formal schooling. As Donaldo Macedo points out in his forward to James Gee’s book, The Social Mind, (1992, p. x), “the reading of the world must precede the reading of the word.”³ Learning prior to formal education represents a means to end.⁴ It occurs so that we can accomplish some immediate task or so that we can participate more fully in some valued activity. For example, we learn a tremendous amount about

³ Here is the quote in its fuller context. Macedo writes, “We must first read the world - the cultural, social, and political practices that constitute it - before we can make sense of the word-level description of reality... That is to say, to access the true and total meaning of an entity, we must resort to the cultural practices that mediate our access to the world’s semantic field and its interaction with the word’s semantic features” (in Gee, 1992, p. x). Presumably this type of ‘reading’ begins long before the onset of formal education.

⁴ In the social sciences, growth in the period prior to formal education is probably more likely to be viewed in terms of development or socialization.

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language prior to formal literacy instruction. We 'acquire' language so that we can communicate and interact with those closest to us, learning not merely how to speak but what certain words can do for us and, when spoken by another, *to* us. Prior to school, learning is the means by which we figure out a way to meet our needs for nourishment, for affiliation, for experiencing feelings of competence. And we learn whether the world can or cannot meet these needs dependably. Finally, prior to formal education we pick up a vast number of ideas regarding the basic order of the world. Who is in charge? What are the rules? Who are the good guys? The bad guys? What is the degree of our own personal power?

A great deal of what is learned in these years is quite obviously and explicitly tied to who and what we are becoming as persons. Within a matrix of human connection we learn to be a son, daughter, nephew, sibling, friend, or stranger. We learn whether or not we are loved, competent, 'smart', the same as others or different. In a sense, at home who *we are* is what we've *learned*. Most of us would have no trouble acknowledging that most of what is learned at home in the early years lays the foundations for personal identity. Learning in the family is very explicitly a "personalizing process" (Morrish, 1976, p. 169), a process of identity-making (Gover, 1997; Gover, 1999).⁵

⁵ Martin Packer (1995) observes that identity has typically been treated as though it is a property: a property both in the sense of being a characteristic of something (a person) and in sense of something owned by the individual. Packer argues that identity, instead, is a form of "cultural work." He writes, "viewed this way, identity is relational (not personal property) and it is contextual, not a matter of fixed characteristics." Borrowing from Mach (1993), Packer argues that identity is formed in "interaction, in the process of exchange of messages which we send, receive, and interpret until a general, relatively coherent image is achieved" (Mach, 1993, p. 5), to build up a "conceptual, symbolic model of the world" (Mach, 1993, p. 6).

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Now, in school on that first day, learning is suddenly redefined. It is presented as something new and different, not merely a continuation of something we have been doing for years anyway. Indeed, the very function of learning has changed. As mentioned, in the family and home community,⁶ learning tended to be a means to an end. We learned how to ride a bike so that we could in fact *become a bike rider*. If our families were Catholic, we learned to recite “Our Father” and “Hail Mary” so that we could eventually *become Catholic*. We learned how to play baseball so we could *become a baseball player*, so that we could participate in the game. I watch my son outside in the yard, practicing his swing. I listen to his play-by-play. “It’s the bottom of the ninth...bases loaded.” He takes a cut. “*It’s outa’ here!*” He isn’t practicing for the sake of practice. He is motivated by an image of something he would become: a baseball player, a hero in front of 40,000 cheering fans. He continues to practice.

In contrast, the transition to school suddenly confronts us with a situation where learning itself has become the entire point. Learning is both what we do and why we do it. Only secondarily, many years after we have begun, do we begin to deal with the problem of how what we have learned may eventually connect to some kind of outcome, a job or career, beyond learning itself. Especially in the younger years, this remains vague and distant.

Where much of one’s learning at home was not a consciously directed attempt to learn, at school learning is conscious, intentional, and deliberate. Correct answers are the

⁶ By ‘community,’ I imply the community in which one’s family life is immediately rooted: ethnic, religious, racial, socioeconomic, etc. The school itself may or may not overlap with that community.

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coin of the realm. New activities are presented and old ones are ordered in a different way. People listen, wait, raise their hands to speak or to sharpen a pencil or to use the bathroom. They stand in line at specified times. They may be put in particular groups based on ability (a particular reading group, for example). For the first time, learning officially takes place amid of crowd of same-aged peers. This creates a context so developmentally homogeneous that one's clothing, speech, or skin color might suddenly stand out in ways not experienced at home. With the expectation that learning should occur in a calm and orderly fashion, conditions that might interfere with learning, such as the inability to focus or sit still, might be identified for the first time.

With the entry to school, the way one goes *about* learning also changes. One moves from learning among intimates to learning among a crowd, from learning that is assumed to learning that is assessed, from a degree of power over the structure and shape of one's learning to a clear division of power in which a teacher takes responsibility (Jackson, 1983). An important consequence of redefining of learning in this way is that something inevitably begins to happen to our acknowledgement of the relationship between learning and identity, that is, between learning and who or what we are becoming as persons. We no longer see these two processes as being linked together in the same way.

With the assumption that learning is primarily about the acquisition of skills and knowledge, those embodied in a particular curriculum, its ties to identity-making start to

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become hazy.⁷ One could argue that a perceived separateness between issues of learning and identity-making in schools is actually 'built into' the structure, social and physical, of schools themselves. For example, learning in schools is physically isolated from one's activities at home as well as from various communities outside of school. Officially, activities whose primary focus is identity development are most often *extracurricular*, a benefit of one's participation in sports, various clubs, informal cliques, home life, church, and so on. Learning to be a person of a certain kind, a person of particular ethnicity, class, religious persuasion, or gender for example, is a type of learning presumed to occur outside of those spaces dedicated to the teaching of the formal curriculum. In addition, although much learning in schools is ostensibly done in groups (through assignments based almost exclusively on age and ability), learning within these groups is typically approached as if it were a largely individual cognitive process.

Some may think it trivial to argue this point. "But of course our education affects who and what we become!" Although we may *say* we believe this, as a culture we do not *act* as if we do. In the various ways I have described, the definition and structure of

⁷ Ideas about how minds come to learn emerge from a background of cultural beliefs regarding the nature of mind. The pedagogical practices that follow from these beliefs constitute what Olson and Bruner refer to as a *folk pedagogy* (1996, p. 13). By far the most common of these beliefs has traditionally been that to know anything means to have "acquired" a standard body of information. Therefore, the job of one who teaches is to "transmit" what is known in such a way that it can be "received" by the mind of the learner.

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learning within academia obscure the relationship between learning and identity-making.⁸

Although our perception of it may be obscured, the relationship remains. The only difference is that we no longer acknowledge it as quickly or as readily. This is not a cry for school-bashing. I am not even sure that this is where the problem lies. The situation is much more complex. Somehow, in mandating that an institution take responsibility for learning, we have compartmentalized the relation between learning and identity. Learning skills and knowledge is assigned to one institution (education) while learning to be a person is considered the primary responsibility of another (the family). We therefore fail to see that something very significant may in fact be happening in the learning-identity relation as we transition between contexts. We cannot demagnetize the relationship between what we come to know and who we come to be. It does not cease or go away simply because we have redefined it. We can only fail to acknowledge it.

There are costs to our lack of attention to the relationship between learning and identity-making. As a society, for example, we tend to construe public education as Horace Mann's (1984) "great equalizer." To the extent that an education is seen as the right of each and every citizen, identity is irrelevant. The irony of this ideology is that it separates issues of identity, especially matters of ethnicity and class, from the larger

⁸ Hoffman wrote over a decade ago, "in many ways identity has become the bread and butter of our educational diet - an 'everybody help yourself' construct, served up on nearly every scholarly table" (p. 324). Identity is indeed a construct fit for "public consumption:" everybody has one. And, as the decade since Hoffman (1988) attests, it continues to be something an awful lot of writers and researchers have an interest in. Yet I don't believe the outpour of writing on identity is merely a bandwagon effect. Perhaps the continued exploration of identity, while confusing in the variety of perspectives it produces, simply indicates what an enormously complicated construct identity really is. While it may vary as an experience, from simple to complex, it is always a concoction of ingredients (social, cultural, historical, mental, biological, experiential). Something so complicated would seem to demand all the intellectual effort we can muster (for a similar argument see Weigert, 1983).

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problem of who gets educated, where, and how. We qualify for studenthood by nothing that is unique to us as an individual. This situation has lead us in the direction of some romantic but unrealistic assumptions like "separate but equal is equal," or "equal access means equal opportunity," or "the sharing of information through technology can lessen inequities, evaporate walls, and create a global classroom."

It is harder to maintain our grasp on the more inevitable and difficult fact that institutionalized education is forever embedded within level upon level of cultural realities, none of which can be neatly separated from the others. As an institution, American education is an amalgam of history, science, philosophy, culture, politics, race, and economics. It reflects and sustains these realities, recreating the dynamics of power between identities of, for example, blacks, whites, rich, middle class, poor, literate, illiterate, male, and female.

By denying the relationship between learning and identity, we as a society become more confused regarding the goals of institutionalized education. We become more isolated from one another as a collection of subcultures. And, ultimately, students become more isolated from one another as individuals. The past several years has seen a spate of school shootings in America. In their aftermath, there has been a great deal of attention paid by the media. Although obviously complex, much of the analysis of has focused on two issues: the identities of the perpetrators and their victims and the social conditions of American schools generally.⁹ The perpetrators have primarily been White

⁹ In response to the shootings, editorialist Anna Quindlen (2001) takes on the issue of school size, for example.

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middle class students [see Wise (2001) and his commentary regarding school shootings and White denial] who typically experienced themselves as alienated within the school and who, in cases where the killing was not random, resented their victims for their social status. The implicit and often explicit assumption of the media is that since the identities of both were partially developed and sustained within the context of the school itself, there is something going on in schools that we fail to understand.

Another area that has brought attention to the critical relation between learning and identity-making is Michael Chandler's work on the role of self-continuity in adolescents. Chandler looked at adolescent suicide among members of indigenous groups in British Columbia (Chandler and Lalonde, 1998; Chandler, in press). Some of these groups possess a suicide rate 800% that of the population average. Quite the contrary, however, it is also a characteristic of BC's 196 aboriginal bands that the adolescent suicide rate for some groups is close to zero. Chandler and Lalonde (1998) ask the question "Why do adolescents in some bands choose to commit suicide and others choose to preserve their own life?" (pp. 14-15).

The authors suggest that part of the answer may lie in the fact that some aboriginal communities, but not others, are successful in providing their members with a sense of "cultural continuity." This sense comes from adolescents' perception that their lives are nested within a larger narrative: the story of their people. It is this larger story that ultimately informs their identity and provides them with a degree of *personal* continuity. Obviously, an awareness of one's self as being continuous in time and space is a necessary precondition for personal identity. Chandler and Lalonde (1998) argue that

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with when that awareness is diminished, the future for Native adolescents becomes less relevant and so therefore does their future self.

The short answer, we have suggested, is that because it is constitutive of what it means to have or be a self to somehow count oneself as continuous in time, we end up showing appropriate care and concern for our own well-being precisely because we feel a commitment to the future self that we are in route to becoming. (Chandler & Lalonde, 1998, pp. 14-15).¹⁰

Chandler and Lalonde (1998) found that those communities that had the highest markers of 'cultural continuity;' also had "dramatically lower" teen suicide rates (p. 21). Markers of cultural continuity, in order of importance, were (a) self-government; (b) land claims; (c) education; (d) health; (e) cultural factors; and, (f) police/fire. The assumption being made is that markers of cultural continuity provide an index for the degree to which adolescents can borrow meaning from their culture in their personal efforts at identity-making. In short, through a sense of cultural continuity, teens were presumably able to experience an important sense of personal continuity in their lives, one that may have militated against a perceived irrelevance of their own identity. Chandler and Lalonde (1998) suggest that it was this latter perception that started some down the path toward eventual suicide.

Education was one of the important routes through which these communities sought to preserve a degree of cultural continuity and, by extension, a sense of personal continuity in its members. Specifically, Chandler and Lalonde (1998) imply that there is

¹⁰ Chandler writes that "the cultural life of the First nations of BC [British Columbia] has been so undermined by government policies and practices explicitly conceived as ways of systematically rooting out all traces of aboriginal culture that much of what remains is not so much continuous cultural life, as an attempt to reconstruct it" (p. 15).

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something about learning within the context of institutions controlled by the native communities themselves that makes possible this tandem between the nature of their learning and the nature of their identity as members of an aboriginal community.

While just 21.8% of the youth population live in communities in which a majority of children are known to attend band controlled schools, only 11.3% of all youth suicides occur in such communities. The difference in suicide rates between communities that do and do not have such educational systems in place is substantial: 71.1 vs. 116.2 [deaths per 100,000].

In addition to societal costs, neglecting the relationship between learning and identity also has costs at the level of the person. This is the level at which I will be approaching the problem. One of these is an experience of alienation for students whose background makes it difficult for them to identify with mainstream ways of thinking, acting, and talking in school. Such students are at higher risk for academic failure. The lower success rates of some minorities and those from the lower socioeconomic levels as compared with mainstream students (i.e., middle-class Whites), at both high school and college level, needs no reiteration here.

Nonetheless, there are students from less than ideal socioeconomic conditions or a cultural climate drastically different from mainstream academia that do manage to carry on and occasionally excel academically. For such individuals, there may come a point where they must somehow reconcile a higher degree of personal literacy with their past. This can be difficult, particularly when the values of academia and of one's cultural origins represent two vastly different, even mutually exclusive, frames of reference.

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Changing views of learning. The past two decades have witnessed major shifts in our views of learning. In a review of the literature, Leinhardt (1992, p. 23) concludes that perhaps the most "radical" of these shifts has been the move away from an exclusive focus on individual behavior or cognition toward an understanding of learning in which social and cultural contexts are viewed as fundamental (e.g., Bateson, 1972; Cole, 1996; Cook-Gumperz, 1996; Greeno, 1997; John-Steiner, Panofsky, & Smith, 1994; Lave, 1996; Rogoff, 1994; Rose, 1989; Street, 1988). In this view, learning is, above all, a discursive process, something that happens only by virtue of our ongoing relatedness to others.

Views of identity have also shifted considerably in the past two or three decades. Where previous theories tended to foreground the psychological, intrapsychic and social psychological aspects of identity (Chickering, 1969; Erikson, 1959; McAdams 1992, 1993, 1995, 1996), there has recently been a much stronger emphasis on illuminating identity's cultural constituents. These include those perspectives that explore identity as a social and cultural construction both within formal learning contexts (Apple, 1999; Erickson, 1996; Gill, 1993; Giroux, 1992; Gover, 1996; Ogbu, 1990) as well as without (Chandler, 1987, 1997; Gergen, 1990; Gergen, 1991; Gergen, 1994; Giroux, 1992; Gover, 1996; Greenwood, 1994; Harré, 1989; Holland, 1998; Sampson, 1993; Shaw, 1994; Shweder, 1985; Shotter, 1993; Shotter, 1989).

One's success in school is, of course, related to one's success in learning how to sustain relationships with others in the educational environment (e.g., teachers, peers). In doing so, one learns (or fails or refuses to learn) how to talk and behave like a 'good

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student.' This is an important aspect of what goes on inside schools although, as a form of tacit knowledge,¹¹ it is more amorphous than curricular knowledge. Nonetheless, learning how to change and adapt oneself to educational culture is no less critical to academic success or failure. A growing body of literature increasingly substantiates the premise that learning in schools and identity construction are very much integral to one another (Bell, 1997; Bruner, 1996; Davidson, 1996; Eckert, 1989; Erickson, 1996; Gill, 1995; Gover, 1997 #382; Giroux, 1997; Green & Lee, 1994; Lave, 1996; Ogbu, 1990; Rothstein, 1991).

By and large, however, what this literature does not address is the fact that in modern society we must continually move back and forth between contexts that acknowledge, construe, and facilitate the relationship between learning and identity-making in different ways and to differing degrees. That is, current literature does not embrace the idea I had begun to develop earlier, that although the learning-identity relation is not always and everywhere the same, our approach to formal education blinds us to that fact. Our rigid construal of this relationship bifurcates learning and identity-making and, in the movement to education, we quickly lose track of how intimately they are married. The latter is particularly troublesome given that, for most of us from age five until high school graduation, we spend an average of 15,000 hours in some kind of formal educational contexts (Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, & Ouston,

¹¹ Tacit knowledge is a type of knowing developed and internalized by the knower over a long period of time. It incorporates so much accrued and embedded learning that its rules may be impossible to separate from how an individual acts.

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1979). This is almost as much of our waking life as is spent at home during that period.

During that time, thousands of events accumulate, all of which have the potential to work their way into how we think about ourselves not simply as learners but as persons.

Part of the struggle, therefore, in making sense out of and creating one's identity, and part of the struggle in terms of one's own learning, may well have to do with the complexities of moving between institutions, particularly home/community and school, that have different takes on the learning-identity relation.¹² With each perspective come different degrees of acknowledgement and support of this relationship. Given that learning and identity-making are so inextricably connected, what are the implications of participating across institutions that differ in their recognition of this? How do we manage or fail to manage our transitions between them? How is it that people "get on" under such circumstances? How do they construct an identity and progress? While identity remains a popular topic within the educational community (Hoffman, 1998), it is difficult to find anything in the literature that specifically concerns itself with such questions.

As a society, our thoughts about the relationship between learning in school and identity-making tend to be at best, confused, and at worst, contradictory. In America, every person has the right to attend school, a presumed foundation of democracy. This is the irony of school as the great equalizer: part of insuring equality essentially involves

¹² In reality, of course, learning and identity-making are not restricted to either home/community or school. They are potentially part of what we do in any context, contexts that are not disconnected but often share certain features or values. Although we ourselves remain a common denominator, unlike mathematical common denominators, who we "are" in one context is not identical with who we "are" in another. In practice, contexts may either discourage or afford implementing what we have learned in other contexts and, hence, the changes this potentially brings about.

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policy that alleges to strip issues of identity (especially those matters involving race, class, ethnicity, and gender) from issues of learning. In the meantime, educational rhetoric typically appeals to the need to equip students with the skills and knowledge they will need once they join the labor force, that is, once they have *ceased to be* students. This contrasts with other institutions in which learning is seen as expressly in the service of preparing one for fuller membership, so that one may eventually enjoy one's status as part of what are typically quite exclusive organizations. The ultimate purpose of catechism, for example, is not edification but to qualify one for membership in a church.

One's identification as a student is unique in that it is temporary, age-dependent, and episodic. This is compared to roles that might be more permanent (e.g., son, spouse, Catholic) or require more effort in their development (e.g., doctor, lawyer, mechanic). Studenthood is commonly seen as function of one's age in the United States, beginning at age five and ceasing somewhere around young adulthood. In contrast, other institutions are more variable regarding age-appropriateness. While gang members may only vary a year or two in age, other organizations incorporate the lifespan. A 65 year old man or woman may not return to grade school but he or she may convert from one religion to another, as may an adolescent or young adult.

Finally, in most social environments where learning is an aspect, there is typically some formal course of training through which the person must prove him or herself eligible for a particular identity. One must train for a vocation, or to become a soldier. Or identity may stem from intrinsic traits such as blood or race (family or ethnic group), in which case one's eligibility is determined at birth. Still, in other institutions,

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appropriateness is the main criteria for membership. Gender automatically excludes boys from membership in the Girl Scouts. In contrast, unlike any of these other institutions, the identity of “student” is such that one takes it on more-or-less by virtue of walking in the school door.¹³

If the process of becoming a formally educated person and the process of constructing oneself as a person are in fact so fundamentally joined, why don’t we pay more attention to this? Why don’t we talk more about education in terms of identity, or identity in terms of education and learning? Although there are a few who have devoted themselves to understanding this relationship (e.g., Cole, 1996; Dyson, 1997; Wenger, 1998), it may be that - in the brief century since its inception - mass public education has simply become ‘the way things are.’ “The givenness of the classroom is still taken for granted,” writes Bazerman (1994, p. 58). It is part of the status quo, the accepted norm that most of our attempts to understand or improve education start from. But, as Rodriguez observes, “education is not an inevitable or natural step in growing up” (p. 48). We easily forget that it is not human development that drives education but tradition.

In contrast, in this work I hope to provide a more varied, focused, and explicit picture of the relationship between learning and identity-making, between what and how one comes to know, on the one hand, and who and what one is becoming as a person, on the other. I will look at the stories that three individuals tell regarding the differences, while growing up, between their lives at home and in their community, on the one hand,

¹³ Compared to one’s personal identity as represented by one’s proper name, the identity of “student,” (like other terms of vocational identity such as professor, writer, teacher) defines not what a person *is* but what he or she *does*: a student studies.

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and their academic lives, on the other. In particular, I wish to focus on the ways that various transitions within and between each of these contexts, home/community and school, either affirmed or denied for them an experience of fundamental connectedness between learning and identity, that is, between becoming educated and the creation of a coherent, integrated sense of who and what they were becoming.

This work takes a hermeneutic approach to the autobiographies of three popular public intellectuals, exploring the identity-related tensions for persons whose backgrounds, in spite of their aspirations for a working life as an intellectual, made it difficult for them to establish an integrated identity within academic culture.

Conway, J. K. (1989). *The road from Coorain*. New York: Knopf.

Rodriguez, R. (1982). *Hunger of memory: The education of Richard Rodriguez*. Boston: David R. Godine.

Rose, M. (1989). *Lives on the Boundary*. New York: Penguin.

The challenge for these three authors was to define themselves within academia's accustomed ways of thinking, acting, and talking without, at the same time, amputating vital aspects of their past (related particularly to ethnicity and class). In fact, one of the authors (Richard Rodriguez) ultimately opted out of academia entirely, finishing his dissertation but never defending it, rather than going through what he felt would have been the intolerable hypocrisy of a defense. He now works as an essayist for the PBS McNeill News Hour. Conway, a historian, graduated from Harvard and went on to

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become the first female president of Smith College. Finally, Mike Rose received his Ph.D. from UCLA and is director of the writing center there.

As they struggled to adapt, I found these authors' lives exemplified the idea that significant acts of learning are inseparable from significant acts of self-definition. Their education brought change, redefined their roles and relationships, and transformed their experience of themselves and their lives. Through their narratives, each author reconstructs their journey in ways that give meaning to the person they have become and the role education has played in that process. Based on my analyses, there seemed to be three specific tensions in the relationship between learning and identity-making in these autobiographies.

First, there were degrees of pull between *stability* and *change*, between a sense of self-continuity, on the one hand, and progressing toward an identity that was anticipated to be somehow 'better' or 'improved,' on the other. Second, at various times and in various ways, the authors each confront the tension between their *affiliation* to others and their need for personal *separateness*. The tension arose from the pull between feeling that their learning and identity were connected in important ways to people and ideas outside themselves (teachers, family members, peers, texts, authors, poets, for example) and the feeling of existing separately or apart from such affiliations. Achieving affiliative experiences required access to the various means by which the authors could gain access to a particular culture, which included significant learning relationships (teachers, mentors, or peers) as well as their own skills, knowledge, and familiarity with regard to various cultural artifacts. While at its extreme, affiliation could lead to a state where an

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author over-identified with a person or system of beliefs, to the extent that they perceived themselves to be losing their own identity, affiliations essentially mediated the process of becoming formally educated.

Separateness, on the other hand, was essentially the feeling that resulted from an absence of means, an experience of themselves as, to some degree, an individual set apart from the particular web of relationships, things, events, and ideas surrounding them. While at its extreme, separateness induced in them an experience of being cut off, of loneliness and alienation, in balance with affiliation it was important for a feeling of individuality, uniqueness, and personal efficacy.

Third, as their education reached more advanced levels, each author eventually confronted the private or personal tension between two fundamental modes of awareness, or ways of knowing, a tension perhaps best summarized as *immediacy* (living "in" the moment, experiencing oneself fully as a social presence) and *reflection* (giving way to the intellectual impulse to detach, analyze, and abstract in order to understand, or put their experience into some kind of conceptual order). None of these tensions appear to have been inherently bad or good in terms of its contribution to learning and identity-making. Instead, its implications depended on the nature of the particular transition an author was going through.

From the start I must make clear several important points. First, these tensions are not merely analytical devices but emerge from the reported experience of the authors. Second, I have used the conjunction "and" and not "versus" to link the two sides of each tension for a reason (Stability *and* Change rather than Stability *versus* Change, Affiliation

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and Separateness rather than Affiliation *versus* Separateness, Immediacy *and* reflection rather than Immediacy *versus* Reflection). The reason is simply that, for the three authors, these tensions are not simply contrasts, the result of two things experienced in contrast to one another. Instead, they represent the stress inherent in three essential dialectics: Stability and Change, Affiliation and Separateness, Immediacy and Reflection. They are dialectical in the sense that the outcome for the authors was ultimately *not* going to be the obliteration of one side or the other. Change does not stand in opposition to stability in their stories, it dances with it. Similarly for the other two tensions.¹⁴

A third point is that these authors' stories are not home movies, they are autobiographies. It is thus important to bear in mind that the unit of analysis is *not* the historical events being recounted. The unit of analysis is the author's *reconstruction of* certain occurrences and episodes within a particular literary genre. The reader must take on faith that the historical events themselves did actually occur and are not a complete fabrication. We assume that the authors' reconstructions, including the patterns of feeling, thought, and images that accompany their recollections, are not entirely spontaneous, that the tensions they write about, although interpreted in the present, do have roots in their original lived experience. But again, to some extent, whether or not the author's fidelity to historical truth is absolute is not the point. The 'point' is the sense that the author makes of these events as he or she engages in the creative process of fitting them into his or her larger life narrative.

¹⁴ Gill (1995) writes eloquently on the similarities between learning and dancing.

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To summarize, a fundamental assumption is that learning and identity are inextricably connected; you cannot have one without the other. What interests me, however, is the tension that often seemed to exist for these authors between what these two processes were trying to achieve in their learning and in their lives: both change *and* stability, both connectedness *and* self-definition, both a personal presence in the moment (immediacy) *and* an intellectual understanding of it (reflection). It is the particular instances of these tensions in the autobiographies of Mike Rose, Richard Rodriguez, and Jill Ker Conway that provide more concrete examples of, that expose and illustrate, the essential relationship between learning and identity. Indeed, some writers have sought to depict education as essentially a people-making enterprise, documenting the ways that formal education contributes to the construction of gender (Gallas, 1997; Luttrell, 1996), racial and ethnic identity (Davidson, 1996), the identities of the handicapped (Erickson, 1996; McDermott, 1993), and even those considered 'uneducable' (see Levinson, Foley, & Holland, 1996, p. 24 for a list of references).¹⁵ What has not been addressed, however, is how such aspects of oneself ultimately do or do not co-exist with a sense of oneself as 'educated.'

For beyond any knowledge, skill, or opportunities that learning may bestow, those who are formally educated acquire something that the uneducated do not. The educated have a perception of themselves as literate, as people who generally speak, write, and behave in ways representative of educated people. After all, one does not simply become

¹⁵ "Just as school discourses and practices specify the properly 'educated person,' they may also reproduce inequalities by defining and producing the 'uneducable person' (Levinson, Foley, & Holland, 1996, p. 24).

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educated, one becomes an educated *person*. This is particularly the case for the highly educated, for whom an advanced degree of learning constitutes an important aspect of who and what they believe themselves to be. For an intellectual or academic, one's identity emerges and is sustained, in large part, through the perception by self and others that one is learned. How *does* one reconcile an intellectual way of being in the world with other fundamental aspects of cultural life such as ethnicity, gender, or socioeconomic origins, conditions one is born into but that may in fact be incongruous with the intellectual culture into which one has been educated. What *are* the difficulties for those who aspire to a working life as an intellectual but whose backgrounds make it difficult for them to identify with academia's accustomed ways of thinking, acting, and talking? What can this tell us about the relationship between formal learning and identity-making?

Ultimately, regardless of level, schooling in America does require that one move back and forth, that one negotiate the ongoing transition between the culture of the home and that of formal education. In that process, people do give meaning to what they learn and to the changes it provokes in who and what they are becoming, they make sense of their learning and themselves, they construct an identity and progress. How they do so, how they adapt to this 'between-ness,' is a question that has yet to be fully understood. Susan Florio-Ruane writes that "stories of transformation" at the contact between persons, between generations, or between groups "remain few and far between in American education" (1997). Understanding such experiences may shed important light on the struggle that some individuals encounter in their transition to becoming formally educated. Only to the extent that we are able to address the questions such struggles raise

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will our thinking about education and learning head us in new, more conscious directions.

The following paragraphs provide a brief overview of what lies ahead.

Looking ahead. Chapter two will begin with a more detailed review of my argument regarding the separation of learning and identity-making in the transition between home and school. I will suggest that one potential explanation for this can be found in the conceptual frameworks utilized by the various disciplines seeking to elucidate issues of learning as well as those seeking to understand issues of identity. Psychology will provide a case in point with special attention to how this tradition has been carried over into the subdiscipline of educational psychology itself. This will be followed by a review of those studies that have made the relation of learning and identity an explicit focus. I look at three studies that have approached the problem from a theoretical angle and, in contrast, three that have tried a data-based approach. Finally, I will lay out certain criticisms of this literature and how my study attempts to specifically address these criticisms.

Chapter three will offer a rationale for my choice of an hermeneutical approach to the relation of learning and identity. This includes a history of the autobiographical genre and the relevance of this genre to the historical development of various cultural perspectives on self and identity. Related to autobiography are issues regarding narrative and language in the construction of self, which I briefly discuss. After this, I turn to the hermeneutic approach by which the three texts were analyzed. This is followed by a focus on the texts themselves, how they were selected and how I went about my analyses. Finally, chapter three concludes with a section that provides a more detailed explanation

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of the three tensions that ultimately constitute my units of analysis (i.e., stability and change, affiliation and separateness, immediacy and reflection).

Chapters four through six represent the ‘core’ of the study. Each presents a detailed analysis of a particular autobiography through the lens of one of the three tensions. Specifically, after presenting a time-line, a biographical description of the educational life of Mike Rose (1989) as described in Lives of the Boundary, chapter four will analyze the major transitions in Rose’s educational career in terms of the relationship between learning and identity, a relation that can be more clearly articulated and understood as it is expressed in the tension between, first, stability and change (between the desire for a stable self and the desire to become someone or something new).

Following this, I will analyze Rose’s major life transitions but this time in terms of the tensions in his experience between affiliation and separateness (between the need to experience a sense of similarity between himself and important others and the need to define himself apart from them). I point out how, through specific instances of this tension, one can better appreciate the intertwining of learning and identity in Rose’s life. Finally, I explore the transitions for Rose but this time through the lens of immediacy and reflection, that is, the tension that certain transitions that seemed to create for Rose between living two different ‘modes’ of consciousness, two ways of knowing or taking in his experience (one conceptual, analytical, and abstract and the other was represented by moments in which authors experienced themselves as very much ‘in’ the present moment, unselfconsciously engaged, alive to their senses and surroundings). Following the analysis of Mike Rose in chapter four, chapter five will apply this same approach to

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an analysis of Richard Rodriguez's 1982 autobiography, Hunger of Memory. Finally, chapter six carries this approach over into a detailed analysis of the experiences of Jill Ker Conway (Ker Conway, 1989) as documented in her autobiography, The Road to Coorain.

Chapter seven will then step back in order to summarize the three tensions as understood thus far, providing a brief explanation for each including how it makes manifest the relation between learning and identity-making. Next, I will move to a somewhat broader comparison and contrast of each tension across the three authors. This section will explore the more obvious similarities and differences between the authors regarding their experience of the tensions, shedding further light on the nature of the tensions in the context of each of their lives. This will be followed by a discussion of the relationship between the three tensions themselves. Finally, some observations will be made regarding gender, the three tensions, and the autobiographical construction of self particularly as this relates to Conway.

In the last chapter, chapter eight, I will begin with a restatement of my basic premise. I will also include an overview of the picture that my interpretation presents regarding the relationship between learning and identity and the value of the three tensions for understanding the sophisticated nature of this relationship. The final chapter concludes with a brief discussion of the implications that this work may have for how we approach teaching and learning.

CHAPTER TWO

The Literature

The previous chapter concentrated on the idea that no matter what we are learning (or failing to learn), there is an essential relationship between the experience of becoming formally educated and the construction of oneself as a person. Not a relationship in the sense of two things systematically related to one another, which is the way we typically construe relationships in the social sciences. Typically, in terms of a statistical correlation for example, we think of two things that somehow affect one another but whose relationship leaves the nature of each essentially unchanged (i.e., affecting each other in degree but not in kind).¹ Instead, for purposes of this work, I am conceptualizing the relationship between learning and identity-making as one in which each process is an essential constituent of the other. In other words, learning is not simply a process outside or apart from identity that somehow causes, affects, or shapes it. Nor does who and what we are as persons (i.e. identity) merely exert an influence on some independent cognitive system through which we learn. Instead, I would like to view learning and identity as mutually constitutive processes, in dialectical relation to one another. Identity-making is therefore not reducible to a process of individual learning. Were identity simply a form of knowledge, you could attain mine and I could attain yours, including its unique aspects. Instead, an identity is a living event, an emergent in the irreducible tension between one's

¹ Of course, presuming some degree of ontological separateness between two objects or constructs must logically precede tests of their statistical relation.

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position in space and time (by virtue of which I can say that I am a unique person) and one's shared position in cultural space (by virtue of which I can also say that I am a White American Male). In a sense, the qualities of a particular identity belong as much to a context as to a self which appropriates them.

Given this understanding, the previous chapter argued that by focusing our analytic energies on the contradictions and frictions between the experience of institutional learning, on the one hand, and the making of identity, on the other, we might come to a more complex, sophisticated understanding of their relationship. This section will review literature relevant to that argument. In general, it asks *what are some of the available ways for thinking about the relationship between formal learning and the making of an identity, and what might each of these ways preclude or afford?*

Achieving a broader understanding of how learning and identity-making implicate one becomes complicated in a hurry. Each of the disciplines tends to construe learning and identity within its own conceptual framework. For example, sociology has tended to emphasize the broad cultural categories which inform how one learns and develops an identity, categories such as ethnicity, nationality, occupation, class, age, and gender.² Social or cultural anthropology, on the other hand, has leaned toward comparisons across time and culture regarding how individuals in particular societies are taught to constitute an intelligible self or identity. Whether one is talking about learning or identity,

² An exception would be early 20th sociologists such as George Herbert Mead, who focused on the development of self in interaction with social others. For example, Mead writes, "I know of no way in which intelligence or mind could arise or could have arisen, other than through the internalization by the individual of social processes of experience and behavior...there neither can be nor could have been any mind or thought without language" (1934, pp 191-192).

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psychology has for the most part focused on their properties as generalizeable mental or cognitive process.

To complicate matters still further, as each discipline has its characteristic point of view, so does each subdiscipline. Take psychology as a case in point. Historically, learning has tended to be studied by those with a predominately cognitive orientation. To be fair, most cognitive theories have not pretended to offer an explanation of self or identity; their purpose is to illustrate how the mind *per se* works.³ Issues of self and identity are left to those more concerned with matters of social interaction; social psychologists, for example, who have typically searched for the psychological principles underlying the processing of social information and the impact this has on learning (e.g., Bandura, 1986) and identity formation (e.g., Markus, 1977; 1986).⁴ On still other turf, personality psychologists have attempted to excavate the deep structure of identity by exploring how individual's personalities differ from one another in certain basic and systematic ways. The effect of dividing the spoils in this way has essentially been to slice

³ From this perspective, who and what one is as a person, or Self (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991), is extraneous to the functioning of the cognitive system (Gover, 1996). One needn't invoke the Self, identity, or even consciousness for that matter, to explain cognitive functioning. Even the construct of metacognition, which looks at the role of self-regulation in learning (see Paris & Winograd 1990 for review), includes only the executive functions of self or consciousness (see also Snyder's (1987) theory of self-monitoring).

⁴ From a cognitive perspective, presumably cranium-bound structures and events are of most interest. Learning is primarily understood through the internal mechanisms underlying behaviors such as reasoning, understanding, remembering, perceiving, categorizing, analyzing, synthesizing, and so on. For example, from an information processing approach, learning is construed as an essentially computational process (Anderson, Reder, & Simon, 1995; Anderson, 1997; Howard, 1983). The mind functions to represent the external world symbolically. These symbols or images are then 'operated' on, that is, they undergo a series of transformations through which, based on observed changes in the individual's behavior, learning is assumed to have occurred [although in this view learning can also occur without a change in behavior (Bandura, 1986)]. While the focus here tends to be the nature of the operations, that is, the structure of the mental 'program,' other cognitive models of learning focus more on the qualities of mental representations themselves, particularly the way in which concepts or symbols are acquired and changed (e.g., Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1987; see Dole & Sinatra, 1998, for review).

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the human subject or, more precisely, the mind itself, into incommensurate portions (Hermans & Kempen, 1994). Those who study matters of how we come to learn and know are separated from those who study issues of self and identity with little motive for conceptually bridging the two.

This split in psychology between those who look at learning from a cognitive perspective and those who look at learning as related to issues of self and identity has continued to reverberate within the sub-discipline of educational psychology itself. Anderson argues that “ample evidence suggests that the educational research community has become increasingly diverse and divisive over the recent decades” (p. 262). For Greeno (1997), that division takes the form of what he terms *situative* versus *cognitive* views of learning. Each of these offers a unique perspective on the nature of mind, particularly regarding epistemological issues, or how we come to learn or know. From a cognitive perspective, learning is primarily understood through the mental mechanisms underlying such behaviors as reasoning, understanding, remembering, perceiving, categorizing, analyzing, and synthesizing. It is unnecessary, in this view, to invoke issues of identity in order to explain learning.

On the other hand, a situative perspective claims that learning is a fundamentally discursive act inseparable from its particular cultural and historical setting. From a situative view, the central focus is on “the contributions of learning activities to the learners' ability to participate in valued social practices and to *the development of their identities as capable and responsible learners*” (Greeno, 1997, p. 9, italics mine). In this view, issues of identity are central. Each perspective, cognitive and situative, represents

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an ideology, a set of values and beliefs about the world that necessarily precede one's explorations of it. Greeno neatly summarizes a debate that has unfortunately become quite polarized:

Should we consider the major goals and outcomes of learning primarily as collections of subskills or as successful participation in socially organized activity and the development of students' identities as learners? (1997, p. 9).

At the same time, there are a few who have attempted to deliberately tread upon the middle ground between learning and identity-making, who have made the relation itself the focus. Where cognitivists, even those of a more social stripe, make the tacit assumption that the phenomena of interest, that which the social world 'affects', are essentially individual and cranium-bound, others have tried to lay this out as an initial 'unit of analysis' problem. What *are* the boundaries of our subject after all? What constitutes our subject as a 'unit'? In particular, how might we be limiting ourselves by automatically granting center stage to individuals and their qualities as opposed to viewing them against larger issues of culture, identity, and history (Lightfoot & Lyra, 2000)? For Lave,

to the extent that being human is a relational matter, generated in social living, historically, in social formations whose participants engage with each other as a condition and precondition for their existence, theories that conceive of learning as a special universal mental process impoverish and misrecognize it (Lave, 1996, p. 149).

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In the next section, I will take a look at the work of some of those who have taken such criticism seriously and attempted to explicitly focus on and elaborate the relationship between learning and identity-making as social processes. I have divided these studies (of which there are not a large number) into two groups. The first three consist of writers who have tried to cross the breach between learning and identity theoretically. The second group, in contrast, is comprised of those that have used empirical data in an explicit effort to elaborate the nature of this relation.

Theoretical Studies.

Penuel and Wertsch (1995) assert that neither an individual nor a cultural focus alone is sufficient for understanding identity formation. For Penuel and Wertsch, a more complete understanding of identity formation must take into account the "dynamic tension" that exists between social and individual (mental) processes, between the public and private moments of learning and of identity-making. To create a fuller account of this tension, Penuel and Wertsch (1995) attempt to bring together two theorists from very different traditions: the Russian psychologist, Lev Vygotsky (e.g., 1986), who had a deep interest in matters of learning, and identity theorist, Erik Erikson (1959).

Erik Erikson was a maverick who, by foregrounding the role of social forces in identity development, cut his ties with the Freudian dominated postwar psychoanalytic establishment. And yet, argue Penuel and Wertsch, although his way of taking culture into account was innovative, in his attention to ego development and related issues of personal fidelity, ideology, and work, Erikson devoted his greatest focus to the

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individual, specifically the dynamics of individual choice. In contrast, Vygotsky foregrounded the cultural constituents of thought and the role of various cultural 'tools' or artifacts in mediating human thought and action. He was interested in understanding what he called *higher mental functioning*, particularly as this concerned language and language development. In fact, Shotter (1993) argues that, unlike Erikson, Vygotsky "fails to explicate what it means to do things 'personally,' that is, what it is to be and to act as a person within a particular culture" (Shotter, 1993, p. 68). In contrast, these are matters Erikson is more explicit about.

Since Vygotsky did not specifically address issues of identity (the primary focus for Erikson) and Erikson did not address the social mediation of human thought, Penuel and Wertsch suggest that these two theories could very well complement one another. Aspects of Eriksonian theory could be borrowed to fill in the gaps for Vygotsky and *vice versa*. They offer that such an integration might be achieved through a focus on "the language and other signs that people use to describe themselves in the course of action" (p. 91). They further propose that "mediated action" (that is, human behavior as constituted through the use of cultural artifacts such as words, symbols, gestures,

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traditions, and so on), and not strictly the individual, may provide the unit of analysis for a sociocultural approach to identity research.⁵

In contrast, in his book, Communities of Practice, Etienne Wenger (1998) presents an integrated theory of learning that is based on “learning as social participation,” participation being defined as active involvement “in the *practices* of social communities and constructing *identities* in relation to these communities” (p. 4, italics in original). Wenger offers definitions of identity and learning that make an explicit link between the two.

[Identity is] a way of talking about how learning changes who we are and creates personal histories of becoming in the context of our communities (p. 5)...[Learning] is the vehicle for the evolution of practices and the inclusion of newcomers while also (and through the same process) the vehicle for the development and transformation of identities (p. 13).

⁵ The argument that Eriksonian theory plays to the weaknesses in Vygotsky's theory and *visa versa* implies that these two theories may be viably combined. Indeed, there is overlap. Although they are likely to have construed its nature quite differently, both Erikson and Vygotsky sought to portray the social origins of mind, for instance. It is at a higher level that they become theoretically incommensurate. The metaphor for Erikson's theory of identity development was borrowed from embryology, specifically the theory of epigenesis or prenatal development (Weiland, 1992). The origins of Vygotskian theory, on the other hand, are submerged in Marxist philosophy and dialectical materialism. In Pepper's (1942) philosophical framework, we might consider Erikson's theory as depending on a "root metaphor" (or metatheory) of *organicism*. In this view, events in the world are more or less concealed organic process. In contrast, Vygotsky relies on the metaphor of *contextualism*, essentially a systemic view in which events in the world are seen as intrinsically complex and interconnected, sometimes arbitrary, and always changing. Regarding these two metaphors, Pepper (1942) writes that they "contradict each other on nearly every categorical point" (p. 280). In sum, Penuel and Wertsch attempt to wed two world views that are ontologically incompatible with one another.

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In this view, one can regard “learning as becoming.” Wenger makes the assumption that “engagement in social practice is the fundamental process by which we learn and so become who we are” (p. 1). In his view, learning’s “central aspect” is its social nature. Knowledge can therefore be defined in very broad terms as that competence which allows us to participate in society in various ways “such as discovering scientific facts, fixing machines, writing poetry, being convivial, growing up as a boy or a girl” (p. 4). By depicting learning in social terms, Wenger places an especially important emphasis on the role of meaning.

Our ability to experience the world and our engagement with it as meaningful is ultimately what learning is to produce (p. 4).

In Wenger’s theory, it is neither the person nor the social institution that provides the unit of analysis, but instead the informal and ubiquitous “communities of practice that people form as they pursue shared enterprises over time” (p. 1). He writes that within such communities (of which a family, a classroom, a workplace, a garage band or a 12-step group are but a few examples), members “develop their own practices, routines, rituals, artifacts, symbols, conventions, stories, and histories” (p. 6). The nature of the boundaries connecting different communities are integral to the movement of persons and knowledge between them.

Wenger offers an alternative to how learning in our institutions, to the degree it is addressed, has typically been viewed. Learning has traditionally been approached as an

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individual process, one set apart from all of our other activities, and involving an acquisition period with a definite beginning and end. Further, in formal contexts, learning is typically presumed to be a result of teaching. Instead, writes Wenger,

[Learning] is not something we do when we do nothing else or stop doing when we do something else... situations that bring learning into focus are not necessarily those in which we learn most, or most deeply... Learning is something we can assume - whether we see it or not, whether we like the way it goes or not, whether what we are learning is to repeat the past or to shake it off. Even failing to learn what is expected in a given situation usually involves learning something else instead (p. 8).

The problem, according to Wenger, is that although learning is a familiar and integral part of our everyday lives, we have no systematic, well-developed way of talking about it in such terms. He argues that it is our conception of learning that urgently needs to change, “particularly when we choose to meddle with [learning] on the large scale that we do today,” he writes (p. 9).

Another equally comprehensive perspective on learning and education with a special emphasis on their relation to identity is offered by the psychologist, Jerome Bruner, in his book The Culture of Education (1996). Bruner observes that two “strikingly divergent conceptions” of the human mind are currently prevalent. According to what he calls the *computational view*, the mind can be metaphorically compared to a computer. Like a computer, the mind is systematic and logical. It is individual: like a computer is bounded by a case, the mind is bounded by the cranium. Also like a

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computer, the mind works from the “inside-out,” thinking is internal with thoughts as output. In contrast, the *cultural view* of mind has it that human minds are a cultural production shaped by language, customs, traditions, cultural beliefs, *et cetera*.⁶ From this perspective, mind is an “outside-in” proposition that functions via the internalization of culture rather than by virtue of internal mechanisms.

Of course, because each of these perspectives (computational and cultural) has a different view of how the mind operates, they each have a different set of approaches for exploring the process by which learning occurs. From a computational view, researchers might do such things as develop the flowcharts and formulas that map the logic of how real persons behave when learning. Or perhaps they might study how persons go about abstracting general rules about the world from their experience of it. On the other hand, according to Bruner, the cultural view seeks to explore four interrelated questions in its attempt to explain the nature of human learning. These questions focus not on the nature of mind but on the nature of education as a cultural institution. First, what is the societal function of the educational institution? Second, how does it distribute its various forms of social capital (i.e., those things such as the ability to read and write or to attain professional degrees that lend us power and status as individuals). How does institutional education socialize and prepare us for fuller participation in society? Finally, how might the organization of institutional education itself function to create inequities between individuals in terms of what is learned?

⁶ A relationship that Bruner says is recursive: although culture shapes minds, it is also peoples' minds that collectively create language, customs, traditions, beliefs and thus shape culture.

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Bruner's position is that these two views of mind, one psychological and one cultural, are not necessarily mutually exclusive. He therefore attempts to bring them together under the umbrella of his own *psycho-cultural* view of education and learning⁷. There are a number of tenets to this approach, but two are especially key to the relationship between learning and identity. The first of these is "the tenet of identity and self-esteem," according to which all humans experience a sense of self. Bruner proposes two aspects of self that he claims are universal. First, all humans experience a sense of agency (a sense of volition or will) and, second, all humans are inclined to evaluate or judge the self (i.e., themselves). Bruner argues that education connects these two aspects in a vital way.

Since agency implies not only the capacity for initiating, but also for completing our acts, it also implies skill or know-how. Success and failure are principal nutrients in the development of selfhood. Yet we may not be the final arbiters of success and failure, which are often defined from the "outside" according to culturally specified criteria. And school is where the child first encounters such criteria - often as if applied arbitrarily. School judges the child's performance, and the child responds by evaluating himself or herself in turn.

The second tenet to a psycho-cultural approach with special import for the learning-identity relation is what Bruner calls "the narrative tenet." According to this tenet, there are two broad approaches to knowing the world, one involves logical-

⁷ The same criticism might be made of Bruner's psycho-cultural approach as was made of Penuel and Wertsch's attempt to wed Ericksonian and Vygotskian perspectives (see previous footnote). That is, it attempts to integrate world-views that are, at root, ontologically incompatible with one another.

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scientific or theoretical thinking which is largely abstract and conceptual and the other involves a narrative or “storied” type of thinking. It is narrative knowing, Bruner asserts, that represents “the mode of thinking and feeling that helps children (indeed, people generally) create a version of the world in which, psychologically, they can envisage a place for themselves - a personal world” (p. 39). Bruner believes that education should be considered central to the development of narrative thought and, therefore, to the development of self and identity. He writes in summary,

A system of education must help those growing up in a culture find an identity within that culture. Without it, they stumble in their effort after meaning. It is only in the narrative mode that one can construct an identity and find a place in one's culture. Schools must cultivate it, nurture it, cease taking it for granted (p. 42).

Empirical Studies.

In a 1999 study, Packer and Brooks undertook an analysis of classroom discourse with the intention of understanding “the way schools change children.” They observed an elementary classroom on the initial day of first grade, subsequently analyzing transcript material from a segment in which the teacher attempted to explain the rule of no running. Packer and Brooks were interested in the discursive process by which students (all newcomers on this first day) assumed their new identity, that is, the subject position of student.

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From the very first day, they write, the teacher began the task of “legitimizing the codified rules of disciplinary order...by positing the children as a kind of subject - ‘student’ - who speaks a particular kind of discourse, positioned in a characteristic relationship with the teacher” (p. 20). For the children, assuming their identities as students meant bringing themselves into alignment with these “rules of disciplinary order,” rules regarding what could and could not be said or done. Taking on the identity of student involved conforming to the teacher’s expectations regarding the places and times in which saying and doing certain things was either appropriate or inappropriate. Packer and Brooks write,

It is in relationship to [the teacher] that the child becomes student. Her task is to draw children into the classroom order and their new way of being, appealing to, but not simply by meeting those needs. In school the children’s needs and desires must be transformed. Schools regulate not just to organize and maintain order among children in the classroom, but in order to transform them (1999, p. 22).

Packer and Brooks argue that children enter school having known only one subject position, that of “child-in-family.” The new student must now learn to juggle two subject positions, child-in-family and “student-in-classroom,” each having its own set of expectations, obligations, sanctions, and relationships. The new identity does not merely replace or supplement the old. Instead, Packer and Brooks suggest that as the child learns to manage the transition between the two “incommensurate” contexts, a “split” is introduced.

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Now, in school, the child begins to adopt a new position from which events and situations, including the family, can be viewed at a distance. The new subject position changes the way the child lives the old - he or she can never go home again in quite the same way (1999, p. 22).

In contrast to Packer and Brook's focus on the more general identity of student, McDermott (1993) looked at the role of institutional schooling in constructing the identity of a particular student labeled as 'learning disabled' (LD). In the early 1960's, chronic difficulties in reading, writing, or math were beginning to be understood as possible symptoms of an underlying pathology. Within the discourse of the medical and educational communities, this way of talking about learning disorders quickly transformed them from a diagnostic construct into an objective entity, a cause by which the academic problems of not one child but of many children could be explained and dealt with. The LD label was attached to students as often the most significant aspect of their identity (Valencia, 1997). For example, a student might be identified as "an LD" in much the same way that one might identify a psychiatric patient as "a schizophrenic" or "a manic-depressive." Moreover, locating learning disabilities themselves within individual students freed educators from having to ask self-incriminating questions about how the larger system might in part sustain the LD identity. It distracted from the fact that such terms point not to an entity so much as to a stereotype, a cultural category that students inhabit. Learning disorders as a presumably natural fact were confused with 'LD' as social fact (Mehan, 1993).

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As a case in point, McDermott presents Adam, a third-grader formally diagnosed as 'LD.' After 18 months of observing Adam's interactions in situations both in and out of school, a continuum appeared to emerge in which Adam's visibility as "a problem" increased with an increase in the school-like nature of the cognitive demands placed on him.⁸ On one hand, there were everyday life situations (a trip to the zoo, for example). Here, McDermott writes that Adam "appeared in every way competent, and, more than most of the children, he could be wonderfully charming, particularly if there was a good story to tell" (p. 278). On the other end of the continuum, there were academic testing situations in which "Adam stood out from his peers not just by his dismal performance but by the wild guesswork he tried to do" (p. 279). For McDermott, each shift in context seemed to present a different Adam, a virtually different identity. It was only as situations became more school-like in their demands, in which "the quality of Adam's mind was increasingly at stake," that Adam assumed classic LD behavior.

Of course, one might say that the 'LD' aspects of Adam became more apparent in school simply because school made more rigorous demands on Adam's mind than did the everyday world. In other words, school put into stark relief something that was there all along, we just couldn't see it. McDermott challenges this by demonstrating how the notion of learning disorder fails to provide a meaningful explanation for Adam's behavior in situations outside a school-like context. Because Adam and LD can in fact be

⁸ Most of us are probably familiar with instances in which a diagnoses of learning disorder, attention-deficit, or hyperactivity has been made only after a child has entered the primary grades (e.g., McCarthy, 1999). Parents of such children are typically surprised and embarrassed by their apparent failure to have noticed something that, upon diagnosis, they must presume had been present all along.

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unhinged, the school itself is therefore implicated as a necessary constituent of Adam's disorder. McDermott does not claim that there *are* no children who learn slower and with more difficulty than others, only that "without social arrangements for making something of differential rates of learning, there is no such thing as LD" (p. 272).

In looking at the relationship between learning and identity-making on a larger societal level, it is important to consider those 'mini-societies' that have emerged from the onset of mass education itself. James Coleman, on the very brink of the 1960's youth counterculture, wrote the following in his sociological classic, The Adolescent Society: The Social Life of the Teenage and Its Impact on Education:

In sum, then, the general point is this: our adolescents today are cut off, probably more than ever before, from the adult society. They are still oriented toward fulfilling their parents' desires, but they look very much to their peers for approval as well. Consequently, our society has within its midst a set of small teen-age societies, which focus teen-age interests and attitudes on things far removed from adult responsibilities, and which may develop standards that lead away from those goals established by the larger society (1961, p. 9).

Coleman claims that by bringing adolescents together in large numbers, mass education has created an "adolescent society" that stands separate from adult society. In general, within the school, "small teen-age societies" rather than the family provide the resources for identity construction. More recently, Shaw (1994) reviewed five studies that together took a cross-cultural look at the formation of 'cliques' in junior high and high school. He argues that cliques are an important aspect of identity-making in schools.

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They provide resources for identity-making via the social practices (certain types of dress, talk, and behavior) through which, as individuals and as groups, they learn to signify themselves as being persons of a certain type or kind. This is a phenomenon Shaw calls the "semiotic mediation of identity."

As an example, one of the five studies reviewed by Shaw is the work of Penelope Eckert. In her 1989 book, Jocks and Burnouts: Social Categories and Identity in the High School, Eckert explored the relation between learning and identity-making by looking at how groups of high school adolescents created and reproduced their identities as either "jocks" (a high-status group of student athletes, active in school affairs, accepting of adult authority) or "burnouts" (a low-status subculture of students resistant to adult authority). Identity is truly a paradox, a sense of being both the same and different. Eckert's (1989) work demonstrates how aspects of a particular student's dress and behavior (e.g., unkempt clothing, smoking, low grades and truancy for burnouts, a collegiate dress style, student council membership and participation in athletics for the jocks) declare a student's individual uniqueness relative to the members of other groups. At the same time, however, the same dress and behaviors which declare their difference from others also served to mark their membership in, and conformity to, a particular sub-group or clique (for further studies of identity-making within school-based adolescent peer groups see Schwartz, 1968; Shaw, 1988; Willis, 1977).

Summary and Conclusions.

As the literature seems to reveal, we appear to have moved from a time when Erik Erikson (1959) could talk confidently about highly predictable age-related, ego-centered,

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normative stages of identity development over the life course to more recent views in which identity and self are regarded as quintessentially sociocultural phenomena, constructed almost out of the flotsam and jetsam of society (e.g., Gergen, 1991). At the same time, in a similar way the past two decades have witnessed a shift in our theories of learning away from an exclusive focus on individual behavior or cognition and toward an understanding of learning and knowledge that includes persons' social context as a fundamental constituent (Bateson, 1972; Cole, 1996; Cook-Gumperz, 1986; Gill, 1995; Greeno, 1997; John-Steiner, Panofsky, & Smith, 1994; Lave, 1996; Rogoff, 1994; Rose, 1989; Street, 1988). These concurrent shifts in the fields of identity and learning may reflect movement in the human sciences generally toward a broader, more integrative, less dualistic view of human mind and action (see Lemmen, 1997). Eisenhart writes,

building or claiming an identity for self in a given context is what motivates an individual to become more expert; that by developing a sense of oneself as an actor in a context is what compels a person to desire and pursue increasing mastery of the skills, knowledge, and emotions associated with a particular social practice (Eisenhart, 1995, p. 4).

As the literature suggests, learning and "developing a sense of oneself as an actor in a context" are not ontologically distinct endeavors. Learning constantly puts one's identity at risk through its on-going consequences for how one is socially positioned. In school, identity cannot be inoculated from the effects of demonstrating (or failing to demonstrate) that we have learned what we are expected to learn.

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At the same time, Packer and Brooks (1999) recently cited a series of limitations that they believe apply to the current literature regarding issues of learning and identity. First, even in more recent constructivist accounts of learning, the child remains an “epistemic subject” with no acknowledgment that learning actually changes the kind of person one becomes (p. 134). Second, and in line with the prior assumption, knowledge (including even certain norms and values) are generally seen as “internalized ... by a subject unchanging in character.” Third, students are typically seen as passive and viewed as active only when engaged in acts of resistance (e.g., McLaren, 1993). Fourth, in theories of cultural reproduction, teachers and students are seen merely as carriers of cultural tradition. The details of how this is accomplished are not spelled out. Fifth, Packer and Brooks write about the problem of ignoring the role that the acquisition of concepts of “text and number” plays in identity-making.

There is general agreement that schools provide children with a transition between the family and the larger institutions of work and public life, and that it introduces the important cultural mediators of text and number, though again these changes are generally viewed in terms of skills, knowledge, norms and values that are internalized or constructed. But the world of the classroom is a ‘disciplinary matrix’ (Foucault, 1973), a ‘symbolic order’ (Lacan, 1968), involvement in which doesn’t just generate knowledge and skill, it leads to what we call ontological work: transformation of the human person” (p. 5).

To these criticisms of the literature on learning and identity I would add a couple others. Within the literature generally, there is a lack of personal perspective. That is to

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say, there is no detailed understanding of how the individual himself or herself construes issues of personal identity in his or her movement between different contexts, particularly home and school. This would seem to be an inevitable outcome of viewing students primarily as epistemic subjects (see criticism number one above). In addition, there is an absence of a broader time-perspective in studies of learning and identity-making. Identity and learning in their broadest sense can be viewed as processes that occur over long periods of persons' lives.

There are of course very real practical difficulties in overcoming these issues. However, it is critical that we make the effort. Packer and Brooks (1997) write that in sum,

[although] recent examination of "the cultural production of the educated person" has paid more attention to "how people creatively occupy the space of education and schooling" (Leninson & Holland, 1996, p. 14), the details remain far from spelled out. A greater understanding is important because current calls for school reform amount to a demand that schools change the kinds of persons their students become (p. 137).

Through the use of autobiographical material, I am hopeful that the current study can address many of these criticisms. A motive behind the writing of the books by Mike Rose, Richard Rodriguez, and Jill Ker-Conway, after all, was the authors' attempt to acknowledge the personal impact of formal education on their identities, on who and what they have become over the course of their educational careers.

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The next chapter begins with a history of the autobiographical genre and the relevance this genre has for the historical development of various cultural perspectives on self and identity. Related to autobiography are issues regarding narrative and language in the construction of self, which I will briefly discuss. After this, I will describe the hermeneutic approach by which the three texts were analyzed followed by a focus on the texts themselves, how they were selected and analyzed. Finally, chapter three will conclude with a more detailed explanation of the three tensions that ultimately constitute my units of analysis (i.e., stability and change, affiliation and separateness, immediacy and reflection).

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CHAPTER THREE

Identity, Autobiography, and Questions of Method

The question motivating this study has to do with how the between becoming process of becoming formally educated, on the one hand, and becoming a person, on the other, implicate one another. I've chosen autobiography as my source material for certain reasons. First, a "central insight" of the work of Harré and Langenhove is the idea that "personal identity and selfhood are manifested in discursive practices, amongst which are the writing and telling of lives" (1998b, p. 60). Simply put, to the extent that writing or telling one's story is a discursive act (i.e., an act ultimately done in dialogue with an 'other' of some kind), to write an autobiography is an act of identity-making. By writing an autobiography, one positions oneself socially (as well as engendering a sense of personal continuity for oneself over time).¹ Consider the act of writing an autobiography in light of this quote from Holland et al.,

Identities are improvised – in the flow of activity within specific social situations – from the cultural resources at hand. Thus persons and, to a lesser extent, groups are caught in the tensions between past histories that have settled in them and the present discourses and images that attract them or somehow impinge upon them... identities are hard-won standpoints [that] make at

¹ Harré and Langenhove (1998) distinguish between *social identity*, who one is relative to social others, and *personal identity*, one's private awareness of being one and the same individual over time. This is a bit confusing, due to the different meanings of the term, identity, in each case. While the former refers to the social or psychological aspects of identity, the other is more concerned with the philosophical issues surrounding sameness. I will thus refer to these simply as issues of *identity* and *self*, respectively.

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least a modicum of self-direction possible" (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998, p. 4).

The genre of autobiography is certainly one of those "cultural resources at hand," a resource that can be borrowed from in seeking to define ourselves as persons (Casey, 1996; Coupland & Nussbaum, 1992; Goodwin, 1993; Harré & Van Langenhove, 1998a; Mascuch, 1996; McAdams, 1992; Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992; Shotter, 1993; Van- Langenhove & Harré, 1993).

To the extent that one does not live one's life in preparation for one day writing about it, an autobiography is an improvisational act, constructed from those materials that present themselves at the actual moment of writing (one's memories, current life circumstances, skill as a writer, potential audience, and so forth). In addition, like identity-making in the quote above, one composes an autobiography from the standpoint of a certain crossroad: that between "past histories" and the "present discourses" in which one is engaged. In other words, one doesn't simply write about the past, one writes about it from a *certain perspective*. Finally, writing the story of one's life is a way of retracing the steps that actually brought one to that "hard-won standpoint" (see Holland et al. quote above) from which one writes. By putting the struggles, successes, joys, and failures of life into some kind of narrative order, one lends a certain logic and credence to the present. It helps to clarify the meaning of who and what one has become, and *why*.

Another reason for going with autobiography is simply methodological. How *does* one research the quality of an individual's experience over many decades? In this work, I am interested in how individuals have come to understand the experience of

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becoming a person within the constraints and affordances presented by years of institutional education. An autobiography, which encompasses a longer span of time than one might study through, say, observation, has obvious advantages when studying the development of identity. It's a carefully reflected upon 'public record' of personal experiences that cannot be attained through other means.

Finally, it is hard to go too far into the nature of autobiography without confronting issues of *narrative*. Narrative is not only a literary device but a way of understanding the world and oneself, that is, one's identity (Gover, 1998). Both aspects of narrative are central to autobiography. For that reason, having given my general rationale for employing autobiography as a data source, I would like to explore the area of narrative itself more deeply before then moving on to a broader analysis of autobiographical form.

Narrative.

It is true that in the past two decades, the term 'narrative' has become widely used. At present, I can think of five orientations toward narrative that are prevalent (Table 1). For purposes of clarification, I would like to provide a quick overview.

Table 1. Uses of the Term 'Narrative'

Narrative viewed as

- a characteristic of mind
- a form of meaning-making
- a technique of teaching and learning
- a method of educational research
- a mediator of social power

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Narrative as a characteristic of mind. In his book, Thought and Language, Lev Vygotsky (1986, p. 148) wrote about two different, but related, forms of experience. He suggested that each of these forms was predominately involved with one of two different types of mental reasoning: *spontaneous* and *scientific*. More recently, Gordon Wells (1994) has drawn attention to the similarities between Vygotsky's twin categories of thought and those proposed by psychologist Jerome Bruner (1985), *narrative* and *paradigmatic*, and also by sociolinguist Michael Halliday (1993), *dynamic* and *synoptic*. Elsewhere, philosopher Kenneth Burke (1989), who refers to humans as the “symbol-using animal,” proposes that symbols are intended to represent two types of meaning: *metaphoric* and *sylogistic*. The latter is logical or semantic in meaning while the former is poetic. He writes, “poetic [metaphoric] meanings cannot be disposed of on the true-or-false basis. Rather, they are related to one another like a set of concentric circles, of wider and wider scope” (p. 90). Finally, to draw yet one more theorist into this dualist camp, these distinctions are roughly similar to the differences Rom Harré identifies between “consciousness as experiencing something and consciousness as *knowing* that one is experiencing something” (1983, p. 27, italics added).²

² As Wells (1994) points out, it is true that school-based discourse brings students to the edge of the precipice between thought and word. Bridging this gap requires that students learn to render consciousness in propositional form. This gap is small, seamless in fact, when speech easily communicates what one is attempting to say, that is, one's *meaning*. When it does not, breakdowns occur and the teachable moment arises in which one becomes conscious or critical of his or her own use of language (See Gover & Englert, 1999). For most of us, school is where training in this type of critical consciousness begins (cf. Vygotsky, 1986, p. 171).

Across these theorists, one type of thinking is concrete, personal, "empirically rich but disorganized" (Kozulin, 1986, p. xxxv), and rooted in the detailed images of immediate experience. In contrast, another type of thought or understanding depends on the use of systematic thought and reflection. Each involves its own unique style of communicating, to wit Bruner (1985) writes that "in logic and science [i.e., scientific, paradigmatic, synoptic, or syllogistic modes of understanding], you attempt to mean what you say. In narrative [i.e., spontaneous, narrative, dynamic, or metaphoric modes], to be successful, you mean more than you say" (p. 109).³ Although each form of thought is equally natural, Oliver Sacks (1998) takes the position that narrative constitutes a more fundamental feature of mind:

The narrative comes first, has spiritual priority. Very young children love and demand stories, and can understand complex matters presented as stories, when their powers of comprehending general concepts, paradigms, are almost non-existent. It is this narrative or symbolic power which gives a *sense of the world* - a concrete reality in the imaginative form of

³ These two types of thought parallel what Mitchell and Rosen (1983) have identified as "two great streams of thought" in Western philosophy. According to the *enlightenment* view (associated with empiricism, positivism, of formalism), philosophy is a search for knowledge that is rational and secular, epitomized by the natural sciences. From this perspective, "philosophy must be cognate with the sciences...either it is to become a branch of science itself or...prepare the conceptual ground where the edifice of science is to be constructed" (p. 3). According to the *understanding* view (associated largely with analytic philosophy ala Wittgenstein, for example), philosophy is understood in terms of "the contribution it makes to human understanding in general - to our ability to find the world and our deeds in it intelligible" (p. 3). Each of course represents its own epistemology, its own set of procedures, assumptions, and values as to meaning and how we come to know.

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symbol and story - when abstract thought can provide nothing at all (p. 183-184, italics in original).⁴

Although Saks attributes it to the human mind, there is not space enough here to go into speculation regarding the 'location' of what Ricoeur calls the "narrative function." (1991). While some might see this function as rooted largely in culture, there are others who take a different stance. Adhering to what I've elsewhere termed *narrative individualism* (Gover, 1998), some writers turn to cross-cultural and developmental evidence that argues that narrative is ultimately an innate characteristic of mind (Bamberg, 1987; Mandler, 1978; Monague, Maddux, & Dereshiwsky, 1990; Olson & Gee, 1988; Rumelhart, 1975; Schank & Abelson, 1977; Stein & Glenn, 1979). Indeed, some conclude that the mind itself is "a narrative concern" (Sutton-Smith, 1988, p. 12). It has been suggested that a basic narrative form or structure, such as commonly realized within folktales, provides ample evidence for the "universal structuring of human memory" according to narrative-like "schemes" or mental operations (Mandler, Scribner, Cole, & DeForest, 1980, p. 21).

Narrative as a form of meaning-making. Narrative, as a way of understanding, therefore mediates our views of world and self, a means through which we give form and meaning to our experience, including the very existence of self. Freeman writes,

⁴ On the other hand, Kieran Egan (1998) would argue that it is only *through* narrative that young children in fact gain access to such abstract philosophical and moral concepts, or "binaries," as good and evil.

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The very attempt to answer the question "Who am I?" and "How might I have come to be that way?" requires an act of synoptic understanding, a configurational process of transforming the events and experiences of the past into *episodes*, into parts of a story ... Taking these ideas one step further, if in fact narrative is tied in some fundamental way to selfhood, as I believe it is (at least in the modern West), it follows that *we too*, as selves, are products of such labor: hence the idea of the poetic construction of selfhood (1999, p. 105).

In this way, narrative can be said to play a "privileged role" in the process of identity-making (Miller, et al., 1990, p. 292). Ricoeur, 1991, uses the term "narrative identity" to describe "the kind of identity that beings acquire through the mediation of the narrative function" (p. 188). He turns to the concept of "emplotment" (an idea whose pedigree can be traced to Aristotle's *Poetics*) to "reformulate the relation between life and narrative" (p. 21). The idea of emplotment implies that the 'record' Bruner refers to above is not a simple listing of events but entails a logical arrangement of incidents, a plot in which one thing leads to another in a story-like fashion.⁵ Writes Polkinghorne,

the experience of self is organized along the temporal dimension in the same manner that the events of a narrative are organized by the plot into a unified story... It is the plot that gathers together these events into a coherent and meaningful unity, and thereby gives significance to the contribution that the individual episodes make toward the overall configuration that is the person (1988, p. 152).

⁵ A potentially negative aspect of emplotment is Freeman's (Freeman, 1999) depiction of what he refers to as "narrative *entrapment*." This describes the situation in which a person feels unable to extricate him or herself from the current 'plot' structuring one's life. One is trapped within a certain story line and is unable to imagine or access alternative stories through which other life-options might be realized.

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Polkinghorne agrees with Ricoeur that this plot incorporates the future as well as present and past. The events in one's identity narrative have a *telos*.

Self, then... is a configuring of personal events into a historical unity which includes not only what one has been but also anticipations of what one will be (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 150).

Although they are rooted in the details of an individual's life in a specific community at a certain point in time, Ken Gergen argues that the ability of an "identity narrative" to communicate something intelligible depends on how well it follows the contours of conventionalized story forms (Gergen, 1991, pp. 161-163). According to Gergen, culture provides us with a limited array of story genre that serve as the template for identity narratives. Many of these are defined by how they begin and end. For example, there is the "rags to riches" or "riches to rags" story. There are "happily-ever-after" stories and tragic narratives. Regardless, Gergen (1994) writes that the conventions surrounding the telling of stories

sensitize us to the limits of self-identity. To understand how narratives must be structured within the culture is to press against the edges of identity's envelope - to discover the limits to identifying oneself as a human agent in good standing" (p. 189).

To illustrate what these conventions might actually look like, Gergen offers six "historically and culturally contingent" criteria for how narratives and, by extension,

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identity narratives, traditionally organize themselves (Gergen, 1994, ch. 8).⁶ These are the criteria by which our stories about ourselves are rendered intelligible to self and others.

First, in a story, there is typically a culturally valued endpoint of some kind. A story resolves in a way that meets our expectations and is in accord with cultural standards. Similarly, with an identity narrative, although I might interpret the outcome of a particular episode in my life (attending college) as ‘a success’ (I obtained a good job), this is only a meaningful outcome in relation to a culture that values economic attainment. James Gee (1991) writes that “any event is contingent on a narrative, and any single narrative is contingent on a wider set of narratives (a narrative context in which it is embedded)” (p. 3). Thus, individual identities are always surrounded by, or enveloped in, the more inclusive narratives of gender, race, religion, education, and so on.

Second, in somewhat backwards fashion, the selection of relevant events for inclusion in a story depends on how the story ultimately ends. In a typical rags-to-riches story, for example, the greatest elaboration is given to those events that feed the image of finally succeeding over tremendous odds. Similarly, with an identity narrative, one wishing to portray their life as a ‘success story’ might reconstruct it by selecting only those episodes that contribute to that kind of story. events can be left out while others can be elongated or abbreviated.

⁶ Bruner (1996, pp. 133-149) also offers a set of criteria for analyzing narratives. Somewhat broader than Gergen’s, Bruner refers to these as “nine universals of narrative realities.”

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Third, in narrative, there is the convention of a linear temporal ordering of events, an ordering that may or may not correspond to events as they actually occurred historically. Eudora Welty, the writer, remarks that “the events in our lives happen in a sequence in time, but in their significance to ourselves, they find their own order” (quoted in Cameron, 1992, p. 11). For humans, the experience of time is marked and regulated by the events in one's life. Writes Bakhtin, “at the heart of these ancient forms lies a new type of *biographical time* and a human image constructed to new specifications, that of an individual who passes through the course of a whole life” (1981, p. 130, italics in original). Although events are reconstructed as having occurred in a logical order, the logic is ultimately in terms of the genre. The events contained in a success story, for example, must first present the main character with some type of obstacle which is then overcome. Were triumph to be followed by his or her unexpected death, we would have a different genre (a tragedy)..

Fourth, in a typical narrative, the stability of a character's identity is usually stable over time. Heroes do not suddenly become villains and visa versa. Similarly, with our own identities we feel the need to characterize ourselves in consistent ways over time. Obviously, there are life events that can work against this such as career changes, divorce, death of one close to us, or life-changing illnesses or injuries. These events may bring changes in how we see ourselves, forcing us into the often difficult work of integrating them into a revised identity narrative.

Fifth, in a well-formed story there is a culturally and historically contingent range of viable causal linkages. It is the ties between events that lead to a story's ultimate

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conclusion. To borrow Gergen's example, "The king died then the queen died" is not much of a story. However, "The king died then the queen died *of grief*" provides a cause and the meaning of that cause for human actors. The same comparison could be applied to an identity narrative. I could say of my work life, "I was a musician and then I entered graduate school." Or I could say, "I was a musician and then, disillusioned, began a quest for a more challenging and secure future by entering graduate school." Again, the latter provides the meaning of events in the context of a life. Beyond that life, the 'cause' of entering graduate school could perhaps be seen as simply a result of living in a culture that places a premium on education or self-fulfillment.

Teaching. Within formal educational contexts and without, "for millenia, human beings have learned about life and the world through the telling of stories" (Toms, 1998). Although we must be able to think both ways, scientifically and spontaneously (to borrow Vygotsky's terms), one may sometimes find it easier to retain knowledge by situating it within a meaningful, storied context, one rich in associations, rather than through organizing it within an abstract logical framework. When facts are embedded in a story they can seem to take on a new relevance. The voice of one of my own students provides a telling example of how narrative frameworks may provide a scaffold for knowledge. The following appears in one of her journal entries:

In my own experience, I have an easier time in subjects where I can read a book and be asked to describe events. This is one reason why I love history. I really like hearing about people's lives and events. For some reason I have a very good memory when it comes to history. On tests I can simply recall events and details that interested me very easily. However, when I take a

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science class, I try to apply the same strategies and they don't work as well. Scientific terms may be very similar and my memory doesn't differentiate them as well. I can usually remember reading the material but I can't quite pick the correct answer. Today I had a test in physiology and I couldn't remember the difference between similar terms such as diastolic and systolic (journal entry, Spring, 1997).⁷

One wonders how this student might have performed in physiology had she been encouraged to embed terms like 'diastolic' and 'systolic' in a story-line regarding the development of our understanding of the heart. With the belief that narrative really does represent a unique way of human knowing, a large group of contemporary authors and researchers are engaged in exploring the connections between narrative, learning, and teaching (Dyson, 1993; Egan, 1998, 1992; Gallas, 1994, 1997; Gee, 1991; Gill, 1995; McEwan & Egan, 1995; Turski, 1991).

Far from being incapable of abstract thought, Egan (1988) claims that even young children understand stories through their ability to grasp the meaning of such abstract moral struggles or "polarities" as good versus evil, security versus danger, courage versus cowardice, and so on. Egan argues that children are socialized into these ways of understanding through the structure such polarities lend to childrens' stories and that these same structures can have a pedagogical purpose. The human stories behind the development of, for example, mathematical, scientific, or historical ideas can be integrated into teaching in a way that makes them interesting and meaningful to students.

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Research. The educational researcher, Elliot Eisner, writes that “the eye is not only part of the brain, it is part of a tradition”(1998, p. 46). Eisner means that all researchers, in one way or another, must ultimately view their subject from within some larger tradition, some system of concepts, beliefs, and values that informs their thinking and behavior as researchers. The term ‘narrative’ has been used to describe a relatively new research tradition in the human sciences (McAdams, 1996). In 1996, Kathleen Casey published a chapter in The Review of Education titled *The New Narrative Research in Education* (Casey, 1996). In her chapter, she uses the term “narrative research” to encompass a wide range of current research practices, many of which overlap with one another. Among them are, for example, autobiography, life writing, personal narratives, life stories, and life histories (see Casey, 1996, pp. 211-212 for review and references). Casey writes that “what links together all of these lines of inquiry is an interest in the ways that human beings make meaning through language” (p. 212). In all of these forms of ‘data,’ there is a direct link between the subject and his or her words, that is, between one person and one ‘voice.’ Voice, in this sense, ‘carries’ meaning and is an instrument of affiliation with others. (For a more critical review of the construct of voice, see Pinar & Pautz, 1998.)

Voice is meaning that resides in the individual and enables that individual to participate in a community...The struggle for voice begins when a person attempts to communicate meaning to someone else (Britzman, in Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

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Power. Gearing and Sangree ask a question that is compelling in its simplicity:

How does it come about that, in any community, every person comes to learn some things, and different persons come to learn different things? Said differently, Why, in any given community, doesn't almost everyone come to know everything? What constraints necessarily noncognitive and non-motor in nature, reduce the expected randomness in how 'commonplace know-how' is distributed (Gearing & Sangree, 1979, p. 1)?

We learn about ourselves and those around us, particularly in terms of class, race, and gender by the stories those around us tell.⁸ But not all stories have an equal chance of being heard. Freeman writes that “certain stories become sanctioned and others disallowed...the very world in which one lives becomes crossed with boundaries which all but dictate what can and cannot be said or done” (1993, p. 185). Thus, there are critical theorists who attempt to illuminate the dynamics of power that determine what narratives can be employed for which persons. That is, they look at the dynamics of social power that influence what is or is not considered an appropriate accounting of one's experience and self.

In Janet Miller's case, one of her reasons for using narrative as a research tool is to actually foreground these issues of voice and power.

⁸ Apple (1999, p. 12) reminds us that there are, in fact, social divisions that go beyond the “relatively essentializing... seemingly holy trinity” of race, class and gender. For example, other social divisions might be based on such things as sexuality, ability, age, nationality, or bodily politics, all of which constantly interact with race, class, and gender.

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Our uses of narrative, biography, and autobiography as forms of educational inquiry have a particular focus. We use these inquiries in ways that highlight how the personal and the private voice, for example, are inextricably bound up in varying social, historical, and cultural influences on and constructions of the self and the truth (Miller, 1998, p. 230).

For Mary Belenky and friends (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule's, 1986), a lack of education prevents acquisition of new narratives of identity through which one finds the power to imagine a future self, an image that may help guide one's attempts to change in the present. In their book, Women's ways of knowing (1986), these writers interviewed a small group of women whom they describe as exhibiting "an extreme denial of self" (p. 24). Common among the women is a background of social, economic, and educational deprivation. These are individuals "silenced" by an environment that did not value their words. As a result, neither did the women come to place value in the power of their own thoughts and words to effect change in their lives.

With little encouragement or opportunity to participate in the language practices by which we symbolically mediate our participation in the world, by which we reflect, abstract, and make ourselves into an object of thought, these women seemed to live and react almost totally in a self-absorbed present. Their imagination largely uncultivated, they were unprepared to generate prospective images of themselves. One woman says simply, "I haven't thought about the future" (p. 32).

Belenky et al. found that identity, for the at-risk women they interviewed, some of whom were in long-term abusive relationships, was very much a function of the degree to

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which they had been able to appropriate the cultural tools available for identity construction, particularly the language through which (in Freeman's terms) they might "rewrite" their lives. A discursively impoverished context precluded the development of identities that might draw upon wider cultural artifacts (e.g., a different system of values, a different way of thinking about themselves) and through which they might obtain a greater degree of personal power.

Finally, it should be pointed out that the media itself has massive control over the kinds of narratives that get communicated on a grand scale. George Gerbner, a respected telecommunications scholar, has argued that it is no longer families, churches, and teachers that have control over the propagation of cultural narratives, that is, the stories that reflect, sustain, and change us as a culture. Instead, the power to communicate stories on a large scale lies in the hands of the media, where the decisions that are made must serve commercial interests. As a result, the types of narratives disseminated on a large scale provide a distorted perspective, disseminating a view of our culture that is far from the reality of most people's lives.

Prime-time television presents a world in which men outnumber women three to one; young people under eighteen are about one-third of their true proportion in the population; older people sixty-five and above, about one-fifth. It is a world driven by marketing, which prefers the best consumers and ignores those who are not the best consumers. The lower one-third of our population in terms of income and education are represented by 1.3 percent of the characters in prime-time" (Gerber, in Toms, 1998, p. 22).

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Having dealt with the nature of narrative, the next section will offer a history of the autobiographical genre and the particular relevance this genre has for the historical development of various cultural perspectives on self and identity.

Autobiography - History of the Genre

The author of an autobiography is literature's version of the folksinger. Like the folksinger/songwriter, the autobiographer tells us stories. Like folk songs, these stories have their origins in the life and experiences of the writer. Nonetheless, because its author is human, it is presumed that the story's meaning will ripple outward to connect with other lives. Although as a piece of writing, an autobiography communicates the experience of an individual, it is also saturated with the values, traditions, and social dilemmas of a particular time and place, a time and place occupied by others, some of for whom that individual's story will have meaning.

I write of one life only. My own. If my story is true, I trust it will resonate with significance for other lives (Rodriguez, p. 7).

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As a technique, autobiography is deliberately introspective.⁹ It is an attempt to see within oneself and confess what one finds there, good, bad, or otherwise, and to do this in the 'presence' of the audience for whom one is writing. Although autobiography presumes the self, it presumes a certain *kind* of self, one based on the idea of a circumscribed and bounded individual (Mascuch, 1996). This is a particularly Western notion and, historically speaking, a comparatively recent one at that.¹⁰ Mikhail Bakhtin (1981), in The Dialogic Imagination, traces the voice of the individualist self as it has emerged in and through Western literary form. As he does so, he describes historical changes in the literary construction of time itself, time of course being the frame or background against which a life is ultimately understood.

Bakhtin begins with the ancient genre of the epic (Homer's *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* being prototypical) and the notion of *adventure time* by which the epic is structured. Adventure time is constituted by a hero or heroine and the series of supernatural or

⁹ Some make a distinction between autobiography and memoir. Autobiography is a *chronicle*, it tracks a life from start to the present in a more-or-less linear way. It "moves along in a dutiful line, from birth to fame, with nothing omitted" (Zinser, p. 11). For some, this can be distinguished from a memoir. Memoir assumes the life and instead focuses on events of special importance or events that prove a particular point (Goodwin, 1993; Mascuch, 1996). Zinser writes, "A memoir writer takes us back to a moment in his or her life that was unusually vivid, such as childhood, or that was framed by war or travel or some other exceptional event...Memoir is a window into a life" (p. 11). The writer of a memoir must become the editor of his or her own life, imposing a narrative pattern and an organizing idea on an unwieldy mass of events (Zinser, p. 13).

To the extent that they are selective in their choice of events in order to foreground the experience of formal education, the three autobiographical texts I will be using overlap with the category of memoir, which is essentially Bakhtin's second chronotope of *adventure-time-of-everyday-life*. However, since the meaning of the term 'autobiography' is literally 'words about one's own life,' one could consider memoir (or a diary or journal, for example) as simply another form of autobiography.

¹⁰ Other cultures, even sub-cultures (the feminist sub-culture in America, for example) are argued to have other ways of conceptualizing the nature of self and personhood (Morris, 1994).

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mythical events in which he or she is involved, events that take place in “an utterly different and inaccessible time and value plane” than that of the reader (p. 14). An epic does not reveal the personal thoughts and emotions, the ‘inside,’ of a hero. More important are the hero’s or heroine’s external characteristics such as strength, persistence, and courage - characteristics that are more expressive of national ideals than of a particular individual.¹¹

Following the epic, the more recent genre of the novel begins to appear.

Importantly, Bakhtin argues, the novel is the first written genre that had not first existed as part of an oral tradition, its emergence being bound up with the advent of writing. With the existence of ‘hard copy,’ authors began to be more enduringly identified with their texts. This had not necessarily been the case with the epic, which was typically handed down orally over the generations, its origins lost in time. In what Bakhtin calls “the novelization of literature,” a new view of the individual was ushered in. Where the epic had dealt with historically distant mythical events and the fixed characteristics of a hero, the novel hops between past, present, and future, portraying shifts in the internal thought and emotions of its subjects. Bakhtin terms the novel “the genre of becoming” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 21). Where the epic spoke in a communal voice laden with history and tradition, the novel was now associated with an author, a single person who spoke from the same cultural times and spaces as the reader.

¹¹ See Gover and Conway (1997) for a sociocultural perspective on the role of heroes and heroines in moral development.

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There is an interesting and relevant side note regarding Bakhtin's notion of novelization. In an epic, the fictional subject (the hero or heroine) was of course the center of the story, the reader's ultimate focus. That is to say, the hero or heroine him- or herself is what the story was ultimately assumed to be 'about.' In contrast, it is widely felt that in present times the self or identity of the author of a novel has become an even more compelling reality, a more viable and believable subject, than the fictional selves he or she actually creates. To some extent, as a culture of readers, we have become unable to grant fictional characters enough 'reality' to make a story compelling. Instead, we read beyond the text to its presumed roots in the dynamics of the author's psyche - here we find out what the story is really 'about.' We look for the connections between the author and his or her characters, his life and their lives. In a sense, the authorial mystique has become a more compelling reality in contemporary fiction than the fiction itself.¹²

Pointing out that fewer and fewer young persons are looking to literature as a source of moral guidance in how to live their lives, Jill Ker Conway, in an interview with journalist David Gergen (Gergen, 1998) suggest that autobiography is the only genre remaining for which readers may still be willing to "suspend their disbelief." Conway argues that there is a waning of modern readers' ability to imaginatively involve themselves with fictional characters, to find them credible, viable, and compelling, a real concern since, as J. Hillis Miller writes, "we need fiction in order to experiment with

¹² Of course, one could also go the other way and site modern literary criticism depicting the 'death' of the author as ultimate source or origin of a text (Barthes, 1974; Barthes, 1977; Foucault, 1977).

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possible selves and to learn to take our places in the world”(Miller, 1990, p. 69). Instead, Conway believes modern readers may be drawn to biography and autobiography simply by virtue of the fact that the subjects of the story are or were real (i.e. living) selves. That is consonant with our modern ideology of self: *Self*, or Bakhtin’s “personal experience” being the one reality against which all others are compared. Bakhtin writes,

To portray an event on the same time-and-value plane as oneself and one’s contemporaries (and an event that is therefore based on personal experience and thought), is to undertake a radical revolution, and to step out of the world of epic into the world of the novel (p. 14)...Epic disintegrates when the search begins for a new point of view on one’s own self (p. 34)...The present, in all its openendedness, taken as a starting point and center for artistic and ideological orientation, is an enormous revolution in the creative consciousness of man...the novel, from the very beginning, developed as a genre that had at its core a new way of conceptualizing time (p. 38)...At its core lay personal experience (p. 39).

For Bakhtin, the novel sets the stage for the emergence of three *chronotopes*, a literary device (literally time/space) that reflects various cultural understandings of time, particularly the way time frames human lives.¹³ The first of these, also seen in the epic, Bakhtin calls *adventure time*. Adventure time is full of chance and the unexpected. It can be recognized by conventional phrases such as “suddenly,” or “at just that moment.” On

¹³ The chronotopes Bakhtin proposes are derived from his analysis of Classical Greek literature. Although Bakhtin is concerned with what he refers to as “ancient” rather than contemporary forms, his chronotopes would seem equally applicable to contemporary genre.

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either side of the unexpected, the story is typically bounded by a beginning (in a romance the actors must meet and fall in love) and an end (there must ultimately be a successful union). In adventure time, we do not typically meet the actors prior to the beginning of the story nor do we follow them into the happily-ever-after. The central metaphor in adventure time is that of the trial.

Throughout, actors (the hero or lovers, for example) remain basically unchanged, their basic character (e.g., courage, faithfulness, etc.) only further affirmed by events. In adventure time, writes Bakhtin, “nothing changes: the world remains as it was, the biographical life of the heroes does not change, their feelings do not change, people do not even age (p. 91)...the world and the individual are finished items...there is no potential for evolution, for growth” (p. 110).¹⁴

As mentioned, adventure time is structured and defined by two predictable points: beginning and end. In contrast, it is precisely the nature of developments themselves, what happens *between* beginning and end points, that structures and defines Bakhtin’s second chronotope: *adventure-time-of-everyday-life*. Represented by the folktale, the metaphor for adventure-time-of-everyday-life is that of a path. Not the entire path of a character’s life, however, but “the *exceptional*, utterly *unusual* moments of a man’s [sic] life, moments that are very short compared to the whole length of a human life” (p. 116, italics in original). These moments bring change and transition and provide new contexts for identity. Unlike the epic, the subject of a folktale is transformed by events and, in

¹⁴ Is it possible that newspaper comic strips might represent the purist modern example of adventure time?

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effect, becomes something different than what he or she was before. According to

Bakhtin,

the folkloric image of man is intimately bound up with transformation and identity (p. 112)...metamorphosis serves as the basis for a method of portraying the whole of an individual's life in its more important moments of crisis: for showing how an individual becomes other than what he was (p. 115)...The series of adventures that the hero undergoes does not result in a simple affirmation of his identity, but rather in the construction of a new image of the hero (p. 117, italics mine).

Finally, Bakhtin's third temporal framework builds on the one previous. It is the chronotope of *biographical* or *autobiographical time*. The innovation here is that we are presented for the first time with the image "of an individual who passes through the course of a whole life" (p. 130) rather than only circumscribed periods of a life. Until about the mid-17th century, a biography provided a rhetorical account of the surface features of an individual's life.¹⁵ In fact, there was as yet no interior-exterior distinction, no difference between the person as he or she appeared and what would later, with the rise of the romantic view of the individual, be seen as the deep interior or soul of a bounded and autonomous person (Gergen, 1991). In contrast, a modern autobiography is

¹⁵ In fact, the use of the term *self* in the modern sense, that is, of an enduring and intrinsic 'core,' did not appear until the 17th century (Goodwin, 1993).

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as much about the self and one's personal identity as about the historical events in one's life *per se*.

The general point here is that intertwined with the appearance of certain cultural forms in Western culture, particularly the genre of epic, novel, and biography/autobiography, has also been the development of a certain culturally-based view of self (Mascuch, 1996), a self whose experiences constitute a story worth telling. At the same time, it is important to note that these genre reflect a model or cultural code that accords more closely to male than to female experiences of self. Cultural models of self have historically been different for men and women and this may well be reflected in the autobiographical genre, argues Conway. In her book, When Memory Speaks (1998), Conway refers to "the internalized code a culture supplies about how life should be experienced" (p. 17). She believes these such cultural dictates are deeply encoded into the autobiographical genre. In this way, cultural norms are mirrored and perpetuated. Conway observes that the history of autobiography as a genre reflects the contrasting myths and expectations Western European culture holds for the typical life course of males as opposed to those of females. Typically for males, autobiographies are built around a test or trial of some kind (as outlined previously), a "classical journey of epic adventure" (Conway, 1998, p. 9). The protagonist "is tested by the forces of nature and by cultural conflict, and he acts as an agent" (p. 10).

In contrast, according to Conway, the autobiographies of women in Western culture have typically followed the romantic myth, "the life plot linking the erotic quest for the ideal mate with property and social mobility" (p. 13). "What is important about

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the Western romantic heroine,” writes Conway, “is that she has no agency, or power to act on her own behalf. Things happen to her” (p. 14). But this may not be the *actual* experience of women, says Conway, even those who portray a certain passivity over events in the telling of their story. Instead, it may represent an artifact of the genre itself, the form into which women must squeeze their stories if they are to be intelligible to others.

What are we to make [of this]? Should we agree that the Western cultural mirror distorts women’s self-perception so that they cannot see their own agency? Can women really not... reflect on their own political life? Are they not capable of forging their own tradition for the expression of political motives? Clearly this is not the case, because frontierswomen and pioneer women reformers kept diaries and wrote letters which dealt with their physical bodies, openly acknowledged the wish for power and depicted the writers as political beings. So the problem is one of censorship for public self-presentation (p. 16).

Gender aside, what is it that ultimately motivates one to write an autobiography? Wald suggests that “the recognition of a discontinuity between past and present and the desire to make them continuous give rise to a narrative of identity, which in turn imparts the way people know, understand, and experience themselves - or their selves” (1995, p. 4). This desire for an integrated “life story” (McAdams, 1992; Zinsser, 1995) is therefore one motivation to write. Putting the events of one’s history into a narrative order can give it a composure that may not have existed previously. One is consoled by the sense of having lived a life that tells a cohesive story, a cohesion that ultimately spreads to self.

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Conway, for example, talks about one of her reasons for writing what she refers to as a “quest narrative:”

because the modern consciousness, which separates some private essence that we think we have from the roles we play, leaves a thoughtful person with a quest to put all those lives together and see what they have added up to (in Zinsser, 1995, p. 160).

For Erik Erikson (1959), of course, identity dynamics represent developmental impulses. We come to a place in our lives where we hunger to perceive its outline in a way that traces an integrated, inevitable, and fulfilling whole. In his own words, it is a quest for “the acceptance of one’s own and only life cycle, and of the people who have become significant to it, as something that had to be and that, by necessity, permitted of no substitutions” (1959, p. 104). For most of us, such a quest rarely implies more than moments nostalgically reminisced, past feelings relived, perhaps some degree of closure achieved or relinquished. For the formal autobiographer, however, this quest is both more compelling and more complicated. The autobiographer does not merely provide a descriptive chronicle. She strives to describe how it was for herself, to share her perceptions, feeling, thoughts, and emotions.

Yet, as she does, there is also a certain turning back that occurs. That is, the recounting of thoughts and actions, in some way or other, turns back upon the author so that she is changed by it. As she is changed, so inevitably does the understanding of her subject: herself. This is more properly the *process* of autobiography, a self-reflexive,

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developing dialogue between author and subject, present self and historical self, narrating I and narrated I (Genette, 1980). It changes both. As Pinar and Pautz write, both biography and autobiography “tell a story in a voice that simultaneously creates distance and intimacy between a reader and the subject of the story, even when the subject is oneself” (1998, p. 68).

For example, Aniela Jaffé, the person to whom Carl Jung dictated his memoirs, first with reluctance and then with mounting enthusiasm, recalls the following (Jung, 1961):

During the years in which the book was taking shape, a process of transformation and objectivization was also taking place in Jung. With each succeeding chapter, he moved, as it were, farther away from himself, until at last he was able to see himself as well as the significance of his life and work from a distance (p. xii).

Indeed, in the following comment, Jung states that by distancing himself, that is, by putting himself in the role of a ‘narrating I,’ he made strange the very subject of his narrative, which was of course Jung himself.

In fact it seems to me as if that alienation which so long separated me from the world has become transferred into my own inner world, and has revealed to me an unexpected unfamiliarity with myself (359).

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Of course, this seems like a typically Western experience. Michel De Montaigne's 16th century collection of autobiographical essays (written - as were others [for example, those of Benjamin Franklin, St. Augustine, or Rousseau]- well before the term *autobiography* existed) states that "I myself am the subject of my book" (p. ix). Montaigne's essays imply a sense of autonomy and individuality regarding his identity, a potential and often desirable separateness of himself from the selves of others. For example, to obtain the kind of solitude he believed was necessary for self-reflection, he writes,

it is not enough to withdraw from the mob, not enough to go to another place: we have to withdraw from such attributes of the mob as are within us. It is our own self we have to isolate and take back into possession (pp. 98-99).

In contrast to this are experiences of identity and self that make sense only in cultures where these are construed as discursive (Harré & Van Langenhove, 1991), dialogic (Hermans, Kempen, & van Loon, 1992) or jointly constructed (Shotter, 1993; Shotter, 1995). There are indeed cultures whose inhabitants perceive their own identities and selves to be more 'in' a culturally shared history and its traditions than 'in' the individual *per se*, more communal property than personal possession (see Chandler, 1998, 2000).

In his dictated autobiography, for example, Black Elk (an Ogalala Sioux, second cousin to Crazy Horse and a "holy man") shared his memories regarding the history of his people during the mid to late 1800s (Neihardt, 1932). All of his life, Black Elk had

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carried “visions” or prophecies. Most of these he had received in dreams as a young adult. They pertained to his people. At no point was he inclined to think of these visions as belonging to him, as creations of his own mind and therefore his personally. Instead, they were regarded by himself and others as gifts given to him by “the grandfathers” (i.e., his ancestors). As holy man, Black Elk’s purpose was to carry them. Still, throughout his life they continued to puzzle him, for they so contradicted what he had actually come to witness: the swift destruction of his people by the Whites. In the end, to save his visions, he surrendered them to a White anthropologist. He relates this choice, in which he must finally sacrifice his sacred position as cultural repository, in a most poignant way:

I have lain awake at night worrying and wondering if I was doing right [to tell his story, including his visions]; for I know I have given away my power when I have given away my vision, and maybe I cannot live very long now. But I think I have done right to save the vision in this way, even though I may die sooner because I did it; for I know the meaning of the vision is wise and beautiful and good; and you can see that I am only a pitiful old man after all (Neihardt, 1932, p. 206).

Black Elk did not tell his story for himself. Reconstructing his life, going through the process of autobiography, for Black Elk meant preserving the story of his *people*, not his own personal story. Indeed, Montaigne’s belief that one must “withdraw...from such attributes of the mob as are within us” in order to achieve clarity and ownership of self would have struck Black Elk as peculiar. Further, the effect telling his story was anything but integrating for Black Elk. Where, for Jung, the energy for telling came from the

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gravity of a single self (his own) pulling the disparate pieces of single life together, for Black Elk - because his identity was built on the collective and because, in an oral culture, it was he who held, contained, and preserved the story of that collective - telling it (especially to a White man) achieved almost the opposite effect. To sacrifice control over who had access to his people's story was an act that Black Elk experienced as somehow diminishing him personally. In fact, he believed it was likely to hasten his own death ("for I know I have given away my power when I have given away my vision, and maybe I cannot live very long now").

Several additional points about the nature of autobiography can also be made. First, although the autobiographer is concerned with the events in his or her life, an autobiography should not be presumed to constitute a true or accurate historical record of empirical fact. Instead, it deals with the experiences an author considers having had the most personal significance. As a researcher, if it were the empirical facts of a life and their faithfulness to historical truth that I was after, then autobiography would have to be considered a secondary source (which is by no means to say that authorial memory is always inaccurate or 'unreliable'). However, if my interest is in how a person has used his or her experiences to construct an identity, to render a certain image of him or herself, then an autobiography is primary source material.

The criteria for judging an autobiography is not merely fidelity to the truth. Mark Freeman (1993), while acknowledging the cultural and historical layers of narrative construction, some of which I have touched on here, argues that poems and autobiographies are products of the same impulse. Part of that which constitutes any

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narrative construction, including an autobiography, is the “imaginative labor” of an individual attempting to write a story that gives “form and meaning” to his or her experience.

Whether we are considering the crafting of poems or autobiographical narratives...there is in fact a good deal in common between the two: What poets often do, I have suggested, is *rewrite the world*, such that we, readers, may learn or see or feel something about it that might ordinarily have escaped us. What autobiographers often do, in turn, is *rewrite the self*, which is to say, they seek, through the narrative imagination, to refigure those dimensions of past experience made available, so to speak, through the vantage point of the present...Autobiographical narratives, like poems, therefore, are not only artifacts of writing...they are products of imaginative labor, of giving form and meaning to experience (Freeman, 1993, p. 105, italics in original).

Regarding the claim that autobiography represents ‘merely’ an act of interpretation

Freeman writes,

The very act of *self-interpretation* is at one and the same time an act of *self-construction*, of *poesis*, that creates a new self even in the midst of discovering it... [it] is to be understood as a *practical* activity (1993, p. 109, italics in original).

For those who have come up through westernized educational systems, ‘rewriting the self’ often involves revisiting and reinterpreting one’s school-related experiences.

Blumberg and Blumberg (1994) found that adults, when asked about their education,

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typically worked to shape their memories of school-related experiences into some kind of cohesive story. These stories not only communicated something about their image of themselves as learners (shaping that image even as they wrote or talked about it, as Freeman suggests), they also included memories of their personal experiences of the different educational contexts through which they had passed. The fruits of these labors, Blumberg and Blumberg believe, constitute a vital but untapped source of information regarding the private dimensions of educational experience.

What is it that...adult memories of school might have to offer beyond a bit of humor and nostalgia? We think that it can offer a glimpse into a side of life that occurs in schools that is obtainable in no other way. That is, in a sense, these stories and untold numbers of others like them constitute a type of knowledge about schools that needs to take its place alongside other bodies of school-related knowledge (Blumberg & Blumberg, p. 6).

Bruner (1996) also is quite clear about the role of institutional education in the creation of those autobiographical narratives by which we understand who and what we are as learners and as persons.

What characterizes human selfhood is the construction of a conceptual system that organizes, as it were, a 'record' of agentive encounters with the world, a record that is related to the past (that is, 'autobiographical memory', so-called) but that is also extrapolated into the future . . . schools and school learning are among the earliest of those places and activities [through which this record is constructed] (Bruner, 1996).

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A second additional point regarding the nature of autobiography is that, although autobiographies may be approached as such for analytic purposes, like all narratives they are not fully self-contained, autonomous creations. As a genre, they nest themselves within and thus 'contain' larger cultural narratives regarding gender, race, class, power, and national history, for example. "The autobiographer gazes at himself in the mirror of culture, just as the portrait painter must when working on his self-portrait," writes Conway (1998, p. 4). Says James Gee,

any single narrative is contingent on a wider set of narratives (a narrative context in which it is embedded). And where does this wider narrative context come from? It can only come from one's history, traditions, socialization, and the narratives groups of people share with and repeat to one another (Gee, 1991, p. 3).

Finally, as a retrospective, an autobiography is probably as much about who one *is* as much as who one *was*. As mentioned, any narrative in autobiographical form divides the subject of the autobiography into two actants: the narrating I and the narrated I (Genette, 1980). Past events are evaluated and made sense of in the light of the present. Rodriguez writes.

In writing this autobiography, I am actually describing the man I have become - the man in the present (p. 176)

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So rather than providing a fully 'true' or 'real' historical account, an autobiography is a personal statement regarding the role of particular past events in the construction of who one is at the time of its writing.¹⁶ Indeed, it could not be otherwise. Although the reference has escaped me, somewhere Bakhtin writes words to the effect that it is just as impossible to forge an identity between myself, my own 'I,' and that 'I' that is the subject of my stories as it is to lift myself up by my own hair.

Hermeneutics

In classic mythology, Hermes was the son of Zeus and father of Pan. He traveled with great swiftness, wings on his sandals and cap, carrying messages between the gods and humans. The term 'hermeneutics' refers to a collection of traditions all of which involve the interpretation of texts. Like Hermes, the interpreter might be said to mediate between a source (a text) and its eventual audience. Although its roots are thought to lie in biblical scholarship, there are long hermeneutic traditions in theology and jurisprudence as well as in philosophy and the humanities [for a more comprehensive history see Grondin (1994) or Mueller-Vollmer (1985)].

Educational philosopher, David Blacker (1993), writes that hermeneutic principles are basic to human understanding, particularly the notion that understanding

¹⁶ Of course, even accuracy and truth are relative to some cultural standard. For example, after telling the legend of how his people acquired the tradition of the peace pipe, Black Elk says, "This they tell, and whether it happened so or not I do not know; but if you think about it, you can see that it's true" (p. 5).

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always involves a back-and-forth movement between a part and the greater whole to which the part belongs.

All understanding - whether of a text or of another person - is interpretive. Briefly and roughly, what this means is that, whatever else it is and does, understanding moves in what Heidegger called a "hermeneutic circle." This is not, however, the vicious circle reviled by formal logic.

In other words, the meaning of a thing is not contained within the thing itself. One must look to the larger context, a context whose understanding always comes through the 'fitting together' of its parts. For example, we understand the meaning of an individual word (part) most fully within the context of the sentence (whole) in which it is used. Word lends meaning to sentence, sentence lends meaning to word.

The boundaries of what constitutes part and whole are not fixed. That is to say, for example, that the meaning of a sentence (now considered as part) can be understood in the context of a paragraph (whole), or the meaning of a book (part) in the context of an author's entire literary output (whole), and an author's entire literary output (part) in the context of the culture time and place in which he or she lived (whole). The boundaries of 'part' and 'whole' are ultimately determined by what it is that one wishes to understand. Bontekoe (1996), who refers to part and whole as 'poles' of the hermeneutic circle, writes that

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what distinguishes the hermeneutic circle from the vicious circle is that the amount of information contained within the former is being constantly augmented. And this new information (which may enter the circle at either or both of its two poles) makes possible the progressive development of new insights (p. 3).

From a hermeneutical point of view, there *is* no single 'true' interpretation of a text. This is because we presume that our perspective, how we read and understand, is forever colored by where we ourselves are located within a particular time and culture. At the same time, this does not mean that all interpretations are somehow equal, that one is as good as another. Ultimately, the best interpretations are those whose meaning is most viable for the text as a whole, that are the most cohesive and free from internal contradiction.

It has become part of the postmodern view to assume that every interpretation (indeed, every understanding) is forever filtered through the expectations, purposes, and values of the one doing the interpreting. As such, interpretations cannot be considered revealed truths. They are a way of understanding embedded in the same world of human culture and events that sustains the hermeneuticist him- or herself. Wexler addresses the issue of hermeneutic integrity in light of its interpretive nature:

An interpretive, hermeneutic understanding of social reality does not mean abandoning the possibility of a real story, a comprehensible narrative, where there is care and attention not only to the form of telling, but also to the facts and to the characters of the story... But I 'take license.' I select, condense, juxtapose, underline, and, worst of all, I recontextualize lived worlds into an analytical social language. Still, I am not the cold-blooded instrument of an error-free objective knowledge-machine that mirrors social reality; but, an historical, social

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analytic composer, and what follows is neither Truth nor Fiction, but a composition (1992, pp. 1-2).

Like Blacker, Bonetkoe (1996) argues that all human understanding is hermeneutic in terms of the meaning that various objects, events, and experiences have for us. Because human understanding is always historically conditioned, it is always timebound, a progressive process of “searching and building” (Goodman, 1978, p. 107).

All human understanding, by virtue of its occurring in time, is *hermeneutically* circular. Because as sentient creatures we are located always at some point in space during some moment in time, information becomes available to us only serially. We notice things in succession as one item after another attracts our attention. This sequential appropriation of information, however, is a matter of immediate perception, and does not yet constitute understanding. Understanding occurs only when we recognize the *significance* of the various items that we notice - which is to say, when we recognize the way in which those items relate to each other. Understanding then is an essentially integrative activity (Bonetkoe, 1996, p. 2, italics in original).

The hermeneutic circle is a spiral toward progressively deeper levels of understanding. This process, some would argue, is the same whether one is talking about understanding in science, the arts, moral judgements, or religion (Polanyi, 1975). A text then, broadly defined, is anything that must be interpreted. An autobiography is a text whose parts, like parts of any text, are understood in terms of the text as a whole.

In research of all kinds, the researcher must begin by specifying the kinds of things he or she is setting out to find. In hermeneutic research, these generally follow

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from a set of questions posed to a text (Kvale, 1996). Thus, in my analysis of the books by Rose, Rodriguez, and Conway, I was guided by the following general question:

In the complex transition back-and-forth between cultures of home/community and school, (A) how do these authors manage (or not manage) to take on the identity of a literate person; and, (B) how is it that the authors get on under their particular circumstances: how do they construct/preserve an identity and, at the same time, progress through the educational system?

Borrowing from Radnitzky (1970), Kvale (1996) describes seven "canons," or presuppositions of a hermeneutic interpretation of literary texts. These presuppositions outline my general approach to interpretation.

- There is a continual back-and-forth between one's understanding of the meaning of a text as a unified whole and the meaning of its various individual parts in and of themselves. For example, one might read a text from start to finish, ending up with an overall understanding of what the text as a whole appears to mean. Going back for a closer read, one might then scrutinize the meaning of an individual segment of the text, which might then alter how one construes the text as a whole. This, in turn, changes how one understands the relationship between its individual parts, et cetera.
- The end of this process is reached when one obtains a coherent interpretation free of logical contradictions.
- One may "test" interpretation of individual parts against the overall meaning of the text and even against other texts by the same author.
- The text itself is considered relatively closed or autonomous. In other words, as much as is possible, the meaning of a story is understood within its own context or frame.
- It is presumed that the interpreter approaches the task already having a good deal of knowledge about the general theme of the text.
- No interpretation is 'presuppositionless'. An understanding of any text is embedded in wider cultural traditions and ways of thinking that influence and shape interpretation. An interpreter does have the option (some might say the obligation) of

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becoming conscious of these factors, however, and making their influence on the interpretive process more explicit.

- Interpretation is a creative process. That is, interpretation goes beyond what is at hand and “enriches the understanding by bringing forth new differentiations and interrelations in the text, extending its meaning” (Kvale, 1996, p. 50).

Using this framework of assumptions, I put my broad question to the three texts.

Specifically, as I analyzed, my task was to recognize and interpret the importance of various experiences, in school and without, for the developing identity of the author.

More detail about this process is provided below, where I describe the selection of the books and my approach to reading them.

This study began with my interest in the role that formal education plays in the constitution of oneself as persons. That formal education can affect who and what one becomes is a foundational assumption of American democracy. Nonetheless, *how* it happens remains an intriguing and ill-understood question. I wanted to try and address this question in a way that would do justice to the complexity of identity, to the fact it is simultaneously both public and private. The suggestion was made to me that a potential source of ‘data’ might be the recollections of persons who have had to struggle with the education-identity relationship in a way that makes this relationship particularly explicit.

I therefore began to look for books that dealt with the reconstruction of educational experience by people who had made the transition to formal education from the ‘outside,’ from conditions far removed culturally from those of the classroom. Like the proverbial fish who, floundering on the beach, comprehends the existence of water for the first time, it is often those who have been required to move back and forth between diverse cultural contexts who have the greatest awareness of culture *per se* as

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well as their relation to it. There are not a large number of such books. I made a list of seven candidates, all of them dealing with various contexts, populations, age spans, ethnic groups, and theoretical orientations. This original list was as follows:

Brice Heath, S. (1983). *Ways with words : language, life, and work in communities and classrooms*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Conway, J. K. (1989). *The road from Coorain*. New York: Knopf.

Delpit, L. (1995). *Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom*. New York, NY: The New Press.

Everhart, R. B. (1983). *Reading, writing and resistance: Adolescence and labor in a junior high school*. Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Purcell-Gates, V. (1995). *Other people's words: The cycle of low literacy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Rodriguez, R. (1982). *Hunger of memory: The education of Richard Rodriguez*. Boston: David R. Godine.

Rose, M. (1989). *Lives on the Boundary*. New York: Penguin.

From this list, I decided to select only those texts that had the strongest autobiographical component. It was clear that, in terms of the intertwining of school-based experiences and the author's development as a person, the autobiographies of those who have had to wrestle with this relationship might provide the greatest amount of reflection and insight into its personal, identity-related aspects. I therefore selected the following three texts:

Conway, J. K. (1989). *The road from Coorain*. New York: Knopf.

Rodriguez, R. (1982). *Hunger for memory: The education of Richard Rodriguez*. Boston: David R. Godine.

Rose, M. (1989). *Lives on the Boundary*. New York: Penguin.

There are additional reasons for why I chose these three books. First, as mentioned, they are all written in the same genre: autobiography. As such, they are centered around the author's first-person account of their experience. Second, each author provides a retrospective of their lives and their education from childhood into adulthood. Third, in reconstructing their experiences, the authors do not restrict themselves to the portrayal of a single period or context in their lives. Instead, all three attempt to foreground the significance and meaning of their *transitions* from one context to another, in particular between home community and school. For each of these authors, this movement appeared to spark a consciousness of themselves that could be enlightening and inspiring but, at the same time, could also be a source of confusion and even shame. Finally, against the odds imposed by their respective circumstances and the fact that they all began as outsiders in some way, each author managed to go on to advanced doctoral study at an American university.

At the same time, there are also important differences. Mike Rose, an educator, writes with a special sensitivity to issues of class. He has special insight into the struggles of those who, like him, come from a place far removed from the rarefied atmosphere of academia. In contrast, Richard Rodriguez is a critical essayist who has found a life outside of academia. Raised in a middle class Hispanic home, his autobiography tends to

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give most weight to issues of ethnicity. Having experienced an attempt to first disregard and then to exploit his ethnicity, he is especially attuned to the moral contradictions and disparities in American education. Finally, Jill Ker Conway is Australian by birth. Leaving home for graduate work at Harvard, she writes with a special sensitivity to issues of nationality. Also, as a woman, she maintains a strong consciousness of gender biases she has encountered. Still, for her the doors of academia have opened easily. She is a scholar and a historian with a joyful passion for learning and, as her tenure as a university president would suggest, a personal commitment to the broader institution of higher education. These differences between the authors are important in that they lead to considerable differences in how each interprets and writes about their experience of eventually becoming highly literate individuals, including its implications for their identity as persons.

What can such stories tell us? At one level, published autobiographies are only written by those who have ultimately ‘succeeded,’ as have Rose, Rodriguez, and Conway. Their stories have sold well and received much acknowledgement. The authors themselves have all become respected public intellectuals. They constitute a tiny survivors club. But what I wanted from these books was not an explanation of how they managed to survive but, instead, of what it was like for them. What insights could these formal, well-crafted reconstructions of their experience provide on the relationship between education and identity-making in their lives? To the extent that their collective stories addressed conditions common to 20th century education, my hope was that there might be some broader relevance.

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For my analysis then, I began with a re-read of Lives on the Boundary by Mike Rose. Although I had read the book previously, my reading had not been analytic. This time I read with intent, identifying various events, feelings, experiences, and perceptions that might have been recurrent in Rose's attempt to become highly educated and, at the same time, achieve an integrated identity. As I read, I noted those passages that seemed to deal with education and identity-making in some way, shape, or form. These were then copied onto index cards with a note in the upper right regarding my broader sense of how this passage might be characterized. That is, what did it appear to be 'about' at a general level? As I next applied this same method to my reading of Rodriguez and then Conway, themes began to emerge.

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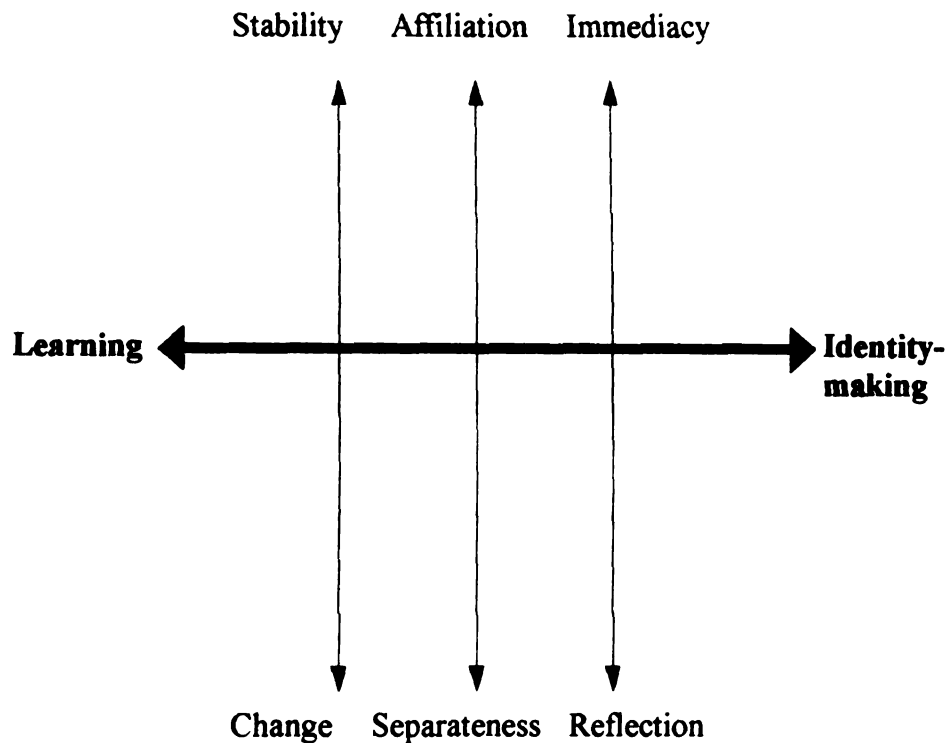


Figure 1 Essential Tensions Between Learning and Identity

Essential Tensions. Eventually, I found that across the three texts, those passages having to do with education and identity could be placed into at least one of three thematic categories (see Figure #1). None of the three categories seemed conceptually simple. Instead, they had to do with some kind of *tension*, a tension apparent in the authors reconstruction of what occurred over the course of their formal education. Each of these tensions seemed very basic to me. Further, each of the them

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seemed to illustrate the relation of education and identity in its own way. They seemed to provide incarnate or concrete example of the otherwise abstract relation between two very broad ideas: “education” and “identity.” In other words, these tensions each seemed to express, demonstrate, or reveal the relationship between education and identity-making in some compelling and storied way.¹⁷

These three tensions, then, took shape around my reading of the memoirs of three successful public intellectuals, Mike Rose, Richard Rodriguez, and Jill Ker Conway. In general, for each author the tensions were involved in their transition to the new forms of social organization that formal education represented. What is more, the further up the authors moved on the educational ladder (elementary, secondary, then university), the more opportunities they seemed to have to experience these tensions. Before I discuss them more detail, since the idea of tension plays such an important role here, there are a couple of points that should probably be made about the notion of tension in general.

First, although tension generally implies that some kind of contradiction exists, in this case it involves a difference that stretches and pulls at what is really a fundamental connectedness between things. Such tensions are said to be “essential” in the sense that to dissolve them would be to collapse the differences by which one thing is defined relative to another. It is also important to remember that tension is dynamic, it *changes*. Were it not dynamic, it would not be tension but a static structure. To say that there can be an

¹⁷ Of course, the particular conditions under which, according to the autobiographies, a certain tension was engendered are something I will be very concerned with.

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essential tension between education and identity is therefore to say two things: (1) that although the processes of formal education and the construction of oneself as a person are inseparable, they can sometimes appear to work against one another, and; (2) this relationship is not fixed but dynamic in nature. I will now define the tensions themselves more specifically. Subsequent chapters will present the texts and my interpretations of them through which the tensions are illustrated.

Stability and Change. In the three books, each author entered a progressive series of educational institutions carrying with them a personal past as well as certain ideas about the future. Where they came ill-equipped, adapting meant developing an identity that 'overcame' their past, that accorded to the ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving that would allow them entry into school culture. Indeed, this is modern condition.

Self-identity for us forms a trajectory across the different institutional settings of modernity over the durée of what used to be called the 'life cycle' (Shotter, 1997, p. 188, quoting Giddens, 1991, p. 14).

Or, as Catherine Bateson suggests in her book, Composing a Life,

adjusting to discontinuity is not an idiosyncratic problem of my own, but the emerging problem of our time (1990, p. 14).

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To what extent did the various discontinuities involved in their formal education afford Rose, Rodriguez, and Conway an identity that was continuous with who and what they felt themselves to have been previously? To what extent did their education seem to require that they devalue or turn away from their past?

In concert with their personal development, change in the three authors' sense of self was driven by cultural forces. Culture, or more accurately the differences *between* cultures, created turbulence. In their unique ways, as Rose, Rodriguez and Conway crossed the boundaries between family, home community, and school, a tension was set up between the authors' experience of themselves in one context and their experience of themselves in another. Although contemporary education is rhetorically cast as the way of progress toward a self that is somehow better or improved, there were limits for these authors in the extent to which preexisting ways of thinking, feeling, and acting could be extended into their identities as a 'good student' or, eventually, an 'intellectual.' Given that identities can never be perfected, only sustained, to what extent did the different contexts these authors inhabited allow for the stability or 'carry-over' of their identities from one moment to the next? Or, instead, were there pressures that demanded some kind of change in their behaviors, thoughts, and values.

Affiliation and Separateness. What do I mean to capture with the relatively broad term 'affiliation' (as opposed to 'relationship' or 'attachment,' for example)? I use it to refer to a sense on the part of the three authors that their learning and identity were connected in important ways to people, things, events, and ideas *outside* of themselves. For them, achieving this experience required familiarity with the means by which they

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could gain access to a particular culture, the points of entry by which could realize a place for themselves in various worlds.¹⁸ In terms of education, it might be a kind of relationship (e.g., teacher-student), a particular social practice (e.g., teaching and being taught, test taking, participation in a system of rewards and punishments), certain traditions (e.g., reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, graduation ceremonies), or the use of special mediational artifacts (e.g., books, language, or art).

Separateness, on the other hand, was the opposite experience, an experience that one was living a life set apart from the surrounding web of relationships, events, and ideas. For the authors, separateness in and of itself was not necessarily good or bad. At times, a certain amount of separateness was necessary in order for them to develop intellectual independence as well as personal autonomy. However, in terms of their education, too much separateness from the academic cultures into which they desire entry deprived them of the affiliations through which they could experiment with, or in essence practice, their identities as intellectuals. Given sufficient affiliations with academic culture, Rose, Rodriguez, and Conway were able to participate in their learning in ways that explicitly brought learning and identity together. The unique constellation of these affiliations at certain points provided them with a future-oriented space that was important in moving them toward a new and substantive intellectual identity. It afforded

¹⁸ Shotter writes that through their affiliations, people “create and maintain between themselves, in certain of the ‘basic’ communicative activities, an extensive background context of communicative activities...within which they are sustained as the kind of human beings they are” (, 1993, p. 12).

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opportunities to try on, or play with, an academic identity vitally interwoven with the people and practices of a particular educational community.¹⁹

In those instances in which an author's affiliations with educational culture were weak and feelings of separateness were an issue, the identity that learning moved him or her toward seemed to be less clear, less certain. For example, with the exception of his passion for books, the depth and breadth of Rodriguez's affiliations with academic culture were not as great as those of Rose and Conway. His autobiography contains no mention of a special mentoring relationship, for example. Nor was there mention of participation in intimate peer groups. Although Rodriguez was indeed learning from an academic standpoint, who and what he was becoming in that process remained unclear to him. At no time over the course of his education did it become an explicit issue. As a result, Rodriguez remained alienated, clear about what he was moving away from but less clear about what he was moving toward.²⁰

It was through their affiliations with people and things outside themselves that the authors acquired images of how to be. While at its extreme, affiliation could lead to a state of over-identification, a sense of their lives having been 'co-opted' by another person, institution, or system of beliefs, affiliations essentially mediated the process of

¹⁹ Of course, such affiliations are generally the means by which one pursues an identity in cultures beyond education as well. There are affiliations with family, ethnic group, faith community, or even socioeconomic groups, for example. For the three authors, these affiliations could, at times, help them to realize a sense of personal continuity, albeit a sense that might sometimes complicate their future-oriented efforts to change.

²⁰ Although Rodriguez did have strong affiliations with Catholicism, these were not about learning *per se*. Nonetheless, they provided a sense of stability, a common thread to his past.

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becoming formally educated. In contrast, separateness for these authors was, at its extreme, a kind of existential loneliness. There was an absence of connectedness, a certain difficulty in feeling that their learning and identities interfaced with the world around them. During such moments, they were aware of themselves as individuals set apart from the particular web of relationships, things, events, and ideas that surrounded them. While at its extreme, separateness could induce in them an experience of being cut off, of alienation, in balance with affiliation it was vital to feelings of individuality, uniqueness, and personal efficacy.

Immediacy and Reflection. Where the first theme, stability and change, is concerned with the authors' experience of personal continuity over time, the second theme, affiliation and separateness, addresses experiences of social connectedness in the back-and-forth between contexts. In contrast, immediacy and reflection alludes to the tension between what might be thought of as two different modes of consciousness, two ways of knowing, of taking in one's experience. On the one hand, there are instances in which the authors experienced themselves as very much in the present moment, unselfconsciously engaged, alive to their senses and surroundings. In contrast to this are moments in which they instead follow their intellectual impulse to analyze, to put their experience into some kind of conceptual order or theoretical frame. There is a 'stepping

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back' that occurs.²¹ Although both of these modes are natural, there is a confusion the authors feel as they move between contexts that tend to feature one type of knowing over the other. An abrupt shift in consciousness seemed to accompany their movement from sensual activities, activities in which the object of their attention was experienced bodily through the senses (e.g., physical work) to activities whose object was conceptual (e.g., contemplating a theory or idea), from matters that were concrete to those that were more abstract or imaginative.

In contrast to the favor that enlightenment traditions have shown rational thought, the German philosopher, Martin Heidegger (1962), insists that our primary access to the world is not through our intellect but via one's practical, unreflective involvement with it, what he called the *ready-to-hand*. Only secondarily, according to Heidegger, do we rely on the kind of detached contemplation through which we isolate and order phenomena. Winograd & Flores use the example of a hammer (1986, chapter 3). In practice, a hammer is experienced unreflectively as an extension of the carpenter's arm, ready-to-hand. The carpenter does not contemplate the hammer or the act of hammering itself until there is some kind of physical or mechanical breakdown that makes analysis necessary. Immediacy might be considered akin to a mode of consciousness in which one's surroundings are ready-to-hand (I am typing but as I do so, unless my keyboeard

²¹ There is a developmental aspect in that reflection on one's experience demands more mature intellectual skills. As a result, tensions between the two 'modes' of thought that I am calling immediacy and reflection do not tend to appear in the authors' lives until late adolescence or young adulthood.

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malfunctions or I make an error that requires me to direct my attention to it, the keyboard does not become a conscious object of thought). In contrast, reflection represents that creative mode of thought one might use to analyze a problem, breaking it into logical steps or parts (were a particular key on my keyboard to stick or break, or the keyboard to stop functioning altogether, in order to solve the problem I would need to become very conscious of its mechanical workings, no longer oblivious to its role as a mediator of my access to the written screen).

Immediacy and reflection, in a sense, tries to get behind what we mean when we draw such dualities as practical versus intellectual, mental versus manual, applied versus theoretical. Although there are bits of all of these contained in this theme, I do not merely want to set up another dichotomy. I do not want to imply that reflective thought is not somehow ultimately embodied, for example (cf. Johnson, 1989; Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991). There is a quote from an interview with the writer, Annie Dillard, that is suggestive of the relationship between these two ways of experiencing the world. She says,

the interior life is in constant vertical motion; consciousness runs up and down the scales every hour like a slide trombone. It dreams down below; it notices up above; and it notices itself, too, and its own alertness. The vertical motion of consciousness, from inside to outside and back, interests me (in Zinsser, 1995, pp. 42-43).

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The tension is in the movement between Dillard's "dreaming down below," living in the moment and experiencing oneself fully as a social presence (i.e., immediacy), and the intellectual impulse to 'detach' and notice from "up above" how things are ordered (i.e., reflection). It is somewhere in between these two that meaning is constructed.

In the three autobiographies, a particular activity and context usually tends to feature one mode of consciousness, immediate or reflective, over the other. It is probably the case that as education strives to invite students into the practices of abstract, rational discourse, most schools place the greatest value on logical reason and reflection (Bruner, 1996; Gardner, 1983; Wells, 1994). However, progressive educators have long pointed to the pedagogical benefits that arise from moving students *between* immediate and reflective ways of knowing.²²

'Reason' at its height cannot attain complete grasp...it must fall back upon imagination - upon the embodiment of ideas in an emotionally charged sense (Dewey, cited in Garrison, 1995, pp. 428-429).

²² As an interesting side note, Jill Ker Conway remarks on how aspects of today's culture, particularly the media, work against developing powers of reflection in young persons. She writes,

"The young women I got to know when I was [president of Smith College] were energetically interested in writing and understanding themselves and their current life experiences. Their problem was that most of the narratives they saw, which were on television, were structured around very brief two- or three-minute incidents. These women had never become accustomed to writing reflective expository prose - looking at an event and reflecting on what it means - because events on television are so neatly packaged that you don't think about the alternatives" (in Zinser, pp. 176-177).

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[Thought] is a dynamic system of meaning, in which the affective and the intellectual unite (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 10).

An example of the tension that can exist between immediacy and reflection is provided by Rodriguez. He had abandoned graduate study, “cast off that culture” and returned home to the imagined safety and comfort of his parents’ home. In the midst of eating dinner with his mother and father, he was uncomfortably aware of his compulsion to reflect on and analyze even this simplest of moments.

I rushed to ‘come home.’ Then quickly discovered that I could not. Could not cast off the culture I had assumed. Living with my parents for the summer, I remained an academic - a kind of anthropologist in the family kitchen, searching for evidence of our ‘cultural ties’ as we ate dinner together (p. 160).

He could not reclaim his conceptual innocence. Although Rodriguez realizes that his ability to think and abstract in complex ways is what has ultimately saved him from reenacting the frustrated lives of his parents, because it is for him the voice of the objective, white, authoritative academic, it threatens to separate him from them. He thus struggles with integrating it into his own identity.

General points. In the three tensions that I’ve proposed, there is no one outcome that is generally better or more natural than another. Whether stability rather than change, affiliation rather than separateness, or immediacy rather than reflection are most conducive to learning and growth at any given moment is a consequence of the author’s

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circumstances and his or her unique life trajectory. It is also true that the authors do not experience both 'poles' of a tension at the same time. What I mean is that an experience of change, for example, does not seem to occupy the same moment in time for them as an experience of stability. Nor do they describe experiences of affiliation and separateness, or immediacy and reflection, as occurring at the same instant. However, their stories *do* reveal how their educational paths lead them to cycle between the two aspects of these tensions, a cycling that was of greatest importance to the process of learning and identity-making. In this sense, each of the tensions is a true dialectic: stability sets up the preconditions for change (and vice versa), affiliation sets up the precondition for separateness (and vice versa) and, similarly, immediacy sets up the precondition for reflection (and vice versa).

Related to the above point is the fact that one's life must inevitably be lived somewhere between the poles of each tension. Part of the essentialness of these three tensions is that one is, to varying degrees, forever moving between experiences of change and stability, between feelings of closeness, similarity, and affiliation and feelings of being someone different or apart, between moments of immediacy in which one's experience of one's self is entirely 'in the moment' and those in which one has stepped back from the moment in order to reflect on, analyze, and understand it.

In these stories, then, there seem to be three concrete ways that the relationship between education and identity-making expresses itself (see Figure #1). First, there are varying degrees of pull between *stability and change* in the context of one's life, between things remaining the same, on the one hand, or progressing toward a state that is

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somehow 'better' or 'improved,' on the other. Second, at various times and in various ways, these authors write about confronting the tension between their *affiliation* to others versus their need for *separateness*, that is, the tension between defining themselves in relation to others (teachers, family members, or peers, for example) versus the need to understand themselves as individuals apart from their relationships. Third, as their educations advanced, each author eventually confronted the private or personal tension between two fundamental modes of awareness, a tension perhaps best summarized as *immediacy* (living in the moment, senses alive to one's surround) versus *reflection* (giving way to the intellectual impulse to detach and analyze in order to understand).

The processes of formal education and identity-making are inextricably connected. You cannot have one without the other. What has come to my attention in the reading of these three autobiographies, however, are the tensions that can haunt this relationship and that can ultimately moderate what these two processes are able to achieve. For the authors, institutional education bred a struggle between who they were and who they felt they were expected to be, between a sense of connectedness and a sense of self-definition, between their personal presence in the moment and their intellectual understanding of it.

Final note regarding a hermeneutic approach. I believe that a hermeneutic approach provides the most viable means of analyzing what I am most interested in: the ways that individuals come to understand *for themselves* the relationship between learning and identity-making. An interpretive approach allows me to understand the meaning and sense that each of the authors make of this relationship. I would argue that

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my analysis of how these three individuals reconstruct the struggle between formal education and becoming someone or something different provides one possible perspective on the relationship between formal learning and identity-making, one rooted in the “warmth of a life being lived” [a phrase that Oates (1991, p. 5) uses to describe that which is uniquely communicated by the biographical voice].

There are other ways, other roads of inquiry, by which one could have approached these autobiographies, of course. For example, it is a fact that, throughout their lives, each of the authors moved in and out of different communities of Discourse.²³ In particular, as they gradually became part of the academic community, they acquired the discursive tools for becoming critical of the community from which they had originally come, the one represented by their particular ethnic group or social class. At one level, then, one might say that what comes into conflict for them are actually two conflicting Discourses, two conflicting ways of perceiving, valuing, arguing, and interpreting. Gee writes,

²³ Gee (1996) views Discourse, with a capital ‘D’, as a means of structuring social relations. He writes,

[Discourse is] a socially accepted association among ways of using language, other symbolic expressions, and ‘artifacts’, of thinking, feelings, believing, valuing, and acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or ‘social network,’ or to signal (that one is playing) a socially meaningful ‘role’ (p. 131).

In sum, Discourse refers to a conventionalized way of communicating, dialoguing, or conversing that accords with certain culturally channeled and rhetorically structured ways of perceiving, valuing, arguing, and interpreting. Discourses are intimately related to issues of social power. For this reason, “they are always and everywhere ideological” (Gee, 1996, p. 132). Control over certain Discourses can lead to the acquisition of social goods such as money, power, status.

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It is sometimes helpful to say that it is not individuals who speak and act, but rather that historically and socially defined Discourses speak to each other through individuals . . . The individual instantiates, gives body to a Discourse every time he or she speaks, and thus carries it, and ultimately changes it, through time...the individual is the meeting point of many, sometimes conflicting, socially and historically defined Discourses" (1996, p. 132).

Drawing from Minnis (1994), Gee (1996) provides an example of how “conflicts between Discourses can inhabit one and the same person” (p. 133). Minnis writes,

Given that mutual unspoken understanding between teachers and students requires common prior experiences, most good law students are traditional law students. They are students whose economic, social, and educational backgrounds are much like those of traditional law professors. These students, that is, are members of middle- and upper-class society, the dominant culture, the culture that shaped the law. Accordingly, they are inclined to accept without question beliefs that are characteristic of that culture and that give them an advantage in law school. In short, their personal histories have taught them to confront the world aggressively; they esteem reasoning over other ways of knowing, individual accomplishment over collective accomplishment, and competition over cooperation (Minnis, 1994, p. 380).

Accordingly, the Discourses of law school “conflict seriously with the social practices and positions of the other Discourses to which many minorities and other non-mainstream [law] students belong” (Gee, 1996, p. 135). Gee continues,

The Discourse of law school creates kinds of people who (overtly or tacitly) define themselves as different from - often better than - other kinds of people. For many minority and other

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non-mainstream [law] students, the Discourse of law school makes them be *both* kinds of people. They get to define their kind (as law student) as different from - often better than - their own kind (as member of one of their other Discourses). A paradox, indeed - unfortunately one they get to live and feel in their bodies and their minds (p. 135)

Gee is making two assertions. First, that one way to conceptualize the situation is that “it is not individuals who speak and act, but rather it is historically and socially defined Discourses that speak to each other through individuals” (1996, p. 132). Second, and on the other hand, where there are “points of opposition” between Discourses, these otherwise abstract ideologies are experienced on the site of individual. It is *the person* who gets to “live and feel [them] in their bodies and their minds.” In this conceptualization, the primary unit of analysis remains Discourse. Although as individuals we get to “live and feel” them, in this account the bulk of agency nonetheless continues to reside in Discourse itself. The individual is more or less a conduit through which different and sometimes opposing Discourses pass and sometimes meet. While at one level this may be a viable metaphor, absent from this account is an understanding of what it is actually *like* to be spoken through. In other words, there is no way in this account for individual experience to assume the ontological foreground. The same problem would have been present had I chosen to use other sociolinguistic or ‘social semiotic’ approaches, those of Halliday (1989) or Lemke, (1989) for example. These are methods in which the nature of the texts themselves *as texts* tend to retain analytic primacy (e.g., literary criticism or critical theory).

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Instead, in this study, it was how the authors' made sense of the learning-identity relation as it played out in their own lives that I wanted to understand and foreground. How were they able to thread together the educational events in their lives in a way that for them created a cohesive story? After all, these were not persons who experienced themselves as "inhabited" by the Discourses they participated in. There is individual agency in the fact that they used these Discourses to get on with our lives, to learn, and to construct and manage an identity.

The constitutive nature of social Discourses notwithstanding, what these autobiographies 'contain' are the authors' creative reconstructions of their lived experience. In this case, broader issues regarding how Discourses might 'speak through' the individual are by no means dismissed. But they do take back seat to, or provide background for, the author's own experience of being spoken through. Again, this does not preclude the idea that various social Discourses were integral to the identity-making of Rose, Rodriguez, or Conway. It only seeks to foreground the individual perspective, one that for the moment transcends questions regarding the origins and structure of the Discourses themselves. In so doing, I have attempted to create for myself a more open interpretive space, one that as much as possible allows the experience of the three authors to inform my theorizing.

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CHAPTER FOUR

Mike Rose

Lives on the Boundary is a chronicle of Mike Rose's lifelong struggle between a view of himself and the world set against the economic and spiritual poverty of his youth, and his identity within the American educational system. Even in his career as an educator and scholar, where Rose seems to have found a degree of salvation from the hopelessness of his youth, he carries with him a nagging sense of alienation. In Rose's words, Lives on the Boundary "is a book about movement: about what happens as people who have failed begin to participate in the educational system that has seemed so harsh to them" (p. xi). His is essentially a story about class, about the attempt to define oneself through education in ways that repudiate the economic conditions of one's past. Rose's autobiography shares his experience on the border between the promise of education and the dead ends of poverty, between creating an identity of one's own and existing for the sake of others, between learning for the sake of ego and learning in order to serve, between what one 'is' and what one was or would like to become and, finally, between those who teach and those who are expected to learn.

Background. Mike Rose's parents were both children when their families immigrated to America from Italy in the early 1900's. His mother quit school in the 7th grade to help with her family. His father had a year or two of Italian elementary and "could write a few words" (p. 11). When they were first married, Rose's parents had operated a successful

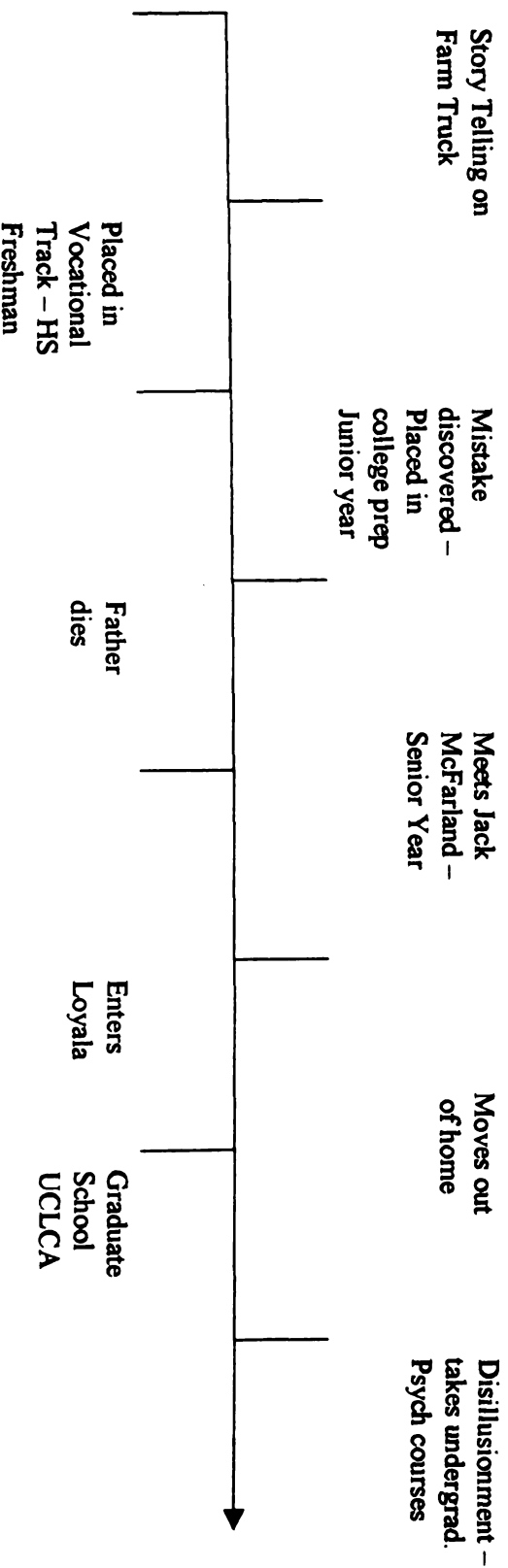


Figure 1. Mike Rose - Time Line of Major Transitional Events

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of UCLA Tutorial Center

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Figure 1 (continued). Mike Rose - Time Line of Major Transitional Events

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diner in Altoona, Pennsylvania. But this folded when the railroad there went bust. At the suggestion of their doctor, Rose's family relocated to California for his father's increasing arteriosclerosis. There his mother worked as a waitress while his dad held a string of odd jobs. The world that Rose's parents moved in was small. "We were webbed in close, a four- or five-block stretch" (p. 89), writes Rose. Because of his illness, his father was home most of the time. Rose recalls his mother's routine, taking the bus to her waitress job in downtown Los Angeles six days a week, returning home worn out, "enervated and mechanical." What he remembers most is that "her life did not radiate outwards" (p. 89). Eventually, his father's worsening arteriosclerosis required the amputation of his leg. This started a downward spiral in his father's health and in his general will to live. He died during Rose's sophomore year in high school. Mike was their only child.

Rose remembers his early years as "a peculiar mix of physical warmth and barrenness" (p. 12).

I developed a picture of human existence that rendered it short and brutish or sad and aimless or long and quiet with rewards like afternoon naps, the evening newspaper, walks around the block... (p. 17).

At the same time, the neighborhood where he and his parents lived was changing rapidly.

[We lived in] a house about one and one-half miles northwest of Watts. The neighborhood was poor, and it was

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in transition. Some old white folks lived there for decades and were retired. Younger black families were moving up from Watts and settling by working-class white families newly arrived from the South and the Midwest. Immigrant Mexican families were coming in from Baja. Any such demographic mix is potentially volatile and, as the fifties wore on, the neighborhood would be marked by outbursts of violence (p. 12).

Rose began reading early. The science fiction stories he discovered at his small school library fueled his imagination. They began to give him a sense of story form. They also offered a temporary means of escape.

I would check out books two at a time and take them home to curl up with a blanket on my chaise lounge, reading, sometimes through the weekend, my back aching, my thoughts lost between galaxies. I became the hero of a thousand adventures, all with intricate plots and the triumph of good over evil, all many dimensions removed from the dim walls of the living room (pp. 20-21).

The summer before 6th grade, Rose got a job with some other boys picking strawberries. As they drove back and forth to the work site, it became Rose's task to entertain them. This was the birth of Rose the Story-Teller. It was his first experience using language in a way that could lead him out into the world and, at the same time, pull others in. Otherwise, Rose has few recollections of his elementary years, which puzzles him.

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Some people who manage to write their way out of the working class describe the classroom as an oasis of possibility. It became their intellectual playground, their competitive arena. Given the richness of my memories of this time, it's funny how scant are my recollections of [elementary] school (p. 18).

When it was time for secondary, Rose's parents saved the money necessary to send him to Catholic school. Unfortunately, Rose's test scores were confused upon admittance with those of another student by the same name who had apparently not scored well. As a result, Rose spent his first two years erroneously placed in the vocational education track. These two years had a profound impact on Rose. He internalized the hopelessness of his Voc Ed classmates. He accepted the low-achiever identity bestowed on him by the school (an aspect of himself that, as a teacher of marginalized students, would one day serve him in a meaningful way).

The error that had thrown Rose into the vocational track was not discovered until the end of his sophomore year. At the beginning of his junior year, he was therefore promptly transferred into the college prep track. The adjustment was difficult and Rose floundered. Looking back, Rose believes that he was saved only by his relationship with Jack MacFarland, a 26-y/o English teacher with a recent masters from Columbia. MacFarland was brilliant, caring, demanding, and was passionate about language and ideas.

It was not a definite plan of Rose's to attend college following high school. No one in his family had attempted higher education. Only two uncles had ever completed

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high school. "The reality of higher education wasn't in my scheme of things," he writes (p. 35). With Jack MacFarland pulling a few strings, however (Loyola was MacFarland's undergraduate alma mater), Rose was able to enter Loyola university under first year probationary status. At that time, Loyola's student population was predominantly white, middle to upper class, and exclusively male.

Loyola was foreign. Rose felt out of place. Disguising his discomfort with contempt, he struggled to produce college-level work. Just two years out of the high school vocational track, Rose felt that he lacked a "solid center of knowledge." The boundary between Rose and higher education felt impermeable. After a dismal fall semester, Jack MacFarland, with whom Rose continued to have contact, phoned several of his own former professor's at Loyola. At MacFarland's suggestion, they subsequently provided special tutoring for Rose. This helped immensely and things began to improve. In his final three years of undergraduate work, Rose became editor of the campus literary magazine, moved out of the family's home, and - to his amazement - secured a scholarship for graduate study in English at UCLA.

The first year or so at UCLA went well. But Rose gradually found himself disillusioned. His professors did not seem interested in his poetry, nor did they seem to have much enthusiasm for writing themselves. Rose watched them in their enclosed world of criticism and critique and it left him cold. He decided that whatever he was looking for, he would not find it through graduate study in English. In the hopes that it would lead him more directly out into the world of human experience, for the next year Rose took undergraduate courses in psychology. Still, academic psychology did not seem

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Rose eventually gave up his scholarship and left UCLA, joining Los Angeles's Urban Teacher Corps. Volunteers in the Teacher Corp worked as interns in low-income elementary schools in Los Angeles. At the same time, they took a couple of education classes each quarter at the University of Southern California, where the Corps was based. This was Rose's first experience with teaching and it amazed him. He worked with kids the system had labeled 'slow' or 'disabled.' As he did so, he felt that what began to come out of them were ideas, images, and abilities with language that would never have shown up in the classrooms that had marginalized them. Rose's understanding of learning itself began to change. He began to see learning less as the acquisition of knowledge and more as a "romance," an "invitation" (p. 102). At the same time, the futility of his students' lives spoke to him personally. It echoed the hopelessness of what he himself had grown up with and still, in a sense, carried with him.

After two years in the Teacher's Corp, Rose began thinking about returning to graduate study at UCLA. He left the Teacher's Corp and took a job that would allow him that option. He worked 20-30 hours a week as an English tutor for returning Vietnam veterans. The vets were men that wanted to change themselves, to "be transfigured by books" (p. 138), who wanted to be "up and out of the pool of men society could call on so easily to shoot and be shot at" (p. 137). Like himself, these were people very much in transition, transitions much more dramatic than his own. He could certainly identify with their desire to change their lives through education.

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Rose found himself teaching not just reading and writing to the vets but even general intellectual strategies for making it academically; skills like summarizing, classifying, comparing, and analyzing. The Veteran's Program allowed Rose to define himself publicly as "someone engaged with the language of others" (p. 146). "It was the Veteran's Program that really enabled me to come into my own as a teacher," he writes (p. 146). His work with the vets challenged Rose to find the logic and meaning in their errors. It confirmed his belief that "even at the extreme, there is possibility" (p. 159). Working with the veterans also turned Rose back once more onto his own experience. In juxtaposition to his relationships with them, he reached a deeper understanding of the depth and difficulty of the changes he himself had gone through.

From the veteran's program, Lives on the Boundary finishes with Rose's recollections of his subsequent position as director of the UCLA Tutorial Center. He had more-or-less come full circle. The difference was that now, he writes, he entered the university "with some responsibility for making it work" (p. 170). By this time, Rose had learned a great deal about learning ("how to foster it, what impedes it" p. 164), about transition into college, and about helping others with the "emotional spasms that come with change" (p. 165). It was from this distance that Rose finally obtained the fullest appreciation for the nature of the changes that had brought him to where he was.

In the analysis to follow, the first section will concern itself with the tensions that Rose experienced between experiences of stability and experiences of change. For Rose, this was the tension between maintaining a sense of himself as a member of the lower socioeconomic class, the son of immigrant parents while, at the same time, also

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transforming himself through learning in ways that would legitimate his identity as an intellectual and scholar. My analysis of each of the three tensions will be organized according to the transitions in the story that seemed to fuel the particular tension being discussed.

Stability and Change.

Transition: Vocational Education to College Prep. Once in the high school Voc Ed track, Rose gradually internalized what this placement implied regarding the quality of his mind. For he and his peers, performing in ways that confirmed the judgement that they were “slow” was less painful than trying to demonstrate that they were not. Underperforming was a way of resisting change, of defending themselves, although it did require a kind of intellectual suicide. Maintaining the stability of their status did not involve a passive acceptance of their condition, in other words, but instead required an active effort on their part.

You have to twist the knife in your own gray matter to make this defense work. You'll have to shut down, have to reject intellectual stimuli or diffuse them with sarcasm, have to cultivate stupidity, have to convert boredom from a malady into a way of confronting the world (p. 29).

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When Rose was abruptly pulled out of the vocational track and tossed into college prep courses at the start of his junior year, a simple administrative act changed the school's categorization: 'remedial' in the spring and 'college-prep' in the fall. Out of the blue, Rose was publicly redefined in ways that bore little resemblance to the student he had been previously. Changing his own perception of himself was not so easy.

I was an erratic student. I was undisciplined. And I hadn't caught onto the rules of the game (p. 30).

The transition was difficult. The vocational track had given him few opportunities to identify, much less to develop, his particular intellectual talents. The discontinuity between Voc Ed and college-prep was jarring. Every effort on his part seemed only to succeed in exposing his shortcomings still further.

At the first sign of doing rather than memorizing, I would automatically assume the problem was beyond me and distance myself from it (p. 43)...As long as I stayed half-awake intellectually, there was no tension, no failed attempts at mastery, no confrontation with my limits. But now I was trying hard, and I could see how limited I was. It would be quite a while before I could relax into the gifts I did possess (p. 59).

Rose writes that Jack MacFarland could not have come into his life at a better time. The changes that MacFarland introduced into how Rose was being taught were

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MacFarland's lectures were crafted...He asked questions often, raised everything from Zeno's paradox to the repeated last line of Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening." He slowly and carefully built up our knowledge of Western intellectual history...We wrote and talked, wrote and talked. The man immersed us in language...There were some lives that were already beyond Jack MacFarland's ministrations, but mine was not (p. 33).

Transition: University. The culture of Loyola was a dramatic contrast to that of South L.A., to the world that surrounded his family's home on South Vermont street. To Rose, they felt discontinuous with one another. He was "in the middle of Loyola's social world without a guidebook," no way to find direction or understand the background and significance of things. He writes that he was torn between "contempt for" and "exclusion from" this world: both rejecting it as something foreign and wishing he could change enough to belong.

Many of my classmates came from and lived in a world very different from my own. The campus literary magazine would publish excerpts from the journals of upperclassmen traveling across Europe, standing before the Berlin Wall...I had never been out of Southern California...Fraternities seemed exclusive and a little strange... John [John Connors, friend from South L.A.] and I pretty much kept to ourselves...simultaneously feeling contempt for and exclusion from a social life that seemed to work with the

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Nor did Rose have the academic background that might have made for at least some intellectual bridging between secondary and higher education. He still maintained his contact with Jack MacFarland. This and his friend John provided a modicum of social continuity. Even though his days were spent on campus, South L.A. still felt like home. In spite of its “dreary impotence,” isolation, and the deep sadness it engendered in him regarding the tragedy of his parents' lives, it was familiar. In contrast, Loyola seemed to be an extension of the *Ozzie and Harriet* world Rose watched on television: white, middle class and happy, alien to the economic and spiritual poverty of South L.A.

Rose held below a C average by the end of his 2nd semester. Meanwhile, Jack MacFarland knew that Rose was in trouble and what he would need in his second year if he were to survive. Of particular importance was a personalized kind of help, which MacFarland was able to arrange. Rose began to receive private tutoring from his professors during his second year. He recalls an important change in the quality of his experience...

To journey up through the top levels of the American educational system will call for support and guidance at many, many points along the way. You'll need people to guide you into conversations that seem foreign and threatening. You'll need models, lots of them, to show you how to get at what you don't know. You'll need people to help you center yourself in your own developing ideas...The teachers that fate and Jack MacFarland's crisis intervention sent my way worked at making the humanities

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All during this period, Rose had been commuting back and forth from Loyola to South L.A., where he lived with his mother. As his comfort at Loyola increased, so did his inner conflict. Although the conditions of his learning had changed dramatically, the conditions supporting his identity as the son of disillusioned immigrant parents, a member of the lower class, had not. He lived at home. His mother depended on him. What would she do now that his father was gone? To worsen matters, Lou Minton, a friend of his father's who had helped during his illness and now lived with Mike and his mother, had walked into the bedroom after an argument with Rose's mother and shot himself. Rose felt the inherited stoicism and despair of his deceased father. Against this was the hope engendered by his experiences at Loyola. Two different pictures of the future battled it out, one rooted in static images of the past while the other held images of change, hope, and growth. To leave home in search of knowledge and a better life would have been to abandon his mother. But to simply give up on college would have disappointed his parents' dream that he live a better life than they. The tension literally paralyzed him.

I lived a life of choice and possibility during the weekdays and then returned every evening to South Vermont. One day in the middle of my junior year, I lay down on the couch in the living room and could not get up...I stayed there for two days, getting up only to eat, returning quickly to keep the fear at bay (p. 59).

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A friend took Rose to his family physician, who recognized his soul-sickness. He urged Rose to move away from home. He assured Rose that his mother was strong and would be able to care for herself. Something had to change.

It was simple. Move. I would have to move away from South Vermont [street]. Dr. Metzger had released something, and eventually, I would move . . . I knew that I had to (p. 61).

As mentioned previously, things improved greatly for Rose his last three years at Loyola. He received all A's as a junior. He also took on editorship of the campus literary magazine.

Those last years saw a gradual shift from the somnambulance and uncertain awakenings of my earlier time in college. I was involved, and I was meeting with success. And success carried with it its own challenges and threats (p. 60)

One of the challenges of academic success for Rose was the dissonance it conjured within him. A juxtaposition was created between what he aspired to be and what he had been. Had he really changed that much? Had he become the person all the positive feedback, the honors, the awards said he had become? Or was this again some kind of fluke? Would someone suddenly show up telling him there had been a terrible mistake, that he should never had been admitted to Loyola, that his admission papers were mistakenly confused

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with someone who - unlike him - really *was* intellectually gifted? Rose recalls receiving an English award at one point. He writes,

My name was called, and I walked to the podium...as I was walking back and reading the inscription, I saw that the engraver had made a mistake: Rose was spelled Ruse. Ruse. A wily subterfuge. A trick. The plaque was returned and made right, of course, but the joke still went down. A peek from behind the curtain. A wink in the hall of mirrors. Was I the real thing or not (p. 61)?

Transition: Graduate Study. Although Rose continued onto graduate study at UCLA , he eventually became disillusioned. Graduate work did not seem to be leading him “out into the world.” More and more, it felt to him like a species of learning that was ultimately disconnected from life. In a sense, the hours of secluded study represented only more of the same, a withdrawal from the world rather than a step further into it, an absence of change.

All this was becoming a variant of hiding away in the house trailer on South Vermont (p. 77).

Rose’s subsequent year of study in psychology was an attempt to break the pattern. But even this eventually proved to be more of the same, more of the “worm’s-eye view” (p. 78).

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The Teacher Corps offered a significant change from university culture. For the first time, as an intern Rose was not solely a student. He was given teaching assignments that helped him tentatively explore what Mike-Rose-as-teacher might look and feel like. He began to think of himself as a teacher. He was treated in a collegial way by the supervisors, teachers, and administrators he worked with, part of a community of people some of whom were quite passionate about helping students get hold of a better life. At the same time, there was something about the experience that threaded hauntingly back to South Vermont. The poverty and desperation surrounding the elementary in El Monte, Rose's Teacher Corp assignment, were so similar to the conditions of his own youth.

In some ways, I wasn't a greenhorn. There were South L.A. experiences that transferred to the East Side and to the streets and back alleys of El Monte (p. 88).

It seemed as if moments of personal history were being projected out onto the streets, reshaped and out of phase but familiar: the faces and buildings of an unsettling childhood dream (p. 89).

Although there was much that had changed in Rose's life, he began to discern something in himself that had not. When Rose joined the Teacher Corp, he assumed that education had been providing him with an escape from the conditions of his youth. What he had learned so far had released him from a future of despair and proved that, if he only

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knocked, there were doors that would open. Working with the students in El Monte, however, rekindled a familiar futility that tied him back to what he had witnessed growing up in South L.A. Rose recognized a part of himself that, in spite of the many changes, remained a stable part of who he was and how he reacted to life. The following passage describes what this was like.

Months before [when starting with the Teacher Corp]...I had a powerful realization that South L.A. hadn't trapped me, that I could come back to neighborhoods like mine and do things. The street seemed full of life and promise. What I felt as I sat with Ben [a student Rose worked with in the Teacher Corps], and realized I'd been feeling on and off since arriving in El Monte, was something quite different: It was the powerlessness of South Vermont, an impotence as warm and safe as a narcotic. It wasn't clear despair - it wasn't that articulate - it was more a soft regress to childhood, to hot and quiet afternoons in an empty lot (p. 104). Little things could trigger it - a smell in the cafeteria, a ramshackle house - and whatever I was doing - creating a lesson, working with the children, shaping an observation for [friends] Joe or Lillian - would begin to feel unworthy, lifeless from the inside. I did my work in spite of all this, but with an inner labor that I was just now appreciating, holding a hazy and familiar ineptitude at bay with one hand while framing a lesson with the other (pp. 104-105).

Rose acknowledged that he could not extract from himself the images of South L.A. They had become a part of him, dark and enduring scenes with the power to reproduce themselves in new environments.

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This, I thought, was how South Vermont kept hold of its errant children. You can leave those streets, but the flat time and the diminished sense of what you can be continues to shape your identity. You live with decayed images of the possible (p. 105).

Rose writes that this tension between a lack of change in a perpetually dead present and the hope for something different in the future “was not simply an intellectual tension.” It was real, rooted in the physical conditions of actual lives, including his own. It was tied to the struggle between stability and change, between what he felt he was and what he hoped he could become. Rose saw it replicated in the elementary students he was trying to help in the Teacher Corps.

I was living through the very conflict...the conflict between two visions, one of individual possibility and one of environmental limits and determiners; the vibrant power of meaningful work versus the absorbing threat of South Vermont. One day I saw the emerging human spirit, the next day the naturalist's dreary landscape. Both were true. And, I guess, this was a tension the children felt, in their way - something they couldn't articulate, perhaps, as I couldn't when I was a child, but they were living it, absorbing it into marrow (pp. 114-115).

Integrative Summary : Stability and Change

According to Rose, the first significant appearance of tension between stability (remaining the same) and change (becoming someone or something new) emerged from his mistaken placement into the vocational track his freshmen year of high school. In the

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vocational track, Rose found himself as apathetic as his buddies, rejecting or diffusing the risks that learning involved. To work toward an understanding of things as complex as mathematical formulae, historical analyses, or compositional writing styles, one must be willing to withstand the anxiety created by their initial meaninglessness, an encounter made tolerable only by the faith that one can, in fact, eventually learn. However, in the vocational track, such faith was a mistake. Indeed, Rose and his peers were motivated to sabotage their attempts to learn in order *not* to become a certain thing: a ‘failure’ (cf. Covington, 1992). Rose’s resistance to accepting any kind of intellectual challenge hardened. Their presence was only a reminder to Rose that he was presumed to be incapable of meeting them.

At home during childhood, with his books and chemistry set, curiosity and imagination were traits Rose had learned to depend on. His mind had been comparatively free. He could be inquisitive, imagine himself in a multitude of ways, as a mad scientist or a space explorer. Now, ironically, at school he was in a context that made curiosity and the stretching of his imagination dangerous. These could lead to aspirations that would only be crushed by an academic environment that suffocated any serious intellectual desires. The tension for Rose lay between the idea that things could actually be other than they were, that he could learn and change and become part of the ‘normal’ student body, and the resigned effort to accept the status quo lest his true ineptitude be revealed.¹

¹ Stability is not always passive. Some people fight like mad to preserve stability, resisting change. Nor is change always active, as with Rose’s placement into Voc Ed and his subsequent relocation into college-prep. The latter was a change that he had no control over.

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Later on, in his movement between Loyola and South L.A., Rose again found himself struggling between hopeful images of the future and a resigned acceptance of his present. Loyola spoke to an emerging part of himself that Jack MacFarland had only begun to nurture in high school: the writer, the thinker, the imaginer. This was a part of him hungry for other possibilities. It sensed that learning and hope were somehow connected. It pulled him toward a future that he could not visualize. On the other hand, there were images from the past. These whispered to him that, underneath it all and in spite of his accomplishments, he was still a Voc Ed kid from the working class. This voice was familiar, actual, it hugged to his past and to South L.A. The pull toward Loyola was a pull away from all that. Simple 'code switching,' behaving and talking one way at home and another at school, would not work. This presumed a self constant across contexts, a self that simply relied on different words and behaviors to express itself. It was precisely such a centeredness that Rose lacked.

Initially at Loyola, Rose was without the knowledge or habits of mind needed to buy his way into a different culture. He found himself in an intellectual economy where the gold standard was a set of thinkers far removed from his own life. To succeed at Loyola required that Rose become thoughtful, that he develop his capacity to criticize the prevailing order of things and, ultimately, his own place in it. On the other hand, conditions in South L.A. turned such skills into a handicap. It was painful for Rose to see his home and life there from a critical perspective. It opened him further to the fact that things were not likely to change much. His intellectual development at Loyola, and the fact that he was maturing physically and emotionally, all contributed during this period to

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Rose's deepening awareness of what continued existence at home would mean for him. With the sensitivities of a poet, Rose gradually saw the futility of his parents' dreams. He grew more conscious of the "gray, dreamless deadtime," stark and absolute, that engulfed life in his community. Again, the tension for Rose lay between a resigned acceptance of his life as someone from the lower class, and his longing for a different life, a life of learning and ideas that could lead him out into the world. It was between a vision of stasis and a vision of change. This tension reappeared during Rose's stint in the Teacher Corp. It has followed him into adulthood as a struggle, at the periphery of consciousness, between lower-class despair and the educated person he has become.

Mike Rose was interviewed by journalist Bill Moyers's in the late 1980's following the success of Lives on the Boundary. In the interview, Rose speaks clearly about the tension he experiences between the identity of a working class person (his identity growing up) and the identity of a scholar (what he has become). Rose shared with Moyers that for two days prior to the taping, he imagined everything that could have possibly gone wrong with the interview; he might trip, or become inarticulate. He talked about the fact that even though he eventually completed his doctorate and established a place for himself in academia, feelings of inadequacy and exclusion continue to suggest themselves.

Isn't it foolish? ...I played out every awful scenario you could imagine... embarrassing you or embarrassing myself...I finally realized what it was. This longstanding feeling that develops in a lot of us who come from the working class and find ourselves suddenly, or not so

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suddenly, in arenas that are very different from the ones we grew up in. I think I continue to live with that sort of nagging uncertainty, that nagging doubt that I have the right to speak to a public about many of these issues.

Moyers asks if Rose ever attributed this to the fact that he is from the working class.

Its not that explicit. You know, I wish I could say it that articulately to myself because then I could prove it to be nonsense. But its, rather - I like the phrase from that wonderful book, The Hidden Injuries of Class: its like a kind of lingering doubt that's hard for me to grab onto but is there. I think it stays with a number of us who sort of move up through the class system into a profession that is highly status-laden.

How might such feelings belie the mystique of education, Moyers wonders, the myth that education has the power to pull “street kids, slum kids, illiterate adults, people who can’t get out of the neighborhood, the lost people of our society” out of their dysfunctional loop, help them to change, and set them on a more productive path? What does it mean that after his degrees and twenty years in the profession, Rose still doesn’t take himself quite seriously enough as a competent authority? Rose responds,

Interesting, isn’t it? The mystique of education, particularly the further you move up the ladder of the educational system, it is so powerful that it can act to deny our most immediate and true experience. Its interesting because it manifests itself in a lot of ways, people who are sullen and

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silent, or people who act out, you know, make lots of noise, joke around, become the class clown, people who get stoned, people who are absent a lot. All of these are ways that they're defending, I think, against that very feeling we're talking about, of not belonging, of being inadequate.

Shotter quotes a passage from The Hidden Injuries of Class (Sennett & Cobb, 1972), the book referred to by Rose above. It speaks to the stability of self-doubt in the minds of those who have earned a status in society higher than that into which they were born. For such persons, this internalized devaluing of self is a basic aspect of identity that often does not change.

This fear of being summoned before some hidden bar of judgement and being found inadequate infects the lives of [many] people who are coping perfectly well from day to day; it is a matter of a hidden weight, a hidden anxiety, in the *quality* of experience, a matter of feeling inadequately in control where an observer making material calculations would conclude the [person] had adequate control (Sennett & Cobb, 1972, pp. 33-34).²

In contrast to the tensions between stability and change, the next section will look at tensions in Lives on the Boundary between experiences of affiliation and those of separateness. For Rose, experiences of affiliation were those that lead to feeling validated

² Shotter (1993, p. 194) regards this sense of not belonging as an inevitable side effect of life in a meritocracy. He reminds us that respect is not automatic in American culture. One must first qualify for membership in the society from which one wishes to receive respect. For some persons, those with the 'right' background, membership is automatic and unconditional. For others, they must first prove that they qualify. For these, even after they qualify there is anxiety that some failure could eventually *disqualify* them, returning them to their true origins. There is always some lingering core of self-doubt.

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by, or similar to, important social others. His learning and his identity were felt to be connected to the people, ideas, and events surrounding him. Experiences of separateness, on the other hand, were those that lead him to feel disconnected, distant, or different . For Rose, it was important that his learning direct him out into the world. Learning, for him, was something that he felt should lead him toward a greater connectedness with life in general. It was when the opposite seemed true that he tended to lose heart.

Affiliation and Separateness.

Transition: Vocational Education to College Prep. During the summer before 6th grade, Rose had been reading a great deal of science fiction. He and some other boys had a part time job picking strawberries and, sitting in the dusty back of the pickup on the way to the farm, Rose would entertain the others by telling stories fashioned out of the tales he had read.

Reading opened up the world. There I was, a skinny bookworm drawing the attention of street kids who, in any other circumstances, would have had me for breakfast. Like an epic tale-teller, I developed the stories as I went along, relying on a flexible plot line and a repository of heroic events. I had a great time... These stories created for me a temporary community (p. 21-22).

Imagination had previously been a means of escape for Rose, a place he went to alone. He had never dreamed that it, and what he had learned through books, had the power to attract others to him. Unfortunately, this was only a brief and temporary niche. Rose

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recalls an almost opposite experience during his two years in the high school Voc Ed track.

You'll see a handful of students far excel you in courses that sound elite: French, physics, trigonometry. And all this happening while you're trying to shape an identity...If you're a working class kid in the vocational track, the options you'll have to deal with this will be constrained in certain ways: you're defined by your school as 'slow'; you're placed in a curriculum that isn't designed to liberate you but to occupy you, or, if you're lucky, train you, though the training is for work the society does not esteem; other students are picking up the cues from your school and your curriculum and interacting with you in particular ways.

In Rose's senior year, the same year that his father died, he took Jack MacFarland's English course. Rose had never seen anything like him.

He was a beatnik who was born too late. His teeth were stained, he tucked his sorry tie in between the third and fourth buttons of his shirt, and his pants were chronically wrinkled. At first, we couldn't believe this guy, thought he slept in his car. But with time, he had us so startled with work that we didn't much worry about where he slept or if he slept at all.

Rose was fascinated by MacFarland's character. It attracted him, presenting a powerful image of what learning could make one into. Rose was accustomed to valuing the physical prowess and brute strength that it took to make it in the streets. But the image of

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the bohemian, the beatnik, whose *intellect* was a source of power and self-definition, was new and exotic. Through his affiliations with MacFarland, Rose began to find a path by which he could finally develop a sense of himself as literate. Pursuing this image was fun. It felt like play.

Art, Mark, and I would buy stogies and triangulate from MacFarland's apartment to the Cinema, which now shows X-rated films but was then L.A.'s premiere art theater, and then to the musty Cherokee Bookstore in Hollywood to hobnob with beatnik homosexuals - smoking, drinking bourbon and coffee, and trying out awkward phrases we'd gleaned from our mentor's bookshelves. I was happy and precocious and a little scared as well, for Hollywood was thick with a kind of decadence that was foreign to the South Side (p. 36).

The bohemian lifestyle, the interest that MacFarland took in Rose's ideas, the positive feedback he received about his writing, the intellectual talk, the things he was reading, all these served to affiliate Rose's learning as well as his identity with "something outside it" (p. 34).

[MacFarland] gave me a way to feel special by using my mind...I suppose I had been mediocre too long and enjoyed a public redefinition. And I suppose the workings of my mind, such as they were, had been private too long. My linguistic play moved into the world; like the intergalactic stories I told years before on Frank's berry-splattered truck bed, these papers with their circled, red B-pluses and A-minuses linked my mind to something outside it. I carried them around like a club emblem (p. 34).

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A small “fledgling literati” formed around MacFarland. Rose and a few buddies would hang out at his dingy, book-filled apartment. The group was a place, connected to school but outside it, where Rose could bring learning and identity-making together in a way that left him empowered, someone special in the eyes of his mentor.

*Those visits became the high point of our apprenticeship.
We'd clamp on our training wheels and drive to his salon...
most of all, I could share an evening, talk that talk, with
Jack MacFarland, the man I most admired at the time.
Knowledge was becoming a bonding agent (p. 36).*

*[I would] read Rimbaud and not understand him and feel
very connected to the life I imagined Jack MacFarland's
life to be: a subterranean ramble through Bebop and
breathless poetry and backalley revelations (p. 40).*

What Rose and his friends were learning from MacFarland became inseparable in their minds from a kind of identity, that of the bohemian “disaffected hipster.” Although Rose would soon reach its limits, this identity was critical in providing him with a way of integrating learning and becoming. It linked him to a world of passion and possibility that extended beyond the stultifying limits of South Vermont.

Transition: University. Rose titles chapter three, “Entering the Conversation.” By enrolling at Loyola, Rose attempts to become part of something, a ‘conversation,’ that is already well underway and with which he shares no history. He has no frame of

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reference, no understanding of the terms and conventions of the discussion. “I was out of my league,” he concedes, vacillating “between the false potency of scorn and feelings of ineptitude.” Commuting back and forth to Loyola with his friend and fellow student, John, South L.A. still felt like home for Rose. In spite of its “dreary impotence,” its economic and spiritual poverty, it was familiar. It was continuous with who he has been up to that point. Rose understands what things mean there.

[leaving campus] John and I would get in his car and enjoy the warmth of each other and laugh and head down the long strip of Manchester Boulevard, away from Loyola, away from the palms and green lawns, back to South L.A...past the discotecas and pawnshops...through hustlers and lost drunks and prostitutes (p. 45).

The fact that Rose was able to eventually find an entry point into Loyola, in his words to connect his mind to what was then “outside it,” was due in large part to the relationship that he eventually developed with several of his professors. They provided a specialized kind of help. These relationships were fueled by curiosity. They came together around a mutually shared passion for language and learning and, in Rose’s case, by a desire for something better. As had his apprenticeship with Jack MacFarland, Rose’s affiliations with his undergraduate professors provided him with a place where he could begin pulling together the knowledge he was gaining with the changes this wrought in how he perceived himself and, indeed, the world. For it was not only what his professors

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taught him substantively that was important. Just as vital was the opportunity to identify with these men, to get close to them, to witness the ways they “lived their knowledge.”

They liked books and ideas and they liked to talk about them...They lived their knowledge. And maybe because of that their knowledge grew in me in ways that led back out to the world. I was developing a set of tools with which to shape a life. (p. 58).

The second semester of his freshman year, there was philosophy with Don Johnson. Although he helped Rose learn to think logically and to read critically, how to define terms and understand basic arguments, his greatest contributions were as a coach. He encouraged Rose to persevere.

I was also gaining confidence that if I stayed with material long enough and kept asking questions, I would get it. That assurance proved to be more valuable than any particular body of knowledge I learned that year (p. 51).

There was Frank Carothers, an English teacher for whom “being a professor was a profoundly social calling” (p. 55). Carothers helped Rose begin to overcome his sense of alienation from Loyola's academic culture. Through these growing intellectual affiliations, Rose began to feel that he might truly be able to create a different kind of life.

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[Frank Carothers] started his best work once class was over...what I saw when I was around him – and I hung out from my sophomore year on – was very different from the world I had been creating for myself, a far cry from my withdrawal into an old house trailer with a silent book.

Except for some experiences with MacFarland, reading had mostly been a solitary activity for Rose. There was no active discourse or debate, the kind that would require him to interact with the thoughts, interpretations, and criticisms of others. For this, he needed help. In addition to the help provided by professors Johnson and Carothers, there was Dr. Erlandson, who helped Rose craft essays in an introductory Prose Literature course. Erlandson “got in there with his pencil and worked on my style,” Rose recalls. Erlandson drew on Rose's ears, reading his work back to him. Rose was shocked at first. It was both humbling and enlightening to hear his words coming back to him from the mouth of someone for whom he had such profound respect. Such experiences began to impact the way he thought and felt about his own writing.

He [Erlandson] worked as a craftsman...he shuttled back and forth continually between print and voice, making me breathe my prose, making me hear language I'd generated in silence. Perhaps he was more directive than some would like, but, to be truthful, direction was what I needed. I was easily frustrated, and it didn't take a lot to make me doubt myself. When teachers would write “no” or “awkward” or “rewrite” alongside the sentences I had worked so hard to produce, I would be peeved and disappointed. “Well, what the hell do they want?” I'd grumble to no one in particular. So Ted Erlandson's linguistic parenting felt just right: a modeling of grace until it all slowly, slowly began to work itself into the way I shaped language (p. 56).

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These affiliations changed Rose's perception of himself as a learner. His professors questioned Rose in ways that forced him to defend and refine his thinking. Rose not only identified with these men as intellectuals, but as flesh and blood characters. They coached him through the inevitable insecurities and frustrations of a beginner. All of this seemed to come together into a path that could lead away from the desperate hopelessness of South L.A.

Rose's initial experience as a graduate student was a rude awakening. In contrast to his undergraduate experience, Rose's graduate professors expressed little interest in his original poetry. The life they exemplified was one that Rose began to see more and more as isolating and disconnected - the opposite direction from which he had hoped graduate education would take him.

The scholar will write and write and only a few will know, for the world of this romance is very narrow, solipsistic. It is focused back forever on itself, an endless regress, like an Escher print, of readings and readings about readings read by a few suitors in a few other private rooms... The tight partitioning of the library carrels, the vacant hallways of the English Department, the solitary meals...all this was becoming a variant of hiding away in a house-trailer on South Vermont. (p. 77).

Rose writes about an important aspect of his learning during these post-undergraduate years. He had maintained an active correspondence with a small group of friends who were now scattered about the world.

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They were curious and disquieted, and they traveled across the country and through Europe to study... They were young and, despite the postures of cynicism they sometimes adopted, they were painfully idealistic... we were drawn to each other - I had a South L.A. rambunctiousness, I suppose, and, to be sure, a passion for this mental thing (p. 80).

Through their correspondence, the small community of friends remained intellectually connected. Rose writes that their letters were like “a postgraduate correspondence school in politics, social theory, and literature” (p. 80). More important perhaps was the validation they provided him regarding the legitimacy of his membership in an intimate intellectual community. That gave him the courage to begin sending them copies of his original work.

They helped me with my writing...My epistolary friends became my first real audience, and through their encouragement and their criticism, they also became my first editors (p. 81).

After joining the Teacher Corps and trying out his own wings as a teacher, Rose realized that teaching brought with it a need for balance between substance (i.e., curriculum or content) and relationship. He remembered that with Jack MacFarland especially, teaching had been an ‘embrace,’

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no-nonsense and cerebral, but a relationship in which the terms of endearment were the image in a poem, a play's dialogue, the winding narrative journey of a novel (p. 225).

Teaching, I was coming to understand, was a kind of romance... You wooed kids with these things, invited a relationship of sorts, the terms of connection being the narrative, the historical event, the balance of casein and water. Maybe nothing was 'intrinsically interesting.' Knowledge gained its meaning, at least initially, through a touch on the shoulder, through a conversation (p. 102).

Carrying forward the experience with his undergraduate professors at Loyola, where knowledge had become a “bonding agent,” Rose knew that to survive intellectually, the troubled, low performing elementary students he worked with in the Teacher Corps would need to experience an affiliation, a personal connection, with someone who truly cared about their mind and their ideas, “a guide sitting down on the steps... building a relationship through the words on the printed page” (p. 125). But relationships were slow to form amid the “violence and abandonment, the guns and pregnancies, the paralyzing fatigue” surrounding the students’ lives (p. 112).

Rose suddenly felt himself flanked by two opposing images. One was of connectedness, potential, hope, and the delicate vulnerability of the human spirit. The other image was one of “anger and quiet despair” (p. 111), of defensive, guarded, and toughened students, fated to imitate their parents’ alienated lives. Rose remembers a scene from his office window that, for an instant, captured these two images, affiliation

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and separateness, and brought them together. It involved a retarded child and an especially tough, sometimes violent student, Terry, “isolated, distant, minimacho - a future angel from hell in frayed sneakers” (p. 113).

Terry was shooting baskets alone when a young girl, noticeably hydrocephalic and retarded, wandered onto the playground. She saw Terry and walked over. Terry said something to her I couldn't hear, and she responded, and he handed her the basketball. She tried to bounce it, and it hit the tip of her shoe and shot off. Terry ran after it, and for about ten minutes he tried to show her how to shoot a basket. Then he took her by the hand and led her back out of the schoolyard (p. 113).

Although he had experienced it himself in the vocational education track, in the Teacher Corps Rose became attuned from an inside and adult perspective to the means by which the institution of schooling served its two purposes: socializing students into the educational mainstream and separating out, through a “vast patchwork of diagnostics and specialists” (p. 125), those who were different. The dilemma for Rose lay in the fact that he himself *was* finding ways to connect to the minds of these children. As a tutor, he was exposing knowledge and abilities that went undetected within the traditional curriculum. And he was accomplishing it within the very system that had, and would likely continue to, alienate and silence them.

The school itself became the stage for playing out this drama, creating...a place that fostered growth and

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celebrated possibility, but creating, as well, the social conditions for intensifying the child's marginality (p. 115).

In his subsequent work with the Vietnam veterans, Rose was again convinced of his students' need, like his own need many years before, to link their learning to the wider world. But what could accomplish that? Whatever his curriculum was going to be, he knew that it also would be the means of any relationship he was to have with the veterans. There was something else about these guys that Rose identified with. He saw them as grown-up versions of his comrades in the vocational education track many years before. So *this* was how those "sullen high schoolers" would end up. What Rose realized with the veterans was that everyone in his classroom, including himself, was shooting for a life different than the one they had had before, and education was the route they had chosen.

I started thinking about why the men had come to the program...I found an answer, one that lay at the intersection of the veterans' lives and mind. The men wanted to change their lives, and for all their earlier failures, they still held onto an American dream: Education held the power to equalize things. They were bringing an almost magical vision of what learning could do for them...I could sure understand the desire to be transfigured by books (pp. 137-138).

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Integrative Summary: Affiliation and Separateness.

In the high school vocational track, Rose was defined as different and placed in a category from which no established routes of escape existed. His own break was entirely serendipitous, a chance occurrence. In the Voc Ed milieu, his identifications were naturally with those closest to him, students who had tested poorly and had no real intellectual ambitions. Once the mistake was discovered and he was transferred into the college-prep track, Rose abruptly found himself expected to fit in among those that, on the basis of his presumed academic deficiency, he had previously been defined *against*.

Having entered the new track, a connection to the world of ideas was not something Rose could immediately forge for himself. It came only through his affiliations with Jack MacFarland, his like-minded friends, and the small intellectual community they comprised. Through their sharing of ideas and attitudes, Rose began to acquire a sense of his own intellectual identity. The “circled, red B-pluses and A-minuses” that he says linked his mind “to something outside it” were not in and of themselves important, it was who they came from, Jack MacFarland, that gave them potency. Indeed, as Rose himself shares,

My first enthusiasm about writing came because I wanted a teacher to like me (p. 102).

It harkens back to what he had first felt as a boy, sitting in the back of a pickup telling stories to other boys. It was not that he could spin a yarn that delighted him then, it was

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what telling a story publicly did for him. It gave him the ability to connect with others.

Ironically, it was school and Rose's mistaken placement in the Voc Ed track that lead him to assume his abilities with language were *not* something to be taken seriously.

As an undergraduate at Loyola, Rose's professors impressed him as integrated beings. Their knowledge made a difference to how they lived their lives. Their academic identities seemed inseparable from their identities in general. Had they somehow spoken or behaved one way in the classroom and a different way in the office, backyard, or on the doorstep, it would have mirrored the very condition that Rose was wanting to escape from: the feeling that he was two different people (i.e., the son of lower-class immigrants and an aspiring scholar). But because they were willing to allow Rose access to their lives, to witness how they 'did it,' Rose had something solid to identify with. It gave learning a vital place within him where it could be nurtured into progressively more vital connections with the world.

Still, at Loyola, Rose initially felt that he was not like other students. He was from another place and who he was in that place seemed to have little bearing on the person Loyola was now calling him to be. Further, the gratification that came with eventually becoming part of college culture only increased the guilt Rose felt about abandoning his mother. To become an aspiring scholar was to separate his life from hers. Although this is why he struggled, it was also why the struggle was worthwhile - he did not want to forsake his mother but, at the same time, he *did* want to realize a different life than that offered by South L.A. The willingness of his undergraduate college professors to take Rose under their wing mediated this tension in an important way. It helped him to make

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points of contact with academic culture. Nonetheless, these also represented points of *contrast* between that culture and the events in his life at home.

As mentioned, as a graduate student at UCLA, Rose experienced a separateness between himself and the professoriate that had not been present as an undergraduate.³ He was unable to find the right relationship around the right content or, as Hawkins (1974) might say, the right “I-Thou” around the right “It”.⁴ There was tension and it came largely from Rose’s frustrated attempts to achieve a more personalized relationship with his graduate professors. He knew that his learning needed a catalyst, someone to encourage and inspire him, someone who understood his passion for the creative aspects of language. As an undergraduate, Rose had initially felt alienated. With the help of MacFarland and his professors, however, he had found a point of entry. Now he found himself alienated once more but in a different way. It was not because he was being excluded from graduate culture. Instead, it was because he had entered graduate culture and realized that he did not want what he had found there. He desired learning that would lead him increasingly out into the world, into face-to-face contact with the reality of other lives. What he found was a way of life that, to him, felt increasingly self-absorbed. It was a difficult time. He felt apart from academia and yet could not go back to South L.A.

³ Rose sees as an ongoing problem the fact that the professoriate in general is not passionate enough about the intellectual development of young people. According to Rose, they see their job as “monitoring the rightness or wrongness of incursions into their discipline” (p. 197), with preserving and promoting the discipline. It is an unresolved problem, Rose writes, “how to interweave the social dimension of knowledge with the preservation of a discipline, how to make the advancement of a discipline go on in concert with the development of young minds” (p. 197).

⁴ The philosopher, David Hawkins, writes that “without a thou, there is no I evolving. Without an It, there is no content for the context” (1974, p. 52).

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Rose's story is one in which he continually seeks the affiliative path of learning or, perhaps more true, in which he seeks to avoid the separateness and alienation that institutional education can often engender. By deciding to drop out of graduate school and teach, Rose was not ending his status as a student. Indeed, it may have represented the decision to continue his own education in a way that felt more natural for him. At the same time, working with students with origins similar to his own, first with elementary students and then with the Vietnam veterans, allowed him to finally begin addressing his own internal struggle. As something in him resonated to the conditions of their lives, he began to recognize and to own the internalized images and stereotypes he had carried with him from South L.A. He understood in a different way what it meant for him to have grown up in that culture. Ultimately, this all fed into the relationships that he sought to establish with his students where, in a sense, he had come full circle to teach to the person he once was.

The next section will look at the tensions in Rose's autobiography between experiences of immediacy and reflection. In his book, Rose communicates clearly that through education he wanted to become someone intensely and immediately engaged with the world. He craved unmediated contact, soaking experience in through the senses. At the same time, Rose obviously wanted to develop as a skilled and critical thinker, to become knowledgeable, comfortable with reflection as a way of knowing. With the sensibilities of a poet, Rose lived in the tension created by these two ways of knowing.

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Immediacy versus Reflection.

As a child, there was very little in his surroundings that Rose remembers sparking him intellectually. His parents “didn’t read or write very much” and, for whatever reason, he remembers himself as a somewhat somnambulant elementary student. Rose attributes at least part of this dulling to his defensive efforts to stave off both his feelings of incompetence at school as well as the intimidating strangeness of life in South Los Angeles.

All the hours in class tend to blend into one long, vague stretch of time... [I] started daydreaming to avoid my inadequacy... I realize now how consistently I defended myself against the lessons I couldn't understand and the people and events of South L.A. that were too strange to view head-on. I got very good at watching a blackboard with minimum awareness (pp. 18-19).

For Rose, the world of South L.A. discouraged a vital experience of life. Given that little could be changed, for Rose to have experienced his surroundings with an even greater immediacy, or to have reflected critically upon them, would only have intensified their unpleasantness. So perhaps it was consciousness of any kind, immediate *or* reflective, that the hopelessness of South L.A. worked against. Rose remembers that it wasn’t so much the violence that impressed him. What impacted him most was the complete absence of creative and intellectual passion.

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What finally affected me was subtler, but more pervasive: I cannot recall a young person who was crazy in love or lost in work or one old person who was passionate about a cause or an idea. I'm not talking about an absence of energy - the street toughs...had energy... The people I grew up with were retired from jobs that rub away the heart or were working hard at jobs to keep their lives from caving in or were anchorless and in between jobs and spouses or were diving headlong into a barren tomorrow (pp. 17-18).

With his mistaken placement into the vocational education track, Rose developed further his half-asleep approach to life. It was not until he met Jack MacFarland and he and his friends began to read, write, discuss ideas, and try on different intellectual personas, that Rose began to realize his own capacity for reflective thought. At the same time, in spite of its immaturity, this way of learning (assuming a persona that allowed one to play with ideas) held great immediacy for Rose. The fact was that it did lead he and his buddies out into the world. It introduced them to the possibility of another way of being.

Let me be the first to admit that there was a good deal of adolescent passion in this embrace of the avant-garde: self-absorption, sexually charged pedantry, an elevation of the odd and abandoned. Still, it was a time during which I absorbed an awful lot of information: long lists of titles, images from expressionist paintings, new wave shibboleths, snippets of philosophy... With hindsight I realize how layered and important that knowledge was. It enabled me to do things in the world. I could browse bohemian bookstores in far-off, mysterious Hollywood; I could go to the Cinema and see events through the lenses of European directors... It provided a critical perspective on society, and it allowed me to act as though I were living beyond the limiting boundaries of South Vermont (pp. 36-37).

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Transition: University. After Lou Minton committed suicide in their home during Rose's freshman year at Loyola, Rose began to experience moments in which what he was learning at Loyola seemed to reach out to the desolation he felt. It touched the immediacy of his pain with an image of something better. He was at a vulnerable point. His grief had begun to open him up to the possibility that, through education, he might avoid being sucked into the emptiness of life in South L.A.

Lou's suicide came to represent the sadness and dead time I had protected myself against... another kind of death, a surrender to the culture's lost core. An alternative was somehow starting to take shape around school and knowledge. Knowledge seemed... was it empowering? ...as if I were untying fetters (p. 46).

It is important to remember that only two years prior to starting college, Rose had been identified by his high school as 'slow' and, like those similarly identified, had begun to shut down intellectually. Now, in college, Rose suddenly found himself among persons who had a much different set of expectations for him. Through special relationships with several of his professors, Rose was learning the skills of reflection: how to read closely, how to persevere with difficult material, how to ask good questions. He writes that teachers like Father Albertson were "slowly opening the language up, helping me comprehend a distant, stylized literature, taking it apart, touching it" (p. 57). These were the skills and the language he would need to become part of an intellectual community.

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In college, reading was again becoming the rich, world-expanding activity it had been for Rose in grade school. He was learning to read reflectively, to analyze a text, to challenge and interpret it, and this all circled back into a kind of imaginative excitement that, for Rose, felt most immediate.

I took an art history course, and one day during a slide show on Gothic architecture I felt myself rising up within the interior light of Mont-Saint-Michel. I wanted to be released from the despair that surrounded me on South Vermont and from my own troubled sense of exclusion... what I felt now was something further, some tentative recognition that an engagement with ideas could foster competence and lead me out into the world. But all this was very new and fragile... how easily it could have been crushed (p. 46-47).

In the aesthetic experience of being lifted up “within the interior light of Mont-Saint-Michel,” a light went on inside of Rose, a desire to be transfigured. He sensed the potential to become someone who *could* participate in the kind of activities that lead one into more immediate contact with the world, that lead to futures that were not simply endless reruns of the present. Learning could not only open up a path out of South L.A., it could lead Rose away from who and what he *was* there.

During his last three years at Loyola, there was an important juxtaposition of immediacy and reflection in Rose’s interactions with his professors. Part of this was because he was learning how to reflect and to think critically, to use language and knowledge in ways that were making things new (the world, his future, himself). But at

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the same time, this was not something he was learning in isolation. It took place in the immediacy of flesh and blood relationships.

[My professors] encouraged me to make connections and to enter into conversations – present and past – to see what talking a particular kind of talk would enable me to do with a thorny philosophical problem or a difficult literary text... And it was all alive. It transpired in backyards and on doorsteps and inside offices as well as in the classrooms. I could smell their tobacco and see the nicks left by their razors (p. 58).

Transition: Graduate Study. UCLA provided Rose with a much different surrounding than did the small liberal arts environment of Loyola. The campus was sprawling, the competition between graduate students fierce. Rose was still aware of large gaps in his knowledge. His background in literary history was weak and he had not learned a foreign language. He writes about his initial motivations for accepting a graduate scholarship. Again, these point to Rose's strong desire to use his intellectual gifts in a way that, through service and close contact with people, would lead him more immediately into the world of human experience.

Jack MacFarland, Frank Carothers, and the others created the conditions for me to use my mind to engage the world. What I wanted so strongly now was a program that would further develop my intellectual tools and equip me to . . . to teach? . . . to use books to change the lives of others?

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Rose was writing poetry at the time. But he suspects that the motivation behind it, to use his mind and, in particular, language “to engage the world” was conceived much earlier, in particular while listening to lyrics on the airwaves in South L.A. For Rose, the words, images, sounds, and rhythms contained in the popular music of his youth all blended together to create an experience that was most immediate.

Way before the printed poem was the radio dial, the only lyrical index I had on South Vermont. The lamentations of Hank Williams and Kitty Wells, the phrasing of the blues, the rhymes and rhythms and sent-from-God saxophone breaks of rock ‘n’ roll...this was the score on which T.S. Eliot played...honky-tonk angles and hot-rod Fords and trucks on a lost highway; rivers of whiskey and...lips as sweet as “petals falling apart”; a hotel on Lonely Street where “the desk clerk’s dressed in black”... This, I think is where it started...familiar longings and distant lyrics and musical cadences would reify into an image at the center of a poem (p. 73).

Writing for Rose, as well as the pleasure he took in reading, was very much about the translation of immediate experience into language, a personal function very different in his mind than the use of language as an analytical tool. Of his own poetry, he writes...

When the book lists and literary critiques and the wordplay receded, the heart emerged (p. 82). Working on poetry certainly got me to thinking about writing from the inside (p. 157).

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Rose had made a couple close friends in the graduate program, Rich McBriar and Steve Drinkard. They shared his excitement about language. "Language washed over them," he writes. As with Rose, their interests regarding literature and writing were personal and immediate. But their passion seemed to get no response from faculty who appeared to them uninterested in any kind of personal connections with words. To Rose and his buddies, the professors' focus seemed to be exclusively critical. Discouraged, Rich and Steve dropped out before the first year was over.

*"It's deadly, man," McBriar said, hunched over a beer...
"They could give a shit if you like this stuff. They could
GIVE A SHIT" (p. 76).*

About this same time, Rose read a novel by Sherwood Anderson, Winesburg, Ohio, that he especially enjoyed. It contained images of "dreamy and dislocated people" that reminded Rose of the people he had grown up around in South L.A. He visited his American Literature professor to talk about the book and his personal reactions to it.

*{The professor} was nice but reserved and told me a little
bit about a critical study of Anderson I should read...He
told me that he thought Anderson's sentimentality limited
him, he wondered aloud if there might be a dissertation
topic for me in some of the novels the critics had neglected
(p. 75).*

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On another occasion, the chairman of the English department invited Rose to visit him following the first quarter. It was a meeting that, for Rose, made the department's priorities clear.

I told him that I thought my own writing was making me understand something that I hadn't quite understood before about the poems I was studying in class. He smiled and continued, explaining about the departmental exams and what courses I should be taking to prepare... He was cordial and helpful, but by not addressing it, he made clear to me the department's attitude toward my own direct involvement with the writing of poetry versus the analysis of it (p. 75).

For Rose, reading could be a most immediate and vital act. The same was true of writing, which he approached in a very personal way. Through these he was both understanding his life and reconstructing it at the same time. But Rose had begun to feel that whatever graduate school was going to expect from him, it would mean severing writing as a collection of personalizing, life-affirming acts from writing as critical reflection. It would be expected to be objective, analytic, and impersonal. Although at first it was only "a daydream during a lecture" or "a fleeting sadness in the library," Rose increasingly felt the tension between his need for a more immediate experience of the world, on the one hand, and the kind of divorced reflection he believed he would have to practice as a graduate student, on the other. He stumbled upon a poem by Wallace Stevens that went straight to the heart.

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Arrival at the Waldorf

Home from Guatemala, back at the Waldorf.
This arrival in the wild country of the soul,
All approaches gone, being completely there,
Where the wild poem is a substitute
For the woman one loves or ought to love,
One wild rhapsody a fake for another.

You touch the hotel the way you touch moonlight
Or sunlight and you hum and the orchestra
Hums and you say "The world in a verse,

A generation sealed, men remoter than mountains,
Women invisible in music and motion and color,"
After that alien, point-blank, green and actual Guatemala.

Wallace Stevens

Rose observes that Stevens "was consumed by the tensions between the vital but uncontrollable natural world versus the crafted and orderly but artificial world of art" (p. 76). In a sense, it is the tension between life in a natural world, one created without human intent, versus a cultured life, life amid a world of human objects, events, and purposes. This seemed to echo the tension of Rose's own struggle in the graduate program between writing in the service of immediacy and writing in the service of reflective, critical thought. Rose writes,

My professors spent endless hours with their books. Some were in their offices as I was going home, reading Macbeth or Moby Dick again, but more often a book you would find only in the card catalog of a research library. They pursued the little-known fact, the lost letter, the lucky fissure in language that invites one more special reading. It was not uncommon for me to spend eight hours a day in the library - and for a while that was fine, for I was learning so much - but when I began to think of a career of those eight-hour days, to think of the unending drive to find one more

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piece of intellectual property, something went cold within me (p. 76).

I began to feel more and more a desire to open the door, to go out and read the world: 'alien, point-blank, green and actual' (p. 77).

Rose dropped out of his graduate program. He began to take undergraduate coursework in psychology hoping it would enable him to “turn scholarship out onto human affairs” (p. 77). The humanist theories of Maslow and Rogers did help to counter the negative images of life that Rose carried with him from South L.A. He also felt that he learned about important aspects of psychological research and the complexity of human behavior. But, finally, he writes,

What I got was instead more of the worm's-eye view (p. 78)... Graduate work in academic psychology wouldn't satisfy whatever vague thing it was that was fluttering within me. It would be a specialized and distant pursuit, no different, really, from studying the collected letters of a not-so-famous American author (p. 83).

Transition: Teachers Corp. After his disillusionment lead him to leave UCLA, the Teacher Corp offered Rose a markedly different experience. He worked with actual teachers. He became part of an established school community. He developed special

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relationships with the students. At the same time, he took classes at the University of Southern California where the Teacher Corp was based: courses like “Social Stratification” and “Sociology of Education.” In essence, this arrangement allowed Rose to realize a kind of interplay between immediacy and reflection. It potentiated his learning with a recursiveness he had been looking for. That is, he could come in from the immediacy of working with struggling students in an urban elementary and, through his coursework, reflect on this experience in a larger theoretical framework which could then be taken back out into the field, et cetera.

Transition: Returning to UCLA- Teaching Veterans. As a teacher, Rose aspired to share and infuse his students with his own excitement for language and ideas. He wanted to fashion a curriculum that would equip the Vietnam veterans with the basic academic skills they would need to make it through the system. In doing so, Rose was compelled to look back on his own education. What had helped *him*? What was it that for him had constituted an academic approach? And how could he teach reflection, thinking, or in his own words, the ability to “think about thinking,” to the veterans?

Given the nature of these men's needs and given the limited time I would have with them, could I perhaps orient them to some of the kinds of reading and writing and ways of thinking that seem essential to a liberal course of study, some of the habits of mind that Jack MacFarland and the many that followed him had helped me develop... I was looking for a methodical way to get my students to think about thinking. Thinking. Not as fussbudget course, but a course about thought (p. 138).

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Rose eventually settled on what he called four “intellectual strategies.” These represented the fundamental thinking skills that he believed formal education had helped him to develop: summarizing, classifying, comparing, and analyzing. Although he had finally come up with his own personal definition of what constituted intellectual reflection, he was later humbled to find that these were all modes of thought “as old as Aristotle.”

Integrative Summary: Immediacy and Reflection.

There is a passage in Lives on the Boundary in which Rose remembers being given a telescope as a young boy. It brought to mind for him the lost deadness of his surroundings at that time and, in contrast, the solitary moment at night, in his front yard with the telescope, in which he had imaginatively taken flight.

Poor Freddie, toothless Lester whispering promises about making me feel good, the flat days, the gang fights - all this receded, for it was now me, the star child, lost in an eyepiece focused on a reflecting mirror that cradled, in its center, a shimmering moon (p. 22).

In the passage above, Rose moves from the perverse to the celestial in the space of one sentence. It mirrors the juxtaposition of poverty and transcendence in his own life. For him, this kind of betweenness, like the back-and-forthing between immediacy and reflection, was part of the continued search for meaning.

As Jack MacFarland began to jolt Rose from his intellectual stupor, the back-and-forth between immediacy and reflection finally began to generate some developmental

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heat. For example, through the small community formed by MacFarland and Rose's friends their senior year of high school, a tiny niche was created in which reflection essentially became a form of play. They toyed with various intellectual personas such as the beatnik or "disaffected hipster." They tried on the language, the clothing, the lifestyles. At such moments, learning and identity-making became tightly fused.

The middle ground between immediacy and reflection is where Rose desired most to be. This was where language could, to borrow from Seamus Heaney (1995), provide "a glimpsed alternative," a "revelation of potential." While learning could bring Rose into a more immediate contact with the world, in the service of reflection it could also give the world an ordered clarity. Moving between them gave the world *meaning*. The purpose of intellectual reflection for Rose was not understanding alone, but an understanding that could lead him out into a more immediate world of human experience. As mentioned, Rose's learning was often potentiated by the close juxtaposition of moments of immediacy with the opportunity to then reflect on those moments. This is apparent in a memory he has of Father Albertson, a professor at Loyola. Albertson's main objective was to shepherd his students into the intellectual conversation of the university. Although Rose is referring to his own initiation into academic discourse, the terms he uses to describe Albertson's efforts to achieve this are actually quite immediate, even sensual.

*What Father Albertson did was bring us inside the circle,
mudging us out into the chatter, always just behind us,
whispering to try this step, then this one, encouraging us to
feel the moves for ourselves (p. 58).*

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In graduate school, Rose initially found himself losing hold of this precious middle ground. He had begun writing poetry, using its sounds, rhythms, and images to give voice to the immediacy of his own experience. But there suddenly seemed to be no one who, like Jack MacFarland or Father Albertson, shared that passion or need. There was no one who could help him find a way to reconcile it with the typically more analytic graduate discourse. Learning no longer seemed to volley between immediacy and reflection. The scales were tipped in the direction of reflection and, in the face of Rose's desire for learning that lead into the world, this created a tension. Rose eventually acknowledged the difference between literacy as it functioned in his own life and literacy as it functioned in the life of his graduate professors. For Rose, the function of language was ultimately to bring him into a closer, more intimate contact with life. From what he could understand of his professors, literacy seemed to represent an end in itself.⁵ He perceived them as living in a self-enclosed world, reflection set adrift with no anchor in the "point-blank, green and actual." This is the point at which Rose felt he had to abandon ship.

Leaving graduate school for the Teacher Corp, Rose's learning became very self-driven. It was motivated by his desire for a clearer understanding of the human condition and, of course, of himself.

⁵ From a strictly critical or analytic approach, if a particular piece of writing is passionate or sensual, for example, it is not the potentially new insight or perspective on *life* this offers that ultimately interests the critic, but the literary function such evoking serves and how this might fit within a the larger body of text.

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A life of the mind can bring with it at least momentary deliverance, an athletics of the spirit (p. 63)

I came to better understand what I had once only felt (p. 172).

So it was as a teacher that Rose finally reclaimed the middle ground between immediacy and reflection. In his involvement with the lives of students, he realized again the rhythm of moving in and out, from critical thought, conceptualizing, and abstraction back out into the world of human relationships, a dance between mind and spirit, learning and identity.

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CHAPTER FIVE

Richard Rodriguez

Richard Rodriguez begins Hunger of Memory...

This is my story. An American story (p. 5).

The title of chapter one is “Aria.” A voice singing, unaccompanied. Because his story is a deeply human one, and because he sings it with soul and passion, Rodriguez believes it can have meaning for those who listen.

I write of one life only. My own. If my story is true, I trust it will resonate with significance for other lives (p. 7).

Hunger of Memory consists of six chapters and a prologue that collectively portray Rodriguez’s struggle to find a place for himself in mainstream American academic culture. The chapters, writes Rodriguez, “are essays impersonating an autobiography” (p. 7). Collectively they portray the futility of Rodriguez’s struggle to construct an identity within a system that seemed to require that he amputate his cultural past. They offer a retrospective of Rodriguez’s attempts to reconcile himself to, and find a place in, the moral order of American academic life.

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Background. Like Rose's parents, Rodriguez's mother and father immigrated to America. They had both left small towns in Mexico in the 1950s. In American, his mother had received a high school diploma "by teachers too careless or busy to notice that she hardly spoke English" (p. 53). In spite of the fact that they both spoke English only haltingly, his father dreamed of continuing his education and becoming an engineer. Optimism and ambition lead them to settle in a middle-class section of 1950's Sacramento. Surrounded by the homes of Whites, their house soon became its own ethnic enclave.

Our house stood apart. A gaudy yellow in a row of white bungalows. We were the people with the noisy dog. The people who raised pigeons and chickens. We were the foreigners on the block (p. 13).

As a result, until the time that he began attending school, Rodriguez was more-or-less insulated from mainstream American culture. School was a shock. For the first time in his life, with no family to steady him, Rodriguez confronted the dizzying gap between White America and the culture of his parents. He watched his mother's face dissolve on that first day "in a watery blur behind the pebbled glass door," the clarity of her comforting presence fading.

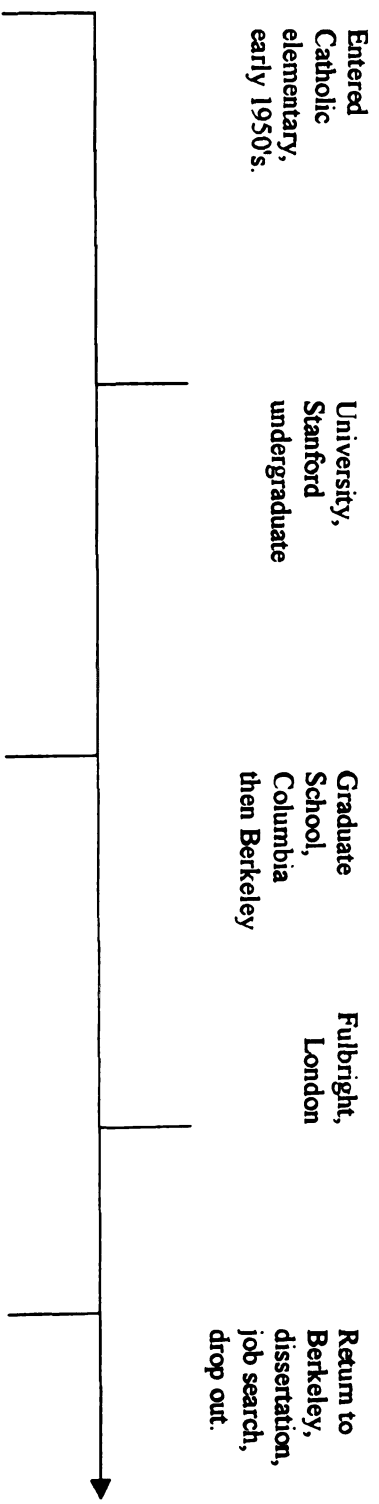


Figure 3. Richard Rodriguez - Timeline of Major Transitional Events

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It astonished Rodriguez that he was the only Spanish speaker and the only non-white in the room (he had entered school understanding only fifty or so words of English). He was keenly aware of the difference between his own socioeconomic level and that of his peers, many of whom were the children of professionals. He suddenly felt conspicuous, confused, and alone. But Rodriguez was intellectually gifted and eventually found recognition and a certain type of validation in the classroom.

After graduating from high school (a time about which Hunger of Memory says little), as a college student at 1960s Stanford Rodriguez encountered the term 'minority student' for the first time. It was ironic. In his own eyes, he had finally made it. He had joined the ranks. He was part of the majority. Suddenly, those at Stanford informed him that this was not the case. Instead, they construed him as a member of an oppressed and alienated minority and treated him accordingly. It confused him. He had worked one summer on a construction crew among "lost pobres" (literally, the poor people), the uneducated Hispanic construction workers. From his perspective, and that of his parents, *they* were the oppressed and alienated, not he. By qualifying for a shot at the American dream, he had left their ranks.

Later, as a graduate student in Renaissance literature at Columbia and then Berkeley, this dilemma continued to lurk below the surface, vague and unnamed. It was ironic that during his tenure as a graduate student, Rodriguez met with some success as an outspoken critic of affirmative action and bilingual education. Embraced by conservatives, he was published, quoted, and invited to speak at conferences. His position

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was that affirmative action and bilingual education are simply ways of ignoring the inequities of social power. As one coming from the outside in, he had come to believe that there could never be a true equality of cultures or of languages in American education. According to Rodriguez's stance in Hunger of Memory, there will always be a mainstream in America. It is education that should help one find his or her way into that stream (cf. Floden, Buchmann, & Schwille, 1987).

Meanwhile, during a fellowship in London that involved long hours in the British Museum, Rodriguez had felt himself becoming more and more alienated. On the verge of completing the doctorate he had worked so long and hard for, the struggle between past and future suddenly became clear. It condensed in the rarefied atmosphere of the British Museum. Rodriguez had finally attained a scholar's life and still he felt himself without a center.

Too distracted by the internal tensions to continue with his dissertation, Rodriguez began reading the educational literature. He was looking for a description of himself, a lower-class minority who had successfully climbed to the heights of academia. He needed something outside himself to validate what he had become and the internal battle he was now fighting. Instead he found much that had been written about those who had failed, about the inability of schools to make much of an impact on students from the lower class. But nothing about those who, like himself, had succeeded. Then, he writes,

one day, leafing through Richard Hoggart's The Uses of Literacy (1957), I found, in his description of the

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Scholarship boy, myself. For the first time I realized that there were other students like me. (p. 46).

The “scholarship boy” is a sociological category based on Hoggart’s analysis of 1950s British culture. It is intended to describe “the working-class child who ‘makes good’ by entering the middle class world of grammar school and university” (Goodwin in Hoggart, 1998, p. xiv). Although the educational system typically offers encouragement and support to such students (e.g., scholarships, special tutoring), conditions of home and economic life typically work against their success. Rodriguez writes,

most working class children are barely changed by the classroom. The exception succeeds. The relative few become scholarship students. Of these, Richard Hoggart estimates, most manage a fairly graceful transition. Somehow they learn to live in the two very different worlds of their day. There are some others, however, those Hoggart pejoratively terms ‘scholarship boys,’ for whom success comes with special anxiety (p. 48).

Most compelling to Rodriguez, however, was the recurrent theme of Hoggart’s scholarship boy: the incommensurability between the identity one constructs within academic culture and the identity of one’s ethnic and cultural roots.

The Scholarship boy does not straddle, cannot reconcile, the two great opposing cultures of his life (p. 66).

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After London, Rodriguez returned home to complete his dissertation. As the time approached for him to graduate and find work, however, the contrast between the ease with which he seemed to be obtaining academic job offers and the difficulty his equally-skilled White peers were having began to deeply trouble him. He knew in his own mind that much of the reason for his success in obtaining offers owed to a push by departments under pressure from affirmative action to meet minority quotas. Still, it was not really Rodriguez the *Hispanic* they wanted. What they wanted, of course, was someone that would fit into the preexisting culture of their mostly White academic departments. Rodriguez believed that department heads who had interviewed him held no more interest in him as an Hispanic, as someone whose cultural origins were far from mainstream academic culture, than had the nuns on his first day of elementary school. In his experience, he had never been able to have it both ways and he could not now. Rodriguez felt himself being asked to forsake his integrity in a system that, during the affirmative action of the 1960's, sought him out for an identity that it ultimately devalued.

In protest at the perceived hypocrisy, Rodriguez withdrew from the academic job market. In fact, by refusing to finish his dissertation, he withdrew from academic culture entirely. It was a move, however, that allowed him to reclaim both his ethnicity and his special intellectual gifts as his own. He writes (Richard Rodriguez, personal communication, February 5th, 2001),

About the dissertation. I wrote it but no one has read it. I was in such anger toward the liberal university that had created me and

then described me as a minority student, I refused to have a committee of faculty members evaluate my work. For a long time, the dissertation sat in my parents' garage. Now, I think, it sits somewhere in my closet, along with several other secrets. I wonder, sometimes, what it sounds like. I doubt I ever will know.¹

While the narratives in the two other autobiographies, Lives on the Boundary and The Road from Coorain, are moved along primarily by the dramatic force of events and characters in the lives of their authors, Hunger for Memory continues to orbit around the dynamic, subtle, but ever-deepening sense of alienation Rodriguez experienced throughout his education, from elementary through graduate school. It is a sense that first began in the classroom and eventually spread to home and finally, in adulthood, erupted in a painful split between Rodriguez the scholar and Rodriguez as someone with roots in a particular culture and, within that culture, a particular family.

As in the Rose analysis, the first section below will be concerned with the tensions that Rodriguez experienced between stability and change. For Rodriguez, this was the tension between maintaining a sense of himself as the son of illiterate Hispanic immigrants while, at the same time, changing in ways that could bring him closer to feeling that he was a legitimate member of the classroom and, later on, of the academy in general.² As in the previous chapter, my analyses of the three tensions will be organized

¹ Used with permission.

² The term "illiterate" in relation to Rodriguez's parents is the term he himself uses.

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Stability and Change.

Transition: School. Rodriguez remembers his first encounter with the classroom. It was the first time adrift in *gringo* culture, on his own and completely surrounded.

All my classmates certainly must have been uneasy on that first day of school - as most children are uneasy - to find themselves apart from their families in the first institution of their lives. But I was astonished (p. 11).

For Rodriguez, education and the social making (or re-making) of himself were fused from the very first day in parochial elementary when nuns literally assigned him a new name: "Richard."

Their English voices slowly prying loose my ties to my other name, its three notes, Ri-car-do (p. 21).

In the classroom, *Rich-heard*, with its clipped consonants and growling r's, replaced the rolling sounds of *Ricardo*. *Rich-heard* symbolized the difference between how Rodriguez experienced himself as a student and his experience of himself as

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Ricardo, the family member. It signified who he was to be in public and the expectation that this would be different than who he was at home. It was not merely that Rodriguez had to learn to ‘code-switch’ between the languages of home and school before he could fully participate in either. To become truly teachable, that is, someone who he believed that his teachers would accept, he sensed that he must change at a deeper level.

Looking back, Rodriguez realizes that one of the signs that he was changing was his growing sense that the classroom was ‘his,’ that he truly belonged there. A sense of ownership emerged as he began to claim the school’s ways of talking, valuing, and acting as *his* ways. However, at the same time, with each pull toward the classroom Rodriguez also felt himself pushed from the fold at home. The intense intimacy he felt at home began to diminish, for it was an intimacy partially based on his family’s cultural isolation. The latter was something the older generation more-or-less encouraged as a way of fending off the inevitable diaspora. This fueled Rodriguez’s early awareness of a sharp difference between his public (school) self and his private (home) self. He writes that “the great lesson of school [was] that I had a public identity” (p. 19).

Rodriguez regards these early changes in self-perception, the awareness of the distinction between private and public aspects of his identity, as the necessary kernel of who he has become as an adult. It was the price of admission to an American life.

The social and political advantages I enjoy as a man result from the day I came to believe that my name, indeed, is Rich-heard Road-ree-guess (p. 27).

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In entering school for the first time, Rodriguez enters a double bind that was to last throughout his formal education. To bring his ethnicity to school with him was to exclude himself from membership in academic culture. But to pursue membership by American-izing himself also meant losing his place not only within his family-of-origin but within Hispanic culture generally. In his parents' native culture, membership seemed at least partially based on one's refusal to identify with things American, even though survival outside the home meant learning to carry oneself as an American.

As a Catholic schoolboy, I was educated a middle-class American. Even while grammar school nuns reminded me of my spiritual separateness from non-Catholics, they provided excellent public schooling...I was taught well those skills of numbers and words crucial to my Americanization (p. 79).

For Rodriguez, the struggle between embracing the ways of school and those of his parents' native culture was a zero sum game; more of one always meant less of the other. Becoming more *Richard* meant becoming less *Ricardo*. The more that he identified with the culture of his middle-class parochial school, the more that life at home seemed to leave him feeling strange, alienated and unfamiliar. At school, he began to feel himself cut off from that by which he had previously felt himself defined. Although he was surrendering to his studenthood, there was a certain sadness that he could not reconcile.

I was increasingly confident of my own public identity. I would have been happier about my public success had I not

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*sometimes recalled what it had been like earlier (p. 25)...
At last, even years old, I came to believe what had been
technically true since birth: I was an American citizen. But
the special feeling of closeness at home was diminished by
then. Gone was the desperate, urgent, intense feeling of
being at home; rare was the experience of feeling myself
individualized by family intimates (pp. 22-23).*

For Rodriguez, embracing academic culture felt inevitable. It was both cause and cure of his alienation. Almost against his will, his identification with school-based values lead him to redefine his parents' attitudes and abilities in a negative light. To him, his mother and father began to lack the very things the classroom was teaching him were important, literacy in particular.

I was oddly annoyed when I was unable to get parental help with a homework assignment. The night my father tried to help me with an arithmetic exercise, he kept reading the instructions, each time more deliberately, until I pried the textbook out of his hands...(p. 44)...the docile, obedient student came home a shrill and precocious son who insisted on correcting and teaching his parents with the remark: "My teacher told us..." (p. 50)...what mattered to me was that they were not like my teachers (p. 52).

At the same time, school helped ease the loss of family intimacy that seemed to attend his every move toward Americanization. Although the transition had destabilized his sense of who and what he was, Rodriguez, intellectually gifted, also sensed that learning how to participate in school life might offer some means of compensation. It was many years later before he understood the nature of this solution.

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Rodriguez adaptation was typical of the scholarship boy. As he grew, the injunction to better himself through education had been strong. Both his teachers and parents conspired on this point. And so he turned to his studies and away from his past. But it was a past he remained conscious of, forever aware of the distance that his education was putting between who he had been and who he was becoming. Eventually, widening that distance became its purpose.

A primary reason for my success in the classroom was that I couldn't forget that schooling was changing me and separating me from the life I enjoyed before becoming a student (p. 45)...I never forgot that schooling had irretrievably changed my family's life. That knowledge, however, did not weaken ambition. Instead, it strengthened resolve (p. 50).

According to Hoggart (1957), the scholarship boy learns that he must turn to the classroom for his sense of who and what he is to become. School promises to lead him toward a future that is an improvement on the present, that will not recapitulate the lives of his parents. Through his education, the scholarship boy comes to believe that he can become someone and something better. And yet, writes Rodriguez, education offers “a nurturing never natural to the person one was before one entered the classroom” (p. 68). For Rodriguez, the competitive and public identity created in the classroom could never be continuous with, and in fact required that he distance himself from, the familial and private identity he developed at home.

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From the very first days, through the years following, it will be with his parents - the figures of lost authority, the persons toward whom he feels deepest love - that the change will be most powerfully measured...Advancing in his studies, the [scholarship boy] notices that his mother and father have not changed as much as he. Rather, when he sees them, they often remind him of the person he once was and the life he earlier shared with them (p. 49).

Rodriguez recalls some of the external changes mirroring the transformations he felt internally.

I grew increasingly successful, a talkative student. My hand was raised in the classroom; I yearned to answer any question. At home, life was less noisy than it had been (I spoke to classmates and teachers more often each day than to family members.) Quiet at home, I sat with my papers for hours each night.

Simply mastering the academic challenges was not be enough to gain Rodriguez membership at school. Something more was required. He had to somehow unhinge his former life from the future that formal education held out to him. "They could make me an educated man," he writes (p. 50). It was confusing. It disoriented him in a way that he dealt with only by clinging more tightly to the compensations of the classroom.

Those times [that] I remembered the loss of my past with regret, I quickly reminded myself of all the things my teachers could give me...I tightened my grip on my pencil and books. I evaded nostalgia. Tried hard to forget (p. 50).

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As a Catholic, an important thread of stability did run through Rodriguez's life. He attended a Catholic grammar school. This was important in providing Rodriguez with at least one level of linkage between home and school; at least he was a Catholic in both places. A picture of the Sacred Heart hung in his parents' home. When he entered the classroom of his first day, he saw this same picture on the classroom wall.

The picture drew an important continuity between home and the classroom. When all else was different for me (as a scholarship boy) between the two worlds of my life, the Church provided an essential link. During my first months in school, I remember being struck by the fact that - although they worshipped in English - the nuns and my classmates shared my family's religion. The gringos were, in some way, like me, católicos (p. 82).

Although the church provided him with an important sense of continuity around his Catholic identity, this did not diminish Rodriguez's perception of the differences between what he was expected to be at school (an American student) and at home (a member of an Hispanic household).

Transition: University. Rodriguez claims that the term *minority student* allows us to believe that we have reached down into the levels of the poor and oppressed and lifted such persons 'up' into academia when in reality, as Rodriguez views it, we have only skimmed from the top. Those minorities who qualify for higher education are those with the ability and means to make it academically, thus those from the upper echelon of his or her minority group. But as a Stanford student, a school he had been attracted to

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“partly by its academic reputation, partly because it was the school rich people went to,”

Rodriguez did not consider himself part of an oppressed minority.

A dean said he was certain that after I graduated I would be able to work among “my people.” A senior faculty member expressed his confidence that, though I was unrepresentative of lower-class Hispanics, I would serve as a role model for others of my race. Another faculty member was sure that I would be a valued counselor to incoming minority students. (He assumed that, because of my race, I retained a special capacity for communicating with nonwhite students.) (p. 147).

His professors did not realize that Rodriguez could not go back. In his mind, the education that had gotten him to that point had also removed him from the category of the oppressed. It was a contradiction that went unnoticed by those around him.

The odd things was that in the classroom, teachers reminded me of both my public identity and power as a student of literature. But outside of class, few were willing to recognize that I was, at best, paradoxically named a minority student (p. 156).

Transition: Graduate School. In graduate school, Rodriguez sensed that the counterpoint of stereotypes (minority student and scholar) he embodied made his fellow academics uneasy, as if there were something Pygmalion about him. He wondered if maybe to his professors and peers it looked as if someone had grabbed an immigrant off a

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work crew and dressed him in professorial garb. Was he taunting them with a caricature of themselves?

To many persons around him, [the scholarship boy] appears too much the academic. There may be some things about him that recall his beginnings – his shabby clothes; his persistent poverty; or his dark skin (in those cases when it symbolizes his parents' disadvantaged condition) – but they only make clear how far he has moved from his past. He has used education to remake himself (p. 65).

Rodriguez interpreted his colleague's imagined discomfort as a symptom of their denial, a measure of the extent to which their own identity as academics had required them to sever themselves from their past. He believed that his presence reminded them of the fact that becoming a scholar requires one to basically change from who one was.

[They] expect – they want – a student less changed by his schooling. If the scholarship boy, from a past so distant from the classroom, could remain in some basic way unchanged, he would be able to prove that it is possible for anyone to become educated without basically changing from the person he was (p. 66).

Transition: Leaving academia. Rodriguez left London and returned to California. While continuing to struggle with his dissertation, he accepted a 1-year teaching assignment at Berkeley. He was approached during this time by a group of

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young Chicano students. They had come wanting him to teach a course on “minority literature” at a local barrio community center.

I had been submissive, willing to mimic my teachers, willing to re-form myself in order to become 'educated.' They were proud, claiming that they didn't need to change by becoming students. I had long before accepted the fact that education extracted a great price for its equally great benefits. They denied that price – any loss (p. 160).

It was an awkward moment. In front of him was the person he might (should?) have become. He told them that he did not believe in the term ‘minority literature.’ “Any novel or play about the lower class will necessarily be alien to the culture it portrays,” he told them. The students, disappointed and bored, left his office. For Rodriguez, a sense of shame hung over the encounter. Although sitting with the Chicano students had reinforced the feeling that what he had left behind could not be returned to, he was confused by his inability to identify with the students – and by their conviction that they did not *need* to change to become part of academic society.

In retrospect, Rodriguez links his shame and confusion to a truth that, at that moment, he had been unable to confront. For him, the process of becoming educated had wrought profound changes in who and what he had expected himself to be. In the face of this, the minority students were a group of young *Ricardos*. They sat in front of him, university students whose choice had been to *not* abandon their past. They were willfully holding onto it. Rodriguez, in his own efforts to join with academic culture, had felt the

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need to cut himself off from his cultural roots. It all felt somehow ludicrous, that in a lifetime of trying to become like his teachers perhaps he had only become a caricature of them.

The truth was that I was a successful teacher of white middle-class students ...I was the bleached academic – more white than the anglo professors (p. 162).

It was ironic that Rodriguez found a point of stability in the identity of the scholarship boy, an identity rooted in instability, rupture, and change. Equally ironic was discovering another kind of stability in his decision to bail out of academia. He realized his desire to be a personally authentic intellectual.

I wanted to teach; I wanted to read; I wanted this life. But I had to protest. How? Disqualify myself from the profession as long as affirmative action continued? Romantic exile? But I had to. Yes. I found the horizon again. It was calm.

The calm horizon was Rodriguez's ethnic past. Although it had never moved, Rodriguez was like a plane flying by sight through the darkness. Without a visual fix he could not seem to orient himself to who he was, nor could he return to his point of departure.

How great is the change any academic undergoes, how far one must move from one's past (p. 68).

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Integrative Summary: Stability and Change

Wald writes that “national culture defines and disseminates a concept of personhood” (Wald, 1995, p. 8). The general difficulty in becoming a student for Rodriguez was not so much the intellectual challenge as in its requirement to change from an Hispanic to an American vision of his own personhood. Early on, Rodriguez had intuited that only by changing in deep and significant ways could he establish a place for himself in the classroom. He must learn to speak a new language (English). He must value its speaking over the language of his past (Spanish). He must value the knowledge framework of the classroom over that of his parents’ culture.

There is an important sense in which Rodriguez continued to regard these changes as inevitable and necessary. As an adult and a critic of education, Rodriguez’s stance is that good schooling is that which prepares every student for a place in society. One of learning’s principal aims, he believes, should be to help students re-form, that is, to form new ways of talking and behaving that contrast with those acquired in early family life, ways that in Rodriguez’s experience had begun to create a public and inherently less personal presentation of himself.

At the same time, in his autobiography, Rodriguez’s desire to pursue such change was driven by the paradoxical belief that only by doing so could he compensate for the destabilizing of family closeness that seemed to follow his moves toward studenthood. He could not become the kind of student that he believed his teachers and, in fact, his parents wanted him to be without the forsaking of family intimacy. “Tightening the irony into a knot was the knowledge that my parents were always behind me,” he writes (p.

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53). Although the paradox was profound for Rodriguez, at another level he is also claiming that formal education, by its very nature, works to create this paradox in every student.

Good schooling requires that any student alter early childhood habits. But the working-class child is usually least prepared for the change (p. 47)...At once different from most other students, the scholarship boy is also the archetypal 'good student.' He exaggerates the difficulty of being a student, but his exaggeration reveals a general predicament. Others are changed by their schooling as much as he. They too must reform themselves (p. 68).

But what if Rodriguez *hadn't* somehow figured out that it was schooling that was responsible for changing him? The implication is that it was the power of this perception that allowed him to capitalize on what school seemed to be offering; to be blind to it would have meant missing the opportunities that surrounded him. The perception that learning was changing him allowed him to seek it out for that very purpose. The intensity of this awareness was special because it depended on the crossing of multiple boundaries: ethnic, class, but particularly linguistic. Rodriguez held to the notion that through English, and through books, he would be able to crack the code of becoming educated.

I privately wondered: What was the connection between reading and learning? Did one learn something only by reading it? Was an idea only an idea if it could be written down (p. 59)?

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Rodriguez writes about his early awareness of one “consequence of literacy.” It was one that he was “too shy to admit but nonetheless trusted” (p. 61).

Books were going to make me 'educated.' That confidence enabled me, several months later, to overcome my fear of the silence (p. 61).

The “silence” was something that seemed to have enveloped Rodriguez’s life following his parents insistence that they change from Spanish to English in the home (his father, less fluent in English than his mother, had simply become quiet). Of course, one does not acquire a language (native or otherwise) without also acquiring, in Janet Miller’s terms, its function as “a constituting factor in the artificial separations, hierarchical orderings, and essentialist constructions of public and private...self and other (Miller, 1998, p. 229). In other words, learning a second language for Rodriguez was not simply a matter of exchanging one system of representing and expressing himself for another, one different in form but identical in function. Instead, the languages of home and school mediated and made possible ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving unique to each. To forbid Rodriguez to speak Spanish was to silence the ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving that only Spanish made possible. To learn English, on the other hand, was to open the door to new (i.e., American) ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving. It was in the tension between these ways (which was *his* way?) that the relationship between learning and identity made itself known.

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There were many circumstances surrounding Rodriguez's education that, for him, forged a distinct split between public and private, or public and personal. To the extent that a cultural community is linguistically homogeneous, it is true that as one moves between contexts that vary in the degree to which they are public versus private (home, school, church, doctor's office, barber, grocery store, etc), the basic language (English, Spanish, etc.) nonetheless stays the same. It is only the degree of intimacy that varies. For Rodriguez at a young age, however, there *was* no variation in terms of public and private kinds of talk, the kind of variations that, again, might exist were *all* the contexts one moved between characterized by the same language. There was only inside talk (Spanish) and outside talk (English).

At home, assuming his place in the family was joyfully simple, easy, and routine. In contrast, at school, learning in a different language demanded profound changes in Rodriguez's sense of who he was and where he belonged. These were demands that were never announced or made explicit. They could only be felt and experienced by Rodriguez, who was without the capacity to yet understand. At no time or place in Rodriguez's education had his status as someone perched on the boundary between cultures become conscious in a way that might have validated it.

That he could change, become someone new through learning, was obvious to Rodriguez. So was the expectation, his own and others', that this learning should occur at school through formal education. The role that his native language or his parents themselves would play in his learning was implicitly clear. Through silencing his ethnicity, the school had made it plain that there was very little that could be learned at

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home. His parents either lacked the knowledge or what they *did* know contradicted, or was devalued by, school knowledge.

The big question is why Rodriguez felt that he could not straddle the two - that he could not move freely between home and school and experience himself as a single integrated person at the same time, even one experiencing change. Throughout his formal education, an integrated sense of who he was and where he belonged continued to elude Rodriguez. He could not straddle the world of home and past and that of mainstream academic America. Prior to coming upon Hoggart's description of the scholarship boy, Rodriguez had really not been able to experience himself fully as a member of any public social category, only as existing between them; between working- and middle-class, Hispanic and mainstream culture, between his identity as an intellectual and that of the son of uneducated immigrants. In other words, the changes that Rodriguez at once embraced and were confused by did not unfold at home. Nor did they happen at school. They took place in the back-and-forth *between* the two, between Hispanic and academic cultures.

Terms like 'back-and-forth' or 'between' do not imply that Rodriguez experienced this movement as if on a continuum, however. It was truly an either/or for him, a binary logic of being either a family member and not American, or American and not a family member. This is ultimately why he could not straddle the two. It was also why neither place alone could provide him with a secure sense that what he was learning and who he was becoming did not require denigrating some other part of himself.

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It was here, in the choice between stability and change, that Rodriguez had to figure out where he belonged. It was difficult in the face of his gnawing awareness that his attempts to think, talk, and act in the ways of school culture, as much as his parents may have encouraged it, only brought about a lessening of the closeness he felt between himself and them. He was changing and they were not. Further, what was happening somehow went against the natural desire of his parents to bring their children up in the ways of their own culture. By requiring the changes that it did, particularly the expectation that school culture be valued over that of the home, Rodriguez's early schooling undermined this parental function.³

Rodriguez. The name on the door. The name on my passport. The name I carry from my parents - who are no longer my parents, in a cultural sense (p. 4).

So the changes that schooling required, although they made the relationship between learning and identity explicit, also made it clear to Rodriguez that this was a relationship unique to school: it was through education and not his home life that he could become a new person. The strong connection that Rodriguez sensed between learning and identity evaporated as soon he walked into his family's home. It was not until university and the imposing of his status as a minority that people began to tell him

³ It is important to remember that, as a Catholic school, there was a strong link between school and the church. The authority of the school was great, taken in essence from the church.

that things could also work the other way around: that his home or native culture and what he had learned there could extend into the world of his formal education. This is an idea whose feasibility Rodriguez continues to doubt.

Through the story of the Scholarship boy, Rodriguez finally began to accept his own marginality. The point is not that it was impossible for him, at least at some point, to have found some level of integration between the expectations of two different cultures, home and school. But it *was* impossible as long as this expectation remained implicit rather than explicit. For Rodriguez, the struggle between changing and remaining the same was never publicly acknowledged and dealt with. By neglecting this struggle, the acknowledgment of a strong and ever present relationship between learning and identity-making was also pushed underground.

There were necessary losses at home that Rodriguez felt changed him, pushing him further toward a more public, school-based identity. At the same time, throughout his formal education, experiences of change began to lead him back toward a desire for the stability of his ethnic home life and the easy acceptance he had once found there. In a way, although difficult at first, the expectation of his earlier teachers that Rodriguez assimilate himself to academic culture was a much less complicated problem than the expectation of his college professors that Rodriguez be both a minority student *and* a successful academic. At least, prior to college, things had been clear. To change, he must learn to think, talk, and act like a White American student. But in the atmosphere of 1960's campus life, the expectation that he personify two cultures at the same time and in the same place, his own culture and that of higher education, was impossible for him to

fulfill. In a very real way, it was asking him to *deny* the relation of learning and identity, to *not* express what he so keenly felt: that his formal education had involved a necessary bleaching of his ethnicity.

At thirty, Rodriguez is finally brought to the point of recognizing the personal quest his education represents. Only then, when the contradictions behind his identity began to make some sense to him could he finally claim what had eluded him for so long: a view of himself as a genuine intellectual, one unhaunted by a nagging sense of illegitimacy.

Not until my last months as a graduate student, nearly 30 years old, was it possible for me to think much about the reasons for my academic success. Only then, at the end of my schooling, I needed to determine how far I had moved from my past (p. 45)...I was able to frame the meaning of my academic success, its consequent price - the loss (p. 46).

It was paradoxical and poignant. Rodriguez abandoned his doctorate and, with it, the struggle between the sophisticated, full-fledged academic and the child of illiterate immigrant parents. It was in his conscious decision not to climb that last ten feet, *not* to complete his doctorate, that Rodriguez was finally graced with a genuine and integrated sense of himself as an intellectual. He reclaimed his past, that part of him that formal education had ultimately failed to exorcise. In leaving academia, he grabbed willfully for the stability of self he had longed for. Maybe now there could be greater equity between stability and change, between those aspects of himself that felt abiding and constant and

those that felt mutable and changing. From now on, maybe *he* would control the balance in the dance between learning and identity, between Richard, the intellectual, and Ricardo, the son of Hispanic immigrants.

Having explored the tensions between stability and change, the next section looks at tensions in Hunger of Memory between experiences of affiliation and those of separateness. Experiences of affiliation were those that lead Rodriguez to feel that his learning and his identity were connected in important ways to persons and ideas outside himself while experiences of separateness were those that lead Rodriguez to feel that he somehow existed apart. Because of the rewards of feeling validated through one's public affiliations, and because it is sometimes *painful* to experience oneself as separate (particularly at an age when the world appears so black and white), entering school forced Rodriguez to begin shifting his affiliations from home to school, from parents to teachers, from his parents' culture to mainstream culture. For him this ultimately meant separating himself from the ideas, beliefs, and values of parents that he loved.

Affiliation and Separateness

Transition: School. In the early years of Rodriguez's schooling, home is the place he felt most fully himself. With his family, he had shared a language and a way of looking at middle-class White America, a way of feeling *apart* from it, that had bonded them.

I was an extremely happy child at home. I remember many nights when my father would come back from work, and I'd hear him call out to my mother in Spanish, sounding relieved. In Spanish, he'd sound light and free notes he never could manage in English. Some nights I'd jump up just at hearing his voice. With mis hermanos I would come running into the room where he was with my mother. Our laughing (so deep was the pleasure!) became screaming. Like others who know the pain of public alienation, we transformed the knowledge of our public separateness and made it consoling – the reminder of intimacy (p. 18).

At home, the sounds of Spanish meant belongingness and intimacy. Outside, they meant differentness and isolation. Of course, the situation was just the reverse in terms of English. The sound of it in the family home left Rodriguez feeling alienated while bringing him closer to others at school. Prior to his parents' mandate that they speak only English, young Rodriguez could think and speak in Spanish, freely and easily, just like his parents. Implicit in the prosody of his parents' voices was something that identified young Rodriguez as a particular and unique individual and yet a valued part of the family. Even outside the family but within the larger Spanish community, Spanish was the reminder of his separateness from mainstream American culture. It joined him to others.

Spanish speakers... seemed related to me, for I sensed that we shared – through our language – the experience of feeling apart from Los Gringos (p. 16).

Outside the Spanish community, on the other hand, aspects of his native culture reinforced only separateness. Rodriguez looked different than the other students at

school. He talked differently. He felt surrounded by a culture that he could not enter.

School confronted Rodriguez with the realities of education in a culture in which there is more than one language but in which not all languages are equal.

At the age of five, six, well past the time when most other children no longer easily notice the difference between sounds uttered at home and words spoken in public, I had a different experience (p. 16)...I easily noted the difference between classroom language and the language of home (p. 20).

There was a private language, Spanish – his family’s language. It marked his affiliations with family and community. English, on the other hand, was a public language. It was the language spoken on the outside to those in positions of power, to *los gringos*: teachers, sales people, policemen, gas station attendants.

Because home and school felt “at cultural extremes, opposed” (p. 46), Rodriguez tried to avoid overlap in the ideas and expectations of each. He writes that in third grade, for example, he was “careful to keep separate the two very different worlds” of his day (pp. 44-5). In the beginning, things had changed abruptly. Half-way through Rodriguez’s first grade year, the nuns who taught him had noticed that Rodriguez still was not talking in class. They noted that his older siblings were having much the same problem. One Saturday morning, they paid a visit to Rodriguez’s home.

Stiffly, they sat on the blue living room sofa. From the doorway of another room, spying the visitors, I noted the

incongruity – the clash of two worlds, the faces and voices of school intruding upon the familiar setting of home. I overheard one voice gently wondering, “Do your children speak only Spanish at home, Mrs. Rodriguez?” While another voice added, “That Richard especially seems so timid and shy” That Rich-heard! (p. 20).

The culture of school had suddenly intruded into the home. It was a “clash of two worlds” (p. 20).

With great tact the visitors continued, “Is it possible for you and your husband to encourage your children to practice their English when they are home?” Of course, my parents complied. What would they not do for their children’s well-being? And how could they have questioned the Church’s authority which those women represented? In an instant, they agreed to give up the language (the sounds) that had revealed and accentuated our family’s closeness. The moment after the visitors left, the change was observed. “Ahora, speak to us en inglés,” my father and mother united to tell us (p. 21)

Now it was no longer possible for Rodriguez to keep school and home separate. The nuns knew what he had only sensed: that to truly join the classroom, that to affiliate himself there, he “needed to speak a public language” (p. 21). Looking back, Rodriguez accepts this as a necessary part of his Americanization. The sanctuary of Spanish had to be forcibly closed off, its promise of shelter shattered. Since neither parent was fluent, attempting to communicate with them in English only lead Rodriguez to feel separated from them. His sadness grew as he watched their clumsy attempts to communicate with

him in English. Looking back, it all seems to have been a necessary push toward his Americanization.

Most of all, I needed to hear my mother and father speak to me in a moment of seriousness in broken – suddenly heartbreaking – English (p. 21)...the spell was broken (p. 22).

With the family's speaking of English, the separateness Rodriguez felt in public now invaded the home. Also, since it was partially the contrast with the sense of separateness he experienced at school that made for the intense familiarity of home, as school became less strange, the importance of home as an escape from that separateness also began to fade.

We remained a loving family, but one greatly changed. No longer so close; no longer bound tight by the pleasing and troubling knowledge of our public separateness...as we children learned more and more English, we shared fewer and fewer words with our parents (p. 22-23)...Once I learned public language, it would never again be easy for me to hear intimate family voices (p. 28).

In retrospect, Rodriguez realizes that while the identity of *Ricardo* linked him to his family, it also separated him from teachers and students. At school he was Richard, not Ricardo. It was through the school's expected ways of thinking, feeling, and

behaving, not the family's, that he would gain membership in the classroom. Rodriguez writes,

It is not possible for a child - any child - ever to use his family's language in school. Not to understand this is to misunderstand the public uses of schooling and to trivialize the nature of intimate life - a family's 'language'" (p. 12).

A passionate student, as the back-and-forth between home and school continued, carrying his passion for learning into the house brought contradiction and change. Because his parents did not understand it, Rodriguez felt as if it separated him from them. He could not describe for them (In English? In Spanish?) what his experience was like. In his own words, he had become a "good student, troubled son" (p. 48).

Withheld from my mother and father was any mention of what most mattered to me: the extraordinary experience of first-learning (p. 51).

As Rodriguez continued to experience the sense of being "educated away" from the culture of his mother and father (p. 147-8), he turned more and more to his connections with the world of books.

[Reading Dickens], I loved the feeling I got - after the first hundred pages - of being at home in a fictional world

where I knew the names of the characters and cared about what was going to happen to them (p. 63).

Reading was not an escape from intimate family life but, in some ways, surrogate for it.

A diminishing sense of affiliation at home was being more-or-less balanced by the satisfaction Rodriguez took in his developing identity as a student. He remembers the gradual mental awakening. Melancholy, excitement, fulfillment, and uncertainty filled him at the same time. At his age, these were feelings he was unable to articulate or share. More importantly, with whom might he have shared them? Who would have understood the contradiction?

I rarely looked away from my books...I kept so much, so often, to myself. Sad. Enthusiastic. Troubled by the excitement of coming upon new ideas. Eager. Fascinated by the promising texture of a brand-new book. I hoarded the pleasures of learning. Alone for hours. Enthralled. Nervous. (p. 52).

As he progressed, Rodriguez's affiliations continued to gradually shift from home to school, from parents to teachers. He no longer wanted his parents' lives. It was the lives of his teachers he wanted. He began to model himself after them.

The urgency with which I came to idolize my grammar school teachers...trusting their every direction. (p. 49).

When I was in high school, I admitted to my mother that I planned to become a teacher someday. That seemed to please her. But I never tried to explain that it was not the occupation of teaching I yearned for as much as it was something more elusive: I wanted to be like my teachers, to possess their knowledge, to assume their authority, their confidence, even to assume a teacher's persona (p. 55).

It is important to acknowledge that during the early years of his schooling, Rodriguez was able to find in his Catholic faith precious moments of integration. During such moments, the tension between affiliation and separateness would temporarily resolve itself. It seemed to him that the mysteries of his faith were somehow able to reconcile, however briefly, the opposition of public and private.

At that time in my life, when I was so struck by diminished family closeness and the necessity of public life, church was a place unlike any other. It mediated between my public and private lives...the mass mystified me for being a public and a private event. We prayed here, each of us, much as we prayed on our pillows - most privately - all alone before God. And yet the great public prayer of the mass would go on (p. 96).

[Terms like sister and father] implied that a deep bond existed between my teachers and me as fellow Catholics. At the same time, however, Sister and Father were highly formal terms of address...It was possible consequently to use these terms and to feel at once a close bond, and the distance of formality...we were close - somehow related - while also distanced by careful reserve (p. 97).

Transition: University. In college at Stanford in the 1960s, a professor startled Rodriguez by alluding to his status as a ‘minority student.’

Never before had a teacher suggested that my academic performance was linked to my racial identity (p. 144).

This is the first time a teacher had explicitly acknowledged the difference that, according to the term, separated Rodriguez from other students. This was not how his earlier education had lead him to think about himself. It confused him. Up to entering Stanford, he had worked so hard to affiliate with teachers and students, to feel a part of the academic community. Suddenly, after finally making it to the exclusive club of the university, it was announced that he was *not* like others and, furthermore, that this was not a mark of shame but an honorable distinction that perhaps he could benefit from. This contradicted everything Rodriguez had come to believe. He could not accept it as legitimate.

Slowly, slowly, the term minority became a source of unease. Minority, minorities, minority groups. The terms sounded in public to remind me in private of the truth: I was not – in a cultural sense – a minority, an alien from public life... The truth was summarized in the sense of irony I'd feel at hearing myself called a minority student: the reason I was no longer a minority was because I had become a [college] student (p. 147).

Rodriguez did not *want* to be separated out. He *had* a place in public life – the fact that he had successfully navigated the White, middle-class educational culture of 1960s America was the very reason he could not bring himself, in good conscience, to acknowledge himself as under-privileged and oppressed.

His university experience strengthened the divide between Rodriguez and his family. He writes about the experience of coming home for the first time as a freshman. He could not describe college life to his parents in words that would have made sense to them. It was not of their culture or experience. It was awkward at first as they groped for common ground.

The first hours home were the hardest. ('What's new?'). My parents and I sat in the kitchen for a conversation. (But, lacking the same words to develop our sentences and to shape our interests, what was there to say? What could I tell them of the term paper I had just finished on the 'universality of Shakespeare's appeal'?) (p. 58).

Out of love and respect, they settled for a compromise: silence. "The silence that comes to separate the [scholarship boy] from his parents" (p. 68). And yet, this was not so different than it had been before. It was something they had learned long ago.

All those faraway childhood mornings in Sacramento, walking together to school, we talked but never mentioned a thing about what concerned us so much: the great event of our schooling, the change it forced on our lives. Years passed. Silence grew thicker, less penetrable. We grew older without ever speaking to each other about it (p. 190).

Working on the construction crew the summer after getting his undergraduate degree was an enlightening time for Rodriguez. He and his family had always referred to these crews as *los pobres*, the poor ones who had to depend on physical labor for work. It amazed him to find out the contractor was a Princeton graduate. On the crew, he unexpectedly found himself in the company of carpenters, electricians, plumbers, painters.

These were not los pobres my mother had spoken about...I am embarrassed to say I had not expected such diversity. I certainly had not expected to meet, for example, a plumber who was an abstract painter in his off hours...nor did I expect to meet so many workers with college diplomas. (They were the ones who were not surprised that I intended to enter graduate school in the fall.) (pp. 133-134).

On a couple of occasions, the contractor had also hired a group of “Mexican aliens” to complete a specific job. Although he would sometimes use Rodriguez as a translator, Rodriguez felt keenly the distance between the Mexicans and himself. He thought about talking more casually with them, asking them where they were from, but what did they have in common to discuss? *These* were the real *los pobres*. It awakened him to the immense separateness, despite their common heritage, between the conditions of his own life and theirs.

When they had finished, the contractor went over to pay them in cash...I can still hear the loudly confident voice he used with the Mexicans. It was the sound of the gringo I

had heard as a very young boy. And I can still hear the quiet, indistinct sounds of the Mexican, the oldest, who replied. At hearing that voice, I was sad for the Mexicans. Depressed by their vulnerability. Angry at myself. The adventure of the summer seemed suddenly ludicrous. I would not shorten the distance I felt from los pobres with a few weeks of physical labor. I would not become like them. They were different from me (pp. 135-136).

Through his education, Rodriguez had found a public identity, had forged affiliations with the broader culture. Unlike him, these people would always remain separate.

There are people who would label me 'disadvantaged' because of my color...But I was not one of los pobres. What made me different from them was an attitude of mind, my imagination of myself...I will never know what the Mexicans knew, gathering their shovels and ladders and saws... They lack a public identity. They remain profoundly alien. Persons apart (p. 138).

Transition: London. In London on his Fullbright, at first content just to be studying, after about three months Rodriguez began to feel a creeping uneasiness. There was uncertainty about the meaningfulness of what he was doing. And there was a steady, throbbing loneliness.

Then came the crisis: the domed silence; the dusty pages of books all around me; the days accumulating in lists of obsequious footnotes; the wandering doubts about the value of scholarship (p. 160).

It became clear that I had joined a lonely community. Around me each day were our faces eclipsed by large piles of books... everywhere eyes turned away the moment our glance accidentally met. Some persons I sat beside day after day, yet we passed silently at the end of the day, strangers (p. 70).

Rodriguez had crossed the Atlantic to initiate himself further into the intellectual community, so why did the gap he felt between himself and other human beings seem only to have widened? Shouldn't things, shouldn't *he*, be coalescing into something, into *Richard* the scholar? Wasn't this the identity in which he had presumed his years of education would culminate? It is true that this quiet group of scholars in the library, some who like him returned day after day, were connected in a way. They shared an interest, a "common respect for the written word" (p. 70). But their relationships were never more than a choreography of glances. As long as there was no personal contact, the affiliation was gossamer-thin.

We did form a union, though one in which we remained distant from one another (p. 70).

Rodriguez writes that more "profound and unsettling," however, were the affiliations he perceived between himself and the authors of his source materials. The interests that knitted them together were highly esoteric, shared by few, and the pursuit of them largely solitary. Among them there was actually more separating, more pulling away from the cloth of larger society, than uniting.

Whenever I opened a text that hadn't been used for years, I realized that my special interests and skills united me to a mere handful of academics. We formed an exclusive - eccentric! - society, separated from others who would never care or be able to share our concerns... Who, beside my dissertation director and a few faculty members, would ever read what I wrote? (p. 70).

Transition: Leaving academia. In his decision to leave academia, Rodriguez lodged his protest against the system that had created him, a scholar aspiring to membership among a group of scholars, and then ultimately had separated him out as a minority student. But his decision was also empowered by a deep acceptance. He could now see and understand his own complicity. The intellectual dishonesty, the willingness to abandon his own ideas, his naïve faith in education's merit badge economy. These had all begun in elementary as a bid for affiliation with those who had the power to validate and reward him.

Always successful, I was always unconfident. Exhilarated by my progress. Sad. I became that prized student - anxious and eager to learn. Too eager, too anxious - an imitative and unoriginal pupil (p. 44).

And the complicity was there as an adult. Rodriguez grappled with it at the British museum as he wrote his thesis. But he was much closer to it now. His bids for affiliation with the world of academia had been answered, he was ostensibly *there*, but for him it had become an empty place. He could not find his voice. Throughout his education,

Rodriguez had felt separated from his past. But this feeling intensified in London. Going abroad had foregrounded his nationality. Although he was American, his features marked him first as someone of color. And at that point, to say that he was American was also to say that he was *non-Hispanic*.

Rodriguez attempted to write but could not. As a writer, one must speak from someplace and he could not find that place. He felt separated finally from himself. For Rodriguez, this was the crisis, the tension, that finally pulled his denial of himself to the surface.

What I am about to say to you has taken me more than twenty years to admit: a primary reason for my success in the classroom was that I couldn't forget that schooling was changing me and separating me from the life I enjoyed before becoming a student (p. 45).

Rodriguez longed for affiliation, for a time when answers - the right answers - came not just from cultural outsiders but from inside the family, from his parents, from himself.

Hoggart describes the scholarship boy in terms that, at that moment, must have had a gripping effect on Rodriguez.

[The scholarship boy] cannot go back; with one part of himself he does not want to go back to a homeliness which was often narrow : with another part he longs for the membership he has lost, 'he pines for some Nameless Eden where he never was'. The nostalgia is the stronger and the more ambiguous because he is really 'in question of his own absconded self yet scared to find it'. He both wants to go back and yet thinks he has gone beyond

his class, feels himself weighted with knowledge of his own and [his own class's] situation, which hereafter forbids him the simpler pleasures of his father and mother (Hoggart, 1957, p. 232).

Rodriguez suddenly understood that the separateness he felt at that moment was a product of those very circumstances his formal education had taught him to aspire to, even to compete for. He felt angry and, ultimately, betrayed.

Then nostalgia began. After years spent unwilling to admit its attractions, I gestured nostalgically toward the past. I yearned for that time when I had not been so alone...I feared the library's silence. I silently scorned the gray, timid faces around me. I grew to hate the growing pages of my dissertation on genre and Renaissance literature...above all, I wanted to be less alone (p. 71).

Integrative Summary: Affiliation and Separateness

In his autobiography, Rodriguez emphasizes what he perceives to be the difference between his public and his private identities. His public identity was that which seemed to draw on aspects of himself (speech, dress, behavior) through which he affiliated non-intimately with others in contexts outside the home and ethnic community. Rodriguez takes the position that the proper function of formal schooling was to help him construct this public aspect of himself. At school, one's learning does move into public view. An original essay of his was published in the high school newspaper, for example. Its potency as a public act of identity-making impressed him. Rodriguez recalls that "the

letters furnished evidence of a vast public identity writing made possible” (p. 181). His public identity became that through which he could affiliate with a larger mainstream culture.

In contrast, Rodriguez’s private identity was nourished at home. It was that aspect through which he affiliated with intimates. It was based in part on his very separateness (and, by extension, the separateness of his family and their culture) from public life. It emerged from the intense personal relationships he had with his mother and father but also including his grandmother, who held a special place in her heart for Rodriguez.⁴ Prior to beginning school, the words Rodriguez spoke were in Spanish. They were intended only for intimates. But it was only through learning English that Rodriguez believed he could change into someone that truly belonged in the classroom. He remembers the moment in grammar school that “it happened.”

*One day in school I raised my hand to volunteer an answer.
I spoke out in a loud voice. And I did not think it
remarkable when the entire class understood. That day, I
moved very far from the disadvantaged child I had been*

⁴ The public-private distinction is ultimately paradoxical. To say that an author’s relationships at school were public and non-intimate is *not* to imply that they were non-affective or incidental to learning itself. It means only that they are public in relation to those relationships the author held as personal or private. But what about the “stranger on the bus” phenomenon; those moments in which we are moved to share things deeply personal with a complete stranger? Writes Rodriguez, “This is what I have learned by trying to write this book: there are things so deeply personal that they can be revealed only to strangers. I believe this. I continue to write” (p. 185). Of course, Rodriguez is talking about revealing himself to strangers that he will never meet or will meet only briefly with the anticipation of never seeing again. This all foregrounds the importance of history to those relationships we consider most personal. While we may be moved to confess our deepest secrets to a total stranger, without a shared history there is no personal relationship, nor at the moment of disclosure do we likely desire one.

only days earlier. The belief, the calming assurance that I belonged in public, had at last taken hold (p. 22).

Rodriguez had two principal needs at the time that he entered elementary school. There was a natural desire for affiliation, for feelings of connectedness and similarity to others. In addition to that, there was the social need for him to construct an autonomous public identity, an *American* identity. For Rodriguez, neither home nor school were capable of serving both of these needs simultaneously. But this alone doesn't explain the tension, his active struggle to initially keep the two contexts, home and school apart. As he says,

I was careful to keep separate the two very different worlds of my day (pp. 44-5).

Rodriguez struggled to maintain this juxtaposition because, in his mind, it was the only way of keeping things straight. But why *did* these two worlds feel at odds with one another, "at cultural extremes, opposed" (p. 46)?

In a very real sense, they *were* at cultural extremes. Rodriguez uses scare-quotes around the word, language, when he first offers the generalizing phrase, "a family's language".

It is not possible for a child - any - child - ever to use his family's language in school. Not to understand this is to

misunderstand the public uses of schooling and to trivialize the nature of intimate life - a family's 'language' (p. 12).

By qualifying his use, Rodriguez expands *language* to encompass a family's broader ways of communicating and making meaning, of talking, valuing, and behaving, ways embedded in the history and traditions of one particular family and that bind them together as intimates. For Rodriguez, especially early on, his family's 'language' was the medium of affiliation. It was his link to the warmth and safety of his family, where words were valued for their powers of intimacy. The intimate talk of Rodriguez's family, his family's 'language,' was for him a unique product of time and place. It was intelligible only to them. Consequently, in his view, it would be impossible for the conditions that made it meaningful to have been recreated elsewhere.

Intimacy is not trapped within words. It passes through words. It passes. The truth is that intimates leave the room. Doors close. Faces move away from the window. Time passes...and there is no way to deny it. No way to stand in the crowd, uttering one's family language (p. 39).

In hindsight, Rodriguez believes that an important difference for him between home and school lay in the purposes to which language was put. The *raison d'être* of the classroom, for young Rodriguez, was the creation of a public self, the development of a public way of talking, valuing, and behaving, one grounded in mainstream American culture. The classroom prepared him to participate in that culture as an individual. On the

other hand, his family was where he had first learned to participate as an intimate. This intimacy was organized around a 'language' that was personal to his family for the very reason that it was not publicly defined. Were it transferable to the classroom, it would have longer *been* his family's 'language'.

So, for Rodriguez, words served a different purpose at school. At school, words were in the service of a separate, autonomous self. In that public sphere, he used words "that belong to the public" (p. 185). Their purpose was to announce himself to a community of teachers and students, a generalized Other. Rodriguez had intuited that words at school contained the knowledge, the facts, the information that he would require to become a member there. When English first surrounded him in the classroom, the Hispanic in him did not want to listen, it wanted to shrink away, to hide. At home it was different. Spanish words were in the service of affiliation. They revealed the attachment between family members. Words at home were the channel through which affect and intimacy flowed.

Later, at the university, words were suddenly introduced whose purpose was to mark aspects of Rodriguez's identity heretofore unmarked inside of academic contexts. In stark contrast to his prior school experience, which had silenced his past, words like *minority, minorities, minority groups, and minority student*, brought his heritage, and his past to the foreground. For faculty and other students, these marked important features of who and what Rodriguez was for them in that setting. For Rodriguez himself, however, the experience was one of being separated out from other students and, in a sense, from the academic mainstream. It was confusing then that, returning to his parents' home as an

undergraduate, the silence between them seemed to represent an implicit acknowledgement from both parents and son that Rodriguez's identity, that of an aspiring scholar, drew its water from the *gringo* world.

The separation that Rodriguez experienced at the British Museum triggered the crisis that allowed him to finally appreciate the connection in his own life between formal learning and identity. He understood that behind the "Good Student" there was a genuine need, the need to affiliate, to find membership and public validation. In the "Bad Student," this need had superseded intellectual honesty.

The reason [the scholarship boy] is such a bad student is because he realizes more often and more acutely than most other students...that education requires radical self-reformation... (p. 67) ...he remains the uncertain scholar, bright enough to have moved from his past, yet unable to feel easy, a part of a community of academics (p. 69).

In these examples of the tension between affiliation and separateness, one can see that from a young age, a clear relationship was apparent in Rodriguez's life between learning and identity, between Rodriguez's education and the limits of who and what he might become in the process. It was a tension that was internalized by Rodriguez. Goodwin (in Hoggart, 1998, p. xiv) refers to "the very particular combination of affinity and distance that is produced in the Scholarship Boy." In contrast, the next section will explore the tensions in Rodriguez's experience between immediacy and reflection. Experiences of immediacy refer primarily to those moments in which Rodriguez felt

himself connected to those around him, particularly family members, in a very direct and intimate way. Reflection, on the other hand, attempts to describe those moments in which Rodriguez found himself with the ability and, indeed, the proclivity to step back in order to creatively analyze the world.

Immediacy and Reflection

Transition: School. A parallel with his own experience, Rodriguez describes the tension the scholarship boy encounters between the spontaneous flow of family life and the atmosphere of the classroom, where order and reason presumably prevailed. The following passage brings these nicely into counterpoint.

With his family, the boy has the intense pleasure of intimacy, the family's consolation in feeling public alienation. Lavish emotions texture home life. Then, at school, the instruction bids him to trust lonely reason primarily. Immediate needs set the pace of his parents' lives. From his mother and father the boy learns to trust spontaneity and nonrational ways of knowing. Then, at school, there is mental calm. Teachers emphasize the value of reflectiveness that opens a space between thinking and immediate action (p. 46)...School offers a differently ordered environment...a change from the confusions of busy family life... There are even rows of desks. Discussion is ordered. The [scholarship] boy must rehearse his thoughts and raise his hand before speaking out in a loud voice to an audience of classmates. And there is time enough, and silence, to think about ideas (big ideas) (p. 47).

Differences between school and home in the way language was used again played a large role in such contrasts. Where words at home seemed predominantly in the service of relationships and of immediate thoughts, needs, or feelings, at school language contained the solutions to a different type of problem, one typically requiring some amount of analysis and reflection.⁵ For Rodriguez, playing into the tension between immediacy and reflection were important distinctions between the *sounds* of language in the classroom (the voice of a teacher giving instructions or making requests) versus those at home (e.g., the voices of his family members as they casually gathered around the dinner table). He recalls the distinction in his earliest years between the immediacy of language as sound in contrast to the more reflective, denotative, or propositional aspects of language. For example, as a child Rodriguez would listen to “the high and loud sounds” of *los gringos* speaking English. Because he understood so little English, “exotic polysyllabic sounds would bloom in the midst of their sentences” (p. 14). It was the prosodic aspects of speech, the acoustics of language, that caught him up. “Wide-eyed with hearing,” he writes, “I’d listen to sounds more than words” (p. 13). In musical terms, Rodriguez reflects on the distinction for him between word and sound.

⁵ Hoggart’s observations would seem to be corroborated by a recent study by James Gee (2000). Gee performed a discourse analysis on interviews with working class as opposed to upper middle class American teens. Based on the relative presence of two categories of statements about self, one category more affective and narratively embedded with the other leaning toward more cognitive, abstract or distanced statements, Gee found that while working class teens viewed themselves as “immersed in a social, affective dialogic world of interaction,” the upper middle class teens tended to fashion themselves “as immersed in a world of information, knowledge, argumentation, and achievements built out of these” (p. 416, italics in original).

Singers celebrate the human voice. Their lyrics are words. But animated by voice those words are subsumed into sounds. I listen with excitement as the words yield their enormous power to sound - though the words are never totally obliterated. In most songs the drama or tension results from the fact that the singer moves between word (sense) and note (song).

In his earliest years, the distinction for Rodriguez between the immediacy of language as sound and language in its more denotative aspects neatly mapped onto the distinction between private (home, Spanish) and public (school, English). Eventually, however, as he became more fluent in English, he also grew less sensitive to the separation of sound and 'sense.' Listening began to involve hearing more of the general meaning of what was being said rather than the sound of language itself.

Until I was six years old, I remained in a magical realm of sound... But then the screen door shut behind me as I left home for school. At last I began my movement toward words (pp. 38-39).

Rodriguez remembers that he spent a good deal of his time as a child with books. Reading gave him great satisfaction. It validated him. For him, reading was a way to acquire a sense of adequacy.

I found reading a pleasurable activity. I came to enjoy the lonely good company of books... carrying a volume back to the library, I would be pleased by its weight. I'd run my fingers along the edge of the pages and marvel at the

breadth of my achievement. Around my room, growing stacks of paperback books reinforced my assurance (p. 62-63).

The difference in young Rodriguez's mind between reading and writing is telling. It speaks to his view of learning at that time and what he believed it could accomplish for him. Learning was about the accumulation of knowledge and it was reading that gave him access to that knowledge. Writing was also important, of course, but its purpose was limited to documenting what knowledge he possessed.

What did I see in my books? I had the idea that they were crucial for my academic success, though I couldn't have said exactly how or why. In the sixth grade I simply concluded that what gave a book its value was some major idea or theme it contained. If that core essence could be mined and memorized, I would become learned like my teachers. I decided to record in a notebook the themes of the books that I read (p. 62).

Writing was a process of recording his achievement, what he had presumably learned through reading. It was not a personal or immediate process, one that went beyond the information given.

Reading was for me the key to 'knowledge,' I swallowed facts and dates and names and themes. Writing, by contrast, was an activity I thought of as a kind of report, evidence of learning. I wrote down what I heard teachers say. I wrote down things from my books. I wrote down all I knew when I was examined at the end of the school year.

Writing was performed after the fact, it was not the exciting experience of writing itself ...In high school there were more 'creative' writing assignments...I won prizes [although] I did not feel any great pride in my writings, however(p. 181).

Looking back, Rodriguez refers to reading as a “habit.” A telling word, something done without thinking or conscious reflection. Rodriguez recalls that he read without “a point of view,” not reading so much to learn as to feel learned, to educate himself as to feel educated. His conviction was that only through those things outside of himself, teachers or books, could he truly become educated. In other words, he did not perceive anything on the inside, no quality or trait, no part of *himself* that could produce knowledge.

I entered high school having read hundreds of books. My habit of reading made me a confident speaker and writer of English. Reading also enabled me to sense something of the shape, the major concerns, of Western thought...In these various ways, books brought me academic success as I hoped that they would. But I was not a good reader. Merely bookish, I lacked a point of view. I vacuumed books for epigrams, scraps of information, ideas, themes - anything to fill the hollow within me and make me feel educated (pp. 63-64).

Transition: Graduate School. Even at the university, the process of learning for Rodriguez was still not a personal one. He was not there to learn about *himself*. Since high school, teachers had urged him to write something more personal, “closer to home”

(p. 181). But the lesson from the first day of grammar school had been that the point of view Rodriguez brought with him (his family's point of view, their 'language') was not the appropriate one. In spite of his public success as a student, Rodriguez remembers himself as a "great mimic, a collector of thoughts, not a thinker" (p. 67). In third person he writes of himself,

He sits in the seminar room - a man with brown skin, the son of working-class immigrant parents. (Addressing the professor at the head of the table, his voice catches with nervousness.) There is no trace of his parents' accent in his speech. Instead he approximates the accents of teachers and classmates. Coming from him those sounds seem suddenly odd. Odd too is the effect produced when he uses academic jargon - bubbles at the tip of his tongue: 'Topos . . . negative capability . . . vegetation imagery in Shakespearean comedy.' He lifts an opinion from Coleridge, takes something else from Frye or Empson or Leavis. He even repeats exactly his professor's earlier comment. All his ideas are clearly borrowed. He seems to have no thought of his own (p. 66).

Transition: London. In London, in the British Museum, the shift from long hours of self-absorbed reflection to the immediacy of even casual social contact was difficult.

I'd leave the library each afternoon and feel myself shy - unsteady, speaking simple sentences at the grocer's or the butcher's on my way back to my bed-sitter (p. 70).

And the time had come, too, for him to write. It was his dissertation - the pinnacle of years of learning. Now it was his turn to speak. What would *he* say? What did *he* think? What was *his* opinion, *his* perspective? He was unprepared. He had not been authorized to have a point of view. At that moment, there seemed to be no connection between the intellectual task he was attempting and the immediate concerns of his heart. Thinking had become "lifeless." Increasingly apparent with a gnawing immediacy of its own was the age old dishonesty with himself. It was the root of his angst. Rodriguez suddenly longed for "experience more immediate," a simpler, more direct world of feeling and flesh.

Whenever I started to write, I knew too much (and not enough) to be able to write anything but sentences that were overly cautious, timid, strained brittle under the heavy weight of footnotes and qualifications. I seemed unable to dare a passionate statement. I felt drawn by professionalism to the edge of sterility, capable of no more than pedantic, lifeless, unassailable prose. Then the nostalgia began...I became impatient with books. I wanted experience more immediate...I wanted something - I couldn't say exactly what. I told myself that I wanted a more passionate life. And a life less thoughtful...I wanted to be less alone (p. 71).

Transition: Leaving academia. Returning to his parents' home, Rodriguez realized a sense in which he would in fact never be able to 'come home.' Although he could physically leave academia, a part of that culture would always be with him. He had in fact become a scholar. His education had formed in him certain ways of reflecting on the world and, in a sense, it was his *modus operandi*, an important constituent of his

identity. Still, even though his reflective capacities might help him to understand his parents in a broader perspective, Rodriguez knew this was a type of understanding that would never connect him in the more immediate way for which he longed - a way that he had felt compelled to give up before he was ready.

I came home. After the year in England, I spent three summer months living with my mother and father, relieved by how easy it was to be home...I felt easy sitting and eating and walking with them. I watched them, nevertheless, looking for evidence of those elastic, sturdy strands that bind generations in a web of inheritance (pp. 71-72)... [I] could not cast off the culture I had assumed. Living with my parents for the summer, I remained an academic - a kind of anthropologist in the family kitchen, searching for evidence of our 'cultural ties' as we ate dinner together (p. 160).

At first, the realization disappointed him. His penchant for intellectual reflection seemed to be something that detached him from his parents. However, it came to him that this was also the skill that had allowed him, and would continue to allow him, to understand and creatively transform his own life.

I realized that I had not neatly sidestepped the impact of schooling. My desire to do so was precisely the measure of how much I remained an academic. Negatively (for that is how this idea first occurred to me): My need to think so much and so abstractly about my parents and our relationship was in itself an indication of my long education. My father and mother did not pass their time thinking about the cultural meanings of their experience. It was I who described their daily lives with airy ideas. And

yet, positively: The ability to consider experience so abstractly allowed me to shape into desire what would otherwise have remained indefinite, meaningless longing in the British Museum. If, because of my schooling, I had grown culturally separated from my parents, my education finally had given me ways of speaking and caring about that fact (p. 72).

The bigger problem for Rodriguez at this point was that his ability to reflect, to abstract away from immediate experience, still did not feel genuine. Even the process of trying to complete his dissertation had begun to feel like an aping of academic life. It was only years later, after he had abandoned his academic goals, that Rodriguez was finally able to trust the impulse to reflect, to make it his own, a bona fide aspect of himself. Only then, at a point he ironically calls “the end of education,” did Rodriguez experience himself as having an authentic choice over his future as an intellectual. There is an acceptance that it could not have happened any other way.

It would require many more years of schooling (an inevitable miseducation) in which I came to trust the silence of reading and the habit of abstracting from immediate experience - moving away from a life of closeness and immediacy I remembered with my parents, growing older - before I turned unafraid to desire the past, and thereby achieved what had eluded me for so long - the end of education (p. 73).

Integrative Summary: Immediacy and Reflection

Central to the tension between immediacy and reflection in Hunger of Memory were two different levels at which Rodriguez remembers being conscious of language. At one level, language was the ‘carrier’ of knowledge. It was the medium through which he would become a ‘good student.’ Books in particular, Rodriguez believed, held the power to transform him into an educated person. Academic language at this level served a denotative rather than a creative or expressive function. It afforded an analytic, detached, propositional access to a world that somehow did not include himself.

At another level, Rodriguez recalls also being conscious of a more immediate aspect of language. For him, this was contained in the *sound* of words.⁶ Language could be musical. From this perspective, meaning went beyond mere words to the relational, imaginary, aesthetic, and affective meanings implicit in their sound. *Who* was immediately speaking was as vital as what was said. This is the level to which Rodriguez’s consciousness attuned as he read poetry or he listened to the voices of intimates. Ultimately, for Rodriguez the richest sounds seemed to reside in poetry. Poetry was never quite one or the other, word or sound for him. It continually moved back and forth between them.

⁶ I recently had lunch with a friend, a foreign student from a non-English speaking country. She is in America working on her doctorate. English has continued to be a struggle. She shared that during her most recent trip home, she was wondering what she missed most about her country. She realized that it was not the food or the geography or the climate. It was the *language*. As she put it, she “cannot touch” in English. In English, because she must work so hard at the mechanics of it, she cannot get beyond the feeling of only “exchanging information.” For young Rodriguez as for my friend, words during the initial period of language acquisition were a means of merely exchanging information. Suddenly, a sensitive child at a critical point in his development (i.e., leaving the home to enter the first institution of his life), especially once the family had shifted to English, Rodriguez could no longer ‘touch’.

It is the song created by lyric poets that I find most compelling. Written poems exist on a page, at first glance, as a mere collection of words. And yet, despite this, without musical accompaniment, the poet leads me to hear the sounds of the words I read. As song, the poem passes between sense and sound, never belonging for long to one realm or the other (p. 38).

Prior to his parents' insistence that the family speak only English in the home, for Rodriguez immediacy and reflection as ways of knowing mapped quite neatly onto home and school, respectively. Or perhaps more precisely, they mapped onto Spanish and English. Spanish in the home slid between sound and sense. It nurtured and sustained the bonds between them. His mother's voice held great immediacy. In Spanish, the sound would 'say' to Rodriguez...

I am addressing you in words I never use with los gringos. I recognize you as someone special, close, like no one outside. You belong with us. In the family (Ricardo). (p. 16).

With the banning of Spanish and the introduction of English into the home, until Rodriguez became more fluent, language existed in the first sense only, that is, as mere words, a means of exchanging information only. For him there was a disturbing decrease in the immediacy of the communications between himself and his family members.

A significant issue for Rodriguez, as written about in his autobiography, was a concern regarding the *quality* of his reflection, the quality of his intellect. Because, as

mentioned, he wanted so much to be validated by his teachers, he had become obsequious. He did not voice an opinion nor, for that matter, was he given the impression that original or independent thought was a good thing. From his standpoint, his intellect was not intended to serve *him*, it was intended to serve his teachers. Ideas were things to be borrowed, repeated, lifted from a teacher or a book. This approach to learning was at first successful but, as Rodriguez moved through undergraduate and graduate school, it gradually undermined him. It was this that prompted him to observe...

although I was a very good student, I was also a very bad student (p. 44).

Not until his decision to leave academia was made and his formal education terminated could reflection for Rodriguez, his trust in “the silence of reading and the habit of abstracting from immediate experience,” become truly his own. Only then did he feel he had something important and original to contribute as an intellectual. For Rodriguez, the “end of education” meant that he was now free to think beyond the information given.

CHAPTER SIX

Jill Ker Conway

The Road to Coorain relates the events in the education and life of Jill Ker Conway from 1929, when her folks purchased the family's sheep ranch in the Australian outback, to Ker Conway's departure in 1960 for graduate school in the United States.¹ Ker Conway writes about her path from the outback, with its isolation and unforgiving natural elements, to the complex social world of Sydney, where she, her mother and two brothers relocated following her father's untimely death. Conway's education occurs amidst, if not because and in spite of, her struggles against the forces of fate, family tragedy, class, culture, and an increasingly self-absorbed mother. Rich in detail, The Road to Coorain is a book about how Conway first recognizes and then gradually learns to cherish and protect her own intellectual freedom.

Background. Jill Ker Conway was born in the Australian outback in 1934. With her family, she lived on a remote and isolated ranch that her parents' had purchased in 1929. They named it "Coorain," an aboriginal word meaning windy place. Her father raised sheep and cattle, a tough job given the barrenness of the land and the unpredictability of the elements. He had been a sharpshooter in the first world war and, upon returning to Australia, had overseen a large ranching operation.

¹ Conway has also written a second book, True North (Ker Conway, 1994), that encompasses her arrival in the United States, graduate school, and her subsequent personal and professional life in America. This work will concern itself only with the events contained in The Road from Coorain.

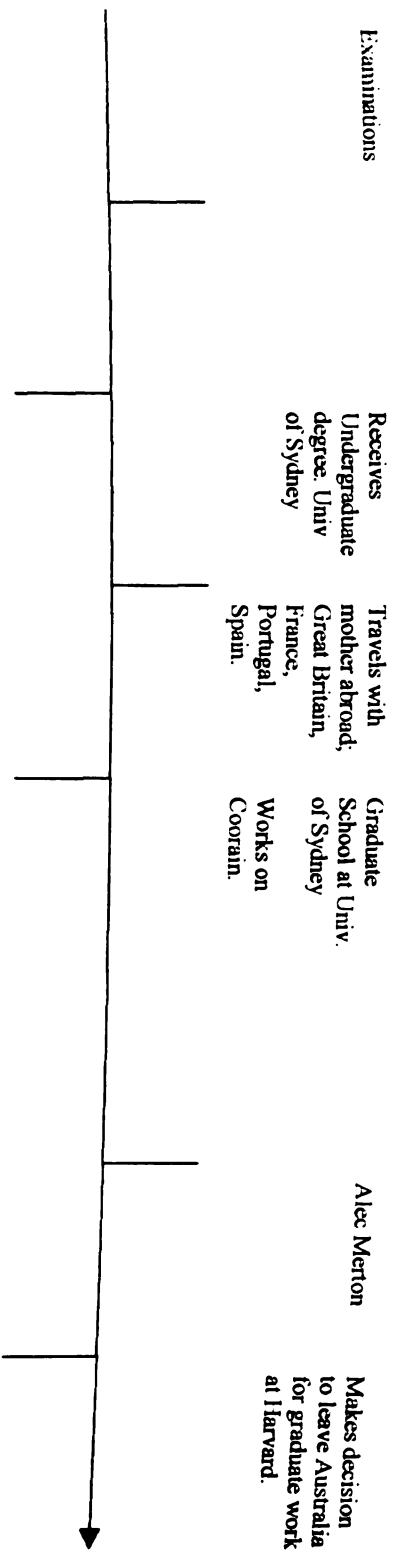


Figure 2 (continued). Jill Ker Conway - Timeline of Major Transitional Events

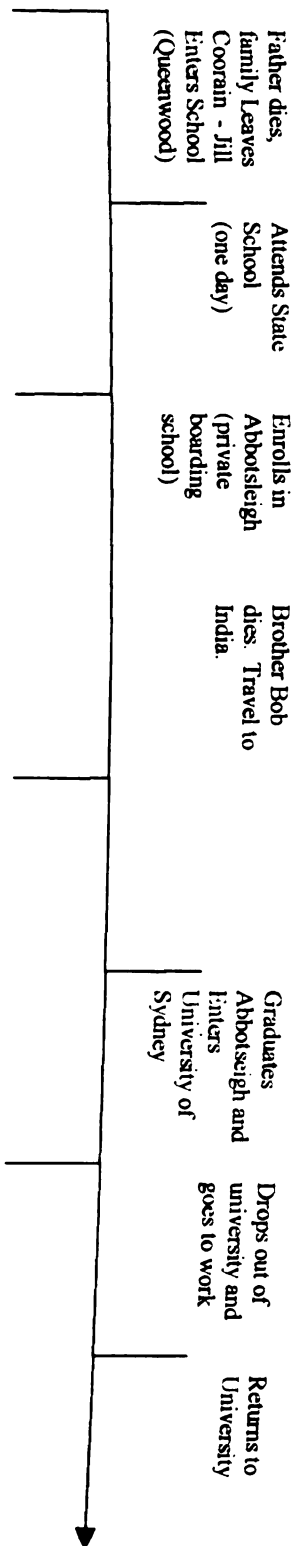


Figure 2 Jill Ker Conway - Timeline of Major Transitional Events

Although neither of Conway's parents had much formal education, both were intelligent and could read and write. Her father was mostly self-taught. "His education had been the lore of raising sheep and cattle, breaking horses, knowing how to command men," writes Conway (p. 20). Conway's mother had quit school at age 14 to work in support of her family. Resenting this arrangement, she left home at 17 and began nurse's training, which she completed while still in her teens. Conway writes that her mother used her profession "to educate herself." Her mother would take positions in different parts of the country where she could "sample" and "explore" life. After ten years of working, she met Conway's father. Aware of her lack of formal learning, Conway's mother undertook a program of self-education, reading widely during their period as a young family at Coorain. Adhering to the colonial mentality of the time, she was determined that none of her children should become associated, in education or manner, with Australia's commonfolk.² Because of the remoteness of Coorain, Conway's only contact with other children was with her two older brothers, who were both away at boarding school by the time Conway was seven. So great was the remoteness that she did not see another child her own age until she was eleven.

² Historically, there has been an assumption that Australian commonfolk are descendents of its original European inhabitants, which were British convicts sent to the Australian colony during the 18th and 19th centuries in Briton's effort to populate it. Unable to persuade ordinary citizens to immigrate, for two hundred years the British government had sent ship after ship of convicts to Australia (Sydney itself was originally a convict settlement). In subsequent generations, there was an inherited contempt among the descendents of these original settlers toward those who identified themselves, in education and manner, with "higher," genteel, British culture. Only recently has this begun to change to the point where the ability to trace one's roots to Australia's original European inhabitants has become a point of pride.

Conway learned to read at an early age and, with her curious mind, was soon reading “everything within reach” (p. 41). Books were not work, but provided a window onto the world outside their isolated ranch. Because of Conway’s passion for reading, a more formal early elementary education (which would have been by correspondence nonetheless) was not pursued. At age eight, however, Conway did begin a correspondence course designed for educating children in the outback.

Although the start of her parents’ venture at Coorain coincided with the Great Depression and with what was to become an extraordinary period of draught, the early years were good. Conway remembers these as a time of stability for the family. Life was in rhythm with the seasons and the regularity of the tasks of ranching.

All in all, what might on the surface appear like a lonely childhood, especially after the departure of my brothers [for boarding school], was one filled with interest, stimulation, and friends...this world gave me most of what we need in life, and gave it generously. I had the total attention of both my parents, and was secure in the knowledge of being loved. Better still, I knew that my capacity for work was valued and that my contributions to the work of the property really mattered (p. 50).

Unfortunately, as the years passed, an extended drought began to ravage the farm. The deterioration of her parents' dreams was difficult, especially for her father. As things worsened he began to isolate himself, withdrawing into a deep and extended depression. Following his death from an apparent drowning, her mother moved the family to Sydney

where Jill entered school for the first time.³ Conway's mother maintained ownership of Coorain, however, hiring a manager to run the day to day operations.

Sydney represented a huge change for Conway, both socially and culturally. Her first experience of school was as a day student in a private school, Queenwood, where she spent the remainder of her first year in Sydney. Concerned with the cost of private school, Conway's mother enrolled her in the local state school the following year.

Dismayed, Conway did not return after the first day.⁴ Instead, her mother finagled an interview for Conway with the head mistress of Abbotsleigh, a prestigious private school for girls, where Conway completed the remainder of her elementary and secondary education.

In her third year at Abbotsleigh, Conway's brother Bob, whom she loved deeply, was killed in a tragic car accident. He was 21. Conway remembers her grief and her subsequent slide into a cocoon of defensive numbness. "Daily life was in black and white...I mastered intellectual tasks as in the past, but they gave little pleasure" (p. 122). Her mother was paralyzed by the loss. Conway remembers that while away at school, she would be "haunted" by the knowledge of her mother sitting alone at home, "anxiety-crazed" and fearing that that Jill and her brother would also be taken by a sudden and

³ It remains undetermined whether her father's death was a suicide or in fact accidental.

⁴ Conway writes: "In fact, had I persevered [and stayed in the state school] I would have learned a great deal, though little of it from the harassed and overworked teachers in the ill-equipped classrooms. I'd have been obliged to come to terms with the Australian class system, and to see my family's world from the irreverent and often hilarious perspective of the Australian working class. It would have been invaluable knowledge, and my vision of Australia would have been the better for it. It was to take me another fifteen years to see the world from my own Australian perspective, rather than from the British definition taught to my kind of colonial. On the other hand, had I learned that earthy irreverence in my schooldays, it would have ruled out the appreciation of high culture in any form. My mother had no training for that appreciation, but she knew instinctively to seek it for her children" (p. 95).

unpredictable death. The overwhelming neediness of her mother weighed heavily on Conway. It drew her away from her peers, a world her underdeveloped social abilities already had her struggling to enter.

The following year, her mother surprised them by taking Jill, brother Barry (4 years older), and another friend on an ocean cruise to Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). Conway writes,

My mother could not have decided upon any experience better calculated to banish our daily routine and superimpose startling new experiences on the troublesome memories of the year (p. 128).

This was Conway's first exposure to a country other than her own and it jarred her cultural moorings. Against the contrasts of a foreign culture, she realized how much of what she knew was not necessarily true but simply presumed or taken for granted as true. Suddenly, many aspects of Australian culture such as the brevity of its history, its class system, and its religious foundations were no longer so transparent.

Conway graduated from Abbotsleigh with numerous honors and awards. Still, she was sad to leave the sanctuary of the place and frightened by thoughts of the teeming social world of the University. She wanted to get out from under her mother's control but felt bound by loyalty and tradition to care for her. To further complicate things, although she knew she loved to study, Conway hadn't the slightest idea of what she "would become" after three years of higher education. Nonetheless, following graduation,

Conway began to attend the University of Sydney while still actively attending to her mother. Ultimately, she was disillusioned by her coursework. It seemed trivial and arcane, of little relevance to her own life. Also, her difficulty forming friendships left her feeling alienated.

Conway decided to drop out of college midway through her first year, using her mother's ill health as justification. About the same time, her brother Barry, who had been managing Coorain, left Coorain for good and was working successfully as a bush pilot. Unlike herself, he seemed to have "made his own place in life" (p. 159). This left Conway next in line for helping her mother to manage Coorain, which meant occasional solo trips there.

Returning from Coorain after the shearing of the sheep, Conway decided that she needed to gain some financial independence from her mother. She found work in a medical office where she served as an "all-purpose medical records clerk, receptionist, appointments secretary, and occasional practical nurse" (p. 161). This period was an important time for Conway's sense of herself. She made deliberate improvements in her physical appearance. Through her daily interactions with the public, she unexpectedly found herself developing the ability to interact in a public context, abilities she had not been able to develop on Coorain or in her isolated existence with her mother. Conway's relationship with mother improved during this time. Her mother was even willing to pay Conway's fees when she decided to return to the University. Returning to school, Conway experienced herself and the University differently than before. She now had a

public self. She was able to begin forming relationships, many vital to her future as a scholar.

Back at the university and confident, Conway even began skipping classes occasionally. She was learning from her friend, Toni, “the art of enjoying life, of stopping to savor the joys of the moment” (p. 165). Studying was crammed into nights and weekends at home. That same fall, her mother visited Coorain with a friend for a couple of months. Conway used this as an opportunity to further explore her new way of life, inviting friends over for meals, study groups, overnight stays, parties, and general conviviality. Word of this got back to her mother on Coorain who, deeply disappointed, cut her trip short. Although Jill would be disciplined, her mother said, this could wait until she had completed her imminent first year examinations. Her mother was convinced that Conway had frittered away her preparation time and that her showing on the exams would be dismal.

The day before the first exam, Conway reviewed “the fragmentary notes” of those lectures that she had actually attended and glanced over the assigned books. She felt a “sense of clam and detachment” the morning of the exam. The exam was on Tudor history, a subject on which she had been reading independently for years. Following the examinations, Conway and her mother were startled when telegrams and letters of congratulations began arriving. Both Conway and her mother were taken aback. Jill had succeeded wildly, taking a first in history and scoring highly in both English and psychology. This inaugurated a period of academic stardom that was new and “heady.” It began to form in Conway the confidence that her ideas could earn her recognition and

respect in the wider academic world. She realized that she could write and that, further , reflective thinking and writing (unlike in high school) were the kind of things valued in the University.

As graduation from the University of Sydney approached, Conway applied for a governmental position with Australia's Department of External Affairs. "I wanted...to play what I saw as a practical role in the general reorientation of the country's culture and external relations," she writes (p. 187). In spite of her overwhelming qualifications, she was denied the position on the basis of gender. It was her first run-up against the wall of sexual prejudice in the Australia of the late 1950s. She was bitterly disappointed. She had "obtusely" ignored the fact that there was only one female on the history faculty and that she herself was the only woman in the history program. She could not fathom that conformity to gender stereotypes would actually take precedence over the value of the many skills she possessed. This did much to raise Conway's consciousness regarding the historical conditions of women in society, including her own mother's. She was determined to learn more that might help her to eventually contribute to some kind of cultural change.

After graduating with a degree in history, Conway took an extended trip to England, Europe and Spain with her mother. The trip provided extensive exposure to British culture, its class system, and its condescending attitude toward Australian culture. She soaked up the history of the various sites they visited around Europe, putting this into juxtaposition with Australian history. Building on the initial insights that had primed her historical consciousness during her teen-age trip to Ceylon, the contrasts began to

produce special insights into the history, culture, and geography of her native land, insights that reached beyond her previous colonial attitudes.

Conway returned to Australia with new eyes. Owing to her congenial relationship with the faculty, she managed to secure a teaching job in the history department at the University of Sydney. Meanwhile, she continued to live with, and care for, her mother. She also made occasional trips in the service of managing affairs on Coorain. It was a liminal existence: academic and bush cultures in juxtaposition. Although moving between them provided Conway with unique insights into both, it also led to a sense of confusion regarding which world she actually belonged in. Her desire for intellectual fulfillment pulled to the future. At the same time, her loyalty to her mother and to Coorain hugged to the past.

During this period, Conway began a brief but intense romantic relationship with an American businessman, a mining speculator whom she met while visiting her brother's farm on the outback. He was the first person with whom Conway experienced complete acceptance of herself as a woman *and* as a professional. However, because both had strong commitments to their professions, their relationship lasted only 16 months. Nonetheless, it was influential in convincing Conway that her pursuit of learning and the development of her identity as an intellectual must take precedence over the obligations she felt to her mother and Coorain. Spurred by the sudden and stark realization of her powerlessness over her mother's increasing bitterness, Conway made the decision to leave Australia for graduate study at Harvard. The Road to Coorain ends with her leaving her native country, her mother, and her past for an unknown future in the United States.

The next section concerns itself with the tension that Conway experienced between stability and change. For Conway, in general, this was reflected through her struggle to maintain a sense of personal continuity through her role as daughter and caretaker while, at the same time, a series of major life events, her formal learning experiences, and the press of her own ideas continued to move her toward becoming something different. As with the prior analyses, the sections will be organized according to those transitions that seemed critical to the particular tensions being discussed.

Stability and Change.

Transition: School. The first important transition in Conway's life involved the death of her father and the family's move to Sydney. It was an abrupt change from Coorain where, although the spaces were vast, the rules regarding how to live one's life were simple and few. In Sydney, Conway's mother enrolled her as a day student at Queenwood.. Here Conway suddenly found herself dropped into the "totally enclosed world" of the school. It seemed complicated and mysterious. And in this urban setting her knowledge of the natural world seemed completely useless. Most remarkable was the experience of being among persons her own age. It was new, frightening, and fatiguing.

I found the small world inside the school gates alien and intimidating. Having never had a playmate, I did not know how to play. Never having known anyone my own age, I was uncertain about how to begin with thirty or so other eleven-year-olds (87) ... Each afternoon I was exhausted, not by the schoolwork, which mostly seemed very easy, but by the stress of coping with so many people and trying to guess what the rules were for each new situation (p. 89).

On Coorain, with the exception of her older brothers, all of Conway's interactions were with adults. They took place around adult projects and concerns. Although at school she was in a world created especially for children, it was not a world she understood. The purpose of activities was lost on her. Coorain had been an intelligible world. "One saw visible results from one's labors" (p. 50). The logic of learning on Coorain was driven by the immediate need to survive. If she got lost in the outback, she would die. Therefore, Conway learned early on how to navigate the terrain. If a sheep could not be caught and held, no wool would be obtained. Therefore, she learned the trick of tackling them so they could be sheered. The role of children was to help. It was a familiar world and Conway felt capable in it. Here in school, in what felt like a swarm, where everything seemed so arbitrary and illogical, she suddenly felt herself inadequate. The change jarred her.

The school yard with its busy ant heap of people skipping rope, throwing basketballs, shouting, and playing hopscotch reduced me to a paralysis of shyness. I had never seen tennis or basketball played, and had not the faintest notion of the rules...I was used to knowing better than most people what needed to be done. Here I was the veriest incompetent, not only in games, but in the classroom, where there were also rules to be learned. It did no good to ask why the rules obtained. Answers were not forthcoming (p. 87).

The rules that sustained school culture were much harder to understand than anything Conway was required to learn academically. Out of school, as her mother began

to adjust to the change and loss, their relationship became a mooring. For a time, their shared history and the gradual patterning of their home life provided a point of stability for Conway.

With each day that passed in our new way of life, I could see [mother's] body relaxing. She was still haunted by grief at the past and by anxiety about the future, but the lines of tension disappeared from her body... On most days after I arrived home, we had a leisurely afternoon tea gazing at the Harbor, and then we read for an hour or so before dinner (p. 89)... our first months together in Sydney were golden (p. 91).

Transition: State School. With Coorain still producing no income, Conway's mother began to be concerned with the cost of private school. As much as she hated the idea, her mother asked Jill if she might like the local state school. Her suggestion that she enter state school astonished Conway, who had internalized her mother's colonial attitude. She had thought of herself as above the commonfolk, and now she was being asked to join them? Sensitive to her mother's predicament, she consented. She was appalled and dumbfounded by what she encountered.

The first day of school in February was hot, 105 degrees. The school, a brick building with an iron roof, was like a furnace, and its inhabitants, teachers and students, wilted as the day wore on. I hated it from the moment I walked in the door. I was a snob, and I knew the accents of the teachers and most of the students were wrong by the exacting standards we'd had drummed into us at home (pp. 93-94)... Worse still was the unruly behavior of everyone of

every age. Boys pulled my hair...girls stuck out their tongues and used bad language. Teachers lost their tempers and caned pupils in front of the class. Few books were opened as the staff waged a losing battle to establish order (p. 93).

As with her short experience at Queenwood, Conway could not fathom the logic by which the state school operated. She remembers her befuddlement.

I was [again] in a more diverse social universe than I had known at Coorain. I had no idea how to behave or what the rules were for managing social boundaries. I had been friends, one could say special friends, with [station hands] Shorty, or with Ron Kelly, but that was in a simple world where we each knew our respective places. Here, I knew only that the old rules could not possibly apply (p. 94).

Even if the “rules” by which the school operated had been fathomable, Conway was not likely to have joined with them. Her sense of herself told her that she was in the wrong place. As she was set upon by the other students, it reinforced for her the difference between herself and them and the impossibility that she could ever change enough to belong there.

“Stuck up, ain’t you,” they yelled, as I faced them in stubborn silence. They were right... My encounter was a classic confrontation for the Australia of my generation. I, the carefully respectable copier of British manners, was being called to raucous and high-spirited account by the more vital and unquestionably authentic Australian popular culture (p. 94).

Transition: Abbotsleigh. In contrast to Queenwood and her brief experience at state school, Conway was immediately comfortable at Abbotsleigh.⁵ She felt herself among her own social class. (Not *back* among her class, by the way, for the fact is that she had never physically been among an actual community of people who shared a colonial mindset. It was always the attitudes and expectations of her mother that had formed her colonial perceptions of herself.) At Abbotsleigh, Conway found there were other bush girls who were also struggling to adapt. She writes that “many students were boarders from distant country areas who had also had to overcome their shyness and become social beings” (p. 97). The teachers, sensitive to this, helped Conway negotiate the transition from an isolated world to the compressed world of the city. Slowly at first, she eventually found her niche in a group of students who shared a characteristic stoicism.

My boarder friends were mainly the daughters of the real backcountry, people who were homesick for the bush and their families and accepted the school as a term which must be served uncomplainingly (p. 106).

The contrast between Abbotsleigh and her brief experience at the state school was abrupt. It brought into stark relief the disparity between Conway’s own possibilities for

⁵ Abbotsleigh, which currently calls itself “The Australian School for World Citizens,” is still in existence. The school maintains a website replete with photos: <http://www.abbotsleigh.nsw.edu.au/>

becoming educated and the bleakness of opportunity she saw for students at the state school. She felt grateful.

The difference between our chances for education were as night and day. At Abbotsleigh, even though I was immediately ushered into a classroom of thirty-six total strangers, it seemed as though I had already arrived in paradise (p. 97).

It is important to add that although this was a time of great change in the circumstances of Conway's life, there were also significant changes taking place in Australian culture generally. As in America, the period following WWII was one of general prosperity in Australia. For many, college was becoming more necessity than the privilege it had once represented. Also as in America, the boom of Australian post-war babies reached adolescence in what was generally an optimistic time. The economy was good and the pace of change in popular culture was swift. Things had been much different for Conway's mother, of course, who had grown up in a more cautious and conservative era.

My mother's code of thrift, sobriety, and industry had served her well growing up in a simpler Australian society, but it had little appeal for her children, hungry for the excitement and experience, and made aware of a more complex society transformed by the economic stimulus of the Second World War. In contrast to the cautious mentality inherited by the generation shaped by the Depression, we [Conway and her two older brothers] were agog with the excitement of prosperity, and the questions

raised by Australia's wartime contact with American culture (p. 109).

A year or so following her brother Bob's tragic death, Conway's mother took Jill and Barry on an ocean journey to Ceylon (Sri Lanka). Although her mother had intended the trip as a diversion, something to distract them from their loss, the contrast of cultures ignited Conway's consciousness. She was jolted by the extent of her own ethnocentrism. Things cultural had always been evaluated in relation to her own class, her own ethnicity, and the values of Australian colonialism generally. Now, in Ceylon,

I felt so disoriented by the extremes of poverty and by my uncertainty about how to behave that I could not relax and enjoy the color, the vitality, and the richness of the new sights and sounds (p. 131). I was puzzled about how to understand and organize the daily flood of new images (p. 133).

Conway found herself calling her colonial perspective into question. She realized the modest length of Australian history in relation to cultures whose traditions antedated Christ. Australia's class system was not the only possible class system, Christianity not the only possible view of the human soul. For the first time, she viewed Australia from the outside. As she did, Conway began to appreciate the arbitrary nature not only of Australian culture, but of culture in general - the fact that, as a product of history, it could

always be other than it was at that moment. Finally, she began to discern the parochial nature of her own education.⁶

A new view of history began to shape my perceptions...Why had no one taught me more about this earlier faith [Buddhism] so similar to Christianity in so many respects? Moreover, why had I been taught to date everything from the birth of Christ and the emergence of the Christian West (p. 132)?

Of course, a consequence of such epiphanies was to find herself questioning the very ground of her own cultural identity. She saw its presumptuousness and even arrogant. These awarenesses were powerful and unsettling for Conway. She felt a pull to return home.

So much of the culture we were viewing in our journey round the island was the product of religion. This was a Buddhist and Hindu country. I wondered idly what Australia was. Did people in Ceylon believe in Karma and a cyclical view of history to explain away the terrible inequities between classes and castes? This set me wondering what beliefs we had at home to justify our inequities. Such ideas were unheard of. I began to look forward to going home and settling into a familiar routine (p. 134).

⁶ Conway writes that the curriculum at Abbotsleigh was "inherited from Great Britain," colonial through and through. Consequently, it "ignored our presence in Australia...We might have been in Sussex for all the attention we paid to Australian poetry and prose. It did not count (p. 98)." This was the colonial mindset. Although Australian by birth, one's identity was tied to things British. To learn was to reconstruct oneself in the British style of thought and manner.

Conway's experience in Ceylon brought her more than an awareness of class. She was also becoming conscious of herself from a national perspective, an identity that ultimately stood in relation to countries outside her own.

Transition: Thinking about University. During her final year at Abbotsleigh, Conway wondered what would become of her.

I knew I couldn't cope with the world outside my family and school yet. I'd never managed to learn to chatter easily with strangers, partly because my home and family wasn't the kind I could chatter easily about (p. 144).

Abbotsleigh had surrounded her with the freedom and the stability to discover her own abilities and interests, to develop a sense of who and what she was apart from her family relationships. It had provided a stable niche where she had begun to blossom intellectually, establish extended friendships, and experience some sense of continuity regarding who and what she was as a person.

[Abbotsleigh] had given me a secure and orderly environment in which to grow, and adults to admire who took it for granted that women would achieve. Moreover, it had been a haven of sorts from the pressures of home...It had also given me friends with whom I could grow slowly from childhood to adolescence. In our time there, we had all come to accept one another like comforting pieces of furniture, and no longer had to hear one another's approval (p. 144).

Now, suggestions for the future came from all sides. Many of these contained the assumption that Conway's educational future, like that of most girls, would follow stereotypical gender paths.

There were clear injunctions from the adult world about what fields of university study were appropriate for a woman... "Don't take science," family friends advised. "There is too much mathematics, and besides, what would a girl like you do in an industrial laboratory?" The things that were "nice for a woman" to study were unintellectual (p. 143).

Conway searched for landmarks by which to determine a course for herself. A star in the night sky maybe, or some stable rock. Unlike the outback, the urban terrain provided no such things. What would she make of herself? What *could* she make of herself? Female professionals were rare in the late 1950s. Did she even have the freedom to consider such options? Stereotypes danced tauntingly around her.

My family and friends agreed that I was "brainy." This was a bad thing to be in Australia. People distrusted intellectuals. Australians mocked anyone with "big ideas" and found them specially laughable in a woman. My mother herself was divided on the subject. One moment she would be congratulating me on my performance at school, and the next contradicting her approval by urging me not to become too interested in my studies. If I did, I would

become a "bluestocking," a comically dull and unfeminine person (p. 146).⁷

Perhaps most importantly, following the path of learning and change by heading off to university would mean leaving her mother. Conway had always understood herself in the light of this relationship. It was difficult to imagine anything beyond it, something else to which she could anchor an identity or self.

[Pride and self-worth obtained from the role of caretaker] was no help when I thought about leaving school and finding my way among the teeming thousands of young people at the University of Sydney. I knew I loved to study, but just what I would do there was unclear. What would I become after three years of higher education? Try as I might I couldn't conjure up a single image to fill in the blank prospect of the future...My picture of myself as an adult was as empty as the western plains (p. 147).

At the graduation ceremonies, Conway was depressed. She struggled between her desire for her own path and the family loyalty that would lead down a road she was already familiar with and, moreover, could predict with certainty. There was no joy at the

⁷ In mid-18th century England a group of women decided to replace evenings of card playing and idle chatter with 'conversation parties,' inviting illustrious men of letters to discuss literary and intellectual topics with them. One regular guest was scholar-botanist Benjamin Stillingfleet. His hostesses willingly overlooked his cheap blue worsted stockings (a type disdained by the elite) in order to have the benefit of his lively conversation. Those who considered it inappropriate for women to aspire to learning derisively called the group the 'Blue Stocking Society.' (Merriam-Webster, 2001).

awards she received that day. She was only irritated that the graduation speaker “slid smoothly past the immediate question of why we had been educated and what we were supposed to do with the rest of our lives” (p. 149). Although her mother had fallen and fractured her wrist the day before, her mother’s absence at the ceremony was ominous. Conway was confused. Hope and powerlessness warred within her.

Daughters in Australia were supposed to be the prop and stay of their parents. Would I ever get away? Was it wrong to want to? How on earth could I set about doing it? How could I tell this woman who lived for me that I did not want to live for her? ...I often watched the Southern Cross in the night sky, but it was not just a compass bearing I needed now, it was a judgment about what would be the moral path to choose (p. 151).

Transition: University . Although without a clear picture of where it might lead, Conway finally made the decision to attend the University of Sydney. She would live at home. This would make it possible to attend school while also continuing to care for her mother. But she found it difficult to keep up both roles, university student and caretaker.

*Would I get everything done in the house before setting out for the thirty-minute walk to the train station?
“Everything” involved seeing that my mother had what she needed for the day, that she was downstairs safely, and that the house was in apple-pie order (p. 155).*

While university life confused and intimidated her, Conway returned home everyday to the exhausting but familiar role of caring for her mother. It was a responsibility that drained her energies for study and also isolated her from other students. The fact that she found the content of her courses uninspiring did not help.

At [Abbotsleigh] sitting down to my books in the evening had been the happy occupation which capped the day, but now I was too weary to enjoy the work. I might have been lifted out of it by the interest of my work, but I was finding most of it dull or disappointing or both (p. 157).

After dropping out of the university in the middle of her first year, Conway began to help her mother manage affairs on Coorain.

It was a sacred trust, [mother] said, our last link to my father and our once happy family life there. I embraced this responsibility energetically, seeing it as a comfort to my ailing mother, whose complaints were now numerous ...It was comfortable to be working there (p. 159).

Following the unsettling experience of the university, Conway found comfort in her roots at Coorain and in the solitude it offered. At the same time, taking her first paid work position during this period, a medical receptionist, marked an important change.

Although her motive had been to achieve a greater degree of financial independence from her mother, it proved to be Conway's first move toward developing a public identity. She

learned to make improvements in her physical appearance according to her own likes, not her mother's. "I was painstakingly constructing an acceptable public self", she writes (p. 162). She no longer spent her evenings exclusively at home but began to date. She began to feel for herself that she was really changing. Still, her mother was generally disapproving.

I felt that at last I was traveling at a heady speed toward adulthood, dressed to kill and ready for adventure. My mother observed my comings and goings warily, but I was too elated to notice her watchful and guarded behavior (p. 163).

Returning to the university one year later, Conway experienced both herself and it differently. Her work at the medical office had helped her to feel more comfortable socially. She had developed the skills and confidence to negotiate a place for herself in public spaces.

This time...I knew my way around, and now accustomed to talking to strangers, I could chatter easily with whomever I sat next to in lectures (p. 164).

The changes in Conway's life up to this point seemed to be either imposed on her or were somehow a result of her attempts to extricate herself from unhappy circumstances. Either way, she struggled to adapt. The next major change was not like

this. Instead, it was sparked by an exceptional performance on her first year examinations. Conway and her mother were startled when the telegrams and letters of congratulations began arriving.

It gradually dawned on me that I had done very well...I had come first in history, earned high distinction in English, and had ranked high in the class in psychology (p. 168).

For the first time, Conway had the “inner feeling” that she had found something at which she could excel. In addition, she had found the means by which she might open doors in the future, particularly one’s through which she might be unindentured from her responsibilities at home.

If I were to become a success academically and chose a career which would take me away from Sydney, it would finesse the whole question of leaving home. My mother would never stand in the way of success. Moreover, if it were public enough, its sweetness might cushion the blow of my departure (p. 168).

There were suddenly dramatic changes in how those in Conway’s academic setting acknowledged her. She had gone from being simply another student to one whose intellectual gifts distinguished her. She was welcomed into the honors program, reinforcing her new-sprung sense of herself as someone with special talents.

The beginning of my second year at the University of Sydney was a heady time. People knew who I was. Faculty, hitherto superior beings clad in black gowns, now nodded as they passed me in the Quadrangle. Everyone taking history or English honors in the years above me began to taking an interest in what I was doing. I started out taking a double honors program in history and English, enjoying the special status that this ambitious program brought (p. 169).

However, after being rejected on the basis of gender for the government position she had hoped to acquire upon college graduation, Conway again found herself in a dilemma. Although her desire to become a professional scholar was strong, she also feared the implications this would have. She had made personal changes that provided her with a stronger sense of herself as a woman. Yet these changes, which she valued, when carried into the academy threatened the stability of the academy's patriarchal structure. She was afraid to follow the path of change and yet she was afraid *not* to.

At a deeper level I feared choosing a career that was universally seen as unfeminine. I feared the only sensible choice for me, the life of a scholar, because I was too uncertain of my identity as a woman to risk the cultural dissonance the choice involved (p. 196).

But Conway's subsequent year abroad with her mother, undertaken first as an escape from the dead ends she had encountered, only brought her back to her passion for questions of history, culture, and identity. She began to understand what it meant that she was Australian, that she had grown up in the outback where one's eyes grew accustomed

to tremendous distances and a natural, austere beauty. She realized it was where she had formed her aesthetic sense.

It took a visit to England for me to understand how the Australian landscape actually formed the ground of my consciousness, shaped what I saw...My landscape was sparer, more brilliant in color, stronger in its contrasts, majestic in scale, and bathed in shimmering light (p. 198).

As Conway and her mother traveled,

the journey involved the redefinition of our relationship to the past and reconfiguring our sense of geography. Just as we know ourselves in relation to others, so I knew how beautiful Australia was only after encountering the real rather than the imagined landscape of England and Europe (p. 201).

Thus, it is against a dramatic change in culture and topography, living and traveling in the countries of Great Britain, France, Portugal, and Spain, that Conway acquired her deepest sense of herself as Australian. She recognized then how her very consciousness had been shaped by the history, culture, and geography of her homeland. It was something she desired passionately to understand. In this desire, she found the moorings for a career.

I knew now what I was going to do. I was going home to study history. It was no use pretending that I wasn't a scholar (p. 209)...I was going back to Australia to test my

new sense of the world and my new perspective on Australian society (p. 210)...It was absurd that it had taken me until I was twenty-three years old to get oriented on the globe, but I was glad that I finally knew where I was (p. 211).

Returning to Australia with new eyes, Conway was asked to teach a course on American History at the university of Sydney. It brought her face-to-face again with the gender stereotypes that becoming a scholar would challenge. Could she hang on to her hard-won sense of herself as a woman? It was a change that she had worked hard to achieve and that was still somewhat fragile. To strive to fulfill herself intellectually within 1950's Australian culture would represent a challenge to the status quo, a threat to deeply entrenched traditions.

The morning of each lecturing day, I woke up with a hollow feeling in the pit of my stomach and set out for the University like a prisoner headed for the guillotine. I was beset by a sudden new set of worries about my appearance. I didn't want to hide my anomalous female self under the conventional black academic gown...I'm a woman standing here teaching, not some apologetic, sexually neutral person. I didn't have the powers of analysis to understand that my tenseness and anxiety came from crossing social boundaries (p. 219).

Although Conway had made plans to pursue graduate work, she still had one foot in the outback. She had continued to take responsibility for affairs on Coorain. "I was puzzling about my future and what world I really belonged in" (p. 224), she writes. About

this time, Conway had also begun to feel a certain emptiness in her life. She seemed to live in two different worlds between which she was the only constant. Either place, there was a part of her that didn't belong. In the academy, she sometimes felt like a rancher dressed in professorial garb. On Coorain, she was an academic in rancher's clothing. There was no one who had witnessed and could validate both identities.

There was no one in any of the variety of circles in which I moved who could participate with me in all the various worlds I liked to inhabit (p. 225).

It was during this time that she met Alec Merton, an American businessman, with whom she had a 16 month romance. A uranium speculator with a college background, he was someone at ease in both of Conway's worlds, outback and academia. He understood both aspects of her life. His insistence that her greatest gifts were as a scholar therefore had a special credibility.

I couldn't believe it; I'd found a man who respected my work and who shared my exacting standards about it... In many respects he was the first really sane, thoughtful, and mature person I'd known, and as a result he began to set me straight about many of my approaches to life... when I mentioned my duty and responsibility to the family, he just shook his head. "Your duty's to your talents," he said. "Never forget it. You can pay someone to run that ranch almost as well as you'll do it. But no one else can develop your gifts" (p. 228).

Their relationship played a critical role in solidifying Conway's image of herself as a professional woman. Merton admired her work and she began to take it more seriously in return.

It was not long after their relationship had ended, both faithful to the precedence of their professional lives, that Conway's mother exploded in an irrational rage at Conway's brother and his wife during a visit. Suddenly, Conway saw the truth of what her mother had become.

My mother was now an angry and vindictive woman, her rages out of all proportion to any real or imagined slight... [she was] impregnably entrenched in her quest for self-immolation (p. 231)... I realized, in what amounted to a conversion experience, that I was going to violate the code of my forefathers... I wasn't nearly tough enough to stay around in an emotional climate more desolate than any drought I'd ever seen... I was going to admit defeat; turn tail; run for cover (p. 232).

The next morning, Conway stopped at the registrar's office and picked up the addresses for Harvard's history department and for Radcliffe's graduate school.

I wasn't exactly elated about it. I felt more like an early Christian convert who has died to the old ways and lives under a new law... I could use my reason to live by another set of rules. As a historian, I knew how few free choices ever face us in life, but this choice of mine now was unquestionably one (pp. 232-233).

To break from her mother and her life in Australia was to admit to herself that Australia's intellectual climate would never be friendly to her desire to understand Australian history on its own terms. She could not form an intellectual identity in a country that denied the existence of the very subject she wished to understand: an authentic Australian culture. She toyed with what she might say in her essay to the admissions committee.

What would the hapless committee chairman do if I wrote the truth, I wondered? That I had come to an intellectual dead end in Australia; that I had rejected the cultural values of the country, and wanted an escape while there was still emotional life left in me; that I needed to be somewhere where one could look at the history of empires truthfully; that life had been so trying recently that I had taken to drinking far too much...that Cambridge was halfway round the world from Sydney, and that was a comfortable distance; that I was looking for a more congenial emotional environment, where ideas and feelings completed rather than denied one another (p. 233-234)?

Her musings revealed to Conway her own uncertainty regarding the story of her leaving. It didn't seem to follow any plot that she was familiar with. What kind of narrative was it, this that represented "both a sentence and a release" (p. 238)?

It was certainly no romantic quest. I had had my great romantic experience and sought no other. And there was no way to see it as an odyssey, for I wasn't setting out to conquer anything and there would be no triumphant return. I was leaving because I didn't fit in, never had, and wasn't likely to...I was going to another country, to begin all over again. I searched my mind for narratives that dealt with

such thorough and all-encompassing defeats, but could come up with none (p. 236).

As Conway finally walked out to the plane that would carry her to America, she had the sense of leaving her father, now long buried in the outback. Her mind settled on the idea that even though she left bodily, her soul would always be Australian and that it would one day return to join her father's. Even in death, she would continue to agitate the views of her countrymen. In the book's final paragraph, Conway writes,

My mind flew back to the dusty cemetery where my father was buried. Where, I wondered, would my bones come to rest? It pained me to think of them not fertilizing Australian soil. Then I comforted myself with the notion that wherever on the earth was my final resting place, my body would return to the red dust of the western plains. I could see how it would blow about and get in people's eyes, and I was content with that (p. 238).

Integrative Summary: Stability and Change

Moving from the outback into the world of a modern city was a dramatic change for Conway. She had little to go by. In the classroom, since learning was no longer embedded in the activities that helped one live from day to day, its purposes seemed lost on her. At the state school, she felt the class differences in the tensions between herself and her classmates and it only solidified her sense of herself as somehow above them. Things changed somewhat for the better once she was accepted into the private boarding school, Abbotsleigh. There, for the first time, Conway found a social niche among others

her own age. She and other girls from the outback recognized one another as kindred souls, accepting and supporting one another “like comforting pieces of furniture.”

The contrasts offered by travel abroad played a large role in the development of Conway's cultural identity. During her first trip abroad, to Ceylon, she was confronted with her own ethnocentrism. It set up a tension between her Australian colonialist attitudes and the possibility of another way. She says she felt “disoriented,” and “could not relax.” Her cultural gyroscope had been knocked off center. Although it was draining and she eventually longed to return home, nevertheless this kind of disruption in her sense of herself culturally and socially continued to disturb, intrigue, and compel her. In fact, it was during her year abroad with her mother following college graduation that she began to realize a sense of stability around her persistent curiosity regarding questions of history, culture, and identity. As such questions continued to shape themselves in her mind, Conway finally accepted them as evidence of who and what she was: a scholar.

Throughout, the question of pursuing higher levels of education brought Conway into conflict with the gender stereotypes of mid-century Australia. When Conway assumed a college teaching role, she wondered at first whether it would be better to be perceived as feminine or as highly educated - these two seemed mutually exclusive. And at home, was it better for her to not rock the boat, continuing her responsibilities as a daughter? Or should she pursue the path of learning and of change? Her relationship with her increasingly bitter and self-absorbed mother was such that she could not fulfill the daughter role and still develop intellectually in the ways she desired.

Conway's decision to drop out midway through her freshman year turns out to have been a good one. For the first time, her work at the medical office demanded but also supported personal change. She needed to interact with doctors, nurses, and patients. After a life that had rarely thrust her into contact with strangers, she had taken a position that now did so on a daily basis. She had to develop a public identity. As a result, she was able to return to the university a changed person, more confident in her capacity to interact socially. At the same time, this did create tension by threatening the stability of her role vis-à-vis her mother. Her mother, who had grown increasingly rigid, responded negatively to most of Conway's efforts toward change.

When Conway returned to school and eventually found herself moving between her responsibilities on Coorain and her work at the university, she experienced the outback and academia as two different cultural worlds. She writes that for the moment they were "mutually stimulating" (216). However, it was her past and a sense of continuity that tied her to Coorain. And it was her future and the desire for change that pulled her toward academia. There was a stability and a sense of rootedness on Coorain that Conway had not yet found in academia. She understood its people, terrain, and culture, even though she admitted that she herself would probably not be able to survive the solitude that life there involved. To try would be intellectual suicide. At the same time, travel back and forth between Coorain and academia continued to fuel her questions about what it meant to actually *be* Australian. These were the questions that began to define her as a scholar.

Conway's memories in The Road to Coorain reflect the fluctuation between her search for a sense of rootedness and stability, lost with the sudden death of her father and their abrupt move to Sydney and, at the same time, her unremitting desire for change and growth. With time, that which had once offered stability in the face of change (specifically, her relationship with her mother) gradually became an impediment to change. At the same time, a new kind of stability had begun to emerge around Conway's academic identity, around her passion and persistent curiosity regarding questions of history and culture. Her decision to leave for Harvard was a quest to pursue the latter. It was the questions *she* had formed that she now wished to form her intellectually.

Nonetheless, it was hard to leave Coorain. Conway had a bond with it that she realized, no matter how much things changed, would endure. The outback would always be there and its images would always remain a part of her.

People will grow old and die; the house will decay, but the desert peas and saltbush will always renew themselves. That's the way to remember it. Even if I never see it again, I'll know just how they look, and the places where they grow (p. 235).

As realized in the tension between her struggle for a sense of personal continuity and her desire to become someone or something new, the pursuit of learning and the making of an identity in Conway's life were inseparable. The next section will look at the tension in Conway's autobiography between experiences of affiliation and those of

separateness. Experiences of affiliation were those that lead Conway to experience her learning and her identity as connected in important ways to people, things, and ideas outside herself. Experiences of separateness, in contrast, were those that those that lead to feelings of being someone set apart.

Affiliation and Separateness.

For those in the Australian bush, family life constituted a culture unto itself. Sealed from the outside world by sheer distance, Conway's sense of herself was sustained in relation to her mother, father, two brothers, and one or two avuncular station hands. She had no one her own age by which to judge herself as smart, dull, or otherwise. Her world was an adult world, her awareness centered around adult concerns, adult hopes and worries, and adult suffering. With the exception of her mother's colonial mindset, which insisted that she and her family were above the Australian commonfolk, the family defined itself not so much through its affiliations with society as in relation to the elements of wind, sun, and rain. These could occasionally be generous but were more often cruel and withholding.

With her father, Conway learned early on about the practical aspects of bush life. He taught her about the land, the animals, the elements, and how be a station hand. Even as a young girl, she contributed in important ways to the family's survival. Working with her father also provided plenty of moments for talk. Most of their exchanges were prompted by the natural surroundings.

I would ask endless questions about the weather, the vegetation, the transmission of characteristics through several generations of sheep. How to breed to eliminate that defect, or promote the desirable characteristic (p. 42).

But morality and ethics were also fair game.

As we did our day's work, theological questions kept cropping up. "Isn't it wrong to kill?" I would ask, as we drove home with a fat young sheep, feet tied together, who would be slaughtered when we arrived at the wooden block near the dog kennels used for such purposes...God made the creatures of the earth for man's use, my father responded... it was moral to kill what we needed to eat (p. 43).

The family's geographical isolation, her mother's ardent feminism, and working alongside her father, helped Conway develop an image of herself that was relatively free of gender stereotypes. She remembers her responsibilities on the ranch and how natural it seemed to perform what might otherwise be seen as masculine tasks.

[Father] needed help with mustering sheep, something which needed two people on horseback to accomplish easily. I rode out with him to check the state of fences...to clean watering troughs, carry out the maintenance of windmills, trim and dress the fly-infested spots which developed around the crutch of sheep where flies would lay eggs in the hot summer months. Dressing fly-blown sheep was hard, hot work because one had to round up the particular flock, get the sheepdogs to hold them, and then dive suddenly into the herd to tackle the one animal whose fleece needed attention. An agile child was better at doing

the diving than an adult, and in time I learned to do a kind of flying tackle which would hold the animal, usually heavier than I was myself, until my father arrived with the hand shears (p. 41)

In contrast to the practical knowledge she gained from her father, Conway obtained knowledge of a literary sort in her relationship with her mother. Her mother was an ideal teacher for her at the time. Capitalizing on the impetus of Jill's ample curiosity, her mother was able to devise learning situations that were largely self-directed. Writes Conway, "her teaching was always carried out so imaginatively that her pupils simply had fun gratifying their curiosity" (p. 35). At age eight, by the time both older brothers were away at boarding school, Conway had begun a more formal education by correspondence. However, her mother still offered a self-motivating environment.

There was no pretense that I would keep a daily school schedule. On Friday afternoons, from 2:00 p.m. until I finished (usually around 4:30 p.m.), I did my week's school. My mother made it a pleasant occasion for me by saying, "Today, you don't have to work out of doors. You can sit in the shade [or if it was winter, in the sun] on the veranda, have your own pot of tea, and do your schoolwork." Thus I was introduced to study as a leisure activity, a gift beyond price (p. 54).

For Conway, however, it seemed that a darker motive had also begun to infect her parents' teaching. Her father's ambition as a rancher had been simple: to own his own ranch and have it be successful enough to provide a good life for his family. Her mother's

ambitions were more complex. She expected herself to be a good wife and a good mother. But Conway also mentions her mother's continuing efforts at self-education, trying to somehow make up for her own lack of formal education. Moreover, in spite of the ruggedness of Coorain, her mother maintained the belief that she and the family were of the colonial class, their cultural roots being in Great Britain, not in Australia. She therefore expected them to possess the sophistication that marked them as different from those her mother regarded as more "common" (i.e., the lower socioeconomic, relatively uneducated, Australian - see footnote #2, this chapter). Efforts directed toward furthering her own education and that of her children was a way to affiliate, in spite of their geographical distance from urban life, with the colonial class and thereby maintain their presumed separateness from the common folk.

So as the ranch began to falter, Conway remembers the difficulty her parents had separating their own frustrated ambitions from who and what they expected her to be.

One troublesome aspect of the frustration of my parents' dreams was the extent to which they transferred their ambitions to their children. My brothers, being five hundred miles away, were not readily available as vehicles for ambition. Being at hand, I became the focus of all the aspiration for achievement that had fueled both parents' prodigious energies (p. 65).

The nighttime conversations now made me nervous because they frequently settled on what a remarkable child I was, and how gratifying it would be for parents to observe my

progress. I had no way of assessing their judgements, but I was certainly uncomfortably aware that I and my performance in life had become the focus of formidable emotional energies (p. 66).

Suddenly, there was the implication that no conflict should exist between Conway's natural interests and the expectations her parents had for her intellectual talents. The development of her mind and abilities had become her parents' one distraction from the sad events of their lives, something else going on at the time that could take them away from their anxiety and depression regarding the deterioration of the ranch. Of course, balancing the loss of their dreams was a lot to put on the learning of a child. Conway recalls that prior to the failing of the ranch, discipline in the home had always been swift, predictable, and somewhat malleable. But then things changed.

Now, however, I encountered more subtle, and to me more terrifying, punishments. If I misbehaved, my parents simply acted as though I were not their child but a stranger. They would inquire civilly as to who I was and what I was doing on Coorain, but no hint of recognition escaped them. This treatment never failed to reduce me to abject contrition. In later life my recurring nightmares were always about my inability to prove to people I knew quite well who I was. I became an unnaturally good child, and accepted uncritically that goodness was required of me if my parents' disappointments in life were ever to be compensated for (p. 66).

The meaning of this for Conway was that only Good Jill would receive her parents' affections. Anything different and she was shamed and alienated. It confused her terribly.

In that situation, with only her parents, there were no other relationships by which she could validate who she was. She learned that the best and most acceptable self was the “unnaturally good” one, whose goodness might somehow offset the harsh reality of her parents’ lives.

Transition: School. Following her father’s death and their move to Sydney, Conway’s first realization upon entering school (Queenwood) was of the differences between herself and the other students. School was strange and, in this setting, so was she. The other students perceived her as “unusual.”

When the bell rang [At Queenwood] for recess or lunch, my heart sank because I knew no one and had no subject of conversation remotely like the cheerful chatter which swirled around about weekend activities. Queenwood was a day school and there were no other girls from the bush there. It was painful when others talked happily about their fathers or boasted about the family fortunes. I couldn't join in either, and became slowly aware that my family and life circumstances were unusual (p. 88).

Conway wanted to join with other children but experienced herself as different, separate, from another world. This impression was magnified by her one day at public school, where class differences separated her even further.

Transition: Abbotsleigh. When Conway finally entered Abbotsleigh, it was a revelation. She saw the head mistress, Miss Everett, as a very knowledgeable person. But it wasn’t Miss Everett’s knowledge that impressed Conway the most. It was the joy with which she approached learning. There was a playful element. This attracted Conway and

she felt herself drawn to Miss Everett. Learning the practical tasks of survival at Coorain had been serious business or, in her mother's attempts at self-education, ego driven. It wasn't about following one's intellectual interests or the love of ideas. An alternative began to take shape at Abbotsleigh. Miss Everett soon became Conway's first intellectual mentor outside the family.

I felt real benevolence radiating from Miss Everett...we began a friendship that mattered greatly in my future. I never ceased to wonder at her, for Miss Everett was the first really free spirit I had ever met. She was impatient with bourgeois Australian culture, concerned about ideas...She loved learning for itself, and this made her a most unusual schoolteacher (p. 96).

Whereas, in the context of the state school, aspects of Conway's identity had only ostracized her, accenting her feelings of separateness, here was a context in which her history was both understood and valued. Her experiences matched the experience of others; she identified with them and they with her. Like Conway, many of the students were relocated bush children, shy, reticent, and with little prior exposure to other children. Her teachers were sensitive to this and consciously worked to help them make the transition. Conway's history in the outback was now worth something. It connected her. At Abbotsleigh, Conway began to affiliate with others in a way that lead outward from the restricted world she had shared with her mother.

In her final year, Conway was made a prefect along with a small group of other senior girls. They were given special privileges in return for helping to keep the rest of

the students in line. This seems to have been an important experience, giving Conway her first exposure to the intimate joys of belonging to a small intellectual community.

Outside our study, we were models of decorum, but within our sanctuary we were a noisy, irreverent, and lighthearted group. One of our number, a gifted mathematician with shining aqua-marine blue eyes and pigtails of unbelievable tidiness, straightened out all our confusions on mathematics homework. My good friend Robin and I, friendly rivals for the school history prize, coached people who were slow to get the point of history questions. Everyone argued vociferously about the interpretation of the English text of the moment, while those who had chosen biology instructed the group about evolution, and the physics and chemistry wing talked portentously about the splitting of the atom (pp. 141-142).

As Conway's intellectual development progressed, she began to read more widely and more deeply. It began to open a whole new world of affiliations. She was excited to find herself drawn into sympathy with distant authors.

Their images and characters peopled my imagination far more than anyone in my everyday suburban world (p. 140).

Some writers assuaged Conway's feelings of isolation. They seemed to be writing about *her* experience. They could trace with a firmer hand than her own the outlines of her life thus far. Literature, this sense of affiliation with authors, offered Conway a way to begin integrating the events of a disjointed past. Conway remembers how T.S. Eliot in

particular seemed to draw from the mix of images and feelings in her own mind. He helped to give some kind of order and meaning to her sense of alienation.

[Eliot] was a new and astonishing discovery. Someone in my own day who wrote blank verse and who shared my feeling of distance from the emptiness of modern life. Eliot might have been writing about my feeling of detachment from the surface of things, and my longing for a world of real feeling and passion, instead of the polite proprieties of afternoon tea in the suburbs. I quickly borrowed "The Waste Land" ...it was a revelation. Here was [a] poet whose attitude to nature was not romantic, who mentioned deserts and whitening bones. It was great poetry about a landscape I knew (pp. 140-141).

Transition: Thinking about University. During her last year at Abbotsleigh, Conway struggled with what the future might hold for her. Her mother's dependence on her had increasingly become an impediment to stronger affiliations with peers. When she did visit with the families of friends, she found herself wishing that she too had parents that were tickled by their children's adventures instead of shaming them for their independence.

My weekends were spent in reading and gardening, and doing errands for my mother. We lived together like an elderly couple with an iron routine which was never broken [or] my mother became flustered, didn't sleep well, and suffered from headaches...When I went to the houses of friends, I would look hungrily at the fathers and mothers who were quietly amused by their sons' and daughters' scrapes, and wish above all else to have a normal family (p. 145).

Outside of school, Conway still lived in an adult world. She found that her intellectual interests had the tendency to separate her from others her own age, boys in particular. She still took satisfaction from her role as 'Good Jill,' her mother's caretaker, and the status it gave her among adults.

Outside school, I still spent all my time with adults. My obsession with Tudor history and Elizabethan drama did not make me an interesting conversationalist with young men (p. 145)... With adults I overcame my shyness... I swelled with pride at discharging my responsibility to care for [mother] so well and at the approval given my conduct and sagacity. I might not be pretty, and I was certainly dangerously bookish, but it was clear that I won lots of approval from the adult world (p. 147).

As the time for college drew nearer, it was hard for Conway to justify setting out for herself when cultural expectations, and the tugging of her own conscience, were that she would continue to look after her mother. The tension between her affiliations with her mother and the desire for a separate life was strong. There was no benchmark by which to gauge her choice. Who would she be if she were no longer 'Good Jill'?

I dreaded being stranded at home, the only companion of an increasingly dependent mother, even as I took my sense of self-worth from doing the job well (148)... Daughters in Australia were supposed to be the prop and stay of their parents. Would I ever get away? Was it wrong to want to? How on earth could I set about doing it? How could I tell this woman who lived for me that I did not want to live for her?... I often watched the Southern Cross in the night sky, but it was not just a compass bearing I needed now, it was

a judgement about what would be the moral path to choose (p. 151).

It was Conway's affiliations with her English and history teachers, her respect and trust for them, that finally tipped the scale toward an intellectual future.

Miss Shell and Miss Hughesdon, my English and history teachers, swung the balance. "It will be a great loss if you don't go on to do further study in history and literature," they told me. "You could do outstanding work." I didn't know what was involved in doing outstanding work, or where the study of English and history might lead, but if they said so, I was ready to follow their advice (pp. 143-4).

Still, Conway was without a picture of where such advice might lead. At the graduation ceremonies, which she attended alone because of her mother's broken wrist, Conway looked at seemingly intact, happy families. She felt herself empty and set apart. Why did her life seem so different in comparison? At that moment, her education struck her as worthless. It had failed to fill the hole left by the deaths of her father and brother. She wondered who she been learning *for*. She realized that after all was said and done, it wasn't her academic accomplishments that had brought her the most satisfaction at Abbotsleigh; it was the relationships she had established there.

Why hadn't I realized how empty success was? I had fooled myself by thinking that covering myself with honors would be some sort of surrogate fulfillment for the promise of my dead father and brother. It was not, nor, I realized sadly,

was it ever likely to be. The real satisfactions of my schooling had been the friends I had made (p. 149).

Transition: University Conway's first days on the university campus were overwhelming. She felt different. She was confused and her lack of direction seemed to separate her from other students.

The week of Freshman Orientation was sunny and hot. When we began to crowd into the University's largest lecture hall at the beginning of the Orientation week, the crowd was vast and intimidating. Outside it seemed as though throngs of young people occupied every square inch of the campus. They all seemed at ease and clear about what they were doing, whereas I was in a constant state of anxiety (p. 155).

It was confusing. Conway's identity still drew so much from her role as daughter. At the same time, the emotional and physical demands of this drained the time and energy she might have used for adjusting to college life, making friends, and establishing herself.

The causes of my extreme shyness were complex. I didn't look right and couldn't blend with the crowd. I worried constantly about my responsibilities at home. At a deeper level, I felt I had no right to exist unless serving the family in some tangible way. At the University, the reassurance of playing that role was not possible (156)...I lasted to the middle of the year before using my mother's increasing ill health as an excuse to escape from the daily ordeal of

having no friends and no place where I felt I belonged (p. 158).

It was not until Conway went to work in the 'real world' that she began to make significant headway against her persistent feelings of separateness from urban life. Her position at the medical office vested her with some degree of authority, and this empowered her affiliations with others - in this case, the staff and patients of the clinic. Conway refers to this 18-month period as a "concentrated education."

I learned that once a person dressed in a white starched coat, however unqualified, chances among those seeking medical advice, the mantle of authority descends, and his or her advice is sought about all manner of human predicaments. I had scarcely sat down at my desk in the outer office of the surgery than the first talkative patients arrived and began to volunteer all sorts of startling information about their intimate lives. My shyness was irrelevant to people who needed to talk about themselves and their problems (p. 161).

In her work at the clinic, Conway began to listen beyond herself, hearing the human condition more widely. It opened her up. She gained perspective. She became more empathic and less absorbed in her own circumstances.

Listening...I saw the uncertainties and worries behind people's appearances, and realized that my troubles in life were modest...It was not simply about the ailments which brought each patient to the doctor's office, but about the social context surrounding each patient and his or her

family...It was like being thrust inside the mind of a gifted novelist. Thenceforth I looked at people, myself included, with more compassion and more distance (pp. 161-162).

Returning to college, Conway did not experience the same sense of separateness from the student body as before. She found that she was now able to affiliate with those around her in a different, more intimate way. She made friends with another student, Toni. With the addition of Toni's brother, they became a happy trio. She began to learn how to play and be more spontaneous.

We took to one another, and began one of the intense undergraduate friendships through which young people learn about themselves by discovering the inner life and feelings of friends ... They came from a country family, had attended schools like mine, and shared my questions about whether I belonged to Australia's bush culture or to its urban professional classes. They were cheerful hedonists who took it for granted that one should enjoy one's university life (p. 164)

As a result of doing so well in her first year examinations, Conway was able to participate in advanced seminars. These brought her into contact with a different type of teacher and a different caliber of student. Through these affiliations, she began to develop a critical distance on herself and her family. She began to analyze her own life in a broader perspective, for example in terms of issues of social class and power.

Marx and Engels opened my eyes to another way of seeing my parents and the enterprise of Coorain. Was it true that we were monopolizers of land, that Shorty and all my other shearer friends were expropriated laborers? Were the family values of thrift and industry simply signs that we were bourgeois? Who were the rightful owners of the land... What had happened to the tribes which once used to hunt over our land (pp. 170-171)?

Conway had yet to apply such analyses to herself as a gendered being, however, to understand how gender stereotypes could ultimately separate her from opportunity. Prior to being excluded on the basis of gender for the government position, adherence to gender stereotypes seemed to Conway more of a personal decision. She did not appreciate their institutional nature.

I had unthinkingly taken on the identity of the male writer and intellect present in all that I was reading, and did not take in emotionally that the subordination Engels wrote about applied to me. Obtusely, I did not pay heed to the fact that I was the only woman taking history honors that year, or how unusual I seemed to all my friends because I was aspiring to excel academically (p. 171).

At the urging of two union organizer friends, Conway visited the Communist Book Shop in downtown Sydney. Afterward, they took her out to a “real working-class pub” to celebrate. She experienced the working-class and, from her left-wing friends, developed a critical perspective on the class system itself. While among them, Conway

realized the consequences stemming from her mother's decision many years before that she should be educated in the colonial tradition.

For the first time, I glimpsed what a choice had been made when my mother took on her extra job to send me to Abbotsleigh (p. 171).

It reflected her mother's determination that, through education, Conway would *not* affiliate with (and thus become like) those whose company she was now enjoying. She finally understood what this choice meant: it was a means of preserving her family's separateness from the working class and their status as members of the bourgeois.

Now Conway was moving across those separations and learning a tremendous amount in the process. She writes,

I was curious about the other Australia I had fled so precipitously as an eleven-year-old... Whenever I went off to work on Coorain, I was conscious that academic Australia was made up entirely of urban social types, people totally different from the rough, hard-bitten men and women of the western plains... Nothing could have been in greater contrast to the sedentary life of the urban scholar (p. 172).

Traveling with her bush pilot brother, Barry, to remote towns and ranches added even more complexity to the web of relationships against which Conway was attempting to define herself. She realized the inability of cultural theory to contain or communicate the

reality of what she was experiencing. Also, there was no theory that seemed to articulate the cultural identity of someone like herself, someone defined through their affiliations with *multiple* cultural categories.

Juxtaposed in my mind when I returned to the city would be the image of some wiry Queenslander, body burnt brown above tattered khaki shorts, heaving around petrol drums at a back-country airport, or the faces of the aboriginal stockmen...I could make a class and race analysis of this world according to the categories I was learning in my history seminars...[but] they had been written by sedentary people who had never lived in the bush and had no notion what settling it was like (p. 173).

As graduation from the University approached and Conway considered a position with the Department of External affairs, she found herself “headed for a traumatic confrontation between ambition, love, and duty” (p. 187). Professionally, she wanted to help develop Australia’s identity as an Asian or Southern Pacific country. It would be a way of releasing her from her responsibilities as a daughter since her mother would never stand in the way of such a prestigious career. After stumbling across Carl Jung’s essay, *The Positive and Negative Aspects of the Mother Archetype*, the quality of the bond she had with her mother suddenly became more clear. It was “a thunderbolt.”

It was astounding. There I was, described to a T. There was my mother sitting on the page before me, as though Jung

had known her every mood...there was no getting away from the fact that my mother's emotional need for me went far beyond normal limits.⁸

This underscored the importance to Conway of achieving an emotional and psychological separation from her mother, of a redefinition of that relationship and her role in it. At the same time, Conway had also begun her first romantic relationship. According to tradition, for her (a woman) to commit to her career as a first priority would be disloyal to her partner. Finally, behind all of this was the voice of her dead father spurring her on to make something of herself.

Caught as I was between my mother's hostility and skillful war of nerves over my ties to [boyfriend] Peter, and his anger that he did not take precedence over my work and my family, I began to feel trapped...My response was to make more contradictory promises to everyone demanding my attention...I knew that turning one's back on one's duty was dishonest. So far as my ambitions were concerned I knew they were deviant. Women were supposed to be governed by love. Yet, though he had been dead more than a decade, I still heard my father's voice saying, "Do something, Jill. Don't just put in time on this earth" ... When the inevitable confrontation came I chose duty and ambition, motivations I still thought compatible, and abandoned romantic love (pp. 187-188).

⁸Jungian analyst, Daryl Sharp (1995), writes, "At the core of any mother complex is the mother archetype, which means that behind emotional associations with the personal mother, both in men and in women, there is a collective image of nourishment and security on the one hand (the positive mother), and devouring possessiveness on the other (the negative mother)."

Although she was denied the government position she had applied for, Conway eventually came to see this as a blessing. Not only did it “foster a little humility and shatter the complacency” of being a big intellectual fish in a small pond, it lead her to affiliate with the plight of women in general.

I needed to be made to think about what it meant that I was a woman, instead of acting unreflectingly as though I were a man, bound to live out the script of a man's life. This one blow of fate made me identify with other women and prompted me, long before it was politically fashionable to do so, to try to understand their lives (p. 193).

By affiliating herself with the condition of women in Australian society, Conway was able to understand her relationship with her mother in a different light. In particular, she was able to attribute aspects of her mother's decline to a conspiracy of external forces rather than to the seemingly self-destructive choices her mother had made directly.

My new ability to empathize with other women made me see my mother differently. My perceptions were so painful I could hardly bear them...I was living with a tragic deterioration brought about because there was now no creative expression for this woman's talents. Lacking a power for good, she sought power through manipulating her children... No one had directly willed her decline. It was the outcome of many impersonal forces (p. 195).

Conway saw her mother in yet another light during their extended time abroad. Her mother seemed to come alive in these new settings. She shed much of her anxiety and rigidity, her reactions became “strong and spontaneous.”

New facets of my mother's character emerged...I marveled at the sight of this woman, totally solitary at home, in animated conversation with strangers (p. 199).

This must have only heightened Conway's sensitivity to the role that Australian culture had played in her mother's demise. It may also have been a harbinger of what continued affiliations with that culture might eventually lead to in her own life: an isolated existence instead of one that interacted vitally with the lives of others.

Prior to leaving for her travels with her mother, Conway had met a medical researcher just returned from doctoral study in the United States. This chance connection planted a seed in Conway's mind regarding alternative intellectual paths. She had never really considered seriously the idea that there might be other traditions of scholarship than those set down by Australian academics.

His attitudes to life were just what I needed to hear. He wasn't trouble by the restrictions of Australian academic life, he told me. One could be a scholar with an international group of colleagues anywhere in the world. One didn't necessarily have to accept the Australian definition of the role. He set me thinking about the future less parochially, and encouraged me to think about creating new styles of scholarly life if I didn't find the current ones congenial. He was an inspiration at a low

point in my life, a new model of a professional scholar (p. 196).

When Conway returned to Australia, teaching at the university introduced her to “a new society.” Suddenly, her professors had become peers.

We all sat round the same lunch table, or gossiped together over coffee...It was a heady experience... They were a wonderful group of friends, encouraging about my teaching, interested in my career (p. 214).

At the same time as these new affiliations were forming, Conway was making regular trips to Coorain, spending long hours driving across the outback. It was an opportunity to appreciate her roots there. It still felt like home. Sometimes she would add an extra day and spend the night at the home of Angus Waugh and his family. Angus had been a ranch hand on Coorain when Conway was a child.

It was just plain comfortable to sit by the fire in the evening...[Angus's] tales were full of close observation of people, psychological insight, and a wonderful sense of the absurd. He would tease me for being “a bloody intellectual,” but underneath the laughter was an old-fashioned Scottish respect for learning (p. 222).

As her mother's behavior became more irrational, Conway finally surrendered to her own powerlessness to effect any type of positive change in her mother's

circumstances. Deciding to leave for graduate study in America, she knew she must separate herself from this predicament or else go down with the ship. It was a decision that expressed her sudden determination to separate her values and attitudes, her identity, from those of her parents.

I wouldn't tell myself anymore [that as a backcountry person] I was tough enough for any hazard, could endure anything...I wasn't nearly tough enough...I was going to admit defeat; turn tail; run for cover. My parents, each in his or her own way...had not been careful about harvesting and cherishing the experiences that nourish hope. I was going to be different. I was going to be life-affirming (p. 232).

Still, there is a very significant way in which Conway did not cut her ties to her mother. In her desire to study and understand the history of women in society and turn this to purposes of cultural reform, she made the conscious decision to dedicate her professional life to her mother's plight. It is something that kept Conway connected to her mother, easing the thought that in leaving Australia she might also be abandoning her.

I had set things in good order on Coorain, but that was the last thing I could do for my mother...Perhaps if I got far enough away, I'd be able to see the causes of her undoing (p. 232)...I wasn't sure how to go about studying those relationships and their evolution over time, but clearly I was going to find out. It wasn't exactly the way I'd expected to find a vocation, out of guilt transmuted into an intellectual calling, but perhaps it was as good as any. I had a talent for history, and the fates were prodding me toward putting it to use (p. 237).

Integrative Summary: Affiliation and Separateness

As a child on Coorain, learning was an activity that strengthened Conway's affiliations. It bonded her with her mother who took great delight in Jill's intellectual growth. It also brought her closer to a father who valued her help with the practical tasks of ranching, as well as her company on the lonely outback. Gradually however, as the ranch began to fail, her parents' emotional stress took its toll. Withdrawing stoically into their pain, they seemed to Conway to become less open-minded. When her brothers came home from boarding school, she was aware that that their education had somehow separated them from the family. Given the situation on Coorain, the school knowledge they professed was only a source of tension, a measure of their distance from the reality of what was happening on the ranch. It was derided by their father. What good was *any* knowledge that could not help him save his life's dream?

In the family's transition to Sydney following the father's death, there was a significant playing out of affiliation and separateness issues for Conway. Formal schooling quickly revealed how different she was from the other students. She was from a different class, a different geography, a different social world. She understood nothing of school culture. At the same time, this sense of alienation pushed her closer to the security she found with her mother. Then, at Abbotsleigh, Conway realized her first close affiliations with persons her own age, many of which took place around intellectual activities that actively engaged her. In concert with her development, she was also lead to strong identifications with various authors and ideas. These began to help her make sense of her own desultory life path.

As graduation from Abbotsleigh approached, however, and the possibility of college loomed, Conway was unable to break free from her increasingly dependent mother without feeling that she would somehow be abandoning her. Nor did she believe that there was any viable intellectual path open to her in Australian culture. Besides, following her ambitions might only separate her from others who perceived intellect in a woman as unfeminine. This was supposed to be the moment in which her future would take flight, but Conway found herself with neither wings nor a destination to home in on. The uniqueness of her family's circumstances, the inability of her achievements to make up for the loss of her father and brother, her frustrated intellectual passion, and the thought that she could only exist if she were serving the family in some way confused her and amplified her feelings of separateness from the lives of those her own age.

Things did improve for Conway's during her work at the medical office, however. By developing the ability to identify and connect with others she obtained a securer sense of herself. This was invaluable in her return to the university where, the second time around, she was able to make entry into various social circles. Later, after accepting a teaching position following her undergraduate work, she began the back-and-forth existence between academia and the outback. Her teaching had brought Conway into the fold of professional scholars. Although she felt accepted there, she also realized another part of herself through her affiliations in the outback. Each context provoked a strange awareness of how different her participation was relative to the other contexts she inhabited. The contrast ultimately fueled a tension that gave the nature and meaning of each identity, academic and outback, a greater clarity. Although by leaving for the states,

Conway finally settled on a path that meant she would never again be a citizen of the bush, it was also a path through which she could seek, through becoming a scholar, to affiliate with that culture in a different way. .

The next section looks at the tensions between immediacy and reflection in Conway's experience. Experiences of immediacy refer to those moments in which Conway felt herself to be fully in the moment, her senses astir and her consciousness alive to the here-and-now of the surroundings. Reflection, in contrast, represents those instances during which Conway found herself stepping back from her direct experience in order to understand its meaning. Reflection was the creative process through which Conway reached for a broader level of analytical or conceptual understanding of her life and the world.

Immediacy and Reflection.

Transition: School. On the outback, the labors of Conway's father were physical. Their object was immediately at hand. Practical knowledge, skill, and prudence, these were what could make a life on the outback. When Conway's brothers went off to boarding school, however, they were exposed to a way of learning that of course drew heavily on reflection. Solving problems in the world of the school required contemplation, theorizing, and the rhetorical skill to make one's case in academic terms. As a result, the two boys and Conway's father held different perspectives on knowledge itself. For the boys, for whom school had become the frame of reference, curricular knowledge - history, politics, philosophy, for example - was important.

For their father, however, school knowledge necessarily played second fiddle to the know-how of running a ranch. For him, labor was not the act of acquiring knowledge, it was the process of applying it to problems in the real world. As the harshness of one's circumstances increased, so did the value of savvy and know-how. Conway notes that when the boys came home for vacations, the two conceptions of knowing were not easily reconciled. Contributing to the clash was the frustration of Conway's father at being unable to save the ranch from the drought that immediately ravaged it.

My brothers would return home from boarding school to a household consumed with anxiety. Coming, as they did, from the totally enclosed world of a school...inevitably their world contained many points of reference beyond Coorain. Much of what they reported seemed frivolous to parents who had never attended a fashionable school and had struggled for the considerable learning they possessed...In better times they might have jumped enthusiastically into this new world of their sons, but my father in particular jumped to the conclusions that his sons were not working hard at school. In fact they were, but they now lived in a culture in which it was a serious faux pas to indicate that one worked hard at study. The two worlds were not easy to mesh (p. 55).

After her father's death and the move to Sydney, Conway presumed that there was some practical purpose embedded in the routines of school, although she could not fathom what it might be. Instruction often seemed pointless and arbitrary.

[At Queenwood] we memorized the provinces of Canada, and recited them starting in the east and traveling

westward. I was used to learning very exact details of topography in order to find my way about a countryside with no signs and few landmarks, but when I asked why we listed Canada's provinces from east to west no one understood why I thought directions important (p. 87-88).

I could not arrive at the reason why the first ten minutes of every morning were devoted to something called mental arithmetic. The teacher called out a problem every few seconds, to which we were meant to scribble an answer. Given time, I could arrive at the correct answer, but here speed was important, though no great matter hung on the outcome of the problem solving (p. 88).

Transition: Abbotsleigh. Arriving at Abbotsleigh, Conway recalls that the teachers approached students newly arrived from the outback differently than they did other students. Teachers seemed to realize that children making the transition from the bush were not merely learning new concepts and ideas, they were learning them in new ways and for new reasons. Unlike for working class students at the state school, the teachers at Abbotsleigh acknowledged that children coming in from the outback were in the throes of a difficult transition. They realized the importance of helping bush children reflect on the reasoning behind activities that were new to them.

Even the strange ritual of the gymnasium was less puzzling. The teachers were used to bush children and took the time to explain what the exercises were for, or to tell me that I would soon learn the eye-hand coordination I lacked (p. 98).

Conway writes that in her third year at Abbotsleigh (her junior year), she “transformed from adolescent rebellion to genuine intellectual interests” (p. 114). She remembers this as a time when she especially began to blossom intellectually. Her developing capacity for reflective thought had suddenly begun to make itself known. She found herself integrating ideas into what seemed to her new and wondrous conceptions.

As Miss Everett [head mistress at Abbotsleigh] had predicted, I began almost without noticing it to become absorbed in my studies at school, and it was these rather than the entertainments of my school friends which drew me into a world outside the family. Chemistry and biology were not just subjects, they offered the vision of an ordered material and living universe, whose elements and their components were arranged in complex patterns, the principles of which were dazzlingly simple. The wonder of making crystals and understanding the reasons why they formed left me so preoccupied I missed my stop on the afternoon train, and had trouble explaining why I was so late home. History classes now treated the question of causation, leaving the memorization of dates for larger questions of free will and determinism (p. 112).

It was a period of intellectual awakening for Conway. She writes about the growth in her awareness of language as “a set of structures of miraculous complexity.” Learning French was also enabling her also to *hear* English in a different way. Instead of hearing simply words, she became attuned to the immediate experience of their sound.

For six years I had marched every morning into the school assembly and listened idly to the instructions and sermons of the day... Now, as though I had been deaf before, I began

to hear Miss Everett's beautiful voice lingering lovingly over the cadences of the King James Bible. I had loved poetry before because of its imagery, but now I heard language as a form of music (p. 139).

Following her brother's death, Conway's ability to absorb herself in ever more complex levels of thinking provided her with moments of solace and comfort. Ironically, these were times when she remembers actually breaking through her sense of emotional detachment. Intellectual work had the power to somehow integrate her.

Just as with our departure from Coorain, my consciousness had retreated to a great distance. It was hard to bring it back to earth unless I was concentrating every energy on some difficult intellectual effort. I came to love my hours of homework because when I finally sat down alone in my room with my books, I could get my mind and body together again, and escape the discomfort of watching the world from the other side of some transparent but impenetrable window (pp. 121-122).

This ability to reflect and to intellectually put her world into some kind of order seems to have been an alternative unavailable to Conway's mother. In fact, Conway believed that her mother's "lack of education," the absence of a more complex and

meaningful framework for understanding, was something that prevented her mother from reconciling with the tragic experiences in her life.⁹

[Mother's] lack of education was a real handicap, because she had no historical or philosophical perspective from which to analyze her own experience of loss and grief (p. 115).

Transition: University . At the university, Conway recognized the desire in herself for something beyond the conventional life. The idea of 'a life of the mind' sounded to her like a lovely alternative to the emotionally draining work of, for example, a helping profession, even though her mother thought the latter more appropriate.

My mother favored "something practical" like medicine... I didn't much like the idea of caring for sick people. My years spent caring for the emotional needs of others made me long for some wonderfully abstract study, elegant, clear, free of messy human demands (p. 143).

⁹ More than anything, this attribution speaks to Conway's view of the role education has played in her own life, in the way she has learned to make sense of the world and, hence, herself. In a similar and perhaps more profound way, psychiatrist Viktor Frankl (1959) attributed his ability to have survived the horrors of internment in Nazi concentration camps indirectly to his own education and the rich internal world it had endowed him with. Not only did Frankl's intellectual life provide him a 'place' to retreat to imaginatively during the worst of times, it also helped him place what was happening to him in a larger framework that gave it some degree of meaning.

Still, Conway began her time at the University of Sydney undecided. She had set up idyllic expectations regarding the content of her courses and was deeply disappointed. They seemed overly analytic and abstract.

I thought philosophy would be about wisdom, that French would enable me to read more of a literature I found enchanting, and that history and English would be more of the subjects I had loved in school (p. 155)... [Instead] I was finding most of it dull or disappointing or both (p. 157).

In philosophy, I could do the logic exercises, but I didn't really care whether an argument contained a syllogism with an undistributed middle clause or not... this painstaking analysis of language seemed dull. I had looked forward to reading Plato and studying Greek philosophy, but the hours spent on the Euthyphro were not spent dealing with what it meant and how that fitted into the Greek view of life, but on analysis of every word, comma, and phrase (p. 157).

Conway found herself longing for a type of learning that would help her to understand the immediate human world of her own struggles. Her response to the esoteric nature of the courses, as well as to “the daily ordeal of having no friends and no place [to belong]” (p. 158) was to hunger for something that was less abstract and more immediate. Her mother conspired with this sentiment.

Each day she asked me hungrily what I was learning, hoping to live out her own thwarted longing for education through me. When all I could tell her was an account of classes in logic or phonetics, she would make some derisive comment and remind herself and me that at my age she had already been working and supporting herself for many years (p. 158).

After dropping out of the University and traveling to Coorain on one of her managing errands, Conway found that she enjoyed the immediacy of physical labor in the outback. It brought her back into touch with the terrain and the uncomplicated nature of her relationship with it. Such simplicity had special meaning given the confused frustration of her aborted university experience.

It was comfortable to be working there, once again tracing familiar patterns over the contours of the land. After my unsatisfactory studies, the practicality of simple physical labor delighted me (p. 160).

By taking on work in the medical clinic during this period, Conway also realized a different kind of immediacy. The work was not mentally demanding. Its challenges were instead emotional and social. She writes that it was a job “endlessly interesting in its human details” (p. 161). Conway was involved daily in the drama surrounding major events and crises in the lives of her patients and their families. It was so different from the crises in her own life. These had always been *hers*, with herself and her family at the

center. That center was suddenly being invaded by a new and more immediate collection of scenes and images through which she began to connect more widely.

My shyness was irrelevant to people who needed to talk about themselves and their problems. Listening and making soothing sounds, I saw the uncertainties and worries behind people's appearances, and realized that my troubles in life were modest in relation to the human predicaments which people paraded before me daily...The complexity of the human drama each day was gripping...When the office was busy I received a more concentrated education. It was not simply about the ailments which brought each patient to the doctor's office, but about the social context surrounding each patient and his or her family....Thenceforth I looked at people, myself included, with more compassion and more distance (p. 161).

In her white starched coat, Conway was endowed with the some of the same status of a medical professional. This would motivate patients to share with her details of their circumstances and lives. Working in this capacity provided Conway with a more intense, sustained, and immediate contact with people than she had ever experienced. It counterbalanced the alienation in own life and helped her develop a more sophisticated sense of empathy. She could listen to others, as she says, with “more compassion and more distance,” that is, with both immediacy and reflection.

After returning to school and succeeding so thoroughly in her examinations, Conway now had another aspect of herself, her intellect, validated socially. She realized that “learning and reflection” were what was valued in academia. Moreover, these were things she could do very well and that might eventually rescue her from her fate as a

“bluestocking,” a spinster caring for an aging and increasingly bitter parent. She *could* have her own life, a life of the mind.

[I had a] new awareness that university study was about learning and reflection, not the cramming of texts and information. Now I had a purpose in life... it would finesse the whole question of leaving home. My mother would never stand in the way of success...I could [also] remain true to my obligations to the family by covering the family name with honors (p. 168).

Conway began taking a double honors program in history and english, although she found history the most compelling. It was an exciting and “heady” time for her.

We took seminars on modern European and British history, and on historiography. We plunged into reading Vico, Marx, Hegel, Burckhardt, Acton, Mannheim, Max Weber and modern philosophers of history like Collingwood, without pausing to consider whether we had the background to analyze them critically....our discussions were about the 1848 revolutions in Europe, the character of industrial society, the concept of alienation (p. 169).

I found myself intoxicated by the pleasure of abstract ideas, by the company of others who shared my interests (p. 170).

For the first time, Conway found herself in a delicate balance between immediacy and reflection, her need for close human relationships and the satisfactions of an intellectual life. She had also begun to make friends. They encouraged her to become more spontaneous, to appreciate and enjoy the immediate pleasures of life.

Our conversations were not intellectual, but focused on our parents, our families, our uncertainties and insecurities, our feelings about being Australian, our puzzlement about what to do in life...From Toni and her brother I learned the art of enjoying life, of stopping to savor the joys of the moment, and of letting the cares of tomorrow wait (pp. 164-165).

In the midst of this, Conway had an epiphany regarding the quest that her studies represented. She recalls “a sudden vision of what the young were seeking from a university” (p. 175). Like others her age, Conway wanted knowledge that could lead her to an understanding of the world that was whole and without contradiction, that could set everything into some kind of larger order. She wanted more direct knowledge, not just symbols and shadows, once-removed Platonic representations. She wanted to see Australia for what it was and not from a derived and derisive colonial perspective. She wanted knowledge of herself and of what she was supposed to become in life apart from the contradictions of her talents and desires, the constrictions of caring for her mother, and society’s stereotypes. What Conway longed for was a world in which immediacy and reflection came together.

Like Stephan [in James Joyce's Portrait of An Artist] I was seeking "wholeness, harmony and passion," the claritas which was the Christian equivalent of God. Somewhere, somehow it must be possible to reconcile the conflicts of the emotions, the pains of life, the sense of beauty, in one unifying understanding. This was what I was doing here, what these stone walls had been built for, and why these books had been painstakingly accumulated (p. 175).

Transition: Returning from Abroad. Returning from her post-graduation sojourn to England and Europe, Conway was even more passionate about her search for understanding. She was annoyed with those who were "hostages" of the British worldview and with the attitude that authentic Australian culture was somehow second rate. What did it mean to be Australian without reference to external standards? How had the environment shape the people who lived there? How had people learned to survive and sometimes even flourish in the bush? How was Australian poetry and painting a unique reflection of the "existential awareness of the continent"? These questions had become *her* questions. "None of this was in the history texts," she writes, "and at first I thought no one but me noticed its absence" (p. 185). These questions began to shape her intellectually. Further, by understanding the authentic Australia, she found she coming face to face with the historical, cultural, and social narratives to which her own identity was answerable. She felt alone in her quest.

I wished there was a clear way to understand the process by which a people's dominant myths and mental imagery took shape. Now [that] I had seen England and Europe, these myths seemed more important to me than any study of the politics of Federation, or of the precise details of

nineteenth-century land policy...there was so much to learn I could barely fall asleep at nights because my mind raced on at fever pitch about a set of questions I felt no one else understood, or even cared much about (p. 219).

During the period in which Conway taught at the university and cared for Coorain, she was constantly moving back and forth between the practical and the theoretical, the physical and the intellectual.¹⁰ This movement is what fueled Conway's interests and imagination. But no one else she knew was in a similar situation. No one else was intrigued by the questions that popped into her head as she crossed the boundaries between one culture and another. She recalls the frustration of her attempts to engage others:

My one problem was that [the faculty] had very little interest in intellectual and cultural history. I couldn't make them understand the kinds of events I thought interesting. Our department was strong on techniques of research, but no one could understand the kinds of cultural documents I wanted to study. They weren't in archives, but in people's minds and imaginations (p. 215).

¹⁰ I contrast terms such as *practical* and *theoretical*, or *physical* and *intellectual*, only to represent aspects of Conway's experience. I do not mean to present them as realms naturally opposed to one another. Nor are they stand-ins for immediacy and reflection.

During this period, Conway remembers feeling most fully herself in the outback. She had begun to understand and appreciate in a different way the uncomplicated ways of its inhabitants.

The place I was most at home in was the bush. The older I grew the more I liked backcountry people. I enjoyed the slow and unstylized way conversations with strangers developed – the weather, the state of the roads, where the kangaroos were swarming this year, whose yearling had run well at the picnic races (p. 222).

Of course, Conway was a backcountry person herself. She even entertained the idea of returning to that kind of existence. But she realized what the danger might be for her.

I sometimes toyed with the idea of settling on Coorain myself, but much as I loved it, I knew I would become a hermitlike female eccentric if I settled into that isolation alone (p. 223).

At the same time, although she loved her work at the university, Conway could not see herself engaging it as a career in the same fashion of her professors. She wanted a type of scholarship that was more immediate in its application, that lead out into the world.

I couldn't see myself settling down to become a professional scholar. The year of my graduation was notable for a series of petty wrangles between Australian

historians on subjects of only minor antiquarian interest. I feared becoming similarly pedantic (p. 196).

The romantic relationship that Conway developed with Alec, the sensitive and cultured American mining speculator, was instrumental in helping her to find a balance between the immediate demands of caring for her mother and for Coorain, on the one hand, and her desire to live a creative, reflective, intellectual life, on the other.

I'd found a man who respected my work and shared by exacting standards about it. Like all people whose business involves speculative risk, Alec had a talent for living completely in the moment and letting tomorrow's worries wait...we took the time to be happy, to savor the pleasure we took in one another's company. In many respects, he was the first really sane, thoughtful, and mature person I'd known, and as a result he began to set me straight about many of my approaches to life (p. 227)

Integrative Summary: Immediacy and Reflection

Conway recalls the distinction when she was young between what her father respected as knowledge and the kind of worldly knowledge that her brothers brought home from boarding school. This contrast reappeared during Conway's initial transition to the "totally enclosed world" of the school. It introduced one of school's initial perplexities for Conway: the apparent absence of any logical rationale for learning. For her, knowledge was still that which one applied to the problems in one's immediate circumstances.

At Abbotsleigh, as her mind matured, Conway discovered pleasure in reflection, in analysis, and the aesthetic and creative aspects of thought. At the same time, this ability had put itself to practical use by helping her to weather the tragic death of her much-adored brother. In dealing with the pain, retreating into her academic world was not merely an act of 'intellectualization,' defensively disconnecting from her immediate feelings. In fact, Conway found that the passionate interest she took in her studies could lead to precious moments of integration when she would once again feel herself come together in body and mind. It was after her employment in the medical office, upon her return to the university, that Conway began to find and create social niches offering patches of mid-ground between immediacy and reflection. She discovered that, in fact, there are those who can offer her both the emotional and intellectual companionship she hungered for.

Through these relationships, Conway finally began to learn that she could balance her physical and social world with a life of the mind. Through her friendships with peers, she realized that she could be spontaneous and connected to the world and still have access to that part of herself that was a scholar. In the context of her relationship with Alec Merton, she finally accepted her life as one that should be built around her independent intellectual talents. She decided that properly stewarding these gifts was ultimately of greater importance than her role as a daughter or as manager of the family's legacy on Coorain.

The Road to Coorain, at one level, is about Conway's search for a way to bring real human meaningfulness into her work as a scholar and, at the same time, intellectual

and creative strength into her life as a woman and as an Australian. Indeed, throughout the book there are moments when the results of analytical understanding, when applied to her own life, proved themselves personally and immediately healing. Unlike her mother's life, Conway's education seemed to allow her the ability to analyze her life within a series of progressively larger, more abstract but, at the same time, more meaningful frameworks. Paradoxically, as she did so, she also seemed to understand more completely her desire to live a life that was humanly real and immediate.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Comparisons and Contrasts

The previous chapter followed the educational histories, from elementary through doctoral study, of three intellectuals: Mike Rose, Richard Rodriguez, and Jill Ker Conway. I interpreted their autobiographies individually in the light of three themes that upon close reading seemed to emerge from them as a group. At this point I would like to concern myself with the 'error variance,' if you will. In other words, using the same three themes as a framework, I would like to look at the differences and similarities between the authors. I hope that this will make it possible to come to a deeper and more complex understanding of the three tensions themselves. As I said earlier in chapter three, these tensions ultimately reside in the authors' account of their experiences. As such, they provide us with storied examples of a more theoretical and abstract relation, that between learning and identity.

In this chapter, I step back in order to summarize the three tensions as understood thus far, providing a brief explanation for each including how it makes manifest the relation between learning and identity-making. Next, I move to a somewhat broader comparison and contrast of each tension across the three authors. This will explore the more obvious similarities and differences between the authors regarding their experience of the tensions, shedding further light on the nature of the tensions in the context of each of their lives. This will be followed by a discussion of the relationship between the three

tensions themselves. Finally, some observations will be made regarding autobiography and gender.

Briefly reviewing the three tensions, stability and change refers to the tension in the three autobiographies between a sense of personal continuity and a sense the authors had that they were becoming something new or different. To what extent did the various transitions in their formal education afford them an identity that was continuous with who and what they felt they had been in the past? Or to what extent did their education seem to require that they devalue or turn away from that past? In contrast, the tension between affiliation and separateness refers, on the one hand, to the authors' attempts to find ways to legitimately participate in academic culture and, on the other, their attempt to develop an identity that was uniquely their own. Finding a balance was not easy. It meant discovering a way to become intellectually honest while still remaining true to their own interests and, most importantly, to their past.

Finally, immediacy and reflection refers to the tension in the authors' educational careers between two modes of consciousness, two ways of knowing or experiencing the world. To what extent did a particular transition afford them with instances of feeling engaged with others, alive to their senses, vitally present in the here-and-now? Or to what extent did their learning allow them to put some kind of conceptual order and meaning to what they had previously only experienced?

Comparisons Across the Authors.

Stability and Change.¹ Based on his autobiography, the initial transition between home and classroom life was an intensely disorienting experience for Rodriguez, who spoke only fifty or so words of English. Disorientation was also true for 11 year old Conway, whose late entry into the “totally enclosed world” of the school put her far behind her peers in understanding its ways and means. Both Rodriguez and Conway retain vivid memories of their first day. The stability of their lives had been disrupted. Rose, on the other hand, recalls little about his transition to elementary. Although he attributes this to his self-protective response of dreamily tuning out, it is also true that Rose had attended an elementary in his community, that English was his first language, and that his parents were already quite Americanized. This contrasted with Rodriguez, who lived in a middle-class White neighborhood, whose parents spoke Spanish and clung to Hispanic culture and also with Conway, who came into the classroom directly from the remoteness of the outback. In other words, for Rose there really *were* no big changes involved in the initial transition to school. His first sense of a break in the stability of his life and his identity came much later during his high school transition from Voc Ed into the college prep track.

Between them, it seemed that the most important and also the most difficult educational transitions for these authors were the ones that required them to change and

¹ Stability and Change refers to the tension in the three authors' experience between a sense of personal continuity and the sense that they were becoming something new or different. To what extent did the various transitions in their formal education afford them an identity that was continuous with who and what they felt they had been in the past? Or to what extent did their education seem to require that they devalue or turn away from that identity and that past?

reorient at two tightly interrelated levels. One level was academic proper. They had to 'learn how to learn' in the style of the school. They had to confront the academic tasks that were required, the 'work' of the classroom. At another level, they had to learn to adapt themselves socially to the 'culture' of the classroom through which its work was accomplished. In their stories, Rodriguez and Conway did not seem to have too much trouble orienting at the academic level. Neither of them encountered the long period of intellectual struggle that Rose faced. Instead, it was at the level of culture that Rodriguez and Conway continued to experience the greatest periods of disorientation and tension.

For Rose on the other hand, the demand that he adapt himself academically was encountered two years prior to any big cultural transitions.² The greatest need was for him to come up to speed academically. This meant that he needed to completely change how he saw himself as a thinker and learner. His image of himself suddenly needed to include competence and, at the urgings of Jack MacFarland, even certain intellectual gifts. This was a process that preceded and then continued into Rose's subsequent transition to Loyola, where both cognitive *and* cultural change became issues. Again, because their academic abilities were recognized from an early age, one does not get the sense that Rodriguez or Conway ever had to reconstrue their own levels of intellectual competence in the same ways or to the same extent as did Rose.

Many times, the process of change for these authors seemed to require them to let go of aspects of their past that they felt unable to maintain into their educational futures.

² Although the jump to Voc Ed did redefine him within the culture of the school itself, this was not comparable to the dramatic cultural changes that Rodriguez and Conway's first contacts with education involved.

In order to more fully embrace the classroom, school, or campus as a new point of order, one status quo had to be exchanged for another. Various transitions either made this possible or they made it necessary. For example, distancing himself from his past was a process that Rose had begun with Jack MacFarland, the first person to seriously challenge his academic perceptions of himself. Rose needed to let go of the image of himself as Voc Ed material before he could take the risks involved in the college prep track. Later, Rose found that he had to detach himself somewhat from his origins in South Los Angeles in order to make a fuller transition to university life. Only then could he fully accept the idea that his education might really open up new worlds of possibility.

On the other hand, for Rodriguez there was a strong tie to his parents solidified by ethnicity that he felt must be let go of (Rose and Conway had strong bonds with their mothers strengthened by the tragedies they shared but these were essentially without the ethnic dimension). For Rodriguez, speaking English in the home announced his transition to the ways of school culture. It symbolized a weakening for him of his tie to his parents. But English was also the only means by which he could build a public identity, one that the classroom would recognize and reward.

Finally, for Conway, although her transition from the outback to urban life as well as her initial trip to Ceylon certainly challenged her view of things, the first time it appears to have been necessary for her to truly change, to let go of an aspect of her own identity in order to embrace a new direction in her learning, is when she reached university. Here she found that in order to fulfill her aspirations of becoming a scholar, she had to release herself from the expectation for her gender that she stay at home and,

as a daughter, continue to care for her mother. Further, she needed to distance herself from the myth that one could become scholarly to the point of abandoning one's womanhood. Perhaps the reason this did not happen earlier for Conway was that she had not come across anyone who could help her mediate between her academic and outback identities. It seemed that her brief but intense relationship with Alec Merton was the catalyst that helped her begin sorting out who she was and what she should become as a person. It empowered her to let go of her role as caretaker of her mother and their legacy on Coorain.

At the same time as each author found it necessary to let go of some aspect of their past in order to change, there were also times when they realized the impossibility of ever completely doing so. There were transitions during which, as they teetered on the boundary between cultures, the more enduring aspects of who and what they were became more obvious to them. For example, while in the Teacher Corp, Rose's identification with his students sensitized him to the presence of the past within himself. He realized that the "decayed images of the possible" he had internalized growing up in South L.A. would always remain. It was Conway's travel between countries, on the other hand, that seemed to make conspicuous for her the colonialist attitudes inherent in herself as well as those aspects of her, a certain way of apprehending a landscape for example, that were Australian through-and-through. Finally, it was only late in his formal education, sitting by himself alone in the British Museum, that Rodriguez could finally appreciate the indelibility of who he was as a Hispanic, the son of illiterate immigrant parents. In some important ways, the changes that had allowed these authors to complete

the transition to an academic world, to find there new points of stability, were in fact never fully complete. The tensions between stability and change was never fully resolved. Although it lessened at some moments and increased at others, it remained an integral part of who they were.

Thus, within the context of each of the three narratives, the author's experience renders views of him- or herself and the world from very different places. In a sense, although they may have departed these places physically, there is also a sense in which they never really left. Conway never left the expansive remoteness of Coorain nor did she leave Harvard, Rose never left South L.A. nor did he leave Loyola, and as he enlisted as a member of an academy that he ultimately rejected (or that rejected him), Rodriguez never left the Spanish speaking warmth of his early family life. Finding their own sense of place, their own integrated identity, for each of these authors has meant bringing these places together in a way that has finally allowed them to connect.

Perhaps because of the extent to which Rose and Rodriguez felt their transitions to academic life had transformed them from who and what they were, they continued to experience self-doubt throughout their educational careers, doubts that denied they had changed in any truly significant way. Were they the 'real thing' or not? For example, Rodriguez's doubts were evoked by the persistent contrasts in ethnicity between himself and his academic peers. Rose, on the other hand, although he had made huge shifts in his intellectual view of himself, continued to feel the tug of having spent two years in the Voc Ed track as having been a denizen of L.A.'s lower socioeconomic class. For Conway, owing partially to the schools her financial circumstances had allowed her to

attend (private schools whose culture was consonant with her colonial attitudes), her whiteness in a White culture, as well as the early recognition of her intellectual gifts, the 'real thing' issue was not one she appeared to struggle with. Her own self-doubts stemmed more from the constrictions of gender and the moral issues this raised for her: was it *appropriate* for her as a woman to become a scholar and, as a daughter, did she have that right?

Perhaps driven by such self-doubts, in those instances in which the authors appear to have made some kind of academic progress, all of them seem to have experienced an impulse to sabotage the change. After his transfer into the college prep track, Rose struggled against the habit he had acquired of under-performing. Later, while attending Loyola, he fought the pull to stay in South L.A. where life was familiar and he could continue to look after his mother. Conway, on the other hand, struggled against the dictates of gender for the Australia of her time. She wondered if her place was in Australia, at home, caring for her mother. Or was it as a ranch owner on Coorain? Either choice would have ended her academic path.

Finally, the nature of Rodriguez's self-doubts and the direction these took him in were a bit more complicated. Although his refusal to defend his dissertation, in spite of the fact that it had been completed, would appear to have been a deliberate attempt to sabotage his own academic career, in reality it was the only way he could *not* sabotage himself at a deeper level. By abandoning this quest, he was also avoiding the continued self-sabotage of the scholarship boy who, by splitting from his past, destroys his own integrity. The dissertation, at one level, embodied his entire education. It was a symbol of

who he was as an intellectual. However, he now realized that his academic identity was one that sought to deny his origins as a Hispanic, the son of illiterate Mexican immigrants. To defend it publicly in front of the faculty would have only been to continue the charade and the intellectual dishonesty. It would have been a betrayal, one now conscious, of the past that he was finally claiming for himself.

If we look at the tension between stability and change simply as the result of a cultural clash, the ‘old’ culture of one’s past colliding with the ‘new’ culture of the present, there are three obvious ways such a tension could logically resolve. First, one could actively pursue membership in the ‘new’ culture. Second, one could reject this option and retreat or resist membership. Third, one could find a way to ‘code-switch’ or translate between the two. That is, one could say to oneself, “While these two places are different, while I’m here I’ll be this and while I’m over there I’ll be that,” speaking and acting accordingly in each.

Although each of them did try, none of the three authors seems to have been successful with this last option (i.e., code-switching). They were unable to translate between worlds in which things held such different meanings, at least without becoming painfully confused about themselves and who they should be as persons. The second option, to retreat or resist in some way, may be the easiest and the choice many students who come from conditions much different than those of the classroom actually make. Rose, Rodriguez, and Conway are therefore exceptions in having gone with the first option, that of pursuing a place for themselves in the thick of academic culture.

Of course, for none of the three authors did their transitions occur overnight. They often involved a long, extended process. There was constant back-and-forthing between old and new ways of thinking, learning, and doing. Sooner or later, the tension generated a crisis.³ There was a sense of having lost the horizon (to borrow from Rodriguez), a lack of anything by which to orient their sense of themselves, nothing to get a fix on. At the same time, it was usually only during such crises that the impetus seemed to appear for moving forward. For example, during undergraduate Rose continually commuted back-and-forth between South L.A. and Loyola, daily crossing what were predominantly lines of class. The tension and confusion this generated ultimately paralyzed him. It was then that he made the decision to leave home for good. Rodriguez moved back-and-forth across lines that were more broadly cultural, marked largely by ethnicity: Hispanic and White. In London, his attempt to parachute deep into academic territory precipitated his surrender to the fact that he could not, or was unwilling to, disregard his past for a place in academia. Not long after this, he abandoned academia entirely. Finally, the crisis for

³ I realize that the term 'crisis' carries some theoretical baggage, particularly having to do with Eriksonian theory. Crises for Erikson were between states within the individual (e.g., trust versus mistrust, industry versus inferiority, ego-identity versus role-confusion, integrity versus despair). In contrast, although my use of the term 'crisis' refers similarly to moments in which one's identity is at risk, it is not used developmentally. For Erikson, the dynamics of crises were shaped by the forces of inner development ('epigenesis') confronting the structure of outer society. Reconciling these crisis in the appropriate way at the appropriate time resulted in the accruing of basic personal virtues (e.g., trust, competence, fidelity, wisdom). In this study, the dynamics of a crisis are explained in terms of the juxtaposition of two different forms of social organization and the mediational means that do (or do not) facilitate one's movement between them. The unit of analysis is not the individual, nor an individual's developmental period, it is the individual-in-transition, which naturally includes as a constituent the nature of that which the individual is moving between. The crises in the authors' lives were driven by the identity that they arrived in various contexts 'with' and the inability of a particular context to sustain that identity (i.e., that way of thinking, talking, acting, and valuing). In this view, a critical constituent of crisis is the nature of the prior or former context and its generating and sustaining of a certain identity. Finally, the resolution of the crisis is not supposed to have endowed Rose, Rodriguez, or Conway with particular virtues. The resolution simply allowed them to move forward with a life whose trajectory they felt they had lost control of.

Conway came only after years of constant movement between home and her role there (a daughter caring for an ailing mother) and the world of academia (an aspiring scholar). At that point, she was essentially moving back-and-forth across lines marked by gender. An irrational tirade by Conway's mother was the event that finally triggered a moment of clarity for Conway. Admitting the distortedness of this relationship, Conway was finally able to make the conscious decision to stop the back-and-forthing and begin a more focused pursuit of an academic career.

To more deliberately pursue their education, all three authors at some point needed to abandon the attempt to be one person in one context and a more-or-less contrary person in another context. Beach (1999) might characterize this change as moving from a "collateral" transition in which one moves continuously between two different contexts to a "lateral" transition in which one turns away from one's past in the service of a more complete and final change. For these authors, it was actually out of their collateral movement that the momentum for a more lateral movement toward a different kind of future arose. Having accomplished the latter, it is true that Rose, Rodriguez, and Conway do finally look back. In general, it is class, ethnicity, and gender respectively that inspire them to do so. But this looking back is by no means a desire to actually return to what they once were. In deed, their inspiration for remembering comes only by having moved quite some distance from where they began. Only by virtue of this distance can they now understand the broader picture of themselves.

One possible reason that all three authors did decide, against the odds, to continue their educations into college and graduate may come from their shared belief that

education could somehow remake them. There was an overarching faith on their part that knowledge and books would transform them. Of course, a necessary ingredient of this was a strong desire on their part to be transformed. Rose's desire began to unfold during his senior year in the context of his intense student-teacher relationship with Jack MacFarland. He wanted to become something other than what he saw around him in South L.A. He wanted education to lead him out into a richer world of experience. For Rodriguez, on the other hand, desire sprouted early. From the earliest days of elementary, he wanted to be a 'good student.' He wanted to belong there as he had belonged among his family. He sought validation as an important and legitimate member of the academic community.

Conway's desire for change through education was different in the sense that it was not so all-encompassing. Unlike Rose and Rodriguez, Conway was more comfortable in the multiple worlds she inhabited. With the exception of her desire to be released from her role vis-à-vis her mother, the university did not necessarily represent a means of escape from an identity and a past she wished to forget (remember that Rodriguez, who was from a strongly Hispanic family background, had chosen to become an English major, specializing in Renaissance literature). The transformation in herself that Conway sought from formal education instead had more to do with her identity as an intellectual. She had an idea of what she wished to accomplish as a scholar. In fact, as a historian, she *wanted* to look back. By doing so, she had hoped that she could attain a deeper understanding of the issues that had been so integral in her mother's life and, thus far, in her own - particularly gender, colonialism, and nationality.

In summary, across the three texts, certain things can be said about the tension between stability and change. First, at some point for all three authors, the stability of their identity was lost during the course of significant educational and life transitions. There was a break with the past that somehow disoriented them. This, in turn, set up a tension between the author's need for personal continuity, on the one hand, and the desire for a kind of learning that would help him or her become someone or something new, on the other. From one author to the next, there were differences in when this destabilizing occurred, differences that depended on the timing of events as well as on where each of the authors were in their own developmental trajectory.

Second, tensions between stability and change could be created by a sudden shift in the intellectual expectations accompanying certain transitions, as with Rose's transfer to the college prep track or his initial year at Loyola. At the same time, other transitions seemed to involve more of a shift in cultural expectations than in what was expected of the author academically. Examples of the latter would include Conway's transition from Coorain to urban culture following the death of her father, or Rodriguez's initial movement between home and grammar school.

Third, although part of the tension between stability and change came from a certain resistance to letting go of various aspects of their past, such letting go was also the path by which this tension could be lessened and thus change more fully embraced. Having said that, however, it is also important to note that each of the three authors found themselves faced with the impossibility of ever completely doing so. There was an important sense in which the tension generated by an earlier transition, particularly those

involving the exchange of one status quo for another (e.g., the status quo of home/community for that of school), was enduring and in fact never fully resolved. Perhaps this is what prompted them to look back in the first place. Although it may have seemed to them at times that their education required a severing from their origins, each eventually reached for the sense of personal stability that came with reclaiming their identifications with the past.

Finally, over the course of their formal education, the tension between stability and change often seemed to be fueled by the authors' transition back-and-forth between one cultural context and another. This movement, motivated in part by a vague idea of how their education might change them, seemed to incite further the tension between who they were or had been and what their learning promised they might become. They essentially moved between cultures that each held different trajectories for them. One culture, home and community, lead in the direction of the past and a continuation of who they had been there. The other, school or academia, afforded a change in destination, heading them toward futures in which they could become something different, although what this might be often seemed obscure. This tension gradually built to a crisis that then provided the impetus for a more committed lateral movement toward the future, a future that at least promised opportunities for a more integrated self. At that point, they were able to assume a more conscious control of the change in their lives, a control that had not existed before (although each would still need to reconcile their future identities with the past, as discussed in the next section).

In these ways, each of the authors followed educational paths that introduced a tension into their lives between their need to maintain a sense of stability regarding who and what they were as persons and the opposing desire to become something different, to move beyond the constraints of their past. As Rose, Rodriguez, and Conway pursued higher levels of academic achievement, tensions between stability and change were generated by their ongoing awareness of contrast. Moving back and forth between academia and a world closely affiliated with their past continually foregrounded the differences between these two. These differences were not merely in terms of contexts however. Each of the authors also had a strong experience of essentially moving between one *identity* and another and that moreover these identities were somehow mutually exclusive.

For all three authors, their most significant periods of transition involved some type of crisis before a conscious commitment toward some future set of coordinates could be made. For all three authors, these crises were very personal. They were not shared by others around them and were not necessarily precipitated by any kind of catastrophe in the author's life. The crisis was an outcome of the author's struggle with the frustrated tangle of old and new. Although, of course, they could not have planned it this way, as a crisis unfolded it often afforded them with the conditions for its own resolution. The next section will now gather together the main points that seemed to have emerged from my analysis of the tension between affiliation and separateness.

Affiliation and Separateness.⁴ The tension between affiliation and separateness, and the way this played into the public-private distinction, was a phenomenon that all three authors encountered during their various educational transitions. The quality of their experience depended in large part on the circumstances that they were coming to school *from*. Typically, these were circumstances that had served to separate them a particular school's culture. In Rose's case, life among the economically lower-class, racially mixed population of South L.A. had little in common with life on the predominantly upper-class White campus of Loyola University. For Rodriguez, the fact that his was the only non-White in the classroom, and moreover that he did not speak English, was sufficient enough to induce feelings of separateness upon entering school. For Conway, her family lived on a ranch so geographically remote that prior to age 11 there essentially was no public to have felt separate from. Perhaps because of this, unlike Rodriguez, it was only *outside* of academia, during her stint as a medical secretary, that she could finally begin to construct "an acceptable public self" (p. 162). In sum, in different ways, some aspect of the authors' lives prior to significant educational transitions made it difficult at times for them to construct their public identities as students once such transitions were underway.

⁴ As defined in chapter three, *Affiliation* refer to the authors' experiences of feeling that their learning and identity were connected in important ways to people, things, events, and ideas outside themselves. Achieving this experience required access to the various means by which they gained access to a particular culture (e.g., means would include significant learning relationships such as those with teachers, mentors, or peers as well as their own skill, knowledge, and familiarity with regard to various cultural artifacts). Separateness, on the other hand, was essentially the absence of such means, an experience of themselves as, to some degree, an individual set apart from the particular web of relationships, things, events, and ideas surrounding them. While at its extreme, separateness induced an experience of alienation, in balance with affiliation it was also important for a feeling of individuality, uniqueness, and personal efficacy.

To varying degrees, Rose and Conway's intellectual development depended heavily on their affiliation with individuals who were able to serve as catalysts for their learning. Some were mentors. Probably owing to the academic leap he needed to make (Voc Ed to college prep), mentorship seem to have had the greatest importance for Rose. Along with receiving help in the development of his academic skills, first in his relationship with Jack MacFarland and later with his college professors, Rose was also shown a personal side of his teachers' lives. He saw that their private identities were consonant with their public identities and this inspired him to emulate them. At different times, Rose and Conway also searched for affiliations with educational culture through their involvement with various small school-related peer groups. These intimate communities provided a temporary niche where learning and identity-making could be brought together in a more explicit way.

For all three authors, niches such as these were an important means of maintaining a sense of personal continuity in the face of dramatic change. Although not all of these niches were within academia, through them each author was able to find at least some degree of stability. For example, for Rose there was his friendship with a buddy from high school who had also been accepted into Loyola. He and his friend would commute back and forth to campus from South L.A., sharing their frustration with Loyola and their pleasure in returning every evening to familiar surroundings. Rose was also part of the small circle of friends who, after graduation from Loyola, wrote to one another, sharing bits of their original poetry. With them, he *was* a poet. An affiliation vital to Conway's sense of continuity was provided by her relationship, albeit brief, with

friend and romantic partner, Alec Merton. He was someone who could mediate, perhaps for the first time, between her life on the outback and her life as a scholar. Finally, for Rodriguez it was through his strong affiliation with the church, in the context of his identity as a Catholic, that he realized some degree of personal continuity in the confusing back-and-forth between home and grammar school.

However, given the importance of someone who could serve an intellectual catalyst in the lives of Rose and Conway, the absence of similar affiliations in Hunger of Memory is striking. I continue to puzzle about their absence. As mentioned, Rose and Conway each encountered small pockets of friends, or a mentor here or there, that afforded them small, temporary, but apparently important niches where they could start pulling together their past with who and what they were becoming intellectually. Given their circumstances, it is not difficult to come up with possible reasons why. Conway attended an exclusive boarding school that shared her colonial mindset.⁵ Both Rose and Conway were fortunate enough to meet up with friends and teachers that shared their passion for language and learning. And neither of them had to deal with ethnicity, or second language issues, in quite the same way as did Rodriguez.

Still, I remain curious as to why a similar niche never seemed to appear for Rodriguez, at least as written about in Hunger of Memory. Was there really no place to resolve the tensions between past and future, aside from the continuity provided by his

⁵ The fact that Conway's mother was so intensely, albeit ambivalently, involved with her education (both personally and financially) and was literate herself (both Rose and Rodriguez's parents had very little formal education) provided an environment that was comparatively supportive to Conway's intellectual development.

identity as a Catholic? Although the fact of it *not* happening was critical to his 'breakthrough' in the British Museum (or that's how I interpret it), was there really no one to have helped him along the way, no one who understood his struggle in moving between Hispanic and academic worlds? Perhaps not. Although he might have been helped by someone who could serve as a model of the successful Hispanic-American intellectual, a theme of his autobiography is of course the impossibility of doing precisely that, of incorporating his ethnicity into his identity as an American academic.⁶

Throughout their educational careers, Rose, Rodriguez, and Conway all struggled with the powerful and enduring affiliation between their own lives and the lives of their parents. They struggled because, in order to develop their own individual path, there was also the need for them to appreciate the ways in which their lives were in fact separate from those of their parents. This was not a simple task. The conscious decision to avoid replicating the lives of their parents sparked feelings of guilt. Except for those occasional niches that brought learning and identity together, that helped them to integrate their past with what they were now learning formally, the author's intellectual development seemed to symbolize a turning of their backs on the lives of their parents, maybe even an abandonment.

⁶ I did correspond briefly with Rodriguez regarding this issue. He replies,

Of course, there were favorite teachers. And I always expected, as a boy, that books mysteriously would transport me one day into the company of educated people. But no. Otherwise, my education was a strangely solitary journey. To this day, I write and I work as a kind of public intellectual within a circle of loneliness. That loneliness feels like a burden at times, but it also gives me the impulse to write (to touch other lives, to puncture the silence) (R. Rodriguez, personal communication, April 1, 2001, used with permission).

For example, each eventually had to acknowledge and accept the stark differences between their own educational opportunities and those of their parents. All three autobiographies portray the glow and optimism of their parents' early lives in contrast to what eventually became a string of disappointments and dead-ends. Unlike their offspring, whose educations had spanned the prosperous decades following WWII, all three sets of parents had been born into hard economic times. It had been necessary for them to forsake education at a young age in order to work. Also unlike their offspring, each of the authors' parents had married young, had children, and continued to work in support of a family. In one way or another, each of the authors' quest for academic achievement is construed by them as having been an effort to compensate for the disappointment of their parents' unfulfilled dreams. As a result, the authors all reach a point where they are conflicted about who it is they are truly learning *for*. Who *should* their educations serve? Why did their learning seem to separate them from their parents instead of strengthening that affiliation?

At her high school graduation, Conway felt empty. She realized that no amount of accomplishment could bring back her deceased father and brother. Nevertheless, her education continued to be one way of remaining faithful to her father's admonishment, as his ranch was collapsing, to make something of herself. Further, it was only through paradoxically devoting herself intellectually to improving the cause of women (a means also of indirectly maintaining her affiliation with her mother's life) that Conway could physically leave her mother for a separate life in America. Similarly, before Rose could wholeheartedly pursue a college career, he also found it necessary to realize a more

conscious separation of his life from the life of his widowed mother in South L.A. It is also telling for Rose that at the point at which he had decided to give up his scholarship and leave his graduate program, it was toward his deceased father that he felt most apologetic. He remembers the images that came to him that afternoon. He had resigned from UCLA and lay on the bed in his apartment.

The rain was streaming off the roof drain and down along the window. I could see my father. His face was quiet, comatose, his cheeks soft and stubbled. His lips were open slightly. Dad? I slid my arms under his arms - he was hot and damp - and tried to sit him up in bed. Dad, sit up. Please. "Come on, Dad," I heard myself cry. "God dammit, Dad. Dad. Dad. Oh, Dad, I'm so sorry" (p. 83)

Finally, a prominent dynamic in Rodriguez's autobiography was the increasing separateness that education seemed to engender between he and his folks. Throughout his education, Rodriguez found himself repeatedly having to reconcile academic achievement and the opportunity for a better life with a sense of being alienated from his parents, although he viewed this struggle as an inevitable and even necessary part of his Americanization.

Differences between the authors' backgrounds, especially in terms of their family histories, meant that they came to education from different places, with different constellation of affiliations by which they felt themselves defined. There were differences between them in the breadth and depth of affiliations between their family of origin and the world external to it. Rose's parents had immigrated from Italy to America's east coast

and, in hopes that an improvement in weather might slow his father's arteriosclerosis, from there to the west coast. However, the move west only separated them further from extended family as well as from the life for which they had hoped. Rose's autobiography contains no reference to the involvement of aunts, uncles, cousins, or grandparents, for example. "Isolated and deceived," his parents were "two more poor settlers trying to make a go of it in the City of Angels" (Rose, 1989, p. 13).

In contrast, although Rodriguez's parents were new to America, the fact that they had come from nearby Mexico allowed for a greater degree of affiliation with their extended family and native culture, which likely endowed Rodriguez with a greater sense of ethnic heritage, while heritage is something Rose says little about (of course, this deeper sense of ethnic heritage also helped to explain Rodriguez's angst regarding his having been co-opted by White academic culture).

For Conway's parents there were no immigration issues. Moreover, in spite of the hardships involved in running the ranch, the purchase of Coorain had in fact moved Conway's family into Australia's owning class. As a result, she had access to resources that Rose and Rodriguez did not: private boarding school, vacations abroad. Further, although all three sets of parents valued and sacrificed for their children's education, Conway's mother was different in the set of high standards she maintained for Jill's learning as well as her level of involvement with it. The fact that Conway's mother was relatively literate allowed her to participate more directly in Conway's education. She and Conway read together. There were many books in the home. She even assumed the

role of teacher during Conway's early years on Coorain.⁷ Thus, there were certainly differences between the quality of Conway's initial transition to the academic work of the classroom, for which she was well prepared, and the more difficult transitions of Rodriguez and in particular Rose.

In counterpoint to learning that seemed to separate them from others, at various points in each of the three autobiographies, there are moments in which Rose, Rodriguez, and Conway experience an affiliation between their own lives and the lives of published authors. In literature, as they personally resonated to a particular story or poem, they were able to realize a kind of distant mentoring. About Shakespeare and Elizabethan theater Conway writes,

I could scarcely read a page without self-discovery, for it seemed as though my experience of life and the one expressed in the plays were identical. When Hamlet spoke of the smallness of man washed up "upon this bank and shoal of time . . . creeping between earth and sky," it evoked my sense of smallness before the vastness of the bush. The inexorable swiftness with which the fates closed in upon Macbeth reminded me of my childhood (pp. 139-140).

In the poems of Wallace Stevens, Rose was able to recognize his own desire to "open the door, to go out and read the world: alien, point-blank, green and actual" (p. 77). The same

⁷ The tension between Affiliation and Separateness that Conway's formal learning eventually introduced into her relationship with her mother had to do with the threat that her education posed to Conway's role as daughter and caretaker.

type of affiliation with literature, seeing reflected in it the nature of the struggles he was presently engaged with, seemed to have occurred less frequently for Rodriguez. Perhaps this owed to his denial regarding the change that education was requiring. Eventually, however, Rodriguez did find himself and his situation characterized with stunning likeness in the pages of Richard Hoggart's (1957), The Uses of Literacy. The scholarship boy was more than a metaphor for Rodriguez. It was a categorical description of his life.

Finally, in considering the tension between affiliation and separateness in these authors' stories, Conway leads me to consider issues surrounding gender and the definition of self. One popular view of gender and relationships has it that, for various reasons, the psychological and emotional concerns of women generally orbit around themes of 'self-in-relation,' of human connectedness and affiliation (e.g., Gilligan, 1982; Miller, 1984; Surrey, 1985). In contrast, according to this view, male psychological and emotional concerns generally have more to do with issues of autonomy, power, and separateness. The reasons for these differences are usually attributed to a mix of biological, psychological, and evolutionary development and how these combine with culture to explain the construction of gender.

Based on the broader concepts of affiliation and separateness as they are defined here, I do not find this to be the case in these autobiographies. Rose's educational career was very much preoccupied with, indeed driven by, his need and desire for human relationship. His determination to be educated toward a broader sense of affiliation with others is what initially pushed him out of graduate school and into teaching. It was then as a teacher that he actually felt himself come into his own intellectually. Rodriguez, too,

was preoccupied with relationship issues during his education, although in a perhaps more self-absorbed way. The loss of intimacy with his parents that his education seemed to entail is a recurring theme in his autobiography, as is a persistent loneliness. Finally, and in contrast, although her identity was obviously greatly invested in her maternal relationship, Conway was also very much concerned with whether or not she would ultimately be able to *take* an independent stand. She struggled for assurance that she had the power and right to realize an identity separate not only from her mother but from broader gender stereotypes. Conway, who also takes a broader view of human connection and separateness, writes elsewhere...

I'm very much opposed to the current sentimental school of female psychology, which argues that women never separate from their families of birth because they bond with their same-sex parent and never develop boundaries that separate them from the primal mother....I think that's wrong for a great variety of reasons....I see men lodged in networks of supporting relationships everywhere I go... in fact they have many ways in which they display affection or support for each other...Women don't get to watch them doing that, so they're not aware of it. So I wanted to write a story about separation - as honest an account as I could give of that process. My new memoir, *True North*, pursues that motif of separation. It's my personal testament in opposition to the sentimental school of thought about women" (in Zinsser, 1995, p. 166-7).

In summary, some general points now can be made about the tension between affiliation and separateness. First, although constructing an identity through which they could affiliate themselves with a more general public was critical to negotiating the various academic cultures they encountered, it was precisely this transition between

private identity, nourished through intimate relationships, and public society that was difficult for the three authors. The various educational contexts through which these authors passed were all different (e.g., grammar school, private boarding school, parochial high school, undergraduate and graduate campuses in America and in Australia), but they were all public.

Second, in spite of the fact that the contrasts between where they had come from and where the broader academic culture seemed to be taking them could make this private-to-public transition difficult, most of all it required an array of affiliations through which they could bring learning and identity-making together, through which they could find acceptance of themselves at a public level without having to cut off important aspects of their personal pasts. In one way or another, each author's story represents the struggle to find those learning circumstances through which, by virtue of an optimal degree of affiliation *and* separateness, some degree of integration between past, present, and future identities might be achieved.

Third, each author believed that learning could somehow change them. Each of them desired that change. At the same time, each of them needed to work out who it was that they were learning *for*. Once they realized that it was not so much their own personal pasts they were trying to transcend as those of their parents, they needed to resolve for themselves the meaning their education held.

Fourth, there were of course differences between the authors in the depth and breadth of the affiliation-separateness tension, which could be attributed largely to how their stories differed according to the importance of economic factors, ethnic and racial

heritage, and individual family history. Fifth, there were instances of ‘textual’ affiliation, a personal connection with literature, that brought learning and identity together for each author. Such connections helped them to understand and, just as importantly, *experience* the meaning that their lives and struggles might hold. Finally, although these are only three individuals, the fact that Conway was a woman while Rose and Rodriguez were male seemed to play little role in determining the quality of the tensions between affiliation and separateness. More important seemed to be issues of class, ethnicity or race, and family history.⁸

The preceding were some of the ways that each of the authors’ educational paths involved a tension between the feeling that their learning and identity were connected in important ways to persons, events, ideas, and objects outside themselves, on the one hand (affiliation), and the sense that they were to some degree, an individual set apart from the particular web of relationships, things, events, and ideas surrounding them, on the other (separateness). Resolving the tension depended largely on finding a middle ground between family and academia. For the three authors, this middle ground took the form of brief, informal, but important *niches*, times and places in their learning in which the voices of past, present, and future could begin to differentiate and thus be brought into dialogue. These niches were brief contexts in which their future self, the part of them that held an idea of where their education could potentially take them, could ‘converse’ with who and what they were at that moment, including those aspects of the past that still remained a part of them.

⁸ This does not mean that gender was not a very real and continuing issue in Conway’s life.

In all three cases, out of this sometimes torturous and difficult dialogue between past and present came a third direction, one that was neither entirely new nor that relived their past but that to some extent integrated both. An example would be the “fledgling literati” that Rose and a few buddies formed with Jack MacFarland during Rose’s last year of high school. Although the bulk of Rose’s identity was still ensconced in South L.A. in the learning context of this small group he began to pull himself toward a very different kind of future. Or one can envision Rodriguez at the British Museum, hunched over a copy of Hoggart’s Uses of Literacy, agog at finding such an astonishingly accurate depiction of his struggles and planting the seeds for his eventual decision to abandon academia. The final section will now pull together the main points that came out of my analysis of the tension between immediacy and reflection.

Immediacy and Reflection.⁹ Obviously, in terms of differences between the authors, the tension between immediacy and reflection played itself out over the course of very different life settings. This is true for the other tensions as well, and perhaps more could be said about this. However, I will focus here on those things that seemed to contribute most to similarities and distinctions between the authors in terms of the tension between immediacy and reflection.

⁹ Immediacy and reflection refers to the tension in the author’s experience between two modes of consciousness, two ways of ‘processing,’ knowing, or experiencing the world. One mode seemed to be conceptual, analytical, and abstract and the other was represented by moments in which the authors experienced themselves as very much ‘in’ the present moment, unselfconsciously engaged, alive to their senses and surroundings.

There were geographical transitions that played a much stronger role for Conway than for Rose and Rodriguez in mediating the immediacy-reflection dynamic. For both Rose and Rodriguez, all of their major transitions were contained within the physical boundaries of urban society. Conway's most significant transitions, on the other hand, incorporated her movement between the natural world of the outback and the artificial world of the city (to the extent that one considers cities artificial). There was thus a manner in which Conway experienced the immediacy-reflection tension in ways that Rose and Rodriguez did not, this tension being fed by her back-and-forth between outback and urban academic life. In addition, tensions between immediacy and reflection for Conway were different in that there was not the same sense of struggle, a burning desire for more human contact and immediacy of experience in the face of academic pressure for more analytic types of reflection. Conway's movement back and forth between academia and outback was not driven by the press to inject greater immediacy into her life. It was merely a requirement of her dual roles: one in academia and the other on Coorian.

For Rose and Rodriguez, tensions between immediacy and reflection were mostly an aspect of their transition between the social and cultural worlds of home/community and academia (where, again, this transition for Conway was overlaid with her transition between natural and urban environments). For Rose, issues of class fueled this tension. The ethic of toughness and survival in South L.A. worked against efforts to develop more reflective modes of consciousness while, for Rodriguez, the tension between these two ways of knowing was fed primarily by the differences in ethnicity and tongue between

himself and his teachers or classmates. In spite of such differences, however, there remain important points of similarity between the authors regarding the tension between immediacy and reflection.

There were impediments to becoming a reflective intellectual for the three authors that can be thought of as more properly cultural. Although these resided in external society, they were also internalized in ways that each of the authors struggled to overcome. Rose struggled with overcoming the inhibition created by having come from a segment of the lower socioeconomic class while, for Rodriguez, the struggle stemmed from his own continued efforts to suppress his ethnic origins. In Conway's case, there were internalized gender expectations such as the perception that femininity and intellect excluded one another, or that her most important role was that of caring for her mother.

For all three of the authors, there was also a point reached where they felt a sense of disillusionment in the direction that their education was taking them. In particular, there was a perception that their learning was leading them away from more direct contact with the world. At some point, learning at the graduate level struck each of them as valuing a disembodied type of thinking that took precedence over more immediate ways of knowing (see Gover, 1997). This seemed to be the expected approach toward one's intellectual work.

At the same time, for both Rose and Conway, learning seemed to be driven by broader questions having to do with class, history, nationality, and gender, for example. These were concerns immediate to their own lives. Rose and Conway had both hoped that advanced levels of learning would lead them out into the world in the direction of

such issues. Although their undergraduate years, once they had accustomed themselves to campus life, had eventually contained powerful intellectual awakenings, both were then disillusioned when graduate study did not contain more of the same. Instead, there were times when graduate study struck Rose and Conway as arcane and obtuse, reflective in the extreme, abstracted away from the things that really mattered to them (more specifically in Rose's case, for example, away from the process of writing itself and, in Conway's case, away from issues of gender and her interests in an authentic Australian character). At some point, both Rose and Conway left their graduate circumstances in response to this perceived lack of immediacy (Rose for the Teacher Corps and Conway for a different kind of intellectual environment in America). Eventually, they reassumed their studies in conditions that allowed them to incorporate topics of more immediate personal relevance into their intellectual work.

In contrast, although Rodriguez also experienced his work as having acquired a certain irrelevance at the most advanced levels, he does not seem to have experienced a loss of immediacy in quite the same way as did Rose and Conway. It was not so much that he had come to long for experience that would lead him immediately out into the world. Instead, Rodriguez's desire was for experience that would lead to a more immediate connectedness with *himself*. Perhaps this was because Rodriguez had felt himself co-opted by academia to a greater extent than did Rose or Conway. Since he had disowned more of himself, there was more to reclaim. Also in comparison to Rose or Conway, Rodriguez's intellectual interests had focused themselves in a somewhat narrow way on Elizabethan theatre. For that reason, distracted by the pursuit of something that

had so little apparent relevance to his ethnic past, it was not until the 11th hour that Rodriguez finally began to deeply question if where he was headed intellectually was truly consonant with the person he was now admitting himself to be: the son of illiterate Hispanic immigrants. This was the point at which his own immediate experience, his identity, and particularly his desire to embrace his personal past, finally became the most important thing.

For all three authors, it seemed that the greatest meaning was ultimately not found in immediacy or in reflection alone. Instead, the richest meanings only seemed to arise once they had obtained a degree of steady movement between these two ways of knowing. Of course, circumstances that could support this oscillation also had to be in place. For example, the most meaningful moments in Rose's education, those most formative to his unique identity as an intellectual, seemed to be those instances in which a certain niche afforded opportunities for intellectual work that was, at the same time, embedded in the immediacy of his close personal contact with others. First, there was Jack MacFarland and, after that, his undergraduate professors at Loyola. There were also close relationships with like-minded friends along the way. Later, Rose's own work as a teacher included moments in which the immediacy of his contact with struggling students often lead him to reflect in important ways on himself, his own knowledge, and the nature of literacy itself.

For Conway, a middle ground that brought together the immediacy of outback and the reflectiveness of academic life was difficult to find. Each time she found herself coming in as if from the outside. In other words, Conway was constantly moving between

contexts in a way that allowed her to see both the one she had left and the one she was entering 'as if for the first time.' There was no niche that provided a middle ground from which Conway could reflect on the larger picture of her life. This is not to say that the reflectiveness that characterized her identity as a scholar was divorced from the experiences of immediacy surrounding her identity as a rancher. Indeed, to momentarily step back in order to appreciate the immediacy of life in the outback, its hard physical labor, its natural elements and one's fight for survival against them, was in itself an act of reflection. At the same time, there was a sense of immediacy that Conway carried back into her work as a scholar. This compelled her, in academia's otherwise rarified environment, to root herself intellectually in concerns that were of immediate interest and concern to her, whose relevance went beyond the confines of her small academic department. Ultimately, such cross-fertilization was not the same as having a third space that was somehow set apart from both her life as a scholar and as a rancher. She lacked a middle ground from which she could understand and, more importantly, evaluate her dual identities more objectively.

Conway finally realized a very temporary but intense middle ground within the context of her relationship with Alec Merton. For Conway, Merton was someone besides herself who was comfortable in the many worlds she inhabited. Like Conway, he could work, play cards and drink with the best of them on the outback but, at the same time, was well-educated and reflective. As a result, he was able to help Conway sort through her outback and academic identities and, ultimately, decide that her intellectual gifts were her strongest suit.

In Rodriguez's autobiography, one has the sense that he never found a niche within academia that could reconcile immediate and reflective ways of knowing in the same ways that did Rose or Conway. As a child, Rodriguez was in fact intensely aware of its absence. Like the scholarship boy, his consciousness at home was consumed with the immediacy of family life. He learned "to trust spontaneity and nonrational ways of knowing" (p. 46). At school, he learned to reflect analytically, to "trust lonely reason." Instruction stressed "the value of reflectiveness that opens a space between thinking and immediate action" (p. 46).

Perhaps for Rodriguez until he left academia, there was no middle ground between these two ways of knowing. Conway, in her back-and-forth between home and academia, whether living an immediate or reflective kind of life, nonetheless remained Australian. Up until university, Rose was among his own lower socioeconomic class whether at home or at school. However, Rodriguez was Hispanic at home, in the immediacy of family life, and an aspiring American at school, where reflection was prized. The fact was that these were incommensurable; he could not have conceived of himself as 'Hispanic-American.' This made it very difficult to integrate immediacy and reflection as two equally valid ways of knowing. Each of Rodriguez's identities (Hispanic son and American student) corresponded with different and mutually exclusive forms of consciousness, different ways of knowing. It was only after he had ultimately left academia for his life as an essayist and writer that he seemed to find a way to use his

reflective gifts in the service of those interests and concerns that were most personally immediate to his own life.¹⁰

In their own ways, at some point all three of the authors became fascinated with the two-sided, immediate and reflective, functions of language. For each of them, while the sound and music of language conveyed something that was very immediate (a feeling, an attitude, a longing), language as a symbolic tool opened up the possibility of creating new ways of understanding and thinking (a concept, an idea, a theory). This fascination is something that eventually drew all of them to poetry. For them, poetry as a form was an exemplar of the movement between sound and word, immediacy and reflection. In Rose's case, poetry (in which he would include song lyrics) and writing were important not only in his own personal and intellectual life, but often as a means of reaching his students.

The immediate and reflective functions of language were also apparent to Rodriguez from an early age. As a young child non-fluent in English, Rodriguez was peculiarly sensitive to the differences between the sounds of English in public and the sounds of Spanish at home. The differences in sound for him also contained a difference between the purposes to which language was put. At home, language served the immediacy of family relations. At school, it served reflective learning and the emergence of his identity as an American.

¹⁰ Since leaving academia, it is indeed interesting that Rodriguez has become an essayist, only one of a few careers that concerns itself with the widest possible field of topics. Also, as an essayist, he must always - in fact is expected to - speak from his own unique position and experience. That is, his daily work now entails reflecting on what seems to him to be of most immediate concern.

Finally, Conway too writes about the point at which she “heard language as music” (139).

This sense transformed my reading of Shakespeare, which I now began to read aloud to myself, instead of memorizing the blank verse with silent joy (p. 139).

In addition, as pointed out in my analysis (chapter 4), poetry and literature provided Conway with an important tool in helping her to understand her transition from the outback to urban life. As these afforded opportunities to reflect on her life, it became more immediate. There were certain poets and writers who had the potential to bring Conway into more direct contact with, and thus begin to integrate, her own feelings of “distance from the emptiness of modern life” as well as the images of “deserts and whitening bones” she had internalized from her life on Coorain.

In summary, some basic observations can be made regarding the tension between immediacy and reflection. First, on the road toward becoming intellectuals, which meant developing the ability to critically reflect, it was not merely societal roadblocks that impeded the three authors. By acting on those aspects of culture that had been internalized and that thus informed their immediate sense of who they were at that moment, particularly negative attitudes and stereotypes, they themselves had the potential to play an active role in blocking (Rose had he stayed in South L.A., Conway had she succumbed to gender stereotypes in Australia) or destroying the integrity of (Rodriguez

had he continued on in what he felt to be his hypocritical position as an academic) their future identities as scholars.

Second, each of the authors reached a stage in their education (graduate school for all) where learning seemed to have become too abstract an endeavor, one removed from the reality of their lives. Reflection had become divorced from the immediacy of the real world and they struggled for relevance. Each of them left education in response. Rose and Conway returned once they had realized an academic direction closer to the concerns of own lives. Rodriguez found relevance elsewhere. As a brief side note, each of the authors at one time or another viewed their intellectual abilities as a means of escape (through education) from unhappy circumstances. It is also important to note that each of them, as exemplified by their having written an autobiography, has turned that ability to reflect and analyze back upon themselves. There is a certain recursiveness achieved between immediacy and reflection in the act of turning back on their own education to give it meaning in the light of who and what they have become. It may be another way of bringing greater immediacy, a sense of 'realness' and integration, to the person they have construed themselves to be at the moment of writing.

Third, the experience of a relation between learning and identity for these authors seemed strongest when there was an optimal degree of oscillation between moments of immediacy and moments of reflection. But each had to realize the circumstances that could sustain this movement. In order to achieve it, as with the affiliation-separateness tension, it seemed to have been important for them each to temporarily attain various niches where the two ways of knowing, immediate and reflective, could cross-fertilize

one another, where a rhythm of moving back and forth between them could be realized. It was in this movement that the relation of learning and identity seemed most obvious, that they seem to have experienced learning in ways most relevant to their concurrent efforts at identity-making.

Fourth, Rose, Rodriguez, and Conway all eventually allude to the ways in which language served to mediate the tension between immediacy and reflection. Each of them came to appreciate language as sound (lyrics, poetry, the voices of intimates). Meaning at this level was very immediate: a feeling, an attitude, a longing. At the same time, as literate persons, they also came to embrace language as word or symbol, where meaning takes the form of concepts, ideas, or theories. This fascination is something that seems to have attracted them all to poetry, which for them epitomizes the movement between sound and word, immediacy and reflection.

This section has attempted to summarize many of the ways that the authors' educational paths involved a tension between a way of knowing constituted through immediate experience contrasted with a consciousness that depended more on critical analysis, reflection, and imagination. It seemed that, for these authors, their learning as well as their development as persons was most optimal in those circumstances that allowed them to oscillate between these two ways of knowing, that in effect allowed one way of knowing to 'play off of' another in the context of their lives. The oscillation was not merely in terms of the authors' internal experience. Their internal experience was simply one aspect of continuing to move between contexts that tended to foreground either one way of knowing or the other. The rhythm of this oscillation between

immediacy and reflection appeared to engender for them greater clarity and a deeper understanding of what they were learning its larger meaning in relation who they were becoming.

At more advanced levels of learning, however, tensions emerged that seemed to break this balance. For all three, there was a point during advanced study at which a perceived absence of immediacy in their learning effectively stopped the oscillation. Learning had lost its momentum. Although the result varied from the generalized pain of ennui (Rose), to feelings of personal alienation and irrelevance (Rodriguez), to a more basic dissatisfaction in the light of personal goals (Conway), the outcome was a conscious effort to effect some kind of change in their lives. At the very least, such a decision might get them out of this painful position, one in which they had felt increasingly stuck.

Relationships Between the Three Tensions. Having dealt with the tensions separately, in this section I will try to touch briefly on the possible interrelationships between them. Although I've separated them here for purposes of analysis, they were of course very much interdependent. Through his education, Rose hoped to reach out and affiliate himself more solidly with the world of immediate flesh-and-blood experience. That which Rose appears most driven to understand seems frequently to have been the immediate experience of those, including himself, struggling with "the dislocations that come from crossing educational boundaries" (p. 9). Doing so, however, paradoxically required that he also define himself as someone apart from those (including his mother) outside academia, those still inhabiting the world from which he came.

For Rodriguez, on the other hand, the tension between a sense of personal continuity (stability) and the process of becoming someone or something new (change) was often intimately coupled with the tension between affiliation and separateness. The circumstances of his very first contacts with the classroom left him feeling separated and apart: the only non-White, non-English speaker, non-American. He had to bring himself into closer affiliation with the culture of the classroom and the only way he could accomplish that (in fact was encouraged to accomplish it) was through urgent efforts to change, to divorce himself from the familiar, to drastically and hurriedly transform who and what he expected himself to be. To change in the ways that he believed were necessary, he ultimately had to devalue his identity as a member of Hispanic culture and, ultimately, as the child of illiterate immigrant parents. Therefore, an important component of change for Rodriguez, as well as for Rose and Conway, involved altering the network of affiliations through which they sought to define themselves.

In Conway's case, the tension between stability and change interacted in important ways with the tensions she experienced between moments of immediacy and reflection. This was particularly the case as she transitioned back and forth between her ranching duties and her role as a scholar and student at the University of Sydney. Her experiences of immediacy in relation to the outback provided a sense of stability and rootedness in the midst of change as she developed her identity as a scholar. At the same time, reflecting on her identity as a rancher fed into who and what she wanted to become intellectually: as a scholar she wanted to explore and even advocate for an authentic Australian identity that stood apart from a colonialist mindset.

Because I do not see the three tensions as being mutually exclusive, I have not felt compelled to reduce my interpretations to a single tension in any given case. In fact, as I tried to get a fix on how learning and identity-making came together at certain moments in the authors' lives, the widest understanding was occasionally offered by instances in which all three tensions seemed to be operating simultaneously. As an illustration, I go back to Rodriguez's experience in the British Museum and his eventual transition out of academia entirely for life as a social critic. This series of transitions made clear for Rodriguez the tension between the changes in himself effected over years of formal learning and his contrasting need for a sense of stability and personal continuity. But, in addition, these transitions also illustrate the struggle between Rodriguez's need for closer affiliations and the validation that formal learning offered him, on the one hand, and the separateness that this seemed to create between himself and the ethnic world of his origins, on the other. This was a struggle that had started his first day of elementary and that sitting in the British Museum only brought to a head. The series of transitions that ultimately lead Rodriguez out of academia involved the conflict between a life in which the value of reflection seemed to have become inflated and his desire for a life in which immediate experience could regain its currency. In this case, each of the three tensions illustrates important facets of the relationship between learning and identity-making.

Autobiography and gender. As mentioned in chapter three, in her book, When Memory Speaks (1998), Conway reflects on the history of autobiography as a genre that reflects the contrasting myths and expectations Western European culture holds for the typical life course of males as opposed to females. Typically for males, autobiographies are built

around a test or trial of some kind, a “classical journey of epic adventure” (p. 9). The protagonist “is tested by the forces of nature and by cultural conflict, and he acts as an agent” (p. 10). For females, the protagonist typically portrays less control over the events in her life, less agency. As in the romance, things happen *to* her.

Much of the cultural “code” that Conway encountered in her native Australia had to do with these gender norms and, given that she was female, what seemed or did not seem to be culturally appropriate paths for her to follow. There was no apparent story line she could map her life onto, no quests or odysseys featuring the successes of a strong, intellectually independent women. In the typical romantic plot, the heroine defines herself primarily through her intimate affiliations with the hero. A heroine whose autonomy, agency, ambition and separateness served to define her was not an appealing character in British colonial culture. Yet, this is precisely the identity Conway’s education was nurturing. Even though she found comfort and belonging in the stability of her role as caretaker of her mother, it was the lack of change this role involved, its intellectual deadness, that pushed her to challenge gender stereotypes, even though she had no clear vision of an alternative. In contrast, at no point does one get the sense that Rose or Rodriguez were pitted against issues of gender in their struggle to realize a degree of personal agency in academic culture. The nature of what they were up against had much more to do with class and ethnicity.

The final and last chapter will offer a broad statement of my basic premise. I will also include a broad overview of the picture that my interpretation presents regarding the

relationship between learning and identity and the value of the three tensions as analytic tools for portraying more specifically the sophisticated nature of this relationship.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Synthesis

In this work, I viewed the relation of learning and identity through the lens of three authors who each had profound experiences of transition between their past and the academic cultures into which they desired entry. I began with the commonsensical assumption that an integral relationship exists between learning and identity, that what and how we come to know is inextricably intertwined with who we are becoming as persons. However, I argued, in the transition to formal education the definition and structure of learning change in such a way as to obscure this relationship. Although our perception of it may be obscured, it is a relationship that remains nonetheless vital. The difference is that we no longer acknowledge it as quickly or as readily. As a society, as the relation of learning and identity becomes hazy, this ironically permits us to separate issues of identity, including matters of class, ethnicity, and gender, from the larger problem of who gets educated, where, and how. Ultimately, we may become confused or discontented as individuals not only regarding the purposes and meaning behind our education, but about who we are becoming in the process.

Using a hermeneutic approach, I explored the published autobiographies of three public intellectuals: Mike Rose, Richard Rodriguez, and Jill Ker Conway. I interpreted their texts in terms of the relationship between learning, on the one hand, and their efforts to construct an integrated identity within mainstream academic culture, on the other. In various ways, in their journey toward becoming highly educated persons, all three

struggled to define themselves within academia's accustomed ways of thinking, acting, and talking without, at the same time, distancing themselves from vital aspects of their past.

In the three autobiographies, the relationship between formal learning and identity-making seemed to express itself most strongly through the tensions these authors experienced in the transition between home/community and academia. At some point, for each of them this essentially amounted to an experience of moving between two separate identities, each defined in the context of a different culture. The activities through which the authors constructed themselves as persons, if they were to be relevant, had to survive the lived confluence of the different worlds they inhabited. It was between home/community and school cultures, as they moved back and forth from one to the other, that they ultimately realized the implications of their learning for who and what they were becoming as individuals.¹

Three basic themes emerged from these narratives. These themes each revealed a basic tension in the learning-identity relation that was then used as an analytic tool for subsequent interpretation. As well as providing a metaphor for organizing opposite frames of mind, the tensions provided a unique means of articulating the more abstract relationship between learning and identity. The first theme, *stability and change*, refers to the tension in the three authors' experience between a sense of personal continuity, on the one hand, and the sense that they were becoming something new or different, on the

¹ For work that attempts to provide a broader framework for understanding the complex interrelationships of different life contexts see Beach, 1999; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Lerner, 1997.

other. In general, moving through significant life transitions produced increasing levels of tension that emerged from the authors' attempts to reconcile past and present identities. Their sense of who and what they were bumped up against a new context, one that had an entirely different set of expectations for them. For Conway and Rodriguez, an example would be their initial entry into elementary, which precipitated a major break in their sense of self-continuity. For Rose, the demand for change felt especially strong during his transition to university life. For all three authors, some type of crisis was ultimately necessary before any degree of resolution could be obtained. These crises were very personal and were largely an outcome of the struggle between their past identity and the ways of talking, valuing, and behaving that constituted the academic settings they were moving into.

The second theme, *affiliation and separateness*, represents the tension between the authors' need to feel that their learning and identity were connected in important ways to people, things, events, and ideas outside themselves. At the same time, they also needed to retain a sense of their own individuality, an individuality that was defined partially by their past. Rose, for example, felt he had initially lost this balance in graduate school. It was largely because learning seemed to have become so impersonal, to have lost its affiliations with his own life, that he was unable to follow the path his graduate professors had laid out for him. Rodriguez's affiliations with academia were strong up until the very end, at which point he opted out. He had strived to realize his childhood aspiration of becoming like his teachers. And yet he also increasingly struggled to find a place for himself as an Hispanic. The latter was a part of himself that he experienced as

separate, as standing outside of academia. For Conway, the tension was experienced as she moved back and forth between academia and the outback. Although she had strong affiliations in academia, returning to the university from the ranch foregrounded her feelings of separateness from those in her academic world, most of who had no experience in the outback. Conversely, as she returned to the outback, she could not help feeling a tinge of alienation there also, an academic in rancher's clothing.

For the three authors, therefore, progressing through the tension between affiliation and separateness required special niches, times and places in which the web of affiliations through which they defined themselves could become conscious, in which voices of past, present, and future could be brought into dialogue. Out of this sometimes torturous and difficult process came a future-oriented third direction, one that was neither entirely new nor that relived their pasts but that, to some extent, integrated both. Rose found an important niche, for example, as a teacher after temporarily dropping out of graduate school. It afforded him relationships with poor and struggling students, important not only in helping him to construct himself as someone "engaged with the language of others," but also in bringing him into contact with aspects of his own past that had yet to be integrated.

For Rodriguez, the British Museum was a much different kind of niche. It was demarcated by his distance from home and an intense solitude. In these circumstances, the tension between affiliation and separateness came to a peak that finally forced him to confront the internal struggle. He considered his affiliations to his family, to his work, to the other solitary souls in the library, and to his newly acknowledged identity as a

‘scholarship boy.’ Conway’s short but intense affiliation with Alec Merton, her exposure to his liberal ideas, his life-is-too-short attitude, and his great respect for her, provided a context in which she could both acknowledge her heritage in the outback and also begin to separate from it. As a result, she was finally able to disentangle the trajectory of her own life from that of her mothers. She made plans for studying in America.

Finally, *immediacy and reflection* refers to the tension in the authors’ experience between two ways of knowing or experiencing the world. While one way seemed to be conceptual, analytical, and abstract, the other involved those moments in which the authors experienced themselves as very much ‘in’ the present moment, unselfconsciously engaged, alive to their senses and surroundings. Oscillating between the two appeared to have afforded the authors the widest and deepest perspective regarding what they were learning and the meaning of this in relation to their own lives. At the graduate level, however, tensions emerged that broke up this movement. For all three authors, there was a point in their later years of study at which a perceived absence of immediacy stopped the rhythm. Although the results varied from the generalized pain of ennui for Rose during his first pass at graduate school, to Rodriguez’s sharp feelings of alienation and irrelevance while on his fellowship in London, to Conway’s sense of dissatisfaction with Australian academia in the light of her scholarly goals, the outcome was a conscious decision to finally effect some kind of change. They decided to leave their present academic surrounding. For example, Rose dropped out of his graduate program and went to work for the Teacher Corp, Rodriguez ultimately left academia entirely, and Conway left graduate work in Australia for graduate study in America. At the very least, such

decisions took them out of circumstances in which they had begun to feel increasingly stuck.²

Are the tensions I've explored here productive or problematic? Are they inevitable? Are they necessary? Looking first at the tension between stability and change for the three authors, personal disorientation during times of significant change created special windows of opportunity for reconstructing themselves as persons. The discomfort of change, of temporarily loosing their social bearings and their natural desire to regain them, put their identity 'at risk.' In different ways, all three authors describe how delicate and vulnerable was their view of themselves as a thinker and learner during periods of change (starting elementary school, changing academic tracks, starting or leaving or returning to college, the move to graduate school), periods during which their self-views could just as easily have been swayed toward the negative as toward the positive. And yet it was precisely this change-induced tension that compelled them to evaluate the quality of their learning and, in the later years for Rose and Rodriguez, to finally confront the images of themselves they had carried forward, images formed during their long tenure as students.

For the authors, certain transitions ushered in a change in what was expected of them. There was tension to the degree that they felt unprepared for such change. From an academic standpoint, Rose's initial transition to the college prep track in high school and

² Following their decision, the authors were each eventually able to resume their intellectual lives in circumstances that again afforded them a greater degree of movement between immediacy and reflection. Rose eventually returned to UCLA and a more involved role as an educator, Rodriguez found a career as an essayist and critic, and Harvard allowed Conway to pursue the questions she herself had formed regarding matters of history, gender, and culture.

his first year at Loyola University were discouraging. Without social supports, he languished and could easily have succumbed to his overwhelming self-doubt. The tide was turned by a string of mentors that encouraged him, acknowledged his successes, and provided models of the authentic intellectual. In contrast, Rodriguez felt the weight of his parents' and teachers' expectation that he become a successful student. Although he was able to compete academically, from a cultural standpoint this meant adapting his identity to the White, middle-class values of academia at the time, suppressing not only the expression of his ethnicity but his own sense of himself as Hispanic. The subsequent tension fueled the crisis that ultimately lead to his decision to leave academia.

Finally, for Conway, the move from Coorain to Sydney following her father's death and her entry into a formal learning environment caused her much anxiety, confusion, and bewilderment. Like Rodriguez, the challenges were not so much academic as cultural. She felt alien and developed an over reliance on her role as daughter for a sense of belonging. And yet, this tension between identity change and a sense of personal continuity was to play a productive role in sparking Conway's interest in questions of history, culture, and gender - questions that eventually informed her identity as an intellectual.

In their movement back-and-forth between the expectations of home/community and school, the tension between who they were or had been and who they should become gradually built to a crisis. This provided the impetus for a more committed lateral movement toward the future. As a result, the authors were able to assume a more conscious control of the change in their lives, a control that had not existed before. Of

course, things do not always turn out this way. These crises occurred in the context of lives that contained opportunities. For example, Rose's serendipitous encounter with Jack McFarland had opened the door for him to attend Loyola. Rodriguez's parents had made the decision to settle in a White, middle-class section of Sacramento and send him to a White, middle-class school where he followed the same path as his affluent peers. Conway's mother had a strong if overly vicarious interest in Jill's education and the resources to ensure that she was in the best possible learning environment. This allowed Conway to form relationships with those who could encourage and mentor her and help her make the transition (at Abbotsleigh, for instance) from outback to urban society.

In terms of the tension between affiliation and separateness, the three autobiographies described how important educational transitions required the authors to develop an identity that was more public and through which they could form affiliations with non-intimates. To them, this was an identity in contrast to the more private experience of being with family members. Rodriguez is clear that this public identity is what allowed him to progress academically, to attain his goal of becoming an intellectual.

Formal learning does require that one learn how to interface with a broader public, to construct an identity within a larger society. This is an identity based in part on the very separateness between public life and the exclusivity of one's intimate

relationships.³ At the same time, if the public identity one develops in the process of formal learning leads one to devalue aspects of who one is among intimates, or if the unique nature of one's family relationships works against the formation of a more separate public self, significant educational transitions may bring about a rupturing of self-continuity. At such times, the relationship between learning and identity-making is no less vital, but the relationship may have become a negative one.

We saw how important it was for the authors to find circumstances in their educational lives by virtue of which an optimal degree of both affiliation *and* separateness could be achieved. These were places where the authors could try out and play with different ideas, identities, and personas and, out of this, find some degree of integration between past, present, and future identities. As important as these niches were, they were serendipitous, personalized, and unique and generally found outside of the formal curricula. Perhaps there *is* no way to transform something so informal into a systematic component of the curriculum. At the same time, it does speak to the need for facilitating the opportunity for learners to realize those circumstances in which they can experience for themselves the relationship between what they are learning and who they are becoming.

³ Although there is not room to expand on it here, Chandler's discusses the results of his extensive and compelling research with adolescents that suggests two different and basic philosophical attitudes toward the self, attitudes heavily influenced by culture. Chandler calls these 'Entity' versus 'Relational' forms of selfhood (see Chandler, 2000). Where Euro-American adolescents were shown to have a more essentialist or romantic view of self, Native American youth "commonly adopt a more narrative approach to the problem of weaving together the various threads of their lives into some culturally available fabric" (p. 209). This seems to parallel Rodriguez's experience of formal education as requiring him to develop a public identity based on an American individualist notion of self, an isolated entity speaking to an anonymous public. For him, this was in strong contrast to the more relational self he experienced among his family.

The fact that all three authors consciously confronted the affiliations between their own lives and the lives of their parents was a good thing in one respect. It allowed them to transcend the educational limits of their parents' lives. Although each author held the covert desire that his or her successes could somehow compensate for their parents' lack of achievement, for the most part these desires were transmuted into motives that fed into the authors' future careers as intellectuals. The flip-side of this was the pain of surpassing and 'abandoning' their parents. It was their conscious grappling with this pain that finally allowed them to become honest with themselves regarding the motives behind their desire to excel academically. Coming into their own as authentic intellectuals required that they take ownership of these motives. Only then could they decide what their education meant in the context of their own lives rather than vis-à-vis the lives of their parents.

Regarding the tension between immediacy and reflection, as was said earlier, the authors' learning seemed to be optimized by a steady back-and-forth between immediacy and reflection. The rhythm between a type of knowing that was immediate and in the moment and one that was more conceptual appeared to generate for them the broadest moments of awareness regarding the relationship between what they were learning and the implications this had for who they were becoming. Such experiences were not frequent but they were motivational. They were something that each author eventually came to look for and without which their learning seemed unfulfilling.

For Rose, Rodriguez, and Conway, it was necessary to find a niche that could sustain this rhythm between immediacy and reflection. The emergence of these niches

was often informal and unplanned. Other times, they were an outcome of situations that a teacher had a direct role in structuring (for example, for Rose it was meetings at Jack MacFarland's house or backyard barbecues with his professors). More than anything, the tension between immediacy and reflection was about the *absence* of niches. It can be difficult to find those circumstances within formal education that value immediacy as a way of knowing. By the same token, it can be hard to find conditions outside of school, within one's home life, that support reflection. Although the authors' disillusionment with an over-emphasis on an analytic type of reflection and the accompanying lack of immediacy in their academic worlds was painful, it also brought each of them to important decision points. The resulting tension compelled them to make a change in their educational lives that lead to the eventual creation of circumstances that could support for them a way of learning vitalized by its relevance for identity-making, even if such learning lay outside the formal institution of education.

There were cultural impediments to becoming a reflective intellectual for all three authors. Each author struggled with the internalization of cultural stereotypes.⁴ Indeed, intellectual qualities can be perceived by oneself and others as incongruent with one's class, gender, ethnicity, or in and of themselves qualifying one for membership in a pejorative category (e.g., a 'nerd'). Such incongruities depend on a certain stereotype of

⁴ Since they exist in the same social milieu as everyone else, it is easy for members of certain groups to internalize the negative attitudes underlying prejudice and discrimination. These attitudes are then directed against themselves. Just as many gays and lesbians must overcome their own internalized homophobia, or addicts and alcoholics their internalized stereotype of the junkie or drunken wino, so must members of certain ethnic, lower socioeconomic, and gender groups confront the degree to which they have absorbed social stereotypes that seek to define them in negative ways, constraining their efforts to change.

the intellectual, of course, as well as on conventional views regarding what constitutes knowledge or intelligence. Although this and other stereotypes are not objective truths, they are cultural truths and therefore, as individuals and groups, we contend with them. The tension involved in becoming a reflective individual may come from the fact that one may both want to develop intellectually and, at the same time, may not want to challenge the stereotypes, the traditions or prevailing attitudes and expectations that inform how one is perceived by self and others. For Rose, Rodriguez, and Conway, making this tension conscious was a critical facet of their formal learning. Their experience suggests that it may be during periods of significant transition that one's internalization of cultural stereotypes becomes most visible. It was the very visibility of the stereotypes that finally permitted the authors to more consciously understand and contend with them. The outcome of this struggle was ultimately a greater degree of conscious choice over what formal learning would entail, how it would position them socially, and who they might become in the process.

There is no question that, as written about in their texts, the three tensions could be seen as productive in the lives of Rose, Rodriguez, and Conway. And in hindsight they were necessary to the story that each author tells about their formal learning careers. But they are not inevitable in the same way as a development stage might be construed as inevitable. Again, to repeat my quote of Rodriguez in chapter one, "education is not an inevitable or natural step in growing up" (p. 48). The transitions that afforded the emergence of tensions cannot be reduced to developmental impetus. They depended on aspects of the authors' personal histories. At the same time, given that these histories

played themselves out in the more general context of modern culture, it would be hard to argue that their experiences were thoroughly unique to them as individuals. As much as anything, I regard the tensions as representing one potentially neglected aspect, the human or experiential aspect, of the familiar transition between learning among intimates to learning in the context of institutionalized education. To the extent that this transition can be construed as a concomitant of education in a modern and culturally or economically diverse society, I do not consider the authors' experiences necessarily restricted to their particular historical and cultural circumstances.

There were pivotal moments in all three narratives during which the authors could have easily chosen to opt out of or otherwise sabotage their learning. Given the gap they often experienced between life at home and at school, it might have been simpler for them to simply have remained as they were, resisting the changes that formal learning imposed. From this perspective, the tensions presented here could indeed be construed as problematic. For society in general, it would be problematic were they so aversive that individuals abandoned their education altogether, dropping out or otherwise selling themselves short. The potential was certainly there for Rose, Rodriguez, and Conway.

In fact, the gap between the cultures of home and school is typically seen as a problem. Attempts are made to bridge it through, for example, policy initiatives (Bempechat, 1992; Miriam, 1993; Texas Kids Count Project, 1999), changes in practice (Au, 1981, 1993; Floyd-Tenery, 1995; McCarthey, 1999), or attention to issues of family literacy (Heath, 1986; Morrow, 1995; Nistler & Maiers, 1999). In each case, the implication seems to be that the more similar we can get the school to the home, the more

ways in which school can accommodate a diversity of home cultures, the better off we will be. But is the ideal solution to actually eliminate these tensions? Would the most helpful thing for students be for the transition between home/community and formal education to be as seamless as possible? I would like to describe a period from my own educational career that I believe has particular relevance for this question. I offer it for purposes of comparison. While I will not try and interpret it to the same extent as the three autobiographies, it does provide another perspective on the tensions proposed here and, through these, on the relationship between learning and identity-making.

As a child in the early 1960s, there was a great deal of continuity for me between home and the academic world. Some of this was due to the fact that I was white, middle-class, and from the cultural mainstream. Both of my parents were college educated. But there was more. The elementary school I attended sat directly across the street from our home. From the front of our house, I could look out either one of two large picture windows onto the school and its parking lot. School was always a visual presence. Even on sick days, I could hear the guilt-triggering sound of the bell and the noisy throngs at recess. When at school, I had only to glance out of the classroom window to know that home was never very far away. I could see my father's pickup pull into the driveway at lunchtime. Probably more unusual, however, was my relationship to the principal, a woman that once, in frustration with her job, had warned me against ever considering a career in education. She was my grandmother.

The fact that my grandmother was principal seemed mostly a good thing. I was not a standout either academically or athletically. So I came to value being “Mrs.

Conaway's grandson." It was important to how I saw myself. It made me different and somehow special. After all, I had an inside with my teachers' boss.⁵ In my young elementary life, school became an extension of family life and family life an extension of school. They were both part of the same network of affiliations and my grandmother was the node that joined them. As vice-president of the school board, my father provided even further continuity. Adult conversations in the house were frequently about the more political aspects of education: millage proposals, new hirings, *et cetera*. Not until adulthood was I able to acknowledge how unusual all of this was.

Rodriguez's position would probably be that those whose education requires very little change or contrast between the culture of home/community and that of academia are generally less aware of education as an agent of change. But are there also developmental implications? In my own case, education was certainly not perceived as an agent of change, at least not to the same extent as for the three authors. I was the proverbial fish, oblivious to the existence of the water. With no thermocline between home and school, there was little contrast of old and new, no back-and-forth between ways that marked my membership at home and those that marked my membership in the classroom. My grandmother sat at the dining room table on Sunday afternoon and behind the principal's desk on Monday. The same basic affiliations defined me in either place. The learning that was involved at school did not especially require me to become anything new, it didn't

⁵ This did have its negative side. I was sent to the office two times during elementary for disciplinary reasons. I imagine that the fear I felt was probably worse than for most other students. It wasn't just the mix of respect, fear, and affection I felt for my grandmother that came into play. My parents might just have well been in the room also since word of my exploits always made it home.

require me to reflect upon or change who I felt myself to be as a person. Although I certainly acquired new knowledge, I did not have to change much in terms of my basic identity.

Further, returning home at various times in their educational careers, Rose and Rodriguez felt as if they were coming in from a foreign land that their parents had never visited and could not understand. In my case, the adults in my house not only understood my school, they *ran* it. It's probably accurate to see my circumstances as representing 'privilege' or 'advantage.'⁶ I had one up on those students who had not come to school already walking and talking in the expected ways. I had the 'cultural capital,' Bordieu (1973) might say. In other ways, I'm not so sure. I also can't help but wonder about the *absence* of tension. For Rose, Rodriguez, and Conway, in a sense the logic of their autobiographies depends on the assumption that, at some point, formal learning *had* to disrupt their sense of personal continuity. It was the home-school contrast that initially revealed to them the new, that suggested the potential for a kind of learning that might lead them out and away from what was. Tension arose from the juxtaposition of this with their need for stability. I cannot remember my early education containing this kind of tension. The fact is that there simply was little experience of transition for me in terms of culture or class as I crossed the street between my home and my elementary.

⁶ Indeed, the conditions of my childhood education could be described as 'privileged' or 'advantaged.' I had opportunity and resources. But terms like 'privileged' reveal little about how learning and identity cooperated in my own educational career, nor how my status (my father also owned a large department store) often made me a mark for those who resented it.

Even in high school, home and school were all part of the same cultural past and present. I attended college at first by default. Since all the adults in my family had attended, I don't ever recall doubting that I would also. I lived at home and attended the local state university. When I received my undergraduate degree, I remember vowing that I would never return to what I perceived then as the suffocating structure of education. It felt as if I had been studying about life all those years and now I wanted to go out and *live* it. Perhaps, like the three authors, this was my own desire to find greater immediacy, experiences closer to the bone. And perhaps it is because in a sense, although I had started school, I had never really left home and was only now doing so. Not until my return to college a decade later, in pursuit of a career change, did I have the sense that formal learning could lead me to become someone or something different.

What my own experience suggests is that the tensions described here are not inevitable. Obviously, to the extent that we learn the attitudes, values, and behaviors that inform who and what we are becoming as persons, there will always be a connection between learning and identity. For every kind of student, entering a formal learning context compels us compare, to gauge and evaluate the extent of our intellectual abilities relative to others. At the same time, there isn't necessarily a connection between formal learning (as opposed to learning generally) and identity *change*. Instead, it is the degree to which such learning requires us to cross boundaries (social, cultural, economic, and otherwise) that determines its relevance for transformations in our fundamental attitudes, values, and behaviors. Otherwise, as in my case, the culture of the classroom is more likely to sustain the identity one enters with than to change it in any dramatic way.

Thoughts regarding autobiography and the study of learning and identity-making. However one wishes to conceptualize it, in school-learning we accomplish two things, neither of which can be divorced from the other. One, we construct an understanding of the world and our individual place in it. Second, by virtue of this understanding (and in concert with the understandings of others), we act in ways that identify us, that is, that position us in social space relative to those around us (see Davies and Harre, 1990). Since identity and learning are so fundamentally dialectic, there cannot be identity-free learning. We cannot separate learning how to *do* from learn how to *be*. Nor can there be any significant learning that does not depend on, sustain, or alter our identities in some way. Since learning (or the failure to learn) always positions us socially, learners' construction of knowledge cannot be separated from their constructions of themselves as people. But how can we study such a relationship? Where do we look?

Given that transition is such a prominent aspect of life in an industrialized society, perhaps Bhabha's (1994) suggestion that we look in the "interstices" between what he refers to as cultural "domains of difference" is a helpful one. At least here, one can begin to understand the great complexity of learning and identity-making. As described in chapter one, we are likely to find that each domain of difference in our lives (home, community, school, work, church, etc) contains a different presuppositional framework, a different 'take' on the relationship between these two fundamental aspects of life. Bhabha writes,

It is in the emergence of the interstices - the overlap and displacement of domains of difference - that the intersubjective and collective experiences of *nationness*, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated. How are subjects formed 'in-between,' or in excess of, the sum of the 'parts' of difference (usually intoned as race/class/gender, etc.)? How do strategies of representation or empowerment come to be formulated in the competing claims of communities where, despite shared histories of deprivation and discrimination, the exchange of values, meanings and priorities may not always be collaborative and dialogical, but may be profoundly antagonistic, conflictual and even incommensurable (1994, p. 2, italics in original)?

Similarly, Jiménez (2001) cites Rosaldo's (1989) suggestion that "researchers place the cultural borderlands at the center of their gaze rather than at the margins" (p. 996). Jiménez believes that these borderlands may in fact be "the most culturally and linguistically productive spaces in contemporary society." Again, as the three autobiographies illustrate, the relationship between learning and identity-making in all its richness and complexity may be clearest in those brief moments of transition as we move between one domain and another.⁷ My argument for using autobiography as a data source is that it provides one possible perspective on these interstices or borderlands. Of course, there are other possible perspectives that might further deepen our understanding. I wonder about the value of an ethnographic approach. By studying the transitions of those engaged in the actual process of crossing educational boundaries, would the three

⁷ In the lead editorial of a special issue of *Cultural & Psychology* devoted to the development of self and culture, Lightfoot and Lyra (2000) suggest that the "conjunctive relationships" between issues of culture, self or identity, and time "are somehow fundamental to justifying such principal dualities, paradoxes or tensions between opposites as those commonly understood to exist between continuity and transformation, subjectivity and relatedness, and coherence and diversity" (p. 99).

tensions serve a purpose in understanding their experience? Would they provide any insight into the experience of those who are presently at risk of failing or abandoning their education? If so, this might have something important to say about where the social supports for such persons should be located.

Final Thoughts.

As each of the authors found, it is not only that moments of significant transition foreground the present contrasts and contradiction of living in a culturally diverse world. They can also make conspicuous the consistent threads of stability that run through our individual lives, that maintain our bonds to the past. As Rose drew closer to becoming a member of the educated elite, his recurrent images of South L.A. and its “decayed images of the possible” threaded him back to his roots in the lower economic class. As Rodriguez sat for long hours in the solitude of the British Museum, the thread was the long-suppressed but ever present call to embrace his origins as the son of illiterate Hispanic immigrants, to personify rather than to deny his past. As Conway left for America, she was aware of the Australian dust deep in her bones. This was a thread that would forever tie her to Australia and to her father buried in the outback.

At the same time, what continues to strike me about the three autobiographies is the extent to which significant transitions in their educational careers continually evoked for them images not only of what they were in the present, but of what they were *not yet*. Philosopher Kenneth Burke (1989) comments that a human is the only creature to live its life in the presence of the negative. Higher consciousness brings with it the realization that whatever is so, could conceivably be otherwise. We not only perceive a tree. Unlike

other sentient organisms, we can also conceive of the tree's absence (we can think "not-tree"). We might even imagine some alternative in the tree's place. Rose, Rodriguez, and Conway all struggled with who they were in the context of formal learning. Although their identity at any given moment had its origins in their personal pasts, the trajectory of their learning was toward what they might become. Learning carried with it images of a future self. It was these images that either inspired or discouraged their continued efforts to learn and, finally, to become intellectuals.

Although effective learning programs will always require some degree of looking back, of assessing where we have come from and what we have achieved, we should not neglect their role in helping us construct images of what we might still become.⁸ Jack MacFarland's admonition to Mike Rose, "Look. You can write!", was as much about the possibility of what Rose *could* be as about any skills Rose possessed at that moment. Of course, ethnicity, social class, and gender may represent the kinds of categories through which our individual identities must ultimately speak, but neither could my interpretation of the three texts have been reduced to these terms. As the three autobiographies reveal, there is always a certain amount of agency contained in the ability of learners, and of

⁸ Again, see the work of Belenky et al. (1986) on literacy, gender, and power, reviewed in chapter three, for an example of the absence of such imagining and its affects on personal agency.

those who help them, to imagine something different. As teachers and educators, we are very much in the image business.⁹

I would be surprised if the basic premise with which I began, that there is a relationship between learning and identity, strikes the reader as news. Indeed, it was not my intention to try and establish this relationship as fact. The purpose was not hypothesis testing. The purpose was to see what might be learned about the relationship between learning and identity, in all its richness and complexity, from the documented experiences of three individuals. My hope is that this particular arrangement of the details provided by their stories may help us to understand more deeply an idea that we may already accept but, like myself, wish to understand more fully. It is intended to add to the already existing literature on the relation between 'identity work' and learning.¹⁰ Speaking in the abstract, I would summarize what I've learned here in this way: *learning is an experience and identity is the juxtaposition by which that experience is realized*. Or, conversely, *identity is a juxtaposition and learning is the experience by which that juxtaposition is obtained*. The activities through which we learn anything always position us relative to

⁹ The way we talk to one another about learning and identity is also important. It is a fact of the disciplines that those who talk about learning in mostly cognitive terms tend to talk less about it in social, situational, or cultural terms and *vice versa*. This is all 'academic,' as they say, until the conversation turns to a particular person, until the 'cognitive functions' of which we speak attach themselves to a specific individual. At that point, to the extent that the conversation is peppered with words and phrases such as 'cognitive functioning,' 'intelligence,' or 'aptitude,' we tend not to be talking about the part of a particular student's learning (indeed that part of his or her *identity*) that we ourselves are responsible for, that is constituted by the social and cultural worlds of which we ourselves are a part.

¹⁰ The phrase, identity work, was originally used by sociologists Snow and Anderson's (1987) in the context of their study of identity construction among the homeless. Their model has been extended to, for example, the study of marginalized students in an alternative high school (Fraser, Davis, and Singh, 1997). The phrase, though not attributed to Snow and Anderson, was also used recently in an essay on literacy by Gee (2000) as well as by Hemmings, (1998) in her case study of the identity construction of three African American students in a desegregated urban high school.

someone or something. From that position, by virtue of that identity, we continue learning what is and is not possible for us at any given point.

POSTSCRIPT

In the case of all three authors, these autobiographies provide examples of a more complex, multifaceted, and challenging form of contemporary identity. After all, these are probably not stories that one would have been invited to publish 50 or 100 years ago. They are not the tale of an All-American-Boy-Made-Good written by an older male reflecting on the obstacles in his life and how they have been overcome. These are stories written by middle-aged persons about their search for a transcendent stand, a third space that was neither family-and-past nor traditional academia but, out of the movement between them, an integration of both that was their own.

Further, and perhaps unfortunately, it is probably more of an aberration than the norm that the interplay of formal learning and identity-making would yield someone so capable of such severe institutional criticism as Richard Rodriguez and Mike Rose. These are authors who remain rigorously critical of contemporary academic culture. Because they have occupied the margins, they have been rendered extremely sensitive to the fact that, in practice rather than rhetoric, the highest values of modern institutional education do not involve enlightenment and the quest for knowledge but the dynamics of social power. It is somewhat of a paradox therefore that Rodriguez and, to some extent, Rose continue to remain attractive to higher education audiences. Perhaps it is a good sign that something in the psyche of academia feels compelled to reward Rose and Rodriguez for being so severely critical of the very system that produced them.

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