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A NARRATIVE STUDY IN TEACHER EDUCATION

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UNDERSTANDING POSITIONALITY:
A NARRATIVE STUDY IN TEACHER EDUCATION

VOLUME I

By

Suzanne Dee Knight

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ABSTRACT

UNDERSTANDING POSITIONALITY:
A NARRATIVE STUDY IN TEACHER EDUCATION

By

Suzanne Dee Knight

This dissertation represents the study of a narrative inquiry project I designed for my students, offering three of my students as case studies to investigate how the project worked, the nature of students' learning, and whether and to what extent my students gained a deeper understanding of the concept of positionality. As a teacher researcher, I drew on narrative theory, feminist theory, and learning theory to provide a backdrop and to locate this study within the larger body of teacher research. Data sources for this study included: samples of students' writing (both narrative and reflective/analytical writing), videotapes of two class sessions where students' writings served as primary course texts, interviews with two focus students, and an interview/viewing session with another focus student.

This study reveals that teacher educators need to make their pedagogies visible. More specifically, when teacher educators seek to design pedagogies that support their students' construction of new knowledge, these "systems" need to be articulated so that students are able to both use and interrogate them. This study also shows that not all students are willing—or perhaps able—to interrogate knowledge, either their own as manifested in their personal experiences, or more objective, theoretical knowledge.

This study also points to some implications for teacher preparation. First, what kinds of pedagogies might support prospective teachers as they grapple with complex concepts such as positionality; and how might teacher educators create "safe spaces"

where these pedagogies then become possible? How might teacher educators locate themselves in the classroom in order to enact these pedagogies? Furthermore, how do projects such as The Narrative Project reflect visions—though arguably problematic—that can be developed into segments of teacher preparation curriculum in ways that support the knowledge base for teaching and that are also responsive to prospective teachers' perceived needs? Finally, this study also puts forward the idea of spirituality in teaching, suggesting that this notion might receive more notice in teacher preparation and that perhaps it is too vital to *not* explore and examine more carefully, despite the risks.

To Tom, Jesse, Sam, and Levi—my boys—for the life we have shared

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I also extend my deepest gratitude to my students, who are always so willing to share their lives with me. You are remarkable people.

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Chapter One

The History Behind One Teacher Educator's Story

Backdrop

As a new teacher educator, I began to realize several things. I did not know how to *think about* teaching or how to frame the problems I encountered in a way that would allow for systematic study of the multi-faceted nature of those problems. Nor did I know how to develop a plan for addressing those problems, and then how to analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of my plan. In addition, my teaching methods courses seemed to compound this issue as I confronted a new set of challenges that I had not encountered as a high school English teacher. Feeling continually unsure—though surrounded by peers who seemed certain about *everything*—I kept my teaching practice, as well as my concerns, very private.

However, I also belonged to a small cohort of beginning English educators and was forced—in a sense—to open up my teaching practice and allow it to be more public, whether I wanted it to be or not. After a fellow graduate student video-taped some of my classes, he asked me questions about my responses to students during class discussion, wondering how I had interpreted what was taking place. He also questioned me about the role I had created or carved for myself, why at times I said very little, letting students work through questions and issues on their own, while other times I "inserted" myself more into the class, becoming much more noticeably present.

I often found myself unable to provide satisfactory reasons for my pedagogical choices. My responses seemed both too arbitrary and too intuitive. Though action based on intuition is not necessarily "bad," my inability to move beyond that was problematic

and disheartening. My decisions were *neither* entirely arbitrary nor intuitive, but I felt at a loss to provide anything better. And because I still wished my practice to be "mine," I lacked the commitment to work to answer his questions.

Magdalene Lampert (2001) writes:

> On the many occasions when someone has observed a small slice of my practice and questioned something I did, I have felt a great deal of sympathy for those teaching practitioners who respond to an observer's comments by closing down the possibility of further conversation with responses like: 'This is just my way of doing things' or 'Your way of thinking about what happened does not apply to my students.' But I also recoil from such statements for what they suggest about the nature and limits of professional knowledge building (pp. 29 & 30).

I am not sure if Lampert would have felt sympathy for me or recoiled from my answers to my colleague's questions. Either way, I knew I had closed "down the possibility of further conversation" and had not engaged in any kind of "professional knowledge building."

After another year of teaching the same course that my colleague observed and about which he asked such probing questions, I realized that my thinking about my teaching was beginning to move beyond intuition. And though I still wanted my practice to remain private, I also realized that I needed to get serious about working more systematically and deliberately to articulate what I was doing in my practice. This became especially apparent when even newer teacher educators than I were asking for my help and seemed intrigued by some aspects of my practice. Therefore, I moved from paying lip service to the idea of practitioners engaged in professional knowledge building to a conviction of its importance and a newfound desire to make my practice even more public. This provided the impetus for me to formulate a study of my own teaching practice.

To some extent, my entire practice may be contextualized in one inquiry project that I designed and enacted for my students. I asked them to write personal narratives, identify the salient social issue reflected in that narrative, locate an academic text that spoke to that issue, and then write a more reflective piece that explored how their narrative—informed by an academic text—furthered their understanding of their teaching practice. (See Appendix A for the complete rationale and task outline of this project). Two years after I began teaching this course, this project became the focus of this study. In particular, this study investigates the pedagogy around this inquiry project, including both the content and processes of the project and whether and to what extent it engaged my students in both an exploration and examination of their beliefs about students, teaching, and learning. Rather than investigating my students' learning only through my interpretations, however, this study also examines how my students made sense of this project.

Understanding my practice—as well as the inquiry project that is the basis for this study—first requires an understanding of my learning. It is that learning, as well as some of what occurred in my class when my colleague first observed my teaching, that represents the origins for this project. In the rest of this chapter, I will provide a brief narrative history about the conception of this study. This narrative reveals some of my own personal and intellectual history—and combined with reflections on my first experience of teaching this methods course—illuminates how this study came to be.

Origins

I read *Teaching to Transgress* (1994) by bell hooks for the first time during a graduate seminar "Feminist Perspectives in Education." At that time I found the chapter

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"Confronting Class in the Classroom" the most provocative. While reading that chapter, I realized that while I had thought about social class as a structure, I had not explored my beliefs about class, what "markers" we attribute to class, my assumptions about people based on their class, or the source(s) of those beliefs and assumptions. As a result, I experienced discomfort in conversations around the issue of social class.

During one particular discussion in this seminar, someone raised the question: "Why do we feel like we are entitled to be comfortable?" This question challenged me to further consider my own feelings of discomfort around the issue of social class and my belief that I *should not* feel—or was entitled not to feel—that discomfort when, in fact, I *should* feel uncomfortable, as it is a difficult topic or issue.

While enrolled in this seminar, I also taught—for the first time—the year-long secondary English methods course discussed earlier, which was the "culminating" subject-area methods course in a five-year teacher preparation program. Students receive a bachelor's degree and then return for a fifth year to complete a one-year internship for certification. This particular course is a methods course that all students take during their internship year. One of the first-semester projects for this course required my students to design a unit of instruction around literature; the introductory piece for this unit was a written rationale. One of the areas my students were to address in their rationales dealt with timing: "Why are you teaching this unit now? Why is this time of the school year an appropriate time for this particular unit?"

The day after the "comfort" discussion in my graduate seminar, I read the rationales my students had written for their units. Many of the students wrote that they were teaching this unit in the spring because their students would be comfortable in their

classes and comfortable with each other. They believed that the issues they wanted to discuss as part of their units necessitated their students' feeling a certain level of comfort with their teachers, as well as with fellow students. As I read these rationales, the question "Why do we feel like we are entitled to be comfortable?" rang in my head.

Considering my students' responses in light of what I was thinking and learning about in my own coursework, I decided to post the following prompt on Blackboard (an electronic course management tool) to explore the idea of comfort with my students: "Why is comfort so important to us? Why is it so important that our students feel comfortable? Why do we expect that we can make our students feel comfortable when we are talking about ideas that are *not* comfortable? How are we going to respond when students make it clear to us that they are not comfortable or when they become upset or angry?"

I read through my students' replies to the prompt several times and identified three common themes: safety, teacher discomfort during classroom discussion, and teacher expectations for classroom discussion. While my students may disagree with my interpretations and/or representations, I nevertheless theorized to some extent about what they were saying in order to make further pedagogical decisions. Because I based my subsequent decisions on these interpretations, I have included some "representative" responses on each of the three themes, as well as my interpretations of those responses. This "representative" group consists of eight of the seventeen students who responded to the prompt, and these eight comprised approximately one-third to one-half of the total number of students enrolled in the course.

Safety

Student One: Now do I think that some situations may make them feel uneasy? Yes. But uncomfortable, no. I guess that maybe my association with comfort has much to do with feeling safe. For instance, I could be in a safe environment talking about an issue that makes me feel uneasy, but it is OK, because I know that I am not being threatened... Being comfortable in the classroom—in my belief—is feeling safe. Safe in the sense of feeling respected enough to not fear peer responses in the classroom.

Student Two: A person might argue that it is impossible to create an ideal classroom environment where students feel safe, comfortable, able to peel away their inhibitions, where they can openly reveal their true beliefs, identities, and insecurities.

Student One seems to be talking about safety and comfort as if they are synonymous. She initially "associates" comfort with safety but later explicitly states that comfort *is* feeling safe. Student Two juxtaposes "safe" and "comfortable" in a list of factors that constitute an "ideal classroom environment," leading me to believe that unlike the first student, she does not understand safety and comfort as synonymous.

Both students talk about classroom environment, suggesting that comfort and/or safety may be more than individual, inner feelings. In other words, although students may inherently feel comfortable or uncomfortable and/or safe or unsafe, environments—particularly classroom environments—may have similar characteristics, thus abating or exacerbating students' existing feelings. Student One extended her discussion of classroom environment to include her understanding of how a teacher's level of comfort and/or discomfort might impact the classroom environment or atmosphere. Student Three, whose example is shared below, alludes to the same idea as she considers *how* a teacher might create an "ideal classroom environment.

Teacher Discomfort

Student One: That my own uneasiness has to do with what is within myself, rather than what is outside of me...If they feel uneasy, I hope that it is because of something within themselves rather than something within the classroom environment...They will have to look inward.

Student Three: So how do we create an atmosphere where students can think critically and logically on emotional and uncomfortable issues? An atmosphere where students feel free to express their opinions and successfully argue their points? An atmosphere where the teacher feels comfortable enough with the "uncomfortable" subject to explore and challenge students' and society's thinking? This is the real question. We are concerned about the students' comfort level when perhaps it is we who are the most uncomfortable.

Student One seems to be trying to work through the issue of unease, which I understand as a form of discomfort. She seems to be exploring the idea by looking at herself and the sources of her own discomfort, which she asserts comes from within. However, she then moves to talk about her students and her hope that their similar feelings originate in themselves, instead of as a result of an environmental factor(s).

Student Three seems to take the issue further and differentiates between external and internal sources of discomfort, talking specifically about "emotional and uncomfortable issues." She seems to understand that a student may experience discomfort because of an internal uneasiness about the ideas raised in class, not as a result of any external environmental factors.

Neither Student One nor Student Three is explicit about the possible sources of their inner discomfort, though Student Three seems to expand on Student One's discussion of uneasiness generating from within. She talks specifically about teachers and seems to understand that the atmosphere in the class, an environmental factor, may be a result of a teacher's discomfort. She asserts that the teacher's discomfort needs to be examined more carefully than students' discomfort. She implies that she believes that "an atmosphere where students can think critically and logically on emotional and uncomfortable issues...[and] where students feel free to express their opinions and successfully argue their points" is a vital characteristic of the English language arts

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classroom, thus making a teacher's self-examination necessary. Students One and Two—as well as Students Four, Five, Six, Seven, and Eight talked more specifically about students' expressing their opinions and ideas through discussion and the need to formulate expectations for those discussions. The following section illustrates my students' understanding of the nature of classroom discourse: what it should entail and what processes it should reflect.

Discussion Expectations

Student One: My students need consistent routines and expectations where respect is the norm and rules are enforced. Spontaneous outbursts and slurs and disrespectful comments bring about discomfort. My students need to know what kind of classroom I have.

Student Two: Students are surrounded by peer pressure, intimidation, and bullying. How can we eliminate these elements from our classroom? Solutions to this are classroom rules and creating classroom communities.

Student Four: …my problem is finding the line of where "it's okay to state your opinion but you cannot insult others and/or discuss too many details of your private life."

Student Five: I believe that as a teacher, I need to create a comfortable classroom atmosphere in which students are allowed to express their opinions in an open forum where no judgments are passed and no one is personally attacked for sharing their thoughts.

Student Six: Students need to feel like they can safely volunteer an insight or answer without being criticized or ridiculed by their peers.

Student Seven: I think that the most important part of it all is that we are aware of what the material is, and to relay it in a way that is acceptable to us, and to our students.

Student Eight: I would want to "objectify" all of the comments and emphasize that all language used in the classroom focuses only on points in the argument.

All of these seven students talk about creating an atmosphere or environment— and to some extent—about establishing norms where students would be able to discuss or exchange ideas and opinions, as well as the necessity of this kind of discussion in the

English classroom. Students Five and Six are especially explicit about how this could

potentially fail because of criticism, ridicule, and personal attacks; and Student One

asserts that "slurs and disrespectful comments" need to be eliminated.

However, Student One also places "spontaneous outbursts" in that same list,

while Student Four claims that students should not reveal too much of their private lives.

All three students talk about how classroom rules—and rule enforcement—as well as

consistent routines and expectations serve to take care of these kinds of events or issues,

thus increasing the likelihood that students will feel comfortable. Student One's

summary statement: "My students need to know what kind of classroom I have," seems

to embody these students' belief that their role as the teacher is to communicate

expectations and exert control in order to make it possible for their students to participate

in discussions and engage in classroom activities.

I chose to include Students Seven and Eight as they also talk about issues around

control, though they focus more on the control of ideas in the classroom, as opposed to

the control of student behavior. Student Seven does this through her use of the word

"material." In a sense, Student Four is talking about the same idea when she claims that

students should not reveal too much of their private lives. Both of the students imply that

the focus of classroom discussions should be the "material," which I interpret as the text

or concept under study, as opposed to students' ideas and opinions.

Student Eight seems to want to exert even more control over the ideas in the

classroom, using the word "objectify" and wanting all discussions to focus on "points in

the argument." This student implies that it is possible to be objective—or that the search

for objectivity is most desired. As a result, I assume that she would eliminate any

openings where students would exchange their "non-objective" opinions and ideas. And although this student is not explicit about what she means by "points in the argument," I again assume that she means that the goal of her teaching is a specific topic to be pursued and/or a finite outcome to reach, as opposed to the goal of exploring "big ideas" and issues, encouraging her students to share their varied perspectives. She seems to believe that if she minimizes these opportunities for students, then she can establish and maintain greater control over her students.

When I read these students' responses and worked to "categorize" their thinking, I recalled conversations with them where they expressed their concerns about how to manage their students. They recounted situations where they experienced difficulties getting their students to pay attention, focus on lessons, or simply listen to teachers and peers.

They may have been concerned with the classroom atmosphere or environment and wished to create a classroom community where they welcomed and promoted the free exchange of ideas. Their statements indicated their belief that discussion is the primary pedagogical tool for reaching these goals. On the other hand, they also seemed obsessed with control and having their students "under control;" they seemingly needed to be *in* control or else felt uncomfortable. This stands to reason, however, given that many research studies in education have shown that "control" is a primary concern of novice teachers.

For example, in her classic study of the most salient issues, questions, and concerns of beginning teachers, Fuller (1969) found that class control is one of the most "blatant persistent" (p. 220) concerns for novices; and she ties this concern to the larger

issue of beginning teachers' sense of inadequacy. Katz (1972) provides another model, identifying four developmental stages in-service teachers go through, the first one being survival, where: "The discrepancy between anticipated successes and classroom realities intensifies feelings of inadequacy and unpreparedness" (p. 51). If in-service teachers experience this sense of inadequacy, then it seems only logical that pre-service teachers experience even more intense feelings of inadequacy, given their lack of experience. If beginning teachers feel—perhaps overwhelmingly—inadequate, then it makes sense that they would work to exert as much control as possible in their classrooms in order to combat and overcome those feelings. As a result, it is not surprising that my students seemed to avoid topics such as race, class, gender, sexuality—the very issues they claimed they wanted to work within and through in their classrooms.

This situation seemed almost paradoxical to me, as it appeared that although my students' intentions were laudable—and their goals were sound—they seemed unable to carry through on their intentions or reach their goals out of their need to control. While it seems a foregone conclusion that control was a primary concern for my students (and indeed for most novice teachers), I wanted to further complicate the issue, not abandon the idea as a given and move on. Therefore, as I continued to ruminate on my students' responses, I also further explored the issue of social class, and worked to link my own learning to my reflections on my students. And I discovered some connections. When I asked my students to consider the idea of comfort in the classroom, they talked extensively about classroom conduct and issues of control. hooks (1994) relates these ideas to social class when she writes about her own realizations while in college:

> Although no one ever directly stated the rules that would govern our
> conduct, it was taught by example and reinforced by a system of rewards.

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> As silence and obedience to authority were most rewarded, students
> learned that this was the appropriate demeanor in the classroom.
> Loudness, anger, emotional outbursts, and even something as seemingly
> innocent as unrestrained laughter were deemed unacceptable, vulgar
> disruptions of classroom social order. These traits were also associated
> with being a member of the lower classes. If one was not from a
> privileged class group, adopting a demeanor similar to that of the group
> could help one to advance. It is still necessary for students to assimilate
> bourgeois values in order to be deemed acceptable (p.178).

I wondered whether or not my students' thinking about the ideas of comfort and control

was related to their social status. I wondered if their desire for control was a result of

their seeing "loudness, anger, or emotional outbursts" as "vulgar disruptions of classroom

social order." I unfortunately made the assumption that all of my students represented

either the middle or upper-middle class and thus assumed that perhaps this was a way to

"get at" the issues my students raised in their responses. I thought that perhaps exploring

the issue of class with them would help them to think about how their own class standing

might influence their desire for the bourgeois classroom order that hooks describes.

Therefore, I began to think about what I might do to address this with my students.

Thoughts on Instruction

Fear as obstacle. I now realize my assumptions were faulty and simplistic;

nevertheless, I was just beginning to explore these ideas myself. I wanted to continue

this exploration with my students and engage in work where we further examined these

issues, despite my many concerns and misgivings about what that work might look like.

First, I had so many unanswered questions; every time the topic of social class came up

in the context of one of my seminars, I sensed that we shied away from it. Therefore, I

was not having the kinds of conversations that would have provided some meaningful

illumination. Even if I were to read everything I could get my hands on, I felt I needed

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some direction in how to connect that reading to myself. And I lacked the conviction that I could adequately support my students as they engaged in the same process and then extended that to consider how it might affect their practice with middle school and high school students. I felt as if I could not design and/or enact effective pedagogy(ies) because I could not yet articulate my own thinking.

The issue(s) became layered for me. I lacked confidence, primarily because I lacked knowledge. I was afraid, as I was in the process of working through my own "stuff" and sensed that at some point I would need to make that work "public" with my students, thus breaking down boundaries I had always worked to establish and maintain. And if I took these risks and failed, what then? Finally, my students sought answers to their questions, and I believed they held the expectation that I could provide answers or solutions for the daily challenges they faced in their "very-real" classrooms. What if my students left the experience of my course believing they had learned nothing or placed no value on what they *did* learn?

Exploratory thinking. Despite my fear and uncertainty, I did have some ideas. I believed that like any effective teacher, I needed to set learning goals for my students. What did I want my students to learn? I could not make sound pedagogical decisions unless I could articulate the substance of that learning. Through a discussion with a peer, I identified three possible goals: the ability to tolerate ambiguity, understanding multiple ways of knowing, and the ability to critique disciplinary content and method. Considering these initial goals within the context of my own learning, I returned to bell hooks (1994) to help me think further about how to develop and enact the pedagogy for such an undertaking:

> When professors bring narratives of their experiences into classroom discussions it eliminates the possibility that we can function as all-knowing, silent interrogators. It is often productive if professors take the first risk, linking confessional narratives to academic discussions so as to show how experience can illuminate and enhance our understanding of academic material (p. 21).

I decided that since I was personally struggling with some of the same issues I wanted my students to struggle with, perhaps opening up my own thinking to my students through the use of personal narrative would provide a "way into" our academic discussions. And as hooks asserts, I thought that it might minimize—perhaps eliminate—my feeling that I had to be—or that my students expected me to be—"all-knowing." So I decided to write a narrative within the context of my graduate seminar where I explored aspects of my own background that had perhaps affected my beliefs and understandings about social class.

Writing this narrative helped me to better articulate my thinking about the issue of social class, especially as I considered those aspects of my background and those experiences that had perhaps most impacted my perceptions and understandings. Based on my experience of writing this narrative and what I learned through the process, I thought that perhaps my students could write similar narratives and read them to each other, as hooks suggests. I thought that I could begin this process by sharing my own narrative. However, the next "problem" I faced was how to frame a class discussion that was grounded in narrative and personal experience yet would move beyond that to include academic material.

I thought that I could possibly scaffold such a discussion by first reading my own narrative and my reflections on an academic text, showing how my narrative informed the text and how the text informed my narrative. I could then talk about the assumptions

I had made about my students and how those affected my interpretation(s) and understanding(s) of their responses in both their writing and in their comments during class discussions. This discussion seemed to dovetail nicely into a consideration of the assumptions we all might make about others—particularly our students and their families—based on their social status. I believed that I could then connect this discussion to the ideas of comfort and control, beginning with something that they were uncomfortable with, such as "yelling" at their students. We could also explore what that word means and why they felt uncomfortable with it, perhaps connecting this to issues of social class. Finally, we could consider how our knowledge and understanding of ourselves affects how we engage students in our content and how it positions us as teachers and affects our interactions with students.

Trusting a theoretical foundation. Unfortunately, fear and uncertainty ruled that semester; and I did not go through this process with my students. As a new teacher educator I continued to struggle with both the appropriate content and effective pedagogical strategies for methods courses. What do prospective teachers need to know? What do they need to be able to do? Why? What are the best methods for having them engage with the concepts and ideas in methods courses? What exactly are those concepts, ideas, and skills?

In addition, I believed—and still do—that my practice as a teacher educator must rest on a theoretical foundation; and although I was moving in that direction, I did not entirely trust my thinking. And despite my beliefs, I continued to wrestle with questions like: What comes first, theory or practice? How does theory inform practice? How does practice generate new theories? I struggled with these questions and with the relationship

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between theory and practice, perhaps because the questions created a dichotomy between the two, as if one must come first with the other following, a cause/effect relationship.

I did not wish to perpetuate this dichotomy as it separates content and pedagogy, which function together and support each other in effective instruction. Theory must form the content and provide the foundation for pedagogical decisions. This raised new questions for me: Which theories most inform what I believe teachers need to know and be able to do? Which theories do not dichotomize the relationships between theory and practice or between content and pedagogy?

My graduate seminar had given me an opportunity to learn more about feminist theory; in fact, it introduced me to feminist thought and opened my eyes to an entirely new way of thinking, as well as looking at—and making sense of—the world around me. Because I felt personally changed—and charged—by what I was discovering, I came to the realization that I wanted my teaching to reflect a feminist stance. I will explore this concept more fully in Chapter 2. One reason for this is that feminist theory does not create dichotomies between theory and practice or between content and pedagogy—a split I wished to avoid. As Magda Lewis (1994) asserts: "The challenge of feminist teaching lies for me in the specifics of how I approach the classroom. By reflecting on my own teaching, I fuse content and practice, politicizing them both through feminist theory and living them both concretely rather than treat them abstractly" (p. 187). The ideas of "fus[ing] content and practice" and "living them both concretely" appealed to me, as it gave me a space to bring my "self" into the classroom and to explore ideas and issues with my students sincerely and honestly. This understanding gave me the initial blocks for constructing a theoretical foundation for my practice as a teacher educator.

Nevertheless, I still lacked the confidence to "try out" a pedagogy that I still could not adequately articulate and explain. I believed that my wanting to enact a feminist stance required my being explicit about that stance with my students. I needed to articulate the theoretical foundation for my choices and decisions and still did not feel prepared to do that. I did not want to "project an interpretation, a definition, a description of [my] work and actions, that may not [have been] accurate, that may [have] obscure[ed] what [was] really taking place" (hooks, 1994, p. 62). I feared, as hooks cautions against, using a term like "theory" too freely—or more specifically—calling on feminist theory poorly. However, during the second semester of the methods course I was teaching, I began to feel the urgency of addressing my concerns.

Plunging in. Although I did not do this every week, I sometimes gave my students approximately 20-30 minutes at the beginning of each session to talk about what was happening in their classrooms. I eventually found these conversations disturbing and stopped them, waiting until I could think about the best way to deal with what I was hearing. My primary concern was that I heard my interns blaming their students, both middle school and high school, for academic failure. I heard story after story of how the highest passing grade on a grammar quiz was a "D," of how students never completed readings assigned as homework, of how students did not seem to care about whether or not they passed since they knew they would be promoted anyway, of how disengaged students were.

When I asked the interns for possible explanations, I believed their answers reflected their assumptions about students, parents, teaching, and learning. They blamed student failure on parental disinterest, student indifference, narrowly-mandated curricula,

or student ability. I seldom heard them talk about why their lessons were not responsive to students or how differences in race, class, or gender may account for how students experience school differently or how these differences might also account for their views of students, teaching, and learning. Their comments conflicted with what I was coming to understand that all teachers must do: examine their positionalities and how those positionalities affect both how and what they choose to teach.

Linda Alcoff (as cited in Maher & Tetreault, 2001) defines positionality as the "knower's specific position in any context, a position always defined by gender, race, class, and other socially significant dimensions" (p. 22). Teachers' positionalities, therefore, affect how they perceive their students, their roles as teachers, and learning. They also affect how teachers manage their students and how they maintain control of their students, as well as the ideas in their classrooms.

I understood positionality—like Alcoff—as a knower's position, a position established by a person's "location" according to gender, race, class, or other "socially significant dimensions." I assumed that pre-service teachers entered my classroom with their positions firmly in place and for whatever reason, had not examined their varied positionalities and how they might affect their teaching practices. Added to my assumption was the impression my students gave me that persistent issues such as student failure, student disengagement, student apathy, or parental indifference immobilized them. Rather than consider possible explanations for these observations or experiences that might suggest actions they could take, they seemed all too ready to blame factors over which they had no control. This stance seemingly enabled my students to abdicate

their responsibility to somehow work to address the issues they faced—or to abdicate their responsibility to their students and for their students' learning.

In *Releasing the Imagination: Essays on Education, the Arts, and Social Change* (1995), Maxine Greene writes:

> There are, as most of us have learned, objective as well as subjective realities to be considered; we cannot simply fantasize the disappearance of joblessness, homelessness, fatherlessness, disease. It may be, however, that a general inability to conceive a better order of things can give rise to a resignation that paralyzes and prevents people from acting to bring about change... To call for imaginative capacity is to work for the ability to look at things as if they could be otherwise. To ask for intensified realization is to see that each person's reality must be understood to be interpreted experience—and that the mode of interpretation depends on his or her situation and location in the world... Doing so, a person may become freed to glimpse what might be, to form notions of what should be and what is not yet. And the same person may, at the same time, remain in touch with what presumably *is* (pp. 18 & 19).

The words I used to describe my students and their responses to the realities they observed and experienced in classrooms imply that I blame them for their stance, just as they seemingly blamed their students. And perhaps I did. However, Greene provides me with a different perspective. I made assumptions about how my students perceived themselves: I assumed they perceived themselves as actors—or as agents—but had simply made a *choice* not to act. Greene, on the other hand, provides an alternate interpretation for my students' responses in her assertion that once we realize that students' negative "realities" will not simply disappear, we are unable to imagine anything better. While I believed initially that my students chose not to act, she leads me to believe that instead, they reached a point where they believed that no matter how they acted, it would make no difference and were thus in a state of paralyzing resignation.

I was not trying to get my students to imagine that the realities of their students might be different, and as Greene argues, the disappearance of those realities is a fantasy, though certainly we would wish for that disappearance. However, I wanted my students to consider that their actions could be otherwise, that their realities as teachers might be otherwise, that they could consider any variety of alternatives, that they could make different choices. I wanted them to see that they could experience a sense of efficacy, as well as feel a sense of discontent with what they saw in their classrooms. The reality I sought to change was my students' responses to—even attitudes toward—their students and their students' disengagement and failure. While they may not have possessed the ability to change their students' present realities, I believed they could respond in ways that were more agentive.

I also believed that if their students experienced school differently, experienced success and engagement and learning, then perhaps those students' realities *might* change. Perhaps those students could envision a better future for themselves. As Greene asserts, my students could "remain in touch" with the present, while becoming "freed to glimpse what might be, to form notions of what should be and what is not yet." Greene identifies this mode of thinking as "imaginative capacity," which she defines as working "for the ability to look at things as if they could be otherwise." Based on Greene's arguments, I believe that my students lacked an imaginative capacity. And perhaps so did I. Perhaps I was jaded, assuming that students' beliefs about teaching, based on the "apprenticeship of observation" (Lortie, 1975) were foregone conclusions. Perhaps I believed that working toward an imaginative capacity was ultimately useless; perhaps I was stuck in the same paralyzing resignation as my students.

Greene (1995) further claims: "When nothing intervenes to overcome such inertia, it joins with the sense of repetitiveness and uniformity to discourage active learning. New beginnings become unlikely, yet it is only in the experience of a beginning that persons feel themselves to be the initiators, the authors of what they are doing or intending to do" (p. 21). I knew I had to intervene as I had the sense that active learning in my classroom was waning, if not at a complete halt. Therefore, unwilling—and unable—to provide my students with "hard and fast" solutions, I decided to consider this as a problem in my own practice and approached my instruction with the conviction that I needed to provide my students with opportunities to explore their varied positionalities.

As Greene suggests, "intensified realization" requires that we understand our realities as "interpreted experience," which depends on our varied "situation[s] and location[s] in the world." I believed my students needed to explore these situations and locations—these positionalities. We needed to begin a new endeavor such as this so that my students—and I—could become "the initiators, the authors" of what took place in all of our classrooms. Neither my students nor I could remain in our present space.

I also believed that if we examined the concept of positionality together, perhaps we might create a fresh perspective for how my students might respond to the realities they faced in their classrooms. In other words, I believed that this examination might move my students beyond the "blame game" and begin to make them more aware of how their location in the classroom (a location affected by their positionalities) might, in turn, affect their perceptions, understandings, or actions.

Based on my thinking during the first semester of the course—and despite my hesitance to pursue working with narrative—I decided to "take the plunge" and engage in a narrative inquiry—or autobiographical reflection—to try and provide my students with such an opportunity. It has been my assumption—or intent—that the outcome of such an inquiry would begin to develop an "imaginative capacity" and a sense of agency in my students. In this context I interpret "agency" as suggesting a sense of responsibility that leads to a plan of action.

Contrary to my understanding, some researchers and theorists would argue that my students' positionalities were *not* in place when they entered my classroom but that the process of telling stories *would* position them. For example, Nespor and Barylske (1991) draw on their work with narrative interviews. They write: "Instead of assuming that people tell stories because they 'lead storied lives,' we simply try to make sense of what people *do* when they tell stories and what their *stories* do" (p. 807). Through a series of interviews with two teachers, Bob and Clara, they concluded that these two teachers positioned themselves through their sharing of stories. One teacher, Bob, positioned himself between the university and the classroom, while another teacher, Clara, positioned herself between her family and the classroom. Nespor and Barylske claim that the teachers "*made themselves* in the interviews" (p. 817), implying that their positions were constructed—or reconstructed—through the process of telling their stories. They include extended quotes from both teachers to illustrate how Bob and Clara positioned themselves. Neither of the two teachers is explicit about how they are positioned; that is a construct the researchers use in their analysis. In fact, the teachers' awareness of this remains unclear.

Alcoff (as cited in Maher & Tetreault, 2001) asserts that a person's position is "defined" by race, class, gender, or other socially significant dimensions. Nespor and Barylske (1991) argue that discourse produces the person, not the other way around. They seem to imply, then, that discourse produces positionality, that positionalities are not formed or created until after the discursive act. Knowing how the two teachers made sense of this process and of their stories might add clarity to the role of discourse in the construction—or reconstruction—of positionality, but based on the study Nespor and Barylske (1991) conducted, the two conceptions of positionality seem to oppose each other.

One explanation for this opposition may be syntactical in nature. For example, according to Alcoff (as cited in Maher & Tetreault, 2001), a person is passive in her positionality; positionality is somehow "done to" her or is a result of situations or circumstances that are beyond her control. Society has determined—or mediated—her positionality. On the other hand, according to Nespor and Barylske (1991), a person is active in forming her positionality and can determine what it might be or what it might look like. In addition, "positionality" is a noun, while "positioning oneself" requires action and acts as a verb. However, neither of these "either/or scenarios" is very satisfying.

Wilson and Ritchie (1994) offer an explanation that gets away from these dichotomies. They write: "But stories—those we tell ourselves as well as those others tell about us—can also constrain and position us in identities and roles: We often become who stories tell us we are. Even though all stories are fictions contingent upon vantage point and serving ideologies—perhaps because they are—we believe composing and re-

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telling stories can allow teachers to resist and revise confining stories which others too often draft for us" (p. 177). I interpret the "stories" these researchers identify as the discursive act. In other words, they suggest that individuals are positioned—as Alcoff (as cited in Maher & Tetreault, 2001) argues. They also assert that while discursive acts—such as the stories that we and others tell—may further constrain and position us, "composing and re-telling stories" can be empowering in that we are *not* necessarily constrained or positioned by our existing "stories."

It was out of both necessity and desire for my students to explore the concept of positionality and to "form notions of what should be and what is not yet...[and] at the same time remain in touch with what presumably *is*" (Greene, 1995, p. 19) that finally compelled me to risk enacting a pedagogy that I believed in, even if I did not always do it "right." And I decided to frame that pedagogy around the writing and sharing of personal narrative, as I believed that narrative inquiry may lead to the kind of transformative pedagogy I sought to enact. When I first introduced this pedagogy to my students, I entitled it "The Narrative Project."

The Narrative Project

At two different points during the semester, my students wrote two narrative pieces, which included autobiographical information about their family backgrounds, educational experiences, and/or other personal experiences that they believed shaped how they think about themselves, about their students, about their students' families, or about education in general.

After each narrative was complete, I wanted them to identify the salient societal issue(s) that they believed had shaped them, such as race, social class or gender. Once

they had identified the "issue," they were to locate one academic text that helped them make sense of their experiences and how their backgrounds reflected issues of positionality. Once they had found a relevant text, I asked them to write a reflection to accompany the narrative to explain how the text informed their thinking about themselves, their students, their stance in the classroom. Finally, I wanted them to reflect on what they had learned about themselves through this process and consider how they might apply this knowledge in the classroom.

I knew that this type of assignment might seem foreign to my students, and I wanted them to feel free to take risks and to explore. In addition, I was working to embody a very specific theoretical stance—that of a feminist teacher educator—and so I wanted to work to disrupt some of the power disparities between teacher and students. Therefore, I eliminated the element of evaluation. I explained to my students that if they completed the assignment, they would receive a 4.0 grade on the project because I would not be evaluating either their writing or their effort. In the same "spirit," I also explained that a project such as this and the subsequent lack of evaluation placed the responsibility for their learning on *their* shoulders. They could put forth as little or as much effort as they chose, taking either more or less away from the experience.[1]

In addition, I engaged in this writing along with my students, and during two different sessions in the semester, we shared our writing with each other and discussed our learning. In order to "set the stage" and to continue to enact my "new" theoretical stance, I read my narrative and reflection first. But because this was new to me and because I was unsure about how it might "play out," I loosely structured the rest of these sessions, letting my students provide the direction the class would take.

At this point, the decisions I made were largely based on advice from my own mentors and instructors. When I would "strike out on my own" in attempts to be responsive to my students or address issues that seemed specific to my particular context—or when I worked to make sense of what took place in my classroom—I acted primarily on an intuitive level. That is, based on informal conversations with and feedback from my students, I believed that my students had learned from this project. They stated that it helped them to think about themselves, their students, and teaching in new ways. However, they did not cite specific examples or explicate what they meant. Nevertheless, based on this feedback, I repeated this project with subsequent groups of students, armed with my continued conviction that it was effective.

When colleagues asked me about the project, specifically how I enacted it, I think I finally fully appreciated the complexity involved. I discovered that while enacting the project, my thinking was really quite complicated as I considered how to respond to students' writing, how to manage the classroom discussions, how to guide my students toward the larger goals I had set out to accomplish. In addition, I could not "prove" that my students were actually learning what I believed they were learning. I had not gathered artifacts that represented my students' work—and my work with them—and then examined those artifacts for evidence of my thinking and their learning. Therefore, I designed a study based on my current understanding of the research tradition of narrative inquiry within teacher preparation so that I might provide that evidence and move both my practice and this project beyond the level of intuition. The research questions I nominated are twofold: they examine my practice and the sense my students make of both the content and processes involved this project.

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Research Questions

Questions about pedagogy. I identified two questions related specifically to pedagogy:

1. **Whether and to what extent does both the content and processes of the narrative project engage prospective teachers in both an exploration and examination of their beliefs about students, teaching, and learning?**

2. **Whether and to what extent does the narrative project then afford prospective teachers the opportunity to examine the concept of positionality?**

My first two questions relate specifically to the pedagogy involved in this project, specifically the processes of reflecting on the narratives, sharing the narratives, and the communal nature of making sense of both the significance and the value of the narratives in terms of classroom practice, both my own practice and my students' practices. The theoretical work that guided my examination of this pedagogy is twofold: feminist pedagogy and narrative inquiry.

The feminist pedagogy piece is important as it was my initial interest in feminist pedagogy that prompted my designing this project for my students, and the issue of positionality also came out of my first experiences with feminist pedagogy. My assumption is that without a critical examination of a teacher's stance as part of this project, it becomes a "course assignment" with an unclear purpose or focus.

A related piece is what takes place when the students share their narratives and then consider the implications of those narratives for classroom practice. This is the process involved in the project, and it is my guiding of this process that suggests how a teacher educator might enact—or embody—a pedagogy. Using the theoretical frame of feminist pedagogy, which I discuss more fully in Chapter 2, allowed me to more systematically examine both my practice—and my stance—as a teacher educator.

The second question, which focuses on the concept of positionality, is important given that part of the study examines my positionality as well and allows me to include as part of my positionality my narrative of learning. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) argue that a central concept—in this case positionality—is necessary in narrative inquiry. They state: "Narrative explanation derives from the whole...by a sense of the whole and it is this sense which needs to drive the writing (and reading) of narrative" (p. 7). If I assert that this study is a narrative inquiry, then it is the issue—or concept—of positionality which most drives this study and provides it with this sense of the whole. I identify the pedagogical problem as helping my students to examine/critique their own positionalities and its implications for teaching. One specific component of this pedagogical problem is my own stance as a feminist teacher educator.

Questions about sense-making. Because I also wished to discover how my students made sense of this project, two questions focus on student learning:

1. **How do pre-service teachers make sense of the processes involved in the narrative project?**

2. **What sense do pre-service teachers make of the concept of positionality through their engagement with the narrative project?**

The first question addresses how students understand—or make sense of—the processes involved in the narrative project: *how students learned.* The second question focuses on the central concept of the study: positionality, or *what students learned.* It seems important to consider student understanding of both process and content for several reasons. First, this is a study of pedagogy, as well as a study of student learning. In other words, I am interested in students' understanding of the concept of positionality; but I am equally interested in how students have made sense of the pedagogy involved in
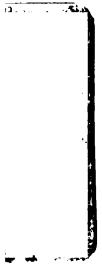
this project. The questions allowed me to use artifacts of teaching to systematically critique my practice, as I explored my stance in terms of students' perceptions and understanding. It also allowed me to challenge the assumptions I made about the efficacy of the narrative project, as I am interested in whether or not my assumptions about the effectiveness of this project—in terms of student learning and understanding—are either accurate or unfounded.

Overview

In Chapter 2, "Locating the Study: Researching the Narrative Project," I discuss narrative inquiry and work to explain why narrative inquiry as a pedagogical approach seemed a good choice, given the learning goals I identified for my students. Because I was also working to enact a feminist stance, I further develop what this stance entails and what it might look like in the classroom. Finally, I work to situate both of these discussions within the larger framework of teacher research. In Chapter 3, "Illuminating Practice through Research: Methodology for Examining Content and Process," I describe the research methods I used, including the artifacts of teaching I gathered, what I believed they might show me, and how I analyzed—or interpreted—those artifacts.

I examine three focal students' narratives in Chapter 4, "New Frames of Reference: Using Narrative and Reflective Writing to Construct Knowledge," and investigate whether and to what extent these students worked to integrate subjective and objective knowledge in order to construct new knowledge. Chapter 5, "Connected Knowing: Exploring Procedures for Constructing Knowledge," includes a description and interpretation of my students' and my conversations during two class sessions where we

shared and discussed our narratives. It examines whether and how my students and I worked to form a connected knowing group.

In Chapter 6, "Exploring Students' Sense-Making: How Understanding of Content and Process Impacts Learning," I describe what some of my students shared during interviews and viewing sessions, where I asked them to discuss both the content and processes involved in the project, as well as the nature of their learning. This chapter details what I learned from interviewing these students, particularly about their understanding of the concept of positionality and their perceptions of the project.

It is my intention to illuminate my students' sense-making through the private process of writing and working with their narratives, as well the public processes of the class discussions. I will also explore my interpretations of the focal students' learning from this project, particularly around the concept of positionality and their understanding of students, teaching, and learning.

Chapter 7, "Challenging Curricula and Interrogating Pedagogy in Teacher Education," is a culmination of how I believe this narrative inquiry unfolded for my students, as well as how it unfolded for me. While I include a discussion of the personal nature of this study, I also work to foreground what I have learned, perhaps in a sense what I know, as a result of engaging in this systematic and critical examination of The Narrative Project. I frame this learning within the context of implications for teacher preparation curriculum and the pedagogical considerations that this curriculum then suggests. Finally, this chapter will raise issues that merit further research.

Footnotes

1.   To eliminate the misconception that evaluation was not a part of this

course, let me explain that this was not the only project for this course.

In addition, the students were engaged in an ongoing inquiry into their

teaching practice, focusing on discussions around literature. As part of

this project, they had to nominate a question, complete a brief and

informal literature review related to their question, videotape

themselves facilitating discussions with their students on two separate

occasions, transcribe a portion of each of these videotapes, participate

in a viewing session as part of a small group, analyze their videotaped

discussions in light of their questions, and write a final analysis that

explicated what they had learned about literature discussions. This

discussion project, The Narrative Project, class participation, and the

grade from their university liaison (with input from their mentor

teacher) produced the grade they earned for the course.

Chapter 2

Researching the Narrative Project

I found working with personal narrative to explore my beliefs and assumptions about social class—as well as the sources for those beliefs and assumptions—both intellectually challenging and personally enlightening. It led to greater understandings of how and why I perceived and responded to my students as I did, thus affecting what and how I taught. Therefore, I believed that it might be an effective pedagogical tool for me to use with my students. In addition, I wished to enact a feminist stance in my classroom and therefore believed that engaging in narrative inquiry with my students might work toward that end as well.

This study is designed to include three strands: narrative inquiry as pedagogy, feminist pedagogy, and narrative inquiry as research. While the first two strands concentrate on the pedagogy—both the content and the processes—around a project I designed for prospective teachers, the third strand focuses on how I am coming to advance my understanding of that pedagogy through the research process. Designing this project—what I identify as narrative inquiry as it was grounded in experiential narrative—was based on an intuitive decision. The genesis of the project came out of my own narrative of learning how to become a more effective teacher educator.[1]

Therefore, in the first section of this chapter, I will explore the first two strands, narrative inquiry as pedagogy and feminist pedagogy. Exploring why narrative inquiry seemed an appropriate choice allows me to make my intuitive thinking more explicit and to work to ground my stance as a teacher educator, as well as my enactment of this project, drawing on the existing scholarship on feminist pedagogy.

The second section of this chapter will explore the third strand, narrative inquiry as research. Because narrative inquiry has the capacity—like feminist scholarship—to weave together content and pedagogy, and theory and practice, I chose narrative inquiry as a methodological approach with the following intentions: 1) to illuminate my practice through my own emerging narrative as a feminist teacher educator; and 2) to explore how this project unfolded for my students as they engaged with the content—and experienced the processes—involved with this project.

Finally, I will attempt to bring all of these strands together in the concluding segment of this chapter to show how narrative inquiry may also serve as an effective research methodology to study narrative inquiry as a pedagogical approach and to study how a teacher educator works to enact a theoretical stance. This demonstrates how this study may fit into the larger body of literature on teacher research.

<div align="center">Narrative Inquiry as Pedagogy</div>

The Nature of Narrative

A discussion about why narrative inquiry seemed an appropriate pedagogical choice first necessitates a very brief discussion of narrative in general, where I will draw on the work of literary theorists. At its most basic level a "...narrative is *the representation of an event or a series of events*" (Abbott, 2002, p. 12) that are "connected by subject matter and related by time" (Scholes, 1981, p. 205). In addition, narratives have characters who are a part of the events and narrators, who may or may not be characters in the narrative. According to Abbott (2002), it is the narrator who constructs the story: "...when you narrate, you construct. This is true whether you are making up a story about

<div align="center">33</div>

creatures from another planet or telling the intimate secrets of your life" (p. 64).

The idea that narrative—or story—is a construction is critical to understanding why narrative inquiry seemed a sound pedagogical choice.

However, narrative also represents a way of knowing; and as Carter (1993) claims, narrative "is particularly suited to explicating the issues with which we deal" (p. 6). Wilson and Ritchie (1994) further this when they write:

> Becoming teachers involves an ongoing process of negotiation and struggle among various narratives—narratives composed as scripts from their histories in gender, social class, racial, ethnic and family groups; multiple and often conflicting narratives of teaching and education in our popular culture; and the narratives surrounding teaching and learning students have composed from seventeen or more years of experience in educational institutions. All of these stories continue to shape teachers' understandings of teaching and them as people in educational institutions (p. 178).

As part of my own learning process, I realized what Carter, as well as Wilson and Ritchie, assert: first, that narrative suited the issues that I was exploring as a new teacher educator; and second, that the various narratives that composed my life worked together to shape my understanding of teaching, many times without my awareness of how they shaped me. Therefore, when I extended this thinking to prospective teachers, I believed that story may represent a way of knowing for them as well. I assumed that if prospective teachers' conflicting narratives continually shape their understandings of teaching, then my engaging in narrative inquiry with them might work to create a heightened awareness of who they are, how they have come to be who they are, and how that impacts their teaching practices. If we think and know in story form, then it is those stories that allow us to make sense of ourselves and the world around us. Therefore, I

further assumed that the collection of all of these stories may point toward new understandings for prospective teachers.

Clandinin (1985) identifies this territory of knowledge as a teacher's "'Personal practical knowledge...imbued with all the experiences that make up a person's being. Its meaning is derived from, and understood in terms of, a person's experiential history, both professional and personal" (p. 362). I find Mark Johnson's (1989) understanding of Clandinin's work especially helpful when he claims that this knowledge "is meant to focus attention on the way teachers understand their world, insofar as this understanding affects the way they structure classroom experience and interact with their students...and how this understanding bears on what happens in the classroom" (pp. 361-362). Johnson further argues that while this knowledge is born of experience, it also has the power to transform that experience. In fact, it has "meaning and value only within the context of that experiential process of growth and change" (p. 364).

According to both Clandinin (1985) and Johnson (1989), my students entered my classroom already holding experiential knowledge, just as I held similar knowledge as a teacher educator. However, Willinsky (1989) identifies this knowledge as "tacit knowledge that informs the teacher's classroom practices" (p. 256). Because I was unaware of the knowledge I held, or perhaps more importantly, how that knowledge might shape me as a teacher, I assumed the same might be true for my students. It was my intention that narrative inquiry would support my students as they worked to focus their attention on the ways they understood their world, to bring that knowledge to the surface, and to illuminate how it impacted them in the classroom.

Characters and narrators. As part of this inquiry, my students wrote about events in their lives, events they believed were significant. They constructed and reconstructed those stories both in the act of writing them and through the act of sharing them with their peers and with me. The events we choose to chronicle—or narrate—convey significance (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Therefore, when my students were in the process of choosing which event or series of events they wished to write about, they had already placed a certain amount of significance on those events. Furthermore, while my students were initially the characters in their narratives, I hypothesized that they became the narrators of their stories when they constructed their narratives, especially when they reflected on their narratives' relevance to life in classrooms.

This move from character to narrator is an important pedagogical consideration, especially given my desire for my students to have a greater sense of agency. Conle (1995) writes: "But the real power of agency comes when she is not just chronicling events, but narrating her life in schools, when she, the prospective teacher, can be a narrator as well as a character in her story. Autobiographical work in teacher education has this potential" (p. 20). Conle contextualizes this statement within a conversation that took place in her course "Teachers' Stories, Teachers' Lives." Beyond this reference, however, this particular piece is more theoretical in nature, where Conle explores the relationship between the life of the researcher and her research. Her writing is a self-exploration where she weighs her way of being in the city against her way of being at the beach and describes how her ways of "being in the world hindered or advanced [her] research and why the kind of research [she does] pushed her to live [her] life differently, personally, as a teacher educator and as a researcher" (p. 7).

Conle (1995) further claims: "Usually experiential narratives first produced personal theories or working hypotheses. They emerged from the narrated experiences of the inquirer" (p. 23). To a certain extent, this is where my study resonates with Conle's work. When I first began this study, my narrative of learning how to become a teacher educator was just beginning. As my narrative unfolded, I drew on past experiential narratives to aid in my examination of why I perceived and responded to students as I did. I narrated those experiences, and this process of narration enabled me to gain a greater sense of agency; and through this inquiry my way of being in the world began to change; I began to live my life differently, more personally, just as Conle was pushed to do. This study explores how this change came about for me—and in turn—how it affected my teaching practice. Therefore, like Conle, one part of this study is a self-exploration.

On the other hand, this study also builds on Conle's (1995) work. Based on my own narrative inquiry, I produced the working hypothesis that this this same narrative inquiry might work toward similar end(s) for my students. In all likelihood, Conle would agree. However, my empirical study examines the pedagogy that came out of my personal theory or working hypothesis, a possible pedagogy that may be enacted in order for students to gain a similar sense of agency. Furthermore, my study also examines how students made sense of their own narrative inquiry and explores the nature of their learning and whether and to what extent *they also* gained a greater sense of agency.

One pedagogical implication Conle (1995) does suggest occurs when she claims that pre-service teachers are—in a sense—characters in their own narratives but that the "transformative" nature of narrative inquiry comes during the shift from character to

narrator, whether the narration constitutes an event inside or outside the classroom.

Therefore, I assume that one potentially transformative characteristic of this project may

not necessarily be the writing of the narratives, where my students are "characters," but in

the reflective writing, where they—as "narrators"—are working to make sense of those

aspects of their narratives that are relevant to the classroom and their teaching practice(s).

This seems to be an important pedagogical issue, as it provides direction for a project

such as this, moving it away from either therapy or "navel gazing" into academic content.

Conle (1995) goes so far as to argue that a shift of this kind must occur in order for the

work to be transformative. In my particular case, I hoped a transformation in my students

would manifest itself in their moving from a sense of paralysis to a sense of agency.

Time. The concept of narrative that works to accomplish a shift from character to

narrator is time. Conle (1995) writes:

> Each telling happens from at least two time perspectives, the 'then-
> perspective' of the contents of the story and the 'now-perspective'
> available at the time of the telling. The now-perspective changes with
> each telling, as new information, new circumstances influence the teller.
> The told event therefore is not 'reality itself,' but reality from a particular
> vantage point, the current now-perspective. As the vantage point changes,
> so does the story and with it the reality we are able to perceive (p. 15).

Conle is talking specifically about the role of time in the constructing—and then telling—

of stories and how it shapes reality. My students' written narratives represent what Conle

calls a "then-perspective." However, the "now-perspective," which occurs when

narratives are shared with others, implies that their written stories take on new

significance or value—and thus reality—because the vantage point has changed.

Greene (2000) talks about reality in slightly different terms, drawing on her

construct of imagination: "To tap into imagination is to become able to break with what

is supposedly…objectively and independently real…Doing so, a person may become freed to glimpse what might be, to form notions of what should be and is not yet. And the same person may, at the same time, remain in touch with what presumably *is*" (p. 19). While Greene may not disagree with Conle (1995), she seems to extend Conle's ideas into the future. In other words, while we may construct the past and interpret the past through that construction, it is this *process* that allows us to look into the future and to imagine something different or something better. Greene would assert that this then creates space(s) for us to "carve out new orders in experience…[to] become freed to glimpse what might be…" (p. 19).

Again, because I wanted this work to be transformative in that my students would leave the experience with a greater sense of agency, narrative inquiry seemed to hold the greatest promise, given its ability to span past, present, and future and its potential to create those spaces where we might conceive of something different or better. This process required my students to consider the value of their narratives from a "now-perspective" and then use that knowledge or understanding to engage in more imaginative thinking.

The Collective Nature of Narrative Inquiry

Some theorists and researchers claim that the most distinctive quality of a narrative process is its collective nature, which occurs through the act of "telling" our stories. Conle (1995) writes:

> Through the attitude of the narrator and the role of the now-perspective, the act of telling itself has an impact, so that the telling of experiences becomes a major shaping force in our lives. For example, telling the story of my action or experience in class this morning can organize and reorganize that action for me. Similarly, telling the story of my life in

autobiographical accounts can serve to make a sense of my life that I have
not been aware of before (p. 15).

I interpret Conle's conception of "telling" as the oral sharing of narratives, which implies

a collective effort, and according to some, an essential element of narrative inquiry.

Grumet (as cited in Casey, 1995-1996) argues that this work is not only "an individual

exercise but…a process that always takes place within a social context" (p. 220). Casey

furthers this argument when she asserts that "the self is understood as a social

construction, and as such, can be remade. But this transformation is a collective project"

(p. 222). While Casey refers to studies where people are exploring the "collective self,"

as opposed to the "individual self," I interpret "collective project" as a group effort or

process, a process individuals engage in with others.

Bruner (1996) identifies this collective effort as collaboration and goes so far as to

claim that without collaboration, agency is impossible; you cannot have one without the

other:

> Let me turn now to the issues of agency and collaboration. They need to
> be treated together, else learning is made to seem either too solo or not
> solo enough…a *solo* agentive view of mind is wildly off the mark…We do
> not learn a way of life and ways of deploying mind unassisted,
> unscaffolded, naked before the world…Rather, it is the give and take of
> talk that makes collaboration possible. For the agentive mind is not only
> active in nature, but it seeks out dialogue and discourse with other active
> minds. We learn an enormous amount not only about the world but about
> ourselves by discourse with Others. Agency and collaboration are rather
> like yin and yang (pp. 92-93).

Bruner also suggests what this process might look like in his description of Ann Brown,

an elementary classroom teacher who works to connect agency and collaboration in her

classroom. She accomplishes this through allowing her students to "generate their own

hypotheses...negotiate them with others...and take the role of teacher" (p. 93); Bruner identifies this process as providing structure.

One of my pedagogical concerns in the narrative inquiry I designed was to provide a similar structure: I gave my students a great deal of freedom in choosing their writing topics, in choosing academic readings, and in determining how they would connect the two. Moreover, this structure—along with collaboration—played a central role in the project during class discussions, where my students and I heard and learned from each others' stories, worked to connect each others' stories to our own, and explored the connection(s) between all of the stories and our lives in classrooms.

Researchers in other fields, such as community psychology and developmental leadership draw on empowerment theory to discuss how narrative holds the potential to empower individuals within families, organizations, and their communities. Their work points to implications for teacher education. Specifically, these researchers argue that individual narratives both inform—and are informed by—community narratives. Rappaport (1995) defines a community narrative as "...a story that is common among a group of people...A group of people with a shared narrative may constitute a community" (p. 803). Rappaport further argues: "Everyone needs a community narrative to support one's personal life story, especially if that life story is being newly created. It is far easier to accomplish and sustain this in a collective context" (p. 804).

I have hypothesized that the students in my class shared one common story, that of learning how to teach and struggling with the challenges of classroom life, thus forming a community narrative according to Rappaport's (1995) definition. In addition,

their individual narratives as prospective teachers needed this community narrative if their subsequent stories as teachers were to be "newly created."

Rappaport also explicates how a greater sense of empowerment might result when a community narrative supports the creation of new individual narratives: "...empowerment [is] enhanced when people discover, or create and give voice to, a collective narrative that sustains their own personal life story in positive ways....listening to stories and helping people to create places that value and support both their personal stories and their collective narratives is an empowering activity" (pp. 796 & 805). This is something I desired for my students; Rappaport's work, then, suggests that narrative inquiry was a sound pedagogical choice.

Bond, Belencky, and Weinstock (2000), further this implication with their illustration of how a narrative inquiry played out for a group of young women in an intervention called "The Listening Partners." They describe this intervention as "...a synthesis of feminism and community psychology...[a] social action, peer group interaction [that] supported a community of poor, rural, isolated, young, White mothers to gain a greater voice, claim the powers of their minds, and collaborate in developmental leadership..." (p. 1). As part of this intervention, the researchers "designed sessions where women took turns telling their life story...as narrative is the primary tool we have for making sense out of our own experiences in the world...The goal was to name one's own experience and naming is power" (pp. 6 & 18).

However, that empowerment came from more than the stories and the naming; it was also the process of sharing of those stories: "Reflective dialogue was the centerpiece of the peer group activities because it empowers people as individuals and groups..." (p.

5). I theorized that the collective effort, as well as the collected stories, may lead to new understandings; and these researchers' work suggests that narrative inquiry was an effective pedagogical choice, especially given the learning I sought. Therefore, this study is designed to investigate the nature of that pedagogy and to examine whether and to what extent that pedagogy resulted in the learning I desired, as well as whether and to what extent my students experienced what I hoped they would.

However, I also theorized that in order to create a "new empowered self" through a collective effort, students must begin with an *initial* sense, or knowledge, of self. After all, I had examined myself (without the benefit of a community narrative); I wanted my students to engage in the same process. This is not antithetical to the idea of a community narrative—or the empowerment that comes through the negotiation and struggle of various narratives. As Casey (1995-1996) argues: "Whether implicit or elaborated, every study of narrative is based on a particular understanding of the speaker's self. At present, definitive features of narrative studies differ widely depending on their authors' deeply held beliefs about the nature of self" (p. 213). My belief about the "nature of self," which grounds this study, is that the "self" is positioned. Based on Alcoff's work, being positioned refers to the "knower's specific position in any context, a position always defined by gender, race, class, and other socially significant dimensions" (as cited in Maher & Tetreault, 2001, p. 22).[2]

However, positionality goes beyond an understanding of self to an increased understanding of others. Pinar (as cited in Casey, 1995-1996) argues: "Understanding of self is not narcissism, it is a precondition and a concomitant condition to the understanding of others" (p.217). This seems to be an important concept in that it implies

that understanding the self has a purpose that goes beyond itself. In other words, as a pedagogical approach, I have worked from the assumption that if teachers are to have greater awareness of their students' positionalities, they must first be aware of their own, as well as the underlying sources—or reasons—for those positionalities. This can begin as they learn about each others' positionalities through the collective effort of hearing and valuing each others' stories.

To this end, I used narratives as primary tools for learning. Nespor and Barylske (1991) claim: "Teachers' narratives are not expressions or reflections of some underlying, hidden, knowledge or experience; they are tools for constructing knowledge" (p. 819). This is important in that from a pedagogical perspective, I used the narratives and accompanying reflections as primary course texts—or tools—to explore the concept of positionality; they acted as the foundation for the content of this project. This study investigates, then, whether or not using experiential narratives as primary courses texts worked as tools for constructing knowledge.

The nature of a project such as this does not stop at content, though. Engaging in this project with my students required me to pay considerable attention to the processes involved. Since collectivity and collaboration are essential if narrative inquiry is to be transformative in nature and afford students a greater sense of agency and empowerment, then the enactment of such a project is just as vital as—if not more fundamental than— the content.

In their prologue to the book *Stories Lives Tell: Narrative and Dialogue in Education* (1991), Carol Witherell and Nel Noddings write:

> Through telling, writing, reading, and listening to life stories—one's own and others'—those engaged in this work can penetrate cultural barriers,

discover the power of the self and the integrity of the other, and deepen their understanding of their respective histories and possibilities" (p. 4).

These feminist scholars assert that growth is not only an individual process; instead, deeper understandings of both the self and others also come through dialogue with others. Considering that I wanted to engage in a narrative inquiry with my students, and the research that points out the need for inquiry to be collaborative in nature, I worked to enact a feminist stance in the classroom in order to guide and encourage a collaborative process. Drawing on feminist scholarship, I will next explicate what this might look like in a classroom—or at least what I hoped it would look like in mine.

<div align="center">Feminist Pedagogy</div>

Providing a definition of feminist pedagogy is somewhat problematic, as it may not reflect the broad and varied concerns of feminist scholarship and may ultimately prove too constraining. Nevertheless, Shrewsbury (as cited in Laird, 1988) provides a definition that helps me ground a discussion of how I worked to enact a feminist stance in my classroom. She explains that feminist pedagogy is:

> a theory about the teaching/learning process that guides our choice of classroom practices by providing criteria to evaluate specific educational strategies and techniques in terms of the desired course goals or outcomes. These evaluative criteria include the extent to which a community of learners is empowered to act responsibly toward one another and the subject matter and to apply that learning to social action (p. 450).

My understanding of this definition is that feminist pedagogy has an explicit primary goal: "social action" and the many forms that action might take. It also moves the conception of teaching beyond a series of discrete "methods" to "strategies and techniques" that provide opportunities for learners to become "empowered," and that guide students toward valuing an educational experience where they act "responsibly

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toward one another and the subject matter." I will utilize Shrewsbury's definition to illustrate how the content and processes of the narrative inquiry I designed and enacted were intended to reflect a feminist stance.

As I stated earlier, my desired goal or outcome was to have my students work toward developing an "imaginative capacity," to feel a greater sense of efficacy, and to become more agentive. I wanted them to leave my course believing that they could entertain a greater variety of alternatives, that the instructional choices at their disposal were endless, and that they were—in some sense—"in charge" of their realities as teachers. Again, while they may not have possessed the ability to change their students' present realities, they could help their students to experience school differently, to experience success and engagement and learning, and perhaps to feel a greater sense of empowerment to change *their* realities. Perhaps then those middle and high school students could envision a better future for themselves. This desired outcome seems in line with my understanding of the social action agenda that Shrewsbury (as cited in Laird, 1988) identifies as a primary goal of feminist pedagogy in that its ultimate goal is to work to improve the lives of others.

I decided that to work toward accomplishing this goal, I would design a learning opportunity where my students could explore the concept of positionality and how their various positions might affect their responses to—and their attitudes toward—their students and their students' disengagement and failure. I also thought that such an exploration would lead them to consider how their middle and high school students' diverse positionalities might impact their understandings of the value of school.

Ultimately, I hoped that this learning opportunity would move my students to begin to challenge their actions and the choices they were making.

Because I wanted my teaching to reflect a feminist stance and because this study examines my own narrative of learning to become a teacher educator, I will draw on the work of feminist scholars to help illuminate my own practice and the instructional decisions I made. In my discussion of the content, I will talk about my belief that the narrative inquiry would support my students during the process of their working toward a stance of constructed knowing. I will also discuss how this process may allow students to gain a voice and thereby holds the potential to empower learners. Next, I will focus on the processes involved in the project and how I anticipated that they would enable teachers and students to become co-learners and recognize teachers and students as co-authorities. In addition, I will explain how I intended that both the content and processes work to move students beyond their subjective knowledge to more analytical and critical modes of thought.

Constructed Knowing

When students enter a teacher preparation program, they bring knowledge, beliefs, and values grounded in their personal experiences as members of families, communities, and the larger culture. They also bring their accumulated knowledge of their years in schools. The phenomenon of the "apprenticeship of observation" (Lortie, 1975) leads them to believe that their many years of filling the participant/observer role in classrooms has provided them with an understanding of teaching, despite its intricacies, complexities, and uncertainties. This set of knowledge and experiences and

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subsequent beliefs and values all come to bear on their learning as pre-service teachers, perhaps even without their awareness.

Their teacher preparation program may include their developing deeper content knowledge, learning teaching methods, and studying teaching and learning theories (Lanier & Little, 1986). Perhaps they are afforded some opportunities to learn systematically about the practice of teaching and to analyze discrete teaching experiences. This type of preparation is primarily based on a conception of teacher learning known as "knowledge-*for*-practice" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999), the "formal knowledge and theory (including codifications of the so-called wisdom of practice) *for* teachers to use in order to improve practice" (p. 250). However, for the most part, this preparation is somewhat isolated from "real" students and learning contexts. Furthermore, prospective teachers' learning about students may be somewhat de-contextualized as well.

When these students then move into the classroom, they may feel some tensions between what they believe to be true about teaching and learning based on their experiences both in and out of classrooms and what they are now experiencing as teachers. They may also sense some dissonance between the research-based and theoretical knowledge they began to develop as part of their teacher preparation program and the "realities" they observe in classrooms. They may become more aware that no "authority" on teaching exists—no one-size-fits-all solutions to their problems are available. Teaching is inherently uncertain (Floden & Buchmann, 1993; MacDonald, 1992), and they may find it challenging to make use of the knowledge-for-practice from their university program. They may also find it difficult to determine whether or not they

are effective in the classroom. As a result, they may respond to their students as teachers responded to them, only to find that this does not seem to work, as their students are *not* like them and do not respond as *they* would have responded. Their students are different. They may realize that what they thought might be "true" is not true at all. So they struggle to figure out why this is so and anguish over what to do.

Considering the tensions these students may feel and the dissonance they may sense, it does not seem efficacious to provide only one way of exploring—and hopefully addressing—their concerns. In other words, only offering continued knowledge-for-practice does not seem entirely satisfying. But allowing students to simply draw on their personal experiences to examine the challenges they face and to inform the decisions they might make also seems dangerous, as it may result in overly-simplistic analyses or interpretations. Students may minimize contextual factors and may not critically examine or question their personal experiences (Appleman, 2000). Therefore, an effective approach might be to somehow weave together students' experiential knowledge with knowledge-for-practice. This approach would entail guiding students toward a position of constructed knowledge, an integration of both subjective and objective knowing (Belenky, et al., 1997).

The process of moving toward a stance of constructed knowing involves integrating knowledge that is personally relevant with knowledge learned from others; it is an amalgamation of both emotional and rational thought. In addition, constructed knowing reflects an understanding that all knowledge is contextual: no "truth" can be separated from the context of which it is a part. "Once knowers assume the general relativity of knowledge, that their frame of reference matters and that they can construct

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and reconstruct frames of reference, they feel responsible for examining, questioning, and developing the systems that they will use for constructing knowledge" (Belenky, et al., 1997, pp. 138-139). Finally, constructive knowing allows for a greater tolerance for ambiguity and a recognition that conflict is unavoidable, which seems significant given the uncertainties of teaching.

Guiding students toward a stance of constructed knowing seems logical, if not necessary, and requires a pedagogy that blends their past experiences as students and as positioned individuals with theoretical knowledge. Therefore, it seems that prospective teachers may need to be allowed to "return," in a sense, to a position of subjective knowing. Or they at least need to understand that they can draw on their subjective knowledge. However, this is not the "end." They also need to learn how to integrate that knowledge with objective knowledge, or knowledge-for-practice. They may need to reflect on their past experiences, being alert to the details of those experiences, questioning and challenging the beliefs and values that have resulted from those experience. At the same time, they may also need those experiences to contextualize the theoretical—or objective knowledge—they are in the process of developing. Through this process, they may move toward a stance of constructed knowing. It is from this perspective, then, that they can explore their beliefs and assumptions about students, teaching, and learning. From this perspective, they may re-learn how to engage in reflective and critical thought about teaching practice.

Approaching my instruction from this perspective, I made a conscious decision to draw on students' personal experiences, through the use of personal narratives, and to use these narratives as primary "texts" for the course. Bruner (1996) argues that narrative is

the means by which we make sense of our experiences. Therefore, designing a narrative

inquiry for my students was a way for me to value their experiential knowledge, to guide

them as they worked to make sense of their experiences. I hoped this effort would prove

to be empowering, which is a criterion of feminist pedagogy that Shrewsbury (as cited in

Laird, 1988) identifies.

Coming to Voice

Joanne Cooper (1991) asserts that "narrative in any form functions first and

foremost to sustain and encourage the writer or storyteller" (p. 104). It allows us to

chronicle our stories and to give voice to our experiences. (Belenky et al., 1997; Bond, et

al., 2000, Cooper, 1991; Gilligan, 1993; Grumet, 1988). Audre Lorde (as cited in

Cooper, 1991) claims that "the development of voice is a way out of helplessness and

into a kind of personal power" (p. 107). Therefore, I intended that a narrative inquiry

held the potential for students to "create" themselves, to develop a voice, which would

then lead to a sense of personal power.

> hooks' (1994) argument also seems fitting here:

> As a teacher, I recognize that students...enter classrooms within
> institutions where their voices have been neither heard nor welcomed,
> whether these students discuss facts—those which any of us might
> know—or personal experience. If I do not wish to see these students use
> the 'authority of experience' as a means of asserting voice, I can
> circumvent this possible misuse of power by bringing to the classroom
> pedagogical strategies that affirm their presence, their right to speak...This
> pedagogical strategy is rooted in the assumption that we all bring to the
> classroom experiential knowledge, that this knowledge can indeed
> enhance our learning experience (p. 84).

Although hooks talks specifically about students from marginalized groups, all students

are in a sense marginalized when their experiential knowledge is not recognized as a

valuable source for learning. The narrative inquiry I designed, therefore, was a

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"pedagogical strategy" designed to affirm my students' "right to speak" and "rooted in the assumption" that "experiential...knowledge can indeed enhance" learning. Again, this is consistent with Shrewsbury's (as cited in Laird, 1988) definition of feminist pedagogy, in that the narrative inquiry represented a strategy or a technique used for the purpose of communicating that students' voices are inherently valuable, thus empowering them to apply that knowledge to social action.

What my students may have previously experienced in their teacher preparation coursework may have served to stifle "their inner voices," causing them to draw "back into a world of silent obedience" (Belenky, et al., 1997, p. 88). It stands to reason, then, that they would have felt helpless and paralyzed, that they would have lost their "imaginative capacity," when faced with their present realities in classrooms. They had—in a sense—returned to a subjectivist position, but at the same time they seemed to be attempting to work toward more reflective and critical thought. Therefore, I sought to give my students the opportunity to name their experiences, to gain a voice through that process, and to feel a greater sense of empowerment.

Villegas and Lucas (2002) work to connect this to teacher preparation when they discuss the role of autobiographical writing in teacher education courses:

> [It] helps them not only to better understand their own worldviews but also to recognize the active roles they can play in promoting or obstructing the success of individual students and groups of students and to consider ways they might act toward these students in the future (p. 123).

It seems that these authors are arguing that narrative inquiry helps students to better understand their worldviews. And it is through this deeper understanding that they begin to recognize where they may be advantaging some students while disadvantaging others. A social action agenda implies that teachers should work to advantage *all* students, to

respond equitably to all students. I believe that my desire for students to understand their experiences—and thus their worldviews—represents the value I place on their experiential knowledge and the role it plays in how they act toward students. And when valuing that experience means that I allow them to name that experience, then it also serves to empower them.

Although I have been talking more specifically about the content of the narrative inquiry I designed, the processes involved in the project are equally—if not more— important than the content itself. The process I chose as part of this learning strategy or technique involved my taking the stance of being a co-learner and a co-authority along with my students. Being explicit with my students about that stance necessitated their assuming a similar role with both me and with their peers. To fully value this learning opportunity, then, my students were placed in a position of responsibility to me, to their peers, and to the subject matter, again an important component of feminist pedagogy.

Students as Co-Learners and Co-Authorities

Constructivist learning theory. Maher and Tetreault (2001) looked at the practices of a small group of feminist teachers/scholars in various colleges and universities. One such institution was Lewis and Clark College, where constructivist learning theory informs the professors' teaching practices. One foundational principle of constructivist learning theory is students acting as co-learners, socially sharing in intellectual endeavors or socially co-constructing knowledge (Resnick, 1997; Windschitl, 2002). Valuing constructivist learning—or having a "persistent concern with the social construction of knowledge" (Maher & Tetreault, p. 36), though, is not necessarily an outcome of feminist scholarship; not all who advocate constructivism would identify

themselves as "feminists." Feminist thought does, however, provide a unique lens through which to view constructivism, particularly feminists' concern with the role of the teacher in a constructivist classroom.

Some educational theorists—though again not necessarily feminists—have written about a teacher's role in a constructivist setting, as well as the dilemmas this might create. Therefore, I will first provide a brief description of constructivists' understanding of a teacher's role. I will then explain how feminist theory might inform constructivist learning theory, paying particular attention to the notion of teachers embodying a stance, which I define as teachers acting on a set of values and beliefs regarding the nature of their role as a teacher and their location in the classroom.

Teaching—and dilemmas of teaching—in constructivist classrooms. Windschitl (2002) characterizes teacher and student activities in a constructivist classroom: teachers draw on students' backgrounds and experiences, provide multiple opportunities for collaborative efforts between and among students, and both teachers and students work to make their thinking processes explicit (p. 137). His characterizations seem to echo Duckworth (1987), whose research was largely influenced by her work with Piaget.

Rather than characterizing teacher activities, Duckworth (1987) identifies some implications for teachers who espouse constructivist teaching and learning: acknowledging complexity, raising questions, focusing on depth versus breadth (pp. 78 &116). When teachers take on such a role, "learners come to recognize knowledge as human construction (p. 133), and teachers are not the final arbiters of what students come to know.

Assuming this role, however, seems to create dilemmas for teachers. Windschitl (2002) claims that teachers struggle to develop teaching practices that are consistent with the goals of constructivist learning because these practices

> ...are always situated in a larger context...the culture of the classroom....For teachers, creating patterns of beliefs and practices consonant with a constructivist philosophy is especially difficult when one considers the entrenched school culture that it must usurp. The predominant images of 'being students and teachers' are some of the most persistent known in the social and behavioral sciences (p. 150).

When students enter the classroom, they come with a set of expectations about their roles and responsibilities in that classroom, as well as the teacher's role and responsibilities. Teachers enter the classroom with a similar set of expectations. Therefore, when teachers attempt to develop teaching practices that may seem new to both them and their students, they run the risk of disrupting the cultural norms of classroom life to which both they and students have grown accustomed. As a result, teachers may experience some dilemmas as they work to avoid this disruption while at the same time attempt to enact new pedagogies.

Dilemmas require teachers to make some sort of decision, often a decision that is not entirely satisfactory (Lampert, 1985). Because of this, teachers may opt to maintain cultural norms and not fully enact pedagogical strategies that are consistent with constructivist learning theory. Cohen (1990) illustrates this "reality" in his description of Mrs. Oublier, an elementary teacher, and her instructional practices in mathematics.

Although Cohen frames his "case" of Mrs. Oublier within the territory of instructional policy, as opposed to within constructivist learning theory, he nevertheless demonstrates—like Windschitl (2002) asserts—that both teachers and students are "historical beings" (p. 323) who:

...cannot simply shed their old ideas and practices like a shabby coat, and slip on something new. Their inherited ideas and practices are what teachers and students know, even as they begin to know something else...As they reach out to embrace or invent a new instruction, they reach with their old professional selves, including all the ideas and practices combined therein (p. 323).

Therefore, although Mrs. Oublier "...believes she has revolutionized her mathematics teaching" (p. 311), Cohen discovered many tensions and paradoxes in her teaching of which she was unaware. He asserts that teachers may inevitably become confused while working to create and implement a new kind of instruction from the perspective of an old self.

The place of the "teaching self" in the classroom is what seems most salient here. I sought to act as a co-learner and co-authority along with my students, which may seem (at least to some) like a new kind of instruction—or stance. In order to avoid the confusions and minimize the tensions like those that Mrs. Oublier experienced, I needed a language beyond that of constructivist learning theory that would help me access my own understanding of what I was attempting to accomplish and that would provide greater explanatory power as I worked to explicate this stance for my students. This seemed especially imperative because as these researchers suggest, what I was attempting could prove disruptive to my students' images of "being students and teachers." Feminist theory provided such a language.

Examining a teachers' role through a feminist lens. Feminist theory provides insight into a teacher's understanding or conceptions of her role in the classroom, framing this understanding in terms of a "stance." Fried (1995) calls a stance "...a philosophy, an attitude, a bearing, a way of encountering students based on a set of core values about

kids and their learning potential....based on our commitment to respect the depth of their potential and the dignity of their person" (pp. 139 & 150). He further asserts:

> The value of having cultivated a stance is that it allows us to focus most of our energy, most of the time, on what we think learning is all about, on what's really important, instead of getting caught up in the details of the lesson plan or the formalities of classroom management. It lets us respond to the kids' own spontaneity and good humor. It decreases the awkwardness between the generations and allows students to believe in us as advocates for their becoming powerful persons (p. 150).

My understanding of Fried's definition and evaluation of a stance, then, is that it is based on a set of beliefs and values that informs every move, every decision, every response to a student (or students) a teacher makes. And these values reflect the belief that students merit a teacher's respect of their both their potential and their dignity. It means that teachers have a solid foundation of what teaching and learning are all about and that despite the shifting winds of instructional policies and theories, they return to that cornerstone to re-discover that "essence."

So taking a stance does not eliminate the reality that the teacher is an "historical being" entrenched in the "culture of the classroom," and it does *not* mean that a teacher will not experience dilemmas or feel tensions. However, unlike *assuming* a role, a teacher *embodies* a stance. It encompasses who a teacher is as an individual—a human being—as well as who she is as a teacher. It means that she is able to articulate the reasons for her choices, and the explications she provides are based on her system of beliefs, which in turn reflects what she values.

What seems most relevant about a teacher's stance within the context of constructivist learning is school culture, particularly the norms that suggest the roles teachers and students should assume. In her attempts to create a constructivist classroom,

a teacher may alter her images of what it means to be a student. She may elicit her students' ideas; she may encourage her students to make their thinking processes explicit; she may pose problems for her students to solve; she may afford her students multiple opportunities to work collaboratively—to co-construct knowledge.

However, her image of what it means to be a teacher may remain unaltered. In other words, she may still perceive herself as the primary and most significant holder of knowledge, as her epistemological assumptions have gone unquestioned. Furthermore, she may not recognize the necessity of sharing her authority with her students. It is these concerns around knowledge and authority that feminist thought both informs and challenges.

In their discussion of knowledge Belenky et al. (1997) propose: "Instead of the teacher thinking about the object [knowledge] privately and talking about it publicly so that the students may store it, both teacher and students engage in the process of thinking, and they talk out what they are thinking in a public dialogue. As they think and talk together, their roles merge" (p. 219). What is significant about this is that teachers and students work together and discuss what they are thinking. The teacher does not simply give her students opportunities to work collaboratively together and talk amongst themselves. Instead, she joins them and becomes a part of these conversations as well. As a result, their "roles merge," as both teachers and students become co-learners and co-authorities.

Here Belenky et al. (1997) provide a language that provided a theoretical foundation for the processes that comprised The Narrative Project. They also provide further insights into what a feminist stance within a constructivist classroom might look

like. Teachers do not "assign" ideas or issues or posit questions for the students to think about and then pull back and observe. Nor do teachers do all of the thinking and then make their thinking available for students to absorb. Instead, teachers think about ideas or issues *with* students and join in the discussion or dialogue *alongside* them. This is a different "image" of what being a teacher might be all about, an image of myself that I sought to create or develop and that I further examined in this study.

Extending this idea of a teacher's "image" even further, Belenky et al. (1997) provide the image of a teacher as midwife:

> Midwife-teachers are the opposite of banker-teachers. While the bankers deposit knowledge in the learner's head, the midwives draw it out. They assist the students in giving birth to their own ideas, in making their own tacit knowledge explicit and elaborating it…midwife-teachers focus not on their own knowledge (as the lecturer does) but on the students' knowledge. They contribute when needed, but it is always clear that the baby is not theirs but the students (pp. 217-218).

The midwife-teacher "assists" her "students in giving birth to their own ideas." In other words, a mid-wife teacher is interested in more than only positing her own ideas, opinions, experiences, or knowledge; instead, she works and talks with her students and guides them as they work to make their own knowledge and thinking public. Through this process, both teachers and students learn with and from each other. As a result, the "images" of student and teacher begin to "merge," as they both become co-learners and co-authorities.

Returning to Lewis and Clark College, one particular professor Maher and Tetreault (2001) describe is Laurie Finke, who designed her instruction so that "…students sought knowledge on their own terms as well as in concert with others…It

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became collaborative rather than hierarchical. [She] wanted her students to make increasingly complex interpretations rather than definitive conclusions" (p. 17).

If I use this as one example of a feminist classroom, then it is one that encourages diverse perspectives on the topic of study, one where the complexity of issues or ideas, as opposed to definitive answers, is encouraged. It is one where the instructor feels free to say that she does not have all the answers and becomes an equal member in the discussion. It is also one where students learn to deal with the realization that some tensions will not go away, that sometimes there is no resolution. This can be disruptive for students who are accustomed to having tensions resolved and problems solved.

Moreover, Finke does not allow her students to get mired in sharing their own experiences or beliefs, as that can turn into a self-perpetuating practice. Instead, she moves them beyond that; she wants her students "...to speak theoretically, to move beyond personal perspectives to a comparison of approaches in the abstract" (p. 75). Therefore, a teacher who embraces feminist pedagogy does not allow students to only share their beliefs or interpretations with each other and then stay there. In a sense, she encourages students to adopt a more public discourse as they attempt to think and talk about themselves in more theoretical terms. She guides them as they learn to apply theory, as well as allowing them to form theories based on their experiences.

This seems to resonate with what I was working to accomplish with this project. I wanted my students to begin with their own experiences. But I also wanted them to explore how those experiences had shaped or influenced their thinking about students, teaching, and learning; and ultimately, to examine the concept of positionality. It was through the more reflective, analytical writing that I believed the students would begin to

adopt this more "public discourse" and that through the class discussions, they would

continue to develop their abilities to think and talk in more theoretical terms. And like

Laurie Finke, I sought to design my instruction—to take a stance—that would support my

students in their efforts.

This stance—and the kind of instruction it produces—is not without challenges,

though. bell hooks (1994) explains why it is difficult for feminist pedagogues to locate

themselves as co-learners and co-authorities with students:

> ...many of them [students] are already convinced that they cannot respond
> to appeals that they be engaged in the classroom, because they've already
> been trained to view themselves as not the ones in authority, not the ones
> with legitimacy. To acknowledge students' responsibility for the learning
> process is to place it where it's least legitimate in their eyes. When we try
> to change the classroom so that there is a sense of mutual responsibility
> for learning, students get scared that you are now not the captain working
> with them, but that you are after all just another crew member—and not a
> reliable one at that (p. 144).

hooks implies that when a teacher portrays an image that seems unfamiliar—and asks

students to also portray an unfamiliar image—it can be uncomfortable and disruptive for

students. Even if students do believe in their legitimacy as knowers and believe that they

share mutual responsibility for learning with the teacher, they may not necessarily trust a

teacher who asserts that she believes in this as well. Therefore, teachers need to "prove"

their convictions to gain students' trust and to support students as they begin to unlock

their powers as learners and individuals.

hooks (1994) identifies this as "education as the practice of freedom," and she

encourages teachers to work toward this end by taking risks alongside their students in

order to empower both themselves and their students.

> When education is the practice of freedom, students are not the only ones
> who are asked to share, to confess...Any classroom that employs a holistic

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model of learning will also be a place where teachers grow, and are
empowered by the process. That empowerment cannot happen if we
refuse to be vulnerable while encouraging students to take risks (p. 21).

This does not assume that just because a teacher is vulnerable with her students—and
shares in taking risks—that she will "automatically" gain her students' trust. Nor does it
assume that after sharing in the experience of mutual risk-taking with a teacher that
students will "suddenly" perceive themselves—and their knowledge—as legitimate in the
classroom. However, if teachers are not willing to take risks with students and expose
their vulnerabilities, then it is more likely that students may *never* fully trust or *never*
fully believe in their legitimacy.

I always assumed that I took risks alongside my students, acted in ways that
revealed my vulnerability, and communicated my belief in the legitimacy of their
knowledge. However, these assumptions are potentially problematic for the following
reasons. First, because I never systematically examined my practice, I really did not
know whether or not I was actually engaging in these practices, despite my beliefs.
Furthermore, whether or not I was engaging in these practices is beside the point if my
students did not understand my actions as I did. I needed insights into their perceptions
of my stance in order to better understand my own teaching practice, which is part of
what this study examines.

One understanding I have of this stance that hooks (1994) describes is what Philip
Jackson (1986) calls "transformative teaching," which he contrasts with the "showing"
and "telling" practices of "mimetic teaching." Although I would not identify Jackson as
a feminist, his description of "transformative teaching" resonates with feminist pedagogy.
Transformative teaching seeks:

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a transformation of one kind or another in the person being taught—a
qualitative change often of dramatic proportion, a metamorphosis, so to
speak...conceived of as being more deeply integrated and ingrained within
the psychological makeup of the student—and therefore as perhaps more
enduring—than those sought within...[traditions] whose dominant
metaphor is one of 'adding on' to what already exists...(pp. 120-121).

Jackson argues that teachers working within a transformative tradition "...*do* have some characteristic ways of working" (p. 124). One of these characteristic ways of working includes personal modeling, where teachers "...personify the very qualities they seek to engender in their students" (p. 124).

I would argue that hooks (1994) looks to create—or at the least, encourage—a "qualitative change" in her students. And I would also argue that hooks would agree with Jackson's (1986) assertion that teachers need to embody those same characteristics they wish to develop in their students. Like hooks, though, Jackson describes why this may prove uncomfortable and disruptive for students (and teachers):

Often the authority of the teacher is so diminished...that there occurs a
kind of role reversal, almost as though the student were teaching the
teacher...Within the transformative tradition, the superiority of the
teacher's knowledge, whether substantive or methodological, is not nearly
so clear-cut. Nor is the teacher's status in general vis-a`-vis his or her
students. Instead, the overall relationship between the two is often
vexingly ambiguous if not downright upsetting to some students; it can
even become so at times to teachers themselves (pp. 124-126).

What is interesting about Jackson's assertions about transformative teaching is that the authority of teachers and students do not "merge," as some feminist scholars suggest. Instead, the authority of the teacher becomes "diminished;" teacher and student roles reverse themselves. He further claims that this is because the teacher's knowledge and status are not clearly superior, only because the teacher does not engage in "show" and "tell" practices.

Jackson's (1986) argument, though, does suggest why feminist pedagogy may feel so uncomfortable and too uncertain for teachers. However, if I return to Shrewsbury's (as cited in Laird, 1988) definition of feminist pedagogy in light of this, feminist pedagogy provides "criteria to evaluate specific educational strategies and techniques in terms of the desired course goal or outcomes…[which] include the extent to which a community of learners is empowered to act responsibly toward one another and the subject matter and to apply that learning to social action" (p. 450). Therefore, feminist pedagogues must always keep the "end goal" in sight; and any "educational strategy or technique," regardless of its inherent difficulties and challenges, must be evaluated according to the extent to which it allows a teacher to reach those end goals. Feminists value student voice and experiential knowledge, and feminists believe in the power of becoming co-learners and co-authorities with students. Furthermore, they firmly believe that taking such a stance will result in their "ultimate" goals: students who are "empowered to act responsibly toward one another and the subject matter and to apply that learning to social action."

Based on my desire to embody a feminist stance, I designed a learning project grounded in narrative inquiry where I could embody that stance. And because of narrative inquiry's capacity to weave together content and pedagogy, as well as theory and practice, I also chose narrative inquiry as a methodological approach with the following intentions: 1) to illuminate my practice through my own emerging narrative as a feminist teacher educator; and 2) to explore how this project unfolded for my students as they engaged with the content—and experienced the processes—involved with this project. Therefore, I will attempt to show how narrative inquiry may be an effective

research methodology to study narrative inquiry as a pedagogical approach and to study how a teacher educator works to enact—and embody—a theoretical stance.

Narrative Inquiry as Research

Narrative Inquiry Defined

I have previously discussed the layered nature of this study; however, I have also referred to those layers as strands, which in the context of this study seems a more useful conceptualization. One strand consists of what I have learned through engaging in this inquiry, as well as how I came to know what I know. The second strand represents my interpretation of what my students learned, while *their* understanding of what they learned and how they came to that learning comprises the third strand. These three strands represent stories of experience, but telling stories—or weaving various story strands into one new story to tell—does not constitute research, or narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry as a research methodology comes about during the systematic analysis of those stories. This necessitates, therefore, my articulating my conceptions of narrative inquiry as research methodology and what separates that inquiry from mere "storytelling."

Connelly and Clandinin (1995) assert that the term "narrative" encompasses both phenomenon and method and offer a valuable and concise distinction between the two: phenomenon is "story;' inquiry is "narrative" (p. 2). They further this distinction in the following statement: "Thus, we say that people by nature lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives, whereas narrative researchers describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience" (p. 2).

However, these narratives of experience are more than another telling, more than a construction or re-construction of events that make up experience. Instead, narrative inquiry as research methodology arises from the researcher's desire to understand those events and experiences. It represents the process of examining and analyzing events, which then leads to new understandings. This seems consistent with Dewey's (1938) notion of "continuity of experience," in that through deliberate reflection and careful analysis, narrative inquiry seeks to draw connections and locate relationships between experiences in order to impose some kind of order. The researcher then draws on the insights gained through this process to inform further action.

Rationale for Narrative Inquiry

I cannot make a better argument for using narrative inquiry as research methodology than the argument articulated by Witherell and Noddings (1991):

> Stories are powerful research tools. They provide us with a picture of real people in real situations, struggling with real problems. They banish the indifference often generated by samples, treatments, and faceless subjects. They invite us to speculate on what might be changed and with what effect. And of course, they remind us of our persistent fallibility. Most important, they invite us to remember that we are in the business of teaching, learning, and researching to improve the human condition. Telling and listening to stories can be a powerful sign of regard—and caring—for one another (p. 280).

I am using narrative inquiry to describe, reflect on, and analyze the experienced surrounding my learning as a new teacher educator. This includes my reflection on—and analysis of—instructional choices I made, as well as a description of my own learning. This narrative inquiry also includes my students' descriptions of what they learned from the project, as well as their reflections on—and analysis of—both the content and processes involved in the project.

My initial hunch or hypothesis—bolstered by informal feedback from my students—was that students found The Narrative Project to be a worthwhile "activity." However, I never probed further to discover what they believed they had learned. I never pursued questions with my students to discover their interpretations of the processes entailed in the project. Furthermore, I had not fully examined my practice as a teacher educator. Ultimately, it seems as if I forgot that I was in the "business of teaching, learning, and researching" in that I did not reflect on or analyze the experience with the intention of its leading to further and changed action.

As I initially considered engaging in a systematic study of this project, narrative inquiry showed itself as a "powerful research tool." Because I was interested in illuminating my practice, I realized that I thought about my practice in story form and that stories best described how and why I made particular decisions. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) provide an explanation for why narrative inquiry might be an especially sound methodology within teacher research: "The main claim for the use of narrative in educational research is that…education is the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories…" (p. 2). While I engaged in narrative inquiry as a teaching practice, my using it as a research methodology enables me to examine my practice as a teacher educator. Narrative inquiry allows for this, as I both construct and reconstruct the story of myself as a teacher educator—and my students' learning—that revolved around this pedagogical approach and draw on their constructions and reconstructions of their personal and social stories.

One aspect of using narrative inquiry as pedagogy that I have discussed earlier is the relationship between character and narrator. This idea is also important for an

understanding of narrative inquiry as research methodology. For example, while I am

engaging in practice, I am a character in the narrative; however, when I use narrative

inquiry to investigate my practice, I must—like my students—make the shift from

character to narrator. In one sense, I must *step out of* the narrative of my teaching

practice and then *step back in* to make sense of the events that constitute the narrative of

that practice.

Utilizing narrative inquiry as research methodology serves to empower me, just as

I believed that narrative inquiry as a pedagogical tool would also serve to empower my

students. As I stated earlier, I had examined myself without the benefit of a "community

narrative" (Rappaport, 1995). While I argued that this is not necessarily antithetical to

the idea of empowerment's requiring collaboration, collectivity, and the support of a

community narrative, my choice to use narrative inquiry in order to study my practice

serves to help me create a "newly-empowered self" through the collective effort of

studying my practice alongside my students. In a sense, I am working to create a "new"

narrative with my students—a narrative of how we learned together—which then serves

to further empower me as my students continue to inform my narrative of learning how to

become a teacher educator.

Wortham explains why this may be the case. "Telling the story of his or her life

gives the narrator an opportunity to redirect that life…" (p. 5). However, sharing

narratives with others is more than describing or representing some part of one's life.

Instead, as Wortham asserts, a narrator's sharing of a story becomes an enactment in the

listener's own life; in this sense it is transformative for both teller and hearer. It is this

enactment, then, that serves to both change the narrator and the listener. Therefore, both

my students and I stood the chance to learn from each other—and perhaps work to transform each other—as we engaged in this narrative project together.

While this narrative inquiry focuses on both my learning and my students' learning, it also emanated from a problem of practice. As such, this study may be considered an example of teacher research. I will conclude this chapter with a discussion of how this study fits into the larger body of literature on teacher research.

Teacher Research

Teacher Research Defined

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) define teacher research as: "systematic, intentional inquiry by teachers about their own school and classroom work" (p. 22). In their attempt to develop a "typology" for teacher research—with this definition providing the framework—they unpack the terms systematic, intentional, and inquiry. It is their understanding of the term inquiry that seems most informative here. They characterize inquiry as research that "...stems from or generates questions and reflects teachers' desire to make sense of their experiences..." (p. 24). This study stems from a question that I posited about my teaching practice, and through this study I hope to place order on one particular experience and to interpret that experience to make greater sense of it.

Making sense of experience is a very personal—and perhaps idiosyncratic—goal of research. My personal goal is to make my intuitive thinking more explicit; however making the product(s) of this work public also serves to expand the knowledge base on teaching. The knowledge I hope to build through this study is to demonstrate how a teacher might work to embody a theoretical stance in the classroom and how that stance

may be reflected in a teacher's pedagogical decision-making. Each of these research goals is consistent with the outcomes teacher researchers seek.

Intuition, Theory, and Practice

This study is an example of a teacher researcher attempting to "illuminate pedagogical acts by researching experience…[and making] visible the knowledge that teachers often implicitly employ" (Burton & Seidl, 2002, p. 226). Patti McWhorter (1995) asserts that through the process of engaging in a year-long teacher research project, she brought her intuitions about teaching to a conscious level (p. 53). In fact, she identifies intuition as "…the bridge between theory and practice…" (p. 53) and asserts that intuitions "…give you the confidence to enact your vision more thoroughly (p. 53). Therefore, it is my intention that this study will work to demonstrate the process a teacher educator may go through in order to bring intuitions to a conscious level.

Identifying this study as an example of teacher research allows me to pull together its three strands: narrative inquiry as pedagogy, feminist pedagogy, and narrative inquiry as research. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) assert that neither theory nor practice generate the questions that inform teacher research but "critical reflection on the intersection of the two" (p. 15). Though teacher researchers attend to the nature of these questions that constitute teacher research and thus frame inquiry, they also concern themselves with the methods of inquiry that result in systematic and intentional examination of teaching practice. I will now explain why narrative inquiry as a research methodology is well-suited to the personal goal of teacher research I have nominated.

Narrative Inquiry in Teacher Research—Making Sense of Experience

Teacher research focuses on the intricacies and complexities of teaching practice and is grounded in specific contexts. Smith and Lambert Stock (2002) argue that researchers in the field of English language arts have used narrative inquiry to capture those complexities and to avoid research methodologies that seek to generalize and to overlook the uniqueness of educational settings and experiences.

My study is not without such complexities. In other words, it was a problem of practice that generated the study—or drew my attention to the need for the study. Therefore, it became a "story" of my own learning as I worked to unravel and examine this problem. However, it goes beyond a teacher identifying a problem, devising possible solutions, and then examining the effectiveness of those solutions. Instead, it seeks to explain and interpret the meaning and significance of experiences that led to my further learning as I attempted to enact a theoretical stance that would hopefully result in deeper student learning. It then takes on the characteristics of theorizing, as I see these experiences in new ways, thus leading to further insights and understandings. Through this process I become both theorist and narrator; narrative inquiry allows for that complexity. This study is complicated further, however, as I weave my story together with my students' stories. In a sense, both my students and I take on the roles of narrators and theorizers.

Conle (1999) explains: "If the theorist is a narrator and the narrator a theorist, it is possible to pull theory into an ongoing experiential narrative and expand a story into another spiral of telling, this time by incorporating theory as it is transformed by experience (p. 22). As an example of narrative inquiry within teacher research, this study may portray the intricacies of this "spiral of telling." For example, I have hypothesized

that the pedagogy of The Narrative Project enabled my students to theorize about their own experiences, to examine the significance and value of their personal experiences—one "telling." On the other hand, narrative inquiry as research methodology affords me the opportunity for another "telling" that includes my own narrative of experience and theorizing. Therefore, narrative inquiry provides spaces where these various tellings can occur. This "spiral of telling" then depicts the multi-faceted nature of teaching practice.

Using narrative inquiry within the larger framework of teacher research also allows me to consider more carefully the role of the participants in my study, an important consideration given the nature of both my pedagogy and my research. The participants in my study have the opportunity to provide their own interpretations—their own theories. I intend that my study will work to disrupt some of the power disparities between researcher and researched, just as I have worked toward that end in my teaching. Engaging in a systematic and intentional study of my practice, then, enables me to discover whether and to what extend the pedagogy and methodology involved in this inquiry worked toward that end.

Beyond its power to inform more personal questions related to teaching practice, teacher research also adds to public knowledge of teaching. Burton and Seidl (2002) argue that teacher research "provides valuable theoretical and practical knowledge to the educational community in general" (p. 229). That said, this study may provide some insights into how feminist pedagogy might create spaces for prospective teachers—both male and female—to examine the concept of positionality. Furthermore, it may show how a teacher might embody a theoretical stance in her teaching. My decision to try and create this space and to embody this stance reflects my particular "vision" for teacher

education. Therefore, teacher research may also work to articulate a teacher educator's vision, thus adding to the knowledge base for teaching.

Teacher Research—Illuminating a Vision

In her article "Knowledge and Vision in Teaching," Kennedy (2006) uses the term "vision" as a descriptor for teachers' plans and asserts that these plans are "scenarios" that teachers envision. These visions are purposeful and action-oriented, "...detailed plays with scenes, episodes, and characters all organized to lead to a particular conclusion" (p. 207). Kennedy then moves her argument to teacher preparation and discusses how the "collective vision" that teachers educators have for teacher education is problematic.

Although I could be counted in the ranks of those who collectively have an incomplete vision, I nevertheless held an individual vision for my students: that they would learn how to be more responsive to their students, both as individuals and as learners. This vision appeared purposeful and action-oriented, in that I framed the goal as a problem of practice and then enacted a pedagogical approach that I believe aligned with that goal. While I had my own particular conclusion in mind, however, this study seeks to discover whether and to what extent my students reached that same conclusion. And if it turns out that my students and I reached different conclusions, then this study also seeks to discover what conclusions my students *did* reach.

Kennedy's conception of vision serves to illuminate the complex nature of teaching. Assuming this is true, then, my claim that The Narrative Project was born of a vision I held *also* reflects the complexity of teaching, regardless of the context of that teaching. Furthermore, the research questions I generated stemmed from my concerns

around the pedagogy of this project and how my students made sense of it. Therefore, locating this study within the territory of teacher research makes sense, as does narrative inquiry, since both are designed to accommodate that complexity.

That said, Kennedy asserts that the visions are problematic as they do not impart knowledge, per se, or do not take into account competing visions. It could be argued that this is a curricular issue. This study, however, may take what started as a vision and show how such a vision may indeed add to the knowledge base for teacher education. It may provide curricular implications for teacher preparation, suggesting how visions— regardless of their flaws—may be developed into curricular segments that do build on the more widely-accepted knowledge base for teaching. On the other hand, it could be argued that since this study works to inform a more "personal" teaching concern, then it is not informative for a larger audience, that its value is purely local. However, because teacher research is designed to add such practical knowledge to the larger body of knowledge on teaching, then perhaps its usefulness extends beyond the personal.

Phelps (1991) argues that all teaching decisions are embedded within a curricular context, made by individual teachers and reflecting their unique experiences in the classroom. She further argues:

> But the relations of knowledge and practice can be understood most
> profoundly in the context of a *teaching community*...Part of the work of
> the community is to make visible to itself...the ecology of curricular
> contexts in which any teaching decision is embedded, not merely
> abstractly but as vivid, particular realities (pp. 866-867).

I understand Phelps to mean that although individual teaching decisions may be personal in nature, they do not occur in isolation; instead, they take place within the context of curriculum and within programs and institutions. If these pedagogical decisions are to

become "knowledge" as such, then they need to become public so that the entire teaching community can understand them and learn from them. However, that understanding and learning would be located in the particulars of teaching, as opposed to grounded in abstractions.

Thus, as teachers work to make their more personal accounts of teaching experience public to the teaching community, then that community can work to fit all of these accounts together and read across them. Considering my study from this perspective, it may very well be one particular "story" that illustrates one particular "vision." However, as an example of teacher research, it becomes one of many such accounts, joining others that the teaching community can read with and against as they examine the curricular contexts of teacher education.

Footnotes

1. I say "intuitive decision" because I had experienced first-hand the power of narrative as a "way of knowing." I had used narrative as a tool—in a sense—to gain insights into some of my own assumptions, attitudes, beliefs, and even decisions and actions. However, I did not have a very good understanding of how and why I was able to realize this through narrative. While I could identify what I had learned, I did not fully appreciate how that learning had occurred or how exactly narrative had shaped that learning. So without understanding how narrative might work, at least from a pedagogical standpoint, I decided to make use of it anyway. This study was designed to determine whether and to what extent a narrative study (as pedagogy) served my intended learning goals. And if such a study did serve these goals, even to a limited extent, then I wanted to understand how and why.

2. When I talk about the "self" here, I am not construing it as the same as "identity." To me, an understanding of self goes beyond identity; it encompasses why we are who we are, why we believe as we do, value what we do, or behave as we do. Nor am I suggesting that I see positionality as identity, though one's positionality is certainly a factor in identity and identity construction. Therefore, I do not understand this study as "identity-focused educational research" (Juzwik, 2006) per se, though I could imagine its having implications for that line of research.

Chapter 3

Illuminating Practice through the Research Process:

Systematically Examining Artifacts of Teaching and Student Data

As I explicated in Chapters One and Two, no single theoretical framework

informed this study. While I drew on narrative theory, feminist theory, and learning

theory to provide a backdrop for the study and to locate the study within the larger body

of teacher research, not one of these theories was more significant than the others.

Instead, I wove them together as equal strands as I attempted to make my intuition(s)

visible, to present pieces of my practice and offer them for scrutiny, and to propose

further insights into the nature of students, teaching, and learning.

Therefore, my description and subsequent analyses of the various artifacts of

practice and additional data gathered, presented somewhat of a challenge. In other

words, how such analyses would work—and how such analyses demonstrated intellectual

and scholarly rigor—was not readily apparent. My felt need to make my intuitions

visible suggests that my thinking was somehow out of my reach or beyond my conscious

awareness, though it still acted on me in some way. As a result, I was not able to

determine in advance the direction my study might take, as I was working to access the

knowledge I held but for some reason could not—or failed to—explicate.

This chapter serves to outline and describe the methodology I used for this study

and is organized as follows. I first provide a brief overview of the research design,

identify the research questions, discuss the data sources, and explain the relationship

between the questions and the data sources. I also explain how I chose the focus students

who participated in the study. Finally, I provide a description and explanation of my analytical approach to the data.

Research Design

Research Questions: What I Wanted to Learn

I framed this study using two different categories of research questions: questions around pedagogy and questions around sense-making. (I provide these questions later in the chapter). Organizing the research questions in this way allowed me to systematically study a narrative inquiry project I designed for my students and to examine my students' understanding of that project. The pedagogical questions allowed me to determine whether and to what extent this project afforded my students the opportunity to explore the ideas or issues that provided its focus: beliefs about students, teaching, and learning and an examination of the concept of positionality. These questions focused on both the writing and the whole-class discussions that supplied this project with its structure. The questions around sense-making enabled me to structure an investigation around the nature of my students' understanding of this project, particularly how they made sense of the project itself (the pedagogy), as well as what sense they made of the central concept of the project: positionality. In the next section of this chapter, I lay out the data sources. I then work to explicate the relationship between the questions and the data sources.

Data Sources

Student writing. Student writing—or student work—is an artifact of teaching that can be especially revealing. The student writing I used in this study—the narratives and reflections—allowed me to examine the nature of my students understanding of students, teaching, and learning. It also provided insights into how students might understand the

concept of positionality. Finally, I studied the students' writing to determine how they had written their texts, drawing on narrative theory, specifically the role of character and narrator. Though I will discuss this in more detail later in this chapter, how a writer "uses" the role of character and narrator in a "story" to make statements and to reveal her thoughts, feelings, or attitudes does represent a process. Therefore, these theoretical constructs enabled me to study some of the process aspects of the writing portion of this project, which in turn revealed how—through writing—students constructed new knowledge and gained deeper understandings.

Videotapes. I videotaped the class sessions where we worked with the narratives. Because one component of the project was pedagogical, a colleague videotaped these classes for me. This allowed me to participate more fully in the discussions without having to concern myself with the more logistical—and often distracting—aspects of taping.

Viewing session/interviews. The viewing sessions/interviews provided insights into students' perceptions of how they made sense of the project and what they learned from the project. For the student who shared her narrative (Lisa), we watched the following sections of the class session together: the reading of the narrative that preceded her reading; the class discussion between this student's reading and her reading; Lisa's reading of her narrative; and the discussion that fell between her reading and the following student's reading. Since the other two focal students had not shared their narratives, I did not complete a viewing session with them. Furthermore, because I was primarily interested in what took place during the discussion that *prompted* a student to read, a viewing session with students who did not read seemed unnecessary.

I designed interview questions that focused on how students understood the processes involved in the project, including the writing and class discussions. Before I met with these students, I also completed my initial analyses of their writing so that I might ask them questions that their writing had raised for me.

The first set of questions for Lisa were asked during the viewing session and focused on the class sessions themselves, where I sought to determine what and how she was thinking during the sharing of the narratives and the ensuing discussion around the narratives and reflections. I then asked about her writing, both the content of the narratives and reflections, as well as what and how she was thinking when she constructed those pieces. After this, I returned to the class sessions again and asked her to talk about her perceptions of the processes involved in the project, particularly her responses to the pedagogy I enacted. Finally, I asked her to imagine some "teaching scenarios," scenarios that reflected the concerns of the students enrolled in this course the first time I taught it two years earlier. In fact, I asked all three students about these scenarios, primarily because I never observed any of my students' teaching and therefore could not speak to the instantiation of their learning in their teaching practices. Therefore, responses to these scenarios provided some insights into how they believed they might apply their learning in particular contexts and to teaching practice.

The second set of questions was designed for the student who did not share his narrative, Steve, but wished he had. These questions were the same as for Lisa, though the probes for the sessions where we read and discussed the narratives focused more on what took place that prompted him to wish he had participated more fully.

I hesitated to ask the hesitant/resistant student, Erin, too many questions; I was most interested in what was compelling to her. Therefore, I chose broad categories, such as her responses to the structure of the class sessions and her beliefs about what she learned or did not learn from the project and allowed her to express her thoughts and feelings more freely without a structured protocol. However, I presented this student, as well as Steve, with the same scenarios that I discussed earlier.

Relationship Between Research Questions and Data Sources

My primary data source was artifacts of practice, but I also collected additional interview data. The table below shows which artifacts of practice and which data sources I used to explore the research questions.

Table One: Relationship Between Artifacts and Research Questions

Research Questions	Artifacts/Data Sources
Questions around Pedagogy 1) Whether and to what extent do both the content and processes of The Narrative Project engage prospective teachers in both an exploration and examination of their beliefs about students, teaching, and learning? 2) Whether and to what extent does The Narrative Project then afford prospective teachers the opportunity to examine the concept of positionality?	**Questions around Pedagogy** 1) three focal students' written narratives and reflections 2) videotapes of two class sessions where both my narrative and reflection and my students' narratives and reflections served as primary classroom texts
Questions around Sense-Making 3) How do pre-service teachers make sense of the processes involved in The Narrative Project? 4) What sense do pre-service teachers make of the concept of positionality through their engagement with The Narrative Project?	**Questions around Sense-Making** 3) three focal students' written narratives and reflections 4) viewing sessions and interviews with focal students

Relationships Between Research Questions and Data Sources

Pedagogy: research question one. Research question one addressed The Narrative Project itself: both what and how the students learned. The students' written work (data source #1) was one representation of this learning. In one sense, this was distinctive for each student, as each narrative depicted unique experiences and explored individual and varied topics and issues. On the other hand, the combination of these narratives also represented a portion of the entire project for all students, since the narratives became course texts and formed the basis for our class discussions. Furthermore, these written texts generated another text, the text created in and through our class discussions.

The class discussions offered another representation of what and how students learned. The nature of discussion is markedly different from other types of talk (Dillon, 1994; Bridges, 1988; Nystrand, 1997; Almasi, 1996; Costa, 1990). Therefore, utilizing *videotapes* of class sessions where the narratives and reflections served as the *springboard* for discussion (data source #2) allowed me to examine the interactions *during* our class discussions.

Pedagogy: research question two. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) argue that a *central concept is* necessary in narrative inquiry: "Narrative explanation derives from the *whole...by a sense* of the whole and it is this sense which needs to drive the writing (and *reading) of narrative*" (p. 7). If I assert that this study was a narrative inquiry, then it was _e issue—or concept—of positionality that most drove the study and provided it with _is sense of the whole. I identified the pedagogical problem as helping my students to _amine/critique their own positionalities, as well as how both teachers' and students'

positionalities shape teaching and learning experiences. Again, drawing on the students'

writing and the videotapes of class discussions (data sources #1 and #2) allowed me to

investigate whether and to what extent this project afforded students the opportunity to

examine the concept of positionaity.

Sense-making: research question three. Just as it states, the third question

focused on how students understood the narrative project. Because I observed that

students' overall responses to this project varied, I assumed that their understandings also

varied. To some extent the students' writing (data source #3) revealed their

understandings of the narrative project, particularly their reflective writing. However, to

extend, and perhaps challenge, my interpretations of how they understood this project, I

completed interviews with two of the students and a viewing session/interview with

another one (data source #4). As a result, this afforded me the opportunity to gain further

insights into my students' sense-making.

Sense-making: research question four. While question three focused on the sense

students made of the narrative process, the fourth question attended to the sense students

made of the concept of positionality. It is important that I make this separation, primarily

because I was never explicit with my students about the concept of positionality. I never

explained that this was the purpose for the project and never made explicit connections

between students, teaching, learning—and positionality. I took a more inductive

approach. However, because the concept of positionality is the central concept that

drives my design of the narrative inquiry, I need to explore what my students did examine

and whether and to what extent positionality was a part of that examination. Again,

while the students' writing (data source #3) may have provided some initial insights, it is

hrough the interviews and viewing session/interview (data source #4) that I worked to

liscover the nature of my students' understandings of this concept.

Focus Students

Choosing Focus Students

Based on previous conversations with, and observations of, students from

previous years, I already knew that some students seemed more open to this project than

others. They expressed how much they enjoyed the opportunity to return to narrative

writing, as opposed to more "academic" writing, and appreciated having the space to both

talk and write about themselves. On the other hand, some students resisted the project or

hesitated to participate (especially in class discussions) for varying reasons: they did not

want to reveal too much of themselves; they distrusted their peers; they perceived no

connection between the project and their teaching. It seemed that this project "worked"

for some students, though not for others.

When it came time to examine this project more systematically, I decided to wait

and choose focal students as participants after the course was completed and grades

submitted. It eliminated the ethical issue of asking students to participate in a study when

they relied on me for their course grades. Because several factors played into how I

chose these students, waiting until the end of the year also allowed me to look back over

an entire year of work with all of my students to determine which ones would become the

focus of the study based on criteria described below.

First, because I wanted insights into how the class discussions worked for

students, I made sure that one of the focal students had actually shared a narrative. I

made the assumption that a student—any student—who agreed to share or who desired to

share was more open to the project. I assumed that the processes "worked" for this student and that he/she could serve as a point of comparison. Just as Jeffrey Wilhelm (1996) sought to determine how to engage reluctant readers through studying the reading habits and stances of engaged readers, it seemed to make sense to study how and why some students were seemingly more naturally engaged with this project and then work to build on that knowledge to determine how to promote more engagement in the reluctant or resistant students.

Second, I understood that any pedagogical choice held the potential to alienate certain students. But I also realized that teachers may misinterpret students' behavior as hesitance or resistance, just as they might misinterpret what seems to be a positive response to an assignment or project. My initial intention, therefore, was to interview a student who was explicitly resistant, who made it clear that she did not like the project and found it all very uncomfortable and/or not entirely necessary. Not surprisingly, a student who fit this description opted not to participate. Therefore, I chose a student who voiced her hesitance about the project but who was not necessarily "resistant."

I perceived these students, one for whom the project "worked" and one who seemed hesitant or resistant, as located at opposite ends of a continuum. Therefore, it seemed important to gain their perceptions of the project. It also seemed important to explore their understandings of their engagement with the project.

Those students who indicated that they wished they had shared their narratives, even though they decided not to, added a third perspective and seemed to fall in the middle of this continuum. Their responses suggested that during the course of reading and sharing the narratives, they gained some new understandings of both the content and

processes of the project that they had not previously considered. Furthermore, their feedback implied that they had learned something they had not expected to learn. It was one more perspective that added another dimension to the study. Making these distinctions between different "groups" of students enabled me to gain a broader perspective on the variety of stances that *all* students might take toward such a project; it also provided additional insight into the nature of students' learning.

Limiting the Number of Focus Students

Initially, I thought I would work with one student who shared and two students (one male, one female) who I believed fell at each of the other two points on the continuum, for a total of five. I thought that gender may possibly affect a student's response to the project; therefore, including one male and one female student representing two of the different points on the continuum, the hesitant/resistant student at one end and the student in the "middle" (did not share a narrative but later wished he/she had) made sense. This may be true, but examining how gender may have affected students' responses was not specified in any of the research questions. Therefore, I decided that making that differentiation was really beyond the scope of what I sought to learn in this study.

I also resolved that it was more important to create a vibrant portrait of three individual students than to try and develop "representative" locations on a continuum, as I never intended to make any generalizations about the class as a whole. Therefore, I decided to go with my "hunches" that these three students represented a continuum and remained mindful that I might find discrepant evidence that would challenge my thinking and perhaps change my mind.

I used the analytical process (which I will describe later in this chapter) as part of how I identified the students who I would ask to participate. This choice ultimately came down to two factors. As I analyzed all five students' writing, I found that some of the students' writing was inherently more interesting or intriguing to me. Either it resonated with me for some reason or I found myself wanting to talk more to them during an interview. The three students I chose (Erin, Steve, and Lisa) after my initial analysis of all five students' writing often stayed after class and sought me out when they had questions or problems. In all honesty, they were students who I liked, respected, and enjoyed talking to and working with. Additionally, based on my understanding of them from an entire year's worth of working together, I predicted that they would be willing to talk about their learning and their teaching. Erin, (hesitant/resistant) was a quiet student and compassionate teacher; she worked diligently and always seemed sincere about wanting to learn. Steve (middle) seemed to fit the description of a "bull in a china shop." He was excitable and would often speak impulsively, often having to go back and either clarify what he meant or apologize for perhaps offending someone. On the other hand, like Erin, he too was sincere in his desire to learn. Finally, Lisa (for whom the project seemed to work) was an energetic and driven student and teacher. She tended to assume leadership roles with her peers, keeping small groups on task and often stepping into class discussions to help focus the group or to encourage students to think more deeply about topics or issues. I will introduce these students again in Chapter 4 and talk about them in greater detail.

As I said, I knew these students. And perhaps this is a limitation: choosing participants based on perceptions, interpretations, or intuitions. However, at this point I

was both a teacher educator and an educational researcher; so I concluded that drawing on my knowledge as their instructor was inevitable, though certainly a factor I needed to acknowledge.

Presenting Focus Students as Cases

As I stated earlier, I wanted to provide a rich picture of the focal students. Therefore, it seemed logical to present each of them as a "case" (Yin, 1994) as case studies allow for description, accompanied by interpretive commentary that seems characteristic of narrative inquiry. Moreover, offering the students as cases illustrated the uniqueness of each student. Therefore, in Chapter 4, I first provided a brief portrait of each student as a means of introduction. I stated my assertions about each student's body of written work, summarized their narratives, and then analyzed both their narrative and reflective writing, using the research questions as a structure for that analysis.

In Chapter 6, I also presented each student as a case. I described my overall impressions of my conversations with these three students, intending that my initial perceptions of these conversations would provide further insights into each of them. Again, I made assertions about each student's understanding of the project before I analyzed their responses. The analysis of the cases in this chapter focused on how students understood the project itself, how they understood the concept of positionality, and how they believed the project impacted their teaching practices.

I concluded both Chapters 4 and 6 with cross-case analyses that provide additional insights into how this project seemingly worked for these three students. These cross-case analyses discussed the affordances and constraints of the project, as well as the challenges or issues that a project such as this may raise. These analyses also

illuminated how prospective teachers grapple with complicated concepts such as positionality.

Placed between these is Chapter 5, where I studied the whole class through the class discussions. This chapter provided a context for the learning community in which these three students participated, and seemed to both complement Chapter 4 and point to Chapter 6. In Chapter 5 I provided a window into the class discussions using discrete "moments." Along with a brief overview of each discussion, I also provided an explanation for why I nominated these moments. Finally, I drew on the concept of connected knowing and what constitutes a connected-knowing group as I sought to depict each moment and what each one revealed.

I have asserted from the beginning that this study represents one "local" story of how a project played out in one class, using three focal students to help illustrate this. The case method allows for this, as it illustrates the particular and then uses the particular to illuminate new issues and posit new questions; it is not intended to offer generalizations. Therefore, this research method offered a way for me to present a more vibrant portrait of each student, as well as to provide insights into the workings of the entire group of students.

Steps in the Analytical Process

As I have already stated, I did not begin the study with a specific framework in mind for data analysis. I took the stance that I would let the data indicate the directions I might take. Therefore, as I worked with the data—focal students' writing, videotapes of discussion, and interview transcripts—I continually noted what seemed most striking,

particularly within the contexts of both the learning goals I identified and the research questions I nominated.

My analytical process consisted mostly of writing. I wrote analytical memos that described how I was looking at the artifacts and data, what I was learning, what questions my analyses raised, and what directions I might take next. As I worked with the data and began to notice salient ideas or issues, I then worked to connect them to the theoretical constructs I discussed in Chapter 2. Once I determined what these constructs might be— and how they might work—I returned to the data again to engage in another "round" of analysis. Therefore, it was a recursive process as in my writing I moved back and forth between data and theoretical frameworks to reach findings that seemed significant in terms of the questions I asked. The rest of this chapter is devoted to a more thorough explanation of how this analytical process worked.

<center>Analysis of Artifacts</center>

Student Writing

As I stated earlier in this chapter, I identified two artifacts of teaching that served as "windows" through which I looked as I attempted to answer the research questions that guided this study: the three focal students' written narratives and reflections and transcripts made from videotapes of whole-class discussions which were grounded in the written narratives and reflections.

In the next section I will begin with a brief discussion of how my thinking about the research questions became more complex as I engaged in an analysis of individual students' writings and as I read across the texts, seeking to determine what seemed most salient, surprising, or interesting. I also discovered some key concepts that came out of

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this initial analytical process. I returned to the data to discover the relationship between these concepts and the empirical evidence. Therefore, I will also discuss how this process complicated my understanding of theoretical constructs.

Re-Thinking Research Questions

One assumption on which I based this project is that prospective teachers' beliefs about students, teaching, and learning are born of their experiences and that to some extent how they are "positioned" in society determines the nature of those experiences. The intention behind The Narrative Project was that students would utilize narrative and reflective writing to bring those beliefs to a more conscious level. I intended that the students' drawing on academic texts that addressed the issues raised in their writing would lead them to new understandings of how they framed their beliefs as positioned individuals. I also intended that this would, in turn, lead them to consider the implications for their teaching practices, thus minimizing the possibility of a self-perpetuating endeavor. Finally, I expected that as they became more cognizant of their beliefs—and identified the source(s) of those beliefs—they would be more prepared to challenge them.

Working from these assumptions and intentions, the following two research questions guide the analytical process: 1) Whether and to what extent do both the content and processes of The Narrative Project engage prospective teachers in both an exploration and examination of their beliefs about students, teaching, and learning? and 2) Whether and to what extent does The Narrative Project then afford prospective teachers the opportunity to examine the concept of postionality? Even though I initially framed these two questions as separate from one another, my analysis of the three focus

students' written work revealed that this separation is superficial and over-simplified the intimate relationship between the two research questions.

To further explain, the concept of positionality suggests that we all experience the world differently. Put another way, we experience the world as positioned individuals. Moreover, our experiences inform our beliefs and our values; in fact, our beliefs and values may be determined in some ways by our experiences as positioned individuals. While this may seem obvious—or common sense—my initial framing of the two research questions mentioned does not suggest this relationship. When I began my analysis of students' writing, I approached it with the understanding that I was asking two separate questions. However, after looking across the writings of the three focus students involved in this study—Erin, Steve, and Lisa—I determined that they engaged in an exploration and examination of positionality to varying degrees. As I sought to determine how—or why—this was the case, I returned to the theoretical constructs I was working with, complicating my initial understanding of these constructs.

Theoretical Constructs

One of the constructs I used for analysis is "constructed knowledge," based on the work of Belenky et al. (1997). Constructed knowledge occurs when subjective knowledge and objective knowledge are integrated. For my analysis I nominated the students' personal narratives as representations of subjective knowledge and the outside texts as representations of objective knowledge. Therefore, I expected that constructed knowledge would be evidenced in the connections they made between their subjective knowledge or understanding of their experiences and the ideas found in the texts they chose. Another important construct I utilized was "frame of reference," again located in

Belenky, et al., particularly "re-constructed frame of reference," which I understood as new and perhaps more complicated perceptions or understandings of people, ideas, or situations. I believed that this would be evidenced in the interns' statements about students, teaching, and learning. I assumed that as a result of engaging in this project, they would have "revised" beliefs or "reconstructed frames of reference." Through analysis, however, I found that my understanding of these constructs was over-simplified.

First, Belenky et al. (1997) do not set up the different "ways of knowing" as a hierarchy, though some "ways" are only found in more fully developed individuals. Therefore, subjective knowledge is not placed "below" objective knowledge (or the other way around). I understand that both subjective and objective knowledge each have equal value when integrated to construct new knowledge. However, it is more complicated than that. It is not the "status" of each of the ways of knowing; it is the nature of the interaction between the two, *how* they come together that is most significant. Belenky et al. describe it as follows: "Once knowers assume the general relativity of knowledge...they feel responsible for examining, questioning, and developing the systems that they will use for constructing knowledge" (pp. 138-139).

For the purposes of my analysis, these "systems" to which the authors refer was how the students used and read the outside texts (objective knowledge) in conjunction with their narratives (subjective knowledge) within the context of their reflective writing, where they discussed their beliefs about students, teaching, and learning. Moreover, my analysis is about how their writing reveals whether and to what extent they developed these systems and then examined or questioned them. This suggests, therefore, that integration is more than one way of knowing simply "informing" another way of

knowing. It also suggests that the nature of this integration, or coming together, may impact prospective teachers' opportunity to explore and critically examine their positioned experiences and thus their beliefs, in order to construct new knowledge—new "frames of reference"—about students, teaching, and learning. In the next section of this chapter, I further explicate my analytical approach to the students' writing and provide some examples of how I applied these theoretical constructs to their work. In Chapter 4, I present each focal student's experience and sense-making as a detailed "case" and further ground these ideas in excerpts from their writing and my interpretation of that writing.

Analytical Approach to Student Writing

      Characters and narrators: analysis of narrative. Given my concern with both the content and the processes involved in this project, I needed constructs that would allow me to examine both in my students' writing. I decided to look to narrative theory for insights and drew on Chatman's (2000) differentiation between the role of character and narrator, as well as his definitions of implicit and explicit narration. Chatman explicates these constructs as follows:

> It is high time that we introduce a terminological distinction between these two loci of 'point of view': that of the narrator, and that of the character. I propose *slant* to name the narrator's attitudes and other mental nuances appropriate to the report function of discourse, and *filter* to name the much wider range of mental activity experienced by characters in the story world—perceptions, cognitions, attitudes, emotions, memories, fantasies, and the like. 'Slant' well captures, I think the psychological, sociological, and ideological ramifications of the narrator's attitudes, which may range from neutral to highly charged. (I use the term in a totally nonpejorative sense. 'Angle' would work just as well.) The slant may be expressed implicitly or explicitly. When the narrator's slant is explicit—that is, put into so many words—we call it 'commentary,' particularly 'judgmental commentary.' Such commentary should not be confused with the characters' comments, anchored as they are to an observational post *within*

the story world. Attitudes, of course, are rooted in ideology, and the narrator is as much a locus of ideology as anyone else, inside or outside the fiction. The ideology may or may not match that of any of the characters" (p. 98).

I understand Chatman as saying that while both characters and narrators are present in narrative, they serve different functions or have different points of view. Slant is the narrator's point of view and serves a reporting function, while filter relates to character and reflects the character's mental activity; slant reflects attitudes, while filter reflects experience.

That said, I revisited Conle (1999) and her discussions of characters and narrators, focusing primarily on her assertion: "But the real power of agency comes when she is not just chronicling events, but narrating her life in schools, when she can be a narrator as well as a character in her story. Autobiographical work in teacher education has this potential" (p. 20). First, Conle argues that character(s) and narrator(s) abide together in the same "story." On the other hand, she also asserts that while pre-service teachers can take on the roles of both characters and narrators, the work becomes empowering and agentive during the shift from character to narrator.

Simply describing this as a "shift," however, seemed too simplistic, too linear; the word did not seem to capture what was actually occurring—or what needed to occur—if I wanted to describe the nature of the pedagogy that may be necessary for a project such as this. And if I wanted to argue that prospective teachers gained a sense of agency from engaging in this project, then the concepts of character and narrator, and the differentiation between them, seemed important. Therefore, my analysis first required clarifying the nature of characters and narrators and what role(s) they play in narrative.

My analysis of the five students' narratives focused only on those parts of the writing that described personal experiences, and Chatman's (2000) constructs allowed me to consider the content of what the students had written in those narratives, especially that content where they as narrators (as well as authors in this case) commented on their experiences to reveal their "attitudes and other mental nuances" (p. 98). It was my assumption that this commentary was what led the students to identify and/or make explicit the issues in their narratives that seemed most salient, thus moving them in the direction of reflection and analysis. Therefore, Chatman's constructs also allowed me to examine the processes the students went through as they were writing.

Furthermore, I surmised that my students did not make "shifts" from character to narrator as much as they occupied both positions. They were characters or filled the role of filter, especially since they wrote personal narratives. In addition, they were narrators, whether within the body of the narrative itself or within the reflective writing. However, their "narrators' attitudes" were sometimes implicit and at other times explicit, what Chatman calls "commentary" or "judgmental commentary." I will illustrate this process of my analysis of narrative with an example from one student's writing and then discuss how I then worked across all of the students' writings.

One student as a point of reference. Of all my students, Lisa was the one who I believed best understood the project (at least from my "teacher" perspective). It seemed that she ultimately made some important "leaps" from her personal narrative to her students and her classroom. Therefore, I decided to look at Lisa's writing with the assumption that she was a character and from the perspective that as a narrator, she provided a slant that was at times implicit and at times explicit. So I examined Lisa's

writing looking specifically for both implicit slant and explicit slant or commentary. I believed that this initial analysis might help me determine whether or not this might be a fruitful path to take in looking at all the students' narratives. (Lisa's case, discussed in Chapter 4, will provide a detailed analysis of what I learned from taking this approach.)

Lisa's first narrative was a description of an incident that took place when she was in first grade. The students were to record the meaning of the adage "March comes in like a lion but goes out like a lamb" in their composition books, but Lisa did not know what it meant. Her descriptions of herself as she walked to her teacher's desk included words and phrases such as walked slowly, head down, uncertain. She further identified this situation as a "rare occurrence even then." These lines contained both implicit and explicit expressions of Lisa's slant. The phrases she used to describe herself do not explicitly reflect her attitude toward this situation, though they are manifestations of her "uncertainty," an explicit slant—or commentary on the experience. The phrase "a rare occurrence," though explicit, also implied that Lisa had not often—if ever—experienced uncertainty in school tasks. She provided commentary on this later when she described what she was thinking: *Thomsons don't get things wrong! I don't get things wrong! Everyone else is already dooo-oonnneee.*"

Later in the narrative, Lisa described her teacher as Devil-Woman, one scary woman, intimidating as hell, and a monster. When she discovered she had an incorrect answer, Lisa "shuffled back" to her desk and looked at her picture where the lion stared "ashamedly" at her. Lisa's use of the word "shuffled" implied her feelings of embarrassment or shame, though she was more explicit about this in her description of the lion's ashamed stare. She did provide both an implicit and explicit slant on her

attitude toward herself at this point, but she provided straight commentary on her teacher with phrases and words such as: "eagle-eyed response," "Devil-Woman," "intimidating as hell," and "monster."

When I looked at this brief excerpt in light of research question one (see chart on p. 8.), I concluded that Lisa provided a depiction of herself as a learner: she did not get things wrong; she was generally not the last student to complete a task; she was used to feeling certainty about answers to questions. She also expressed her beliefs about teachers, implying that they should not be intimidating or denigrating. Furthermore, she implied that teachers who exhibit this kind of behavior toward students have negative effects on students' ability or willingness to learn in their classrooms.

As I considered Lisa's writing, I concluded that assuming that my students were characters in their own narratives made sense. It also seemed that examining where the students, as narrators, implicitly expressed their attitudes—or where they provided explicit commentary—was a useful way to unearth their beliefs about students, teaching, and learning, one of the questions I sought to answer. Chatman argues that both characters and narrators have attitudes, though the attitudes may be different. If I thought of this in terms of Lisa, her attitude as a character in the narrative was different than her attitude as the narrator representing the experience. As a character she was hurt and confused; however, as the narrator, her attitude was more "highly charged" as she expressed her judgments of her first-grade teacher's behavior toward her.

Although Lisa's did not, some of the narratives included descriptions of events or situations from my students' classrooms. I did not include those portions as part of

this analysis, as I treated those sections as "reflection" and addressed them in my

subsequent analysis of the students' reflective writing.

Conceptions of knowledge: analysis of reflection. My analysis and interpretations

of the students' reflections drew on the work of Belenky, et al. (1997) and their various

conceptions of knowledge, particularly constructed knowledge. This analysis focused on

if and where the students demonstrated one of the characteristics of constructed

knowledge: integrating subjective and objective knowledge, as evidenced in the

connections they made between their understanding of their experiences and the ideas

found in the texts they nominated to inform those experiences.

Another characteristic of constructed knowing according to Belenky et al. (1997)

is "[q]uestion posing and problem posing [as] prominent methods of inquiry" (p. 139).

Therefore, I also looked for where the students posed questions or problems (a primary

method of inquiry in constructed knowing) and seemed to be constructing (or

reconstructing) a frame of reference to help them better understand their teaching

practices, paying particular attention to what they said about students, teaching, and

learning and how they seemed to understand the concept of positionality. My analytical

approach to my students' writing was to try to determine "what was happening," as

opposed to searching for themes. While themes presented themselves throughout the

analysis, my initial intent was not to identify themes and then search for either a presence

or absence of such ideas in the students' writing.

While it could be argued that the distinction between "themes" and "what is

happening" is nothing more than content versus process, this is not necessarily the case.

Taking a "what is happening" approach represents content as well; however, it was not

based on a search for some pre-determined content. Instead, it changed the focus of my

approach to the content, allowing me to be more open to what my students wrote, not

forcing me—in a sense—to either minimize or dismiss certain content contained in the

writing because it did not "fit" preset criteria. Furthermore, this approach allowed for

greater clarity between content and process, in that the process then became a focus on

how "what happened" actually came about.

With these same questions in mind, I then analyzed the reflection that

accompanied Lisa's narrative. I began this analysis by writing a brief synopsis of the

reflection. I identified the readings that Lisa used to inform her reflection, as well as the

"big ideas" that seemed especially salient. I isolated those statements that seemed

specifically related to teachers, students, and learning. Based on what I noted in Lisa's

reflection, it seemed that The Narrative Project did create a space for her to both explore

and examine her beliefs about students, teaching, and learning. Furthermore, it also

seemed to give her the opportunity to examine the concept of positionality. (See Chapter

4 for a more detailed analysis of Lisa's writing). I then engaged in a similar analysis of

the other two focal students' writing.

Examination of students' writing. It seemed logical to first identify what beliefs

the narratives revealed and then determine how those beliefs were connected to the

concept of positionality. If—like Conle (1999)—I asserted that it was this connection

between character and narrator that was transformative, then determining how my

students actually "narrated" their stories seemed like a productive analytical approach for

systematically examining the pedagogy involved in this project. Therefore, to test this

approach I took the first narratives of five potential focal students. I then designed the

following chart and analyzed each of these students' first narratives using the following frame.

Table Two: Heuristic for Narrative Analysis

	Students	Teaching	Learning
Filter: Character			
Slant: Explicit			
Slant: Implicit			

I then examined each student's heuristic and worked to determine what my students were saying—as both characters and narrators—about students, teaching, and learning. When my students' narrations included slant—whether implicit or explicit—about their experiences as students, I decided to generalize their statements as representative of their beliefs of all students. I made this decision because according to Chatman (2000), slant plays a report function and represents the narrator's attitudes, which may be psychological, sociological, or ideological in nature. If—as narrators—they made a statement about themselves as students, I interpreted this as representing their beliefs about students in general—not only as a recounting of their experiences as students. (See Lisa's writing on pp. 20-23 as an example of how slant might reveal beliefs).

Returning to Lisa's writing. As I looked across all the students' writing, I discovered that my hypothesis about Lisa was correct; she was the student who seemed to best understand the project, which was evident in the depth of her analysis as she talked about students, teaching, and learning, as well as positionality. Therefore, I decided to again use her work as a point of reference, against which to compare the other students' writing. I wondered what made her work different from her peers'.

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Through this analysis, I discovered that her writing reflected more insights, primarily because she did not seem to separate her understanding of positionality from her discussions about students, teaching, and learning. She seemed to arrive at this because of how she connected her experiences to the academic texts she chose. Therefore, I returned again to the five students' writing to determine how each of them made use of an outside text, as well as the nature of the connections between that text and their experiences. I came to realize that the quality of these connections influenced the learning the students gained.

Ways of knowing. Working to somehow "name" what I saw happening, I returned to the work of Belenky et al. (1997) and their conceptions of knowledge. After all, one of the goals for this project was for my students to gain new understandings. My students' narratives reflected one type of knowledge; the academic texts represented another type of knowledge. Furthermore, I was looking for a *new* type of knowledge, which came out of the previous two. These authors identified this as constructed knowledge. Once I recognized this, I again returned to the five students' writing to determine whether and to what extent they constructed new knowledge, as well as to locate where and how that occurred in their writing. Additionally, however, I intended that this project would prove transformative for my students in that this new conceptual knowledge would manifest itself in new thinking about students, teaching and learning.

Again, Belenky et al. (1997) helped me to name this with their term "frame of reference," a new way to look at people, ideas, or situations. So I again returned to the students' writing to discover whether or not their writing demonstrated where they had created a new frame of reference for themselves. Finally, I identified this as a "system"

(Belenky et al.), which gives an overall picture of how students used their experiences and academic texts (subjective and objective knowledge) to create new frames of reference. I was able to reach this point only after going through the process of examining students' writing, making some assertions about what I observed in their writing, locating theoretical ideas to explain my observations, and then again testing that by returning to examine their writing.

Re-examining student writing. As a researcher—as opposed to a practitioner— my analysis of my students' writing worked to place that writing within the context of Chatman's (2000) argument. This allowed me to investigate whether shifting from character to narrator was simplistic, linear, limiting, or perhaps even inaccurate. It also seemed to make better sense to make use of Chatman's terms of "filter" and "slant," particularly slant. This enabled me to consider what was happening in the narratives— the various locations my students occupied in their narratives—and moved me beyond the stance of only locating fixed themes.

However, I could not simply ignore the idea of theme, as a central concept is required for all narrative inquiries. Therefore, while I focused on how my students occupied the roles of character and narrator, I also worked to identify where characters' filters and narrators' slants reflected the concept of positionality. Earlier I identified two different understandings of positionality: one suggests that society mediates a person's positonality, and one suggests that a person constructs—or reconstructs her positionality through discourse. Some researchers have argued that students' positionalities are not in place when they enter classrooms; it is not something that individuals passively take on or assume. Instead, they argue that discourse creates or determines positionality.

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Before I began my analysis, I took the stance that positionality was a construct, more specifically, a societal construct as opposed to an individual construct. Individuals act within society and within institutions. So it seems that society and institutions create these "positions" based on factors such as race, class, gender. If this is the case, then discourse—in this case written discourse—held the potential to help students understand the nature of those positionalities and how they have worked on them as individuals. However, I would not assert—as some have—that individuals position themselves through discourse, through the writing of stories. Instead, I have asserted that the writing of stories made those positions more explicit; it made the invisible visible.

This might beg the question: "How do you know that your writing and your students' writing will 'work' in this way?" Dorman, Rosen, and Wilson (2003) draw on the work of James Britton and Donald Murray when they claim that the writer "generates new ideas and discovers new meanings through the act of composing" (p. 37). Conle (1999) connects this to personal writing when she asserts: "...telling the story of my life in autobiographical accounts can serve to make a sense of my life that I have not been aware of before" (p. 15). Therefore, another stance I took before I analyzed the data was that my students were positioned—and experienced being positioned. This stance led me to assume, even before I examined the data, that through the act of writing, they gained new understandings of how aspects of positionality were evident in their experiences, as well as how it had impacted those experiences. It allowed them to make better sense—or more accurately—a new sense of their lives. Therefore, just as I had worked to identify the "new sense" I made of my experiences through writing my own narratives and reflections, I applied that understanding to my interpretations of my students' writing.

Class Discussions

    Initial purposes. My students and I gathered to discuss the narratives and reflections during two class sessions. Initially, I planned to treat each of these as two discrete sessions, assuming that one did not necessarily build on the other. However, reading through the transcripts of these discussions several times, I noticed that the first session was unlike the second. While the content was of course different, it was the differences in the processes of the discussion that seemed most salient. Therefore, while I focused on both the content of my students' writing, as well as how they seemed to construct their writings, my analysis of the class discussions rested primarily on process. This seemed necessary, as this—at least at this time—was a study of my teaching practice, as well as an exploration of what and how my students learned as a result of their engaging in one particular learning opportunity.

    This is also important because it was my initial interest in feminist pedagogy that prompted my designing this project for my students, and the issue of positionality also came out of my first experiences with feminist pedagogy. Therefore, one specific component of this pedagogical problem was my stance as a feminist teacher educator and my desire to guide my students as they examined/critiqued their own positionalities and then moved to consider the implications for their teaching. Drawing on Hollingsworth's (1992) work in particular, this was a pedagogical problem in that a teacher's stance seemed vital to the effectiveness of a project such as this one. My assumption was that without a critical examination of a teacher's stance as part of this project, it became a "course assignment" with an unclear purpose or focus.

My students and I shared our narratives and then considered the implications of those narratives for classroom practice. This represented the communal nature of this component of the project, and provides a context of the learning community in which each of the focus students participated. Furthermore, it was my guiding of this process that suggests how a teacher educator might enact—or embody—a pedagogy. Therefore, analyzing the class discussions as an artifact of my teaching practice enabled me to more systematically examine both my practice—and my stance—as a teacher educator.

Although this was my initial purpose, midway through the study I decided to take away some of the focus on the pedagogical components of this project and to focus instead on the students themselves. Therefore, I intended that my analysis of the class discussions would focus more on the students. However, part of my stance was to work to demonstrate that I perceived of myself as another member of the group, not the teacher who held the final answer or say-so or the instructor who "controlled" the discussion. I realized that I needed a way to examine the discussions that would investigate the group processes as a whole, as well as my moves as a member of that group. I assumed that this would then reveal some pedagogical implications.

Shift in analytical focus. I focused my analysis of the class discussions on the procedures of a connected-knowing group, and what encouraged or impeded the procedures required of such a group. Therefore, in terms of my stance, I worked to discover where I believed my participation in the discussions was effective or where I stood in the way of all of our efforts to become a more connected-knowing group.

For this analysis I drew again on the work of Belenky et al. (1997) who discuss a "mode" of teaching they call "connected teaching." These authors, like hooks (1994)

assert that connected teachers take risks alongside their students; they do not ask their students to risk what they themselves are unwilling to risk. In addition, connected teaching requires teachers to think aloud with their students, as opposed to only revealing the products of their thoughts. "...[B]oth teacher and students engage in the process of thinking, and they talk out what they are thinking in a public dialogue. As they think and talk together, their roles merge" (p. 219). Connected teachers embrace uncertainty and work to develop a community, where neither students nor teachers "act as representatives of positions or as occupants of roles but as individuals with particular styles of thinking" (p. 221). They perceive students on the students' terms, not their own. Therefore, a connected teacher creates an environment hospitable to diversity of opinion and less open to conflict. Finally, the connected teacher values the position of subjective knowing, the unique perspectives and funds of knowledge that each student brings to the class, a knowledge "that is in some sense irrefutably 'right' by virtue of its existence" (p. 222).

Belenky, et al (1997) suggest that women (or in this case pre-service teachers) need opportunities to step back and observe and listen, as well as opportunities to hear themselves think. Certainly interns have plenty of opportunity to watch and listen; however, they have little opportunity to hear themselves think.

> Women's emphasis on beginning to hear themselves think, while
> gathering observations through watching and listening, is the precursor to
> reflective and critical thought...During the period of subjective knowing,
> women lay down procedures for systematically learning and analyzing
> experience. But what seems distinctive in these women is that their
> strategies for knowing grow out of their very embeddedness in human
> relationships and their alertness to the details of everyday life.
> Subjectivist women value what they see and hear around them
> and...[they] are 'gaining a voice' and a knowledge base from which they
> can investigate the world (p. 85).

The knowledge position the authors discuss here (which I alluded to earlier) is that of subjective knowledge, or self-knowledge. The authors argue that watching and listening, combined with self-knowledge, is necessary in order for reflective and critical thought to occur. They imply that for reflective and critical thought to take place, some knowledge of the self—or subjective knowledge is necessary. This position of subjective knowing is not necessarily permanent or fixed; it is not finalized. Instead, it acts as a foundation for new discoveries and further learning, for "reflective and critical thought."

This is similar to hooks's (1994) assertion that personal experience can inform the study of academic material and in turn, that the study of academic material can then lead to students' gaining new and deeper insights into their personal experience. As I have already stated several times, I had hoped that engaging in The Narrative Project would be transformative for my students. And as Casey (1995-1996) argues, "…this transformation is a collective project" (p. 222).

Therefore, through an analysis of the class discussions, I worked to locate both the presence and absence of "connected teaching" in my facilitation of the discussion. For example, I looked for where I either made a statement or asked a question that seemed to move students to think more deeply about a topic or issue. I also sought to locate those times when what I offered to the discussion seemed to either completely shut down the discussion or force students to find a different direction to take. I worked to discover where—and to what extent—I was a participant in the discussion while still supporting my students as they attempted to become a connected-knowing group. At the same time, I also hoped to discover where both my students and I gained new

understandings as we explored together the intersection of subjective and objective knowledge.

One of the procedures of a connected-knowing group that I identified during analysis was positing a genuine question. I characterized a genuine question as one that does not have a readily-apparent answer, that the questioner truly does not know the answer to, or that does not reflect an agenda other than the questioner's desire for further learning. What I discovered is that while a question might possess one of these characterizations, it may not possess all of them. When this is the case, then the question is not really genuine and therefore, will not work toward promoting a connected-knowing group. I did not have this understanding before I began my analysis. However, as I considered what might constitute a genuine question as I examined all of the many questions that were posited during the discussions, I refined this characterization. The following example illustrates this process.

On one occasion, I asked what I thought was a genuine question: "If the more typical or traditional ways to motivate students, such as grades and points or tangible rewards like candy, do not work, then what do we do?" I told the students that I did not know the answer to this question, which was true. But I also took the question further and asked: "If we know that these traditional means of motivation are largely unsuccessful with many students, then how do we—or how can we—go about determining what motivates them?" I identified the problematic aspect of this question as procedural. In other words, it was the motivation behind my asking the question that created a somewhat knotty situation. While my students' response to the question may not have been readily-apparent and while I may not have known how my students would

respond, the question came with an agenda that extended beyond my desire to help my students form a connected knowing group. I was not looking to help them gain access to other people's knowledge or ways of thinking. While the question may have held that potential, my motivation got in the way of its reaching that potential. My implied agenda prevented the question from reaching the status of "genuine." As a result, I impeded an opportunity for more connected knowing and got in the way of my students' learning.

This example demonstrates how I examined my participation in the class discussions. It illustrates the analytical process in which I engaged as I looked at instances where I joined the conversation. However, it also illuminates how I worked between theory and data as I attempted to codify the procedures that would support a certain type of knowing both in and among my students.

Modifying the focus of analysis. Because I wanted to continue with the idea of constructing knowledge that I began when I analyzed the students' writing, I focused on how discussing narratives with peers might contribute to students' knowledge construction. As a result, I decided to minimize the pedagogical focus of the study, as I was primarily concerned with the processes involved in the students' work together. However, another matter that factored into this decision is what I discovered when I read through the transcripts of the students' discussions. I could identify times in the discussions where students seemed to reach new understandings—or frames of reference. At times I seemed to support this process, while at other times I stood in the way of the process. While this certainly suggests pedagogical implications, it nevertheless diminished the pedagogical focus with which this study began.

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For example, during the first discussion, one of the students, Erica, raised a question about students' academic success, specifically teachers' wanting that success for their students more than their students seem to want it for themselves. She wondered when a teacher should let go because she believes she has given all she can. Belinda then seemed to use Erica's question to rethink her own narrative about her own intrinsic motivation, which was a synopsis of various illustrations from her life that reflected her intrinsic motivation. Her narrative was not about teaching per se, but Erica's question seemed to resonate with some of the ideas in her narrative, adding what seemed like a new dimension to Belinda's thinking about teaching. What seemed most significant about this is that Erica's question is what initiated the exchange. Therefore, I speculated about what other processes took place during the discussion that led to these new understandings or frames of reference. And like I did for the students' writing, I returned to Belenky et al. (1997) for more theoretical constructs to help me name these processes or procedures in terms of knowledge.

Connected knowing. What I discovered was the authors' concept of "connected knowing," which is focused on relationship and on members of a group working to connect with each other and with each others' thinking in order to reach new understandings. Members of a connected-knowing group work to gain access to other people's knowledge in order to construct new knowledge. Therefore, I worked to identify the "procedures" that the class (me included) used to gain access to other people's knowledge in order to construct new knowledge. I focused primarily on the nature of questions (explicit) or more exploratory discourse (perhaps implicit questions) and how these either opened up or shut down the opportunity for new learning or for

integration of knowledge with others' knowledge or integrating perspectives with other's perspectives.

After I identified those places in the discussions, I returned to Belenky et al. (1997) to see if my rough "categories" fit with theirs. However Belenky et al. admit that these processes—or categories of procedures—are somewhat ambiguous. So in some ways, my analysis worked to make these procedures somewhat less ambiguous or suggested procedures that teachers might teach, guide, and encourage in order to support students' efforts to become a connected-knowing group. Even though I examined the reasons for my decisions when I entered the discussions, I nevertheless decided to consider these moments in terms of how they either supported or impeded the group's efforts, as opposed to specific pedagogical moves or choices. Therefore, the focus of the analysis became the group's work together, as opposed to the pedagogy I enacted.

Analysis of Interview Data

Analytical Approach to Interview Data

The only data source for how the focus students made sense of The Narrative Project was interviews I conducted with each of them. The questions I asked each student addressed how students understood—or made sense of—the processes involved in the narrative project, as well as how they made sense of the central concept of the study: positionality. (See Appendix C for the complete interview protocol for each student). From the outset of this project, I made many assumptions about what students were learning as a result of engaging in this project. However, I never "tested" those hypotheses to discover whether and to what extent—or how—my students made sense of the processes and content that constituted this project.

Therefore, my framing of the interview questions allowed me to use empirical data to systematically explore my students' sense-making and made it possible for me to gain some insights into students' perceptions and understandings. Moreover, these insights advanced my own thinking about the project, furthering my attempts to challenge some of the assumptions I had made about the efficacy of The Narrative Project in terms of student learning.

My approach to these sessions was to determine what sense my students made of the concept of positionality. However, it was more than whether or not they understood the concept; it also included the nature of that understanding. Therefore, I was not working to determine whether or not their understanding necessarily matched my own.

That said my viewing sessions/interviews with the focus students served several purposes. First and foremost, they enabled me to discover what sense my students made of The Narrative Project as a whole and to what extent their understanding aligned with my own interpretations and hypotheses. In addition, because I did identify goals for the project, viewing a portion of a class discussion and/or talking with these students about their involvement enabled me to discern whether and to what extent they met the intended goals. However, even if they did *not* meet those goals, I remained resolute in my assumption that they still took something away from the project, either positive or negative. The viewing sessions/interviews provided insight into how the project worked for them.

Just as my analysis of the written narratives and reflections was largely interpretive, so was my analysis of students' responses during the viewing sessions/interviews. I worked to discover if students' responses to the questions in the

protocol revealed why students chose a particular topic or topics for writing, as well as how they were thinking during the writing process and what they learned through the process of writing the narratives and reflections. Finally, I endeavored to determine their thoughts on the role the class discussions played in their learning.

I did not differentiate between the nature of students' understanding of the processes involved in narrative writing and the nature of their understanding of the processes required of more reflective, analytical writing. Nor did I consider how these more private processes might lead to understandings that differed from the understandings gained through the more public processes of discussion. Despite my somewhat over-simplified conceptions of the underlying components of the processes involved in this project and my failure to take into account how students might make distinctions between these components, my analysis of their responses revealed that they do not understand process as an umbrella term, as I had initially proposed. Instead, they broke the concept of process (at least as process relates to this project) down into its constituent parts: narrative, reflection, research, listening, and responding, thus complicating the processes of this project. As a result, they were seemingly able to identify those specific components of the project that they found most significant in terms of their learning and their developing conceptual understandings.

For example, Lisa was articulate about what she learned as a result of writing her narratives and reflections such as deeper understandings of her own positionality and greater awareness of how she might unknowingly obstruct students' learning. This learning came about from the more private process of writing. However, the learning she identified as a result of the discussions was somewhat different. The uniqueness of her

peers' narratives revealed to her that even though it seemed that all the students in the class were essentially the same, they were all very different. This, in turn, gave her a greater appreciation for the vast differences between students in her own classroom. She also learned the value of other teachers' reflections for her own learning, which suggested her realization of the value of a community of practice, where all members attend to each others' learning, not just their own. This suggests that Lisa was beginning to understand the value of more connected knowing as she participated in the more public process of discussion, an understanding she may not have reached without this process.

How the students made sense of the individual versus the group processes seemed to most influence how the project impacted their conceptual understanding of postionality and their thoughts on teaching practice. Therefore, examining how they understood each process separately is especially relevant, given my goals for the project.

How students made sense of the writing. Asking students about their writing enabled me to determine the "accuracy" of my own interpretations. In addition, the interviews served to extend the "what is happening" idea to include what students believed was happening and what they learned through the project.

I again refer to Lisa's case as an example. I asserted as I worked through Lisa's writing that she gained new understandings about herself as well as about students, teaching, and learning. I also worked to illuminate the nature of this understanding and argued that Lisa seemed to grasp the concept of positionality. In fact, it was through comparing Lisa's writing to the other students' writing that I came to recognize the relationship between students' understanding of positionality and how they talked about students, teaching, and learning. However, when I talked with Lisa, she asserted that she

had an understanding of positionality before she began this project—at least an awareness of others' positionalities if not her own. She claimed, though, that her engagement with this project caused her to re-think her own positionality or to complicate that positionality in terms of its implications for her teaching. I did not understand this through looking at Lisa's writing; her self-report, however, illuminated this for me and added to my own awareness of what students might gain from The Narrative Project.

How students made sense of discussions. My analysis of the class discussions focused on the procedures of a connected-knowing group, whether and to what extent we acted as a connected-knowing group, and what encouraged or impeded the procedures required of such a group. When I designed the interview protocol, I was still focused on the pedagogy I enacted as part of the project, as I had not completed a full analysis of the class discussions, only the students' writing. And I had not decided to foreground the interactions during the discussion versus focusing on my own teaching. Therefore, when I completed the viewing sessions/interviews, I asked specific pedagogical questions, not questions about how the group itself worked or about connected knowing. Because of that, unfortunately I do not have any reports from students about connected knowing. Nevertheless, I did gain some insights into students' perceptions of what they gained from the discussions.

For example, all three of the students expressed their surprise at what they learned about their peers from listening to their narratives, and this was learning that they had not anticipated. In retrospect, I realized that I believed this would happen (an example of intuitive knowledge). However, because all three focal students alluded to this, it represented an example of the nature of what their self-reports revealed. These represent

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knowledge I gained that I would not have realized without these viewing sessions/interviews.

A sense of agency. I also sought to know whether or not the discussion process worked to give them a new—or deeper—understanding of self and whether or not it gave them a greater sense of agency, or was in some way transformative. As this study provided no empirical data from their teaching practices, the nature of the transformation relied on the students' self-reports. On the other hand, it was still my intention that their responses to the "scenarios" in the protocol would illuminate—to some extent—how they believed they might approach some "common" classroom realities in more agentive ways.

Again, I assumed that The Narrative Project worked in such a way. Therefore, I looked for examples of where students' actions in similar situations suggested they sensed some "power" within them. Instead of using Lisa as an example of this, I will instead refer to Erin. Erin talked about one particular student who was struggling in her class. She acted on her belief that this student was like her. However, her choices of action were not as effective as she had hoped. She came to realize that even though this student may have been like her—or had experiences like hers—he was also unlike her in significant ways. She asserted that looking back at what she learned about herself through The Narrative Project afforded her some insights into why her actions may not have been especially successful and what she would do the next time she was faced with a similar situation. This student was a "failing student" like the failing students my own interns had talked about so many times before. Instead of acting as if she could do nothing to help this student, however, Erin was able to explain the choices she made in

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her work with this student, the results of those choices, and what she might do differently in a similar situation. Without instances such as the one Erin recounted, I would have no way of knowing whether or not the project impacted my students' thinking—and possible actions—in any substantive way.

My analysis of the interview data led me to consider some of the assumptions I made, primarily assumptions about how I believed my students understood the processes involved in the project, particularly the role of story and the role of reflection/analysis. Their understandings of each of these seemed to influence how they understood the concept of positionality. Re-examining "process," as well as exploring the different roles that story and reflection play, point to the central arguments I make in Chapter 6 about what and how my students learned from this project.

Conclusion

I have identified this study as a narrative inquiry. While my analysis of the artifacts of my teaching may not have rested on a specific theory, or worked to "prove" any theory, the design of The Narrative Project (as part of my pedagogy) rested on theoretical constructs. I would further argue that just as Smith (2005) asserts that institutional ethnography is a "method of inquiry," so in this case was my narrative inquiry a "method of inquiry," as I was emphasizing research as discovery. I was not testing a hypothesis, per se, though I did identify learning goals for my students and was seeking to determine whether and to what extent the content and processes involved in the pedagogy I chose worked toward those goals. However, I attempted *not* to hypothesize about this as a certainty—or a foregone conclusion—that I was attempting to "disprove." If I made any hypothesis, it was that students did not "leave" this learning

opportunity having learned nothing. They inevitably learned *something*. Therefore, I was seeking to discover what they *did* learn and to examine that learning both with and against what I had hoped they would learn.

In addition, I was also working to make my intuitive thinking more explicit, to make my tacit knowledge more visible. I hypothesized that this knowledge existed, but I did not provide a hypothesis as to what that knowledge might entail. Instead, I wanted to discover that through the research process. Therefore, Smith's (2005) conception of "method of inquiry," was again a useful construct as I considered how to approach the artifacts of my teaching practice.

The concept of "method of inquiry" (Smith, 2005) continues to resonate with my approach in this study in that I did not begin with a predetermined conceptual framework that "regulated" how I interpreted the artifacts of my teaching. I discovered a framework, drawn primarily from Belenky et al. (1997), as I worked with the data. In addition, it also seems that "exploration and discovery" were key in that while I had some ideas—or perhaps more accurately—desires for how this project "played out" for my students, I really did not know the sense they made of the project. I was seeking to *discover* their sense-making.

This is relevant for my study in that my students'—and my—experiences were not the primary object of investigation. Their experiences in the classroom (or problems) and my "problem of practice" acted as the impetus for the project that was the basis of this study; they set the "problematic" (Smith, 2005). One facet of the substance of this "problematic" was my students' beliefs and attitudes about students, teaching, and learning, as evidenced in how they talked about their experiences in the classroom. The

other facet of the "problematic" was how I decided to address the issue in my teaching and what I experienced as I worked to guide and support these pre-service teachers' learning.

Furthermore, both my students' personal experiences and mine—as evident in the narratives we wrote based on those personal experiences—served as a means to "get at" the "problematic." None of these experiences were the *object* of investigation. The object of the investigation was The Narrative Project itself, which was motivated by my students' classroom experiences as well as my experience of teaching them. And one portion of The Narrative Project was my students' written narratives. Again, though, their experiences—as described in their narratives—were not the object of investigation either. What was the object of investigation was what my students learned as a result of their engagement in the work (both the content and processes) that comprised The Narrative Project; how my students made sense of that learning; and finally, how this project provided the means for me to make my intuitions more explicit—or to make the invisible aspects of my practice more visible. So while these experiences—or "problems"—may have motivated the inquiry, they did not "define the direction" of the research. Instead, what defined the direction of the research were my understandings of my students' writing, my understanding of the processes my students engaged in both publicly and privately, and the sense my students made of both the content and processes involved in the project. Finally, the pedagogical implications this study raised for both the curriculum and pedagogy(ies) for teacher education may act as "professional knowledge building."

The following three chapters examine the data generated during this study, both the artifacts of teaching and the data from the viewing session and interviews. Chapter 4 introduces the three focal students: Erin, Steve, and Lisa, offering each of them as a "case." Chapter 5 examines what took place during the class discussions and draws on the work of the entire group and in a sense works to contextualize each of the three focal students within this group. Chapter 6 returns to the three focal students and presents their understandings of what they learned as a result of their individual work, as I describe and interpret it in Chapter 4, and as a result of their participating in and with the group, as portrayed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 4

New Frames of Reference:

Using Narrative and Reflective Writing to Construct Knowledge

Introduction

One of the primary data sources for this study was the interns' written narratives and reflections. In this chapter I present a detailed case for each of the three focus interns, Steve, Erin and Lisa. Although this chapter will show that all three interns stated beliefs about students, teaching, and learning, as well as worked to connect those beliefs to personal experiences, only Lisa examined the concept of positionality beyond a limited extent. She explored the relationship between a teacher's positionality (as illuminated through narrative and reflection) and her beliefs about students, teaching, and learning. Furthermore, she seemed to accomplish this through her *use* or *reading* of her chosen texts. For Steve and Erin, using an academic text (or for that matter, perhaps any outside text) to simply support the ideas put forth in writing, resulted in a limited exploration of the concept of positionality. However, Lisa's use of an outside text to problematize both experiences and beliefs led to a much deeper examination of how positionality shapes experiences, influences beliefs, and thus impacts teaching practice. I conclude the chapter with a cross-case analysis that provides insights regarding the constraints and affordances of The Narrative Project. It also points out the challenges or issues that may inherently be a part of a project such as this. Finally, the chapter ends with a consideration of the insights I gained about how prospective teachers grapple with complicated concepts such as positionality.

Overview of Cases

Each case includes the following: 1) a brief portrait of each student as a way to introduce her/him; 2) the assertions I make about the student's body of written work; 3) a summary of the student's narratives; 4) an analysis of the student's narratives; 5) an analysis of the student's reflections, focusing on the student's use of her/his chosen outside text, woven with my findings in relation to the two research questions based on my analysis of the students' written work. The cases provide a view of each intern's unique experience.

<div align="center">Erin</div>

Portrait

I identified Erin as my "resistant" student. She was not resistant to the idea of the project, but she was resistant to participating. She felt that the issues in her narratives were too personal to share. Given the personal nature of this project as a whole, combined with the students' knowledge that sharing their narratives was a part of the project, I identified her hesitance (being nowhere close to malicious) as resistance. Throughout the year, however, Erin demonstrated that she was a diligent, earnest, and conscientious student. She took on extra responsibilities at her placement, including starting a writing club that had not previously existed at her school. She also took advantage of professional development opportunities offered at her school and by the National Council of Teachers of English; in fact, she presented at NCTE's fall convention that year. I characterized Erin as a reflective and thoughtful practitioner who was continually open to new experiences and learning opportunities.

Limited Engagement with—and Literal Interpretation of—The Narrative Project

Erin's case depicted a student who took the parameters of this project quite literally and therefore made few of the types of connections I hoped for. Her writing seemed to move primarily in a linear fashion: narration, reflection, implications, as opposed to illustrating a more recursive process, or more accurately, a process where she examined the "systems" that she had used to construct new knowledge of either herself or her understandings about students, teaching, and learning. In other words, it seemed that she looked at the components of the assignment as sequential steps to be completed, kind of like a building block approach. This was reflected in how she used the texts she located to inform classroom practice but did not use them to rethink her own experiences, integrating both to reach new understandings. On the other hand, she posited several questions, indicating her desire to gain a deeper understanding of her teaching practice.

In addition, Erin's writing demonstrated how she utilized the theme of overcoming obstacles as a means to explicate her view of the world, specifically her being overweight when she was young, her shy nature, and her family's dire financial circumstances. This worldview included the value of an education and working hard. On the other hand, Erin's case portrays a student who tended to not challenge her beliefs and values through careful examination and through the integration of subjective knowledge with objective knowledge. While this could also be attributed to "resistance," this conclusion did not seem consistent with Erin's general attitude, which was one of openness to new learning.

Summary of Narratives

Erin's first narrative did not focus on any specific incident. The following statement summed up the nature of Erin's narrative: "When I was in elementary school

my teachers always said how quiet I was and that they wished I would speak up. I guess I've always been shy. I'm not sure why I was always so shy. Looking back I've started to gather some theories on what could have led to my shyness." From there, Erin described various incidents or situations that could have led to her being shy, particularly her being considerably overweight and her parents' going bankrupt. During her middle school years, she lost the weight and became more involved at school; and this lasted throughout high school. She also wrote about the kind of home her parents worked to provide for her throughout these periods of her life. Still she was shy, a continued reality and struggle for Erin. Her narrative concluded with a brief discussion of a situation with a student in her classroom who was shy and whom she wished to draw out more.

Erin's second narrative was titled: I'm from "education is everything" from "the way to get ahead, to have it 'better,' is hard work and education." She recounted some of the struggles and challenges she faced as she ended high school and why her parents, particularly her mother, were so determined that she obtain a college education. Like the first narrative, the second narrative was more thematically driven, in that it began with an idea: that of facing "obstacles." She recounted some of the obstacles she faced and how she worked to overcome some of those obstacles. She ended her narrative with a brief description of an incident with a student she was tutoring while an undergraduate and with a description of a frustration from her internship. Both of these brief anecdotes belied her frustration with students who did not realize how privileged they were or students who did not—or would not—try and therefore, threw away opportunities. (To view Erin's full texts, see Appendix D).

Analysis of Narratives

Weight, shyness, and finances. Erin's first narrative began with a reality she faced as a child:

> In third grade I gained weight. I got fat pretty quick. I went from being a cute kid to being enormous. So between making odd friends, being teased about friends, and gaining weight, I wasn't exactly a social butterfly in or out of class...I was a fat elementary student, the number one reason I was a social outcast and my family didn't have any money, the number two reason I was an outcast.

Erin claimed that the ramification of her being overweight was that she was not exactly a social butterfly, or more forcefully, she was a social outcast. Furthermore, she believed that her parents' financial situation contributed to her status as an "outcast" at school. She suggested that being a social butterfly was an indication of some kind of higher social standing both in and out of school, and emphasized that with the term "social outcast," which carries a much more negative connotation. Therefore, she implied that her situation was not positive; her weight and her socio-economic status carried negative implications for her at school, though she did not identify those implications. However, when she talked about her life at home, she focused more on her parents' working to maintain a tension-free environment, despite these challenges.

Safety and security. Erin's writing about her parents' financial situation attended more to how they approached this situation:

> In third grade my parents went bankrupt...When my parents went bankrupt, there could have been tensions in our house, but I don't remember them. My parents have always kept it together for us. I never ever heard yelling in my house. It was peaceful and calm. We were a close-knit family...In all honesty, my family's financial situation probably brought us together, since it would influence our school years. A survival technique, I suppose.

Erin articulated what she believed her parents did for both her and her siblings: they continued to make their home peaceful and calm, despite the pressures and anxiety of

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financial hardship. Furthermore, she seemed to suggest her belief that children's

successfully overcoming these obstacles, such as a serious weight issue or financial

difficulties, requires a safe and secure home environment.

Changes. Despite these circumstances during her elementary years, Erin

indicated that some changes occurred when she entered middle school:

> I began to believe I should do something about my weight issue. So, I
> exercised a lot. I lost 50 lbs in my seventh grade year and in eighth grade
> I ran track. I started to get involved and I was able to play an instrument
> in the school orchestra. By high school, I got even more involved in
> activities. This led to my opening up and not being so shy. I had friends,
> but not in every class. But, I had found a nitch. I made friends and was
> social. Money issues didn't hold me back. Well, they didn't exactly hold
> me back before, but they did contribute to my shyness and now I was
> opening up. I challenged myself in various avenues, so much so that I was
> a performer, sang solos, took leadership positions in clubs, and had several
> friends I spent time with.

Erin was explicit regarding her decision about her weight: she simply stated that she

believed she should do something about it, though she did not connect this directly to her

increased involvement at school. In addition, she previously implied that her shyness

was also problematic in some way, a negative trait she needed to eradicate or conquer.

Therefore, she suggested that her becoming somewhat less shy was an outcome (though

perhaps unintended) of her "big" decision to lose weight and subsequent "small"

decisions to increase her involvements at school.

One interesting phrase that Erin used in this excerpt is: "I challenged myself."

This implied that even though Erin made these decisions to become more involved and to

take advantage of new and varied opportunities such as singing, playing an instrument,

sports, and leadership responsibilities, it still was not necessarily easy for her. It

suggested that her underlying shyness was still there but that she pushed herself anyway.

Though Erin did not reveal this, I assumed that she must have continued to feel—as a result of her parents' efforts—safe and secure. Challenging yourself involves taking risks and perhaps being "okay" with the idea that you might not be successful. Therefore, I concluded that her continued sense of security inspired her confidence and her desire to engage in new experiences. Erin's second narrative continued some of the ideas she raised in her first narrative, focusing more on the consequences of her parents' financial hardships.

Education and "getting ahead." The following excerpt opened Erin's second narrative:

> "So, what's your plan? Are you going to college or getting a job or what?" she attempted to ask gently, but the underlying push was clear in her voice. My mother's blunt inquisition over why I hadn't finished filling out my college applications may seem a normal question to anyone else, but when she asked me what I was doing, it was a shock to me...After all, mom knew that I was going to college (or at least I thought she did) as she was the one that instilled her beliefs about education in me...When I dragged my butt on college applications, she got on my case with questions that sounded like a firing squad because I knew that if I didn't go to college I would be the failure...because my mother taught her children that education is everything and the way to get ahead to have it better, is hard work and education. Again and again, we'd hear that the way to go beyond what we had growing up and to build a better life for ourselves was through education.

Erin provided explicit narration when she stated that her mother's question was a "shock" to her. She explained why: she was convinced that her mother knew she was going to college; her mother had instilled her beliefs about education in Erin. She was also clear about why her mother valued education: it was the way to "get ahead" and "have it better." In fact, Erin's use of the phrase "again and again" made it clear that the topic of a college education—and what it affords a person—was often raised in her home, thus consistently reinforcing its significance and value. Furthermore, Erin was explicit about

the feelings of failure that would ensue should she decide to not attend college. Even though her mother did not state—or even suggest—that Erin's not going to college *should* make her feel like a failure, Erin implied such a choice would result in those feelings nonetheless.

Although Erin was explicit about the feelings of failure, she was also providing an implicit statement about the true value her mother seemed to have placed on education: *without* a college education, it is *impossible* to get ahead and have it better. This also suggested that perhaps in the past her mother may have made mention of the "failure" that resulted from other people's not going to college. In many ways her parents' beliefs made sense, given their financial struggles as described in her first narrative, though Erin was not explicit about this.

Erin provided further implicit narration in this excerpt through her use of the phrases "attempted to ask gently" and "underlying push." She seemed to believe that even though her mother was trying to be gentle in her question, it still reflected a demand: that she (Erin) was expected to complete the college applications.

Financial struggles revisited. Erin then included quite a lengthy section where she recounted an experience she had during her third grade year: as a result of her family's bankruptcy, they had to move out of their city home and into a country trailer.

> Money was tight. I learned to watch how my money was spent and I saved almost all the money that I earned. My mother always told us to study and end up in a better economic place than she did...Money issues, as well as my mom's love of education, led to my deep commitment and appreciation for education. I get frustrated when others don't know what they have or when they seem to throw away opportunities for learning and don't work hard.

Erin's narration communicated how much this event upset her, even at such a young age. But it also pointed to the residual effects of such a situation, in that it continued to dictate how she managed her own finances. In addition, she was clear about her mother's admonitions: study and go to college so that you do not experience what I have experienced. Erin further developed these ideas in each of her reflections.

Analysis of Reflections

Reflection one. In her first reflection Erin began to talk about childhood obesity. She chose an article entitled: "Weighing in on the Issue of Childhood Obesity" by Lynn-Garbe and Hoot (2004). She referred to a line in this article that discusses the stigma some cultures place on overweight children, identifying them as "lazy, stupid, slow, and self-indulgent" (p. 70) when she wrote:

> I don't see this as being factual, most likely because I had the experience and knew that being fat did not mean I was slow or stupid. However, this is an issue that very clearly led to my shy disposition. Physical appearance, which is huge for adolescents, contributes to their student behavior.

In this excerpt Erin was talking about students' physical appearance and how it affects their behavior in school. She used her own personal experiences to inform her understanding of the text she chose and concluded that despite the stigma that some cultures place on obesity—and the assumptions people may make about children because of their weight—she knew from firsthand experience that these assumptions did not necessarily represent reality, namely *her* reality. Erin's experiences caused her to disagree with the author's assertions, to read the article more critically. However, she did not attempt to use this article to extend her explorations of—or to develop new insights into—her own personal experiences.

Erin then talked about how her weight led to her shy disposition and drew on

Garbe's (1990) article "Water the Shrinking Violets: Teaching Shy Students," where

Garbe asserts that because shy children seldom volunteer, are hesitant, and exhibit a lack

of confidence, teachers perceive them as having less potential for academic success. Erin

did not make any type of connection between her experiences and this text. Instead, she

moved straight to the classroom and used the article to support her admonition for

teachers to consider how students' physical appearance might affect them in the

classroom, particularly how shy students experience the classroom, specifically in

"voicing their responses."

It is these concerns that seemed most salient to Erin. She claimed that looking

back on her experiences raised several issues for her, making her wonder about the

variety of experiences that her students "bring to the table." She also asserted that

writing her narrative raised the following questions about teaching:

> --Do students have to speak up in class?
> --What is so wrong with being somewhat shy?
> --What about my students' background influences them in class?
> --How do groups form in classes?
> --How does gender influence our discussions?
> --Girls and boys are interested in one another; they must have days
>   when they don't want to feel stupid about sharing an idea,
>   so why would we want them to share?
> --Physical appearance can contribute a lot to students' work in
>   class.
> --What about social dynamics?
> --What about the people that influence their lives outside of school?

Positing questions for inquiry indicated an attempt to construct new knowledge. And

Erin claimed that these questions came out of her consideration of her own experiences

and that writing her narratives had led to discoveries about teaching. However, she did

not articulate whether or to what extent the outside texts contributed to this list of

questions. Nor did her statements suggest that she engaged in any critical analysis of her narratives—in combination with these outside texts—in order to challenge her beliefs about students, teaching, and learning or to explore issues around positionality.

Erin further claimed that she does not expect all of her students to feel comfortable talking in class. She does not expect them to always be "on." However, she does believe that she holds high expectations for her students and varies classroom activities so that students "can become more comfortable with whom they are as students, and in their interactions with other students." She seemingly believed that holding high expectations and varying activities does indeed help students to become more comfortable with both themselves and with others.

In her narrative Erin said that she was not a social butterfly. This combined with her stating that she wants students to become more comfortable with who they are, suggested that perhaps she had not been comfortable with herself either. Therefore, it seemed that Erin attributes shyness to a discomfort with the self, as well as a discomfort within certain situations. Or perhaps a discomfort with the self results in this situational discomfort. Either way, Erin used her narrative to construct new understandings about the nature of shyness in students—or perhaps the sources of that shyness—in order to identify implications for her teaching practice. Unfortunately, she did not seem to use this new understanding to illuminate her own experiences or to explore how her experiences have shaped her beliefs.

In the following excerpt Erin continued in her attempts to identify implications for teaching:

> Yet sometimes because I am comfortable with myself, I find it easy to be
> in my life and harder to step out and see my students' lives… even my

students know that I hold this shyness. I guess I can't escape it, no matter
how hard I try. Perhaps that is the mutual understanding of a safe
classroom environment. We consider all of the stories that enter a room
and meet one another where we are, while we challenge one another.

Related to this, Erin also wrote: "As a teacher, I want to meet my students where they are

and challenge them to go further." I interpreted these excerpts as another illustration of

Erin's working to apply her own experiences—in combination with the ideas found in her

chosen texts—to classroom practice. Although Erin remained steadfast in her

convictions that her experiences were inconsistent with what she found in the texts she

chose, this excerpt suggested her realization that her students' "stories" are not

necessarily the same as hers. Therefore, teachers need to meet students where they are

and help students to be comfortable with themselves and others, while still holding them

to high expectations and challenging them to "go further."

However, again, Erin did not use this understanding to rethink her own

experiences and her unique positionality within the context of those experiences. It was

this failure to turn her experiences back on themselves in light of new understandings that

eliminated the possibility of a more critical examination of those experiences to consider

how they have thus influenced her beliefs about students, teaching, and learning and

therefore, impacted her teaching practice.

Reflection two. While in her first reflection Erin identified the need for high

expectations, in her second reflection she worked to explain why she believes this is

important. She began as follows:

Growing up in a lower social class has influenced the ways in which I
view others that are economically not where they want to be in life, or
where society says they should be. Characteristics of being ambitious,
dedicated, motivated, and driven, are far more important than any status
one holds. My experience of having to work hard for what I wanted has

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led to high expectations for myself, which I now put on my students as well.

In this excerpt Erin explained how her socio-economic status influenced her current values and gave her the drive to succeed. Because she has held high expectations for herself, which have "paid off," she seemed to believe it is the case for her students as well and therefore holds them to the same high expectations she holds for herself.

Erin drew on an article by Anna Quindlen (2003), where Quindlen debunks the idea of "pulling one's self up by the bootstraps" and calls it a myth. Within this article, Quindlen cites Shulman's book *The Betrayal of Work* (2003), that includes the following statistic: one in four of American workers earn an income that places them at the government's poverty level for a family of four. Erin referred to one of Shulman's claims (as cited in the Quindlen article), where Shulman states that the people who hold these jobs are considered low-skilled workers, despite the fact that they are better educated than workers who have held similar jobs in the past.

Erin continued the pattern she established in her first reflection: she did not use the text to re-examine her own experiences. She seemed entirely convinced that because her own ambition, dedication, motivation, and drive—coupled with the high expectations she held for herself—allowed her to "get ahead," then it is possible for others to do the same. At times this may indeed be the case, but she chose to dismiss the positioned nature of her experiences and thus refused to acknowledge the author's argument. Such an integration of subjective and objective knowledge might have afforded her the opportunity to explore the concept of positionality if she had questioned how it is that she had managed to "get ahead" while others have not been so fortunate. Instead, the

following excerpt, which relates to the classroom, pointed to her continued belief that getting ahead is a possibility for everyone.

> While I grew up believing in this bootstrap American dream of moving to a higher social status, what I took away from that experience was the need for students to immediately target their interests and get involved to learn more about those interests, so that they are engaged and narrow interests for future plans.

What I find interesting about this is that it reinforces the notion that she was not going to use the text to re-examine her own experiences. It seemed that she did not want to challenge her own subjective knowledge in the face of both Quindlen's and Shulman's arguments.

My understanding of both Quindlen's and Shulman's arguments is that despite hard work—and education—more and more people still hold low-skilled jobs, making the American dream increasingly difficult to achieve and leaving the idea of the "bootstrap" at the level of a myth. Rather than work to consider how it was that she was able to succeed, despite these realities, Erin instead claimed: "And while the poverty level may at times seem static, I still believe that the individual can make a difference in their life based on their own hard work." It seems that she was "listening" to what these writers were saying; however, she was unable to critically examine her own experiences and work to reconcile them with these claims that ran counter to her own beliefs.

Erin's belief in the value of hard work and education—combined with her drive to get ahead—did lead her to pose a question related to her teaching practice:

> I believe students need to learn the value of hard work and earn an education to have any form of change or social mobility in their individual lives. These expectations are placed on them based on the ideal that all students need to work hard and learn to succeed in society. I wonder why some students do not do the work. I can't understand not meeting class requirements.

Although Erin posed this question, she did not work to answer it. Her frame of reference remained unchanged throughout the reflection; she seemed unable to examine why she was able to succeed, despite the "odds" that are cited in the text she chose, and then reconstruct a frame of reference that might allow her to examine why it is that students might "not do the work." Instead, she continues to believe that hard work and an education will "automatically" lead to change and social mobility because that is what she experienced. Given these experiences, as recounted in her narratives, the deeply-embedded nature of Erin's beliefs and work ethic makes sense.

Although Erin continued with some of these same ideas as she concluded her reflection, she also raised some different issues:

> As an educator that grew up with the bootstraps plan and with an awareness that the level of skills needed for entry jobs has been increasing, there are two major implications for students. First, students need to learn about people from different statuses. This may allow for diverse interactions to take place, as well as a sensitivity to diversity that often isn't as visible as others. Second, students need to be given challenging material to benefit their future. They need to work hard to have skills for entry-level jobs; therefore, we as educators must constantly challenge our students. I believe that this is directly connected with my high expectations, as well as connection of course material to student lives.

Like in her first reflection, Erin once again stressed the need for teachers to challenge their students. And like the first reflection, she did not articulate what this means and did not relate it to any specific classroom practices. On the other hand, she did state why this is important: "to benefit their future…[and] to have skills for entry level jobs." Like when her mother cautioned her, however, Erin did not articulate the relationship between these entry-level jobs and the idea of social mobility—or the "bootstrap plan"—a primary theme running through this reflection.

On the other hand, Erin raised one new idea that suggests she at least considered how others may be different than her when she pointed to the need for "sensitivity to diversity that often isn't as visible as others," specifically the diversity that arises from social class differences. However, she did not extend this to the idea that differences exist even among individuals who share the same socio-economic status. Perhaps these were ideas or issues that may have been stressed throughout her teacher preparation program; therefore, she felt a need to at least mention them here. Or these may be "new" questions or problems that occurred to Erin but that she chose not to pursue to any greater extent, as other issues seemed more salient. Regardless of these explanations, this was the first instance in the reflection (despite its being in her concluding paragraph) that Erin hinted at constructing a new frame of reference, as she seemingly attempted to move beyond her initial understandings and to acknowledge that her experiences do not necessarily hold true for others.

Steve

Portrait

Steve was a non-traditional student. He was considerably older than most of the other students. Because he looked as young as many of the students, most of his peers did not realize his age. In order to support his family, Steve held a full-time job during his internship year.

However, of all of my students, Steve was the most "empowered." He would ask to adapt course assignments to meet his specific needs or to align them more closely with what he identified as his learning needs. He was also the one who most often and most loudly challenged the curriculum of his teacher preparation program, often expressing

dissatisfaction with his teacher education coursework and identifying what he perceived

as gaps in that coursework. In addition, the theme of "too theoretical" and "not practical"

ran through his course assignments, his contributions to class discussions, and his

conversations with me. On the other hand, he often apologized to me for his "rants" (to

borrow his word). Needless to say, when he shared during class discussions, his

comments focused on events or situations in his classroom, specific instructional ideas,

and observations of his mentor teacher or others in his building.

Despite all of this, he completed all of his work with no complaints and met all

course and assignment requirements. However, his work did not always reflect the same

depth of thought as some of his peers' work. I would not "label" Steve as resistant,

though I would say that he was dismissive if he could not identify the value (in his eyes)

of a task, assignment, or project.

Narrow Approach to Teacher Preparation and The Narrative Project

Like Erin, Steve seemed to understand this project as a linear—as opposed to

recursive—process, which means that like Erin, he minimized the extent to which he was

able to make significant connections between objective knowledge and his own

subjective knowledge, leading to his constructing new knowledge. Furthermore, he

seemed to understand it as a task to complete, as opposed to an opportunity to learn how

to engage in an ongoing examination of both himself and his teaching practice. In

addition, Steve seemed to perceive his experiences as "givens" that represented an

unchanging reality, as opposed to events or situations that could be understood differently

upon further examination or that with the help of more objective knowledge might lead to

new understandings of both the self and the world. However, this would have proven

especially challenging for Steve as he had little use for "objective" knowledge because he saw it as primarily theoretical and either loosely related or totally unrelated to "real-life" contexts and situations. Because of Steve's more narrow approach to this project, he minimized—perhaps eliminated—the possibility to explore the concept of positionality.

Although Steve was primarily dismissive of more theoretical knowledge, he remained quite firm in his understanding of teachers' responsibilities. Furthermore, he seemed to have quite a dogmatic attitude about this, as he couched his statements regarding these responsibilities in language that suggested what teachers "ought to" do. His writing bore out that he had reached these conclusions based on his personal experiences in school. However, Steve extensively drew on these experiences in his diligence to empathize with students in order to better understand how they experience school. His own negative experiences seemed to be his primary motivation, and he worked to articulate how this then impacted his teaching practice.

Summary of Narratives

Steve began his narrative by recounting a meeting with a childhood friend who "had just received 25 years in jail for his fourth conviction in drug sales." He then described his relationship with this friend and the sadness he felt during their last time together before his friend began his sentence. Steve continued his narrative: "So here I am, the opposite of an atypical college graduate student and I'll do my best to give you…a succinct version of 'my story' to…understand how I got to where I am today." He then provided a chronology of how he came to be in this particular teacher preparation program.

Steve's second narrative was not really a narrative. He used one specific incident from high school (having the same teacher his sister had in a previous year and being able to submit all of her work as his own) as a springboard for discussing his beliefs about teaching. (To view Steve's full texts, see Appendix E).

Analysis of Narratives

History. Steve's narrative began with his recounting a meeting with an old high school friend. He seemed to use this anecdote to show where he had come from, perhaps as a contrast to where he is now or to contextualize the significance of where he is now. He wrote: "...I was in the process of turning my life around," which suggests that he perhaps had undergone—and continued to undergo—significant changes in his life. This worked to set up the rest of the narrative, which continued with the chronology of his story I referenced earlier.

Steve's invitation to his audience (in this case me and hopefully his peers) to empathize with him was an interesting move. It suggests his belief that he is different from his peers in some significant way, though he did not articulate why that is. Instead, his invitation suggested his belief that his audience would "figure out" why he is different by the end of his "story." What is particularly interesting about this is that a key aspect of this project was to get students to look at their life experiences and thus, consider how they may be unlike the students they teach. Here, Steve's use of the phrase "opportunity to empathize with me and understand" implies that he knew he was unlike his peers.

Fear. As Steve told his story, he wrote about how the only people who knew he was enrolled in this particular program were his boss and his wife. He continued:

> Friends, family and co-workers frequently asked me why my schedule at
> work kept changing and why I was so busy, so I would just beat around

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the bush and somehow change the subject. For the first time in my life I realized why I never tried in high school and got into drugs and alcohol...FEAR. I always had an excuse why I didn't try in school, take your pick: it's boring, when will I ever use this crap, and the ever popular...I have better things to do. But the truth was, I was afraid, and this was the same reason I didn't tell anybody I was in college at that time.

Steve's narration provided an explicit explanation for what motivated his actions and decisions: fear. However, it was unclear when Steve arrived at the realization of how fear had impacted his life, whether it was at the time of the story itself or when he narrated this story. But Steve's writing also suggests that he wanted—or perhaps needed—to understand himself. He seemed to want to know why he made the choices that he made, why he did not succeed in school, why he was hesitant to tell anyone he was going to college.

He described the nature of the three years before he was accepted into the teacher preparation program as "a certain crazy string of events...that should have told me 'I can accomplish anything if [I] set my mind to it.'" This suggests that feelings of fear still plagued Steve, as he implied that he did not believe he could accomplish whatever he set his mind to accomplish. Based on Steve's recounting of some of the events of his life, this belief seems reasonable. However, in looking back at these events from his present perspective, he seems to be saying that these events *should* have led him to believe this; yet he did not. To me this implies how deeply the feelings of doubt and fear were embedded in Steve; yet he did not explicitly acknowledge this.

Loss. At this point in his educational career, Steve was only weeks away from being a certified teacher. He seemed to know that he was capable of accomplishing his goals, so he wrote about a new issue:

I am almost finished with my certification and contemplating when and where I will get my Master's degree. Meanwhile, I can see an uncomfortable feeling in most of my family's eyes at family get-togethers because they feel intimidated with me being a college graduate. The awkwardness is easy for me to recognize because I used to have the same odd feeling around college graduates. It's a mixed feeling of wondering where you are, could be, will be, and being disappointed in the final analysis.

Steve identified what he sees in his family members: their discomfort with his new status as "educated" since he was the first member of his family to earn a college degree. On the other hand, he implied his feelings of loss related to his completion of this portion of his education and his consideration of further advancing that education. He had lost an "easy feeling" with his family members, something he enjoyed at one time and would have perhaps still liked to enjoy if it were possible.

Fear in others. Steve's narrative seemed to lead him to the realization that his fears, particularly his fear of failure, hampered him in some ways. He then provided the following list of fears that he had observed in his students:

> ...a 4.0 student afraid to take an honors class because of his/her fear of getting a "B," a pregnant 15 year old girl that lacks self-esteem afraid that her boyfriend has found another girl so she skips school to check up on him, an extremely bright boy afraid to be more successful than his father so he struggles on purpose, a college bound girl afraid she won't get into a college her best friend is going to attend or a shy and introverted boy afraid of where the government will move him to each week because his dad is in and out of jail.

Following this list, Steve then gave some indication of what he would discuss in his reflection: "helping each one of them acknowledge and tackle those fears." The process of writing his first reflection led Steve to the issue of student motivation. He seemed to "jump off" the first reflection straight to a second reflection where he focused on this

issue. Therefore, I have chosen to treat what should have been his second narrative as a totally reflective piece.

Analysis of Reflections

Reflection one. The following statement, actually located at the end of Steve's first narrative, launched him into reflection. He continued with the idea of fear, particularly a new fear: the fear of being "unable to recognize the individual fears that each one of [his]150 students per semester carry with them each and every day...and the unenviable and overwhelming task of helping each one of them acknowledge and tackle those fears." This statement seems to suggest the questions: 1) What fears do my students hold? 2) Will I be able to recognize these fears? and 3) How will I help them name and gain power over those fears? Steve seemed to arrive at these questions because of what he discovered about himself: a deeper awareness of his own fears and the recognition that his students did not necessarily experience those same fears. He seemed to appreciate that some students carried fears that were *unlike* his and that he would most likely *not* understand. Though he seemed to believe that it is his responsibility as a teacher to help his students overcome those fears, he also seemed to acknowledge how challenging this would be, precisely because his students were not like him.

Unfortunately, Steve only drew on his experiences—without an outside text—to inform his thinking and explained his reasoning for that choice later in his reflection: nothing he had read thus far in his teacher preparation program addressed how fear affects the learning process. (It seems that he did not consider looking for a "new" text that he had not already read.) He then raised the question of why his foremost concern—how fear affects the learning process—was not addressed in his program. Although the

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transition is not clear, it seems that this led him to the question of relevance, as he stated: "This idea of not being taught what I believe necessary has changed my role as a teacher because it makes me realize the importance of relevance in what is being taught." This suggests Steve's belief that fear's effect on the learning process was "relevant" to him, as well as his belief that because this issue was not adequately addressed in his university coursework (particularly his education coursework), that he missed a relevant piece of learning. Therefore, he identified his belief that any content he teaches his own students must be relevant. He did not indicate how this would work to alleviate students' fears, but he did seem to imply that a connection was there.

In the process of working through these ideas in his first reflection, Steve moved directly into his second writing. Although he called it a narrative, it is more of a reflection with some narrative woven into the text. Therefore, I will approach it as reflective writing.

Reflection two. Steve began with the statement: "My second narrative is in reference to engaging and motivating students in the classroom and the responsibility the teacher has in this regard. YES, I do believe that this is the teacher's responsibility!" He related this back to his own observations in high school when he believed that teaching was the easiest job in the world:

> It seemed all I did in my classes in high school was read, take notes, hear lectures, memorize facts and figures, take tests, and write essays. I can't remember any activities that got me interested in what was being taught or teachers that inspired me with any creativity or enthusiasm in their lesson plans. School was mundane and redundant, to say the least.

Steve moved to talk about the two primary "types" of teachers he had observed as an intern: teachers who were "trying new and innovative ways of engaging and motivating

students to learn," and teachers who were "unwilling to adapt to the needs of the students." He then focused on what he aspires to do as a classroom teacher:

> As you are quite aware, the whole concept of teaching, learning and English are some of the main things I want to examine as a teacher. Every time I create a lesson plan or do an activity in class, I want creativity, and the connection and relativity to the students all to come in to play in the process...Whoever said, learning couldn't be fun? To elaborate on this idea, I also believe that "fun" has its place...To further that concept, variety within the realm of fun is also one of the keys to motivating and engaging students...Thus, it is not only important to be creative while trying to motivate and engage students; creativity must be an ongoing never ending process that changes with each class and student on a daily basis.

Steve's primary concern throughout this reflection was the idea of motivating and engaging students. He used his own experiences as a student, coupled with his observations of teachers during his internship experience, in order to contextualize his discussion of the type of teacher he would like to be.

Steve worked to connect this to an academic reading, though again he made a complaint about the difficulty of locating a reading related to the issues he raised:

> To be quite honest, it was very difficult for me to find readings that dealt with the idea of motivating students in the same ways that I wrote about above or ones I felt I could use in a practical sense. It seemed that most of the things I read on this subject were theory based and not very practical. Most of the theories tied motivation to things with big words like "sociocultural contexts," "transactive processes," "holistic understanding" or "adaptive learning processes."

Steve's desire to locate a "practical" or "hands-on" text that would give him tangible "teaching tips" he could then use to motivate and engage students illustrates his misunderstanding of—or perhaps resistance to—one of the primary purposes of the project. In other words, he did not work to locate an outside text that addressed the salient issues raised in his narrative, primarily fear (and its varied sources) and his own

negative experiences in school (experiences that warrant a more nuanced analysis that goes beyond inept teaching). He seemed dismissive of the theories he named, theories that may actually have provided insights into his own beliefs, and thus insights into how his experiences had worked to shape his beliefs about students, teaching, and learning.

Fortunately for Steve (at least according to him), he located a text entitled *Tools for Teaching* by Barbara Davis, who writes about methods for motivating and engaging students. Two of these methods that resonated with Steve were: to "help students find personal meaning and value in the material...[and] to create an atmosphere that is open and positive." He then made the following statement about the text itself, further revealing his attitude about the knowledge reflected in the literature of his field:

> My faith in educated people that write books saying things I can actually
> use and easily understand about teaching definitely took a turn for the
> better, because quite frankly, I struggle to look back on what I have
> learned about education over the last four years and recognize much that I
> actually put into practical use.

Steve revealed the nominal value he placed on the objective knowledge reflected in his teacher preparation program, the more "theoretical" knowledge that constituted the content of his education coursework. Therefore, it is not surprising that Steve would not engage in much integrative work. In other words, because he seemed to have little use for objective knowledge, unless it was readily applicable to specific situations and issues in teaching, then it was unlikely he would use that knowledge to examine his own beliefs, as he seemed to assume that experiences were not something that warranted examination; they were "givens." All of his statements that reflected his beliefs about students, teaching, and learning were extensions of these experiences; therefore, it was unlikely that he would challenge those beliefs in the face of contradictions or nuanced arguments

situated within the more objective knowledge located in academic texts. Because he seemingly assigned little if any value to the knowledge represented in these texts, unless it was in the "cleaned up" form of tangible, hands-on "teaching tips," he did not allow himself the opportunity to interrogate or rethink his experiences, thus narrowing the possibilities for learning that I hoped this project might afford him.

Throughout his reflections, Steve reiterated the same basic point about students, teaching, and learning: it is the teacher's responsibility to engage and motivate students to learn using new and innovative methods and to "adapt to the needs of the students and society as a whole." Teachers' failure to do this results in missed opportunities for students to "engage their mind, think critically and grow as a person...[setting] a negative attitude for the students toward learning." I assume, then, that Steve's assertion is that if teachers work to engage in this "type" of teaching, then students' attitudes toward learning will improve, thus leading to greater learning.

Steve concluded his second narrative with a statement about The Narrative Project itself: "The purpose of these narratives was for me as a teacher and student to get a better understanding of who I am as a teacher, how I got here and what I can do about it in the future...mission accomplished!" Like his approach to integrating subjective and objective knowledge, Steve's "synopsis" is somewhat simplistic and reflects a more linear process of progressing through steps, as opposed to a more recursive process that is ongoing and never-ending.

Based on my interpretations of Steve's writing, I believe he began to move in the direction I had intended, though not to the extent that I had hoped. While he did address the topics of students, teaching, and learning to a limited degree, he seemed to remain

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"set" in the same frame of reference from the beginning to the end of the project. He did not examine his experiences in light of insights gained from outside texts; therefore, he limited—if not eliminated—the possibility of exploring the issue of positionality. As a result, he did not seem to gain new insights into his teaching practice or new considerations of how he might further examine that practice in light of what he discovered about the positioned nature of both himself and his students.

<div align="center">Lisa</div>

Portrait

Lisa was filled with boundless energy, though I would not describe her as hyperactive or giddy. Instead, she was physically active and fit; and she seemed to understand the need to take care of herself (mind, body, and spirit) in order to meet the many and varied demands of being both a teacher and a student. As a result, she was able to accomplish more than many—if not all—of the other interns without seeming "washed out" or weary. She was definitely a leader amongst her colleagues, and many of them seemed to be somewhat in awe of her. Needless to say, she was charismatic!

Unlike some students, who engage an instructor in conversation almost immediately upon entering a classroom for the first time, Lisa was at first a little distant, though friendly and courteous. However, she engaged in many animated exchanges with her peers. In time, she and I shared similar conversations. She was not a typical "quiet student;" nor did she seem to feel compelled to talk. Instead, she actively engaged in class activities and contributed to discussions in thoughtful and sensitive ways.

Finally, Lisa took ownership of her work. She did not seem to perceive course projects as nothing more than assignments or tasks to complete for a grade. Certainly,

academic success in the form of high marks was important to her. But her attitude instead reflected her belief that coursework offered an opportunity for her to learn, and she seemed to perceive the course as an opportunity for both personal and professional development. As a result, the quality of her work far exceeded my expectations and did not reflect what I tended to presume would come from a novice teacher.

Possible Transformations from Embracing The Narrative Project

Lisa provides an example of a student who worked to integrate subjective and objective knowledge. She did not approach the writing as a linear process. Lisa read the texts (both her own narratives and the outside texts) critically, used her narratives to make sense of the academic text and then "revisited" her narratives to critically re-examine her experiences. This led her to explore the issue of positionality as she re-saw her experiences as "positioned" and helped her determine how her beliefs impacted her teaching practice.

Lisa clearly reached new understandings and constructed new knowledge for herself as she engaged in this process. She was also articulate about how these understandings, and particularly her ability to "name" her beliefs, empowered her. Based on this sense of empowerment, Lisa described how she sought to provide that for her own students and how this then had a transformative effect on her, on her students, and on their work together.

Summary of Narratives

Lisa's first narrative was a description of a very specific incident that took place when she was in the first grade. Her teacher asked the students to write down their understanding of the adage, "March comes in like a lion but goes out like a lamb" in their

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composition notebooks, but Lisa did not know what it meant. Lisa described her continued efforts to get the correct answer. She never did get the right answer, though her class "rival" did and shared the answer with the entire class. She recalled her feelings of failure related to this incident.

As in her first narrative, Lisa focused on a specific incident in her second narrative. She began the narrative with a tragic event involving the death of a teammate on her college swim team. Three months later, Lisa's boyfriend of three years—and "friend" since she was ten—was killed in a fire. His five roommates—and a dog—all survived. Lisa interspersed memories of her boyfriend within the story of her first learning of his death. (To see Lisa's full texts, see Appendix F.)

Analysis of Narratives

Perceived failure. Lisa briefly described the scene that opened her narrative: "I walked slowly up to Mrs. Matzke's desk, my head down, uncertain—a rare occurrence even then. Everyone else had already shown their answers..." She then showed Mrs. Matzke her response: "Is it that the lion gets a haircut?" Following her realization that she had the incorrect answer, she continued: "My face turned red. I shuffled back to our shared desks, composition book open, lion with the haircut drawn at the bottom and colored in crayons staring ashamedly back at me. I am almost crying." When Lisa sought help from a friend, she heard the "eagle-eyed response": "Don't help her! She needs to figure it out by herself!" from Mrs. Matzke, who she named the "Devil-Woman" and described as "...one scary woman. Five-foot ten-ish, two hundred pounds, curly red hair, mid-sixties, and intimidating as hell. She was a monster."

The phrases "walked slowly" and "my head down" do not explicitly reflect Lisa's attitude toward this situation, though they are manifestations of her "uncertainty." In addition, the question mark included at the end of her response to the question is an indication that Lisa was unsure of herself. Furthermore, the phrase "a rare occurrence," although explicit, implies that Lisa had not often—if ever—experienced uncertainty in school tasks. She was more explicit about this later when she described what she was thinking: *"Thomsons don't get things wrong! I don't get things wrong! Everyone else is already dooo-oonnneee."*

Shame. Lisa's use of the word "shuffled" implies her feeling of embarrassment; however, she was more explicit about this in her description of the lion, who was "staring ashamedly" back at her from her composition book. While she provided both implicit and explicit narration to reveal her feelings at this point, she provided straight commentary on the teacher, Mrs. Matzke, using phrases and words such as: "eagle-eyed response," "Devil-Woman," "intimidating as hell," "monster," and later on words like "jowls" and phrases like "a shake of her red, permanently permed head of hair." None of these carry a positive connotation and add to the intimidation factor she mentioned early in the narrative.

Lisa provided a depiction of herself as a learner: she did not get things wrong; she was generally *not* the last student to complete a task; she was used to feeling certainty about answers to questions. She also wrote about the other students' responses (whether real or imaginary) to her getting the wrong answer and suggested that they knew she usually got the right answer and were accustomed to her success. But Lisa also exposed some of her beliefs about teachers, implying that they should not be intimidating, eagle-

eyed, denigrating, as this could have negative effects on a student's ability or willingness to learn in their classrooms.

In describing yet another attempt to get the right answer, Lisa wrote:

I shuffled yet again to the front left of that ominous first-grade classroom. Her sixty-something eyes look down upon me (is she secretly enjoying this torture? This triumph?) staring at me from behind the glasses permanently attached to her neck with a metal (not pretty beads, oh no, not her) chain. She's still sitting and won't even get up. I have to stand so close to her, as she reads my answer…and again shakes her head. 'Nope, all right, we can't wait any longer. Go ahead and sit down.' Head down. Practically dragging myself back to the desks." *Don't look at anyone, don't look at anyone, don't look at anyone…*

Although Lisa never explicitly says that she felt shame in this passage, she felt shame, as she again "shuffles" up to the desk and again returns to her seat with her head down. Her added descriptions of Mrs. Matzke solidified her illustration of her as one horrible woman, though she did not explicitly say that this teacher had initiated—or added to— her feelings of shame. Finally, Lisa described the classroom as "ominous" and implied that the teacher and students colluded (unknowingly perhaps) to create this sensation.

Lisa ultimately did not get the right answer, though her class "rival" did and shared the answer with the whole class. Lisa described this outcome: "Tears continued to silently fall from my face. Wrong? Oh no, not just wrong. The absolute *furthest* from right in the WHOLE class. It was March 1, 1988—I was six years old, in first grade, and…I was…for the first time in my life…a complete and utter…**FAILURE.**"

Lisa's word choice belies just how much of a failure she felt: the common phrase "complete and utter." This adds to the idea that this was the first time Lisa had ever felt this way and suggests the devastating nature of the experience. But she also claims:

Perhaps the most depressing part about my first taste of failure is that it actually happened like that. Instead of recalling my elementary years with

fond memories, I remember *this* moment, this first morsel of failure—an unknown, bitter fruit to my young sensibilities. I was six years old, but *I* was SMART! I was a Thomson—and I knew what that meant. It meant "the best." It meant dad's a teacher, mom's a teacher, grandpa's a principal. It meant expectations. Success. Winning. Excellence.

In this passage Lisa contextualized why she felt like such a failure for what was a seemingly small infraction. She had expectations that she believed she had to live up to. She furthered this idea: "A white, upper-middle class mentality—failure is *not* an option. And I knew it. At six years old."

Lisa implies that her family's history as "insiders" in schools meant expectations for her. However, there is nothing in the narrative that indicated how that expectation is specifically either white or upper-middle class. She was explicit that it is, but she did not articulate why that is—or how she came to believe this. Regardless, in Lisa's mind a "white, upper-middle class mentality" meant consistent success and excellence. And for the first time, Lisa experienced the feeling of shame.

Personal loss. Lisa's second narrative was considerably different than her first, and she did not build on the event described in the first narrative but instead described two significant events in her life, the final one her description of a deep, personal loss. The first of these events was the death of a teammate, which she described as her "first intimate encounter with loss...accompanied with the gnawing feelings of disbelief and sadness." Lisa was careful to articulate the nature of her relationship with this teammate: she was not necessarily close to him or in any kind of "intimate" relationship with him. Nevertheless, she felt the loss and raised it as a significant issue at this time in her life.

However, her discussion of loss also suggests that she was surprised by these feelings, as if she perhaps *should not* feel such loss. On the other hand, despite her

surprise—or perhaps discomfort—with this, she was still honest about it. "It couldn't possibly be true. He's so young...this doesn't happen to people like us. People so young. So healthy. So...invincible. He was supposed to be invincible." These words seemed to foreshadow the next event, which took place three months later.

Personal tragedy. The description of this event again began with Lisa's sleeping and her father's waking her to tell her that Sam, Lisa's boyfriend of three years, had died in a fire. She spent quite a bit of time providing narration that illustrated the nature of her relationship with Sam, as well as her feelings for and about him:

> Sam had loved me since we were ten years old...He was skinny and hilarious and had a gap between his two front teeth...We dated our sophomore year of high school, but we didn't have cars, we went to different high schools...we broke up, to say the least. And yet...he still got me anyways...He could sing KCi and JoJo's "All My Life" by heart in front of a crowd. Never much of a comedian myself, I saw something in him that was missing in me. Something I didn't want to lose. We flirted, we dated—and somewhere in there, I fell in love for the first time. I spent the next three years of my life loving him...We had struggles and uncertainty...but every summer we found our way back to each other. He loved pineapples, Michigan football, underwater kisses, long naps, walks on the beaches, romance, and me. He made me laugh—so much laughter.

She then briefly described the last time she had seen Sam (36 hours earlier) the night before he was heading back to college. "We had gone to dinner...[to] the restaurant where his dad had proposed to his mom. We talked about marriage, kids, happiness. We had spoken seven hours earlier, at 1:30 a.m...we talked for about ten minutes, ending with 'I love yous.'"

Woven through this was Lisa's recounting of her response to her father's news: "going insane." She ruined her favorite stuffed animal, destroyed her pillow, hit her father, "And then, coldly, from somewhere within the agony sickeningly emitting itself in

raspy breaths and intermittent screams, [she] asked: 'Was anyone else hurt?'" Sam was the only one hurt in this fire; the others (six people and a dog) all got out safely.

What seems significant about these excerpts from Lisa's narrative is that she was not as explicit about the idea of loss as she was in the first part of the narrative. However, her descriptions of Sam, combined with images, details, and anecdotes reveal how she felt about him and paint the depth of this loss. And her descriptions of her reactions to this tragedy almost dare the reader not to feel it with her. She became the most explicit about how this affected her toward the end of the narrative: "Two deaths, three months. I was nineteen years old. Nineteen, with a grudge, an extra fifty years on my life, and a frozen, frigid heart."

In her first narrative, Lisa raised the following issues: failure, shame, and social class. She used her recounting of a specific first-grade experience to illustrate a time when she felt shame and failure and suggested that her social class—combined with her family's status as school "insiders"—may have affected her drive to excel and the subsequent feelings of shame and failure when she did not. Lisa's narration of this experience allowed her to identify these issues, which then led her to discuss the following issues related to students, teaching, and learning in her reflection: shame; failure, "both as the actual experience and as the cultural expectations and norms that lead to it;" the conscious choice to accept failure (not learning); academic achievement; social class; the assumption of "shared" bodies of knowledge; and cultural capital.

While Lisa's first narrative provided some indications of what she might discuss in her reflection—or how she might connect her experiences to issues related to schooling—she did not make it quite as clear in her second narrative. Her second

narrative was completely about herself and how tragic loss affected her life. However, as she moved into the reflection, she raised the following ideas: vulnerability, loss, naming of feelings or beliefs, "wholeness," empowerment, risk-taking, self in the classroom, and "engaged pedagogy" (hooks, 1994). Although Lisa's approach to the second reflection was not as evident from her narrative as was the first, she nevertheless utilized the narrative to help her make better sense of her teaching practice.

Analysis of Reflections

Reflection one. Lisa begins:

> My narrative is a story of my first taste of failure—a day in my life that I have yet to forget, regardless of how hard I have tried...[it] reflects my first experience of shame and failure in education—common themes my own students experience every day in school, and perhaps, though inadvertently, occasionally through my own actions or words.

Within this piece Lisa wove statements that briefly describe the nature of her background: family of educators, prestigious family name in the school district, her successful academic career. Lisa's direct reference to her narrative indicates that she used this piece of writing to explore her beliefs about teachers and students.

Lisa began her second paragraph: "In writing this narrative, I was initially unsure of the salient social issues my story reflects...However, on further examination and through some research, I had to rethink my place in the text." This assertion suggests that as she examined her narrative in light of her research and studied outside readings within the context of further examining her narrative, she developed a new frame of reference. In other words, she used her narrative to help her make sense of academic texts and then used the subsequent learning to re-examine—and perhaps challenge—the knowledge

gained from experience. This process then seemed to enable Lisa to reconsider her beliefs about the nature of shame and failure, both for herself and for her students.

Lisa continued:

Perhaps that moment of shame was the point at which I chose to over-excel through the next seventeen years of my life. I did not want to have to suffer through that feeling of being a failure again. I made a conscious choice to be a success. Yet, again, that analysis seemed not entirely accurate. Did I have a *choice* at that young age to consciously make? Perhaps not. It is more likely that, as a result of my socialization in a family of educators, and based on who I was (am) socially—a member of white, upper-middle class society—the "choice" was more of a lone option—a given. Continued failure, or the conscious choice to accept failure, or not-learning, was not a part of my culture.

This excerpt seems to reflect some changes, as Lisa was seemingly in the process of thinking through the issues she raised. For example, she stated that she did not want to feel like a failure again; therefore, she made a "conscious choice" to succeed. On the other hand, she also questioned whether or not she could have possibly made such a conscious decision at that young age. Although nowhere in her narrative did she talk about her choosing not to fail, something happened during the course of writing her reflection and engaging with the readings she chose that made her think of failing in terms of a person's choice. What also seems significant here is that she raised issues of positionality: race and class. This move seemed to create a new frame of reference for Lisa, as she examined how her "position" might have affected her reaction to shame and failure.

This also comes through in the last sentence, where she talked about "continued failure," "the conscious choice to accept failure," and "not-learning." In her narrative she talked about failure as something that "happened" to her in the first grade, though she now talked about it as a choice that a person (or a student) makes. In addition, she

developed the idea of failure as continued, a conscious choice, a reflection of not

learning, perhaps a part of a person's (or student's) culture. Although she was not

explicit about the process in which she engaged for these shifts in thinking to occur, the

content of her reflection indicates that the process did take place.

And it seems, according to the following statement, that the outside reading Lisa

chose played a significant role in this process:

> In researching these societal issues of class and failure, I encountered two
> texts that led me to this deeper analysis of the paths I took in my education
> as a result of my class, race, and family background. Dick Gregory's
> essay "Shame" and Herbert Kohl's "I Won't Learn from You," both
> discuss the notions of shame and failure from the perspectives of minority
> experience.

Lisa statement reveals that she did, in fact, identify the issues that seemed most salient in

her narrative and then began her research to locate readings that addressed those issues.

Although her meta-cognitive awareness of this process remain unclear, her use of the

phrase "led me to this deeper analysis" nevertheless suggests that she was systematically

working to integrate her subjective knowledge with objective knowledge and thus create

a new frame of reference in order to construct new knowledge.

However, Lisa was careful to note that these readings did not address the school

failure of White, upper-middle class students (which is how she identified herself) but

instead addressed failure from the perspectives of minority students:

> What separates my narrative from these texts is my social position as a
> non-minority. My 'failure' was not a result of my skin color, religion, or
> economic status—many of the factors that lead students, as Kohl suggests,
> to 'a conscious and chosen refusal to assent to learn' (27). The school
> upheld my societal position and proffered it as the status quo.

Lisa still seemed to believe, though, that failure is the issue, despite this significant

difference between her narrative and the content in the readings; and seemingly seeking

to find some commonality, she wrote: "However, my encounter with failure did have one common strand with those of the conscious non-learners and Gregory's own shame experience: I was held to the expectation of having access to a shared body of knowledge—in this instance of a silly adage—and I fell short." She went on to argue that although failure may consist of "a multitude of levels" and "is a universal experience," it "can lead to the decision to no longer learn or excel."

She again referred to Kohl, who claims that when students experience failure or rejection in school because of their culture or "individuality," they make a choice to not attempt to learn. How can you fail when you have not tried in the first place? It seems that Lisa's readings gave her the opportunity to think more deeply about her beliefs about students and learning. One result of students' experiencing failure or rejection in school because of their "individuality," is that they *choose* to no longer learn.

She also seemingly used her narrative—and the readings—to connect the ideas of shame and failure to larger issues of positionality. She referred back to her narrative, as if to again think of what she learned through the readings within the context of her narrative—and perhaps to revisit her narrative in light of the readings. She argued again that the choice to fail "was absent in [her] own experience because of [her] individual culture and societal standing…[that emphasized] education and excelling in school…a striking contrast to cultures where formal education is less central or even devalued because of inherent racist and classist structures." Here she cited Jay MacLeod's *Ain't No Making It* and claimed that while her social class—combined with her family background—dictated school success and college attendance, this "culture of an

emphasis on education" is missing from her students' experience. Therefore, "This stark contrast to my own education and experience with failure was thus alien to [her]."

This again seems like a shift in Lisa's thinking, generated through the process of integrating subjective and objective knowledge. And she was becoming increasingly more explicit about the issue of positionality, which is especially evident in the following excerpt:

> I also have felt apart from my students' experiences since I had been a failure only because I lacked certain knowledge of my own class, as opposed to because of my race, class, or gender. My reaction—to move on, try harder—was perhaps not what it might have been had the reverse been true. My failure was the result of not being the best: a common goal of my social class. Even now, though, it has taken seventeen years to even tell this story. I apparently have yet to shake the yoke of my upper-middle class expectations.

Lisa's writing in these excerpts depicted her moving back and forth between experience and academic literature to "get at" the issues that were most salient. It was from here that Lisa then moved into a discussion of her beliefs regarding her duties as a teacher.

> The first duty she identified was to not
>
> transfer that restricting yoke (one that I did not even realize until now had affected me so completely in my youth) to my own students. As an educator, this story forces me to locate my own position in education as a result of my class and family background, and to be able to more clearly view my students as similarly cultured and constructed beings.

She continued by stating that even though her failure resulted in her greater motivation to succeed, her students—"who are not similarly situated"—may have completely different reactions. Therefore, she acknowledged the need to recognize that the cultural knowledge her students bring to class is "incredibly varied" and represents a "vast range of cultural structures and capitals." This part of Lisa's reflection illustrated her continued—and increasingly complicated—exploration of the concept of positionality.

Lisa continued to go deeper, as illustrated in the following excerpt:

> Yet, it is not simply the knowledge each student brings to my classroom that I must be aware of and address. More importantly, it is the failure aspect of my narrative that must now most inform my teaching. I must consider failure both as the actual experience and as the cultural expectations and norms that lead to it.

Again citing Kohl, she argued that students make a "*willful* choice to not engage in education" and that teachers often mistake this as a failure to learn or the inability to learn. She referred back to her narrative and stated that she *chose* to learn in order to avoid failure, though Kohl argues that true failure "is characterized by the frustrated will to know." Therefore, she believes that she needs to:

> question which of [her] students have been *actively* not learning because of past failures or educational structures, while [she] *falsely* labeled them as failing. Which students [has she] consciously or unconsciously labeled as unable to learn while they have energetically sat and willed themselves to not engage with [her]? These are powerful meta-cognitive questions that all educators should address—and are ones [she] previously had not actively explored.

She ended her reflection by briefly discussing what she might do in order to meet these "duties," including the following:

- "uncover past failures or points at which [her students'] non-majority cultures have been rejected."
- "examine [her] own brush with failure and recognize it in others."
- "search out and recognize those learners who are willfully not learning and discover both their reasoning and the keys to getting in."
- "never be the bearer of failure."
- "create a classroom community where such damning challenges [to cultural identity] are absent."
- "not *assume* [her] students fail at writing because they failed to learn to write."
- unlearn "[her] own blindness to racism and economic prejudices, developed perhaps in [her] own education and as a result of [her] individual class membership."

What seems salient about Lisa's list is that it reveals her willingness—and her ability—to examine school failure from her students' perspectives. It also illuminates that although she never names it, she nevertheless wrestles with the concept of positionality. Furthermore, her list reveals that her consideration of issues of positionality has deepened her understanding of teachers, students, and learning and thus impacted her teaching practice.

Lisa concluded her reflection with the following statement:

> In delving into my own failure and the structures behind my reaction, I can then begin to *unlearn* the assumptions about student-learners that my own experience created. My vision and understanding has been obscured by the continual sting of my own shame and my inability to understand willful failure when failure had once so badly hurt me. I need to take this knowledge into my classroom and see my students in a broader light.

Rather than assuming that her students may experience shame and failure as she had, she instead reframed her thinking to consider how her experience of shame and failure may be vastly different than that of her students primarily because of different positionalities. Therefore, this excerpt is an even more articulate statement of how the integration of subjective and objective knowledge enabled Lisa to consider how positionality impacts her teaching, as well as her students and their learning.

Reflection two. In this reflection Lisa returned to some of the ideas that she raised in her first narrative and reflection, though she did not necessarily build on those ideas, as much as she worked to deepen her understanding of both herself and her students. She stated that she found this narrative difficult to write, though impossible *not* to write, because it deeply affected her teaching every day. She stated that she believes in the

> old, tired adage that we are what we teach, or maybe more specifically, that who we are cannot be separated from what and how we teach. My socialization as a white, upper-middle class female certainly affects how I

approach my classroom, how I view my students, and how I present and analyze the texts I teach.

She also claimed that "our specific life experiences and journeys that shape who we are" in turn shape "who our students get to experience every day in the classroom."

She related this specifically to Sam's death and how it changed her and altered her conceptions of who she is. She identified the following: overreacting to inconsequential events or what she perceives as her stupid mistakes; experiencing hysteria and having a quick temper; trying to appreciate her life more; loving and appreciating people with more intensity; being more cynical, empathetic, understanding, attuned to the needs of other people; having greater understanding of depths of pain and love and soul that can exist in both herself and other people. She then wrote:

> These experiences thus cannot be removed from my experiences as an English teacher—a vocation of deep social analysis, of pain, love, death, life. In teaching a text with these themes, I would do a disservice to my students by not allowing them to see the part of myself that connects with the text—and even more so, it would be sinful to not help them to see themselves in the text as well.

She continued to talk about her beliefs that without the painful three-year period she went through—and is still in the process of going through—she may not have been "as open to viewing [her] students as the human beings they are—as full of pain and joy and experience." She asserted that teachers often attempt to distance themselves from both their students and their content, specifically the texts they choose to teach. She stated her belief that as a result of this, teachers often fail to expose their humanity to their students and instead hide portions of their lived experiences (and thus themselves) from students, minimizing or eliminating students' ability to relate to or learn from those experiences.

She claimed, furthermore, that this shuts down the possibility of students' realizing that teachers might also learn from *them*.

Lisa's analysis here reveals some of her thinking about students, teaching, and learning. But what is most striking to me is what she implies about the relationship between them: teaching is not an "act" that is separated from the individuals who are involved. Teaching is instead a process, perhaps a way of being in the classroom, that encourages and nurtures the coming together of unique individuals, positioned individuals. This seems like a more spiritual understanding of teaching practice, as it encompasses teachers and students joining together as "whole beings"—mind, body, and spirit—to learn from, respect, and care about each other.

I remember that Lisa shared her thinking with me as she was writing this reflection, that she was struggling to find a scholarly reading that explored these issues. I suggested she read bell hooks's (1994) *Teaching to Transgress*. I sensed that Lisa was searching for something in her teaching and that hooks might be a starting point for her as it had been for me. She "felt this need to share with [her] students the piece of [her] soul that had most changed [her] view of the world, because without this knowledge, they could not possibly ever see her as 'whole.'" She connects this with hooks' writing about Thich Nhat Hanh's philosophy of the "teacher as healer," which means enacting a pedagogy that emphasizes "wholeness, a union of mind, body, and spirit" (p. 14).

She writes in this reflection that this "something" she was searching for—or this belief that she holds—was previously "unnamed," but "hooks's (1994) conversation" helped her to name it. She then wrote about sharing this narrative (in an abridged form) with her students. They were working within a unit on personal narrative, and she used

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her narrative to model the writing process for her students. She wrote the following about this experience:

> We struggled together—and something incredible happened. My students told me stories about themselves that amazed me, saddened me, and moved me to tears on several occasions. They were so raw and full of their voices—and I think this is a direct result of my willingness (need?) to share my own rawness with them. Or as hooks would put it, my own soul and wholeness. The entire culture of our classroom shifted in that one moment—we 'had' each other for the rest of the year.

Lisa's reflection revealed that she was in the process of engaging in continued self-reflection about how her experiences affected her on a personal level. And she seemed to understand that when both she and her students entered a classroom, they did not simply "check" who they are at the door or lock it away. However, in this instance, she was able to use a scholarly text—representing objective knowledge—to help her examine just how her experiences—and her students' experiences—might affect all of them as she worked to teach them and as they were in the process of learning. Finally, Lisa's reflection brings to light her continued experiential learning. She suggests that without this opportunity to explore the integration between her own knowledge with more objective knowledge, she may not have been able to reframe her experience for purposes of teaching and thus further her learning even more. She was the only student of the three, in fact, to accomplish what she did.

Lisa then cited hooks's (1994) argument that a learning process must focus on both the intellectual and spiritual growth of students:

> My students *cannot be* simply 'students'—they are brothers, sisters, friends, lovers, daughters, sons, broken, alive, joyous, disheartened, oppressed, victims, survivors. As hooks states, I need to *respect* these multi-dimensional spirits in my classroom—and I honestly can say that without the experience discussed in my narrative, I'm not certain that I would have been as mature and ready to do this as I am.

She continued this line of thought when she talked about the concept of "engaged pedagogy" and claimed that in order for teachers to enact such a pedagogy, and truly empower students, they must be "actively committed to a process of self-actualization that promotes their own well-being." Lisa seemed to believe that she is continually in this process; therefore, she is "more committed to helping [her] students reach that point—to *help* them." She also seemed to believe that for many of her students, "the narrative process was a healing process, something they *had* to tell, write, learn, from, and ultimately, grow from."

Lisa moved toward concluding her reflection when she wrote: "Ultimately, bell hooks' (1994) text reaffirmed and helped me name something I felt was so central to my teaching experience. The shift in the culture of my classroom following the sharing of my experience and myself (and students' sharing of their own narratives) altered my entire internship year." She then returned to hooks' argument that while engaged pedagogy seeks to empower students, it also seeks to empower teachers, as teachers also grow through the process. However, in order for teachers to experience this growth and empowerment, they must be vulnerable with their students, while encouraging their students to take risks. Lisa claimed that before her experience of loss, she had never felt a sense of vulnerability. As a result, she believes that she has become "more willing to be vulnerable (a now natural part of [her] human experience) in front of [her] students— and to encourage them to be vulnerable with [her]."

Lisa used her narrative as a springboard to a discussion of students, teaching, and learning. And throughout her reflection, she moved back and forth between her personal experiences and more objective knowledge to construct new knowledge and create a new

perspective that seemed to have deeply impacted her teaching practice. Lisa asserted that it was her own experiences with loss that had moved her to a "deeper understanding of [her] own spiritual needs—and thus, as an educator, have helped [her] to see those needs in [her] students as well." I interpret this to mean that as a result of this process, she was able to enact a more engaged pedagogy, one where she allowed her students to see her own humanity and where she encouraged them to reveal theirs as well. This suggests Lisa's belief that both she and her students have unique lived experiences. And although she did not articulate this, her writing in both reflections suggested her deepening understanding of the positioned nature of those experiences.

Looking Across Erin, Steve, and Lisa

Affordances and Constraints of The Narrative Project

One of the primary affordances of this project is how it allows students to begin "where they are" as the starting point for inquiry. In other words, it encourages them to begin with their subjective knowledge, their experiences. As a result, they can come to realize that their experiences hold valuable knowledge and are crucial tools for learning. Furthermore, it allows students the opportunity to articulate their beliefs, without anyone's saying that they are somehow wrong or misinformed. All three of the focus students took advantage of this opportunity and shared openly about their experiences, even when those experiences were potentially embarrassing, somewhat shocking, or intensely personal.

The more open-ended quality of this project allows students to explore their beliefs and values in a relatively "safe" way. They are given freedom to write about experiences that seem most significant to them and then identify what they believe are the

most salient issues. It is from this perspective that they can explore their beliefs and values and then perhaps move to challenge them. No instructor is standing over them, requiring them to write about certain topics or glean specific "nuggets" of learning from their experiences or from their writing. Because of this looser framework, students may come to realize that they can engage in this examination on their own terms and may not perceive that they are being forced to alter their belief system or their worldview at the behest of someone else. To a certain extent, this might work to minimize the resistance students might display when teachers ask them to challenge their beliefs and values. This resistance can manifest itself in students' beliefs becoming even more firmly set and impervious to change. Considering Steve and Erin, although they were somewhat resistant, a more controlled or ordered framework may have caused them to become disengaged and resist even more, especially considering the seemingly fixed nature of their beliefs.

On the other hand, this loose framework also presents a significant constraint. I would identify this project as an example of critical pedagogy, and critical pedagogues (including feminists) assert that instructors must be explicit with their students about their goals and purposes. Although I was not explicit, I did intend for them to interrogate their beliefs through a process of writing about significant events in their lives and then locate salient issues their writing raised for them. It was my thinking that their drawing on academic texts would help them to explore their experiences—and their beliefs—from a new perspective, thus leading them to take a more critical stance toward their experiences and thus their beliefs. This might be identified as a "system" for constructing knowledge (Belenky et al, 1997).

However, my decision to not make these goals explicit means that my students did not have access to how this system might actually work for them. They knew the components of the system, as I had laid those out in the assignment description. But the purposes that actually grounded the project were implied in the rationale; that is where I suggested the system that I wanted students to use in order to reach my intended goals and construct new knowledge. But nowhere in either the description or rationale was I explicit about the constituent processes of that system that students might weave together in order to develop new or deeper understandings of either the concept of positionality or of students, teaching, and learning. Nor did I scaffold my instruction in such a way to illuminate the nature of this system. As a result, they were left largely on their own to develop some kind of system themselves.

This constraint is further complicated in light of Belenky et al's (1997) assertion that in order for students to develop these systems for constructing knowledge, they need to understand the relativity of knowledge. Once students recognize this, they feel a greater need to examine the systems they use to construct knowledge. This goes beyond merely developing a means to interrogate that system. Because my students remained largely unaware of the system itself, they did not have the opportunity to reflect on the nature of that system and its effectiveness or usefulness for constructing new knowledge. And in some cases, such as Steve, they did not understand the project as anything other than a series of tasks to be completed.

One of the key components that may have supported students' efforts is their use of academic texts to examine their experiences and beliefs. Most—if not all—of my students were accustomed to using text to support arguments, particularly in literary

analysis. This idea of using text as support was further reinforced in their education coursework, where they were often asked to "make use" of text or "draw" on course readings.

It seems that Steve and Erin continued using text in this way. Steve was generally dismissive of the knowledge located in academic texts, knowledge he identified as "theoretical" and not applicable to everyday situations and circumstances. Unless the text contained specific ideas or suggestions or offered what he believed to be practical insights, then he remained largely dismissive. Regenspan (1999) asserts that the assumption that "what is *theoretical* stands in opposition to what is pragmatic can further propel an anti-intellectual orientation..." (p. 37). Consistent with this, he clearly valued and gave more credence to knowledge born of experience, including his own experiences. This is evident in his belief in the superiority of subjective knowledge, perhaps a form of knowledge he believed was overlooked in his educational experiences. As a result, he was unable to admit its relative nature. Perhaps he believed that admitting or accepting its relative nature meant that it carried no worth, a concession he was unwilling to make.

On the other hand, it also seems that he understood objective knowledge, as reflected in theoretical texts, as irrelevant; yet he also seemed to assume that objective knowledge was worth more than subjective knowledge. He seemed as unable to understand objective knowledge as relative as he was unable to understand subjective knowledge as relative, though for very different reasons. As a result, he could not resolve the tensions between the two and recognize how he could develop a system to integrate both forms of knowledge in order to construct new knowledge.

Erin, on the other hand, was never as strident as Steve in articulating her beliefs about the nature of knowledge. However, her writing reflects that nevertheless, she seemed to approach this tension in the same way Steve did. Her beliefs seemed firmly embedded. In fact, it seems that if she questioned them, her entire view of the world would crumble around her. Admitting the relative nature of knowledge when that knowledge has shaped how you see the world and how you have lived your life can create more disequilibrium than some students can manage. When Erin encountered an argument that ran counter to her own experiences, specifically the texts that suggested that despite hard work and more education, not all people will get ahead, she seemingly attempted to either ignore it or explain it away. Like Steve, she could not see the knowledge contained in texts as relative knowledge; and like Steve, she was unable to construct new knowledge.

As a point in contrast, Lisa employed the text in a different way—and for different purposes. Instead of utilizing texts to support what she already believed to be "true," she was more diligent in determining what the texts were actually saying, to the arguments the authors were presenting. Based on her understanding of those texts, she then used them to re-examine her initial understandings of the significance of the ideas contained in her narratives. The knowledge contained in her experiences became "relative." Furthermore, the knowledge represented in the texts also became relative. Therefore, she realized the need to "rethink her place in the text" (her narratives) and was able to construct new knowledge.

The disparities between Lisa and the other two students beg the question of what enabled her to use this project to develop and examine a system for constructing

knowledge while the other two students did not. They each had equal information about the nature of the project, and the instruction for all three was the same. Reggenspan (1997) might argue that Lisa was more connected to her own "intellectual journey" (p. 36) and not "cut off from [her] own joy and wonder" (p. 35). Even though Lisa did not write about events that evoked joy and wonder but that instead evoked heartache and anguish, she nevertheless did not try to cut herself off from those feelings. Instead, she allowed her self to live through and experience those feelings again and again. As a result, she seemed to welcome "messes, emotions, and attention for sticky social contradictions" (Reggenspan, p. 35). She was engaged on a more bodily and spiritual level than either Steve or Erin. The challenge for instructors to consider then becomes how to engage all students at this level.

Challenges and Insights

I have always sensed that some students perceive of the work involved with this project as therapy, as laying out all of their "stuff" for others to see. Issues of privacy surface quite often, and some students attribute their hesitance and resistance to a lack of trust. On the other hand, this is also an intensely intellectual project, as the goal (at least as I identified it) was to get students to gain a new—and in some cases deeper—conceptual understanding, primarily of the concept of positionality.

Lisa's case has demonstrated, however, that in order for this understanding to occur, students need to conceive of the project as being as much spiritual as it is emotional or intellectual. Therefore, the inherent challenge in this project is getting students to understand—and ideally experience—this level of engagement.

For me, this challenge manifested itself in my response to the students who resisted because they believed this was too therapeutic, a response which then extended to all students. In order to alleviate what I believed were their fears (primarily an issue of trust and safety) I avoided the more spiritual nature of the project, a facet of it that I had experienced myself and believed to be vital. Reggenspan (1997) writes: "It is ironic that critical theorists and feminist post-structuralists...continue to marginalize conceptions of *higher consciousness* rooted in awareness of body and earth that have traditionally prevailed in much of the non-Western world" (p. 35). Even though I may not explicitly identify myself as either a critical theorist or a feminist post-structuralist, it is nevertheless ironic that I marginalized that aspect of the project that I now realize was most important.

The cases of Steve, Erin, and Lisa bear out the cost of that decision. Lisa talks about how she *had* to write her story. She realized that her story was too much a part of who she was, is, and will become to ignore it. It seems that while her story might represent the "literal" world around her, there is another whole world to which she attends. Getting students to recognize that world and to go into that world, to not deny its existence or shy away from it is challenging. And according to Reggenspan (1997), not making that clear to students—given my purposes for this project—is ironic.

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UNDERSTANDING POSITIONALITY:
A NARRATIVE STUDY IN TEACHER EDUCATION

VOLUME II

By

Suzanne Dee Knight

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
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Chapter 5

Connected Knowing

Exploring Procedures for Constructing Knowledge

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the more communal portion of this project, where students shared their narratives and reflections with each other. Based on what I learned as a result of analyzing the students' writing, I realized that they did not construct new knowledge—or develop new frames of reference—as much as I had previously thought or hoped that they would. This makes sense, given the collaboration that such an enterprise requires (Bruner, 1996; Casey, 1995-1996; Conle, 1999). Therefore, this chapter explores the processes involved in *connected knowing* that may result in students' constructing new knowledge or developing new frames of reference.

Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1997) characterize connected knowing in the following ways: focused on relationship; concerned with understanding, particularly extending understanding to positions that seem strange and unfamiliar; drawn on personal experience; and concerned with accessing other people's experiences, ways of thinking, and knowledge. A group of people working toward more connected knowing will put forth incomplete ideas, counting on others to help them further develop those ideas. Therefore, exploratory talk or rough draft speech (Barnes, 1979) is prevalent in a connected-knowing group as members jointly explore ideas and concepts. In addition, members understand that each person adds to the whole group's understandings and work to share each others' perspectives. As a result, members of a connected-

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knowing group work to construct knowledge and begin to further integrate subjective and objective knowledge and pose questions for further inquiry.

Despite this characterization, the requisite procedures for a group of people to interact together in such a way remain somewhat ambiguous. Therefore, this chapter seeks to identify what some of those procedures might be, and based on those procedures, to determine whether and to what extent this particular group of students could at times be identified as a connected-knowing group. Finally, this chapter will also explore whether and to what extent students in this class worked to construct new knowledge or create new frames of reference based on their collaborative efforts.

Procedures for Connected Knowing

Before I analyzed the discussions that comprised the two class sessions focused on the sharing of the narratives and reflections, I assumed that process—as opposed to content—would be more salient to understanding how connected knowing might result in students' constructing new knowledge. I hypothesized that this process would lead to more rich and imaginative visions as members of the group focused on each other's thinking. I also formed some hypotheses of what this process might look like: 1) If we acted as a connected-knowing group, I would see more evidence of students' interrogating their experiences and thus, their beliefs and values; 2) If I observed evidence of this interrogation, I might also locate instances where students grappled with the concept of positionality, extended their initial understandings into positions unlike their own, and constructed new or more complex understandings of students, teaching, and learning, and reached new conclusions or posed new questions for further inquiry;

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and 3) I had effectively supported students' efforts to reach a position of more connected knowing.[1]

Therefore, I decided to focus my analysis on the form of the discussions, seeking to determine whether and to what extent both my students and I worked together as a connected-knowing group. I began to notice some moves that seemed consistent with the characterization of a connected-knowing group, including the following: being explicit about the learning—or insights—gained from another person's narrative and reflection; identifying an issue raised in the narrative that moves the conversation beyond any individual story; asking specific and genuine questions, those that do not have a readily-apparent answer, that the questioner truly does not know the answer to, or that do not reflect an agenda other than the desire for further learning; and focusing responses on issues in order to help the group reach new understandings.

The rest of this chapter will provide a look into discrete "moments" within the two class discussions that were a part of this project. I first provide a brief overview of each discussion, along with more general explanations for why I nominated these moments. I provide more detailed descriptions of what each moment reveals within the individual discussion of each.

Overview: Discussion One

On the first day of sharing narratives and reflections, I read my narrative and reflection first. Throughout the duration of this particular session, six other students also shared their writing. The major ideas or topics that were raised (in order) during the discussion included: making assumptions about others; motivating students; the nature of student/teacher relationships; students and teachers sharing similar lived experiences;

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students who have lived through—or are living through—difficult experiences; dysfunction in families; creating safe places where students can talk and share; issues of group identity, sexuality, racial and ethnic diversity; teacher responsibilities; the role of the students' writing in the discussion; and tracking.

Rather than talk about the entire discussion, or about the ideas raised during the discussion, I have chosen three specific "moments." These moments are quite typical relative to other moments that took place during our discussions in terms of the amount and nature of my adding to the discussion, as well as the number of students who participated during any exchange. However, they are somewhat atypical in terms of students' exploratory talk and their working to make connections across many ideas. To varying extents, each moment depicts procedures of connected knowing. Moreover, they demonstrate how a group's engaging in such procedures work toward the ends of connected knowing I have identified. On the other hand, they also illustrate how connected knowing may break down or falter. Finally, these moments reflect the extent to which the students and I work with the concept of positionality.

Moment One: First Attempts Toward Connected Knowing

The first moment occurred during the time between the reading of my narrative and reflection and the first student's reading her narrative. During this moment, the conversation revolved around the ideas of making assumptions and student motivation. It is significant in that this particular moment of the class depicts how our discussion began to unfold after the reading of one narrative when one student identified a piece of learning and raised one or two issues, thus moving the conversation in directions that go beyond story itself. Furthermore, it reveals how the offering of just one genuine question

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can get a group back on track and moving toward more connected knowing. Finally, this moment includes a description of a move I made that actually worked to disrupt the students' attempts at connected knowing.

Going beyond story. After I read my narrative and reflection, the first "reading" for this project where I had raised the issue of social class and the idea of making assumptions, Brian identified something he discovered: his misconceptions of rural areas and rural living. He also stated that it was "cool to hear stories of farms and farming" and that it was "cool to hear about different experiences," which was a "cool part of sharing the narratives." What is interesting is his explicitness about how sharing the narratives enabled him, his peers, and me to learn about others.

Brian extended these ideas to student motivation and asserted that we make assumptions about what we believe will motivate students. He then nominated the question: "What should we do when someone makes a statement that is offensive in some way and assumes that we will "jump on board" with them?" While this question did not directly relate to student motivation, which was the first issue Brian raised, it did relate to an issue beyond the "story" of my narrative. He then built on this question with another that focused specifically on people's exposing their biases: "What do we do when we're in a casual situation and someone does expose their true feelings?" He said that he had "been that guy before" (where someone had revealed their true feelings to him) and that it had alienated him from people he worked with because they assumed he would "go along" with them. He then stopped and said, "That's it."

Obstacles to connected knowing. After Brian asked his two questions, Belinda added to the conversation, though she did not respond to one of his questions. Instead,

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she picked up on one of the ideas that both Brian and I had raised: making assumptions, particularly the kinds of assumptions we tend to make about others, and shared an example from her teaching experience. She described the location of her placement as affluent. However, she also claimed that not all of the students at her school were wealthy. She stated: "I would never have assumed that the majority of the students are poor or lack opportunity based on how they act, how they dress, and on the level of parental involvement." However, she discovered that many of her students had never been to either a museum or a public library, experiences that she thought many of her students would have had. She then said: "Just because kids wear expensive clothes and appear to come from wealthy families, it does not mean that they've had opportunities that we would assume go along with wealth." She then extended—and connected—this to the idea of motivation and asserted that we also make assumptions about what will motivate students, what items or rewards students find worth working for and believe that what will motivate us will also motivate our students.

True, Belinda discussed an issue raised within a narrative; but she did not identify what she learned. On the other hand, she did suggest that she challenged her original assumptions about her students and stretched her original frame of reference. Unlike Brian, however, her new understanding did not seem to include—or come out of— anything either Brian or I had contributed thus far to the conversation. In addition, she did not seem to be as concerned with putting forth a specific, genuine question as much as she was concerned with adding to the conversation with an anecdote from her teaching experience. Therefore, this does not seem like an instance of connected knowing.

Inconsistent procedures lead to further obstacles. At this point I stepped into the discussion and raised the question: "If the more "typical" or "traditional" ways to motivate students, such as grades and points or "tangible" rewards like candy, do not work, then what do we do?" I told the students that I did not know the answer to this question, which was true. But I also took the question further and asked: "If we know that these traditional means of motivation are largely unsuccessful with many students, then how do we—or how can we—go about determining what motivates them?"

At the time I was afraid that this discussion would take a turn toward a common occurrence in this class: "placement storytelling," which transpired at varied—and sometimes unexpected—times during each session. These episodes would arise whenever anyone made a statement that resonated with classroom experiences, situations that represented the interns' foremost concerns. But I also raised the question because I had heard my students repeatedly claim that their students did not care whether or not they failed, and that grades failed to motivate many of their students. However, I also knew that grades were a *huge* motivator for *my* students. My thinking was that if they did not understand *not* being motivated by grades—when grades had been their primary motivation through school—then how could they begin to fathom a different kind of motivation? I wanted my students to consider this, and so I raised the question.

I felt my students needed to examine why academic success (in the form of high marks) was so important to them, though not nearly as important to many of their students. I believed that this was related to positionality, the concept around which this project revolved. What is problematic here, though, is my "procedure." I did not present this question to my students as a genuine question; instead, it came with an agenda that

went beyond the desire to help my students form a connected knowing group. My question was focused on content, not process. I was not looking to help them gain access to other people's knowledge or ways of thinking. Certainly the question had that potential, but again, my motivation got in the way of its reaching that potential.

A genuine question removes obstacles. Erica—who described herself as having "maternal instincts" for her students—offered a genuine question that created a shift in the conversation: "At what point do we [teachers] just have to stop and say that we can't want 'it' [academic success] more than our students do...At what point do we say 'I've given all I can give? I can't do it anymore. Or I *won't* do it anymore.'" It seemed to be just the kind of question—genuine and specific—that moved the discussion to another level, as her question implied a desire to gain access to her peers' ways of thinking.

Erica's question seemed to cause Belinda to think anew about her narrative and how it connected to another student's thinking, as she entered the conversation again and referred to the article she located. The article was about intrinsic motivation, specifically the characteristics of intrinsically-motivated students and the goals to which they aspire. In order to do this, she had to include her peer's frame of reference within her own to extend her thinking. She connected Erica's question to her own thoughts when she stated: "While I was reading the article, I wondered if kids were just born this way. I wondered if some people are just naturally more interested." She then briefly described the content of her narrative, which was about her own desire to succeed and how this desire motivated her. This caused some of the other students in the class to begin the chant: "Read it; read it; read it." I then invited Belinda to read her narrative, and she

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agreed to share. This seemed to move the group into a new direction that reflected more connected knowing and which is depicted in Moment Two.

Moment Two: Connecting Stories

The second moment took place after Belinda read her narrative. During this portion of the discussion, the students continued with the idea of motivation, which they raised after I read my narrative. However, this moment also demonstrates how the combination of narratives worked toward the students' developing new understandings.

Additionally, this moment in the class discussion reveals the potential of connected knowing for students' constructing new knowledge and new frames of reference. And again, like the first moment, it demonstrates how this can happen through the process of working to gain insight into other people's ways of thinking and asking genuine questions that come out of a desire to understand experiences—and positions—unlike our own. On the other hand, it also illuminates how quickly the processes of connected knowing can crumble when members of the group seem to be more interested in sharing their own stories and positing their own beliefs than in connecting with others. Finally, this moment is significant in that it reveals a possible procedure for connected knowing I had not previously considered: silence.

Staying out of students' way. Belinda's narrative continued the idea of student motivation, particularly intrinsic motivation. One of the students, Kay, then identified a theme in Belinda's narrative that resonated with her: students' desire to please teachers. She remarked: "I find it interesting how many times throughout her narrative Belinda talked about wanting to please her teachers. I think I probably tried to do that a lot as well." It seemed that Belinda's understanding of herself—in trying to please her own

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teachers—offered Kay insights into her own experiences. From there, though, no one

picked up on Kay's statement in a way that indicated they were trying to understand her

or her thinking. However, a brief exchange ensued that moved the conversation beyond

Belinda's narrative to identifying an issue: how gender might affect students' desire to

please their teachers.

Diane then entered the discussion for the first time and took the conversation in a

new direction:

> My experiences have shown me that if the students care at all—even a
> little bit—about the teacher and what the teacher thinks, then it is easier to
> motivate them than for a teacher who they don't care about. I have some
> students who if they believe they have disappointed me, then they will
> apologize and start to work harder. I have other students who could care
> less whether I yell and scream the whole hour.

At this point, I posed a question to Diane: "So what have you done to make your students

care about what you think?" I worked to connect this back to Belinda's writing,

particularly her reflection, where she talked about the goals of intrinsically-motivated

students, the last goal being: building satisfying relationships with teachers. I explained

that this is what I understood Diane to be saying and further extended my original

question, saying that I wanted to know how teachers might go about building those

satisfying relationships with students, as well as how teachers and students may have

different perceptions of what constitutes a satisfying—or positive—relationship. My

thinking was that even though we might assume that we have established a positive

relationship with students, it does not mean that students perceive those relationships as

positive.

Reflecting back on this moment, I think I was trying to accomplish several things

here. First, I wanted to refer directly to a narrative, perhaps to model for my students

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how they might think of using them. In addition, I always held the primary goal of this assignment in the back of my mind: to get my students to explore the issue of positionality. I wanted them to remember that we cannot assume that our students are like us or that they have the same perceptions or understandings that we do. Just because we believe that a relationship with a student is satisfying, does not mean that our students see it the same way. While I did not disagree with Diane, I wanted to push the conversation further.

However, my current understanding of this moment reveals that my question was genuine. In other words, while I was aware of how I worked to build positive relationships with my students, I had no idea how they might go about accomplishing that. Like the question I asked earlier about motivation, the answer to this question was unknown to me. Unlike that question, however, I did not have a "content agenda" with this question; instead, I was more concerned with process. In posing a new question, I intended to offer my students an opportunity to extend their initial understandings. The subsequent portion of this moment, as described below, does not provide evidence that anyone picked up on the content of my question. It does, however, provide an illustration of how some of the students worked toward more connected knowing. So while my question may not have necessarily generated this discussion, it also did not interfere with my students' efforts.

Connecting "stories" with exploratory talk. Dahlia moved the conversation in a significantly different direction, back to how to motivate the students who do not want to do anything. While this may not seem like a new direction, Dahlia added a new layer:

> I liked Belinda's narrative because my own experience as a high school
> student was so radically different from Belinda's. I think it was cool that

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Belinda talked about being an only child and not having any life-changing, horrible events in her life and that she went to school to learn and to impress her teachers. I connect with my students—like the kid in the back of the room who's sleeping. I go by that student and think about how I got tired in English class too—and didn't stay awake in class and didn't do anything...I had every crap thing in the world happen to me...that's why I didn't care about high school...I do not look down on the students who sleep in class...these students go home and their mom's doing drugs or someone has cancer or something.

She reiterated that she thought it was "cool" that Belinda's experience was so different.

Dahlia seemed somewhat at a loss at this point when she was trying to connect back to

Belinda's narrative, though she was explicit about what she gained from Belinda's

narrative: insight into a perspective that was different from her own. In that sense, she

was working to "connect." Moreover, she was seemingly working to articulate an idea,

primarily that the students in this course—despite their assumptions that they were all

pretty much the same—were, in reality, significantly different. It is here that I asked

Dahlia if she would like to share her narrative with the class.

Dahlia's narrative focused on what she had witnessed so far in her life: divorce,

domestic violence, and dissociation. She also wrote about the event that most "haunts"

her: the year her mother was first diagnosed with breast cancer. Her narrative described

that year, how she tried to cope, and her feelings about her mother. After Dahlia read her

narrative, she sat quietly, with her head down, close to tears. No one spoke.

Critical instant. As I reflect back on this moment, trying to "name" how I felt, I

realize that I was at a loss as to how to respond to Dahlia. What was I supposed to say?

What was I supposed to do? I wanted to respond to *her* as if no one else was in the room.

I did not want to move back to talk about students, teaching, and learning. I did not want

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to even think about positionality at that moment because the concept seemed too distant, perhaps too objective. So I remained silent, as did everyone else.

I have since come to realize that this silence may not have been a bad thing. It may be preferable to a response, question, or statement that is offered in order to fill the silence. Perhaps these times of silence are also indicative of a group working to become more connected. Yes, some members of the group may not speak out of a sense of discomfort. On the other hand, others may be absorbing another's story, trying to understand that person's feelings, working to extend their understanding into an experience unlike their own. That process requires time, perhaps time for quietude and reflection.

Dahlia eventually apologized for the "buzz kill," which lightened the air. The first student who responded was Brian, who exclaimed, "Wow! That was great writing!" Neither Dahlia nor anyone else responded. Instead, Dahlia returned to what she had said earlier: "I just liked Belinda's narrative because it was so different. I like that there are two teachers out there who are so different." Then, "I don't know where that came from." Based on what followed, it seemed that some of the students were moving toward developing new understandings.

Struggling to share others' perspectives to reach new understandings. The ensuing conversation began when both Thad and Brian talked about two different students who were facing situations similar to Dahlia's. Each of them explained how their thinking about these students—and how to work with these students more effectively—had changed as a result of what they discovered through Dahlia's story. Brian's response, especially, reflected this. He referred again to students who sleep in

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class and how it can be hard to discern what is happening because there *are* kids who have everything but who are simply uninterested. Then he said: "On the other hand, there are times you have to ask yourself: 'How can I motivate this kid to continue living?'" Although Dahlia responded to Brian's question with some "tangible" ideas, the opportunity for more connected knowing seemed to end here in that three other students reverted back to the "usual" tendency: sharing teaching anecdotes. None of these students identified anything they had learned; nor did they identify a new issue or expand on the issue that had been raised. Furthermore, none of them asked a genuine question. As a result, the question Brian raised was essentially set aside. Although it seemed that Dahlia, Thad, and Brian had worked to challenge their original thinking and extend their thinking to gain new understandings, their work to continue to move in that direction seemed to stop here.

Moment Three: Blending Process and Content

This final moment took place after the last two students shared their narratives. I chose this particular segment because some of the students were increasingly explicit about the differences between their experiences. I also chose it because the students talked about creating spaces where their middle and high school students can safely explore issues of diversity. It is also the *only* time that one of the focus students participates in the conversation.

As I analyzed this entire class session, this third moment is where I did not feel the tension between content and processes that I often did. In addition, we were moving in the direction of more carefully exploring the concept of positionality, even though neither the students nor I were explicit about that. Therefore, this moment reflects how

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content and process can be blended together and how one can be addressed without "sacrificing" the other. Finally, it also suggests how challenging it is to guide and support students as they work to understand a difficult concept such as positionality and how that concept "plays out" in their lives in classrooms.

Moving toward new understandings and exploring positionality. At one point toward the end of the class, Kathy, a quiet student, came into the discussion for the first time. She was responding to two other students, Iris and Brian, particularly around the issue of giving students spaces to express their beliefs and opinions, "safe" places where students could feel free to voice what may be unpopular—even offensive—perspectives without fear of recrimination or attack. She stated:

> My narrative is about the importance of teachers' allowing whatever talk
> is to happen and to create a safe place where it can. I grew up in an
> environment where I couldn't talk about a lot of my realities. I believe I
> suffered because of it. I believe now—as a teacher—it is hard to create a
> space where kids can express their myriad of opinions and teach tolerance
> and allow expression to happen—to educate them in their opinions.

Brian seemed to challenge Kathy, as he believed that she was arguing for allowing students to just express whatever they want without challenging them. He contextualized this challenge in his teaching of *Huck Finn* and said: "I asked my students about why Huck makes the right decision. I told them they could express whatever opinion they wanted, *except*: 'Huck makes the wrong decision because everyone should continue to be racist.'" Kathy asserted: "…when awful opinions are not expressed, then you don't have the opportunity to counter or challenge them; and they will continue to go on." Three other students: Belinda, Karen, and Iris, all recounted brief incidents where students had made offensive comments in their classrooms. Various sidebar conversations then took place until I asked Kathy to share her narrative. At this point Iris indicated that she

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wanted to read her narrative as well. This is the only time during the class discussion where one student's reading directly followed another with no discussion between the readings.

Kathy's narrative described the context in which she grew up, the "Bible belt" of the South and hence, her family's involvement in a fundamentalist church. The narrative also described her struggle against this culture as she came to realize that she was homosexual, as well as the tensions she felt between her spirituality and her sexuality, thus leading her to conclude that there was no such thing as "reality," only "realities." She concluded with how all of this had affected her stance as a teacher, focusing specifically on her desire to be "safe" for her students and to create safe spaces for them, regardless of their beliefs or values. Iris' narrative was somewhat different. She wrote about attending high school in Japan and developing a close relationship with one particular Japanese family, as well as how intimate knowledge of a culture other than her own had made her less tolerant of students' offensive racial and ethnic comments born of ignorance and fear.

Working to support students' efforts. Just as when Dahlia read her narrative, we seemed to be in a "strange place" yet again. I recall that I felt like we could not leave Kathy's narrative "unaddressed," that we needed to respond to it. Therefore, unlike when Dahlia read, I interjected and did not remain silent. Instead, I remarked: "We have two very different kinds of narratives on the table at the same time. Both of them deal with giving kids spaces so that they are not shut down." Although Iris' narrative was not really about this, I remember that I wanted to make a more explicit move to ensure that we would—or could—return to the issues Kathy raised in her narrative. I then turned to

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Iris and said that hers was similar in that she talked about an appreciation for what differences in worldviews or perspectives bring. I encouraged my students to think about this, hoping that they would respond based on those issues.

My remark is about the content focus of the project: positionality. The previous discussion had suggested how students come to classrooms with many different beliefs and perspectives, as do teachers. And the two narratives offered, though each in a unique way, an opportunity to move closer to the overall goals for this project. My comments also suggest my concern with the processes involved. My motivation came out of a desire to have my students consider what they may have learned—what insights they may have garnered—from each of the narratives. And I was particularly concerned with their extending their understandings to include Kathy's position, one perhaps unlike their own. Therefore, my statement worked to allow the students to begin to explore the concept of positionality (though not overtly) while working to connect with how their peers were thinking.

Deeper meta-cognitive awareness of process and content. Toward the end of this conversation, another interesting development took place. Steve, one of the focal students for this study, spoke for the first time and brought the conversation to a more meta-cognitive level as he discussed how he was learning from this discussion: "What is engaging to me in each of these narratives is not the details—or the grammar—but that each one is unique and different." He then explicitly referred to what Belinda and Dahlia had written and spoken about, as well as Iris and Kathy. He concluded his statement saying that if all of the writing were about the same thing, he would be uninterested. But

because each piece was so unique, he was completely engaged and considering how it all applied to his teaching practice.

Diane also talked about the narratives, building on what Steve said. She asserted that what a teacher brings to the classroom—her unique experiences—is important, particularly the different "angles" and "diversity." She then stated:

> This is making me think again because I have always believed that I learned the most from the teachers who were just like me or that I wanted to teach students who are just like me. After listening to the students read their narratives, I believe it is important that students hear a different outlook. If you hear the same things from people who are just like you then it's like you're being boxed in. This is just making me re-think about where I think I want to be. Maybe I could bring more—or be more powerful—in a classroom where there's no student like me because I can then bring my varied experiences and my outlook on life.

This was the first time in the entire conversation that the students referred to the narratives themselves, to what the writing and sharing of narrative might accomplish. While this was not the first time that a student mentioned how each of their narratives was unique (as Dahlia alluded to earlier in the discussion), it was the first time that one of the students (Diane) made an explicit recognition of the diversity between teachers and students. We did not talk about how those differences may position all of us differently (positionality); but we were moving in that direction.

After this class session, Steve revealed to me that he wished he had shared his narrative because his perspective and experiences were unlike anyone else's. This illustrated to me his deeper understanding of how an awareness of others' perspectives—and working to inhabit those perspectives—can lead to substantial learning.

Overview: Discussion Two

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The second day of sharing narratives and reflections took place during the second to last class session. For the most part, the students were no longer teaching at their placements, though they were still involved to varying degrees, whether it was observing other teachers in the building or at other schools or grading student work. They were also in the midst of preparing their portfolios and completing all of their university coursework. Needless to say, this day of sharing was not always as focused as the first day for perhaps various reasons: a "senioritis" type of phenomenon, a more relaxed feeling since students were more familiar with the format, a general preoccupation with end-of-the-year events, or sheer exhaustion. Despite this, the topics or issues that we raised included: parental involvement; teacher/parent relationships; teachers' attitudes as they progress through their careers; dismissing or "writing off" students; "saving" students; teachers' perceptions of students and students' perceptions of teachers; parental access to the education "system;" teachers' vulnerability in the classroom; the "power hierarchy" that reflects students' varying degrees of status amongst their peers; relationship between students' social lives and academic lives; differences between public and private schools; classroom discussions around uncomfortable issues; competition amongst students, school as the "real world" as opposed to an isolated world; connections between school curricula and students' lived experiences.

Again, rather than talk about the entire discussion, or about any specific ideas raised during the discussion, I have chosen two significant moments. I chose these moments primarily because they demonstrate the students' growth from the first session to the second, despite the lack of focus that sometimes occurred. The first moment took place during the first fifteen minutes of the session. I included it as an example of how

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the students seemed to take their learning about the processes involved in connected knowing and build on them from the moment the discussion started, as well as to show how the authenticity of motivation communicates a desire for connection. In other words, I genuinely desired to do nothing more than share my story, without as much concern about what happened after I told my story (the direction of the discussion or the topics my students discussed). Therefore, my own desire for relationship seemed to set a somewhat different tone and encourage a more connected orientation toward the discussion. The second moment takes place approximately one fourth of the way through the session. I have included this moment for two reasons. First, one of the key participants is Lisa, one of the focal students. Steve, another focal student, is also a participant. Second, this conversation reflects the students engaged in the procedures involved in connected knowing more than any other moments, perhaps suggesting *how* such a group begins to evolve.

Moment One: Primacy of Process

Like my analysis of the first discussion, this analysis also starts with what took place after I read my narrative (again being the first reader). This moment is somewhat different, however, because the impetus for my sharing this particular story changed. Therefore, this moment demonstrates how motivation, particularly one's need to tell a story, might create a better opportunity for connected knowing. It also demonstrates how my primary concern with process (the telling), as opposed to content, opened the door for all of us to connect in a way that perhaps had never happened before.

A parent's story. Again, I read first, a narrative about my oldest son, his experiences in school, and my experiences as a parent trying to access—and

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communicate with—his teachers and school counselor. After I finished reading, Dana immediately jumped in and stated: "I am glad that you read that and that we had the opportunity to hear it. Because most of us do not yet have children, we don't necessarily understand the parental perspective, which is unique."

Comparing *this* initial moment to the opening moment from the first discussion leads me to one interesting conclusion, based on my disparate motivation or agenda. When I shared my first narrative with my students, my focus was on the "issue," as opposed to the "story." I was not as concerned with sharing my story as I was with wanting my students to focus on the issues my story raised. However, this time I was only interested in telling my story, to sharing my experiences with my students.

Part of that experience was my feelings of frustration about the assumptions others made about both my son and me. I had always been a teacher in public schools, an "insider." However, I was now an "outsider," trying to access a public school. I had heard so many of my previous students say (so often) that their own students' parents were uninterested in their child's education because the parents did not behave in ways that fit their notion of the "norm" for parental involvement. My students' idea of "norm"—based on what they said—was how their own parents had been involved in *their* education. As they had described these parents, I often felt as if they were describing *me*. I wanted my students to hear my story, perhaps in an effort to defend my own parental choices or perhaps for them to see that sometimes situations are not what they might seem.

Looking at this moment with fresh—or perhaps more distanced—eyes, it now seems that my motivation altered the nature of what took place. Dana could simply

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respond to the story and in turn, respond to me. As a result, she identified an insight she had gained from my story, challenged her own initial thinking, and extended her understanding to my position—one unlike her own.

After she responded, then Darian and Erica responded. In previous discussions both Darian and Erica seemed primarily concerned with sharing stories from their placements. However, each of them responded in a different way this time. Darian talked about her own family, about how she and her sister did well in school while her brother struggled. In looking at her parents' experiences with her brothers' teachers, she identified a new understanding: perhaps those teachers made some incorrect assumptions about *her* parents. She then claimed that she does not want to be that kind of teacher. Instead, she wants to be the one who tries to reach out to each of her students, free of assumptions.

When Erica spoke, she—like Dana—responded to me:

> I believe the real problem your narrative brought to the surface was that
> you were a parent who really wanted to get involved and who wanted to
> have lots of communication with your son's teachers, but his teachers
> were an obstruction. Not only did they not initiate communication with
> you, but they actually got in the way of that process. I felt frustrated while
> I listened to your narrative.

All three of these students' responses reveal how they worked to stretch their frame of reference to include mine. Even though none of these students was a parent, they worked to weave my parental perspectives into their own. In turn, they raised new issues, such as teachers obstructing or perhaps eliminating the possibility for honest communication with parents and the unique qualities of individual students. By the same token, they did not seem to be trying to solve any particular problem or trying to identify any particular strategy to use. Instead, they identified some issues my narrative had raised for them,

thus allowing them to develop new understandings, all of which reflect the procedures of a connected knowing group.

Moment Two: Exploring Issues of Humanity

What seems important about this moment is that it demonstrates how students can use more than "story" to begin to make connections with each other and to begin to construct new knowledge. In this moment one student worked to connect with another through the use of a more theoretical text. Therefore, it illustrates that through the process of working to be a more connected-knowing group, students can begin to draw on both subjective and objective knowledge in order to develop new frames of reference.

On the other hand, this moment is significant in that it suggests implications for teaching practice, particularly as it illuminates what it might mean to trust both ourselves and our students, as well as what taking risks and being vulnerable might entail. It also further elucidates the importance of authenticity and genuineness in connected knowing groups, as it suggests the necessity of taking risks and explores what those risks might require.

Connecting through theory. After a brief conversation around what it means to "save" kids or what that looks like, Steve (a focus student) came into the conversation and raised the issue of students' perceptions of teachers. He asserted that until teachers are able to connect with their students, those students will not see their teachers as "people." He further asserted that once students see teachers as people, then teachers "have them;" and he shared two anecdotes of how he has tried to reveal his humanity to his students, also stating that he never perceived his own teachers this way (as people).

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He concluded with: "Being a person means being able to say you are sorry or being able to say you are wrong."

It is here that Lisa (another focus student) spoke for the first time, and her response to Steve clearly indicated that she was responding to what he said and working to extend it. Unlike other moments in the class, however, she worked to connect with what Steve was saying not through her narrative but through the text she located to inform her narrative: *Teaching to Transgress* by bell hooks (1994). She said:

> One of hooks's arguments is that teachers need to make themselves
> vulnerable in the classroom, which is probably the scariest thing in the
> entire world. But if students see the teacher as vulnerable, then they will
> be more willing to be vulnerable as well and be willing to take risks with
> the teacher and see that the teacher is not perfect.

Not everyone possesses necessarily the same understanding of concepts such as honesty or vulnerability. Therefore, raising those issues implies some kind of question or the need for some kind of exploration. This seems consistent with the procedures for connected knowing. In addition, this procedure moves students toward positing new questions and holds the potential for students to extend their initial understandings of the concepts beyond what they perhaps have previously thought.

Understanding vulnerability. At this point I encouraged Lisa to read her narrative, where she had described an extremely personal tragedy, the death of her boyfriend of three years and who she would—in all likelihood—have married. After she finished, she talked about how she utilized it with her own students, which was what she described in her reflection. She told us about what happened when she shared this with her students: how her classroom changed for the rest of the year, how her students perceived her differently, how her views of her students changed because of what they were then

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willing to share. She described her choice to share this with her students as "probably the best decision" she made that year. When Lisa finished, a long moment of silence ensued.

Kathy was the first student who responded to Lisa's narrative, which is interesting given that after *she* shared her narrative during the first session, we were all silent *then* too. And she began by simply thanking Lisa for sharing and for being vulnerable with all of us. She also told Lisa that she liked the connections she made to the classroom, but that even more, "I want to call everyone I love and tell them how much I love them." What I found interesting in Kathy's response is that just as Lisa became vulnerable, so did Kathy, in that she was willing to share her feelings with all of us. It was as if Lisa had invited all of us to join her.

I, on the other hand, *wanted* to respond as Kathy had responded but did not. I was too busy trying to control my own emotions and feeling like I could not let myself just "go with it." In retrospect, I wish I had done that or could have done that. But this required an entirely different level of vulnerability. Choosing how and when to be vulnerable—as well as having control over the *level* of vulnerability—is very different than being vulnerable in a response to someone else. I now wish I had taken bigger risks.

Lost opportunity to connect out of fear of losing control. The conversation took an interesting twist at this juncture. Wanda asked Lisa if she had cried when she shared this story with her own students. Lisa answered that she had shared it on four different occasions with various classes and that while she shook badly (as she did when she read it to us), she did not cry (as she did when she read it to us). Just as I had worked to keep a tight rein on my emotions—in order to *not* cry—it seems that perhaps Wanda was feeling as I did, that we should not cry in front of our students. I remember thinking:

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What is it about crying? Why are we so afraid to let someone see us cry? But instead of

asking that question—the *real, genuine* question that was in my mind—I asked a more

"teacherly," distanced question: "What made you decide to take this stance, to share this

with your students, and to set yourself up (in a sense) to be this vulnerable?" Even

though at the time I thought this was an important question, one that would get behind

her thinking and encompass the more complex idea of teacher "stance," it now seems like

my question diminished this entire moment. Because I was not honest with my students

about what I was really thinking and how I was really feeling and because I resisted

exposing my emotions, I missed the opportunity to truly connect. My students were

sincerely struggling to do that, and I did not support them in that effort like I could have.

As a result, this particular moment in time, the one moment where we could have all

really "connected" as we considered fear and loss and sadness vanished.

Lisa did try to bring us back to that level when she said: "I felt I would be lying if

I didn't choose to share this particular story. When I think personal narrative I think that

this is the story of my life so far." And then once again, I tried to create some distance

and asked the class what is scary about doing this, about opening yourself up to your

students like this. I asked them to consider themselves and why or how that would be

frightening for them.

What is painfully ironic about this is that the very question I was posing to my

students was the one I refused to answer for myself in that very moment. What makes it

even more ironic is that the idea of being vulnerable with students—and perhaps working

to shift some of the "traditional" boundaries between teacher and student—was one of the

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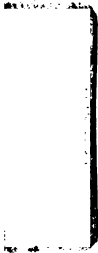
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more theoretical ideas that informed this study and what I hoped informed my teaching practice. However, when the time came to really put that to the test, I failed miserably.

Diane then answered my question (a disingenuous one at that since I already knew the answer) that teachers want to be in control or at least to feel like they are in control. She stated: "When you share something about yourself, you equate pain with weakness or tears with weakness. When you share that side of yourself, it's almost like you're out of control and that you're not sure you want your students to see you in that state." At that point two other students, Erica and Karen, talked about what happens when we ask students to share personal parts of their lives, thus making students uncomfortable; and their comments revealed to me that the moment was lost. As hard as some of my students tried to work as a connected knowing group, it seems I worked just as hard to undermine them, thus eliminating that opportunity in order to protect myself.

Examining Discourse

Just as I had assumptions of how my students might have understood this project and what they learned from it, I also made assumptions about the nature of the discourse in my classes. For example, I knew that for the most part, I let my students take control of the discussions and determine their direction. I also was aware of how I challenged myself to not insert myself into their conversations, even if I disagreed with what they were saying, unless I deemed it absolutely necessary. Instead, I had always tended to let them work their own way through issues, even if it meant taking a circuitous route and following diverging paths.

However, I was not aware of how often my students seemed primarily concerned with getting their thoughts "out there," whatever their motivations, or of how often the

connections they made to what other students said were superficial at best. I also had not considered the extent to which my students challenged both themselves and others in an attempt to learn more or to weave their thinking in with someone else's. That said, examining the discourse involved in these two class sessions allowed me to investigate my hypotheses and to interrogate the assumptions I had made about the nature of discussions in my classroom. Furthermore, scrutinizing these discussions more systematically opened up insights about connected knowing: what it might look like, what it does *not* look like, and the inherent challenges in guiding, encouraging, and supporting students as they work to connect with each other.

Footnotes

1.   Because I was working to enact a feminist stance, I always perceived myself

(whether or not my students did) as an "equal" member of the group.

Therefore, if I am a part of one of these "moments," I include my

contributions just as I would anyone else's. However, my discussion of those

portions of the discussion are somewhat different, in that I include what I was

thinking at the moment, as well as my present understandings of those

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Chapter 6

Exploring Students' Sense-Making

How Understanding of Content and Process Impacts Learning

Introduction

I have separated process and content in this study, primarily because initially, I

also intended to examine my own pedagogy around the project. (See Chapter 3 for a

more thorough discussion of the rationale for not including an analysis of my pedagogy.)

Again, as in Chapter 4, I provide an overview of the cases, identifying the questions to

which I attended most closely and how I approached the analysis of the students'

responses. (See Appendix C for the complete interview protocols and Chapter 3 for a

more thorough discussion of my methodology.) I then present each of the students as an

individual case to provide support for my argument and conclude with a cross-case

analysis that suggests the significance of what the findings reveal.

The Nature of Process

I divide the following portion of this chapter into three sections, one for each of

the focus students: Erin, Steve, and Lisa, who I again present as "cases." Each case

includes the following: 1) a brief description of my perceptions of the conversation with

each student as a way to perhaps provide a sense of the tone of each interview and

additional insights into the student; 2) the overall assertions I make regarding the entirety

of the student's responses; and 3) an analysis of their more specific responses, focusing

on their understanding of both private and public processes and the concept of

positionality, as well as their thoughts on how engagement with the project has impacted

their teaching practices. Finally, a cross-case analysis provides further interpretation and explores the challenges or issues that may inherently be a part of a project such as this (based on students' responses). The chapter ends with a consideration of the insights I gained about how prospective teachers grapple with complicated concepts such as positionality.

Analysis of Student Responses

I first examined students' responses to questions around the writing processes involved in the project, such as topic choice and how writing a more reflective, analytical piece to accompany the narrative affected their learning. I also examined questions that asked the students to contemplate what took place during our class discussions. I then considered their responses to questions about positionality, specifically whether or not they understood the concept (as I had never been explicit about "naming" the concept in class) and the sense they made of the project's contribution to their conceptual understanding. As I described the students' responses, I looked for similarities and differences in their responses and through this more interpretive work, sought to draw conclusions about the students' sense-making.

Finally, I had always questioned how my students' engagement with this project and their understanding of the concept of positionality may impact their teaching practices. Therefore, I focused on questions that explored their thoughts on students, teaching, and learning. I had never observed these students engaged in actual teaching, other than 10-20 minute videos of class discussions recorded during their internship experiences. As a result, I fully recognize the limitations in relying on my students' self-reports as accurate depictions of their work in classrooms. Nevertheless, my analysis of

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how they made sense of the project, combined with their self-reports, provides some insights into the nature of their understanding of the processes and content of The Narrative Project.

Erin

I identified Erin as a "skeptical" student, though not necessarily a "resistant" student. In addition, of all the students I chose as focal students, Erin was the only one who was initially hesitant. Before she agreed to participate as a focal student, she asked to meet with me in order to gain further clarity on how I might use her story, as well as how I intended to protect her privacy. Even after I provided additional explanations, Erin wanted more time to mull over whether or not she wanted to participate. However, once she decided, Erin was very open to talking with me and seemed equally willing to share personal information, as well as to open up her teaching practice to me.

Erin provides an illustration of a student who seemed to find the narrative writing component of the project the most beneficial but who also appreciated the role of collaborative work, despite her unwillingness to participate. However, examining her responses against the content of her writing suggests that it was her listening to her peers' stories that actually worked to further push her thinking about the concept of positionality. She was able to articulate how she sees the influence of the project in her ability to interrogate some of the assumptions she made about students, as well as in her approaches to situations she encountered with her students, both as individuals and as a group. Erin's appreciation for the more private aspects of the project and for the opportunity to learn more about her peers seemed to help her think more carefully about her teaching practice.

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Erin's Understanding of Process

Open-minded yet guarded. Despite her own hesitance, Erin's advice for other students or prospective teachers who might engage in a project such as this was to keep an open mind. She further clarified: "So often when we are trying to become teachers, we want to guard ourselves. But I think this project itself allows—or challenges—you not to do that. You have to challenge yourself to put out the issues that you are dealing with, the issues that you see the most for yourself."

Erin then explained why an open mind was necessary, as well as how she found the project challenging. To help clarify she differentiated between the demands of the writing and the inherent difficulty of sharing personal writing with peers:

> I think it's a combination. The writing part I think is good because it helps you to be reflective on a larger level. It's the challenge that you're actually putting it on paper and going through the process. Because I think so often we're reflective but we don't put it on paper. We don't think of all the aspects related to it [a particular issue or situation] or all the reasons why it might be bothering us. In that regard, you have to be open to letting the pen hit the paper and seeing where it goes. And then I also think it's a challenge to share the material, but it's good because so often we think that it's easy for our kids to share. But it's not. And even if it's about writing that is not personal, sometimes it's hard to share.

In retrospect, she wished she had shared with the group and believed that with more time, she would have shared. However, she always felt like she did not quite fit in and believed that her peers noticed that—or felt that way about her as well—even though they were always welcoming. She believed that because she "was so quiet in class yet involved in quite a bit outside of class," people just did not "get" her and that sharing her narrative would have given her peers more insights into who she was.

Despite my initial perception of Erin as skeptical, Erin's self-report of her understanding of the processes involved in the project revealed that she was not as

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skeptical as she was guarded. She assured me that she trusted me; otherwise, her writing would not have been so personal. She also felt that any confidence she shared with me would stay between us and that I would share our conversations with the larger group only if she gave her permission. Nevertheless, she cited the following reasons for her reticence: 1) she did not want to share personal information with her peers; 2) she felt intimidated by the size of the group but would have shared with a small group; 3) she had always felt that she was somewhat different from her peers; and 4) she felt a strong sense of competition with her peers, especially for teaching positions.

Erin's responses reveal her thinking on how she worked to remain open minded about the entire project and seemed to be more able to accomplish that in her writing, as opposed to during class discussions. Her writing reflected this willingness, and her never speaking in class during either session also reveals that she remained somewhat guarded with her peers.

Erin's Understanding of Positionality

Coming in through the back door. Erin had not thought of the concept of positionality before I asked her about it, though as she reflected on her learning from the project, she maintained that the project helped her to explore the concept. However, she stated that she went in through the "back door" because she started by considering students who were more like her, as opposed to those who were not. Nevertheless, when Erin elaborated, focusing specifically on social class, she referred first to our seminar, stating that she always felt somewhat different from her peers, assuming that most of them were from a middle class or upper middle class background. This implies that even

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though she began the seminar with that assumption, the process of hearing others' stories may have disrupted it somewhat.

Erin then moved to talk about her own students and her teaching practice. She began by identifying those students who were like her. However, she revealed that her current thinking about those students had become more complicated, as she considered how those students may be different from her, despite seeming similarities. In talking about students who were in "that situation," (meaning her family's past financial situation), she made the following admission:

> I am much harder on students who are in that situation, though I try not to be. I have a lot of kids who are in similar situations but who may not have parents like mine who told me that I was going to college or who are supportive (maybe not financially) but in terms of walking them through that process and preparing them. I have a hard time with students who come from a similar background but refuse to see that they have similar opportunities, so I am harder on them and tell them that yes, they can do this.

Erin was quick to also admit that this project had helped her recognize that students (even those from the same social class) are different because of other factors (in this instance parental influence and support).

Erin then went on to talk further about her idea of going through the back door when she said: "We recognize how students are like us and by doing so, recognize how they are not." She then shared an anecdote about a particular student who she believed was "like her." However, as the year progressed, she began to notice how she and this student were really not as much alike as she had originally thought, despite some similarities. She concluded: "I think that in some ways I was able to connected with parts of [this student's] situation, which helped for awhile. But I also began to see bigger gaps

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between him and myself and in our backgrounds, not just a personal thing but people's backgrounds. I saw both connections and gaps."

Erin did not think she would have reached these conclusions without having engaged in The Narrative Project, primarily because she did not think she would have told this student about her own background. She also asserted that she gained the understanding that in order for teachers to work successfully with their students, those students need to have a sense of a teacher as a person and need to know where a teacher is coming from. She clarified this further when she asserted that this is necessary because adults tend to "keep things back," but teenagers are generally "much more out there" with what is going on in their lives. Therefore, teachers need to reveal themselves to students as well.

I agree with Erin's self-assessment that she worked to remain open-minded and to challenge herself throughout this project. I also recognized that Erin was a quiet, reflective student when this seminar first began. She seemed able to draw on her reflective nature in this project and gain some new understandings, even though she chose not to share any of herself with her colleagues during the duration of this project. Nevertheless, her listening to others share their stories seemed to lead to her understanding that both similarities and differences exist between people, differences and similarities that we are unaware of, primarily because we make assumptions. This seemed to lead to a more refined understanding of positionality—at least compared to the nature of her understanding as reflected in her writing. Furthermore, Erin demonstrated her increasing awareness of how students might be both like her as well as *not* like her in her explicit illustrations from her teaching.
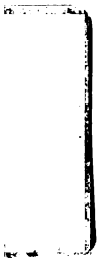
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Steve

During his interview, Steve engaged in extensive story-telling about his teaching. For example, he discussed the following topics: what happened when he lost a student's paper, students' responses to texts he was teaching and how he addressed that, being "straight" with students about their GPAs and how they will affect their future opportunities, curricular issues and departmental assessment practices at his school, negative professional development experiences. He seemed completely wrapped up with telling "stories of teaching." It was difficult to get him to stay on track and to consider various aspects of the project without forays into these illustrations.

Steve was also more than willing to talk with me. In addition, he was animated, and his responses consistently reflected his passion for teaching, though they also continued to reflect his frustration with his teacher preparation program as a whole. However, this time his frustration was located with his district's and school's professional development efforts. He seemed to still hold the belief that "answers" for his questions and concerns existed somewhere but that those responsible for providing those answers continued to "hold out" on him.

Like Erin, Steve was a student who seemed to find the narrative writing component of the project beneficial and who also appreciated the role of the collaborative work, even though again like Erin, he chose not to share his narrative. However, unlike Erin, he did participate in the class discussions. I would not attribute this to a difference in their understanding of the role of the discussions in their learning but rather to Steve's tendency to be more willing to speak up in class discussions.

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Examining Steve's responses against the content of his writing suggests that his listening to his peers' stories also worked to further his thinking about the concept of positionality. However, what seemed more influential in Steve's understanding of the concept was his own lived experiences. Furthermore, he seemed somewhat unwilling to talk about the concept itself; and rather than talking about how he sees the influence of the project in his ability to interrogate some of the assumptions he made about students or in his approaches to specific situations, he talked more about how his learning from the class discussions influenced his decision to engage in a similar project with his own students. Therefore, he seemed to perceive the project as an example of an "effective" assignment (or activity) that he might incorporate into his instruction, as opposed to a method for examining himself and his teaching practice as a whole.

Steve's Understanding of Process

The significance of personal history. Steve chose the topic for his narrative for the following reason: "It's a synopsis of who I am, who I was, and how I got to where I am now. It has definitely impacted the teacher that I am." Despite this understanding, he did not realize how much writing the reflection would affect how he saw himself as a teacher or how it would influence how he saw teaching. The narrative opened his eyes, and the reflective piece added onto that. He also believed that the reflection "solidified or clarified" the ideas he raised in his narrative and gave him more perspective. Unfortunately, I was unable to get Steve to explain how it impacted his perceptions of himself as a teacher—or how it had influenced his teaching—beyond his using an adaptation of the project with his own students.

When he talked about the class discussions, Steve wished that everyone in the class could have read their narratives. He expressed his certainty that had he shared his narrative, everyone would have seen him differently—would have seen *him* and viewed him as who he really is. Although he initially did not want to read his narrative when he came to class, he started hearing his peers share and realized how much it was helping him to better understand them. He then wished he had had the opportunity to do the same, as he was surprised at how unique everyone's story was—yet still different from his own. In fact, Steve asserted that what he learned from the project was a new realization of the "significance of everybody's history, whether a teacher or a student."

It seems that Steve's understanding of the writing portion of the project has that it enabled him to tell his story, as well as to clarify his thinking about teaching. However, it does not seem as if the writing caused him to challenge his thinking in any way or to reflect further on his teaching—in light of his personal experiences—to gain new insights. Instead, it seemed to reinforce what was already present. On the other hand, Steve found the discussions enlightening, gaining new understandings of others and the realization that the variety of experiences present in any given classroom can lead to everyone's learning.

Steve's Understanding of Positionality

Lived changes in positionality affect understanding. Steve claimed that he understood the concept of positionality, not necessarily because of his engagement with this project, but because he had "lived" a change in his own positionality, which he identified as a path from drug dealer to teacher. He decided that the best way to

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demonstrate this understanding was through the following personal anecdote, which followed this path, ending at "the fruition of the end."

He did not feel "done" with college until he received a job offer. After that he experienced a heightened awareness of the differences between himself and the supervisors at his workplace (a warehouse job he held full time before and during his college years and which he maintained on a part-time level even during his first year of teaching). Before he obtained his teaching position, his supervisors, none of whom were college-educated, were always "above" him on the social ladder. However, after he became a college graduate and a teacher, these supervisors had come to realize that they had lost their "leverage" with him. They were—in a sense—"stuck" in their jobs, while he had gotten "out."

He believed that even though his "position" had changed before (from drug dealer to warehouse worker), the "gap" between drug dealer and warehouse worker was actually smaller than the gap between warehouse worker and college graduate. Steve understood education as an issue of positionality, primarily because of the status if afforded him amongst his supervisors and his co-workers.

The only time Steve suggested an understanding of the concept of positionality within the context of schools was when he made the following statement: "...the biggest problem with educators is that most of them don't know what it's like to be the student who doesn't care." He identified himself as a kid who did not care and that he cannot seem to get past that, even in terms of learning opportunities. "Whenever I read any professional or academic material or attend any kind of seminar, I look for anything

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about kids who don't care. And if that isn't mentioned or acknowledged, then the rest of the information—or the message—is tainted for me."

He furthered this idea by raising an issue he finds especially troubling: why conversations in educational circles always seem to overlook the fact that students (even good students with at least a 3.5 GPA) don't really care about critical writing or critical analysis. The reason he cited for this absence is the complete lack of "answers." Yet he avowed that there must be ideas that "good teachers" have successfully employed. He then said: "Too many times those in education say there is a sure-fire way to…[did not complete statement]" even though that's not true. I just want some pointers, where someone would say: 'Here's some pointer to try; see if it works for you.'"

All of what Steve stated here suggests that he did have some understanding of positionality. He was aware that some students care about school, while others do not and identified himself as the student who did not care. This, combined with what he said earlier about feeling like he was different from his own peers, implies his knowing that for various reasons, the students who enter classrooms each day are unique, represent disparate backgrounds, and carry a variety of knowledge and experiences with them. He was not explicit about how positionality might affect students' experiences in—and perceptions of—school. Nor was he explicit about how students' varied backgrounds, knowledge, and experiences affect, and are affected by, positionality. Therefore, his understanding of this concept seemed to remain at a somewhat rudimentary level.

Although Steve may have experienced "shifts" in his own positionality and seemed to appreciate the uniqueness of every person present in a classroom, he did not seem to take the concept any further or consider how this might affect his teaching

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practice or his classroom, other than citing the necessity of teacher's making themselves "real" to students. Furthermore, as I stated earlier, he seemed to understand the project as somewhat isolated, as a discrete assignment or activity, as opposed to a means to engage in ongoing self-examination or to examine the self in relation to others.

<center>Lisa</center>

Reflecting on the three interviews, I realized that Lisa and I seemed to have more of a conversation than anything else. Perhaps it was because Lisa had raised issues in her second narrative and reflection that resonated with some of my own thinking about this project. It may also be that because Lisa had done some narrative work with her own students, she had already formulated questions in her mind that she thought this project might inform. She had—in a sense—already laid the groundwork for this project, perhaps causing her to be more receptive and alert to what the project might teach her. Or perhaps it was because Lisa was the one focal student who shared her narrative with the class; therefore, we seemingly had more to talk about. Finally, it may also be that Lisa came to this project with some understanding of the concept of positionality; therefore, the background knowledge she already possessed enabled her to take more from the project, which stands to reason. Regardless, I found myself asking Lisa questions that were not a part of my protocol, primarily because her responses to some of the protocol questions brought new ideas or issues to the surface.

For example, Lisa raised the idea of taking risks, vulnerability, and trusting students. I explained how I had always believed that I trusted my students; yet when it came time to test that trust, I began to doubt its existence. Therefore, we talked about whether a person needs to trust another in order to risk becoming vulnerable or whether

risking vulnerability and finding care and acceptance then creates trust. We then considered whether or not it was possible to express a feeling of trust and behave accordingly (even though the true feeling of trust is not there) and still remain honest and genuinely vulnerable with students.

I explained how I had struggled with this part of the project, and she shared from her own experiences. She stated that whether or not it was a fair or accurate assessment, she believed that her students cared about her and her well-being because she had always worked so hard to establish trust. Despite this belief, though, she did not sleep the night before she shared her story with her students for the first time, had a headache (migraine-like) during that school day, and passed out when she got home from school. She attributes this to trust issues and the stress of sharing such a personal story when trust is at stake. We then further explored the idea of vulnerability, thinking that perhaps it is taking a risk without knowing what others' responses might be, yet regardless of that uncertainty, taking the risk anyway.

While this description of our conversation might seem unnecessary, it demonstrates the depth of Lisa's thinking on these ideas, as well as how she was able to move beyond specific events or situations to think more conceptually. In addition, Lisa seemed unable to separate the learning gained in her university coursework (in this instance, The Narrative Project) from the learning developed as a result of her reflecting on herself as a teacher and her teaching practice. Finally, unlike Erin and Steve, who focused more on their newfound realization of the uniqueness of people's stories and on how they applied that knowledge in their classrooms, Lisa found the reflective part of the

project to be the most significant. She identified both her own reflective writing and hearing the reflections of others as equally important.

However, as I already stated, Lisa came to this project with some understanding of the concept of positionality, though she could not necessarily name the concept. Lisa's drawing on this initial conceptual knowledge seemingly enabled her to think more deeply about herself as a teacher. It also seemed to help her read across her personal experiences and her experiences as a teacher, thus enabling her to more fully interrogate her assumptions and beliefs and to further complicate her teaching practice.

Again, Lisa already possessed her own interest in the ideas explored in this study. Compared to Erin and Steve, Lisa was much more enthusiastic and focused on these ideas. It seemed that very little encouragement was necessary to get Lisa to talk about the project, and she often responded to my prompts before I asked them. This allowed us to engage in a much more extensive conversation, which ultimately yielded much more data to examine and take into account and allows me to create a much richer picture of Lisa.

Lisa's Understanding of Process

Weaving together sites of learning. Lisa explained that the choice of topic for her second narrative came out of her knowledge that there was no other story at that point that had so changed who she was. In fact, she had actually written this narrative as a college junior and had re-worked it during the previous semester of our course to use as a model with her own students. She wanted her high school students to show her in *their* writing how they had changed or evolved as a person and knew she could model this for them through her own story of how her life had changed. She described herself as a

"happy, carefree person" before the tragedy and after as someone who was "high-strung" and "quick to snap on somebody." If she had not shared this story with them ("like if [she] had written about a vacation"), she believed the writing her students produced would not have been as powerful as it was.

Lisa provided an anecdote about one student in particular who had not produced any writing thus far that year. He sat and cried after hearing her story, so Lisa pulled him out of class and talked with him for about 20 minutes. The next day this same student started the rough draft of the assignment Lisa had assigned her students (with an explicit outline). He followed the outline point by point and produced a four-page paper. He mimicked her but nevertheless wrote his own story, which represented an important breakthrough. Lisa believed that because she had written about such a personal aspect of her life, that he could then say: "This is why I'm sullen...this is why I get pissed off a lot...this is why I'm like this because I've lost four of my family members, and I'm 14 years old."

Although Lisa talked about her understanding of the narrative writing primarily in terms of her teaching practice, she talked about the reflective writing in terms of her practice and her own learning. Lisa claimed that she found the reflection to be a "huge way to understand" how something that she tried to do earlier in the year with her own students was a "powerful learning experience" for both them and for her. She said:

> I did it. I got great narratives. And I thought, 'Oh, good job!' After I read hooks and wrote the reflection, I figured out why it was so powerful. The whole issue of vulnerability and being open to my students' seeing me as a person was something I hadn't considered at all. All I had thought of was: 'Well, if I'm gonna get good ones, I'm gonna need to share one. I don't have another story. This is the story I need to tell.'

Lisa did not anticipate that this assignment (for her own students) would be as successful as it was, and she believed that writing the reflection helped her to understand why. In fact, she declared her wish that she would have written the reflection earlier in the year because she would have made some adjustments when she taught her narrative unit again the next semester, as part of her reflection focused on establishing trust through sharing her story. Therefore, she would have articulated to her students: "I'm really willing to open up with you because I trust you." She did not believe she had done this as much as she could have, which would have resulted in a richer experience.

Moreover, Lisa expressed her belief that this is what true vulnerability is all about, being honest with students with the hope that they will be more willing to reciprocate. For this reason, Lisa had considered writing the narrative yet again for who she is now because this "self" continued to shift. It had been five years since Sam's death, and she believed that she would now probably write more about guilt than sadness, "even though the guilt is not legitimate." Furthermore, she believed that if she were to continue to re-write it, it would be more powerful. She also offered another idea: to write who she was in relation to this experience at 20, 22, 25, and continuing on because she saw the story changing as she continued to grow and evolve. She asserted that it is important for a teacher who is doing a project such as this with students, to "legitimately re-write [your story] in the person you are now.

Lisa also discovered that for her, the research aspect of the project that linked personal knowledge with more objective knowledge was crucial and admitted that she "loves research." She found it especially powerful to take a story from her life, link it to "educational research" and then use that knowledge to become a better teacher. This was

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the only part of the entire writing process where Lisa focused solely on our course project, as opposed to weaving her learning from the project with the learning that resulted from the narrative work she had taken on with her own students.

Even when Lisa talked about the moments during the discussion that led to her decision to read her narrative, she connected it to her teaching. First, Steve had talked about drawing on his experiences as a volunteer fireman in teaching a particular text. His talking about fire—and surviving a fire—evoked an emotional response in her as her narrative was about Sam's death in a fire. The second was another student's, David's, remarking that students do not perceive teachers as real people. Because she had already shared her narrative with her own students and experienced how this changed the entire atmosphere of her classroom, she was almost angry (or more accurately, adamant) about this conception of teachers, students, and their relationship with one another and glad that other students "butted in," asserting that even though students may not initially perceive teachers as people, it is nevertheless possible to make yourself a person to them.

She also stated that watching the excerpt of the video and thinking about this again made her realize how what we say—even when we are not remotely aware of it— can affect others. Furthermore, it made her more aware of how what we say as teachers can trigger in our students either a willingness to share or a willingness to close off from us. While Steve's comments triggered an emotional response because of her personal experiences, David's remark—combined with other students' responses to that remark— resonated with what she had discovered in the context of her classroom. Lisa wanted to show her peers how her story revealed her as "extraordinarily vulnerable in having had this experience" and how the experience of sharing it with her students changed

everything in her teaching. She said she was a person to her students after that, and she wanted to share this new understanding with her peers.

Despite this desire, however, trust was an issue for Lisa. She only knew (and trusted) three people in our seminar: David, Iris, and me. Most of the students had taken the majority of their teacher preparation coursework together, but logistical issues had prevented her from taking those courses with this particular group of students. Nevertheless, her knowing she could trust and count on the support of three people made it a bit easier. She was sure to make it clear, though, that after she had shared her story, she "felt so much better about everyone in the class." She still did not know if it was because they cried with her or demonstrated that they were willing to accept her story. Nevertheless, she felt much stronger and more trusting, even though the class was nearly finished.

In addition to what she experienced and learned from reading her own narrative, Lisa also remembered that other students' sharing narratives and adding to the discussion revealed, to her surprise, how "very clearly everyone's opinions and thinking was so varied" and how there was such a range in "types" of stories. She said that she would never have imagined this, thus reinforcing the idea that within her own classroom, the stories would also be just as varied. While she found this part of the project to be valuable, however, she found that the "meat" of the project was in the reflections and took notes on other students' reflections and what they learned through their own process and their own narratives. As a student in the class, she found that the reflections raised the most salient issues; and she also found it powerful to hear other students' reflections and other students' recounting what they had learned.

Lisa's descriptions of her understanding of the processes involved in the project demonstrate how much her teaching is a part of who she is as a person. She seemed incapable of separating herself from her teaching and always talked about one within the context of the other. Her "student's understanding" of the processes involved in this project seemed to blend with her "teacher's understanding" of those same processes; and she moved seamlessly from one to the other, demonstrating again the depth of her thinking.

Lisa's Understanding of Positionality

Lisa again began our discussion of positionaity within the context of her classroom and stated her conviction that engaging in narrative writing with her own students was especially successful with those students who were most resistant, primarily because she shared her own story. She believed that even if the students did not like her or her class, "it's a sad story; they do listen." Moreover, this brought the most success with those hostile, "unwilling to learn" students because many times they were the ones who had stories that went along with hers or who seemed to most want or need to tell her "why they are the way they are." However, in talking about positionality in terms of those students who were not like her, Lisa talked primarily about her first narrative, as opposed to her second narrative.

In her first narrative, Lisa wrote about how for the first time in her educational career, she did not feel empowered. She said that this helped her to see herself as clearly upper middle class and led her to conclude: "Like that's the only time you felt unempowered in the classroom? Wow!" Therefore, writing this piece—especially the reflection—enabled her to see how vastly different she is from some of her students. She

then returned to the idea of narrative, asserting that she needs to use more narrative with her students because it is through narrative that she will come to a deeper understanding of the nature of the differences in positionality between herself and her students, as narrative seems to reveal varied positionalities. She then explained why she needed to know those positionalities: to be more sensitive to what she is working "against" or what she needs to teach her students that might be in opposition to what their positionalities mean for them. She went so far to say: "If you don't understand positionality as a teacher, then you are failing your students."

Although Lisa did not deny that The Narrative Project was instrumental in her thinking, she did divulge that part of her undergraduate work in college was studying the disempowered and social relations, as she had studied sociology as part of her second major. Therefore, she entered the project with some conceptual understanding. However, she realized that the project helped her to see her *own* positonality more clearly, as she had been used to studying "others'" positions, such as "other women and other races." This project, however, helped her to see her own position:

> I'm in that position. That's who I am, and I recognize that. But I also recognize that I *have* to—it's a lot easier for me probably—recognizing who I am—to make the leap to them, to cross the ravine between my students and me. The narrative helped me to see that much more. I have been told before that I am such a White girl, and I used to be offended. But that's who I am.

Lisa seemed to understand that an understanding of her own positionality was essential if she was going to consider how to best teach her students in light of their varied positionalities.

In fact, she asserted that the project reinforced for her that as a teacher she *must* examine positionality; to *not* engage in such an examination is not an option.

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Furthermore, engaging in the project showed her how different all the experiences are, illuminating the need to be ready for that in her classroom. For example, working with narrative with her own students helped her identify the student she can raise her voice with or the one who might need a hug instead. She articulated her conviction that knowing her students' backgrounds—and positionalities—allowed her to respond to what her students said and did based on that knowledge. She identified this as the affective part of her classroom and asserted: "If I haven't addressed the affective part, then there's no point because they won't learn." She claimed that while she had always "intuitively thought" this, she was not always practicing it and now knew that this was one of her responsibilities as a teacher.

Lisa's responses reflect a deep understanding of the concept of positionality, but they also illustrate her awareness of herself as a person, as a learner, and as a teacher. More specifically, they illustrate how she has essentially woven all three of these "selves" into one "self," refusing to isolate one from the other. Furthermore, Lisa's assertions about herself are consistent with the depth of insight she demonstrated in the writing she produced.

Looking Across Erin, Steve, and Lisa

Understandings of The Narrative Project

I would assume that most—if not all—students enrolled in any course would initially perceive a course project as an assignment or task. When that is their perception, then their work on that project is an undertaking they need to complete in order to receive course credit (and hopefully) a good grade. Unfortunately, many students perceive the projects that comprise the various courses of their teacher preparation program in the

same way. However, that is never how I have perceived them. Prospective teachers do not gain all their knowledge of learning how to teach only in their university coursework. They also learn from practicing under the supervision of a more experienced mentor teacher and then later from organized professional development or as a result of thoughtful reflection. Therefore, I am aware that my courses will not provide my students with all they will learn, much less all they need to know. As a result, I try to conceive of course projects that provide opportunities for my students to learn how to think about their teaching practices or that encourage them to think of teaching as more than "managing" students, planning activities, and coping with the myriad, ever changing demands of the profession. Despite my own understandings and my working to be explicit about my rationales for course projects, I am not always able to effectively communicate that to my students so that they also understand my purposes.

Looking across Erin's, Steve's, and Lisa's self-reports on how they understood The Narrative Project illustrates how students may understand course projects differently, thus affecting how they make sense of the project and what they learn as a result of engaging in the project. Even though self-reports are not always entirely accurate, their responses still provide some insights into how students' varied understandings of the processes involved in any course project shapes their learning and their application of knowledge or skills. In this particular instance, the three students' sense-making seems to fall on a continuum of sorts. Steve seemed to understand the project as an assignment or task that needed to be completed. Lisa approached it more as an opportunity to explore her teaching practice, as well as a means for continued self-examination. Erin fell somewhere in between, perhaps initially understanding the project as an assignment,

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though later understanding it as the beginning of an ongoing process. As a result of these somewhat disparate understandings, the nature of what the students learned also seemed to vary, as well as how they made use of that learning.

Perceptions of project as assignment or task versus "habit of mind." Of the three focal students, Steve is the one who most understood the project as a task. This was reflected in his writing, and he also revealed it in his responses during the interview. Steve ended his second piece of writing with the phrase "mission accomplished," and he explained how he and his peers were feeling at this point about their courses: almost finished, looking for jobs, harried and exhausted. He also made it clear that he and his peers were concerned about their grades, suggesting that at least he may have perceived of the project as a task, a mission to accomplish, as opposed to an introduction to a way to think about himself, his students, and his teaching practice.

Steve further revealed this perception when he talked about using this "assignment" with his students, though adapting it somewhat. He gave no indication that he would continue with the processes involved in the project himself, and he did not demonstrate that he gave much thought to how he might be positioned differently than his students, thus affecting his ideas about students, teaching, and learning. On the other hand, he did raise a concern about an assumption within the educational "community," which was the idea that students care. However, rather than think about why it is that students might not care—drawing on an understanding of positionality—or why it is that he did not care, he continued to berate those involved in teacher preparation and professional development for not addressing what he perceived as a pressing issue and providing him with the knowledge he needed. It seemed that ultimately, because he

understood The Narrative Project as an assignment/task as opposed to a process he might go through again and again, Steve was encountering two somewhat different situations: 1) he seemed unable to answer his own questions or devise his own solutions to the issues he faced; 2) he did work to address the issues he observed in his classroom but did not recognize them as instances of what he was actually looking for in his professional development opportunities or in his professional reading.

Erin, on the other hand, seemed to perceive of the project as an assignment when she was enrolled in the course. However, after nearly a year of teaching in her own classroom, she was beginning to see how the project had shaped her teaching in ways she had not anticipated. For example, it had influenced her approach to quiet students in her class; however, she was working to refine her thinking about quiet students, considering context, purpose, and her knowledge of individual students.

In addition, even though Erin had always expressed concern about individual students, her responses revealed that her approach to them had become more complex. Instead of understanding her students as simply "them," she was looking at the various factors that might influence students' attitudes and behavior in her class. She practiced more self-reflection in order to understand herself, her students, and their interactions with each other more fully. However, unlike what I found in her writing, Erin's self-reports about her teaching practice indicated that she was now more inclined to challenge her beliefs and her assumptions in light of what she learned about individual students and within the context of her work with them. As a result, she seemed to now perceive of The Narrative Project as reflecting an ongoing process, a way to explore her thinking on students, teaching, and learning.

Lisa, on the other hand, came to this project with a completely different understanding. First, she already possessed some initial understandings of the concept I was attempting to explore. This understanding seemed to affect her approach to the project in that she seemed to understand how an investigation of the concept required her to interrogate herself, as well as herself in relationship with her students. Furthermore, she seemed to understand the nature of the "research" portion of the project (borrowing her terminology). In other words, she seemed to already understand that the academic texts she chose needed to connect to her narratives on a conceptual level. She seemed to inherently know that she was not looking for "how to" texts or arguments that supported her own. As a result, she came to understand that she was not simply completing a course assignment. Instead, her responses indicated that she was in a continual process of self-examination and that this process would support her efforts to connect with her students in more meaningful ways.

Another factor, however, that seemed to affect Lisa's understanding is that she had already worked with her own students around narrative and had experienced with them much of what I had experienced when I first began this project. This might have served as a "gateway" (Hillocks, 1995), which worked to prepare Lisa for this particular project. In fact, she claimed that she entered this project with some questions, coming to realize that the processes involved in the project could help her with the answers to those questions. On the other hand, she also seemed to understand how the project worked to further develop or complicate knowledge she already possessed. For example, while she had considered others' positionalities before, she had never considered her own. And while she seemed to believe that aspects of her positionality might remain unchanged, as

that is who she is, she also understood that her "story" would always be changing. If she wanted to remain honest with her students, then she needed to continually re-examine herself.

Of the three students, Lisa's understandings of the project seemed to have the biggest impact on her teaching, which I suppose is to be expected. This was reflected in how her responses often shifted between the boundaries between herself and her teaching as if those boundaries did not even exist. It seemed that her examining and interrogating herself and her reflecting on her teaching practice were all components of the same process. I do not mean to suggest that Lisa never thought of this project as a course assignment. In fact, she implied just the opposite: she explicitly stated that she wanted to be "the best," which was entirely consistent with my perceptions of Lisa. However, it seemed that Lisa quickly understood The Narrative Project as more than this as she began to see how it had influenced, and continued to influence, her teaching practice.

It might be easier—or perhaps more convenient—to say that Lisa seemed to gain the most from this project because she entered the project with more background knowledge or because she was a stronger, more driven student. It might seem sufficient to assert that her interest in research and her desire to excel prompted her to invest more time and energy into the project. But those explanations, while perhaps accurate to some extent, are entirely unsatisfactory. Given that I hoped all my students would reach the level of understanding that Lisa achieved, it may be useful to consider what this suggests about the pedagogy(ies) that might better prepare students to engage in this project, as well as provide the requisite scaffolding throughout the project. (See Chapter 7 for a more thorough discussion of these implications.)

Challenges and Insights

Meta-cognitive awareness of process. Of the three focal students, Lisa was the one who seemed to possess the most meta-cognitive awareness of her own processes. She was more able than either Erin or Steve to explicate her writing process, both with the narrative and reflective pieces; and she was the only one who seemed aware of—or at least who could articulate—how the processes of locating and drawing on an outside text added to her understanding. She even wrote about these processes, particularly in her first narrative and reflection; and when I talked with her, she continued to expand on those ideas.

Erin, Steve, and Lisa alike elucidated how the process of the discussions worked for them. They all talked about how much they learned from hearing others' stories, and in Lisa's case, hearing others' reflections. This realization seemed to impact each of their teaching practices, though perhaps in somewhat unique ways, as they considered the extent of variety in their own students' experiences and backgrounds. Lisa also talked about the desire to let her students—and her peers—see why she is the person she is and explained that while sharing with peers gave them new insights, sharing with students enabled them to see her as a real person. On the other hand, Steve and Erin talked about how they wished they had shared their narratives with their peers in order to illuminate who they are or perhaps to address misconceptions others may have about them. And like Lisa, they both talked about opening up with students in order to reveal our humanity to them. However, as they talked about the processes of discussion, or more accurately, sharing their stories, all three students' responses reflected our inherent need to be known by others.

As I examined how these students understood the processes involved in this project, I considered their responses in terms of my learning goals. I discovered that of the three students, Lisa is the one who seemed to best understand those goals. Not surprisingly, she is the one who was the most articulate about her understanding of her own processes. However, this raises the issue of the nature of instruction and support that is required so that more—if not all—students are more aware of their learning processes and thus gain the depth of insight and knowledge that Lisa seems to have attained. Therefore, it seems absolutely imperative to examine the pedagogical implications that come out of looking across all three cases. Such a critical examination of pedagogy might provide vital insights into how students could be more adequately supported as they endeavor to better understand the processes involved in the project, which might then lead to their gaining more complex conceptual understandings. Furthermore, it might provide students with a deeper realization of how the processes and content of teacher preparation coursework might impact their teaching practice and provide models for ongoing learning.

Teaching for conceptual understanding. Just as the case with their awareness of process, disparities existed in the three focal students' understanding of the concept of positionality. And again, Lisa was the one who left the project with the deepest conceptual knowledge, as was evidenced in her flexibility with that knowledge as she explicated how she applied that knowledge to herself, her students, and her teaching practice. On the other hand, Lisa was the only student who claimed to have somewhat of an understanding of the concept going into the project.

This suggests that in order for students to gain conceptual knowledge, it might be more efficacious to introduce the concept under study before actually moving through that study. Making students aware of these concepts, whatever they might be, might bring the ideas to the forefront and act as "throughlines" for a project, a unit, or perhaps an entire course. Furthermore, it might also serve as the basis for students' examination of their own processes and afford students the opportunity to determine how they gained conceptual understanding. The lack of uniformity in the focal students' responses (and in their writing for that matter), suggests that studying the pedagogy around such a project as this is necessary in order to offer students a learning opportunity that will result in habits of mind that endure throughout their teaching lives. The following chapter, which concludes this dissertation, explores some of these pedagogical implications. It also suggests issues and raises questions that might merit further investigation and study. Lastly, it provides some insights into my thoughts on teacher preparation, as well as the ideals I hold for my students, my teaching practice, and myself.

Chapter 7

Challenging Curricula and Interrogating Pedagogy in Teacher Education

Further reflection on—and conversation around—this study allowed me to continue to make new discoveries, as well as reveal some challenges, limitations, and conceptual issues that emerge out of work of this nature. Finally, I discovered that some of the findings of the study point to new directions for research and theoretical work. As I revisited the findings of the study, contemplated again the contrasts among the three focal students, and reflected on my own learning, the two ideas—perhaps lessons—that seemed to echo throughout the study are epistemological and spiritual in nature.

Therefore, I will first describe my learning around the nature of knowledge and around aspects of teaching that seem to possess a spiritual quality. These are ideas that were certainly a factor when I began this study, though perhaps I did not identify them with necessary clarity. In a sense, they point me back to the beginning of the study. Perhaps this chapter begins yet another cycle of story-telling as I start it with my current thinking on these ideas and then work to explicate how their implications for teacher preparation curriculum and pedagogy(ies).

That said, however, this study was also not without its challenges and limitations. Therefore, I will also talk about those, namely as they relate to the conceptual issues of narrative and positionality and how these ideas ultimately "played out" in both my enactment of The Narrative Project and in my investigation of this project. While these issues also have pedagogical implications, they suggest areas of interest in educational research. All of these ideas related to both instruction and research point to new avenues for inquiry. Therefore, I will end this chapter with a brief discussion of those new

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directions and conclude with some final thoughts on what this study has meant to me both professionally and personally.

Learning from Findings

Epistemological Considerations

One idea that continued to surface was the nature of knowledge construction and my simplistic understanding of what that might be all about. We may understand knowledge construction as: taking previous knowledge and using that knowledge in new situations, which in turn leads to more new knowledge; applying a theoretical idea in a specific context to gain new understandings; falsifying a hypothesis; or engaging in ongoing conversations that generate new ideas. But what seems most salient in all of these understandings is the system(s) used to construct that knowledge. While I may have provided my students with an opportunity to construct new knowledge, I did not support their examination of the system(s) that we used—or that I wanted them to use—for such construction. In fact, this system remained invisible throughout the entire project. Furthermore, I tended to set up pieces of that system as dichotomies: subjective *versus* objective knowledge or private *versus* public processes when in actuality, they were not in opposition to each other but worked together as part of an entire system for knowledge construction.

My new understanding of a system—at least within the context of this study—is that is represents a pedagogical construct that combines both content and process to interrogate both experience and the academic texts from which we teach to construct knowledge about teaching practice. The components—or content—of this system include both the knowledge of experience and the knowledge posited by others. The

dynamic nature of this system occurs as these components come together (not to substantiate one another but to interrogate one another), which reflects the workings of the system. This "coming together" occurs both privately and publicly, privately as students engage in narrative and reflective writing and publicly as they share with one another through discussion. This pedagogy—or system—also involves helping students to adopt the stance that knowledge is relative and malleable, that knowledge can be "used" and challenged and re-made. The pedagogy for both using and constructing knowledge in this way is the characterization of system my study revealed.

So often when I have created projects for students, I have included the statement in either the description of the project or the rubric for the project: "draws on outside texts to inform argument," or "makes good use of outside texts." The language in these statements might suggest a process per se, but it does not suggest that students construct new knowledge. Instead, it seems to imply that students simply demonstrate knowledge, which is significantly different than constructing knowledge. When I created this project, I operated under the same assumptions that the language in these statements reveals. However, what I sought was a system: a process that students would utilize to interrogate their beliefs and values.

It was my aim that students would engage in this interrogation through a process of writing about significant events in their lives, identifying the salient issue(s) their narratives revealed, and then locating a relevant academic text that informed their thinking. This reflected what I believed constituted the "system" I wanted students to engage in to construct new knowledge. However, the contradictions inherent within two key words of this statement of intent—"interrogate" and "inform"—actually impeded the

construction of new knowledge. These two terms seem to oppose one another and to work at cross-purposes. Locating a text to "inform" experience suggests that the experience does not require any interrogation. It suggests that our subjective knowledge, which is located in our experiences stands "as is," a form of fixed knowledge. Therefore, why should we challenge that knowledge?

These words also suggest that unless an academic text substantiates our experiences—informs or supports what we already believe to be true—then it is of limited use to us. We may learn from reading such a text, but we will not incorporate it into any system for constructing new knowledge. We may also gravitate toward texts that fit into our current perceptions and understandings, as opposed to more closely examining texts that will challenge our thinking. In fact, it is entirely possible that we will dismiss such texts altogether. Furthermore, if we perceive our subjective knowledge as fixed, then we may also understand objective knowledge, as represented in academic texts, as fixed and not open to interrogation.

My findings suggest that not all of my students understood knowledge as relative (Belenky et al., 1997), as my framing of the role of outside texts implied that those texts were not to be challenged; nor was it explicit that texts might also be used to examine experience critically. However, Lisa seemed to possess an understanding of this, as did Erin, though to a more limited extent. By contrast, Steve seemed to be searching for knowledge that was not quite so relative but instead what he perceived as more "tried and true." Understanding the relativity of knowledge includes the ability—and willingness— to integrate subjective and objective knowledge, and the propensity to interrogate knowledge, whether subjective or objective. This understanding might be considered an

intellectual orientation, a desire to move beyond the pragmatic to consider bigger ideas and concepts. (Reggenspan, 1999).

Attempts to "Explain" Lisa

Lisa talked about how she *had* to write her story. She realized that her story illuminated who she was, is, and will become. She did not talk about what her story reveals about what she knows or what she is able to do. Instead, she discussed how her story demonstrates her awareness that who she is informs everything she does in her life; furthermore, who she wants to be—or become—also depends on this awareness of herself as a "whole" person. The larger implication of this, however, is how Lisa used this project to reach this point.

Lisa's story carried a power that Erin's and Steve's stories seemed to lack and conveyed her awareness that our stories (more precisely our experiences) go beyond *revealing* who we are to *creating* who we are. This may seem like nothing other than semantics, but it is more than mere wordplay; it reflects a more nuanced and complicated understanding of self and of how the "self" is never static but in a constant state of flux as we grow and develop. In some ways, it is much like the understanding of knowledge that I discussed earlier: how knowledge can be constructed and re-constructed. This understanding of the self felt more elemental and alive and reflected the coming together of mind, body, and soul. This understanding reflected what seemed a spiritual element. So interestingly, Lisa's case caused me to return to bell hooks (1994), where I had first encountered the idea that teaching that serves to empower both the teacher and the learner is spiritual in nature.

When I talk about the spiritual aspects of teaching, I mean bringing the "whole person" into the classroom. For example, one of the questions I had before, during, and after I designed this project was: What kind of teacher educator do I want to be? However, I was unable to separate this from: What kind of *person* do I want to be? In turn, I thought about similar questions in regards to my students: What kind of teachers do I hope they will become? What kind of people do I hope they become? This goes beyond what teachers need to know and what teachers need to be able to do. It is about who teachers *are*: what they believe, what they value, and how their teaching—and, in fact, their lives—reflect those beliefs and values.

I am fully aware of how intimidating discussions of spirituality are. The meaning of the term is intangible, often misunderstood, and fraught with assumptions. On the other hand, to deny it seems to deny who we are on a very fundamental level. hooks (1994), however, takes discussions of spirituality out of the realm of religious beliefs, per se, and frames spirituality as how we live in the world. In other words, it is a combination of contemplation and action, a way or habit of being that informs and shapes our life practices.

In addition, looking at teaching from a more spiritual perspective suggests that as teachers we are unable to separate our public from our private selves. We transgress the boundaries of the self to recognize and include all aspects of our lives: bodies, minds, and soul. And we recognize this in others. Whether or not we want to admit it, the same holds true for everyone. We might try to pretend that we can make these separations and decide to piece out parts of ourselves for others to see or forces others to parcel out bits of themselves to, in turn, reveal to us. We may delude ourselves into thinking that who we

are in life does not affect who we are in the classroom. But this is simply not the case, and it lends teaching a certain sense of urgency.

In his memoir *Now and Then: A Memoir of Vocation* (1983), Frederick Buechner, a theologian and ordained Presbyterian minister, describes this in a discussion of his years of teaching religion at Phillips Exeter Academy: "What I also came more and more to realize was the urgency of what I was about" (pp. 46 & 47). For me, Buechner captures the nature of spirituality in teaching; our beliefs and actions become so intertwined that we cannot escape this sense of urgency.

Throughout this study, I have looked to Lisa for insights, as my findings revealed that she was the one who seemed to most understand this study or who engaged the ideas in the study to a greater extent than the other students. In some ways it seemed that her work on this project—and with her own students—paralleled my own, as we both attempted to challenge and undermine the separation of our public and private selves within our classrooms.

One of the primary influences in my designing this project for my students came out of my engagement with bell hooks's (1994) work, particularly her development of the concept of education as the practice of freedom. Part of that development is hooks's arguing against a separation of public and private selves, instead asserting that it is impossible to empty out the self upon entering a classroom. I had always sensed that I brought my private self with me to the classroom, that I did not teach or make sense of my teaching practice with a completely "objective mind" (hooks, 1994, p. 17), disconnected from my personal experiences. In some ways, hooks gave me permission to embrace a teaching stance that acknowledged—and welcomed—my whole self.

When I talked with Lisa before this study began (as her instructor), she described how she had worked with narrative with her own students. She recounted how she had shared her narrative of tragedy and loss with her students primarily as a model and to demonstrate her own writing processes. However, when she began to observe the changes in her students, her relationship with her students, and in her teaching practice in general as a result of this work, she began to consider it in new ways and concluded that it was her revealing her "self" to students that led to these transformations. Given my own initial attraction to—and what I learned from—hooks, I pointed Lisa to her, believing that she would discover a language that would allow her to explain what took place in her classroom. Therefore, it seemed that Lisa and I were sharing similar experiences, separated only by time and context.

While I have found my own discoveries to be both revealing and personally enlightening, this learning does suggest implications for both the curricula and pedagogy that constitutes teacher preparation. My study came out of a question that I posited about my teaching practice, and through the study I hoped to place order on one particular experience and to interpret that experience to make greater sense of it. However, to move my study out of the particular and into the realm of the knowledge base for teaching, I must make an explicit move out of a local context and into the more general context of teacher preparation.

Thoughts on Curriculum and Pedagogy

English education is a "contested and diffuse field" (Meyer & Sawyer, 2006, p. 46). Given the inherent challenges in the field and how the knowledge base for teaching

often seems to be in a state of constant flux, it becomes increasingly imperative that teacher educators challenge their curriculum and pedagogy.

As I explained in Chapter 2, Kennedy (2006) asserts that visions for teacher education are problematic as they do not impart knowledge, per se, or do not take competing visions into account. I would have to admit that I see The Narrative Project as a representation of one of my own visions for teacher education. It might also be argued that I am trying to mold my students into some kind of pre-determined ideal that I have created. Again, I would have to admit that this is also true. I do hope that my students will be caring and treat those around them equitably and respectfully. I do hope that they will strive to see the good in their students, as opposed to focusing on the bad; and I hope that they will not lose their own visions of a better future and their capacity to imagine.

While I may have visions and hold ideal images in my mind of the kind of teachers I hope my students become, I do not frame these as specific learning goals, though certainly my learning goals are influenced by these visions and ideals. Furthermore, I would argue that my vision and my ideals suggest "areas" of knowledge: particularly knowledge of the self, knowledge of how processes (as well as content) can support learning, and conceptual knowledge. Therefore, the implications of this study illustrate how visions—regardless of their flaws—may be developed into curricular content and how they suggest pedagogies that may be effective in teacher preparation.

The Narrative Project as Curricular Content

Willinsky (1989) asserts that a teacher's personal knowledge is what constitutes her tacit knowledge about teaching. It is this knowledge that shapes and influences her classroom practices, even though it may not be at a conscious level. If this is the case,

then this knowledge should not remain tacit. Instead, teacher educators might think more carefully about how to create and develop curricula that will make it possible for prospective teachers to gain access to that knowledge; and it seems that this project accomplished that.

For example, Erin realized that even when it first appeared that students may be like her, this was not necessarily the case; therefore, she needed to change her approaches to students, as her assumptions were not always accurate. Steve came to understand the need to always consider those students who do not care about school, and Lisa gained new insights into her own positionality. This might all be identified as "tacit knowledge" that students were able to access as a result of this project.

Furthermore, my students' reports of what they believed they learned from this study suggest that future teachers' explorations of themselves through autobiographical writing holds the potential to transform their teaching as they begin to recognize how they might act in order to promote and not obstruct student success. My hunch is that any teacher, regardless of experience or lack thereof, would say that she does not wish to obstruct student success, but instead seeks to promote it. As Lisa learned, we often impede that success unknowingly; and she came to realize this through narrative writing. While it is true that more analytical writing also contributed to this understanding, it can also be argued that narrative writing is what first initiated this process.

Processes that Constitute Curriculum

Certainly the processes involved in this project could be identified as "inquiry," especially as Meyer and Sawyer (2006) define it: [I]nquiry involves investigating questions arising from one's own life and teaching practice" (p. 49). They further assert

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that such an inquiry would consist of "exploratory talk" (Barnes, 1979) and encourage "divergent thinking, which is marked by the generation of many ideas" (p. 49). These researchers further the idea of inquiry as process, as well as assert what this process might accomplish, when they write: "Ultimately, this process may help teacher candidates reassess their understanding of themselves, their students, and the school cultures within which they work" (p. 50). I would argue that curricular segments as represented in The Narrative Project hold the potential for this type of inquiry, thus giving prospective teachers metacognitive knowledge of those processes that will work to further develop and complicate their understandings of students, teaching, and learning.

If teacher preparation programs are to have a meaningful and enduring impact on teachers' desire and ability to further their thinking about teaching practice, then the curriculum of those programs needs to provide students with this type of process knowledge. One of these processes is narrative writing, which I wrote about earlier. The other is learning the process of working within a community of practice so that as prospective teachers move into the profession, they can continue with the kind of exploratory talk constitutive of inquiry that leads to further learning. Moreover, these processes essentially represent the pedagogies teacher educators might employ.

This study suggests what this pedagogy might look like, including the challenges and pitfalls. It contains implications for how teacher educators might guide and support students as they work through the processes together. In other words, how they might encourage a community of practice, where members of that community are in relationship with one another. Furthermore, this study provides some insights into how

these processes might then also work toward the advancement of conceptual knowledge, which I will discuss further in the following section.

Process as Pedagogy

Communities of practice through connected knowing. One pedagogical consideration is giving prospective teachers the opportunity to learn about the processes involved in working within a community of practice so that as they move into the profession, they can continue these same processes. These might include: 1) teaching students the relativity of knowledge by showing them how to integrate subjective knowledge and objective knowledge to construct new knowledge, specifically how to use them to interrogate each other; 2) using this integration to help students then interrogate teaching practice; 3) working to help students posit genuine questions; 4) guiding students as they engage in exploratory talk constitutive of inquiry; 5) demonstrating the value of others' knowledge for our own learning by identifying how that knowledge has altered or deepened our own; and 6) continually making visible for our students how we engage in these processes ourselves. Lisa's case suggests how these processes worked for one particular student; perhaps more importantly, her case also suggests how "process as pedagogy" worked to bring this about.

I argued that one of the affordances of this project was that it allowed students to begin where they were, with their experiences. However, Lisa's case revealed that students come with varying levels of knowledge about the concepts under study. Students also come with different levels of preparedness, whether in terms of knowledge or attitudes. Furthermore, Lisa had engaged in similar narrative work with her own

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students, feeling a need to be "honest" with her students and to let them see her as a real person, as human. This undeniably impacted how much she gained from this project.

In comparing Lisa with Erin and Steve, I cannot minimize the influence Lisa's acting on the ideas within this project ultimately had on her learning. True, it was completely coincidental; and I was not aware of this until after we were in the middle of the project. Nevertheless, her decision to act is fortuitous in terms of the implications it reveals. For example, it illustrates the learning that becomes possible when students are able to take projects such as these and then apply them—or some version of them— within their own contexts. This creates a space where they are able, and encouraged, to create richer understandings of concepts and how these concepts play out for them and their students, as well as how it shapes the intersection of the two. Finally, it holds the potential to provide them with more complex and sophisticated insights into students, teachers, and learning.

Lisa's knowledge and preparedness was especially significant in light of the class discussions. Because we were working toward becoming a connected-knowing group, Lisa heard her peers' statements and knew that they conflicted with her own experiences. Because of what she had experienced, she felt compelled to share her story, not to criticize her peers or to imply that their thinking was faulty but to offer her own experience as a point of contrast. As a result, this created an opportunity for her colleagues' sensitivities to be raised and for their knowledge and understanding to be stretched. Without the processes of connected knowing as part of the pedagogy, this may not have occurred. Furthermore, these same elements are present in any community of practice: members come with and share different knowledge and experiences that can

benefit everyone. When students learn a process such as this for engaging in inquiry together, then perhaps they will continue to learn in other contexts.

Challenges of creating and guiding a connected-knowing group. This pedagogy, however, is not without its challenges. Considering my students' responses, as well as my own fears, it seems that perhaps the primary challenge inherent in the processes or pedagogy for a project such as this are issues of safety and trust. It seems impossible to engage in a project such as this without safety. But while students might feel safe with an instructor (as they seemed to feel with me), it does not mean that they will feel that way with their peers, as Erin made clear. On the other hand, some students will take the risk anyway, even if they do not necessarily trust (as Lisa did) because they feel compelled to tell their story.

This suggests to me that perhaps some other "bridging" pedagogies need to be created in order to help students feel safe and to develop trust among each other. Again, these pedagogies need to present themselves as processes, as opposed to activities such as ice breakers or problem-solving activities. While these activities can be beneficial and worthwhile, they will not generate the assurance of safety and level of trust that a project such as this requires. It seems that one such process might be for a teacher educator to continually create opportunities where she can reveal her stance to her students, how this stance informs her teaching practice, and how it works to create an atmosphere of safety and trust. As I said earlier, although I initially set out to examine this in my study, I did not focus on it as much as I had originally intended. Nevertheless, implications for how a teacher educator might locate herself in the classroom still exist within my study.

A Teacher Educator's Stance

Epistemology and authority. It seemed imperative to me to go beyond thinking of myself as filling a role. I understand that I do fill a role, but I wanted to perhaps complicate what that means. Therefore, regardless of how successful I might have been in this endeavor, I nevertheless desired to share my epistemological stance with my students. Therefore, I implicitly communicated to students that I valued their knowledge when I made their personal experiences primary texts for the course. I also conveyed that their knowledge was important when I framed the project as an inquiry opportunity that reflected the value I placed on their perspectives about their learning needs, as well as aimed at meeting the needs previous students had named. Finally, I continually worked to respond to students in ways that spoke to my interest in how they were thinking and repeatedly inquired into their thinking and knowing.

Additionally, course instructors are seldom—if ever—allowed to step out of an evaluative role. Nevertheless, my description of this project demonstrated my desire to at least try to step out of that role or to make that desire explicit for my students to encourage them to consider how that might alter the nature of our work together. Therefore, this study included some pedagogical implications related to this idea: how the reality of instructor evaluation affects this kind of work and how an instructor's stance might disrupt the inherent power disparities between teacher and student. I do not mean to suggest that this is appropriate for all teacher education courses or even for all projects within one particular course. However, this move not to grade the project—at least for one project—was intended to show my students that I was simply another member of the group and not in any way the "holder" of more knowledge. An epistemological stance such as this may work to communicate to students that their knowledge is valued and that

it is worthy of systematic and deliberate study. However, this is not all that is necessary to create an atmosphere of safety and trust. What seems perhaps even more central to this are the boundaries that an instructor sets in place.

Boundaries. I know that many instructors—and perhaps even students—would challenge the nature of the boundaries that I tended to set. However, because I believe the "whole person" is present in the classroom, I "transgressed" those boundaries, what I now understand as a desire to "share in the "intellectual and spiritual growth" of my students (hooks, 1994, p. 13). I consistently inquired into my students' lives both inside and outside of school to communicate to them that every aspect of their lives was important and that I valued them as learners and as individuals. The idea was to convey to them that they mattered.

However, while I may have implicitly expressed this, I did not explicitly state it. I also never explained to my students that in reality, I was inviting them to enter into a safe space with me, that they were all welcome but that certain rules applied. For example, I did not explain that harsh words or cruelty were not allowed, that a mean spirit was not acceptable, that passing judgment or ridiculing (either in or out of class) was not tolerated in this safe space. Extending this invitation assumes that all students will *want* to enter such a space and that to enter and remain, they will abide by the rules. It also assumes a desire on the part of each student to care for the other students in the room.

As I consider what my students said about safety and about trust, it seems that my pedagogy should have made the nature of this space a continual topic of conversation and exploration in order for students to feel safe with each other, as well as with me. The problem, however, is what to do when students choose not to enter such a space or when

they violate one of the mandates. First of all, what is to be done with that particular student? What can undo the damage? These are boundaries that I tried to move both within and across, and I maintain my belief that boundaries such as these must be a continual focus of attention if students are to feel safe enough to take the necessary risks a project such as this entails.

The findings from this study allowed me to identify some curricular implications for teacher preparation, inclusive of both content and process. Furthermore, the processes that comprise curricular implications also suggest pedagogical considerations. However, looking across The Narrative Project, the study, and the findings also point to some of the challenges and limitations of engaging in work of this nature. Two of these challenges or limitations relate specifically to the concepts of narrative and positionality.

<div align="center">Limitations and Challenges</div>

Positionality

The Narrative Project centered on the concept of positionality. In fact, it was my assertion that this central concept guided both this project and my study of the project. This then led to my arguing that narrative inquiry was an appropriate research methodology. Yet as I look back on the project and study in their entireties, I realize a significant limitation: that I shied away or strayed from the very concept that provided the study with its focus. While I already acknowledged that one problem related to this is my failure to be explicit with my students about my learning goals, another problem lies in the focus students, both my choice of those students and how I approached the analysis of their work and their self-reports. In other words, the concept of positionality did not play a fundamental role in either my enactment or my study of this project.

I chose focus students according to factors other than the dimensions of positionality. I chose them based on my understanding of their responses to the project according to a rough continuum that reflected levels of engagement. I also chose them based on my work with them as an instructor and how I believed they might respond to being participants. However, I did not choose any of them based on the definition of positionality that I was working from when the study began.

Furthermore, when I analyzed the artifacts from the study, I did not consider how issues of positionality might have affected my interpretations of their work or their self-reports. Nor did positionality play a central conceptual role in data analysis. I did not consider how my students' positionalities may have impacted their understanding of—and engagement with—the project.

For example, I did not carefully examine how Lisa's positionality as a White, upper-middle class female may have impacted her response to the project, perhaps causing her to be more aware of process or more open to a project that required self-disclosure. Moreover, as a female student, she may have been more inclined to be a "pleaser," a topic raised during one of the class discussions. Yet I did not consider this in my analysis. While Erin and Steve may have shared similar class backgrounds, different from Lisa's, I did not explore how this might have affected *their* engagement with the project. Therefore, while I did not even choose a focus student based on either race or ethnicity, I also did not consider how social class or gender affected the focus students' (who I *did* choose) level of engagement or depth of understanding.

Another example of where this limitation is revealed is in Steve's case, a student who did not seem to "get it," at least not as much as Lisa and perhaps even Erin. He

continually looked for evidence that confirms what he already knew or believed to be true and may be identified as a clearly frustrated student. And his strong assertions during class discussions and during my conversation with him around his beliefs about where his education has failed him suggests that he did not even realize what he was disclosing about himself. This lack of self-awareness suggests a lower level of meta-cognitive awareness as well. All people have varying levels of meta-cognitive awareness, but I did not explore the dimensions of positionality that might affect this. Lisa has a great deal of it, while Steve seemingly has very little. This finding could be read as gendered and related to the larger concept of positionality. However, my analysis did not reach this level of critique. Again, given the intended centrality of positionality in the study, this is a significant limitation.

Still another conceptual problem was the shifting definition of positionality. Lisa's case suggests that individuals position themselves through their narratives; in fact, she was quite articulate about how this worked for her: while she had already been aware of others' positionalities, she became more aware of her own. I had argued that students' positionalities are already in place but that the narrative work makes them visible. Yet Lisa's case offers a more constructed view of positionality. Therefore, perhaps positionality is—in reality—more constructed than I had originally thought. Yet I did not account for that in my analysis of the data.

Therefore, it seems that my understanding of the concept of positionality seemed to unfold over time. What is problematic is that nowhere do I acknowledge this or deal with it. The same may be true for other concepts, such as system, connected knowing, or spirituality. So while these concepts may have been operative throughout the study, I did

an insufficient job of both identifying and clarifying them. Instead, they operate under the surface of the study, though I attempt to maintain that they are central to the study.

In some ways this might be part of my own story, or my own journey. It reflects my developing understanding of what was taking place, as well as the shifting conceptual sense I was making. Just as I determined that perhaps I should have been more explicit with my students, I also discovered that the need to begin with conceptual clarity and then either preserve that clarity or else account for the changes and shifts. Again, though, this seems to be a part of my own shifting understandings of what I was doing—both as an instructor and as a researcher—in light of my developing awareness of what my students were doing.

In some ways, this stems from one of the original questions that I posited about my teaching practice: that through this study I hoped to place order on one particular experience and to interpret that experience to make greater sense of it. I asserted that my study was an example of a teacher researcher attempting to "illuminate pedagogical acts by researching experience…[and making] visible the knowledge that teachers often implicitly employ" (Burten & Seidl, 2002, p. 226). Therefore, my initial intention was that this study would work to demonstrate the process a teacher educator may go through in order to bring intuitions to a conscious level.

Despite this initial intention, I did not necessarily "illuminate pedagogical acts" per se. Some of this might be the nature of the "story" that I told—or more accurately, that I tried to tell. While I offered specifics—from which I theorized—it was the nature of how I told this story that became challenging. In other words, my failure—perhaps my

inability—to make distinctions between narratives that occur as part of research and narrative *as* research may have gotten in the way.

First, I offered the focus students as cases, as opposed to using narrative to provide a richer portrait of each and to present them as "whole" individuals whose narrative includes their participation in this study as well as the narratives they wrote. Offering them as "cases" of a student on a continuum, I interrupted the narrative I was trying to construct and was not consistent with my initial idea that this was my story, my students' stories, and the story of our work together.

Furthermore, remaining consistent with the idea of narrative as research would have created a space where I could have talked about each of the students' positionalities. I never had the sense that working within the structure of cases allowed me to make any presumptions about my students' positionalities and how they affected their responses to the project or the understandings they gained from the project. On the other hand, if I had worked within a more narrative format, those positionalities could have become part of their stories, as well as part of my own story of how I came to deeper conceptual understandings.

Finally, maintaining consistency within a narrative as research frame would have allowed me to recount the changes in my own story. Just as Lisa suggests, our stories are always changing; if we desire to be honest with both ourselves and with others, then we need to acknowledge how our stories have changed and thus, how we have changed. Therefore, this narrative as research would have included how my own conceptual understandings changed as a result of analyzing my teaching and my students' learning. It would have recounted my increasing sense of commitment to attending to the spiritual

aspects of both living and teaching. It would have disclosed my growing recognition that I did not take the risks I thought I had; that issues of control create feelings of fear within me; that while I desire connection with and among my students, sometimes I get in the way and am my own worst enemy.

Again, approaching this study from a greater awareness of narrative of research would have created spaces for these kinds of disclosures and for this kind of illumination. It certainly would have been more honest and would have more accurately reflected what it was I sought to do in the first place: bring my intuitions to a conscious level and tell the story of my learning to be a teacher educator. Furthermore, it would have provided more powerful suggestions of the challenges that are an inherent part of this work. In addition to the work that these limitations and challenges imply, this study also suggests other new directions for research, particularly around the systems we use to construct knowledge and the spiritual nature of teaching.

New Directions

This study suggests that when we take the stance that knowledge is constructed, we need to make the system(s) that we use to construct that knowledge visible for our students and make the nature of how this occurs a primary area of exploration and examination. While I was concerned with the processes involved in this study, I did not conceive of them as a "system" for constructing knowledge when I designed the project. It was Lisa's case that revealed this to me. Therefore, I now wonder how making a system explicit for students will result in more of them reaching Lisa's level of understanding. This suggests different pedagogical moves, such as 1) exploring with students how writing—both narrative and analytical—works toward this end; 2)

examining how writing can make tacit knowledge more visible; and 3) teaching them more explicitly how subjective and objective knowledge might come together in order to add depth of understanding and how to use these "types" of knowledge to interrogate each other.

This study does not explore whether engaging in such a study with students would lead to greater understandings of self and others or of students, teaching, and learning. Nor does it examine whether or not helping students to both identify and interrogate the systems they use to construct knowledge lead to deeper conceptual knowledge, concepts such as positionality. These are ideas that require further research.

Another salient idea that I have discussed and continually held in the back of my mind is the spiritual aspect of teaching. And Lisa's case revealed to me what an exciting and stimulating line of inquiry this could be. This is a largely theoretical idea and seems very connected to the idea of "vision," a problematic construct in teacher education, as Kennedy (2006) argues. Nevertheless, my findings suggest that perhaps it is too vital to simply dismiss or minimize. In fact, I have come to believe that perhaps the notion of spirituality needs to be afforded more status in terms of the understandings or ways of being that teachers need to explore. What I am suggesting is that perhaps the idea of spirituality in teaching is too crucial to ignore or downplay in standards documents which reflect important research findings about the requisite knowledge, skills, and commitments prospective teachers need to hold. Perhaps these documents also need to speak to who teachers need to be.

Whether and to what extent prospective or practicing teachers, teacher educators, or teacher researchers for that matter understand the nature of spirituality and what it

means is difficult to ascertain. Therefore, it seems that work in this area could take many forms. It might mean identifying the behaviors that suggest a teacher's awareness of this aspect of teaching. It might also mean more theoretical work, to further flesh out the concept within the context of teaching. Finally, just as the case for developing systems for constructing knowledge, it might mean creating and then studying the efficacy of pedagogies (or systems) designed to foster a greater spiritual awareness.

Ultimately, what I am trying to articulate is my belief that the spiritual nature of teaching should become an important part of the curriculum for teacher preparation. I am not suggesting that it should replace the standards based and traditional curriculum needed for teaching. This is definitely not an "either/or" situation. In fact, taking that stance eliminates the possibility for conversation and the potential for knowledge building. It does, in fact, serve to dis-empower. Instead, I am suggesting that perhaps there is room in the curriculum that comprises teacher preparation for *both* the more traditional standards-based content *and* a more non-traditional content—or concept— such as spirituality.

<center>Conclusion</center>

Phelps (1991) argues that the relationship between knowledge and practice is best understood within the context of a community. Although my decision to engage in The Narrative Project with my students was a personal decision, it nevertheless took place within the context of a curriculum, a program, and an institution. This pedagogical decision became "knowledge" as such when I recognized the need to make it public so that the teaching community could understand and learn from it. However, that understanding and learning will necessarily be located in the particulars of teaching, as

opposed to grounded in abstractions. Furthermore, Phelps argues that all teaching

decisions are embedded within a curricular context, made by individual teachers and

reflecting their unique experiences in the classroom.

Thus, as teachers work to make their more personal accounts of teaching

experience public to the teaching community, then that community can work to fit all of

these accounts together and read across them. Considering my study from this

perspective, it may very well be one particular "story" that illustrates one particular

"vision." However, as an example of teacher research, it becomes one of many such

accounts, joining others that the teaching community can read with and against as they

examine the curricular contexts of teacher education.

I have asserted that teacher research may work to articulate a teacher educator's

vision, thus adding to the knowledge base for teaching. On the other hand, it could be

argued that since this study works to inform a more "personal" teaching concern, then it

is not informative for a larger audience, that its value is purely local. However, because

teacher research is designed to add such practical knowledge to the larger body of

knowledge on teaching, then perhaps its usefulness extends beyond the personal.

But I cannot—and refuse—to ignore how and why the personal still remains

important to me. Frederick Buechner (1983) helps me to explain this need to tell my

story when he talks about why he decided to write his autobiography:

> I do it because it seems to me that no matter who you are, and no matter
> how eloquent or otherwise, if you tell your own story with sufficient
> candor and concreteness, it will be an interesting story and in some sense a
> universal story. I do it also in the hopes of encouraging others to do the
> same—at least to look back...as I have looked back...for certain themes
> and patterns and signals that are so easy to miss when you're caught up in
> the process of living them" (pp. 2 & 3).

In some ways this study is the beginning of the story of my own life. I am not sure that I have told it with the same "candor and concreteness" that Buechner would appreciate, but between its lines rests my own journey of learning how to teach teachers—of growing up really—with its success and failures, fears and uncertainties, tears and laughter. Nevertheless, it is just that: my story. I believe, though, that it still holds the power of story and the potential to provide others with insights into their own lives and experiences or to think about their own lives and experiences in some new way. If nothing else, I believe that it might encourage someone else to stop and think about her life, in particular her teaching life, and try to pick up on what she may have lost along the way—and in the middle—of her living it.

I call this study "my story" in that it is my story of coming to understand my students' learning, as well as explicating—and ultimately complicating—my understanding of my own pedagogy. However, it is encompasses my students' stories, as interestingly enough, I cannot tell my story without weaving it with theirs. It somehow seems dishonest to separate their stories from my own, as they are such an integral part of my story. Furthermore, it was the process of writing my story along with theirs that brought my intuitions to a conscious level. It was through writing that I began to learn who I was in my classroom, what I believed and deemed valuable, as well as some ideas about the source(s) of those beliefs and values. In addition, writing gave me further insights into what my students were saying and doing as I tried to reveal who they were and what they learned through the stories *they* told. It allowed me to examine what they gained, what they found challenging, even frightening. Perhaps more importantly, I

learned why they were hesitant or resistant, as well as why despite those feelings, they nevertheless felt compelled to tell their stories as well.

Finally, telling this story has helped me find my own voice (Belenky et al., 1997; Gilligan, 1993). Let me repeat a sentence from the opening paragraph of Chapter 1: "Feeling continually unsure—though surrounded by peers who seemed certain about *everything*—I kept my teaching practice, as well as my concerns, very private." I now more fully appreciate how lost –and particularly how silenced—I felt. While I do believe that some purposely tried to silence me, I realize that others were completely unaware of the effects of their attitudes, their words, or their behavior. Besides, I knew I had to find my voice on my own terms and in my own way. Nevertheless, it came upon when and where I did not expect it, in a problem of practice, and gave me a sense of empowerment I had never experienced before.

Needless to say, I have a greater understanding of the empathy I have always felt for my students' same feelings of being lost and silenced. Therefore, I seek to create opportunities for my students so that their learning might lead to the same sense of empowerment that I have felt. It is my hope that they will then gain some sense of control over the realities of their lives, just as I did. Perhaps if I am able to give them opportunities to realize this, they will reach the same conclusions I have and will then work to create the same opportunities for *their* students. Perhaps it is only through imagining something better for ourselves that we can then create and foster the capacity to imagine something better for those around us.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

MY PERSONAL NARRATIVE

I grew up in a small town in northern Michigan, the same small town where my parents were raised. I tell people that I grew up in Alpena, but I actually grew up in Lachine, home of a post office and small gas station, and approximately 30 minutes from Alpena. Both my maternal and paternal grandparents lived within 10 minutes of my home, so I had lots of time to spend with them. In fact, I could see my Grandpa and Grandma Lewis's house from my own; and I saw them nearly every day. They had a farm and made a living from their land. They chopped and sold wood; made maple syrup; grew potatoes; and sold boughs, cuttings from cedar and pine trees used for Christmas wreaths and trim that they would bundle and sell to distributors who would then sell them in the Detroit area. In addition, they raised beef cattle for slaughter, which happened two or three times a year and were also the caretakers of the Long Rapids Cemetery. My Grandpa dug graves with a shovel, even in the winter, until he was almost 80 years old; then the township decided to purchase a backhoe for that purpose.

My parents also had a farm where they raised beef cattle. It became their retirement investment. They didn't rely on it for income as much as my grandparents because they each had different jobs. But my brother and I grew up helping on both my parents' and my grandparents' farms. We picked rocks in the spring when the ground had to be prepared for planting oats and corn. We baled hay in the summer and helped with my mom's garden. We would weed, shell peas and snip beans. My mom would freeze the peas and can the beans. We went with my mom to pick strawberries, raspberries, and sometimes huckleberries and wild blackberries. All of this was for homemade jams and jellies. After school started in the fall, we still helped with the garden. The corn was then ready to be picked, and we would husk it. Then my mom

would freeze it. We also canned tomatoes and peaches; when my parents bought a cider mill, we would pick up all the fallen apples and make homemade apple cider that my mom then canned as well. She would then get apples from anyone who happened to have a good apple tree, and we would make applesauce. A loaf of bread from the store was always a treat because my mom made homemade bread every Saturday, and I never ate canned fruit from a grocery store until after I was married.

As I got older, I also helped more at my grandparents' farm. I would help them pick potatoes every fall. My grandpa wanted to do it by hand, even though his neighbors used machines. He was convinced that the machines ruined the potatoes. We would each have a five gallon pail, and when we filled it, we would dump the potatoes into a wagon. It was a game to see who could pick as fast as my grandpa. He could fill four pails to my one, no matter how fast and hard I picked. To this day I don't know how he did it, but he was an amazing potato picker! My brother never made a game of it, but I had to because I really did not like coming home from school, changing my clothes, and going to the potato field.

I didn't spend as much time with my maternal grandparents, Grandpa and Grandma Manning, because they lived a little further away. My Grandpa Manning was a janitor at an elementary school near his house. I remember that when I was a little girl, I loved going to see him at Green School because everybody there loved Chet; I always felt special because he was my grandpa. (It didn't hurt that everybody, including myself, knew that I was his favorite granddaughter). He also raised sheep, though not for income like my Grandpa Lewis's cattle; he just liked sheep. He would let me feed them by hand

with a pop bottle filled with a dried milk mixture; our favorite lamb was Charlie Brown, and Grandpa kept him until he died of old age, just because he was my favorite.

I loved my grandpa because he did things that my mom always taught us were "bad." He played cards and could shuffle them like a Vegas blackjack dealer. He chewed tobacco and would spit it into the cook stove in their kitchen. I would lift the lid to see it lying there and listen to it sizzle. He had an old radio in the kitchen, and he would sit at the kitchen table and listen to every Detroit Tiger baseball game. He was always cranky, but I thought he was wonderful because he would let me tease him and always had a ready supply of circus peanuts and Juicy Fruit gum.

Though I talk mostly about my grandfathers, my grandmothers were also significant. They never had jobs outside of their homes, and their husbands both expected them to take care of the typical household duties, as well as help them with whatever work they had. My Grandma Lewis would help my grandpa all day in the field or the barn or the woods; when they would go home, he would sit by the woodstove and wait until my grandma then had dinner ready. After dinner he would return to his chair and fall asleep, leaving my grandma to clean up and catch up. I don't recall my Grandma Manning having to do that, but it was just as clear that her life revolved around my grandpa's.

When my parents were growing up, they never had much money. They worked on the farm, just like I did as a kid, only harder; they knew very few days that were not filled with labor. They also knew that their parents were poor and that they didn't want to be that way. In their minds the only way out was a college education.

My dad started his college career at Michigan Tech in the Upper Peninsula, about 300 miles from Lachine. He was dating my mom then, so he would hitchhike back to Lachine on the occasional weekend. I don't know all the schools they attended, but my mom ended up getting an English major from Oakland University, and my dad a math major from the University of Michigan. They both got certified as teachers and both earned masters degrees.

The whole history is kind of strange, actually. My dad went to college through ROTC and was stationed in Oklahoma after he graduated from college. He and my mom were married then, and both my brother and I were born in Lawton, though I was born at the army hospital at Fort Sill. My mom still had not gotten her college degree; that didn't happen until they moved back to Michigan after my dad was out of the army. They lived in Pontiac then. My dad taught in Bloomfield Hills, and my mom went to school and worked at Kroger. When I was three or four, they moved back to Lachine to be near family and to raise their children. They felt fortunate to be able to find jobs in this community where they were raised; it was a choice they were able to make for themselves.

I remember my mother telling me my whole life that I needed to do whatever I needed in order to not be dependent on any man. She said that I needed an education so that I could pay my own way and be independent and live on my own. I now realize that implicit in what my mom taught me was that whatever I chose to do with my life was my choice. If I "screwed up" in some way, then that was my choice as well. However, there was nothing standing in the way of my doing whatever I wanted to do, other than my own

choice. That was probably her notion of feminism and the conception of feminism that I held for a long time.

When I look at all of this now, I realize that it was white privilege that allowed me to live this way. Though my parents were poor when they were growing up, they always knew that if they worked hard, they could make something better for themselves. They lived in poverty and did not want that for their children. I was never poor, but I had to participate in work that held no direct benefit for me. I may have had more economic security than my parents had, but they taught against the notion, both implicitly and explicitly, that I was entitled to that. However, regardless of this, they still had the freedom to make choices and the knowledge that if they made good decisions, then their lives could be better. No societal barrier stood in their way.

In light of this, I question why I am uncomfortable talking about class. I believe that I was raised within society's middle class, even though my parents were not. However, I cannot describe what makes a particular societal class what it is. We don't talk about it and seem to avoid it; there doesn't seem to be a language to talk about class. Here are questions I have: Is class related solely to economics? Where does education fit? What are the salient features of upper class, middle class, and lower class? Do we not talk about it because the "markers" for class are not as obvious as those for race? Are we afraid we might make a mistake and inadvertently expose our biases because we can't always tell if we are talking with people from our own class? As White people, can we distance ourselves from race because we can say that people of a different race are not like us? Do White people not talk about class because we are forced to deal with White people who are from a lower class, who might be more like us than we care to admit? Do

we not want to admit that as White people, we may place other White people into a

deficit model because of their class? Why do we avoid it?

APPENDIX B

THE NARRATIVE PROJECT

Rationale

During TE 802 many interns raised concerns about their students. The common theme among these concerns was your students' academic failure. Some of you talked about unusually large numbers of your students failing not only your class, but also several other academic classes. Others talked about the difficulty of obtaining and maintaining your students' attention both for and during lessons. Still others talked about the difficulty of engaging students with the material and persuading them that tasks and assignments were worthwhile. Many of you have admitted to the frustration of what you have observed in your students. It has perhaps made you question your decision to become a teacher, especially if you believe that you are not being very effective and are realizing that perhaps you had some misconceptions about the profession.

While I do not disagree that the issues you raise about your students are huge, I do believe that you need the chance to think about these issues. When I say "issues," I do not mean concerns like student failure. I mean that who we are as teachers/people affects how we teach, and who our students are affects their attitudes to/about school and how they learn, as well as how we teach them. I also believe that it's important for all teachers, including myself, to position ourselves, especially with respect to our students and the society in which we all live. I believe that this examination of self is necessary in order to have a deeper understanding of our beliefs and values, where they came from, and how they impact our teaching practices. It will also help us to identify some of the assumptions that we might have about students, their parents, and education in general that are affecting how we perceive our students, their parents, and the role of education in society. This is especially crucial as we will all work with students who have views of the world that are not like ours and who have ways of being in the world that we will not understand. However, as teachers we must be responsive to all of our students and entered the profession because we have a vision of a better world for all of us.

This assignment is designed to help all of us in this endeavor. Its purpose is to have us connect who we are and who our students are, as well as how that affects teaching and learning. I intend to join you in this, as I need to do this work for myself and must position myself as a teacher educator with respect to the prospective teachers I see each week.

Task Outline

- Throughout the course of this semester, write two narrative pieces. These narratives should include autobiographical information about your family background, educational experiences, or other personal experiences that have shaped how you think about yourself or about education in general. For example, how did your parents shape your views of education? When you are choosing parts of your life to write about, consider your position as an educator and how these experiences have either affected or shaped your views of education and the students in your classes.

- After you have written your narrative, identify the salient societal issues that you believe have shaped you, such as your social class or your gender, as well as how

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they are affecting your beliefs about your students. Once you have done this, find one piece of text that helps you make sense of your experiences and how they may be affecting your position with respect to your students.

- Once you have located a text, write a reflection to accompany each narrative that explains how the text informed your thinking about yourself, your students, and your role as a teacher. You should also indicate how what you have learned about yourself through writing the narrative, along with what you learn from the articles or books you have read, might shape your beliefs about education and the students you teach. Finally, you should write about how you might use the knowledge you have gained through this process.

- Throughout the semester you will have opportunities to discuss these narratives, readings, and your learning with other class members who have also chosen this option. This will be a chance for all of us to look into issues such as race, class, and gender and how they have affected our personal experiences and the lives of our students, as well as how they shape our attitudes toward our students and our practices as secondary English teachers.

APPENDIX C

CHOICE OF FOCAL STUDENTS AND INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

I have chosen four focal students: two White females, one African-American female, and one White male. In choosing these four students, I used the following considerations:

- I would like to include both male and female students; thus, I have chosen one male and three females.
- I chose the one male student because he opted not to share his narrative with the class, only to say later that he wished he had shared his narrative.
- Of the three females, two of them shared their narratives with the class and raised issues of positionality: social class and race. The other was not resistant to the project, yet was not entirely comfortable with the project, identifies herself as extremely shy, and decided not to share her narrative with the class.

I anticipate three different protocols: one for those who shared their narratives, one for the student who did not share but wished he had, and one for the student who remained somewhat hesitant throughout the project.

First Protocol—Students who Shared Narratives
With those who shared their narratives, I will begin with a viewing session as follows:

(a) previous students' reading of narratives
(b) class discussion of their readings
(c) focal students' reading their narratives
(d) class discussion of their reading

I have nominated this structure so that for each segment: a, b, c, and d, I can ask the following questions: What were you thinking during this portion of the class, as you decided to share your narrative? AND/OR What thought(s) were triggered at this point that caused you to want to share your narrative?

I might also ask the students at this point about their understanding of the shift from character to narrator.

Following this viewing session, I will next ask the students broad questions about the processes involved in the project, ending with a question about the content of their learning, such as:

- Why did you choose this particular topic for your narrative? What is the significance of this story?
- Tell me about your experience of writing the reflection about your narrative. Probes: How did writing the accompanying reflection contribute—or not contribute—to your learning? What significance or value do you find—or not find—in your narrative?
- Tell me how the class discussion worked for you. Probes: How did—or didn't—the class discussions contribute to your learning? To what extent—if any—did class discussions help you to identify the significance or value of your narrative?

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- (Content): What did you learn through the process of writing the narrative, writing the reflection, and discussing them with your colleagues?

I will next ask more questions about the *process*, separate from their specific narratives, ending with a question about the content of their learning, such as:

- How would you describe your response to the more "open-ended" structure of these class meetings?
  Probe: How did/do you feel about the "let's see what happens" kind of structure?
- What sense of responsibility did you feel toward the success or failure of this project? What sense of responsibility did you feel for yourself, for your colleagues, or toward me as the instructor?
- How was your response to this project impacted by the fact that I would be evaluating you? How do you think it would have been different had I not been in a position where I had to evaluate you?
- (Content): What do you believe you learned from this project? How has it impacted your thinking (about students, teaching, learning, parents, education in general, etc.)? Can you give me some specific examples?

Next, I will provide my participants with the following list of issues that reflect some of the concerns my students have previously raised, such as students who seemingly don't care about academic success; students who are seemingly content with academic failure; students who claim there is no value in education; students who claim they have no plans for the future that require an education; students who consistently seem disengaged; students who are openly hostile, etc.

I will ask the participants to talk about what they might do in any of these situations. I will next ask them if the narrative project influenced what they think, as well as how it might have influenced what they think.

I will end the viewing session/interview with some specific questions about positionality, such as:

- In our class my intent was that we would explore the concept of positionality. By that I mean a person's location, according to gender, race, class, or other socially significant dimensions. Does this idea make sense to you? If so, how?
- Did the narrative project contribute to your understanding of positionality? If so, what specific aspects of the project contributed to this understanding? If not, could you explain why it did not contribute to your understanding?
- Did the narrative project change or transform your thinking about students, teaching, learning, etc. in any way? If so, how? If not, why do you think that is?
- Did engaging in the narrative project lead you to feel a greater sense of responsibility for your students and their learning? If so, how? If not, why do you think that is?

- Did engaging in the narrative project give you any insights into how you might approach issues you face in the classroom, such as student failure or student disengagement? If so, how? If not, why do you think that is?

Second Protocol—Student who Wished He'd Shared
I will ask this student the following questions:

- Why did you choose this particular topic for your narrative? What is the significance of this story?
- Tell me about your experience of writing the reflection about your narrative.
  Probes: How did writing the accompanying reflection contribute—or not contribute—to your learning? What significance or value do you find—or not fine—in your narrative?
- Tell me how the class discussion worked for you.
  Probes: How did—or didn't—the class discussions contribute to your learning? To what extent—if any—did class discussions help you to identify the significance or value of your narrative?
- (Content): What did you learn through the process of writing the narrative, writing the reflection, and discussing them with your colleagues?
- I'm interested in learning more about why you decided not to share your narrative with the class. Can you tell me about that?
  Probe: Do you recall any particular moment when you made your decision? If so, what were you thinking?
- You mentioned one day after class that you wish you had shared your narrative. Can you tell me more about your thinking?

I will next ask more questions about the *process*, separate from the specific narratives, ending with a question about the content of their learning, such as:

- How would you describe your response to the more "open-ended" structure of these class meetings?
  Probe: How did/do you feel about the "let's see what happens" kind of structure?
- What sense of responsibility did you feel toward the success or failure of this project? What sense of responsibility did you feel for yourself, for your colleagues, or toward me as the instructor?
- How was your response to this project impacted by the fact that I would be evaluating you? How do you think it would have been different had I not been in a position where I had to evaluate you?
- (Content): What do you believe you learned from this project? How has it impacted your thinking (about students, teaching, learning, parents, education in general, etc.)?

Next, I will provide the following list of issues that reflect some of the concerns my students have previously raised, such as students who seemingly don't care about academic success; students who are seemingly content with academic failure; students who claim there is no value in education; students who claim they have no plans for the

future that require an education; students who consistently seem disengaged; students who are openly hostile, etc.

I will ask this participant to talk about what he might do in any of these situations. I will next ask him if the narrative project influenced what he thinks, as well as how it might have influenced what he thinks.

I would end the viewing session/interview with some specific questions about positionality, such as:

- In our class my intent was that we would explore the concept of positionality. By that I mean a person's location, according to gender, race, class, or other socially significant dimensions. Does this idea make sense to you? If so, how?
- Did the narrative project contribute to your understanding of positionality? If so, what specific aspects of the project contributed to this understanding? If not, could you explain why it did not contribute to your understanding?
- Did the narrative project change or transform your thinking about students, teaching, learning, etc. in any way? If so, how? If not, why do you think that is?
- Did engaging in the narrative project lead you to feel a greater sense of responsibility for your students and their learning? If so, how? If not, why do you think that is?
- Did engaging in the narrative project give you any insights into how you might approach issues you face in the classroom, such as student failure or student disengagement? If so, how? If not, why do you think that is?

This is the same series of questions that I asked the first two students. I am thinking that I would ask this student if he recalls why he said after class that he wishes he would have shared his narrative with the class.

Third Protocol—Hesitant Student
I don't have specific questions I want to ask this student. In fact, I hesitate to do that in that I want her to talk about whatever is compelling to her. However, in order to start the conversation, I would ask the following question:

If you were to describe the narrative project to an intern who is about to take this class from me, what would you tell that intern about it?
Probe: What advice would you give?

I would use the following topics as probes:

- topics she chose
- accompanying reflections
- class discussions
- what she learned/did not learn
- her response to the structure

- her response to my role as evaluatorher sense of responsibility to herself, to her colleagues, to me

APPENDIX D

ERIN'S WRITINGS

Narrative One

"Hi honey, your teacher just called" my mom gently said. I know "bad" kids are usually associated with calls home from school, but that wasn't me.

"She just wanted to let me know that you are shy and that she's concerned about you not speaking up, no problems, said she loves to have you in class."

"Ok. Thanks mom," I replied.

When I was in elementary school my teachers always said how quiet I was and that they wished I would speak up. I guess I've always been shy. I'm not sure why I was always so shy.

Looking back I've started to gather some theories on what could have led to the shyness. In my early years, I think it may have been the "getting started" aspect of school. My older siblings started out going to Catholic school, a place I was looking forward to going to, but then we moved to a different city. I was the only one of the three of us that would to go through all my school years in a public school. My two older siblings always seemed just a little bit ahead of me in work that they did, or opportunities that they had because of age. I felt just that little bit behind them. We were all three years apart, but for some reason they got to do things together. They were involved at a church day camp and I had to stay home. I remember walking up and down bleachers while they took swimming lessons, even though my mom swears that she still had to hold me as a baby and that was why I didn't take the swim class. I've never quite figured that out - could my older sister have taken swim class at 3 or 4?

When we moved, we were all excited. My mom started a daycare and I stayed home when my siblings were at school. Then it was my turn to start school. I went to

prekindergarten and that is where I made my first friend in this new town. I remember it clearly. I was at recess and everyone was running around on the playground equipment. So, I went to go on a slide. When I was in line to climb the slide ladder, a boy was in front of me. Our conversation was great, it went just like this.

"Hi, I'm Erin."

"Hi, I'm John."

"Do you want to be friends?"

'That sounds good."

A 5 year old happy about making a friend, of course I went home to share the news with my family. I was so excited to have a friend that I made on my own. The result of sharing this news was not at all what I wanted. My family, particularly my extended family on my dad's side, who heard about my friend from my parents, all teased that I had a boyfriend. I was so annoyed. Why can't a kid just have a friend? I remember thinking that I couldn't be friends with John anymore; because that would mean I might have to kiss him and I didn't want to do that. Gross. I didn't want a boyfriend - I hardly knew what that was.

In third grade I gained weight. I got fat pretty quick. I went from being a cute kid to being enormous. So between making odd friends, being teased about friends, and gaining weight, I wasn't exactly a social butterfly, in or out of class. In third grade my parents went bankrupt (which is probably the biggest contributing factor as to why I see so many things the way I do). When my parents went bankrupt, there could have been tensions in our house, but I don't remember them. My parents have always kept it together for us. I never ever heard yelling in my house. It was always peaceful and calm.

We *w*ere a close-knit family. I don't even remember sibling fights with the three

*exce*ptions of my brother shoving my stuffed monkey under a couch and it's butt ripping

*ope*n and my being upset, or the time I decapitated his GI Joe by swinging it on the

dra*pe*ry cords, or when I wasn't allowed to call mom at work to be a tattletale over who

kno*w*s what little thing. In all honesty, my family's financial situation probably brought

us t*o*gether, since it would influence our school years. A survival technique I suppose.

At any rate, I was a fat elementary student, the number one reason I was a social

outc*a*st and my family didn't have any money, the number two reason I was an outcast.

We l*o*st our big beautiful house and ended up moving to the country. We all wanted to

stay *in* the same schools, so that we didn't have to go to a country school. My parents

lied *a*bout our addresses. A friend from our church let us use her address for our schools.

When school of choice came into play, long after our school years, my parents were all

for it.

So in the middle of elementary school we moved. And I was fat. And any boy I

ever talked with was immediately labeled as my boyfriend.

In middle school I remember going on a field trip. I had short hair and I was fat.

I remember a kid asking a teacher what I was - a boy or a girl. I was crushed (looking

*b*ack it still stinks). In gym class, you have to get weighed and do skin folds. The verdict

- yup, Erin is too fat. I met Teresa in gym. We were nervous about getting weighed. So

we debated who was fatter. Believe it or not, that simple conversation, which paralleled

*m*y elementary school ways of making friends, led to my dearest friendship.

By seventh grade, I thought I was in love. Whether it was Michael J. Fox, who

loved telling people he had a movie star name (he always introduced himself with his full

name), or Eric who had the blondest hair and flirted with me, even though I was chubby, I began to believe that I should do something about my weight issue. So, I exercised a lot. I lost 50 lbs in my seventh grade year and in eighth grade I ran track. I started to get involved and I was able to play an instrument in the school orchestra. By high school, I got even more involved in activities. This led to my opening up and not being so shy. I had friends, but not in every class. But, I had found a nitch. I made friends and was social. Money issues and weight issues didn't hold me back. Well, they didn't exactly hold me back before, but they did contribute to my shyness and now I was opening up. I challenged myself in various avenues, so much so that I was a performer, sang solos, took leadership positions in clubs, and had several friends that I spent time with.

I was in high school and teachers didn't call home at that level (or that is what I thought growing up). I had boyfriends, which meant phone calls and trying to meet up after school, usually when friends were around. I didn't start telling my parents about boyfriends, until I was a senior, since the rule was no boyfriends until you are a senior (I hated to lie, but couldn't live up to that rule—boyfriends were a fun part of being social!).

When I went to college I figured I had gotten rid of the shyness of elementary. Then I took my first English classes, one of which was the first class in college where class participation of talking counted in the grade. I never figured out how others could do it. In that class, they contributed such smart ideas, that by the time I had formed my most articulate way to say what I wanted it was either said or we had moved on. Don't get me wrong, I caught everything, but I was too slow at jumping in. I remember that my grade almost took a dive because of the discussion factor. I talked with my instructor about it and she said that I would need to speak up in graduate school and therefore that

meant I should speak up in my undergrad classes too. I did earn the grade that I wanted, without speaking up. I think my instructor realized how hard I was trying. I hope she did.

As college years progressed, I would do what I always did, listen intently, be very involved mentally, and form responses that were just a little late for jumping in. Yet, I often did contribute as well. Or I would not say anything if someone dominated the conversation and was just runny at the mouth without making a point. My other classes seemed to accept this. As I became more confident in my abilities I started speaking up even more. When I started my internship I recalled how I work, start out quieter and then slowly once I am familiar, speak up, but say things with a purpose. When I started the school year, I was much quieter and as soon as my mentor teacher recommended that I work on speaking up with staff, I did. I quickly remedied the situation and spoke up at meetings, in the lounge and in other staff settings. I've become a productive staff member in my placement this year. Yet, at times I still go back to my shyer self. I remember a staff meeting where we were taking about WAC and I was very aware of the content and could have jumped in. I couldn't figure out the best way to interject without slamming another teacher, who was complaining about it. After the meeting we headed back to our room and I said that I felt like a criminal for not speaking up. Since my mentor knew what I could have contributed, he agreed that a crime was committed (something I appreciate from him - his being "real"), but we both agreed that not finding the way to avoid attacking another teacher, probably was a good reason to not speak up.

I hear my sister's voice in my head "think before you speak", though I can't remember why she'd tell me that again and again. Perhaps it was simply an older sister's

job. Or maybe I just annoyed her being the little sister and all. All I know is her advice has always paid off for me.

In my last undergrad semester I took an English Ed class where our professor raised the point that kids who don't talk up aren't getting it or aren't paying attention. I replied that I completely, respectfully disagreed. I asked the professor whether if she thought I wasn't getting anything from her class, because I was quieter. She understood my point.

This year, at parent-teacher conferences I told Laura that she could speak up in class. She always had an excuse for being quiet. Recently, I have been questioning, why do I want Laura to speak up? Do I know she is getting it? Yes. Does she work hard and do her work? Yes. Does she fit in with the others? No. I shamefully have realized that she is silent because of class dynamics. Why do I want her to speak up? Because it would help me as the teacher. Laura, who is now in drama club (I help advise the group), who does her work, who gets the material, who simply doesn't fit in with kids in the class, who has told me she doesn't talk because her classmates are judgmental. I want her to speak up. Is that fair? Would I have spoken up in that class? Absolutely not! Why do I want her to? I guess I always thought I wanted to give her the chance. Maybe she doesn't need it or want it. I have to admit, I almost feel like I need to tell Laura that it is ok. It's ok; I understand why she does not want to talk. My reasons for wanting her to talk are probably what I would mark as my biggest error of this year (next to the time management of grading and planning). I want her to speak up for her, but if she doesn't want to, should she have to?

In our course we've talked about discussion and every week that we watched a discussion clip, I kept telling myself, you have ideas, think faster and get them in. I rarely did. But one thing I wanted to say that I never worked in was whether we have to have all of our kids talk? We touched on it, but aren't some kids getting it without the conversation? I've grown out of my shyness, but yet I still fall back into it. I've been able to perform, teach, challenge, discuss. Just because I don't always talk in class doesn't mean I am not getting it. I am usually sitting there thinking about it. This year, I am quiet in class because I am usually tired by the time we get to Fridays, but in other networks I talk and talk. In this course I am comfortable with our discussions and engaged mentally. Then I go to my other course and sometimes I won't shut up because the things people say in that class often get me talking because they are not quite what I'd agree with and if I didn't speak up in there it would be a crime. Then there is the factor of examining discussion from the viewpoint of it being a discussion that you have to be part of because it is in a class. If you have to be there, how does that influence the conversation? When I am meeting with others on various other projects and I know we all are engaged in the topic, I am more inclined to feel that others want to hear what I have to say, as opposed to in class. There are so many factors that influence why we are the way we are and why we do what we do. Do I remember that stories influence my students too?

Reflection One

So, what about teaching? I had so much to say in this narrative that it was less focused than when I began. Yet questions that this narrative raised for me were: do students have to speak up in classes?; what about students that don't participate in the

conversation?; what is so wrong about being somewhat shy?; what about my student's background influences them in class?; how do groups form in classes?; how does gender influence our discussions? Girls and boys are interested in one another; they must have days when they don't want to feel stupid about sharing an idea, so why would we want them to share? Physical appearance can contribute a lot to students work in class. What about social dynamics? What about the people that influence their lives outside of school? All of these issues are raised by simply looking back on my one experience. What about the variety of experiences that my students bring to the table?

As a teacher I find it important to show sensitivity and fairness. It's easy to forget what it's like to be an adolescent. I decided that I wanted to work with adolescents when I was in high school. I think I figured that it was finally where I felt like I belonged, but it took me so long to get there that I wanted to work with adolescents that went through issues of finding place and identity. In "Weighing in on the issue of childhood obesity," Lynn-Garbe and Hoot suggest that, "although greatly increased risks for health-related problems often accompany obesity, perhaps the most devastating consequences of children being overweight are psychosocial. Children develop negative attitudes about overweight peers at early ages. Unchecked, such attitudes often lead to intentional weight-related teasing." Emotional and social implications of obesity are very real in the lives of our students. As educators, I think we need to consider what factors influence our students. We will never know every issue our students face, but we do need to be sensitive to their needs as people. In addition, it could be easy for students to fit the norm of whatever physical characteristics they portray. This is supported in the literature that "research suggests that many cultures stigmatize overweight children as lazy, stupid,

slow, and self-indulgent" (Dietz qtd. in Lynn-Garbe). I don't see this as being factual, most likely because I had the experience and knew that being fat did not mean I was slow or stupid. However, this is an issue that very clearly led to my shy disposition. Physical appearance, which is huge for adolescents, contributes to their student behavior. As a teacher, I find it necessary to remember what it's like to be an adolescent.

In addition, it's important to consider not just physical appearance, but also students voicing their responses. Garbe suggests that "teachers often view shy children as having lower potential for academic success. Shy children rarely volunteer in class and when they do, they are hesitant and lack confidence." This is how Laura behaves in class. However, because I've had extensive conversations with Laura in and out of class, I know that she is shy in certain circles, but not in others.

With all of the factors that adolescents face, I don't expect them all to feel comfortable talking in class. I don't expect them to always be "on". But, I do hold high expectations and I do vary the activities that we do, so that they can become more comfortable with whom they are as students, and in their interactions with other students. As I reflected on issues that led to my shyness, namely weight issues and economic issues, I realized that simple growing pains influenced my quieter voice too. I guess that part of it also just stays with you.

Yet sometimes because I am comfortable with myself, I find it easy to be in my life and harder to step out and see my students' lives. What I have found however, is that if they like you, they'll remind you what it is like to be in their shoes. Being involved with extra curricular activities or an intense project with students also helps provide those

reminders. And then again, because it's education and everyone has a story, people in your life remind you as well.

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Narrative Two

I'm from "education is everything"

from "the way to get ahead, to have it 'better,' is hard work and education"

"So, what's your plan? *Are* you going to college or getting a job or what?" she attempted to ask gently, but the underlying push was clear in her voice. My mother's blunt inquisition over why I hadn't finished filling out my college applications may seem a normal question to anyone else, but when she asked me what I was doing, it was a shock to me. A shock because I had grown up knowing that I was going to college. After all, mom knew that I was going to college (or at least I thought she did) as she was the one that instilled her beliefs about education in me. She engrained her beliefs in all of her children: education is the key to getting anywhere. When I dragged my butt on college applications, she got on my case with questions that sounded like a firing squad because I knew that if I didn't go to college I would be the failure. Or at least it felt that way. I would be the failure because my mother taught her children that education is everything and the way to get ahead to have it better, is hard work and education. Again

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and again, we'd hear that the way to go beyond what we had growing up and to build a better life for ourselves was through education.

In the third grade my family was about to move into a new house. Well, shouldn't that be exciting? I plopped on the springboard of a mattress we were leaving behind. Trying to understand as best I could what was going on, how my family was moving and why. I pounded my hands into the springboard. Tears dripped down my face and as I continued to pound and cry, the noise I made got louder and louder. My dad found me and held me. Looking back, that had to be a hard moment for him. I cried because we were moving and I didn't understand it. If this had been an "ordinary" or choice move, I probably wouldn't have cried quite like that.

When I was in the third grade, we moved from a house where we each had our own room. First floor: living room, dining room, family room, my parent's room, bathroom, kitchen, mud room, laundry room. An upstairs with a bathroom for three kids. Three rooms and an office. A basement too. A garage and a greenhouse where my parents grew flowers and my dad raised fish.

We moved from the city to the country, all five of us. That house was gone. Now, we had one bathroom for five of us, which was only an issue because we were used to two and my brother and sister were in their teen years. We shared rooms and were very tight on space, as we moved to our new home, a trailer located in the country on land intended for building a new house (one that never got built).

When I was in the third grade my parents went bankrupt. They had to borrow money from their parents and siblings so that we could move into a new home. Money was always tight. I learned to watch how my money was spent and I saved almost all the

money that I earned. My mother always told us to study and end up in a better economic place than she did. So, when it came time for college, my siblings figured out student loans and they worked through their college career. I was to do the same. I did.

Money struggles are, as most teaching interns face, still very present in our lives. It'll be a scary moment when I finally make the calculation that I've estimated over the years, the one I've been trying to avoid. The grand total of my student loans. But the intensity of money issues that my family faced when I was growing up has changed, as we've all moved above the poverty line. Now, I dream about buying a house with my husband (we currently own a condo). I dream of living in a house again.

Money issues, as well as my mom's love of education, led to my deep commitment and appreciation for education. I get frustrated when others don't know what they have or when they seem to throw away opportunities for learning and don't work hard.

A couple of years ago, I tutored a student who was working on a course paper about overcoming an obstacle in her life. Her obstacle was making enough money to have a spring break! In her paper she defined spring break as a trip to some place like Cancun or Acapulco. She wrote a paper about how it was so terrible that she had to get a job during college to pay for her spring break. I have to admit, I was very proud of myself since I responded politely and professionally (though I gritted my teeth). I delicately asked her to define what she meant as spring break. I told her that I thought spring break meant time off of school. I remember her saying "oh .. .I guess, that makes sense." This student was upset that her parents ruined her break because they weren't going to pay for a trip and she wrote about the jobs she did to pay for her break. I was

frustrated that not having a "spring break" was so devastating and that she didn't see what she had. While, I counted my debt in college loans.

My least favorite part of teaching is grading. I haven't figured out where students sit grade-wise until near the time grades are due. I know that I always studied a lot to succeed in school. As a teacher, you figure out that there are always several kids who are very smart, but fail the class because they don't do the work. The kids that have the ability, but do not do their work frustrate me because I see them not using their gift. Some act as though just being a body in class should count for something. I want to see them learn and do work. Like my mother, I too believe students need education and to apply themselves. It is frustrating when students just don't try and instead throw opportunity away. Some of my poorer students don't try. I reflect on my days growing up, wanting to say hey, trying is the way to change what you have and where you are. Growing up, education was taught as the way to challenge our social class and work toward social mobility. This has led to my high expectations for myself in whatever I do, and has also led to high expectations that I have for my students.

Reflection Two

Quindelen, Anna. "A New Kind of Poverty: America is in a country that now sits atop the precarious latticework of myth. It is the myth that working people can support their families." *Newsweek,* 1 Dec. 2003.

Growing up in a lower social class has influenced the ways in which I view others that are economically not where they want to be in life, or where society says they should be. Characteristics of being ambitious, dedicated, motivated, and driven, are far more important than any status one holds. My experience of having to work hard for what I

wanted has led to high expectations for myself, which I now put on my students as well. I believe students need to learn the value of hard work and earn an education to have any form of change or social mobility in their individual lives. These expectations are placed on them based on the ideal that all students need to work hard and learn to succeed in society. I wonder why some students do not do the work. I can't understand not meeting the class requirements. I know all of my students will not turn in the assignment, but it's clear that some of my students are excited about sharing their work.

In "A New Kind of Poverty: America is a country that now sits atop the precarious latticework of myth. It is the myth that working people can support their families." Anna Quindlen reminds that "in America we console ourselves with the bootstrap myth, that anyone can rise, even though [they] who work two jobs ... " While I grew up believing in this bootstrap American dream of moving to a higher social status, what I took away from that experience was the need for students to immediately target their interests and get involved to learn more about those interests, so that they are engaged and narrow interests for future plans. Quindlen through review of Beth Shulman's book *The Betrayal of Work,* notes that "even in the go go '90s one out of every four American workers made less than $8.70 an hour, an income equal to the government's poverty level for a family of four" (Shulman qtd. in Quindlen). And while the poverty level may at times seem static, I still believe that the individual can make a difference in their life based on their own hard work. Yet, Shulman further enlightens this assumption as she describes "people as 'low skilled," as though they're not important or intelligent enough to deserve more. But low-skilled workers today are better educated than ever before" (Shulman qtd. in Quindlen). Therefore, if the lower jobs require more

skills and as technology continues to advance, students need to be challenged and held to high expectations. Technology education also needs to be part of students' daily life.

As an educator that grew up with the bootstraps plan and with an awareness that the level of skills needed for entry jobs has been increasing, there are two major implications for students. First, students need to learn about people from different statuses. This may allow for diverse interactions to take place, as well as a sensitively to diversity that often isn't as visible as others. Second, students need to be given challenging material to benefit their future. They need to work hard to have skills for entry level jobs, therefore, we as educators must constantly challenge our students. I believe that this is directly connected with my high expectations, as well as connection of course material to student lives. My students will be held accountable to high expectations, and they will be aware of various issues of social class and how it's viewed in society.

APPENDIX E

STEVE'S WRITINGS

Narrative One

About six months ago my sister called and me asked if I had heard about what happened to Ron Linton, I replied "NO," and she proceeded to tell me how he had just received 25 years in jail for his fourth conviction in drug sales. Ron was my best friend through my high school years, and for about an eight month period after graduating I supplied him with most of his drugs. The drugs I sold consisted of nothing beyond the norm of what is heard on the T.V. or radio, mostly marijuana, although occasionally I got a good deal on a batch of acid or cocaine. The last time I saw Ron was three years ago in the summer, after his third conviction for selling drugs he was sentenced to three years in prison and was released for a long weekend to attend the funeral of his father. Suited with a tether, he and I played golf, drank a few beers and pondered the decisions we had made in our lives, including some of the individuals and situations that had influenced us the most. Ron's dad was a small town cop and he lived his childhood trying to live up to his father's huge expectations. As for me, through my childhood years I had only seen my father once after the age of four. Needless to say, it was an awkward nine holes, Ron was facing many years in prison and I was in the process of turning my life around. There were hidden tears from me as I said goodbye to Ron, knowing where he was going to spend the next few decades of his life.

So here I am, the opposite of an atypical college graduate student and I'll do my best to give you, my fellow classmates, a succinct version of "my story" that gives you the opportunity to empathize with me and understand how I got to where I am today.

I attended this university right after high school because my girlfriend was going to attend the following year, but mostly because it was close to home and I thought there

was money to be made at a major college selling drugs. I only got accepted because I lived in Timbuktusville and did well on the ACT. After floundering around for a year, and trying to keep up with my college bound girl-friend, I transferred and graduated from a non-accredited Christian college on a 1 ½ year every Tuesday night plan because it was quick and easy. I soon realized that this accomplishment received more smirks than perks. Soon after, I found myself working in a union warehouse after experimenting with a few dead-end jobs.

December 1999: While working at my third shift warehouse union job and seeing a virtual wage freeze and a hike in the cost of benefits in the upcoming contract I realized I had no future with the company and my first degree held almost no weight in the "real world". Frustrated and unfulfilled with both my job and wages I drove to the administration building parking lot of the university at 8:00 a.m after leaving work and waited for it to open. When it opened, I spoke with an advisor about "what I want to be when I grow up" and she told me that I needed to bring my transcripts from all my other colleges before she could help me with anything.

January 2000: Sitting down once again with the same advisor I decided I wanted to be a high school teacher because I loved working with kids, but because of my poor academic record, including graduating from a non-accredited college and a year at the university in which my grade point was poor (about 2.5), she advised me otherwise. Confused and frustrated, I walked out to my car and pondered the situation, and after a few solitary moments I walked back into the advisor and told her that I still wanted to be a teacher. Then she asked me, "What do you want to teach?" At this point I was feeling very stupid because I had not got that far in my thinking, so I walked back out to my car

and thought some more. The last thing I remembered liking in regards to "learning" was

when I bought a 50 cent copy of, "The Autobiography of Ty Cobb" at a garage sale and

read it in one weekend. Thus, my decision was made, I wanted to teach high school

English.

January 2000- January 2003: The only people that were aware I was attending

college were my boss and wife. Friends, family and co-workers frequently asked me why

my schedule at work kept changing and why I was so busy, so I would just beat around

the bush and somehow change the subject. For the first time in my life I realized why I

never tried in high school and got into drugs and alcohol...FEAR. I always had an

excuse why I didn't try in school, take your pick: it's boring, when will I ever use this

crap, and the ever popular...I have better things to do. But the truth was, I was afraid,

and this was the same reason I didn't tell anybody I was in college at that time. I

remember constantly asking myself: What if I don't graduate? What if I don't get into

the College of Education? What if I can't pass the MTTC tests? All these

thoughts, and more, continually went through my mind many times as the next three

years went by.

During this three year period a certain crazy string of events happened that should

have told me "I can accomplish anything if set my mind to it." As I left the advisor in the

spring of 2000, I grabbed a schedule of the classes I needed to take and didn't look back.

I wanted to wait a few years to try and get accepted in the Education Program because I

needed time to get my G.P.A. up, and I remember joyfully crossing off class after class as

I slowly met all the requirements. Then, I hit a wall, I tried to sign up via the computer

for an English course I needed and I was denied access. I called the registrar's office and was told that I needed to be accepted into the English Education program before I could take the three required English courses for teachers. I told the lady on the phone that I had already taken one of them, and after she checked and saw that I was telling the truth, she claimed that she had no idea how I was allowed to take the class because I was never accepted into the Education program. Access denied!! As I got off the phone, I scratched my head and called back two more times until I got a different person to answer the phone. As I went through the same line of questions and answers with a different person, I eventually got the response of "you don't have access to these classes." Knowing how busy the registrar's office is at that time of year, I responded, "as you can see, I have already taken 408 and have been given a special exemption because of circumstances, you are more than welcome to check it out if you wish." After seeing that I had already taken the one course, I could literally hear the lady on the other end of the phone thinking for a moment, and then she replied, "I'll take care of it for you." Needless to say, I repeated the same strategy the following semester to sign up for another English Education course and this gave me the opportunity to get my grade point up and eventually be accepted into the program without having to wait to take those three English Education classes. You can only image the questions I got from one advisor when I sat down with her a few months before I was accepted into the Education program and she saw the list of English classes I had completed.

Summer 2003: It was not until I got a letter saying that I was accepted into the Education program that I began to tell people that I was in college, but even then it was a slow and difficult process. I can honestly say that I didn't feel like a true

college graduate until I received my diploma in the mail in the summer of 2004.

Now it is the spring of 2005, present day. I am almost finished with my certification and contemplating when and where I will get my Master's degree. Meanwhile, I can see an uncomfortable feeling in most of my family's eyes at family get-togethers because they feel intimidated with me being a college graduate. The awkwardness is easy for me to recognize because I used to have the same odd feeling around college graduates. It's a mixed feeling of wondering where you are, could be, will be, and being disappointed in the final analysis. My mom never graduated high school and is remarried to Archie Bunker's brother. My dad died a few years ago and never held a steady job in his lifetime. I only saw him once after I was four and his friends regrettably tell me that he lived in a box on the outskirts of a large city six of the last eight years of his life.

As I deal with once again being family, to my family, I also try to relate to the looks of fear in so many of the high school students that I see day to day. What amazes me the most and what I never expected to see was the variances of fear in my students' eyes. I expected the underachievers fear of failure like my own, but I never expected to see: a 4.0 student afraid to take an honors class because of his /her fear of getting a B, a pregnant 15 year old girl that lacks self-esteem afraid that her boyfriend has found another girl so she skips school to check up on him, an extremely bright boy afraid to be more successful than his father so he struggles on purpose, a college bound girl afraid she won't get into a college her best friend is going to attend or a shy and introverted boy afraid of where the government will move him to each week because his dad is in and out of jail. Funny thing, when I was a high school student I felt like I was

the only one with a fear, and now that my fear of failing in college is gone, I turn to my new fear; being unable to recognize the individual fears that each one of my 150 students per semester carry with them each and every day...and the unenviable and overwhelming task of helping each one of them acknowledge and tackle those fears.

Reflection One

I believe I answered most of the first narratives reflection in the narrative itself, but I wanted to make sure to identify salient societal issues and incorporate them into a reading and how they effect my position in the classroom, as you asked me to do. I apologize for its tardiness. As I began thinking about what reading to use I thought it would be appropriate to go back through my books from past education courses and put one of them into perspective in regards to my first narrative, but right away I began to struggle. Then, I realized what the struggle was, I lacked motivation and was unaware of my fears in the learning process and none of the books I had read thus far directly talked about such important pedagogical issues. How can that be? I hesitate to say these things because I don't want it to be a bash my teacher preparation program reflection, but it is the truth. How can I have so many years of education classes and not have large amounts of knowledge on these topics? So, I guess the piece I am going to recognize is the lack of one.

This idea of not being taught what I believe necessary has changed my role as a teacher because it makes me realize the importance of relevance in what is being taught. If I myself, a teacher, struggle with learning things that I believe are not as relevant to others things that I know can be taught in reference to a subject, than I need to make sure and practice this same concept as a teacher. I know it is difficult for a teacher to bring

relevance to things like Shakespeare, literary terms, and grammar, but I believe it can be done to some degree. This bring me to my second narrative...

Narrative Two

My second narrative is in reference to engaging and motivating students in the classroom and the responsibility the teacher has in this regard. YES, I do believe that this is the teacher's responsibility! As I went through high school, I remember thinking teaching had to be one of the easiest jobs in the world. It seemed all I did in my classes in high school was read, take notes, hear lectures, memorize facts and figures, take tests, and write essays. I can't remember any activities that got me interested in what was being taught or teachers that inspired me with any creativity or enthusiasm in their lesson plans. School was mundane and redundant, to say the least. Teachers seemed to use the same handouts, give the same assignments and have students take the same tests year after year. As a matter of fact, my sister kept most of her previously graded work from high school and because I was one grade behind her I would frequently copy from all of her work she had completed the year before. When I would take tests, I would memorize the multiple choice and true and false answers, never even looking at the actual questions or answers. I believe that this kind of teacher is one of the things that gives teachers in general a bad reputation and puts a negative light on the American educational system among much of our society.

As I complete my internship I see that there are many teachers changing the face of teaching and trying new and innovative ways of engaging and motivating students to learn. Despite this revival, I have also witnessed many teachers using the same style of teaching they have used for years, unwilling to adapt to the needs of the students and

society as a whole. I have an English teacher across the hall from me at my placement that gives a handout for every text being studied and the students complete it in and out of class with no varying activities or lessons through out the school year. Then, upon completion of a text, a multiple-choice test is given to assess the students. There is never any discussion, opportunities for critical thinking or gateway activities for what is being learned. Amazingly, most of the other teachers I have discussed this situation with in the school are aware of his archaic teaching style, but because he has been at the school for almost 40 years nothing can or will be done. The saddest thing about this situation is all of the opportunities that are missed by the students in which to engage their mind, think critically and grow as a person. Another bummer is that this sets a negative attitude for the students towards learning, English and the concept of a teacher.

As you are quite aware, the whole concept of teaching, learning and English are some of the main things I want to examine as a teacher. Every time I create a lesson plan or do an activity in class, I want creativity, and the connection and relativity to the students all to come in to play in the process. My field instructor asked me to have my students write a recommendation for my portfolio and I was overwhelmed with some of the responses. The one that caught my attention the most was a girl that wrote, "I love walking into Mr. Caldwell's classroom because I never know what crazy thing he is going to do next to help me enjoy what we are learning." I was especially taken back by this statement because she had no idea that she had just described one of my main philosophies of teaching.

Whoever said, learning couldn't be fun? To elaborate on this idea, I also believe that "fun" has its place. There needs to be times of serious and rigorous work in the

classroom in which fun is put on the back burner. To make an analogy, Cedar Point is an awesome place to go and have a lot of fun, but if a person went there every day it would eventually become boring because it would be monotonous. To further that concept, variety within the realm of fun is also one of the keys to motivating and engaging students. Because my family goes to Cedar Point every year, we decided to go to Kings Island last year. Despite the fact this park is a bit lower in the overall quality of its roller coasters (height, speed, uniqueness, etc.) compared to Cedar Point, we had more fun than we had experienced at an amusement park in many years because it was different than the "norm" and everything was fresh and new. Thus, it is not only important to be creative while tying to motivate and engage students; creativity must be an ongoing never ending process that changes with each class and student on a daily basis.

To be quite honest, it was very difficult for me to find readings that dealt with the idea of motivating students in the same ways that I wrote about above or ones I felt I could use in a practical sense. It seemed that most of the things I read on this subject were theory based and not very practical. Most of the theories tied motivation to things with big words like "sociocultural contexts," "transactive processes," "holistic understanding" or "adaptive learning processes." Thankfully, there was one reading that I found that was simple and to the point. The reading was *Tools for Teaching,* and although the author Barbara Davis writes about many ways to motivate students in this book, the two that hit home with me the most were: help students find personal meaning and value in the material and create an atmosphere that is open and positive. As I read this text I was raising my glass of chocolate milk and toasting this fine lady as she spoke in terms that were meant to be understood and used in practical terms.

Simply put, the two points that Barbara offered above actually did for me what the ideas themselves are intended to teach others to do. The first point that she says will motivate students is helping them find value or meaning in the material. Well, I found value and meaning in what I learned from her so she motivated me to learn while I read what she had to say. The second point she made in motivating students is to create an atmosphere that is open and positive, and because I felt like this point was clear, concise and optimistic in nature, once again I believe it met the criteria within itself. My faith in educated people that write books saying things I can actually use and easily understand about teaching definitely took a turn for the better, because quite frankly, I struggle to look back on what I have learned about education over the last four years and recognize much that I actually put into practical use. (sorry if I am beating a dead horse)

Let me tell you one story that gives you an idea about what I mean when I talk about creativity that engages students in the classroom. I was teaching an American Literature class and we were on the topic of the American Dream and reading about people migrating to Chicago in the late 1800's. We read a few poems and stories about how the Industrial Revolution changed the shape of Chicago and then read about how the great fire in that city tore people's lives apart and changed peoples priorities and how they felt about material things. I wanted the students to connect to the text and because I was a paid-on-call firefighter for five years I had the knowledge, experience and tools to be creative. I set up my classroom as a "building on fire," gave the students a 10 minute mini-lesson on search and rescue techniques and brought out all of my old firefighter gear. The stage was set, several students individually volunteered to use the techniques I trained them with, put on all my fire gear and attempted to "save" a baby from a fire.

They couldn't see, just as if the room was smoke filled and they had to drag a "fire hose" with them. I made the situation as realistic as possible. I gave them details about the average time it takes for a building to become fully involved after a department arrives and many other statistics to help them understand the situation to a greater degree. Needless to say, the baby didn't survive most of the time and the students were extremely ready for a discussion the next day.

I will use all the experience and knowledge I have gained in what I have learned about motivating and engaging students by standing upon the foundations of why I studied this topic in the first place and why it is such an important part of a teachers repertoire. The purpose of these narratives was for me as a teacher and student to get a better understanding of who I am as a teacher, how I got here and what I can do about it in the future...mission accomplished!

APPENDIX F

LISA'S WRITINGS

Narrative One

March Madness

"Open up your Composition Books - place the date at the top. Okay, now please explain the following statement I'm putting on the board...'March comes in like a lion, but goes out like a lamb.' In your journals, I want you tell me what that sentence means."

Huh? Oh no, oh no. I don't know, I don't know, I've never heard that before, my parents never say it. March comes in like a lion? What? I don't get it?! Uh...what does Brian's paper say? Maybe I can see it? Ugh, can't see it. Oh no. I'm going to get it wrong. Um...um...a lion ...

Oh no, everyone else is done. Um...(writing) Is it that the lion gets a haircut?

I walked slowly up to Mrs. Matzke's desk, my head down, uncertain - a rare occurrence, even then. Everyone else had already shown their answers...

"No, that's not right, Lisa. Go back and try again."

NOOOOOOOO!! I don't know what it means!

My face turned red. I shuffled back to our shared desks, composition book open, lion with the haircut drawn at the bottom and colored in crayons staring ashamedly back at me. I am almost crying.

Thomsons don't get things wrong! I don't get things wrong! Everyone else is already dooo-oonnneee.

Um...umm...

I looked helplessly at my best friend, tears forming in my eyes, pleading with her...

"Don't help her! She needs to figure it out by herself" came the Devil-Woman's eagle eyed response. Mrs. Matzke. She was also my father's eighth grade teacher. My father is THIRTY years older than me. Why was she still teaching? She was one scary woman. Five-foot ten-ish, two hundred pounds, curly red hair, mid-sixties, and intimidating as hell. She was a monster.

Um...um...okay...like a lion...March is the month of Easter...is that it?

I shuffled back up to the desk. A shake of her red, permanently permed head of hair, jowls bouncing along in sync, told me, no, no, no, wrong, wrong, **wrong.** Unfamiliar words to my six year old brain...

I shuffled back to the desks again. Everyone is starting to laugh now. I can hear whispers (imagined? or real?) "Lisa got it wrong?" "No way, I can't believe she got it *wrong!*" "Little Miss Winter Pine Perfect never gets anything *wro-ong.*" A giggle here. A smirk there.

Um...um...don't cry, don't cry, don't cry...uh-oh...

Silent tears began to fall from my pathetic hazel eyes.

Um...umm...oh no, what will my parents say, oh no, I can't get this wrong, everyone else totally knows, oh I'm so stupidsostupidsostupidsostupid ...

A last valiant effort...Is *it that in the storm the lion is roaring and the lamb babas?*

Even my six-year-old sensibility knows this can't be true - and that it's not even a guess that makes sense! But. . .I am miserable, and I have to keep trying, because the Mega-Beast says I do, and they're all laughing at me...

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I shuffled yet again to the front left of that ominous first-grade classroom. Her sixty-something eyes look down upon me (is she secretly enjoying this torture? This triumph?) staring at me from behind the glasses permanently attached to her neck with a metal (not pretty beads, oh no, not her) chain. She's still sitting and won't even get up. I have to stand so close to her, as she reads my answer...

...and again shakes her head. "Nope, all right, we can't wait any longer. Go ahead and sit down."

Head down. Practically dragging myself back to the desks.

Don't look at anyone, don't look at anyone, don't look at anyone ...

"Daniel, why don't you tell everyone what the statement means? Why does March come in like a lion and go out like a lamb?" Even her voice was scary.

Resolutely, clear, confident, his voice rang out - this one in definite triumph. Daniel Gershewski and I were born on the same day, but he was exactly one year older - and he *lived* to upstage and antagonize me. This was his time to SHINE.

"It means that, uh, the weather is bad in the beginning of March and nice at the end of March. Like a lamb." Little brat.

"Very good - absolutely correct."

HUH? The weather? I thought this is supposed to be about animals??

Tears continued to silently fall from my face. Wrong? Oh no, not just wrong. The absolute *furthest* from right in the WHOLE class. It was March 1, 1988 - I was six years old, in first grade, and...

...I was...

...for the first time in my life...

... a complete and utter...

... *FAILURE.*

Perhaps the most depressing part about my first taste of failure is that it actually happened like that. Instead of recalling my elementary years with fond memories, I remember *this* moment, this first morsel of failure - an unknown, bitter fruit to my young sensibilities. I was six years old, but *I* was SMART! I was a Thomson - and I knew what that meant.

It meant "the best." It meant dad's a teacher, mom's a teacher, grandpa's a principal. It meant expectations. Success. Winning. Excellence.

Being a Thomson in my town was like being a regular at Cheers - everybody always, *always* knew my name. I was raised to be the best, try the hardest, work the most diligently, and *never,* under *any* circumstances, fail. A white, upper-middle class mentality - failure is *not* an option. And I knew it. At six years old.

I carried that day with me throughout my formal education. For a few years, I egotistically thought everyone else remembered it, too. I even considered throwing out my Composition Book as late as last year, tarnished as it was with the stain of my failure. And yet, I held onto it...

The only other flash of first grade I vividly recall is looking at one little boy's white, semi-soiled socks during a test and seeing a hole in his heel. His mom had just died of cancer and I thought the hole was because he didn't have a mom to buy him new socks. And I felt bad for him.

But...

...nowhere near as bad as I had felt for myself on that shameful March day.

Reflection One

My narrative is a story of my first taste of failure - a day in my life that I have yet to forget, regardless of how hard I have tried. Coming from a family of educators, and more specifically, from a prestigious family name in my school district, failure was not a common occurrence. My sister and I both graduated high school with 4.0 grade point averages, and my youngest sister is well on her way. This narrative reflects my first experience of shame and failure in education - common themes my own students experience every day in school, and perhaps, though inadvertently, occasionally through my own actions or words.

In writing this narrative, I was initially unsure of the salient social issues my story reflects. It did not seem to affect my attainment in the remainder of my formal education. However, on further examination and through some research, I had to rethink my place in the text. Perhaps that moment of shame was the point at which I chose to over-excel through the next seventeen years of my life. I did not want to have to suffer through that feeling of being a failure again. I made a conscious choice to be a success.

Yet, again, that analysis seemed not entirely accurate. Did I have a *choice* at that young age to consciously make? Perhaps not. It is more likely that, as a result of my socialization in a family of educators, and based on who I was (am) socially - a member of white, upper-middle class society - the "choice" was more of a lone option - a given. Continued failure, or the conscious choice to accept failure, or not-learning, was not a part of my culture. Though not a part of my narrative, this "decision" was best reflected in my next journal entry in that Composition Book - "I like my teacher, she is nice and sweet, she is a wonderful teacher." This was a lie. I hated her after that day in March.

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And yet, I chose to appease her, to let her know my failure wasn't something that bothered me. Another huge lie.

In researching these societal issues of class and failure, I encountered two texts that led me to this deeper analysis of the paths I took in my education as a result of my class, race, and family background. Dick Gregory's essay, "Shame," and Herbert Kohl's "I Won't Learn From You," both discuss the notions of shame and failure from the perspectives of minority experience. In their discussions, the shame suffered in educational experiences leads to, in the former, choosing to not return to school, and in the latter, to a conscious choice of "not learning" what is being taught.

What separates my narrative from these texts is my social position as a non-minority. My "failure" was not a result of my skin color, religion, or economic status—many of the factors that lead students, as Kohl suggests, to "a conscious and chosen refusal to assent to learn" (27). The school upheld my societal position and proffered it as the status quo. However, my encounter with failure did have one common strand with those the conscious non-learners and Gregory's own shame experience: I was held to the expectation of having access to a shared body of knowledge - in this instance of a silly adage - and I fell short. Failure, though consisting of a multitude of levels, is a universal experience and one that, either from a single occurrence, or a lifetime of knowing, can lead to the decision to no longer learn or excel. As Herbert Kohl states of students who practice "non-learning," generally students who experience failure or a rejection of their culture and individuality come to believe that "no failure is possible [for them] since there has been no attempt to learn" (28). No effort ultimately means no chance for failure or rejection. Gregory similarly reflects this reaction when he describes his first shame

experience where a teacher consciously rejected him - in front of the entire class - for being on welfare. He states, "I walked out of school that day, and for a long time I didn't go back very often. There was shame there" (in *Readings for Writers* 334). Gregory and the minority students Kohl describes made deliberate choices to avoid further shame, rejection, and failure by simply not learning or even attending school.

Again, I would argue that this "choice" was absent in my own experience because of my individual culture and societal standing. As a child of educators, the emphasis on education and excelling in school was vital - a striking contrast to cultures where formal education is less central or even devalued because of inherent racist and classist structures (see *Ain't No Making It*, Jay MacLeod). My social class dictated doing well in school and going to college, and was compounded by my family background. This culture of an emphasis on education is missing from many of my students' experiences— it seems college or further education is no longer even a goal, even though they are only in ninth grade. This stark contrast to my own education and experience with failure was thus alien to me.

I also have felt apart from my students' experiences since I had been a failure only because I lacked certain knowledge of my own class, as opposed to because of my race, class, or gender. My reaction - to move on, try harder - was perhaps not what it might have been had the reverse been true. My failure was the result of not being the best: a common goal of my social class. Even now, though, it has taken seventeen years to even tell this story. I apparently have yet to shake the yoke of my upper-middle class expectations.

I believe it is my duty, therefore, to not transfer that restricting yoke (one that I

did not even realize until now had affected me so completely in my youth) to my own students. As an educator, this story forces me to locate my own position in education as a result of my class and family background, and to be able to more clearly view my students as similarly cultured and constructed beings. Whereas my own failure transferred into stronger motivation for success - although also into five years of timidity in the classroom - my students who are not similarly situated may have completely different reactions. My assumptions about my students must shift to an acknowledgement of how the cultural knowledge each student brings to my class is incredibly varied. Mrs. Matzke chose not to acknowledge this in my first grade classroom. My experience, and Gregory's wrenching narrative, help to focus my attention on the class and racial backgrounds that may shift my students' expectations and knowledge base. In my current placement this is extremely vital due to the vast range of cultural structures and capitals my students bring to our classroom.

Yet, it is not simply the knowledge each students brings to my classroom that I must be aware of and address. More importantly, it is the failure aspect of my narrative that must now most inform my teaching. I must consider failure both as the actual experience and as the cultural expectations and norms that lead to it. For most of my own career, I believed failure to be an onus *only* upon the failed person; this was largely because of that first experience as the lone, 'stupid' outcast. Kohl's essay, however, and my own reflection on Mrs. Matzke's actions, suggest otherwise. Kohl states that "not-learning," a *willful* choice to not engage in education, is "often and disastrously mistaken for failure to learn or the inability to learn" (2). While I always *chose* to learn – Kohl states that true failure "is characterized by the frustrated will to know" - I have to now

question which of my students have been *actively* not learning because of past failures or educational structures, while *I falsely* labeled them as failing (6). Which students have I consciously or unconsciously labeled as unable to learn while they have energetically sat and willed themselves to not engage with me? These are powerful meta-cognitive questions that all educators should address - and are ones I previously had not actively explored.

My role as a teacher is to now deliberately search for these answers. I need to not simply discover my students' past successes, but now to also uncover past failures or points at which their non-majority cultures have been rejected. I must examine my own brush with failure and recognize it in others. At the same time, I must also search out and recognize those learners who are willfully not learning and discover both their reasoning and the keys to getting in.

Kohl's juxtaposition of failure and non-learning highlights the fine line that exists in our classrooms. As a teacher, I must address both experiences of students. I will need to, as Kohl suggests of his own teaching, "never humiliate any of my students," and never be the bearer of the failure. I must learn from Mrs. Matzke's public display and never be the source of my students' failures. On the latter end, I then must also become aware that non-learners choose apparent "failure" when they "ha[ve] to deal with unavoidable challenges to [their] personal and family loyalties, integrity, and identity," and create a classroom community where such damning challenges are absent (6). I must not *assume* my students fail at writing because they failed to learn to write. Or, as in my own experience, I can not assume my kids are failures at inferences if, in the past, their guesses and creatively were negatively rejected. Instead, I will need to discover what

challenges may have caused them to become active non-learners.

Finally, Kohl's essay suggests a final role I must take on as an educator if I am to ever fully reach my students in the future. In a consideration of his own lack of acknowledgement of racism in texts, he describes his need to "unlearn this insensitivity to biased, yet traditional ways, of speaking and writing" (20). Unlearning my own blindness to racism and economic prejudices, developed perhaps in my own education and as a result of my individual class membership, is the next step to encouraging my students to not make the *choice* of non-learning or failure. As Kohl states, unlearning is "a central technique that supports changes of consciousness and helps people develop positive ways of thinking and speaking in opposition to dominant forms of oppression" (23). In delving into my own failure and the structures behind my reaction, I can then begin to *unlearn* the assumptions about student-learners that my own experience created. My vision and understanding has been obscured by the continual sting of my own shame and my inability to understand willful failure when failure had once so badly hurt me. I need to take this knowledge into my classroom and see my students in a broader light. As Kohl suggests, I need to acknowledge their experiences - so wholly different from my own, and yet, perhaps with a shared sense of the pains of failure (and for many, oppression), and then move towards the creation of a far more sensitive, failure-less classroom community.

Narrative Two

The Mornings After

When the phone rang that Saturday morning, I was just pulling myself from the depths of my oh-so-sweet summer slumber.

I looked at my old Sony alarm clock - 8:30 am. The phone rang again, and I lazily picked it up with a yawn.

It was Larry Mack, my friend Lance's dad, and he slowly asked for my father. I hollered for my dad, who I could hear brushing his teeth in the hallway bathroom. He grabbed the phone, also still mildly asleep, and took the cordless out into the hall.

Remember, I was still half-asleep - that happy state of consciousness where nothing totally connects. Or at least not immediately. Suddenly, my eyes widened. Fear crept into the sides of my mind...

Ok, wait, Mr. Mack, calling my dad, 8:30 am, Saturday, my sister doesn't swim anymore, what would he want, why is he calling my dad, oh god, on my line, oh pleasegodno, oh god, Ken... Ken's death...

Ken? How did he cross my thoughts so early that morning? I certainly thought of him often, but...not in the morning anymore...

Ken Neuman- a cocky, arrogant, witty, scathing-tongued, swimmer. He was a junior my freshman year - and the only guy on the combined team to succeed in making me cry that year. That was one of his life goals - to make all the girls on the team cry at least once. *That* sense of humor.

He had his moments though. In his senior year, we played 20 Questions on his balcony during a training trip, and he forced me to try one puff of a Swisher Sweet (the closest 1'd ever been to tobacco). He once put a hotel ice bucket on my head during an away meet, and walked my 5' I" frame around the room, yelling, "No, you may not enter the Emerald City!" My height, intolerably short for a competitive swimmer, was a constant source of amusement for him. He was certainly never a guy to date, or very

friendly with most, but he was someone who earned a grudging respect from the majority of the people who knew him. He was an icon in a way.

Two months after he finished his swimming career in college, Ken went for a jog on a beautiful Monday afternoon. He was a few days away from finals. He was a swimmer - in shape, well-conditioned, and a BO-DY! We were called in for a four p.m. meeting that day. Our coaches and four other adults were there - this was certainly out of the ordinary.

We started counting heads. A few were missing - Ken was interminably on his own schedule, so no worries there...

He had a massive heart attack at 12:30 pm in the driveway of his fraternity. He died almost immediately - a heart defect, an enlarged heart ... common among athletes.

It couldn't possibly be true. He's so young...this doesn't happen to people like us. People so young. So healthy. So...invincible. He was supposed to be invincible.

Ken's death was my first intimate encounter with loss - and even then, I was his Teammate...not his best friend, his girlfriend, his brother, his mother. And yet, I woke up for many mornings with him - or more accurately, his death - as the first thought in my head, accompanied with the gnawing feelings of disbelief and sadness...

So, three months later, when I emerged by 8:32 to a higher level of awareness, it was only natural that the pieces of the puzzle would lead me to Ken. Mr. Mack would only call my dad if something was wrong. Lance Mack, a best friend since I was eight years old, was always high-strung. Rigid, at times, with a definite potential for drama. Had he killed himself?

Ken. Ken. Ken. Death. Oh god, please no. Daddy, please...please not

again...Please...

My dad walked back into my room - and I knew immediately it was bad. He was stunned, a zombie. My dad does NOT look weak - not ever. He does not falter. He looked as though he could barely stand.

To this day, my dad believes I harbor some hidden, unconscious resentment towards him - *he* was the one who had to tell me...

He sat on the edge of my bed, his right side toward me. *Not* looking at me.

"Daddy, please, it's Lance, isn't it, oh god, please...is it like Ken? What happened? Noooo...." The wail emerged from some place inside of me discovered only three months earlier, a place I hadn't known existed. It started before I heard what had even happened...

"Lisa, honey..." He faltered again, crying now. Oh god.

"Honey, there was a fire... "

Oh god, no, pleasenononononononono...Lance?

"Honey, there was a fire...in West Virginia...Sammy... "

Sam Tolan had loved me since we were ten years old. He had this team picture of our winter swim club where had circled my face in pen back in seventh grade. He was skinny and hilarious and had a gap between his two front teeth. Even after braces, that goofy gap remained - a testament to his class clown, life-of-the-party, everybody-loves me personality. We dated our sophomore year of high school, but we didn't have cars, we went to different high schools...we broke up, to say the least.

And yet...

...he still got me anyways. There was a swim meet at the end of my junior year of high school where he made me laugh non-stop. He could sing KCi & JoJo's "All My Life" by heart in front of a crowd. Never much of a comedian myself, I saw something in him that was missing in me. Something I didn't want to lose. We flirted, we dated - and somewhere in there, I fell in love for the first time. I spent the next three years of my life loving him. He went to college to swim, almost transferred back for me and his family, and then found good friends and decided to stay. We had struggles and uncertainty...but every summer we found our way back to each other. He loved pineapples, football, underwater kisses, long naps, walks on the beach, romance, and me. He made me laugh - so much laughter...

"Lisa, Sammy is dead..."My dad faltered, again.

All I remember is going insane. The tattered, stuffed pig I slept with, Romeo, had his curlicue tail ripped off. I think I hit my father. I definitely destroyed my pillow. It wasn't Lance, it wasn't my best friend - it was my best friend, my boyfriend, my future, all in one. He had gone back to school for his junior year thirty-six hours earlier. We had talked about big plans before he left. We had gone to dinner – at the restaurant where his dad had proposed to his mom. We talked about marriage, kids, happiness. We had spoken seven hours earlier, at 1:30 a.m. They had been partying, back-to-school fun - we talked for about ten minutes, ending with "I love yous."

My dad: "There was a fire - they don't know - 5: 18 am - in the house..."

And then, coldly, from somewhere within the agony sickeningly emitting itself in raspy breaths and intermittent screams, I asked:

"Was anyone else hurt?"

Sammy had five roommates - four were in the house that night, and two of their girlfriends. Six other people. And a dog. Paco. They ALL made it out. They even got the dog out.

The circumstances don't really matter anymore - he wasn't in his own room that night because of black mold in his room, one of the boys tried to go back for him, it was likely arson, but we'll never know. His roommates either dropped out, moved, or aren't speaking to each other anymore...

He was the only one who didn't make it out. The *only one* who died.

Two deaths, three months. I was nineteen years old. Nineteen, with a grudge, an extra fifty years on my life, and a frozen, frigid heart.

When the phone rang that August morning, so soon on the heels of an April afternoon, it jolted me into a lifetime of mornings of marred realities and broken dreams. It woke me out of the last deep, effortless slumber that I would have for a long, long time.

Reflection Two

This narrative was certainly a difficult one to write - and yet, it is one that so deeply affects my teaching every day, that I found it impossible *not* to write. I deeply believe the old, tired adage that we are what we teach, or maybe more specifically, that who we are can not be separated from what and how we teach. My socialization as a white, upper-middle class female certainly affects how I approach my classroom, how I view my students, and how I present and analyze the texts I teach. However, it is also our specific life experiences and journeys that shape who we are - and subsequently, who are students get to experience every day in the classroom.

The deaths of Ken and Sam, and two years later, of a close high school friend completely altered my conceptions of who I am. Prior to those three years, I was "normal," or at least, in my own vision, fairly free of drama and heartbreak. I was grounded, ever-so-practical, and a hard worker who understood the consequences of "not doing your best." After Ken's death, this carefully constructed vision of my life cracked slightly - but it was not close enough to home to alter my future. With Sam's death, that vision shattered. My mom consistently states that my overreaction to things now (to inconsequential events or stupid mistakes on my part) is a part of my personality that never existed before. My hysteria and quick temper were never a part of my nature. Conversely, I also did not appreciate my life the way I try to now (yes, it's still difficult, and not always possible). I did not appreciate love or people with the same intensity either. The loss of Sam's life to me (and more importantly, the loss of his life for him and his family) shifted my entire perspective of the universe. Far more cynical now, yet far more empathetic, far more understanding, far more attuned to the needs of other people. This is not to say that my selfish side does not consistently reassert itself - only that, now, I have a far greater understanding of the depths of pain and love and SOUL that can exist in people. And perhaps even more importantly, that can exist within me.

These experiences thus can not be removed from my experiences as an English teacher - a vocation of deep social analysis, of pain, love, death, life. In teaching a text with these themes, I would do a disservice to my students by not allowing them to see the part of myself that connects with the text - and even more so, it would be sinful to not help them to see themselves in the text as well. I think without that three-year period, I may not have been as open to viewing my students as the human beings they are - as full

of pain and joy and experience. Too often, I feel that teachers try to distance themselves from both the text and students - we don't allow our students to see us as human beings. I am not just their teacher - I am a young woman, with experiences they can relate to, or at least learn from, and I have as much (more!) to learn from them as they do from me.

In reading bell hooks' "Engaged Pedagogy" in her book *Teaching To Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*, I was immediately struck by the deep connection between her argument for engaging ourselves with our students and my need to share my experiences with my students and help them to see me as a flawed, beautiful individual that could share a connection with them. She discusses Thich Nhat Hanh's philosophy of "the teacher as healer...[a] pedagogy which emphasized wholeness, a union of mind, body, and spirit" (14). She states that his philosophies helped her to "believe a classroom was diminished if students and professors regarded one another as 'whole' human begins, striving not just for knowledge in books, but knowledge about how to live in the world" (14-15). This was exactly what I was searching for in my teaching - I felt this need to share with my students the piece of my soul that had most changed my view of the world, because without this knowledge, they could not possibly ever see me as "whole."

As a result of this intrinsic belief (which hooks' conversation helped me to name), I shared my story with my students (in an abridged form) during a personal narrative unit. I modeled my own introductions, outlines, and story as they wrestled with the writing process themselves. We struggled together - and something incredible happened. My students told me stories about themselves that amazed me, saddened me, and moved me to tears on several occasions. They were so raw and full of their voices - and I think this is a direct result of my willingness (need?) to share my own rawness with them. Or as

hooks would put it, my own soul and wholeness. The entire culture of our classroom shifted in that one moment - we "had" each other for the rest of the year.

In her first paragraph, hooks discusses the necessity of a learning process that focuses on "the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students. To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin" (13). My experiences with loss and heartbreak moved me to a deeper understanding of my own spiritual needs - and thus, as an educator, have helped me to see those needs in my students as well. My students *can not be* simply "students" - they are brothers, sisters, friends, lovers, daughters, sons, broken, alive, joyous, disheartened, oppressed, victims, survivors. As hooks states, I need to *respect* these multi-dimensional spirits in my classroom - and I honestly can say that without the experience discussed in my narrative, I'm not certain that I would have been as mature and ready to do this as I am. At twenty-three, I often feel an old soul- aged beyond my body. This has lessened with time, but a deeper sadness and understanding remains where it once had not existed. hooks' lessons confirm how greatly this has affected my teaching.

hooks also discusses the necessity of "engaged pedagogy" as emphasizing "wellbeing. That means that teachers must be actively committed to a process of self-actualization that promotes their own well-being if they are to teach in a manner that empowers students...'because if the helper is unhappy, he or she cannot help many people'" (15). The process of healing that began with Sam's death (for pain and healing seem to occur simultaneously) has not only altered my view of my own life, but also my view of my students' lives. I needed, in that healing process, to come to a deeper

realization of my own person and the effects of these experiences on my life - I am still

in that process today. However, because I *am* actively committed to reaching that state of

health and self-knowledge (not examined in my narrative because it is an ongoing

process), I am also more committed to helping my students reach that point - to *help*

them. For many of my students, the narrative process was a healing process, something

they *had* to tell, write, learn from, and ultimately, grow from.

This also connects to my own experiences as a student in which I rarely

discovered a teacher who told me enough about his/her life to let me see them as human,

or as someone to be in conversation with. hooks discusses how this is, for many students,

the common experience. She states that the "dualistic separation of public and private,

encouraging teachers and students to see no connection between life practices, habits of

being, and the roles of professors [teachers]" is the norm in today's society (16). For

many teachers, she argues, "the only important aspect of our identity was whether or not

our minds functioned, whether we were able to do our jobs in the classroom. The self

was presumably emptied out the moment the threshold was crossed, leaving in place only

an objective mind - free of experiences and biases" (17). I *am not* free of experiences

and biases, nor are my students. If I do not place my *self* before them, how can I ever

expect them to do the same with me? If I omit my personality and my experiences - and

in this case, the "climax" of my life at this point - from my classroom, I am consciously

asking them to do the same. My *self* would indeed not be interfering with the classroom

(as hooks states many people fear), but instead the *lack* of my self would harm their

learning process. It would harm *them (17).*

Ultimately, bell hooks' text reaffirmed and helped me name something I felt was

so central to my teaching experience. The shift in the culture of my classroom following the sharing of my experience and myself (and students' sharing of their own narratives) altered my entire internship year. hooks states that "engaged pedagogy does not seek simply to empower students. Any classroom that employs a holistic model of learning will also be a place where teachers grow, and are empowered by the process" (21). She warns, however, that "empowerment cannot happen if we refuse to be vulnerable while encouraging students to take risks" (21). My experience with the losses of Ken, Sam, and another friend was my first deep life experience with vulnerability in my every day life—something I hadn't known existed before that period in my life. Subsequently, I became more willing to be vulnerable (a now natural part of my human experience) in front of my students - and to encourage them to be vulnerable with me. As hooks argues,

> In my classroom, I do not expect students to take any risks that I would not take, to share in any way that I would not share ... [teachers] who embrace the challenge of self-actualization will be better able to create pedagogical practices that engage students, proving them with ways of knowing that enhance their capacity to live fully and deeply (22).

In the future, I only hope that I continue to learn from these experiences and continue to be willing to share them with my students - to always be willing to take risks with them. I know I live more fully now than in the past - I have a deeper understanding of what my life means, or at least, I'm more willing to look at it through different lenses of experience. This is the best "lesson" I can help my students to attain and live through - and one that I hope they will continue to carry with them long after they have left my classroom.

Suzanne -

Thank you for these assignments - I certainly lamented the fact of having to do

them months ago, but I've learned so much through the process. This narrative and reflection are far more "raw" than my first - I wanted that to come through, though. I'm still so new at this process of healing and understanding...this narrative and the reflection on how it's affected my teaching is yet another step on the way. I also wanted to explain how the narrative is far less positive than the reflection - I wanted it that way...the pain of the experience is still very real, and remains in my writing...but I have a much deeper understanding of it and how it has affected my life and person than I did then...the two (narrative and reflection) are the two sides of the coin, so to speak...

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