TEACHER AUTONOMY

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

If physicists have for decades been acknowledging that they can't avoid

metaphysics and cosmology in trying to account for what they observe and infer,

it makes little sense for the rest of us to remain too embarrassed to entertain

matters going beyond what we can palp and heft. (Moffett, 1994b, p. 17)

Some teachers are content with tradition, giving school in much the same

way as teachers thirty or even fifty years ago did. They quietly comply with

administrative pronouncements, apparently without question. They are found at

all levels of teaching, and at all levels of experience. When faced with mandated

changes, more experienced teachers may grumble about having "been through

this one before," asked to follow guidelines for "new" notions such as outcome-

based education, assertive discipline, curriculum alignment, or mathematics

instruction centered around real-world examples, but they dutifully go about

implementing the latest mandates. They often say things like, "My principal

makes me," or "The parents want it that way." Their students generally work

individually, and they believe that the teacher's role is to impart knowledge which

students should master. They have a clear idea about what "first grade" or "U.S.

history" is, and take for granted that others involved in education share their views.

Other teachers, admittedly few, are not so content with school as usual. They frequently question administrative decisions about giving school, and are sometimes noncompliant with those decisions, especially if they believe the decisions are detrimental to students or teachers. Their noncompliance may be open and abrasive, or covert and smooth. Most often it lies somewhere in the middle ground between these poles. They continuously ponder ways to give school, and they are not only critical of ideas presented by supervisors, but they are critical of their own ideas. These teachers are involved in a constant process of seeking to be better teachers for their students, and sometimes they are very hard on themselves, reflecting deeply on what they do in the name of education. Many of them leave teaching, dissatisfied with themselves, dissatisfied with the system.

The difference between these two kinds of teachers reflects the difference between heteronomy and autonomy. Kamii (1994a) defines autonomy as "the ability to make decisions for oneself, about right and wrong in the moral realm and about truth and untruth in the intellectual realm" (p. 4). Heteronomy is the opposite of autonomy; it means "being governed by someone else" (Kamii, 1984, p. 410). Some teachers display heteronomous decision-making, based almost

exclusively on dictates, mandates, requirement, and what someone else--

principal, parent, news commentator, another teacher--wants. Other teachers

display relatively autonomous decision-making, making choices for children and

for themselves that stand independent of rewards and punishments, "musts" and

"can'ts." Members of each group, heteronomous teachers and autonomous

teachers, cannot imagine themselves deciding otherwise.

It is the lived experience of members of this second group, those less

content with schooling-as-usual, that is the subject of this study. In examining

decisions made by seemingly more autonomous teachers, I seek insight into what

it means to be an autonomous teacher in a system that fosters heteronomy.

As Moffett (1994b) so aptly states, these are matters beyond what I can "palp and

heft" (p. 17), but the question is an important one: Why do some teachers make

intellectual and moral decisions about their teaching, disregarding rewards and

punishment, power and lack of power, in what they believe is the best interest of

students, while other teachers never even consider questions outside the

framework of rewards, punishment, and power?

The Research Problem

Teachers' Lack of Voice

Some curriculum workers see curriculum as dynamic and emergent, with

multiple meanings and multiple contexts. Others see it as a formal entity, "created outside the classroom prior to the point of instruction by someone other than the classroom teacher" (Paris, 1993, p. 73). Reflecting a received, external view of knowledge, the received, external view of curriculum, is prevalent, either as a packaged set of stuff to be imposed on teachers or as a set of stuff to be developed by teachers themselves--stuff to be preplanned and field tested before being imposed on students. Moffett (1994b) decries the proliferation of commercially-produced curriculum materials, writing, "The great majority of schools buy their curriculum; they don't create it. To this fact alone may be attributed a major portion of their ills" (p. 86).

Restine (1993) claims that "increasing the degree of collaboration and norms of collegiality" (p. 29) among teachers is the key to improving schools. Her emphasis is on increasing teachers' sense of power, because, "The more people believe that they can influence the organization, the more effective and productive the organization will be" (Restine, 1993, p. 30).

However, other writers warn against assuming that collaborative decision making is the answer to teachers' lack of voice in curricular matters. Paris (1993) describes the misleading nature of curriculum committees, composed of teachers who gather to make curriculum decisions:

Curriculum making by consensus only mimics empowerment and, in fact,

may disguise the lack of power that individual teachers--even those serving on the committees--actually have in curriculum matters. . . .Mock participation and false consensus mean that "empowered" teachers again face the day-to-day reality of implementing curriculum created or selected by others, and also struggle with their discontent with curriculum that they themselves have "participated" in fashioning. Whether teachers assert their seemingly illogical and hardly persuasive discontent (after all, "they" were the ones who chose or created the curriculum) or never express it because they have been convinced of their own complicity, the relationships of classroom teachers to curriculum have not changed. (p. 10)

The practice of administrators exercising control over the process of curriculum development, even with "empowered" teachers, is also described by Grundy (1987), writing of a principal who encouraged teachers to share with one another the way they taught handwriting. "Why, it might be asked, did he/she not relieve teachers of their classes for short periods of time to allow them to observe each other's lessons? One senses a concern to oversee and control the sharing of ideas" (p. 55).

The Question: Does Teacher Autonomy Exist in Schools of the '90s?

Krishnamurti (1953) states, "Conventional education makes independent

thinking extremely difficult" (p. 9). Lortie (1975) hints at the same idea, writing, "Teacher individualism is more guarded and cautious--it lies behind a formal rhetoric given to praising cooperation and denying conflict. Teacher individualism is not cocky and self-assured; it is hesitant and uneasy" (p. 210).

Through the course of this study, I will ask several teachers, judged to be relatively autonomous in their decision making, to talk with me about the decisions they make and the decision-making process. The focus will be on their lived experience in making teaching decisions.

The overriding research problem is a deeper understanding of teacher autonomy. Simply stated, the question is:

> *What is the essence of autonomy in teaching?*

Meanings of Terms

Teacher Autonomy

The term "teacher autonomy" is found frequently in studies of teacher thinking and decision making, with a meaning parallel to the idea of political autonomy. Diorio (1982) refers to "the degree of autonomy available to practitioners" (p. 257). According to Street and Licata (1989), teacher autonomy depends on "a teacher's feelings of independence in making instructional

decisions within the classroom" (p. 98). Pearson and Hall (1993) describe

teacher autonomy as "the right [of teachers] to manage themselves and their job

environment" (p. 172). The commonly accepted definition of teacher autonomy

is thus the externally-bestowed *right* to make decisions, decided by others.

I prefer the less common but more precise definition of autonomy used by

Kamii (1994a), following the writings of Jean Piaget (1932/1965, 1948/1973), as

"the *ability* to make decisions for oneself, about right and wrong in the moral

realm and about truth and untruth in the intellectual realm, by taking all relevant

factors into account, independently of reward and punishment" (p. 4). Kamii's

definition of autonomy is deeper than the more common usage found in

educational literature. The common political definition of autonomy is similar to

that of "empowerment:" it can only be granted by someone else through an

institutional structure. However, Kamii's definition of autonomy does not begin

or end with whether or not a person has the *power* to make independent

decisions. Instead, she posits that an autonomous person makes independent

decisions without regard to external factors, and gives the example of Martin

Luthur King's civil rights stance as an example of autonomy, stating,

> King took all the relevant factors into account, such as the rights and
>
> welfare of all human beings, and became convinced that the laws
>
> discriminating against African Americans were unjust and immoral. With

this conviction, King fought to abolish these laws in spite of the police,

the jails, the dogs, and water hoses, and the threats of assassination used

to stop him. (Kamii, 1994a, p. 4)

Any attempt to apply the more conventional definition of autonomy as

empowerment, granted by those in authority, cannot fit Martin Luther King's

actions. He had little legal right to act as he did, as evidenced by his frequent

arrests. However, King certainly had "the *ability*. . .to be self-governing" (Kamii,

1994b, p. 673). Kamii's definition of autonomy transcends the definition of

autonomy used by most educational writers, giving the term a deeper, more

personal meaning.

In response to the question of why I chose a more obscure definition of

teacher autonomy than the more common one used by educational writers and

researchers, I chose the same approach as Gordon (1992), when he wrote,

There are two possible courses of action a writer who wants to discuss

powerful concepts can take when the language symbolizing those concepts

has been abused. One is to use different words that mean essentially the

same thing as the original terms. . . .The other is to attempt to revive the

original terms by reintroducing them along with a discussion of what the

writer considers to be their authentic meaning and appropriate use. I have

chosen the latter. . . .My guess is that new terms used to describe the same

concepts, if they became popular, would be subject to the same misuse as

the original terms. (p. 62)

Thus, even though it may be a bit confusing to the reader to use a definition of

autonomy that departs from that most commonly used, it is necessary to my

inquiry. Selecting a replacement term would only cloud the issue further.

It is a matter of depth: autonomy as the ability of an individual to choose,

morally and intellectually, based on his/her best knowledge without regard to

external constraints or rewards is more powerful than autonomy as the right to

make decisions, completely dependent on external constraints. The two

definitions are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but they look to very different

sources of power. The former usage looks within the individual for power, while

the latter usage looks outside the individual for power.

Heteronomy

The term "heteronomy" is simply the opposite of autonomy. It is not

found in literature which views autonomy as political power. However, Kamii

(1984) defines heteronomy as "being governed by someone else" (p. 410). An

autonomous decision is made without regard to the sanctions of others, while a

heteronomous decision is made in accordance with outside sanctions. Kamii

(1984) describes a famous example of heteronomy exhibited by those who

participated in the Watergate coverup. She writes, "When they were told to lie,

they obeyed their superior, going along with what they knew to be wrong"

(p. 410).

Essence

 In asking, "What is the essence of teacher autonomy?" I use the term

essence as does van Manen (1990): "Essence is that what makes a thing what it is

(and without which it would not be what it is); that what makes a thing what it is

rather than its being or becoming something else" (p. 177). I seek to understand

the essence of teacher autonomy, without which it would not be teacher

autonomy. Van Manen (1990) gives an example of phenomenological research

using the idea of essence, noting,

> Phenomenology does not ask, "How do these children learn this particular
>
> material?" but it asks, "What is the nature or essence of the experience of
>
> learning (so that I can now better understand what this particular learning
>
> experience is like for these children)?" (p. 10)

It is this very difference--asking *what is the essence* of something rather than *how*

does it happen--that draws me to phenomenological research. Seeking essence is

broader, yet more focused; more complex, yet simpler; more difficult to grasp,

yet providing deeper understanding. Van Manen (1990) makes one more

important point about essence and phenomenology, writing, "The essence or

nature of an experience has been adequately described in language if the

description reawakens or shows us the lived quality and significance of the experience in a fuller or deeper manner" (p. 10).

Curriculum as Praxis

The autonomous teacher sees curriculum as praxis, embracing the idea that, "Rather than accept[ing] uncritically notions of what is 'provided' or 'beyond question,' teacher theorizing must include the deceptively simple questions of 'why?' and 'to what end?' and 'what are the alternatives?'" (Beyer, in Ross, et al., 1992, p. 251). Praxis, action with reflection, is certainly connected to teacher autonomy. The critical self-reflection characteristic of some autonomous teachers, the constant seeking to be better, is captured by Grundy's (1987) description: "Praxis is not action which maintains the situation as it presently is; it is action which changes both the world and our understanding of that world" (p. 113).

This view of curriculum as praxis is inconsistent with a received view of curriculum. Grundy (1987) states:

> If a practitioner takes a reproductive view of curriculum which places
>
> emphasis upon the pre-specification of the guiding "idea" and upon the
>
> production of educational outcomes which correspond as closely as
>
> possible to that *eidos*, it is rather difficult to hold, at the same time, a view
>
> of curriculum which centralizes making deliberative judgments and acting

to make meaning of the educational enterprise rather than to produce

certain pre-specified outcomes. (p. 99)

It is this very inconsistency between the traditional, commonly-held view of

curriculum as a pre-packaged set of materials and methods with measurable

outcomes, and the view of curriculum as praxis, ever-changing and based on

reflective action, that is at the center of the research question.

I wish to emphasize that the view of curriculum as praxis is my view, and

it may or may not be shared by the respondents in this study. Other definitions

and themes regarding curriculum will no doubt emerge to illuminate the study as

I talk with teachers about their lived experience in making educational decisions.

Concluding Thoughts: Meanings of Terms

In summary, I will use the following definitions of terms throughout this

study:

autonomy: self regulation; "the *ability* to make decisions for oneself, about right

and wrong in the moral realm and about truth and untruth in the intellectual

realm, by taking all relevant factors into account, independently of reward and

punishment" (Kamii, 1994a, p. 4).

heteronomy: government by someone else; making decisions because of

possible sanctions, rewards, or punishment

essence: "that what makes a thing what it is (and without which it would not be

what it is); that what makes a thing what it is rather than its being or becoming

something else" (van Manen, 1990, p. 177)

curriculum: praxis; educative actions and decisions involving critical self-

reflection

Significance of the Study

Reaching Deeper Understandings of Teacher Autonomy

I seek no generalizable theory, applicable to other situations. Instead, I

hope to deepen my understanding of the decisions made by autonomous teachers

within the context of an institution promoting heteronomy. I will continuously

try to overcome my attitude of "habitual perception" (Reynolds, 1989), because

"periodically suspending habits, dependencies, and attachments both wakes us up

and frees us" (Moffett, 1994b, p. 27-28).

Much of the purpose of the study remains to be determined by my

interactions with the respondents, and our searching together for emergent

themes. Although the study design is emergent both in terms of who the

respondents will be and in terms of specific questions to be considered, the

underlying concern will remain constant: insight into the lived experience of

apparently autonomous teachers as they go about their decision making.

Schubert and Ayers (1992) ask the question, "Why are teachers so often

invisible and silent even in their own worlds?" (p. ix). I ask the complementary question, "How are teachers who depart from teaching as usual able to do so?" This careful scrutinizing of why a teacher makes certain kinds of decisions is valuable. Schubert and Ayers (1992) write,

> We remain convinced that conscientious teachers reflect seriously on their work. They think and feel carefully about what they do and why they do it. They use their experiences as a basis for fashioning responses to similar situations that they encounter daily. They imagine new possibilities and try to anticipate the consequences of acting on them. This involves a careful eye to subtle but powerful side effects, not just main or intended outcomes. (p. ix)

Teacher Autonomy and Teacher Experience

Inexperience and lack of expertise are often held up as reasons that children or adults new to a field must be led by others (Glickman, 1990; Corey and Corey, 1992; Taylor, 1988). Indeed, some writers in curriculum and educational philosophy deem such outer-directed control as necessary to pedagogy: only when a person is sufficiently sophisticated can s/he be permitted to create, to explore, to imagine, to decide.

It is not that children and beginning teachers cannot create, explore, imagine, or decide, but rather that their expressions are ignored. Instead, the

voice of reason [read: age and experience] drown out the often hesitant, quiet songs of the young, the new.

Reliance on experience as a precursor to voice ensures a perpetuation of the status quo, enabling the existing educational establishment to avoid consideration of meaningful dialogue about giving school until teachers have been properly enculturated into the "givens" of school: a quiet child must be listening and learning the intended lesson, soaking up information like a sponge; parents who seldom come to school must not care; bad habits must be corrected immediately in red ink in order to keep them from being permanent; teachers have knowledge and teaching means telling that knowledge to others; there are no new ideas under the sun.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The metaphors by which teachers live, the way they construe their work, and the stories they recount, tell us more profoundly about what is going on in their lives as professionals than any measured behavior is likely to reveal. (Connelly and Clandinin, 1988, p. x)

Teachers and the places they occupy in schools are deeply affected by those who have come before, by those who are curriculum workers in the present but in different locations, and by the taken-for-granted aspects of teaching at any given time, in any given place--even though these taken-for-granted aspects can be interpreted in many ways. It is not unusual for parents of two children in the same class to take for granted very different views of the purpose of schooling: the parent of one child may assume that school's primary role should be to socialize citizens for a participatory democracy, while the parent of another child may assume that school's primary role should be to encourage children to think independently, questioning the whys of social institutions. Varying interpretations of what is taken for granted about schooling is partly dependent upon background and experience. One's background and experience is similarly reflective of varying views of learning, learners, and the meaning of

"curriculum."

I have chosen to approach this literature review from my own experience, my own journey as a graduate student, as a teacher, and as a parent. I begin with an organization of ideas about curriculum that struck me as particularly meaningful during my masters program in secondary social studies curriculum: Eisner's (1985) five curriculum stances. Although the five are truly six stances, and they are certainly not mutually exclusive, they provide a framework from which to begin study of curriculum: what it is, why there is disagreement about it, how views about it reflect taken-for-granted views about learners, learning, and the purposes of school.

After examining Eisner's (1985) ideas, I move to major calls for curriculum reform during the 1980s: The National Committee for Excellence in Education's (1983) *A Nation at Risk,* The Carnegie Foundation's (1988) *Report Card on School Reform,* and *Tomorrow's Teachers* by the Holmes Group (1986). The reforms outlined by these three have dominated much of mainstream conversation about school restructuring and reform during the past dozen years. Each reveals a particular perspective on curriculum, and each varies somewhat in the givens, the philosophical base lying beneath the rhetoric.

My next area of investigation is the philosophical bases for ideas about school. Those that have been of particular interest in my seeking to come to

terms with my own notions of what school should be are essentialism,

experientialism, critical theory, writings of the reconceptualists, and

constructivism. I am intrigued by essentialists, especially Mortimer Adler, and

their calls for curriculum alignment. Perhaps my background as a history teacher

explains this fascination; although essentialists are often drawn to social studies

education, the belief that all students should learn the same information in the

same way at the same time makes no sense to me. Instead, I have been drawn to

the experientialists and their demand for personal relevance in education. More

recently, I have come to realize that constructivism most closely resembles my

own philosophy of schooling.

At about the same time I became aware of constructivism, I began reading

"teacher lore" (Schubert & Ayers, 1992). The personal experiences of teachers

and the meaning they make of those experiences are especially helpful in trying

to make my own meaning about what school should be. I examine teachers'

everyday lives, teachers as decision-makers, and the issue of gender--teaching as

a feminized occupation.

My curiosity about constructivism and its expression in teacher lore have

led me to the study of autonomy. An autonomous person is capable of choice,

making good decisions without regard to reward or punishment. Relatively

autonomous teachers are rare in my experience. Kamii (personal

communication, October, 1994) believes that whether or not a person is relatively autonomous can only be evaluated by examining that person's actions and the reasons behind the actions. School as I know it fosters heteronomy in students and in teachers. We line up; we mark answers to the questions we are asked, without examining *why* we should; we follow externally-driven schedules; we ask convergent questions, expecting a "right" answer; we praise and expect to be praised; we hush dissent, finding it troublesome; we demand uniformity, putting bounds on creative expression.

The final section of this literature review addresses autonomy, my most recent and my most deeply-meaningful study in curriculum and the nature of school. I have spiraled toward pondering autonomy in teachers and in students, both temporally and conceptually. Over time, my scrutiny of the nature of learning and the purpose of school has led me gradually toward contemplating autonomy, just as my inquiry into curriculum has brought me to increasingly deep insights leading toward contemplating autonomy.

Views of Curriculum: A Matter of Perspective

Over time, ideas about what curriculum is and what it should be have changed. However, the earliest ideas about curriculum are still evident today, along with newer interpretations. The effect is one of layering, with more recent

definitions of curriculum and the purpose of schooling overlaying earlier interpretations. New ideas rarely displace earlier ideas about education; instead, the new ideas provide an overlay like a new coat of paint covers old wallpaper. Usually, the old wallpaper eventually shows through the paint, either in pattern or in texture, just as older ideas about schooling may remain only just beneath the surface.

Although many curriculum writers have developed categories of curriculum orientations, Eisner's (1985) list of five curriculum orientations is meaningful to me. His five orientations are: 1) academic rationalism, 2) development of cognitive processes, 3) personal relevance, 4) social adaptation and social reconstruction, and 5) curriculum as technology. One's orientation toward the purpose of school and the way learning takes place directly affects one's basic view of curriculum--what curriculum is, what curriculum means, and how curriculum relates to learning.

Academic Rationalism: Curriculum as Content

The most commonly-held view of curriculum is that of curriculum as content. Zais (1976) describes this orientation to curriculum as "conceiv[ing] of curriculum solely as the data or information recorded in guides or textbooks" (p. 7), while Schubert (1986) writes that from this perspective "curriculum is equated with the subjects to be taught" (p. 26). Specific definitions and

descriptions of curriculum as content are somewhat rare; it seems that curriculum writers who hold this view see it as such a common-sense approach that definitions of curriculum are unnecessary (for example, Tyler, 1949).

McNeil (1990) takes the idea of curriculum as content a bit further, calling this position an "academic curriculum orientation," whose proponents

> see curriculum as the vehicle by which learners are introduced to subject matter disciplines and to organized fields of study. They view the organized content of subjects as a curriculum to be pursued rather than as a source of information for dealing with local and personal problems. . . .[They] assume that an academic curriculum is the best way to develop the mind--that mastery of the kind of knowledge commonly found in such a curriculum contributes to rational thinking. (p. 1)

Eisner (1985) recounts the move toward measuring learning by quantifiably measurable outcomes that has been the logical result of viewing curriculum as content, writing, "In our professional culture a pound of insight is not worth an ounce of data. . . .Professional success has demanded it" (Eisner, 1985, p. 16). This movement toward an increasing emphasis on testing is reflected by Glatthorn (1994), who defines curriculum as what should be taught in schools *and* carefully defined expected exit outcomes. Giroux (in Giroux, Penna, & Pinar, 1981) sees such emphasis on testing as part and parcel of "the

traditional curriculum paradigm," whose tenets he lists:

> a) theory in the curriculum field should operate in the interest of law-like propositions that are empirically testable; b) the natural sciences provide the "proper" model of explanation for the concepts and techniques of curriculum theory, design, and evaluation; c) knowledge should be objective and capable of being investigated and described in a neutral fashion; and d) statements of value are to be separated from "facts" and "modes of inquiry" that can and ought to be objective. (p. 100)

Mauritz Johnson (in Giroux, Penna, & Pinar, 1981) takes such a position for granted, stating clearly that "curriculum is a *structured series of intended learning outcomes*" (p. 73).

A major proponent of academic rationalism is Mortimer Adler, whose *Paideia Proposal* outlines his idea that all students should study identical material and work toward identical objectives (1982). Adler advocates organizing all public schools according to the Great Books of the Western World, and acknowledges only three modes of learning--acquisition of knowledge, development of skills, and introduction to an enlarged understanding of ideas and values--that must be addressed by three modes of instruction--didactics and demonstrations, coaching and supervised practice, and maieutic questioning (Adler, 1982). Adler's concept of curriculum matches Eisner's (1985) description

of that of the academic rationalist: "The greatest ideas created by the greatest writers, exemplified by the greatest works humans have produced, are the proper objects of educational attention" (p. 67).

Cognitive Processes: Curriculum as Mental Discipline

Curriculum decision makers who emphasize cognitive processes believe that "the curriculum is not to emphasize content, but process. Teaching is not to impart, but to help students learn to inquire" (Eisner, 1985, p. 62). In contrast to academic rationalists, supporters of the cognitive processes orientation to curriculum could have as their slogan, "It doesn't matter much what a student studies in school, as long as he doesn't like it" (Eisner, 1985, p. 63). Bull and Lane (1992) describe such a philosophy as one of mental discipline, "begin[ning] with the premise that the mind needs to be disciplined, because if it is not, it will develop inappropriately" (p. 4). They continue, "Many discipline theorists have gone so far as to say that the content itself is unimportant so long as it is dull, dry, boring, and difficult" (p. 18).

For those whose curriculum orientation is aimed at developing cognitive processes, students learn to transfer processes, not content (Eisner, 1985, p. 63). Such a belief that "cognitive processes can be cultivated" (Eisner, 1985, p. 64) is fundamental to the *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: Cognitive Domain*, developed by Benjamin Bloom (1956) which identifies six levels of hierarchical

thinking: information, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and

evaluation.

Personal Relevance: Curriculum as Personal Meaning

Emphasizing personal relevance as of primary focus in curriculum means

that "the curriculum is to emerge out of the sympathetic interaction of teachers

and students within a process called teacher-pupil planning" (Eisner, 1985,

p. 69). Instead of teachers presenting a preplanned set of facts for students to

master, students and teachers work together to decide upon schooling's emphasis

and direction. Personal relevance as necessary for learning is promoted by many

curriculum writers. Katz and Chard (1989) describe the project approach in early

childhood classrooms as one which emphasizes "the teacher's role in encouraging

children to interact with people, objects, and the environment in ways that have

personal meaning to them" (p. 3). Calkins (1991) also sees the necessity of

personal relevance, commenting, "Writing happens when pigeons scramble for

food on the roof of your apartment building, and it happens on the street curb and

in the library. Writing is lifework, not deskwork" (p. 6-7).

Dewey (1938) is a major proponent of the necessity of personal relevance

in education. He distinguishes clearly between three types of experiences which

a student may have: educative, miseducative, and noneducative. Educative

experiences are those which are part of a logical progression in which one leads

to another, promoting further learning. Miseducative experiences are those which can actually inhibit further learning. Noneducative experiences are simply neutral, neither inhibiting nor promoting further learning. These principles regarding the nature of children and the nature of learning bring Dewey to state that the teacher's role is to structure the environment in order to promote educative experiences which will lead to growth. He writes, "Perhaps the greatest of all pedagogical fallacies is the notion that a person learns only the particular thing he is studying at the time" (Dewey, 1938, p. 48). Warning that students will not automatically transfer information acquired from one situation to another, Dewey (1938) writes that educational experiences must be tied to students' present interests. Since students often cannot recognize situations in which bits of acquired knowledge can be useful, only experiences which will promote further investigation are truly useful.

Those who hold the view that making meaning of one's own experiences, one's own lifeworld, is essential to learning, apparently approach it from one of two directions: self-actualization or constructivism. According to McNeil, "Those with a humanistic orientation hold that the curriculum should provide personally satisfying experiences for each person. The new humanists are self-actualizers, who view curriculum as a liberating process that can meet the need for growth and personal integrity" (1990, p. 1). Thus, humanist curriculum

theorists believe that schooling *should* aim at helping individuals achieve self-actualization through personally meaningful experiences.

Constructivists, in contrast, hold that learning takes place *only when learners construct knowledge from within* (Kamii, 1994a). While humanists focus on what schools should do, constructivists focus on what schools do, whether they intend to or not. Constructivists hold that learners will construct knowledge, whether or not teachers acknowledge that process. The question becomes, "What knowledge will they construct?" Children do learn. As Emig (1983) comments, "That teachers teach and children learn, no one will deny, but to believe that children learn because teachers teach and only what teachers explicitly teach is to engage in magical thinking" (p. 453).

Constructivism and humanism are not mutually exclusive facets of personal relevance as a curriculum orientation. There is no part of either position that would indicate that the other is somehow unimportant, and careful delineation between them is often futile. Constance Kamii (1994b), a leading constructivist who helped to define constructivism through her work with Jean Piaget and her ongoing work following Piaget, seems to have much in common with humanists, expressing her concern with what school should be for individual children:

> The traditional role of the teacher is to control children by telling them

what to do and by giving them ready-made rules. But children who are always controlled by others can only learn to be controlled. If we want children to be able to make their own decisions and to feel responsible for those decisions, it is best to allow them to make decisions from an early age. (p. 676)

Kamii's description of what schooling should be for children, implying a connection between learning and experience, parallels that of humanist Arthur Combs (1982), who writes,

The Humanist Movement in education represents only a recognition of the importance of human problems in the world our students will be confronting and an attempt to apply the best we know about how people behave and learn to the problems of teaching. . . .Humanistic education maintains that what students experience about themselves and the world is far too important for education to ignore. (p. 135)

Social Adaptation/Social Reconstruction: Curriculum as Mold/Curriculum as Breaking the Mold

Eisner (1985) chooses to consider opposite sides of the same coin, social adaptation and social reconstruction, as similar in terms of curriculum orientation because each "derives its aims and content from an analysis of the society the school is designed to serve" (p. 74). Although each has society as its centerpiece,

the two positions are at opposite poles in terms of the relationship between schooling and the larger society. Those who hold a curriculum orientation positing social adaptation as the ideal would use schools as a mold to help society by making sure that all students are properly enculturated into existing social norms. Curriculum workers who see the purpose of schooling as social reconstruction believe that schooling can be an effective tool for breaking the mold of social adaptation. Instead, they hold that schooling should make sure that all students are aware of the unfair slant of many social norms so that these students become critical thinkers in order to improve the larger society. Although both positions begin with the importance of school to the larger society, they take opposite paths to arrive at very different conclusions.

Curriculum as social adaptation.

Social adaptation as the goal of schooling is very popular at this time in education history. In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education published *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*, drawing immediate national attention to the notion that students were graduating from American public schools with insufficient skills to fit into the workplace. It is hard to imagine a stronger statement for the purpose of schooling in the United States as being one of social adaptation than this one made by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983):

Our Nation is at risk. Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce,

industry, science, and technological innovation is being overtaken by

competitors throughout the world. . . .We report to the American people

that while we can take justifiable pride in what our schools and colleges

have historically accomplished and contributed to the United States and

the well-being of its people, the educational foundations of our society are

presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our

very future as a Nation and a people. . . .If an unfriendly foreign power

had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational

performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of

war. (p. 5)

This belief that the purpose of school is to serve the larger interest of

society, and that schools should focus on preparing students to adapt to the

workplace has become so commonplace and accepted as a "given" since 1983,

that it is reflected almost daily in national, state, and local newspapers and

broadcasts. It is also reflected in a great deal of writing by educators about

schools. The perceived need for schools to change in order to meet shifting

societal demands is described by Kimbrough and Nunnery (1988):

Schools, for the most part, are geared to the industrial revolution era,

which is fast passing from the scene. The information society will require

that the schools be restructured. Among the concepts to be observed in

this restructuring process are lifelong learning, communication skills, and

principles associated with the economic revolution. (p. 101)

Schwarz and Cavener (1994) refer specifically to the direct connection between

outcome-based education and society's wishes, writing, "[Students] come to

school with varying family backgrounds, experiences, and interests. Yet, select

adults decide what *all* children need to know to become good workers" (p. 335).

The emphasis on the primary function of school as a training ground for good

workers is ubiquitous.

Curriculum as social reconstruction.

Viewing the purpose of schooling as social reconstruction is somewhat

less acceptable, except in instances in which an overwhelming majority of people

see a desired social improvement as best approached through the public schools.

Three popular programs that fit such a description are the anti-smoking

campaign, the anti-drug use campaign, and the training of students as "conflict

managers" to settle playground disputes. Only in such cases is it widely

acceptable for schools to engage in open attempts at improving society rather

than adapting to it. When society in general agrees the time for social change has

come, it sees no better vehicle for promoting such change than the public

schools.

Eisner (1985) writes that emphasizing social reconstructionism as a curriculum orientation means that school programs are "not primarily to help students adapt to a society that is in need of fundamental change but rather to help them to recognize the real problems and do something about them" (p. 76). For curriculum workers who focus on social reconstructionism as the goal of schooling, the ideas about and need for social change come from the students themselves, as they learn to examine critically the society in which they are enmeshed.

Friere believes that schooling aimed at improving society is both possible and necessary, and comments, "The liberating class does not accept the status quo and its myths of freedom. It challenges the students to unveil the actual manipulation and myths in society. In that unveiling, we change our understanding of reality, our perception" (Shor & Friere, 1987, p. 172). Spring (1989) concurs, commenting succinctly, "Education can be for freedom or for slavery. These two possible results are a continuing problem for democratic societies in which government controls the distribution of knowledge through a system of public schooling" (p. vii).

Focusing on school as the center of social reconstruction can be dangerous, mentally and physically. One should reflect on what happened at Kent State twenty-five years ago to recognize the very real dangers of

encouraging students to engage in critical examination of social norms. Four college students protesting the United States' involvement in the war in Vietnam died as a direct result of their participation. Another less severe but extremely important example of the risks involved in helping students raise their critical awareness of social norms is found in the facts of the case *Tinker v. Des Moines* (1969). A small group of children in the Des Moines public schools wore black armbands to school during December, 1965, in order to silently protest the Vietnam War, even though school officials had expressly forbidden such armbands. The United States Supreme Court upheld the students' right to silent protest. However, the fact that the case survived the maze of lower courts and was brought before the Supreme Court nearly four years after the protest occurred, indicates that school officials felt very strongly that such student protests, although silent, were unacceptable. Students as agents of social reconstruction are generally held suspect.

Technology: Curriculum as Machine

The fifth facet of Eisner's (1985) orientation to curriculum is that of "curriculum as technology" which he describes as "a question of relating means to ends once the ends have been formulated" (p. 79). Increasingly popular among educational policymakers at all levels of government, the orientation to curriculum as technology seeks to "operationalize [ends] through statements that

are referenced to observable behavior" (Eisner, 1985, p. 79). Eisner (1985) sees

the view of curriculum as technology permeating all other curriculum

orientations to some extent, since it is "consonant with the Western world's

efforts to control human activity" (p. 80).

The explosion in standardized testing taking place in the United States is

directly related to the idea that schooling should have specific goals and

measurable outcomes--curriculum as technology. Perrone (in Kamii, 1990)

writes, "Standardized tests exist in American society for almost every human trait

imaginable, from intelligence and achievement to alienation, self-concept to

maturity, moral development to creativity" (p. 1). Dependence upon tests, both

norm-referenced and criterion-referenced, to help educators, policymakers, and

the public evaluate schools, lies as the heart of many notions about education

reform.

Reliance on tests to measure outcomes in educational has led to various

attempts to paste principles of business management onto schools. Notions about

using business practices to reform education are found not only in the popular

media; even the writings of many curriculum workers is rife with examples of

management applications and terms. One recent book published by the

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development is devoted entirely to

applying business guru W. Edwards Deming's principles of total quality

management to schools (Glatthorn, 1994). More telling, however, is the way

terms from the world of management have been appropriated by education

writers--outcomes, efficiency, effectiveness, productivity, human resources,

capital, rate of return, time on task. Eisner (1985) comments meaningfully,

> Scientifically based technologies place high priority on the specification of
>
> objectives, the development of units of performance that can be evaluated
>
> after relatively short time intervals, and the standardization of those
>
> features that lead to the ends that have been specified. The general
>
> tendency is to try to increase efficiency and effectiveness by the creation
>
> of routines that are common across the enterprise. In many situations,
>
> such efficiencies do emerge.
>
> The cost of such routines, however, is not trivial if one embraces a
>
> view of education that regards the cultivation of productive idiosyncrasy a
>
> virtue. (p. 81)

The disturbing tendency to equate learning with a manageable process whose

components can be carefully controlled and measured and to equate learners with

products, depersonalizes the process of schooling. Moffett (1994a) decries the

trend toward applying business principles to schools: "This applies an inorganic,

particle approach to an organic, holistic process" (p. 587). How different is the

mechanistic approach of curriculum as technology from Eisner's (1985)

description of the art of teaching:

> Teachers themselves need to feel free to innovate, to explore, and to play.
> Teaching is not an act modeled after the sequences of a highly efficient
> assembly line. Teaching is more like what occurs on a basketball court or
> a soccer field. . . .Neither basketball nor teaching is optimized by chaotic
> abandon or rigid adherence to prespecified plans. Fluid intelligence,
> intelligence in process, is the hallmark of effectiveness in both arenas. (p.
> 183-184)

Recent Calls for "Reform"

Three national education reform efforts have been especially influential
during the past twelve years. The first, *A Nation at Risk*, was written by the
National Committee on Excellence in Education established by President Ronald
Reagan. The committee's findings, published in 1983, brought a national outcry
of alarm at the perceived state of schooling in the United States. The Carnegie
Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, a privately endowed research
group, followed quickly with its own recommendations for reform. Of special
interest is the Carnegie Foundation's *Report Card on School Reform* published in
1988, five years after the original recommendations came out. A third group to
examine education reform beginning in 1983 was the Holmes Group, composed

of deans of education at colleges and universities across the United States. In 1986, the Holmes Group published *Tomorrow's Teachers*, examining teachers and making recommendations about teacher preparation.

A Nation at Risk: Igniting Fear

A Nation at Risk (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) began a stampede of demands for restructuring of education in the United States. Characterized as "an open letter to the American people," the report describes in calculatedly frightening terms the decay of schools so that other nations have surpassed the United States in excellence in education, as defined by the report:

> The world is indeed one global village. We live among determined, well-educated, and strongly motivated competitors. We compete with them for international standing and markets, not only with products but also with the ideas of our laboratories and neighborhood workshops. America's position in the world may once have been reasonably secure with only a few exceptionally well-trained men and women. It is no longer. (p. 6)

The report's brevity--36 pages, not counting appendices--and its eschewing of educational jargon led to its reprinting by many national, regional, and local magazines and newspapers (for example, *The Oklahoma Observer*, 1983). It has been widely read, and its tone of alarm has permeated nearly all

calls for education reform since.

The language of *A Nation at Risk* is management oriented, and the evidence presented is overwhelmingly market oriented, both at individual and national levels, stating,

> Learning is the indispensable investment required for success in the
> 'information age' we are entering. . . .The people of the United States need
> to know that individuals in our society who do not possess the levels of
> skill, literacy, and training essential to the new era will be effectively
> disenfranchised, not simply from the material rewards that accompany
> competent performance, but also from the chance to participate fully in
> our national life. (p. 7)

Of the sixteen indicators of risk listed, twelve rely on standardized tests--including the Scholastic Achievement Test, College Boards, and various achievement tests--for their weight.

According to the National Commission for Excellence in Education (1983), the term "excellence" has several meanings:

> At the level of the *individual learner*, it means performing on the
> boundary of individual ability in ways that test and push back personal
> limits, in school and in the workplace. Excellence characterizes a *school*
> *or college* that sets high expectations and goals for all learners, then tries

in every way possible to help students reach them. Excellence characterizes a *society* that has adopted these policies, for it will then be prepared through the education and skill of its people to respond to the challenges of a rapidly changing world. (p. 12)

These definitions of "excellence" demonstrate the curriculum orientations held by the writing committee of *A Nation at Risk*. Clearly the authors are focused on social adaptation in terms of using education as a tool to help individuals fit productively, in an economic sense at least, into society. They also would use this goal of social adaptation to benefit the larger society, making the United States more economically competitive with other countries. Japan, Germany, and South Korea are specifically mentioned as threats to the United States' economic dominance.

The reforms advocated in *A Nation at Risk* are also closely attached to the curriculum orientation of academic rationalism. The authors, like Mortimer Adler and other proponents of academic rationalism, advocate reducing or eliminating student elective courses in favor of a more stringent and specific course load emphasizing mathematics and science (National Committee for Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 24-27). This orientation also extends into the report's recommendations regarding teacher preparation, including reducing college hours in "educational methods" courses in favor of subject matter courses

(National Committee for Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 22). The quotation marks in *A Nation at Risk* around the term "educational methods" (National Committee for Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 22) apparently indicate the corporate authors' collective disdain for the notion that good teachers need to consider *how* students learn; instead, they favor the notion that only *what* students should learn carries any importance.

The way findings are presented in *A Nation at Risk* also shows a connection to the orientation of curriculum as technology. The linear fashion of the report--define the questions, identify the problem, propose logical solutions, delineate how results will be measured--is demonstrative of instructional technology. There is no examination of the value of the original questions, nor is there even a hint of need for personal relevance. Any consideration of the aesthetic qualities of schooling is absent. In fact, after giving short shrift to individual students' abilities and needs, the report comments, "Whatever the student's educational or work objectives, knowledge of the New Basics is the foundation of success for the after-school years and, therefore, forms the core of the modern curriculum" (National Committee for Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 24).

The Carnegie Foundation: Examination of the Underlying Questions

Perhaps because it was published five years after *A Nation at Risk* and

Foundation members had the benefit of time to develop insight, the Carnegie

Foundation's *Report Card on School Reform* (1988) examines some of the

underlying questions and assumptions upon which *A Nation at Risk* is based,

although many of the Carnegie Foundation's calls for education reform are almost

identical to those in *A Nation at Risk.* The Foundation, headed by Ernest Boyer,

lists some recommendations that are similar to those in *A Nation at Risk*, such as

establishing a "core of common learning--a program in literature, the arts, foreign

language, history, civics, science, mathematics technology, and health--to extend

the basic knowledge of students and broaden their perspectives" (Carnegie

Foundation, 1988, p. 2).

However, much of the text of *Report Card on School Reform* is concerned

with far deeper issues than the number of elective courses secondary students

should be allowed. Boyer and members of the Foundation worry about the first

wave of school reform that took place in the mid-1980s, fearing that "curriculum

reform has been more quantitative than creative and there has been a disturbing

tendency to focus on course labels, rather than on content" (p. 3). They continue,

"There is still a tendency to focus only on isolated facts. . . .Raising course

requirements, without providing support, is especially harmful to disadvantaged

students" (p. 3).

Members of the Carnegie Foundation are concerned with the lack of

personal relevance reflected in much effort at school reform. They recommend a better connection between students' lives and what takes place in school, writing, "Isn't it time for master teachers and research scholars to come together. . .to design, for optional state use, courses in language, history, science, and the like, and to propose ways to link school content to the realities of life?" (p. 3). In the same vein, the Foundation also advocates more active student involvement in learning and less reliance on textbooks:

> Textbooks still control curriculum in the nation's schools. Too little
>
> attention is paid to individual differences among students. Also, there is
>
> great passivity in the classroom where often the most frequent question
>
> asked is: "Do we have to know this for the test?" (p. 5)

Report Card on School Reform, unlike much of what is written about educational restructuring, expresses doubt of the ability of increased standardized testing to measure results of reform efforts. Members of the Foundation (1988) comment, "We are disturbed that the testing instruments are crude and often measure that which matters least" (p. 5-6). However, the Carnegie Foundation fails to call for less reliance on standardized testing in evaluating student learning and school improvement. Instead, the demand is simply for better tests: "If the reform movement is to succeed, educators must design better instruments of evaluation--ones that expand rather than restrict the potentiality of students"

(p. 6). It is difficult to imagine such a magical testing instrument, unless we remember the "Lake Wobegon Effect," in which "children are all above average" (Beck, 1991). As far as standardized tests are able to describe student learning and achievement, there will always be scores in the bottom fifty percent; someone must fail.

The Carnegie Foundation report finally reflects the decision that curriculum as technology must win out over the need for personal relevance. What is pedagogically sound caves in before popular pressure--we are bombarded from all sides by the importance of testing to determine which students learn best, which schools are most excellent. After struggling through descriptions of poorly constructed standardized tests, the Foundation concludes, "In the end, what we test is what we teach. Finding better ways to evaluate students is one of the most essential challenges the reform movement now confronts" (p. 6).

The Holmes Group: Subject Area Specialization is the Answer

The Holmes Group, composed of deans of education of colleges and universities across the United States, began meeting in late 1983 to examine school reform in light of teacher preparation. They compiled a list of five goals to improve teacher education:

1) To make the education of teachers intellectually more solid. . . .2) To

recognize differences in teachers' knowledge, skill, and commitment, in

their education, certification, and work. . . .3) To create standards of entry

to the profession--examinations and educational requirements--that are

professionally relevant and intellectually defensible. . . .4) To connect our

own institutions to schools. . . .5) To make schools better places for

teachers to work, and to learn. (Holmes Group, 1986, p. 4)

The emphasis of the Holmes Group's efforts lies in making teaching a true

profession, complete with mandated subject-area specialization and hierarchical

stages.

In order to improve teacher education, members of the Holmes Group

(1986) assert, "First, the undergraduate education major must be abolished"

(p. 14). The rationale for this amazing step, proposed by deans of education

colleges, is that college graduates who have majored in education generally are

poor teachers. The report states, "Few of them know much about anything,

because they are required to know a little of everything" (p. 14). The education

generalist is frankly criticized: "Many teachers still instruct whole classes of

students in all subjects, as there is little or no academic specialization until high

school" (Holmes Group, 1986, p. 7). Although I would consider this statement a

compliment to pre-secondary schools, the authors of *Tomorrow's Teachers* intend

condemnation of such poor structure. Academic rationalism is well represented

in the Holmes Group. Specific subjects are worthy of intense study, but

consideration of any holistic sense of how learning takes place is eschewed.

The Holmes Group (1986) would also change how teachers spend their

time at school, noting that

> We now live in an age when many elementary school students have their
>
> own microcomputers. . . .Yet their teachers are still working with the same
>
> job descriptions that teachers had in the mid-1800s, when McGuffey's
>
> Reader and spelling slates were the leading educational technology. (p. 6)

The Group proposes a hierarchy of teaching stages, including 1) "career

professionals. . .who have proven their excellence in teaching. . .and in

examinations" who would make up about twenty percent of all teachers; 2)

"professional teachers" who would be competent, with an earned masters degree

in teaching; and 3) "instructors," beginning teachers who would enter the

profession as subject-area specialists through several different avenues rather

than through traditional teacher education (Holmes Group, 1986, p. 8-9).

The Holmes Group report on education reform reflects several curriculum

orientations, including curriculum as technology, academic rationalism, and

cognitive processes. A technological approach, identifying problems and

proposing linear solutions, is the basis of *Tomorrow's Teachers*. Academic

rationalism forms the foundation for the Holmes Group's call for rigor and

tougher intellectual standards for teacher preparation. A cognitive processes stance is reflected by the advocacy of good teaching to produce good teachers. The Group writes, "If teachers are to know a subject so that they can teach it well, they need to be taught it well. Few of us are Leonardo" (Holmes Group, 1986, p. 16). Apparently the belief expressed is that teachers will transfer the teaching they experience as students to the teaching they themselves carry out. However, the emphasis is still on the *subject* rather than on *how people learn*.

Two statements, relatively minor within the overall reforms suggested by *Tomorrow's Teachers*, are especially revealing. In admitting that many of the badly taught, intellectually weak courses required of future teachers are found outside colleges of education, the Group (1986) writes,

> But what of the many badly taught and often mindlessly required courses
> that our students. . .must take?. . .Is the weak pedagogy, the preoccupation
> with "covering the material," the proliferation of multiple-choice tests, and
> the delegation of much teaching to graduate students--increasingly,
> students who cannot speak English very well--not full of messages about
> the nature of knowledge and standards for acceptable teaching? (p. 5)

This statement is indeed full of messages. Beneath the obvious question about prejudice against graduate teaching assistants for whom English is a second (or third, or sixth) language, lies a deeper message. If colleges and universities in the

United States, especially in the area of teacher education, are intellectually poor,

why are so many students from other countries flocking to enroll?

The second small statement that intrigues is a confusing one about

abolishing teacher education at the undergraduate level. The authors comment,

> To eliminate the undergraduate education major would remedy none of
>
> this [subject area specialists who cannot teach well at the secondary level].
>
> In fact, it would probably worsen things. For most of the education
>
> majors in our universities are in elementary teaching, and most observers
>
> argue that pedagogy in elementary schools is better--more lively,
>
> imaginative, and considerate of students--than in high schools. (Holmes
>
> Group, 1986, p. 16)

Apparently the authors of *Tomorrow's Teachers* have fallen victim to one of the

perils of the "five paragraph essay"--allowing a concession to outweigh the

positive points. They skate over this important contradiction, continuing, "But

we do not argue for retaining undergraduate education majors" (p. 16). Surely

allowing that the best teaching taking place in schools is in elementary schools--

whose teachers are generalists, not subject-matter specialists--is reason to rethink

the recommendation to scrap general teacher preparation.

The Holmes Group (1986) is finally wistful about professional

possibilities, more concerned about what could be, if only teachers could gain

respect outside their own ranks.

In a sense, then, our proposal is hardly radical. For American universities know quite well how to provide outstanding professional education. The best professional education in medicine, public affairs, business, and law, that can be found in the world is found here in the United States. (p. 20) Unfortunately, it is disrespect--for teachers and for students--from within educational circles, especially such disrespect as that exhibited in *Tomorrow's Teachers*, that is most hurtful.

Philosophical Perspectives on Education

Even if we refuse to think about the assumptions that underlie our practical work as educators, some set of assumptions always rules. If we go to an instructional materials display and select materials primarily because they will keep students busy, or because they are easy to store, or because they contain pretty illustrations, we have already accepted certain assumptions. (Schubert, 1986, p. 117)

Curriculum treatises are written from various philosophical positions, representing the stance toward ontology and epistemology of their authors. Dobson and Dobson (1987) write,

If curriculum theory is a synthesis of selected ideas, and ideas are the

inventions of humans, and if these inventions have multiple sources, then

the epistemological base of curriculum theory is diverse perceptions of

reality. . . .There is futility in advancing rhetoric about curriculum thought

until the context that gave form to the thought (theory) is critiqued.

(p. 276)

Mortimer Adler and Robert Maynard Hutchins are known as perennialists,

a branch of essentialism holding that education consists of mastering a

predetermined set of writings, The Great Books of the Western World (Adler,

1982). Essentialists believe the purpose of education is to enculturate students

by requiring mastery of specific, shared subject matter.

John Dewey is known as an experientialist or a pragmatist (Schubert,

1986), "calling for careful attention to the experiences of students" (p. 129).

Dewey (1897) writes, "I believe that education. . .is a process of living and not a

preparation for future living" (p. 22). He continues, commenting on the content

of schooling, "I believe. . .that the true center of correlation on the school

subjects is not science, nor literature, nor history, nor geography, but the child's

own social activities" (p. 25).

Stanley Aronowitz and Henry Giroux (1985) are critical theorists who find

shortcomings in the tenets of both essentialism and experientialism, writing,

Conservative educators. . .have focused on the production and

maintenance of what is legitimated as a universal set of symbolic values and knowledge forms. This defense of, call it high culture, classical culture or simply a common culture has also found support among many progressive educators who have criticized schools less for reproducing it in the curriculum than for failing to democratize dominant school culture to make it accessible to all students. (p. 139)

Aronowitz and Giroux (1985) see curriculum as a matter of power: "work[ing] through the curriculum in a way that goes unquestioned, specifically as it defines what counts as legitimate forms of school knowledge, or. . .seen as a negative instance of social control that represses the possibilities for struggle and resistance" (p. 139).

Reconceptualists such as William Pinar and Madeline Grumet are concerned with developing new perspectives on curriculum theory, beyond those traditionally addressed. Grumet (1988) approaches curriculum theory from a feminist perspective, writing of women in education who often never speak of themselves as mothers, fearing a loss of professional status:

By withholding information about that relation [to our children] from the public discourse of educational theory we deny our own experience and our own knowledge. Our silence certifies the "system," and we become complicit with theorists and teachers who repudiate the intimacy of

nurture in their own histories and in their work in education. (p. xvi)

Pinar (1975) writes of curriculum as *currere*, "the study of educational experience. . .the *lebenswelt*" (p. 400). The individual nature of studying *currere* brings us knowledge, according to Pinar (1975), who continues, "It is its own knowledge, and while its roots are elsewhere, its plant and flower are its own; it is another species, a discipline of its own" (p. 402). He sees traditional study of curriculum as content and intended outcomes as inherently useless. Similarly, Doll (1993) describes the changes in curriculum study brought by postmodernism, a "science of complexity" (p. 3), replacing the linear certainty of modernism. He writes, "If curriculum is truly a collaborative effort and transformative process, then 'creator' and 'developer' are far better descriptors than 'implementor' for discussing what a post-modern teacher does" (Doll, 1993, p. 16). Doll (1993) describes as the implicit challenge to postmodern education to "design a curriculum that both *accommodates and stretches*; a curriculum that (combining terms and concepts from both Kuhn and Piaget) has the essential tension between disequilibrium and equilibrium so that a new, more comprehensive and transformative re-equilibration emerges" (p. 10).

The philosophical lens through which this study will be viewed is that of constructivism. Based on the work of Jean Piaget, constructivism holds that learners construct knowledge from within, and that they learn best when they are

"thinking about physical actions on objects (DeVries & Kohlberg, 1987, p. 20).

Kamii (1982) uses a biological metaphor to describe the ways children learn, likening the developing child to a plant: "We can change the factors in the environment such as the composition of the soil, the temperature, and the light in which the plant grows, but there is nothing we can do directly to the plant to make a leaf come out of it. Leaves can be grown only by the plant, from within" (p. 4).

DeVries and Kohlberg (1987) instead use a metaphor of the dialectic process, in which "knowledge evolves from an internal psychological core through an interaction or dialogue with the physical and social environment rather than by direct biological maturation or direct learning of external givens from the environment" (p. 7). They posit constructivism as the epistemological position of Piaget's findings that "the knower actively constructs knowledge" (DeVries & Kohlberg, 1987, p. 8). Bredekamp and Rosengrant (1992) note succinctly, "We know that children construct knowledge because they possess so many ideas that adults do not teach them" (p. 15).

Teachers' Experiences In and Out of the Classroom

The secret of teaching is to be found in the local detail and the everyday life of teachers; teachers can be the richest and most useful source of knowledge about

teaching; those who hope to understand teaching must turn at some point to teachers themselves. (Ayers in Schubert & Ayers, 1992, p. v)

Seeking to understand the lives of individual teachers in order to gain deeper insight into the nature of teaching and the nature of teachers is being carried out by many educational researchers through the use of narrative inquiry (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Bussis, Chittenden, & Amarel, 1976; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Davis, 1993; Goodson, 1992; Greene, 1978; Josselson & Lieblich, 1993; Ross, Cornett, & McCutcheon, 1992; Schubert & Ayers, 1992; Witherell & Noddings, 1991; Yee, 1990). Three areas of study are of particular note: the everyday lives of teachers, teachers as decision-makers, and teaching as a feminized occupation.

Everyday Lives

Teachers take part in an almost endless variety of encounters on any given day--worrying about one student's silent refusal to participate, rejoicing over another's excited exclamation: "I get it! I understand long division," reading in the local newspaper about falling standardized test scores, carrying latex gloves and using them when helping to stop a bloody nose. Good teaching, with teachers connected to the experiences of students and other teachers, is like being a parent: although sometimes mundane, it is never boring because it is so unpredictable. Parker and McDaniel (in Ross, et al., 1992) call teachers' daily

work "bricolage," meaning "work of an odd-job sort done by a do-it-yourself practitioner" (p. 99). They liken teachers to "bricoleurs [who] tackle a problem not by reading a manual or taking a course of study, but by using a personal bag of tricks. They are masters of improvisation, using whatever tools and devices are on hand or can be invented" (Parker and McDaniel in Ross, et al., 1992, p. 99). The truth of this simile is undeniable. The individual learners, including the teacher, in any school setting ensure that any rules of teaching and learning are made to be broken and that prescriptive if-then measures are bound to be challenged by multiple realities. As Ayers (in Schubert & Ayers, 1992) writes, "Again and again, as in most classrooms that are alive and breathing, lesson plans and curricular content are unraveled and left in a heap on the floor as children push past in pursuing their own purposes, dreams, and interests" (p. 138).

Earlier research on teaching, usually carried out as ethnographic studies, takes a more pessimistic view of the unpredictable daily life of teachers. Waller (1932) sees the built-in uncertainty about teaching as inhibiting significant change in classroom practice over time, commenting,

> The student teacher learns the most advanced theory of education, and
>
> goes out from school with a firm determination to put it into practice. But
>
> he finds that this theory gives him little help in dealing with the concrete
>
> social situation that faces him. After a few attempts to translate theories

into educational practice, he gives up and takes guidance from

conventional sources, from the advice of older teachers. . . . (p. 193)

Lortie (1975) also sees uncertainty as a strongly negative aspect of teaching,

leading to anxiety (p. 209). He continues, "Anxious teachers are likely to give up

the search for superior solutions and to cling to what they know from the past. In

begetting anxiety, uncertainty may reduce innovation and serve conservative

ends" (Lortie, 1975, p. 209).

Perhaps the positivistic desire to find "superior solutions" based on "the

most advanced theory of education" is part of an inherent problem in both

Waller's and Lortie's concerns about the need for certainty in teaching. Instead of

looking for pat answers, some teachers anticipate uncertainty, embracing

"imaginative teaching and learning [in which] much of what occurs is spur of the

moment. The connections that students make and that teachers facilitate are

often happening spontaneously" (Jagla in Schubert & Ayers, 1992, p. 70).

Although some parts of teachers' uncertainty is generated by the power

structure of school in which others thoughtlessly impose sudden demands on

those with little or no voice--certainly students and often teachers, too--other

parts of the uncertainty of teaching come directly from pedagogical interaction.

While uncertainty stemming from the unequal hierarchy of school causes anxiety

for all teachers, uncertainty which arises from individual uniqueness in the

teacher-learner relationship can sometimes cause a teacher to feel excitement, anticipation, even joy.

Teachers as Decision-Makers

The study of teachers and how they make decisions about what happens and does not happen in their classrooms is the subject of much research. The slow movement in efforts to reform or restructure American education has led to increased focus on teacher decision making, as "we have come to realize in recent years that the teacher is the ultimate key to educational change and school improvement" (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992, ix).

Several studies attempt to examine teachers' decisions in light of school culture (Blase, 1985; Fuller & Izu, 1986; Montgomery, 1991). The emphasis in these ethnographies is on elements of school culture and climate that affect decisions teachers make.

Other studies directly link teacher decisions to school reform by examining teacher decisions in schools participating in a particular reform vehicle (Dana, 1993; Roberts & Dugan, 1993). The researchers' wishes are apparently to learn about factors influencing teacher decision-making in order to carry out prescribed reforms more efficiently. Insight into why teachers act as they do is tied to ways to modify teacher decisions so that certain kinds of change can occur more quickly. Similarly, other researchers in the area of teacher

decision making, while not advocating a particular set of reforms, are guided by a means-ends perspective. The title of Reyes' (1990) book, *Teachers and Their Workplace: Commitment, Performance, and Productivty*, clearly identifies a positivistic desire to identify aspects of teacher decision making in order to increase productivity.

Such linear, limited examinations of teaching thinking and decision making are of dubious use to curriculum workers who seek to gain insight into how and why teachers, individually and collectively, choose as they do. Connelly and Clandinin (1988) note, "One needs to be cautious about reading too much of curricular significance into studies of teachers' thinking that are effectively cut off, in their methodology, from the past and from the future" (p. 19).

Far more useful to the examination of teacher decision making, especially as related to insights into teacher autonomy, are more open-ended research studies, asking questions without anticipating answers that must fit a particular framework or reform effort. Investigations into why and how teachers make decisions that seek to improve understanding rather than to carry out a particular reform are invaluable (Bussis, Chittenden, & Amarel, 1976; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Hawthorne, 1992; Paris, 1993).

Gender: Teaching as a Feminized Occupation

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, teaching has become increasingly feminized. About 60% of teachers in 1900 were female; by 1930, nearly 90% of teachers were women (Apple, 1986). This growth in the proportion of women teachers brought with it a perceived need on the part of male administrators and policymakers to dictate what takes place in school (Apple, 1986). Paris (1993) writes, "Accompanying the increasing feminization of the teaching force. . .was the transformation of teachers' curriculum work into a highly rationalized and controlled enterprise" (p. 6). Gilligan (1982) explains "the discrepancy between womanhood and adulthood" (p. 17) in which adults are expected to be self-sufficient but women, paradoxically, are to be taken care of:

> Women's place in man's life cycle has been that of nurturer, caretaker, and
>
> helpmate, the weaver of those networks of relationships on which she in
>
> turn relies. But while women have thus taken care of men, men
>
> have. . .tended to assume or devalue that care. (Gilligan, 1982, p. 17)

However, the fact that the overwhelming number of teachers are women has more far-reaching implications than its relationship to an outwardly controlled curriculum. Grumet (1988) comments, "A gender analysis of teaching must strive to depict how women who are teachers experience our femininity in schools and how our sense of gender, in turn, influences our pedagogy and the

curriculum of our classrooms" (p. 46).

The pervasive nature of the devaluing of women by social institutions, including school, often goes unnoticed. However, when women have lived with such devaluing all their lives, the psychological results are evident. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986), interviewing female college students, found that "a woman, like any other human being, does need to know that the mind makes mistakes; but our interviews have convinced us that every woman, regardless of age, social class, ethnicity, and academic achievement, needs to know that she is capable of intelligent thought, and she needs to know it right away" (p. 193).

"Autonomy" in Teaching: Analysis of the Term

Van Manen (1990) describes one approach to analysis of an idea in research, recommending that the researcher

> begin by describing how ordinary social science at present makes sense of
> a certain phenomenon. The object is to show how the experience as
> presented by traditional social science is ill-understood, and how the
> taken-for-granted or generally accepted conceptualizations gloss over
> rather than reveal a more thoughtful understanding of the nature of a
> certain topic. (p. 171)

I follow his recommendation in analyzing the way the term "autonomy" is currently used.

The word "autonomy" is used in several ways in educational and philosophical literature. Most commonly, autonomy is used synonomously with empowerment. This use is in direct conflict with Kamii's (1982) description of autonomy as "the ability to choose," implying instead that autonomy is given to a person by an outside entity. A term related to autonomy is "agency," frequently used by critical theorists and described as a goal for teachers to take risks "through finding alternative ways of knowing the truth about themselves" (Pignatelli, 1993, p. 430). Kamii (1982, 1984, 1991, 1994a, 1994b) is not alone in referring to autonomy as an inner-directed ability; Greene (1978, 1988), Hargreaves and Fullan (1992), and Pinar (1975) agree. A philosophical connection between Kamii's (1982, 1984, 1991, 1994a, 1994b) discourse on autonomy and van Manen's (1990) description of human science research is found in the work of Habermas (1990/1983) and his writings on moral consciousness, in which he emphasizes the importance of relationships in the development of autonomy as well as autonomy's call for action: "In discourse ethics the idea of autonomy is intersubjective. It takes into account that the free actualization of the personality of one individual depends on the actualization of freedom for all" (Habermas, 1990, p. 207).

Misuse: Autonomy as a Synonym for "Empowerment"

The term "autonomy" is most often defined as political empowerment, as in the sense of "Palestinian autonomy" in the West Bank (Kamii, 1994b). Thus autonomy is usually viewed as the *right* to choose, and is bestowed or removed by forces outside the individual--governments, treaties, administrators. When a retired principal found out the subject of my dissertation research was teacher autonomy, she said, "Well, I found out when I was a principal that *some* teachers can handle it, and *some* teachers can't. Some of them just want to be told what to do, not asked" (C. Williams, personal communication, September, 1994). Clearly, she sees autonomy as the right to make choices, not the ability to make choices.

An extensive body of education research deals with norms of teacher autonomy in the sense of empowerment. Pearson and Hall (1993) write, "many teachers are interested in securing the right to manage themselves and their job environment" (p. 172). They continue, describing the need for making teachers more professional and thus "genuinely empowering teachers and giving them a sense of autonomy, specifically, enhancing the perception that they are in control of their work environment" (p. 173). Autonomy is not only referred to as a synonym for empowerment, but is also reduced to a "perception" that teachers need to feel. Street and Licata (1989) describe teacher autonomy similarly: "A

teacher with a high sense of autonomy uses his/her own personal judgement to guide instructional work with students. A low sense of autonomy implies that the teacher feels generally constrained in his/her activities by persons, rules, and regulations, or other conditions and forces outside the immediate instructional setting" (p. 98). These characterizations of autonomy are far removed from the *ability* to make choices.

Allusions to autonomy as empowerment are found in Lortie's (1975) sociological study. He writes, "Some respondents held the principal responsible for close scrutiny of the teacher's work, wheras others stressed his obligation to extend autonomy" (Lortie, 1975, p. 199). Lortie (1975) sees this "extended" autonomy as inhibiting school reform, probably because he also sees such reform as being imposed from above:

> The teacher who is burdened with ambiguous criteria must select his own indicators of effectiveness; this gives him the chance to align his goals with his own capacities and interests. Having worked out a satisfactory balance, a teacher is likely to resist conditions that would force change--he has a stake in autonomy. (p. 210)

Autonomy as empowerment is reflected clearly in Lortie's (1975) descriptions. However, more recent educational writers have also written about teacher autonomy as the right, rather than the ability, to make choices.

Hawthorne (1992) describes her study of the "tensions between autonomy and obligation" (p. 1), as one of the most basic factors in looking at teachers as makers of curriculum. She clarifies her question: "How does one preserve the autonomous construction of classroom curriculum while meeting the organizational obligations of teaching?" (Hawthorne, 1992, p. 124). Although her question is a fair one, she implies that teacher autonomy is counter to school mandates, and that school leaders can either grant teachers autonomy *or* require teachers to adhere to externally-created curricula. This dualistic approach suggests that autonomy is given by entities external to the individual teacher. Hawthorne (1992) is apparently torn in her views on the desirability of teacher autonomy, because she sees it as bestowed externally rather than worked toward internally:

> Multifaceted, autonomy is both essential to effective, responsive teaching and not infrequently responsible for disastrous practice. Whether granted explicitly by the organization. . .or wrested from the organization by various means. . .teacher autonomy presupposes that individual teachers are fully capable of acting for themselves and the students in their classroom. This. . .is not always the case. Some teachers are abler than others. (p. 128)

Ellsworth (1989) writes of empowerment that it "treats the symptoms but

leaves the disease unnamed and untouched" (p. 306). Corey (in Stinnett, 1970)

comments that "purposeless behavior and critical neuroses" are the result of lack

of teacher empowerment: "The teacher who honestly believes that he knows

better ways of grouping, grading or teaching than the manner in which he has

been told to do these things ultimately releases his frustration through antagonism

to superiors, and personal relationships become so strained that the situation

gradually becomes almost untenable" (p. 6). Although the picture of teacher

powerlessness he paints is familiar, he fails to acknowledge autonomy as the

ability rather than the *right* to make such everyday choices. The teacher he

describes is ground down by outside pressures. Although such grinding down is

commonplace in schools, the need for empowerment described has little to do

with teacher autonomy as the ability to make choices; however, autonomous

teachers who exhibit this ability can certainly find themselves ground down, also.

Giroux (1988) examines questions of teacher autonomy more deeply, but

he also holds that autonomy comes from without, writing that although teachers

should have a voice in deciding what school and their role in it should be, it is

"impossible within a division of labor in which teachers have little influence over

the ideological and economic conditions of their work" (p. 128). Instead of

individual administrators or imposed curriculum mandates being responsible for

lack of teacher autonomy, Giroux sees teacher autonomy as prohibited by the

ideology espoused by the dominant class. Although his argument comes closer

to finding the root problem in lack of teacher autonomy, he still focuses on the

external rather than the internal. While such systemic espousal of teacher

obedience can and does inhibit development of teacher autonomy, his contention

that autonomy is externally-driven misses the essential point that the

development of autonomy is a result of internal constructions.

Agency: A Similar Term

Teacher agency is used "to characterize relationships of teachers to

curriculum that. . .involve personal initiative and intellectual engagement" with

an agent being "one who initiates action" (Paris, 1993, p. 16). Acknowledging

that teacher agency relies upon definitions of teaching and curriculum that

deviate from the popular, Paris (1993) describes curriculum as dependent upon

context and agreed upon by teachers and learners together. She sees autonomy as

one facet of teacher agency: "Teacher agency in curriculum matters involves

initiating the creation or critique of curriculum, an awareness of alternatives to

established curriculum practices, the autonomy to make informed curriculum

choices, an investment of self, and ongoing interaction with others" (Paris, 1993,

p. 16). It is unclear whether she sees autonomy as externally or internally driven.

Drawing upon the writings of Foucault, Pignatelli (1993) describes the

problem of teacher agency, asking the question, "What can I do?" (p. 412).

Pignatelli (1993) examines Foucault and freedom in a way that ties the teacher's lament, "What can I do?" with autonomy as the ability to choose, writing, "The practice of freedom is the struggle to remain mindful to one's present status and condition so that one might see it more intensely, and to know one's circumstances deeply in order to recognize recurring games of truth. . . .One other theme undergirds Foucault's understanding of freedom: risk" (p. 418). Foucault's idea of teacher agency is characterized by Pignatelli (1993) as "both an 'inner' critical engagement of self-constituting practices as well as an 'outer' questioning of the conditions within which the self is constituted" (p. 419). Such a description of the tension between inner-directedness and outward actions is in keeping with Piaget's (1932/1965) writing of autonomy, "apart from our relations to other people, there can be no moral necessity" (p. 196).

Autonomy as the Ability to Choose

Although a great deal of writing about schooling uses the term "autonomy" interchangeably with "empowerment," a growing body of literature holds to the notion that autonomy is more accurately the ability, not the right, to make choices. Grundy (1987) maintains that "emancipation lies in the possibility of taking action autonomously. That action may be *informed* by certain theoretical insights, but it is not *prescribed* by them" (p. 113). Thus, although theory can inform autonomous action, it does not define such action. Grundy

(1987) directly rejects as "false autonomy. . .an 'autonomy' which entails

regarding fellow humans and/or the environment as objects" (p. 17).

Greene (1988) sees freedom and autonomy as related, and believes neither

can be bestowed. She wonders at so many people failing to take opportunities

for themselves, writing, "Even given conditions of liberty, many people do not

act on their freedom; they do not risk becoming different; they accede; often,

they submit" (Greene, 1988, p. 117). Surely this quiet submission, without

envisioning anything beyond the status quo, is typical of many teachers.

Greene describes autonomy as being "self-directed and responsible; it is to

be capable of acting in accord with internalized norms and principles; it is to be

insightful enough to know and understand one's impulses, one's motives, and the

influences of one's past" (1988, p. 118). She criticizes autonomy as the proper

aim of education, because she sees it as emphasizing separateness, instead of

arising from Noddings' (1984) ideas about "care" and "connected teaching."

Greene (1988) writes, "Where freedom is concerned. . .it is taken to signify either

liberation from domination or the provision of spaces where choices can be

made. There is a general acknowledgment that the opening of such spaces

depends on support and connectedness" (p. 120). She believes that autonomy is

a limited, patriarchal goal, found in isolation, rather than in connectedness with

others.

Autonomy is somewhat individualistic, in that it depends upon the individual's ability to make choices without regard to external factors such as reward and punishment. However, Kamii (1991) sees connectedness with others as essential to the development of autonomy; it is only through social reciprocity and perspective taking that children move toward autonomy. She follows Piaget (1932/1965) who writes, "Moral autonomy appears when the mind regards as necessary an ideal that is independent of all external pressure. Now, apart from our relations to other people, there can be no moral necessity. The individual as such knows only anomy and not autonomy" (p. 196). Greene's (1988) concern about autonomy's call for isolation rather than connection to others is unfounded, according to Piaget and Kamii.

Perhaps more in tune with the interpersonal dimension of autonomy envisioned by Piaget and Kamii is Greene's (1978) writing on "wide-awakeness," which she describes as "this attentiveness, this *interest* in things. . .the direct opposite of the attitude of bland conventionality and indifference so characteristic of our time" (p. 42). She links wide-awakeness, a picturing of possibilities, to autonomy:

> I am suggesting that, for too many individuals in modern society, there is a feeling of being dominated and that feelings of powerlessness are almost inescapable. I am also suggesting that such feelings can to a large degree

be overcome through conscious endeavor on the part of individuals to keep themselves awake, to think about their condition in the world, to inquire into the forces that appear to dominate them, to interpret the experiences they are having day by day. Only as they learn to make sense of what is happening, can they feel themselves to be autonomous. Only then can they develop the sense of agency required for living a moral life. (Greene, 1978, p. 43-44)

DeVries and Kohlberg (1987) extend Piaget's research in the development of autonomy. They comment, "Children need a social context characterized not only by co-operation with other children, but also co-operation with adults" (DeVries & Kohlberg, 1987, p. 37). They also comment on constructivist teaching and the need to foster autonomy rather than heteronomy, with teachers moving away from authoritarian relationships with students:

Some people have to overcome romantic tendencies in thinking about young children. But most people have to overcome tendencies to authoritarian relations with children. This is partly because of the upbringing most have had, and partly because teacher training has given us this model of the teacher. The shifts. . .are really basic shifts in attitude and way of being. It is often painful to engage in the necessary self-examination and work of changing one's self. (DeVries & Kohlberg, 1987,

p. 377)

DeVries and Zan (1994) describe autonomy as "moral and intellectual self-regulation," as contrasted with heteronomy, "moral and intellectual regulation by others" (p. 31). They write persuasively of the need for interaction with peers and constructivist teachers as children develop autonomy:

> Peer relations are especially conducive to social, moral, and intellectual development for two reasons. The first is that peer relations are characterized by an equality that can never be achieved in adult-child relations, no matter how hard the adult tries to minimize heteronomy. Peer relations can lead to recognition of the reciprocity implicit in relations of equality. This reciprocity can provide the psychological foundation for decentering and perspective-taking. As autonomy can only occur in a relationship of equality, children are more easily able to think and act autonomously with other children than with most adults. However, as Piaget, pointed out, inequalities also exist among children, and autonomy can be violated in child-child interactions. (DeVries & Zan, 1994, p. 53)

Jürgen Habermas and the Philosophical Base of Autonomy

The notion of discourse ethics posited by Habermas (1990) is connected to

constructivist ideas about learning. I see Habermas' (1990) writing on moral consciousness and communcative action as providing a philosophical link between Kamii's (1982, 1984, 1991a, 1991b, 1994a) constructivism and autonomy and van Manen's 1990, 1991a, 1991b) pedagogical tact. Habermas (1990) writes,

> Discourse ethics is compatible with [the] constructivist notion of learning in that it conceives discursive will formation (and argumentation in general) as a reflective form of communicative action and also in that it postulates a *change of attitude* for the transition from action to discourse. (p. 125)

Habermas (1990) carefully describes discourse ethics as dependent upon the viewpoints of all, and ties such an ethical stance to Kohlberg's theory of moral development. He comments, "Intrinsic to moral action is the claim that the settling of action conflicts is based on justified reasoning alone. Moral action is action guided by moral insight" (Habermas, 1990, p. 162).

Habermas (1990) sees autonomy as self-regulation, and contrasts his view of autonomy with that of Kant, writing,

> In Kant, autonomy was conceived as freedom under self-given laws, which involves an element of coercive subordination of subjective nature. In discourse ethics the idea of autonomy is intersubjective. It takes into

account that the free actualization of the personality of one individual

depends on the actualization of freedom for all (p. 207)

Habermas (1990) parallels Kohlberg's stages of moral development and the

development of discourse ethics, with the final stage depending on each

individual's equal access to discourse in a "cooperative search for truth on the

part of a potentially unlimited communication community" (p. 163).

Piaget (1932/1965) writes that autonomy is attached to moral necessity,

linking autonomous thinking to moral action. Similarly, Habermas (1990) holds

that autonomy means "the orientation of action toward an agreement that is

rationally motivated and conceived as universal: to act morally is to act on the

basis of insight" (p. 162). An autonomous individual cannot sit idly by,

acquiescing to injustice. Instead, autonomy requires action; indeed, autonomy is

defined by action.

Van Manen's (1990) human science research is also dependent upon

action. He writes, "The end of human science research for educators is a critical

pedagogical competence: knowing how to act tactfully in pedagogic situations

on the basis of a carefully edified thoughtfulness. To that end hermeneutic

phenomenological research reintegrates part and whole, the contingent and the

essential, value and desire" (van Manen, 1990, p. 42). Action is basic to Piaget's

(1932/1965) and Habermas' (1990) notions of autonomy, and action is basic to

van Manen's (1990) notion of pedagogical tact. All three are at heart concerned with right action.

Summary

One's background and experiences help determine the lenses through which one views the world. I have been a graduate student since my children, now eleven and nine years old, were three-and-a-half and one-and-a-half years old. The combination of parenthood and graduate studies have contributed to the person I have become, and the way I look at possibilities for schooling, teaching, and learning.

This literature review has addressed my journey as a graduate student and the perspectives I have taken over the years. No doubt my progress has been affected and modified by professors' interest in personal relevance and social reconstruction, critical theory and postmodernism, reform efforts and teacher lore. It has also been affected and modified by watching my own children grow and learn. However, it is my own construction of knowledge that is the key to my journey.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

By the very knowledge forms we pursue and the very topics to which we orient

ourselves, we do in fact show how we stand in life. (van Manen, 1990, p. 155-

156)

In keeping with the "exploratory rather than confirmatory" (Reynolds,

1991, p. 66) nature of this study, I will use tools of qualitative research to

identify respondents, request protocol writing, allow questions to emerge from

purposeful conversations, and examine context. This chapter is divided into the

following sections: Methodology, Identification of Respondents, Procedures,

Emergent Themes, and Ethical Issues.

Methodology

According to van Manen (1990), "methodology refers to the philosophic

framework, the fundamental assumptions and characteristics of a human science

perspective" (p. 27). My aim is a sense of *verstehen*, interpretive understanding"

(Bloor, in Emerson, 1983, p. 14). The key to *verstehen* is not the data or

collection of facts, "but rather a deeper holistic experience of learning about the

lives, behaviors, and thoughts of others" (Bloor, in Emerson, 1983, p. 15). My fundamental assumptions in engaging in this study rest on the notion that human decisions and interactions can rarely be quantified in any meaningful sense. Using empirical data to understand and interpret human interaction often clouds the questions at hand, implying that arbitrary divisions define measurable relationships, and that cause-and-effect can be determined.

Instead, I choose to use a form of interpretive inquiry to examine teacher autonomy. By researching the lived experience of several teachers or former teachers in a stance of hermeneutic phenomenology, I seek rich description that "does not attempt causal inferences nor. . .generalization" (Reynolds, 1991, p. 67). My choice of teacher autonomy as an avenue of inquiry is based on my notions that teacher autonomy is rare, that it is admirable, and that it should be nurtured. My already-formed attitude toward the topic fits van Manen's (1990) description of hermeneutic phenomenology as being "a philosophy of action always in a personal and situated sense. A person who turns toward phenomenological reflection does so out of personal engagement" (p. 154). My attitude toward teacher autonomy is formed, but not static. I expect to change and deepen my thoughts through the course of inquiry.

Polanyi (1969) writes, "Knowing is an indwelling; that is, a utilization of a framework for unfolding our understanding in accordance with the indications

and standards imposed by the framework. But any particular indwelling is a particular form of mental existence" (p. 134). My framework, my lens, is constructivism, based on the notion that learning is constructed by the individual, rather than taken in from external sources. Learning depends upon making relationships--among objects, among people. My interviewing, my reading, my analysis, and my synthesis depend upon my conviction that learning is knowledge construction by the individual.

Although I can describe a rough framework of my methods, the inquiry will be data-driven rather than theory-driven, as "both the processes and products of research are shaped from the data rather than from preconceived logically deduced theoretical frameworks" (Charmaz, in Emerson, 1983, p. 110). Katz (in Emerson, 1983) notes, there is a built-in question readers ask researchers:

> There is an infinite amount of background context that you could have
> included or excluded from your original field notes and the final text. The
> meaning of the behavior described would change with a change in the
> description of its context. How can you say your descriptions are the right
> ones? (p. 127)

I acknowledge myself as the primary research tool. Therefore, I cannot help but affect the respondents with whom I work, nor can I help but be affected by them. "The inquirer and the 'object' of inquiry interact to influence one another; knower

and known are inseparable" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 94).

Identification of Respondents

I have selected a means of purposively selecting respondents known as the referral method, or "snowballing" (Ostrander, 1984; Johnson, 1990). Having identified and interviewed one teacher who exhibits traits of autonomy, I will ask her to name for me another teacher or former teacher who might be helpful to my understanding. In an effort to engage in maximum variation sampling so that the sample is "selected in ways that will provide the broadest range of information possible" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 233), I will encourage consideration of a teacher at another level (elementary or secondary) and emphasize that it would be acceptable to include those who are not teaching at this time. The only constraint I will present is geographic: I would like the next respondent to live within a two-hour drive.

If the next respondent referred is unavailable or chooses not to be interviewed, I will return to the previous respondent and ask for another referral. In this way, the "snowball" can continue to grow until I have sufficient depth. I use the word "depth" rather than "breadth" purposefully: I seek at most to describe a "theory of the unique" (van Manen, 1990, p. 155). In keeping with this design, I probably will stop after working with three to five respondents. As

McCracken (1988) notes, in selecting respondents, "less is more" (p. 17).

Procedures

Identifying the First Respondent

In using the snowball method, the first respondent must be selected carefully, since she will determine completely the direction of the study. It is only her selection over which I have control; I know with whom I will begin, but I have no idea with whom I will end. Thus, a research design based on snowballing is uniquely emergent.

Identifying a relatively autonomous teacher is a ticklish problem, since autonomy cannot be discerned empirically. Can a teacher make autonomous decisions without detection? Undoubtedly this is so, because autonomy is not dependent on the *decision* one makes, but upon the *reasons underlying the decision*. For example, a teacher can autonomously decide to follow all school rules. Conversely, can a teacher standing up to administrative authority be acting heteronomously? Although possible, as in the case of a teacher seeking elected office in a state or national teachers' union, this is less likely to be so. Heteronomously-made decisions have self-interest at heart, in terms of the opinions of others. A teacher who speaks out against a perceived threat of injustice, perhaps in the interest of pedagogical thoughtfulness (van Manen,

1991b), is more likely to be speaking autonomously, risking personal and professional censure.

It is difficult to determine another person's level of autonomy in making decisions, since much of the process is internal and implied. The best I can hope for in identifying my initial respondent is my best guess, based on observation and intuition. It seems best to begin with a teacher I know, with whom I have an ongoing dialogue that is "conversational in nature, meaning that we interact in an open, direct, and sharing manner" (van Manen, 1991b, p. 113). I have identified such a teacher. Not only do I have some understanding about the pedagogical decisions she makes, but I admire her for them.

Protocol Writing

I will ask each respondent to write about a teaching memory, since "the most straightforward way to go about our research is to ask selected individuals to write their experiences down" (van Manen, 1990, p. 62). My intention is to allow each respondent time to ponder a personal description of a lived experience, mulling it over and adjusting the language with which s/he describes the event. Although interviews will also be aimed at recounting such lived experience, their spontaneity can hinder the deeper memories that writing allows.

Following van Manen (1990), I will ask, "Please write a direct account of a personal experience as you lived through it" (p. 65). My request may include

directions aimed at eliciting a recollection of a lived experience of teaching, such as "Describe the experience from the inside. . .almost like a state of mind," "Focus on an example of the experience which stands out for its vividness," and "Attend to how the body feels, how things smell(ed), how they sound(ed)" (van Manen, 1990, p. 64-65). My instructions may also invite written recollection of an experience of discomfort while teaching, perhaps one in which the respondent felt "out on a limb," separated in some way from colleagues and supervisors. Remembering such an experience could illuminate the notion of teacher autonomy.

Interviewing

Transcription of semistructured interviews, or "purposeful conversations" (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993, p. 86) which have been recorded on audio tape, will provide the bulk of data I will analyze for this study of teacher autonomy. Although it would seem less controlling for me to enter each interview in a completely unstructured manner, allowing the conversation itself to determine its direction, I believe that my limited experience in interviewing would lead to an overwhelming amount of data from which I would have difficulty extracting themes. Without an "interview process. . .disciplined by the fundamental question that prompted the need for the interview in the first place" (van Manen, 1990, p. 66), I could find myself "lost in a sea of divergent

viewpoints and pieces of. . .unconnected information" (Merriam, 1988, p. 74).

In a semistructured interview I will have several carefully considered questions to be addressed, aimed at deepening my understanding of teacher autonomy. I will begin each initial interview with the same questions in mind, as follows:

1) How would you describe the story behind your starting your current teaching assignment?

2) How would you describe the work relationships at your school (or your former school)?

3) How would you describe opportunities for professional growth in this school (or in your former school)?

4) Have you ever chosen to leave a teaching position? If so, tell me about making that decision. How did you decide to leave?

5) Tell me about a time when you felt a lack of support for a teaching decision you made--when you felt that you were alone, "out on a limb."

6) How did your decision make you feel?

I may find it necessary to adjust the questions as I proceed through the snowball of interviews, and I will change questions and add probing questions as needed. As Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen (1993) comment,

Once the study is begun, the design of a naturalistic study continues to

emerge. As the researcher gets deeper and deeper into the context, he or she will see that early questions and working hypotheses, however helpful in getting started, are very simplistic. First sources of data reveal others that the researcher could not have imagined. (p. 75)

I plan to engage in purposeful conversations with each respondent at least twice. The second interview for each person would be based around questions derived from data shared in that person's first interview. Between the first and second interview, I will provide the respondent with a copy of her/his first interview transcript (van Manen, 1990; Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). Member checks will be imbedded in the entire interview process for each respondent, as I will be "taking data and interpretations back to the people from whom they were derived and asking them if the results are plausible" (Merriam, 1988, p. 169).

Since my intent in this study is to richly describe the lived experience of teachers and former teachers in an effort to better understand teacher autonomy, it is vital that each respondent confirm the emergent themes I draw from her/his interviews and other data. "No data obtained through the study should be included in it if they cannot be verified through member checks" (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993, p. 31). The question I must ask each respondent is, "Is this what the experience is really like?" (van Manen, 1990, p. 99)

Context

Although I do not intend to observe any respondents interacting with students in the classroom as part of this study, my observations of setting and context must be a part of the data I compile. "Close observation" (van Manen, 1990, p. 69) must be part of my role as researcher. It would be impossible for me to decide not to use this method; how could I choose *not* to see, to hear, to notice context? Context is inseparable from any other data collected. However, this is not designed as an ethnographic study, dependent upon and determined by context. An ethnography attempts to "understand. . .a given social setting" (Janesick in Short, 1991, p. 103). I do not seek understanding of a setting; instead, I seek understanding of a phenomenon--individual's teachers' experience of autonomous decisions and related actions.

Multiple Sources

Using protocol writing and interviews, I hope to include "nonverbal cues and unobtrusive measures" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 231) to increase my understanding. My purpose in using multiple sources derived from protocol writing and interviews is less to "improv[e] the probability that findings and interpretations will be found credible" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 305), than from my desire to use every available means to help me toward *verstehen*, a meaningful understanding of teacher autonomy in terms of the lived experience

of the teachers who participate as respondents.

Emergent Themes

In order to describe the lived experiences of others in light of teacher autonomy, it is important for the researcher to be continually sensitive to the issue of emergent themes. Although such themes are at best a way to "give shape to the shapeless," it is also necessary to remember that an emergent "theme is always a reduction of the notion" (van Manen, 1990, p. 88). Glaser and Strauss (1967) maintain that qualitative data is best analyzed through a "constant comparative method" combining a specific way to unitize and code data with an ongoing analysis and reorganization of that data. However, van Manen (1990) allows for a broader interpretation of data analysis, using constant comparison in an ongoing fashion with one of three approaches toward uncovering themes: "1) the wholistic or sententious approach; 2) the selecting or highlighting approach; [or] 3) the detailed or line-by-line approach" (p. 92-93).

I will use the second approach, involving selecting and highlighting, identifying selected statements or phrases that seem to capture the essence of a particular theme (van Manen, 1990, p. 93). "The task is to hold onto these themes by lifting appropriate phrases or by capturing in singular statements the main thrust of the meaning of the themes" (van Manen, 1990, p. 93). I will

continue this process throughout the research, seeking overlapping, unique, and possibly contradictory themes in an effort to deepen my understanding of teacher autonomy.

I will also involve the respondents in the process of discussing and locating themes. This is the key to my research, as themes are "like knots in the webs or our experiences, around which certain lived experiences are spun and thus lived through as meaningful wholes" (van Manen, 1990, p. 90). Denzin (1989) writes, "Stories then, like the lives they tell about, are always open-ended, inconclusive and ambiguous, subject to multiple interpretations. . . .Most slowly unwind and twist back on themselves as persons seek to find meaning for themselves in the experiences they call their own" (p. 81).

Ethical Issues

Consideration of ethics is demanded by interpretive research, as "the naturalistic researcher proactively initiates ethical standards into the research process because they are the essence of what research is all about and can only enhance it" (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993, p. 155). First, I seek to do no harm. In that interest, any respondent will be free at any time to withdraw from the research project without question. I will also allow any respondent to declare a topic or incident off limits to the study if it is too personal or painful.

All respondents will be given disguised names and school settings throughout the study, and only the committee chair will be privy to their true identities. I will be truthful with respondents, although no respondent will have access to information or data regarding another respondent until the study is completed. I will allow respondents to exercise informed consent on an ongoing basis, although I cannot predict at the beginning of the study precisely what will be appropriate along these lines. Instead, I "welcome the opportunity to daily renegotiate and expand the basis for informed consent as new opportunities for collaborative activity emerge" (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993, p. 155).

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

During the course of deciding with whom I would begin my dissertation research and how I would progress from one respondent to the next, I spent a great deal of time pondering my options. Since I chose the referral method for identifying respondents, the only person I had any particular control over choosing was the first; other respondents would be suggested by a previous respondent, at the conclusion of my interviews with each one. I initially planned to begin with a close friend, a woman who had taught both my children for a total of three school years. I know her and her teaching well, and feel confident in identifying her as a relatively autonomous teacher. However, my committee members convinced me that it would be unwise to begin with a close friend, partly because I already knew her so well, but also because the progress of my research, delving into her thoughts about teaching, and using my own constructivist lens to comment upon those thoughts, could in some unforeseen way affect our relationship. Eventually, I concurred.

One committee member proposed that I let my autonomous teacher-friend select my first respondent to begin the "snowball," and I almost did. However, upon careful reflection, I realized that my only control over the course of my

research lay in selecting that first person, my initial respondent. I was unable to give up that control. Instead, I chose another teacher whom I can also identify as relatively autonomous. She is a more recent, distant friend who teaches in a suburb about fifty-five miles away from my town. She has never met my children, and I have visited her classroom only once. However, we have had many long talks about the things we have in common: how children learn, how teachers can help learning happen, how school should be for children. Her name is Kendra.[1]

Kendra

I first met Kendra at a gathering of graduate students and professors supporting the establishment of an in-house curriculum journal at our university, although I had heard about her and her strong stance as a child advocate in the classroom many times from mutual acquaintances. We spoke only briefly in passing at this meeting, and our first real involvement came in Summer 1994, as we were two of nineteen people attending an out-of-state institute studying constructivist mathematics education.

Kendra grew up in Pennsylvania and New York, and completed her teaching degree over a ten year period, taking some coursework at each of several

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[1]All names of teachers and administrators are assumed. Schools and locations have also been disguised.

different colleges in three different states. She began as a physical education major, but her undergraduate degree is in elementary education; she completed it eighteen years after she graduated from high school. She has since received a masters of special education with an emphasis in teaching emotionally disturbed children, and is working on a doctorate in curriculum studies. Kendra has one daughter, a biochemist in another state.

I see in her a woman who puts children first. Kendra spends a great deal of time and money attending national and regional educational meetings that examine best teaching practices and the rationale behind these practices. Besides the constructivist institute she and I attended together last summer, I learned from her passing comments that she has also attended a week-long study of the Italian preschools of Reggio Emilia, an intense workshop on Marilyn Burns' recommendations about teaching mathematics, a five-week institute for teachers sponsored by the local affiliate of the National Writing Project, and a workshop hosted by Missouri's *Project Construct*.

She also buys books. Kendra's classroom is decorated by books and by student art work. Her books--picture books, chapter books, and reference books--are everywhere, filling shelves, carrels, and slanted display stands, stacked on student tables, and covering her own desk.

It was Kendra's outspoken commitment to children--no matter what--that

brought her to mind as I considered what teacher I would interview first. Her

commitment to children goes far beyond, far deeper than the overworked and

commonly-touted "doing what's best for the child." Indeed, Kendra's engagement

with children, the way she speaks of them and the way she connects with them,

reminds me of van Manen's (1991b) description of *pedagogical tact* as

> a sense of vocation, love of and caring for children, a deep sense of
>
> responsibility, moral intuitiveness, self-critical openness, thoughtful
>
> maturity, tactful sensitivity toward the child's subjectivity, an interpretive
>
> intelligence, a pedagogical understanding of the child's needs,
>
> improvisational resoluteness in dealing with young people, a passion for
>
> knowing and learning the mysteries of the world, the moral fibre to stand
>
> up for something, a certain understanding of the world, active hope in the
>
> face of prevailing crises, and, not the least, humor and vitality. (p. 8)

Kendra's multi-faceted connection with the children with whom she works

and her dogged determination to act in their best interests--to the best of her

ability, to the best of her knowledge--enables me to identify her as a relatively

autonomous teacher. She continually seeks to take the perspectives of the

individual children with whom she spends her days. When she recently had a

student teacher in her classroom, she asked the young woman to keep a separate

journal, above and beyond what was required by her university supervisor. In

that journal Kendra asked the student teacher to write about the experiences of one child in the class for an entire week. Kendra read the journal daily and wrote lengthy responses to each entry. After one week, the student teacher chose another child to write about, and so on, through the months of her student teaching. Kendra reported to me excitedly during the student teacher's twelve weeks in her classroom that the young woman was making tremendous progress in her depth of thinking about children through the lens of a particular child.

According to Kamii (personal communication, October, 1994), a researcher seeking to understand teacher autonomy can best identify relatively autonomous teachers through their actions. Kamii laughingly refers to autonomous teachers as "trouble makers" who do not hesitate to express disagreement with administrators or other teachers in order to further the pedagogical interest of children. Kendra's strong commitment to multiage grouping for children in order to foster cooperative relationships that spill over into all aspects of their lives, has sometimes caused her to be labeled a "trouble maker" by principals and other teachers. As a "trouble maker," Kendra will sacrifice work relationships and fitting in with fellow faculty members in order to press for what she believes is best for children.

I had some misgivings when, after I asked her to tell me about a time when she felt "out on a limb," Kendra chose to focus on her immediate decision

to leave her former school after her principal told her she was hurting her fellow teachers' relationships with the larger faculty. I questioned, and still do question, whether her decision is consistent with intellectual and moral autonomy. It seems as though she may have left in direct response to the opinions of others.

However, upon careful consideration and probing, I find her decision more in keeping with Gilligan's (1982) description of a "web of connectedness" than with Kamii's (1982) description of heteronomy. Kendra was worried about the effect her independent outspokenness was having on her fellow team time teachers, but her decision to leave also included an element of self preservation. She felt personally and professionally threatened, and chose to leave rather than compromise her beliefs about what is best for children. After completing my interviews, I realized that a theme of leaving is present in the responses of all three teachers. I label Kendra a relatively autonomous teacher, acting on behalf of children without regard to sanctions.

My interviews with Kendra[2]

Kendra's school district is suburban, with three high schools. The district has about 15,000 students, 91.4% of whom are Caucasian, as are 94.4% of school district employees.

Kendra and I left her classroom shortly after the students went home for

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[2]The complete text of Kendra's interviews and written protocols are in Appendix A.

the day. We went to a local grill nearby for the initial interview, and quickly

found ourselves immersed in "school talk." She told me about the decision she

had made nearly two years before to transfer from one school to another in her

district after having taught there for six years (see Appendix A for complete text).

I had not fully considered that our relationship as friends could hinder my

research. In one sense, I would never have been comfortable choosing Kendra if

I had not known her well, seeing beneath her talk an iron determination to accept

children, to care about them, to care for them, and to enable them to find their

own voices as they make meaning of their worlds. In another sense, that very

knowledge of Kendra, of who and what she is, hampered me in my struggle to

understand her experience as an autonomous teacher, making the best choices

possible for children based on what she knows about children and learning. My

efforts to see beyond "habitual perception" (Reynolds, 1989) are ongoing.

I asked Kendra my initial question about how she came to her present

teaching position. The problem of friendship came up almost immediately,

because the incident Kendra chose to focus on was extremely painful for her to

remember and to talk about. Even though her decision to leave her teaching

position in a multiage group was almost two years old, her voice broke and her

eyes welled with tears as she began. She stopped several times, pausing to

compose herself before continuing. I found myself unwilling to press her,

fearing to cause her more pain. Instead, I led her away from probing hurtful memories with other questions, less painful, less personal.

In subsequent interviews, I was able to focus my questions on specific events and interactions rather than on general, overarching questions about her decision to transfer to another school. Perhaps the increased specificity was easier for her to deal with, or perhaps she had time to think back on the painful decisions she made; our later conversations seemed to be less painful for her. She even told me that writing the protocol I requested, about her feelings about a decision she had made that left her "out on a limb, alone," was helpful in letting her deal with her feelings through composition.

Kendra's decision

During our first interview, Kendra told me that she had come to her present teaching position after making the most difficult decision of her teaching career. She had been involved in beginning a multiage class at her previous school, after having attended, along with her former principal and another teacher, a meeting to brainstorm ideas for a "dream" school. Kendra, listening to a speaker describe ways to put several ages of children together, convinced the principal and the other teacher that their school would be an excellent place to embark on a multiage undertaking because the building was designed with "pods," central pit areas surrounded by four classrooms each. She proposed that

one pod be devoted to a multiage combination of developmental first grade, first grade, second grade, and third grade. Kendra taught third grade, and the other teacher who attended the multiage conference taught developmental first grade. They both agreed to participate and identified two other teachers in their building who would be willing to take the first grade and second grade positions; no teacher would be forced to change grade levels or classrooms. Kendra's principal was an enthusiastic supporter and agreed that the multiage grouping could begin the following year.

The four teachers, including Kendra, began the following year in one of the school's pods, and agreed to spend two hours each morning in multiage groups evenly made up of developmental first graders, first graders, second graders and third graders. Each teacher had a particular group of children of various ages in the mornings, and spent the afternoons with children grouped traditionally by grade level. Because the four classrooms were arranged around a central pit area, Kendra reports that transitions between groupings were smooth.

The multiage grouping, called "team time," continued for two academic years. Kendra comments that the community atmosphere nurtured during team time carried through the rest of the students' days. She sees this "consideration of the other guy" as having been the most important result of multiage grouping of students, noting,

When you mix up ages as well as cultures, and the diversity is

everywhere, they become helpers. They don't see themselves as

competitors. They see themselves as cooperative. But it spilled over in

all areas of their lives. Parents will attest to it. They would come back and

say, "What have you done to my child? He's helping out at home. He's

helping his brother. (Appendix A, interview #1)

She sees even more benefit to children as having happened during the second

year of the multiage grouping, because the teachers and students already knew

one another. She writes, "The trust was established, the relationships were solid.

The caring and nurturing were intact" (Appendix A, written protocol #1).

Reflecting upon her decision to transfer to another school after two years

in the multiage program, Kendra believes that the implementation of the multiage

program, without involving the entire faculty, led to problems with other

teachers. The principal decided originally that it would be best not to call

attention to the multiage group; only four teachers were directly involved. The

physical education teacher and the music teacher were peripherally involved,

because they agreed to work with the multiage groups as needed. Kendra says

now, "It was like we snuck [sic] it in on the rest of the faculty. It was never

approached from an administrative standpoint, as to 'This is what we are going to

do.' It was kind of rumor that went out" (appendix A, interview #1).

Kendra and her principal had been close friends for the six years she taught in the building. She and her husband and the principal and his wife frequently met socially, and even took some vacations together. He had apparently supported her professionally and had helped set up the multiage groups. However, on April 28, 1993, near the end of the second year of team time, he called her into his office and explained that he felt Kendra was hurting the other team time teachers. Kendra remembers his words:

> Calmly, he explains to me that I have too many observers, too many computers. I get to go to too many school functions, I get special scheduling, I have too many books and I spend too many hours at school along with receiving too many grants and manipulatives. He relates that the other teachers are complaining and their perceptions are that I have, and get, *too* much. They generalize their perceptions to include our multiage program and the perceptions of me are hurting my two teammates. (Appendix A, written protocol #1)

When Kendra responded defensively, reminding him that she bought books and computers with her own money, and that she wrote grants for other materials because her own funds cannot stretch far enough, she recalls his answer, describing the complaints from other teachers in the building: "Their perceptions are their reality" (Appendix A, written protocol #1).

Kendra decided immediately to apply for a transfer to another elementary school in the district, contacting another principal within three days of being told she was harmful to her colleagues. That principal decided immediately to support her transfer to his building for the next year. She is completing her second year there. The principal who hired her moved to another state at the end of last year. This spring, Kendra spoke to her current principal, new to the building, about beginning another multiage group. After speaking with the district curriculum coordinator, the principal decided that it was too soon to begin planning for a multiage group for the next academic year. Kendra believed she would be part of the discussion, part of the decision. However, she was left out, finding out about the principal's meeting with the curriculum coordinator only after it had taken place and a decision had been made.

Kendra's husband has taken a job in another town about sixty miles away. She is interviewing for a teaching position there and will move if she is offered the opportunity.

April 20, 1995

Yesterday morning the Federal Building in downtown Oklahoma City was bombed. I found out at 10:00 a.m. when I received a call from a friend worried about another friend's husband. I assured her he was not in Oklahoma City, although he is a federal employee. We live sixty-five miles from Oklahoma City,

and it might seem that we would be unaffected by the bomb that killed so many, including children in a daycare center in the Federal Building. Not so.

When I picked up my children, ages nine and eleven, and another child, age eleven, from school at 3:45 p.m., I asked them if they had heard about something bad happening in Oklahoma City. I saw three young faces pale, three sets of eyes widen as my son asked, "Are Grandpa and Grandma all right?" I quickly told him they were fine, but that a big building in downtown Oklahoma City had been exploded by a bomb and many people were hurt; some were killed. They began listening to the news on the car radio, and heard descriptions of the destruction, including the fact that many of the dead were children. My eleven-year-old daughter leaned her head back against the seat and cried quietly. My nine-year-old son said, "Why would anyone do this?" and then struggled to say, "I feel funny. I feel like it could happen here." I think I could have counted every freckle on his face. Although none of us knew it at the time, the "extra" child I had picked up from school that day had a relative, with whom she had spent Easter three days before, who died in the explosion.

Yesterday evening I had an appointment with Kendra after her graduate night class, and when we first saw one another, we immediately asked about the effects of the tragedy in Oklahoma City. She asked about my children's reactions, and I told her, adding the story of a mutual friend's cousin who had not

yet come out of the building. Kendra teaches near Oklahoma City, and quietly

told me that three parents of the children in her class were still unaccounted for

when she had left for her class. [She found out the next day that all three were

fine.] She told me what the blast felt like in her classroom; she and her students

thought it was an earthquake at first. They were about ten miles away from the

Federal Building.

She said she had been puzzled about what to say, what to do tomorrow

(today) when she and her students came together again, until her graduate class

professor read aloud, "Death in the Classroom" (Luster in Kane, 1991). She said,

"After hearing that--now I know what to do. We *have* to talk about it."

I knew that my small needs--tying up some loose ends of our interviews

for my research--were completely inappropriate *at this time*. She looked and

sounded exhausted and almost in shock. Her voice was too quiet, her face too

calm, too controlled. I told her to go home, carefully. We can talk another time.

This morning, my son came to me with more questions about the

bombing. He asked, "Is someone trying to start a war?" I told him I did not think

so. I added, "Yesterday will be a day you'll always remember, the way people

my age remember where they were and what they were doing when President

Kennedy was killed." He asked, "Where were you when President Kennedy was

killed?" I told him--tearfully--I was at school, in the fourth grade. He said, "That

would be like President Clinton getting killed next year. I'll be in the fourth

grade then. But that's probably not going to happen." I agreed. He asked again,

"Who would do this?" I reluctantly asked if he had heard the word "terrorist."

He replied, "No. . .but I know what 'terror' is." Sadly, I believe him.

Robin

At the end of our first interview, I asked Kendra to begin thinking of one

or two others whom she considered to be relatively autonomous teachers, known

for making pedagogical decisions without regard to reward and punishment. I

encouraged her to think about teachers at other grade levels, and mentioned that I

was also interested in interviewing former teachers. After our second interview,

she gave me two names. I decided to contact Robin, a fourth-grade teacher in my

own town.

I was slightly acquainted with Robin, since we have several teacher

friends in common. She and I spent some time together with two other friends

when we attended a national meeting of writing teachers in Portland, Oregon, last

year. We had a few conversations about teaching and learning, and I was

impressed to find out that she tries to attend a national conference of some sort

every year. She believes that the quality of presentations at national conferences

far surpasses that at state conferences.

Robin was born in Kansas, but grew up in a small Oklahoma town and attended the local college during the four years immediately following high school graduation, receiving a degree in elementary education. She recalls that her years as an undergraduate were spent marking time until she could begin her teaching career--she never considered going into any other field, and pictured herself only as a teacher even when she was a little girl. She began teaching in a small school near her hometown upon graduating from college, and moved to a second rural school the following year. She received a masters in elementary education eight years later. Robin has no children. She has taught for seventeen years, and has completed twenty-nine hours of graduate credit beyond her masters degree, although she has never enrolled in a doctoral program.

My interviews with Robin[3]

Robin seemed hesitant to talk with me about her teaching, and told me over the phone, "I am *not* an autonomous teacher!" I assured her that I was interested in *relatively* autonomous teachers, and from what I knew of her, she fit the description. We arranged to meet for the initial interview at a local pizzeria, but when she arrived, Robin decided that she did not have enough time to stay for an hour or so. Instead, she asked if she could take my first set of interview questions home and write up her answers. She said it would help her a great deal

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[3]The complete text of Robin's interviews are found in Appendix B.

to be able to write answers on her own time, late at night, instead of setting up specific interview times. I reluctantly agreed.

When I received Robin's first set of written responses, I was disappointed at first. Her answers were brief, and I missed my "interviewer" role of asking follow-up questions and probing questions. However, when I had carefully read the interview responses, I was pleased. Robin wrote about some meaningful moments in her teaching, and I gained insight from reading her answers.

She agreed to meet at my office about two weeks later for a follow-up interview to be conducted in person. I was then able to tape and transcribe her responses, and adjust my questions according to her responses.

Robin began her teaching career in a small district teaching fifth grade. After her entry year, she taught for ten years in a small rural school district with a large Native American population and a large budget. She taught second grade and then first grade, five years each. She left after becoming frustrated with the district's decision to spend a great deal of money on a sophisticated computer system that was chosen with no input from teachers. Robin felt that the computer program was simply a glorified worksheet for her students, with "no consideration of development of the child" (Appendix B, interview #1). She immediately began looking for another teaching position, and found one in a nearby university town with six elementary schools.

The district in which she now teaches a combined third and fourth grade class serves about 6,000 students in grades kindergarten through twelve. Robin began in her current school five years ago, teaching fourth grade students. The transition to fourth grade and a larger school was difficult for her, partly because she felt she "had a reputation already. . .for being different" (Appendix B, interview #1). She felt insecure and unsure about her teaching, unsure whether the decision she had made long ago not to depend upon textbooks, but to take cues from the interests of the children for her course of study, was good for fourth grade students. The principal who had hired her helped to reassure her, encouraging her by saying, "Do your stuff."

Robin is still teaching at that school, and was part of a group of teachers who decided to begin a multiage program two years ago. She recently decided that "team time" was interfering with the flow of her students' day, and decided to stop exchanging students for a set period during the day. Instead, she keeps her third and fourth grade students all day. She sees multiage grouping as benefiting students, but comments, "I think a lot of the things I do in multiage are the same as I did in a regular fourth grade class. So sometimes I look back and think it has a lot to do with regular--with how you taught. If you let kids have voice. . ." (Appendix B, interview #2).

Robin's decision

Like Kendra, Robin chose to concentrate on a decision to leave a teaching position when I asked her to tell me about a time when she felt alone and "out on a limb." She relates that the spark that caused her to leave was the district's decision to purchase, without consulting teachers, a huge computer system with programs that Robin describes as worksheets. She was very upset, commenting, "I felt like I was the complainer--the moaner. Hundreds of thousands of dollars on a stupid system. Well, I left that day and knew if I went back I would end up physically ill" (Appendix B, interview #1).

When I asked Robin a follow-up question about other causes for her decision to leave, she laughed and said, "Yeah. It was probably just the icing on the cake" (Appendix B, interview #2). She then told me about basic disagreements with her principal whom she felt was focused on raising test scores and nothing else. He proposed giving medals to the children with the two highest achievement test scores in each class, which made Robin angry. She also notes that she felt he did not treat her professionally, telling her she was going to burn out and asking, "Why do you do all this? Why do you go and do [referring to her attending conferences]?" (Appendix B, interview #2).

Robin's experience which left her feeling "out on a limb" actually came after she had changed school districts. She was extremely upset and unsure about

her teaching after changing schools and changing from teaching first graders to teaching fourth graders. She remembers, "I felt very stupid and inadequate" (Appendix B, interview #2).

She had no close colleagues at her new school, and she wanted someone to talk to about her teaching. However, Robin does not believe her insecurity came from not having a close colleague with whom to share ideas. She says, "I don't *need* much support. Part of me looks at--I just go do things, and you know, people--we talk about our classrooms, and are good friends, and stuff like that. But it's not like you need constant feedback from your friends" (Appendix B, interview #2).

Jenny

Because of Robin's initial unwillingness to let me interview her in person, I was unsure about how much of her written response would be helpful to me in the research process. Her reluctance and her delay in returning her responses led me to believe that I might not be able to include her in my study. While I was working through these issues, I decided to call Kendra's second recommended respondent, Jenny.

Jenny teaches in the same suburban elementary school as Kendra and has for four years. She grew up in a small town in upstate New York, and graduated from high school in 1963, the youngest child of older parents. Her father, born in

1898, was a milkman who went door-to-door with a cart and horse. Four years

after completing high school, Jenny received her bachelors degree in elementary

education in New York, and completed 30 hours of graduate school. She

completed eighteen more hours in New Mexico and Oklahoma. Her daughters

are aged twenty-one and eighteen.

Although she began teaching after college, Jenny decided to stay home

while her children were young. Since returning to teaching, she has taught for the

past twelve years, beginning in New Mexico. After one year there, she moved

with her family to the Oklahoma City area, and she taught half-day kindergarten

for one year. She has taught first grade for the past ten years.

My interviews with Jenny[4]

I had met Jenny only once in passing before I asked her to participate in

my research. Kendra recommended her as a relatively autonomous teacher, and

she recently won an award for mathematics teaching that took her to Washington,

D.C. for an awards presentation. I did not know what grade Jenny taught, and

my visit to her classroom after school one day did not help me decide: Her room

is large, with a few tables and small chairs. Picture books are everywhere--in

display stands, in crates, stacked on the floor, on shelves--and the walls are

covered with student artwork, student writing, and large reproductions of poetry.

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[4]The complete text of Jenny's interviews and written protocol are found in
Appendix C.

On one wall is an "early childhood calendar," typical of that found in classrooms with a daily group time centered around the calendar and its changes. There was also a roll of adding machine tape attached high on one wall and stretched around the room with the number of days the children had been in school written in marker, in handwriting typical of small children. I told Jenny at the beginning of our first interview that no one had ever told me what grade she taught, and that I would assume from looking around the room that she taught either kindergarten or first grade, but that I had no clues to tip me as to which. She laughed and said, "I teach first grade" (Appendix C, interview #1).

Jenny's decision

During our first interview, Jenny sat in a decrepit director's chair that serves her classroom as "author's chair," and I sat on a well-worn sofa designed for small people. A large, grey lop-eared bunny, Chloe, hopped around the room. As I asked my questions, Jenny answered thoughtfully, often looking ahead of her so that I could only see her profile.

When Jenny talked about a teaching decision that had left her "out on a limb," she told me about her former principal's rage over reading an article Jenny had written for the local group, Teachers Applying Whole Language (TAWL). Jenny remembers herself as being in transition, moving away from using basals and moving toward "real literature" (Appendix C, interview #1). In a subsequent

interview and in her written protocol, I asked her to tell me more about the

principal's anger and her own decision to transfer to another school. Her memory

is vivid:

> On Thursday afternoon (almost seven years ago), I was walking my first
>
> grade class to music. The principal approached me and stated, "I need to
>
> talk to you now." We went back to my room. She immediately said, "I
>
> thought WE had decided that WE were not ready to do whole language.
>
> Where are the basal readers?" (Appendix C, written protocol)

Jenny told me that the mental image that still comes to her when she thinks about

the principal's anger at her is of a fire-breathing dragon (Appendix C, interview

#1; written protocol). She felt very much "out on a limb" at that moment, and

made a decision to move to another school. She did not actually transfer for

another year-and-a-half, and only went into the principal's office once during that

time--to tell her she had put her name on the transfer list to move.

Emergent Themes

The interviews and written protocols which Kendra, Robin, and Jenny

have provided, read in whole or in part, enable me to identify patterns or themes

that appear repeatedly. Throughout my contacts with Kendra, Robin, and Jenny,

I have sought to remain thoughtful as van Manen (1990) describes

thoughtfulness: "a heedful, mindful wondering about the project of life, of

living, of what it means to live a life" (p. 12). Describing human science

research, van Manen (1990) continues,

> Most research we meet in education is of the type whereby results can be
>
> severed from the means by which the results are obtained.
>
> Phenomenological research is unlike other research in that the link with
>
> the results cannot be broken. . .without loss of all reality to the results.
>
> (p. 13)

My consideration of patterns and themes began even as my research began.

Seeking to clarify my understanding of particular patterns led to my developing

particular interview questions for second and third interviews for the three

teachers with whom I talked. Van Manen (1990) writes, "Bollnow (1982) has

described how good conversations tend to end: they finally lapse into silence" (p.

99). I experienced such comfortable silences with Kendra, Robin, and Jenny.

That sense of silence, of having arrived at a deeper place through the course of an

interview, a purposeful conversation, happened several times. Although I had

intended to continue to a fourth person, I felt I had finished after completing my

final interview with Jenny. The themes of autonomy I was beginning to see for

these teachers were consistent, and Kendra, Robin, and Jenny had provided me

with breadth and depth. They are strong individuals with distinct personalities

and different experiences, but their sharing of anecdotes and feelings is remarkably similar. Somehow, I knew almost immediately that I was done; I felt no need to go further at this time. Glimpses of the lived experience of the autonomy of these three teachers, individual yet shared, lay before me. As I examined the interview transcripts and written protocols repeatedly, I began to make notes in the margins. Soon, certain words and phrases--barriers, kidwatching, child choice--appeared repeatedly in my comments. In this way, I identified themes that made sense to me. Although another reader might hear different nuances, see different themes, for me the emergent themes fell into four types: themes of pedagogy, themes of professional growth and professional stance, themes of relationships, and themes of leaving.

Themes of Pedagogy

Even though I asked very few direct questions about working with children, Kendra, Robin, and Jenny told me a great deal about their thoughts, feelings, and experiences of their interactions with children. They carefully observe and listen to their students, in keeping with Livingston's description of her own teaching: "I am careful to keep each child in the driver's seat and to follow his or her thinking instead of leading them to *my* ways. . . .We want children to satisfy themselves and to judge whether or not things make sense *to*

them" (in Kamii, 1994c, p. 171). The teacher's careful observation comes from a

desire to understand children's thinking, not to control and determine children's

thinking. Pedagogical themes include: focusing on children, respecting children's

thinking, valuing child choice, and seeing children as whole and capable.

Focusing on children

The children--their actions, their thinking, their importance, individually

and collectively--are at the heart of these teachers' lifeworlds. Robin sees the

children as an important source of professional growth. She comments, "I hope

every day as I listen and notice things about students. . . .Sometimes their

reactions make me stop and think about practices" (Appendix B, interview #1).

Watching the children in her third/fourth grade classroom this year led her to

decide that she would no longer participate in a daily team time with teachers and

students from three other classes, because it interrupted the flow of her students'

day. She noticed, "We'd be doing things in our classroom, and then suddenly

stop and have team time. And it was this whole different reorganization"

(Appendix B, interview #1).

Jenny also tells of making an important teaching decision as a direct result

of paying attention to children's experiences in the classroom, remembering an

event ten years ago:

I looked at the room, and I said to myself, "These first graders are sitting

too much. They're pushing a pencil way too much. And they're doing too much work at their seats, and they can't learn that way." And I thought, "I can't teach science from a book. If I'm going to be teaching science, I need to teach it with experiments." (Appendix C, interview #1)

Jenny also remembers a day when she was tired and had just come in from recess duty. While she caught her breath, a first grade child asked her for a paper bag. When she gave it to him, she sat back and watched the entire class get involved, making things from paper bags. She realized then that her students were self-sufficient, and that learning would go on, with or without her (Appendix C, interview #1).

Changing her attitude toward aspects of teaching after learning from her students is also familiar to Kendra. When she was able to have students in her classroom two years in a row because of the multiage pod at her former school, she found,

There was no lost time. There were already relationships formed, and those relationships just bloomed all over again. It was *incredible*! Incredible, happening the second year. And that's when I became a firm believer in having children for longer periods of time. (Appendix A, interview #1)

Kendra also recalls a time when the district art coordinator led a lesson with the

developmental first grade class at her school. Kendra and the first grade teacher

decided they would bring the smaller "experts" together with Kendra's third-

grade students, and have the young children teach the older children what they

had learned in their art lesson. She remembers the third graders as having been

very impressed with the artistic ability of the younger children, and says, "The

exchange was just like a slap in the face: 'Are you people listening to this?' "

(Appendix A, interview #1). She and the developmental first grade teacher

decided from that time on to put their classes together frequently.

Three weeks into her teaching career, Kendra looked at the classroom

experience through the eyes of her students. She writes, "The blank faces, the

yawning, the misbehaviors, and the silent submission were robotic in nature.

These kids obviously viewed learning as a necessary evil" (Appendix A, written

protocol #2). She immediately changed the way she thought of her role as a

teacher, responding to a child's comment that he wished they could "do" *The*

Wizard of Oz instead of just read about it in the basal. Kendra and her students

abandoned the basal reader, and planned an elaborate production, writing scripts,

building props and sets, and devising costumes. She remembers, "It was during

this time I realized that the children's own involvement was the very thing that

was 'learning.' The spark was in the children, themselves, not something that I

could create, but rather something I could allow" (Appendix A, written protocol

#2).

Robin, Jenny, and Kendra learn from their students. They measure themselves as teachers by carefully listening to the children with whom they work, instead of measuring themselves as teachers according to a principal's evaluation or other extrinsic source.

Respecting children's thinking

A respect for children and their ways of thinking appeared in all of my interviews. All three teachers seek to understand children's thinking so as to abide by a natural flow, a rhythm of classroom life, that is not related to bells and imposed schedules, but is related to children's thinking and learning.

When Robin changed schools and grade levels several years ago, moving from first grade to fourth grade, some of her disequilibrium and self-doubt seems to have come from needing time to watch the children, to get to know the nuances of fourth-grade students, to feel their rhythm, their flow. She comments, "It just took a while to maybe get to know them, too. Maybe fourth graders--well, where first graders run in and hug and kiss, and part of me thought, 'Do fourth graders like to be hugged? I mean, can I hug fourth graders?'" (Appendix B, interview #2).

Robin mentions the "flow" directly, as she describes her recent decision to participate no longer in team time. Although she sees advantages to multiage

grouping, she believes they are outweighed by the imposed interruption of setting a specific time each day to meet. The flow of the children's day is disturbed arbitrarily.

Children's thinking and experience is also central to Kendra's beliefs about school and teaching. As she remembers her participation in the multiage pod at her former school she states,

> This is exactly what's best for children. Family grouping, the lack of competition, the fear being removed when you're with a family grouping-- a multiage. There's not a fear to keep up, there's not a fear to outdo, there's nothing to live up to and nothing to go back to. It's just a comfort zone that *allows* so much growth. . . .It doesn't push it; it doesn't keep it from happening. It just allows it to move where it should move, for each child.
>
> (Appendix A, interview #2)

Her description of the family grouping provided by the multiage setting is connected to the natural rhythm of the children, of the classroom experience.

Jenny's memory of a student who was in her first grade class last year illustrates her tremendous respect for children's thinking. She tells of a boy for whom English was his second language, so that he was very quiet much of the time, uncomfortable speaking out at school; even Jenny had trouble understanding him when he did speak. One day, she was taking her students'

lunch count, and she remembers him standing up, crying out loudly, "ONE! TWO! THREE!" She continues, "So, he took over counting the lunch count, which was fine with me. I think because I kind of understand what's happening, that it's O.K. for me to let go" (Appendix C, interview #1). Undoubtedly, many teachers would have chastised the child for interrupting, but Jenny respected his newly-found voice and his newly-found ability to count in English.

Jenny believes that she learned to respect children and their thinking partly from watching her former principal. She says,

> He never put a child down. He didn't lecture to children. . . .I always liked to observe the way he handled children. It was obvious that he respected the child. And it was obvious that he was patient with the child. . . .He wasn't the authority, and he wasn't the person in charge. It was much more democratic, and much more satisfying. (Appendix C, interview #2)

Jenny feels that mutual respect is the key to students' learning, so that content is almost irrelevant. She says, "I'm convinced that it doesn't matter what theme you use--that's not the important thing. The children remember you for the way you respect them. Not. . .that you did some cute activity. I think children remember you because they know you respect them. I think that's the key" (Appendix C, interview #2).

Valuing child choice

Making sure that children have many opportunities to make real choices is part of constructivist teaching. Most teachers give students some choices, but many teachers structure the choices offered so that there is clearly a choice "good [obedient, quiet, passive] children" should make. For example, a teacher might ask students to choose between lowering the noise level in the room *or* going outside to recess. This is an example of punishment, not an offer of choice. Kohn writes about the unwillingness of many adults to allow children choices:

> One is repeatedly struck by the absurd spectacle of adults who talk
>
> passionately about the need for kids to become "self-disciplined" and to
>
> "take responsibility for their own behavior"--all the while ordering
>
> children around. The truth is that if we want children to take responsibility
>
> for their own behavior, we must first give them responsibility, and plenty
>
> of it. The way a child learns how to make decisions is by making
>
> decisions, not by following directions. (1993, p. 249)

Similarly, Mamchur (1990) writes about the need for teachers to give choice: "The rule is this: whenever you can give a student a choice of any kind, do it" (p. 636). She continues, "The one thing better than having students choose from a variety of modes of learning is having them generate their own options" (Mamchur, 1990, p. 636).

Jenny, Robin, and Kendra all mention the importance of choice in everyday encounters with children. None of them sets up special segments of the day or units within the school year to teach students about making choices; instead, children and choices are woven throughout their days in the classroom.

Choice is imbedded in Robin's description of the blocks of time children in her classroom spend reading. She is looking forward to next year, when she will have her third grade students from this year back as fourth graders, and anticipates, "They know so much about the routine of writing time, and . . .sharing time, and reading time, and self-selection, and when to *abandon* a book" (Appendix B, interview #2). Making choices is woven through their days. Unfortunately, in some third or fourth grade classrooms, reading time consists of either ability groups working out of the basal or children sitting in rows, each with a dog-eared copy of a book like *Red-dirt Jessie* (Myers, 1992)--perfectly enjoyable if chosen by an individual child's interest--each reading a paragraph aloud in turn, impatiently hurried by the teacher when working through an unfamiliar word or an unfamiliar context. Either of these types of "reading" is much more work than pleasure, and neither is remotely related to children making choices.

Jenny's first graders, like Robin's third and fourth graders, make reading choices every day. They have a time called "ten-minute read" which the children

beg for each day. Jenny thinks they like it because of their own meaningful

choices. She comments, "They know that in ten-minute read, they can choose

whatever book they want to read, they can choose whomever they want to read it

with, and if they *choose* to put a chair up here in the front and sit down, then

they're going to get to read it to the class. And I just let it happen" (Appendix C,

interview #1).

Seeing children as whole and capable

Another theme related to pedagogy revealed in these relatively

autonomous teachers' words is that of seeing children as whole, capable

individuals who can do what they need to do. Kendra, Jenny, and Robin see the

children and their experiences in school as far more important than the content of

what they learn. Jenny states her belief in her students' capabilities: "I think

children can work in the classroom without me being the authority. . . .I think

children can know what they should be doing. I think they can do it" (Appendix

C, interview #1).

Kendra's reliance on her students to settle their own conflicts reflects her

belief in them as whole and capable, rather than as too young to be able, needing

an adult to act as judge and jury. She remembers the students in the multiage

group at her former school as excellent problem-solvers, saying,

When there was a problem, they fixed it. None of us on the team ever

fixed any problems. We always said, "Well, when you guys figure out what you're doing, let us know." [And the children would reply], "But we're having a problem here." [The team teacher would say], "I know that. It's going to take all four of you to fix it." Now, we didn't fix things, so children learned to depend upon themselves and each other. (Appendix A, interview #1)

One of the reasons Robin is eager to have this year's third graders back in her room as fourth graders next year is that she is looking forward to witnessing their capabilities as teachers themselves. When she comments on their comfort and fluency with the routines of her classroom--what to expect during writing time and reading time--she adds, "I know that they're just going to be teaching all of these things to those kids [next year's third graders]. And it's going to be unbelievable" (Appendix B, interview #2). She clearly values her students' abilities and is convinced that they *can* and *will* serve as teachers to the children new to the classroom next year.

Viewing children as whole and capable individuals promotes autonomy. The emerging themes revolving around pedagogy are not easily separated, but are more like the united strands of a rope, twisted together to make the whole stronger. Paying close attention to children through watching and listening, respecting children's thinking, valuing child choice, and seeing children as whole

and capable are all part of promoting autonomy in children, helping them toward making their own decisions outside the realm of reward and punishment, adult authority and peer pressure. Kamii (1991) writes of the importance of encouraging children to see themselves as capable of thinking about and making good choices:

> We cannot expect children to accept ready-made values and truths all the way through school, and then suddenly make choices in adulthood. Likewise, we cannot expect them to be manipulated with reward and punishment in school, and to have the courage of a Martin Luther King in adulthood. (p. 387)

Themes of Professional Growth and Professional Stance

Several themes revolving around professional growth emerged from my talks with Jenny, Kendra, and Robin. These three relatively autonomous teachers have strong feelings about the need for professional growth. I get no sense of their feeling "finished" as teachers; instead, they continuously seek to become better teachers. They judge themselves not through the narrow lens of principal evaluation or faculty awards, but through the eyes of their students. By listening to and watching carefully what their students do at school--what they experience, what they learn, how they learn, what they question--the teachers constantly seek

mirrors for their own strengths and weaknesses. Each woman addresses

weakenesses and improves upon strengths through a variety of conferences, staff

developement opportunities, reading, reflecting, and talking with others.

Professional growth themes include: thirsting to be a better teacher, appreciating

the treasured mentor, thinking independently, and experiencing periods of doubt

and confidence.

Thirsting to become a better teacher

All three teachers reveal themselves as seekers of professional knowledge,

investigating how to become better teachers by examining how and why students

learn and how best to facilitate that learning. Kendra, Robin, and Jenny know

they are different from traditional teachers, and they know their thirst to improve

their teaching is not typical. I am reminded of Kamii's (1994c) description of the

need for teachers to depart from traditional roles, traditional rules:

> At a time when many principals and teachers feel caught between the
>
> desire for reform and "accountability" as defined by achievement test
>
> scores, it behooves us to note the role of autonomy in other reform
>
> movements. Martin Luther King would not have accomplished anything
>
> merely by obeying the old laws discriminating against African-Americans.
>
> Likewise, the American Revolution was not won by people obedient to
>
> British laws. We hope that the idea of autonomy, which was the aim of

education for Piaget, will inspire more teachers and principals to lead the public toward true education reform. (p. ix)

Kendra makes passing references to her quest for professional growth throughout her interviews and written protocols. Besides having attended many conferences around the United States, she also sees professional growth possibilities within her school, as teachers share ideas. She comments,

I think any professional growth is worthwhile, at all levels, in all areas. I think discussion of what goes on should not be discouraged in the lounge, but encouraged, because in sharing is how we learn and grow. If we're discouraged about talking about kids--no, no, no! You need to talk about it. Somebody may have a wonderful idea. (Appendix A, interview #1)

Jenny looks at collegiality somewhat differently, preferring to keep to herself. She is friendly with most of the teachers in her building, but says, "Most of the communication with the rest of the teachers at this school is what I would call superficial, or communication about nonacademic things" (Appendix C, interview #1). She hopes that other teachers will move along in their own growth, and leaves herself open to that possibility as well, realizing that she also "may be in a different place in a year or two" (Appendix C, interview #1).

Both Kendra and Jenny refer to the importance of building principals reading and sharing articles with teachers, striving for their own professional growth.

Robin describes her quest for professional growth as "obsession! Obsession to know more, experience more, see more!!!" (Appendix B, interview #1). She admits, "My obsession sometimes causes trouble because I continually ask questions and wonder" (Appendix B, interview #1). She attends one or more national conferences each year, and particularly appreciates those that allow for long periods of time to immerse in exploring new ideas. She continually uses what she learns from watching her students to identify her own weak areas, and looks for a conference to address the perceived weakness. She asks herself, "O.K. What's a weakness? What do you need to be going to?" (Appendix B, interview #2). She and the other teachers who have been part of the multiage group at her school have begun finding out where various national conferences will be held and making annual decisions about which one they can best attend. Last fall, they went to the regional meeting of the National Council for Teachers of Mathematics.

Jenny, Kendra, and Robin all talk about learning from books about teaching. Robin gets so involved in professional literature that she writes notes to herself in the margins so that "it's almost like a conversation" (Appendix B, interview #1). Jenny recalls herself as having been in transition about seven years ago, when she was deeply affected by reading Regie Routman's *Transitions* (1988). She began seeking for answers to her burgeoning questions about

children and learning, and remembers, "I read, attended workshops, visited other

classrooms, and discussed with colleagues. Not only did I read about whole

language, but I read about how children learn and about developmentally

appropriate practices" (Appendix C, written protocol). She wonders why other

teachers do not often share her thirst for knowledge about teaching and says,

> That's a question we all ask--all of us who ask those kinds of questions
>
> ask, "Why aren't they reading?" And you know, we can stick the articles in
>
> their box; we can say, "Read this book!" But, you know, they don't. . .
>
> (Appendix C, interview #2)

She believes her dependence upon professional books was strengthened by her

former principal: "He always said he had been told at a workshop that the

answers were in books, and that's one of the reasons why he read so much.

Because he felt that a lot of the answers were in books. And I think they are"

(Appendix C, interview #1).

Kendra's professional stance is also related to books. She clearly sees

herself as a learner, and does not hesitate to share good books with other teachers

or administrators, especially when she believes having someone else read a

particular book can help her work toward a particular teaching goal. Wanting to

begin a new multiage group at her present school, she recently shared *Full Circle*

(Chase, 1994), a book about multiage grouping, with her district's new

curriculum coordinator, and "asked him to read it" (Appendix A, interview #1).

Her belief seems to be that sharing good information with another teacher or an

administrator must surely bring that person to an understanding of her own

perspectives on teaching and learning. This belief is similar to Kamii's (1981)

certainty that scientifically derived data to support children's construction of

knowledge must eventually sway the education community in that direction.

Kendra believes professional growth can also happen through "sharing,

through reflection, through talking with each other" (Appendix A, interview #1),

but she is constantly searching for good conferences to attend. She feels that the

adminstrators in her school district do a poor job of helping teachers find out

about meetings outside of locally planned staff development. She echoes the

concerns of Robin and Jenny, saying,

> You have to *really* look for things to go to. We didn't know anything about
>
> [national storytelling festival held nearby]. We have known nothing about
>
> the early childhood one [in another state] that I'm going to next week.
>
> Catherine Fosnot is going to be there! So, any opportunity that you have,
>
> you have to be looking for yourself and then share with the other people
>
> around you. (Appendix A, interview #1)

Appreciating the treasured mentor

Although I asked no questions about mentors or mentoring, the theme

came through clearly from all three teachers. Kendra, Robin, and Jenny all remember informal mentors who helped them to grow professionally, and each teacher treasures that relationship.

Jenny looks upon her former principal, who left at the end of last year, as a valued mentor. Her description of him is revealing:

> He would give you questions that would make you think. And I would think about them for *days*. You know, mull them over. But he was that type of person. And he would even be searching. He wouldn't question us just because, he would question us to make us think. (Appendix C, interview #1)

She sees this principal as having helped her in her professional growth, both by being a role model and by prodding her gently to think more deeply. His reading and sharing professional literature was contagious for her, and his dealings with children taught her to be even more diligent in searching for the child's perspective and way of thinking. She recalls, "He *encouraged* us to go to workshops, he *encouraged* us to visit other schools. He kept money in his budget so that every teacher in this school could go and visit another school during the year" (Appendix C, interview #1). Although no formal mentoring relationship was set up between Jenny and the principal such as those established by entry-year committees, his effect on her was certainly that of mentor.

A valued mentor was also important to Robin when she was making the transition from a somewhat more traditional teacher to the teacher she is now, encouraging children's thinking and voice. Robin remembers herself as a much more traditional teacher at first, who relied upon textbooks, although her description of her use of a social studies text is hardly typical, since even then she did not move "chapter-by-chapter, but. . .did parts of it" (Appendix B, interview #2). A university professor became her informal mentor, asking to visit Robin's classroom several times each week during one semester. Robin describes the effect getting to know this professor had on her teaching: "There was a time when *looking at kids* was different than how I look at them now, and what they know. And that really came from someone at [university]. I have always considered her my mentor" (Appendix B, interview #2). The professor was interested in mathematics education and Native Americans. She and Robin had long conversations about school, and Robin remembers,

> She was the perfect person that would ask questions, but. . .it wasn't like she was being critical. She was *genuinely* interested in why you said that, or why you had that person do that. I mean, she started asking me those questions, and I started thinking about those things, too. . . .*Why did I?* Or, *Why do I say*--You've told that child 20 times to carry the one, and they [sic] still don't understand. . . .So, she's the first person that really got me

started looking at kids and how they grow and what we can be doing. . . .It

was our conversations, because a lot of times she would just hang around

after school. (Appendix B, interview #2)

The professor has since died, and Robin recalls her fondly: "I often look back on

my life and think. . .what would it be like now, if she hadn't ever entered your

life?. . .And sometimes she's disappointed with me and what I've done, and

sometimes she says, 'That was good'" (Appendix B, interview #2).

Kendra's informal mentor was also a university professor. Kendra became

acquainted with her while taking a course, "Literature-Based Reading," and was

affected greatly. She found out about the weekend course from a flyer placed in

her box at school, and remembers, "I went there, and she was talking about what

I needed. She was talking about exactly that you had to go from the children

first" (Appendix A, interview #1). Kendra and the professor formed a friendship

at a critical time when Kendra needed help in carrying out her ideas about

teaching and learning. Kendra says, "I listened to [professor], and I heard her say

what I had been feeling. And then it was easy to start looking again, and to keep

looking" (Appendix A, interview #1). Kendra appreciated the professor's interest,

and comments, "She had so much enthusiasm and shared reams of professional

materials on child-centered classrooms. This truly made sense and helped shape

my understanding. All of it was in keeping with what the children had taught me"

(Appendix A, written protocol #2).

These treasured relationships were important to the teachers involved, whether or not the term "mentor" was ever used. Each description certainly fits the definition of mentor as "a trusted counselor or guide" (*Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 1976, p. 718).

Thinking independently

Kamii's (1984) ideas on autonomy as the aim of education describe the development of moral and intellectual autonomy in children, through perspective taking and social reciprocity. She writes, "Unfortunately, teachers often do not encourage children to think autonomously. Instead, they frequently use sanctions to prod children to give 'correct' answers" (Kamii, 1984, p. 413). However, relatively autonomous teachers avoid such sanctions in working with students, and try to ignore sanctions used against themselves as teachers. Just as Robin, Jenny, and Kendra promote autonomy in their students, encouraging them to trust their own independent thinking, the teachers themselves are independent thinkers.

Jenny does not dwell on her own independence, but frequently brings it up in passing as she talks about herself as a teacher. Describing her difference from most other teachers in her building, she comments, "You know, I'm not going to do something just because someone else is doing it" (Appendix C, interview #1).

At another point, she mentions again her difference from the norm, because she

has made a gradual shift in her whole teaching philosophy since beginning

teaching:

> I have made that change because I wanted that change. I felt that the
>
> change was necessary. I went out and I *found* it. I found it by reading. I
>
> found it by going to workshops, I found it by watching videos, I found it
>
> by talking with other people--with other teachers. (Appendix C, interview
>
> #1)

When the principal at her former school questioned her turning toward literature-

based reading in her first grade, Jenny immediately began documenting the skills

children were exposed to in her classroom. She says,

> I didn't have support from [the principal] then, but I didn't let it stop
>
> me. . . .I made up a checklist, on my own, of all the skills that were
>
> supposed to be covered in the basal. And I had a chart--actually it was
>
> four pages--so that if I taught a skill in real literature, then I could just note
>
> it. So that if she came back to me and said, "You didn't". . .(Appendix C,
>
> interview #1)

Although Jenny refused to obey the principal's directive to use basals with her

first graders, she did attempt to justify her teaching in a way that her principal

would understand. Jenny's decision to abandon the basal readers was not an easy

one, lightly made; she knew she would be censured. Her decision came from within, a result of her own professional growth, her own learning from her students as she watched these new readers flounder: "It was confusing. I was having the kids do basals like two days a week, with 'whole language' three days a week, and some of them were confused as to what was reading. . . .So that was the start of my downfall at that school" (Appendix A, interview #1).

Robin's independent thinking was immediately apparent to me, as she chose to take my first set of interview questions home and answer them instead of meeting me for a scheduled, taped interview. She left her former school partly because she disagreed with the principal's decision to install a huge computer system to drill students, including Robin's first graders, with automated worksheets. She said to herself, "Not in my first grade. Especially in that community" (Appendix B, interview #2). Particularly concerned because many of her students were financially poor, Robin felt they would be ill-served by such a system. She left for another teaching position at the end of that school year. Although Robin had a difficult time leaving a trusted colleague as she made the transition from teaching first graders to teaching fourth graders in a larger district, she maintains, "I don't *need* much support. . . .It's not like you need constant feedback from your friends" (Appendix B, interview #2).

Robin has chosen to ignore a recent state mandate to teach foreign

language beginning with fourth grade, because she objects to her school district's

failure to provide elementary schools with a Spanish teacher. Instead, each

classroom teacher is expected to provide Spanish instruction on a weekly basis.

She says,

> I'm waiting for the day when they come into my room and say, "You
>
> haven't done what you're supposed to." And I think they'll write me up--
>
> they'll fire me--and I'll say, "Fine. I just can't.". . . .I feel like there should
>
> be a teacher [for Spanish]. I'm tired, and I feel like everyone should have
>
> just stood up and said, "We do what we can do. Help us here! Give us a
>
> professional! That is a subject that should be treated in a professional way,
>
> and don't get me to botch up all those numbers!" (Appendix B, interview
>
> #2)

Independent thinking permeates Kendra's being as a teacher, also. She

acted on her idea to begin a multiage group at her former school, after attending a

meeting with her principal and another teacher from her building. When I asked

if she thought the multiage grouping would have happened if she had not

attended the meeting, she said bluntly,

> No. A lot of people talk and think, but very few *do*. . . .I'm a doer. . . . I
>
> dreamed up all the things at night. I would wake up at three o'clock in the
>
> morning, and would know just how I could present it. And I put it all

down on paper, and I went right in. I didn't let it die. (Appendix A,

interview #2)

She sees herself as a whole, capable being, just as she sees her students as whole,

capable individuals. Kendra asserts, "I think to have a commitment, a loyalty, an

understanding, a belief system--*is* rather than doing, rather than acting--it's not an

acting, it is a being. . . . That's what I've always known" (Appendix A, interview

#2).

Experiencing periods of doubt and confidence

Although all three teachers I talked with are fiercely independent in their

beliefs and actions regarding children, none is absolute in her thinking. Kendra,

Jenny, and Robin all have times during which they feel quite confident of their

teaching decisions and times of serious self-doubt. Relative autonomy and

independent thinking, at least for these three teachers, apparently do not mean

that a teacher is completely self-assured in any sort of dualistic, good-bad, right-

wrong sense. Instead, these teachers are seekers--searching for better ways to

listen to children, better ways to understand children's thinking, better ways to

see that what they know about children and learning is reflected in what they, as

teachers, do with children every day.

Robin experienced a period of intense self-doubt just after she changed

schools and grade levels. She remembers feeling "alone and indecisive," and

continues, "I just didn't know what to do. . . .I lacked so much confidence--didn't feel like I knew anything and I questioned everything I was doing. . . .During that time I'd drive home after school thinking, 'What am I doing, trying to teach?'" (Appendix B, interview #1). Later, she told me more about that time, recalling, "Fourth grade was new. The kids--I just felt like they knew much more than I did. I felt very stupid and inadequate" (Appendix B, interview #2). Upon reflecting over time about why she doubted herself so much at that time, she has decided that she needed time to get to know the children in her class and fourth graders in general. Since she validates herself as a teacher based on what she learns from her students, the differences between fourth graders and first graders caught her unaware. She says,

> In first grade *you see growth*! I mean. . .it's there *every day*. I mean, letters, numbers, words, making sense of things, songs, kids making things--and of course, fourth grade is different. You just don't see those things happen every day. It may take months before you have a child finally come up and say, "Listen to this part of this story!" and read something to you. (Appendix B, interview #2)

Although Robin doubts herself from time to time, she is also generally confident of herself as a teacher, as she makes independent and sometimes difficult decisions. She has recently decided to discontinue her participation in

her school's team time, because of its interruption of the daily flow for the students in her class. She clearly remembers telling her colleagues of her decision, saying quietly, "I just said, 'I don't want to do team time'" (Appendix B, interview #2).

Jenny, like Kendra and Robin, is a combination of self-doubt and self-confidence. She states firmly, "I feel secure in my place. I feel secure in my philosophy" (Appendix C, interview #1), as she talks about the insecurities of other teachers who question her practices. However, she also worries about whether she allows her students enough choice, saying, "I'm certainly not there. I mean, I certainly need to probably let go even more" (Appendix C, interview #1).

Kendra, one of the most independent teachers I know, is also assailed by self-doubt. Referring to her commitment to multiage education as beneficial to children, she admits, "I may be wrong, because I'm not allowing for anything else" (Appendix A, interview #1). She is still doubtful of herself as a teacher because of her experience two years ago of being encouraged by her friend and principal to leave the multiage pod at her former school. She says with a catch in her voice,

> I went about seven steps backwards in my career and in my faith and understanding of myself, until I was able to look at it in a different reflection. And I'm still working on it. I'm still not back to the total

certainty of who and what I am as I was before. It was devastating.

(Appendix A, interview #1)

It is impossible not to contrast this memory of extreme doubt with the

remembered confidence of two years before, while she was still a teacher in the

multiage group:

I was learning every day. I was growing toward a more meaningful

learning experience for children. I was absolutely certain that what I was

moving toward was right for children. . . .I was truly wrapped up in my

little world, I felt secure. (Appendix A, written protocol #1)

Kendra's self-confidence is building again, as evidenced by her comment about

standardized testing this year. She refuses to prepare her students in any way for

state mandated testing, and has not even looked at the test booklet designed to get

students and their parents "ready" for testing. She laughs, saying, "I just have the

faith that what I'm doing is good for kids. When kids spend that much time

reading every day, I don't care if [the standardized test] measures what it's

supposed to or not--it comes through. My kids are fine, and I don't worry about

it" (Appendix A, interview #2).

Themes of Relationships

Themes dealing with relationships--with teachers, with students, with

parents, with administrators--stand out as I think about my talks with Robin,

Jenny, and Kendra and read their written comments. Anyone who works in a

school must deal with others, and sometimes those relationships cause problems

for autonomous teachers. Indeed, relationships can cause problems for any

teachers, but teachers and administrators who follow more traditional paths far

outnumber those who seek to allow students voice and who base their teaching

on ideas about student learning rather than on set content objectives. Other rare

relationships, those whose essence is collegial sharing, can be immensely

satisfying to the autonomous teacher, providing support and ideas. Emergent

themes centered on relationships are: coping by closing the door, sharing with a

small group of trusted friends, taking the perpectives of others, and living and

letting live.

Coping by closing the door

I asked no questions about "closing the door," but each of the three

teachers with whom I talked used that phrase in describing what teachers

sometimes must do in order to survive. Sizer (1984) describes the sense of

privacy afforded teachers by closing the door, writing, "The privacy of the

classroom is not always the honored badge of the professional but an indication

that what happens there is thought to be of relatively little consequence" (p. 184).

When I talked several years ago with a teacher who is still at the last high

school in which I taught social studies, she told me that curriculum alignment determined by effective schools literature and criterion-referenced testing was the "latest thing" in the district. I told her I was glad I was no longer teaching there because I would have a difficult time with those restrictions, and she replied, "Oh, it's just like it always was. We go to the meetings, pretend to take a few notes, nod like we're listening, and then go back to our classrooms, close the door, and teach the way we always have" (Merkx, K., personal communication, unknown date).

Kendra refers to teachers who close the door as she thinks back to her surprise at the end of her part in the multiage group at the former school. She says,

> You know, there's a comfort for people that are doing their own thing, to close their door. Not seeing what's going on in a place that might be threatening to you, but you don't have to see if you close your door. . . .When people feel that they don't want to know, they don't ask questions. They just close their doors and do what they're comfortable with. They grow in their own ways. (Appendix A, interview #2)

She expresses a unique view of teachers with closed doors; instead of relying on a closed door for privacy from prying eyes, she sees a closed door as related to a closed mind, used by teachers who want to remain unaware of change around

them, unchallenged and unwilling to consider other possibilities. She sees her current school as one in which many teachers close their doors, and says of herself and her small circle of friends, "Those of us who found each other, with our own theories and our own thinkings--it's easy to find each other because you sort of stick out in different places. You're the ones without your doors closed, and it's easy to see" (Appendix A, interview #2).

Robin and Jenny talk of teachers closing doors in a more typical fashion, as if a closed door would keep them from being threatened by others who disagree with their ways of teaching. I asked Robin what she would do if a new principal came to her building insisting that all teachers use basal readers at least three days a week and placing great emphasis on improving test scores. She answered, "I would get around as much as I could. I would shut my door, and if that person wanted to see worksheets, they would be pages out of journals that would be student-composed worksheets" (Appendix B, interview #2). I continued, "So you would acquiesce, and then do what you wanted to do when the door was closed?" Her response was, "Uh huh [nodding]. Which is what I think probably a lot of teachers have to do. . . .They have administrators that don't listen, don't know, or don't understand" (Appendix B, interview #2).

Jenny mentions a closed door in passing, remembering, "At the other school, I kind of felt like I had to keep my door closed, because I was doing

things differently" (Appendix C, interview #1). She thought her closed door and her deliberate lack of contact with the principal insulated her, but tells of friends who noticed a difference in her after she changed teaching positions: "I realize now that I really was under stress at the old school. But when you're in it, you don't see it. When I got out of it, people said that I looked more relaxed, because I wasn't feeling that stress" (Appendix C, interview #1).

Sharing with a small group of trusted friends

All three teachers agree that they are friendly with most of the other teachers in their buildings, but that they only talk superficially with most co-workers. Jenny, Kendra, and Robin derive a great deal of pleasure and professional growth from sharing important ideas about teaching and learning with a small circle of friends, entrusting the group with their most deeply-held, nontraditional beliefs about schooling.

Jenny tells of her feelings about her teaching circle and contrasts them with her superficial contact with other teachers in her building, commenting,

> There is a group of us at this school that get together, and we talk more
>
> about philosophy and what we're doing with children and what is best for
>
> children. And we're not talking so much on the day-to-day activities.
>
> Whereas most of my communication with the other teachers is just a
>
> friendly communication. . . .For example, I don't talk to the teacher next

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the transfer list when [last year's principal] got transferred. . . .All seven of us" (Appendix A, interview #1). Apparently their support of the former principal brought them together. Having been "out on a limb" as a minority group supporting the principal, they have stayed together as a support group for one another.

One aspect of Kendra and her circle of trusted friends sets her apart from Robin and Jenny, at least as far as my interviews show. At her former school, Kendra's close, collegial friends included her principal. She describes their relationship, saying, "The administrator and I and my husband and his wife were best friends" (Appendix A, interview #1). She clarifies their closeness further, remembering how hurt she was when he encouraged her to leave the multiage pod:

> We [Kendra and her husband, the principal and his wife] were together at least twice every week, and we took trips together. . . I mean, we did everything together, we played trivia together, we roasted marshmallows together, we. . .spent Thanksgiving together, St. Patrick's Day. (Appendix A, interview #2)

At first, I thought Kendra may have acted heteronomously, making a sudden decision to leave her former school after being criticized harshly by her principal. However, as I read and re-read her interviews, it became clear to me

that the formerly close friendship between Kendra and her principal caused her to leave, seeking self-preservation. Criticism by "The Principal" was not the reason Kendra chose to leave; instead, it was the sudden and complete removal of professional support by her former close friend that caused her so much pain. She left, not because she reacted to the principal's wishes, but because she had lost a dear friend.

Robin told me when she picked up her first interview questions that she did not want to talk about other teachers, but wanted to tell me only about herself and her teaching. She seemed uncomfortable at the idea of talking about anyone else. She generally held to that decision, so I do not have as much information about whom she shares ideas with. She did tell me about her relationship with the other third/fourth grade teacher in her building when I asked her to whom she turns when she wants to bounce ideas around: "Oh, probably the other third/four teacher that's at my school now. . .because she's right over there and we can walk back and forth. You know, we share what the kids did and things like that" (Appendix B, interview #2). I think that their sharing is based on more than simple proximity, but Robin chose not to discuss it further, and I respected her choice. As far as I can tell, Robin's intimate circle is *very* small, consisting of herself and one other teacher.

Living and letting live

These teachers are not missionaries, proselytizing and seeking to convert other teachers to their ways of thinking about children and school. They are committed rather to the notion that respecting others' differences is part of their professional stance. Although each has strong views about learning and teaching, each is generally willing to accept other teachers who disagree.

Jenny is convinced that, just as she makes her own teaching decisions, she has no right to criticize others for their decisions. She says, "At this school, there are teachers at all different levels. And I think what teachers need to do is to respect each other for. . .the place that they are at" (Appendix C, interview #1). However, she acknowledges that many teachers have a difficult time accepting one another's differences "because some teachers are insecure" (Appendix C, interview #1). She believes that her own sense of security in her teaching philosophy helps her to accept others who feel differently.

Similarly, Kendra wants to accept teachers' differences and describes in detail the fear that causes many teachers to be unwilling or unable to do the same, commenting,

> It's a huge fear, because they have children that they can mess up.
>
> Imagine--thinking, "If I don't follow this recipe, I can do something
>
> damaging to these children." What an *awesome* responsibility. . . .That's a

terrible thing to waste or to experiment with: a child's mind, a child's being. And unless you're really sure of your own understanding, it is hard to leave that recipe where it's been proven. So you can't fault a lot of these teachers for that fear. (Appendix A, interview #1)

Kendra admits that she sometimes has a difficult time living and letting live, saying, "I try to have more toleration from a more feeling attitude. I try to judge less on actions than on feelings. It helps to accept the teaching profession where it is" (Appendix A, interview #1). Kendra recalls her experiences as a new teacher, excited about the possibilities and wanting to share her excitement. She remembers, "I was *very* different. I was also stupid, when I bubbled in and told them how they could do things better and make things better for children. . . .I was forceful. I had *found the answer*. And I *really* wanted to share it. And I did" (Appendix A, interview #2). Although she laughs self-mockingly at the memory, she seems pained as she recalls the reaction of her teacher "friends:" "I did not know until the very end of the year that they were making fun of me. . . .I get so *focused where I am* that I can't visualize what's going on around me" (Appendix A, interview #2).

Again, since Robin chose to talk little about other teachers in any but the most global sense, I have only glimpses of her thinking about accepting other teachers' differences. She does mention differences of opinion among teachers

when talking about her principal: "As far as everyone pretty much accepting everyone else's--what they're doing. . .as far as everyone being able to work together, we can. . . .And I think that's probably due to an administrator who's real accepting of each individual teacher's style. And doesn't say one way or the other, something's right" (Appendix B, interview #2).

Taking the perspectives of others

Closely related to the notion of living and letting live is that of perspective-taking. According to Piaget (1932/1965), learning to take the perspectives of others is the key to decentering, and is necessary to autonomous reasoning. Robin, Jenny, and Kendra continually try to understand the perspectives of others.

Kendra shows her ability to understand the perspectives of teachers who differ from her when she describes their fear of change, their fear of looking at school through the eyes of a child:

They are sure of their recipe because they only see one facet of that child: that's the academic progress. They don't see what competition does to them, they don't see the demeaning, they don't see the humiliation, they don't see the pain. . . .They can't see anything other than that four wrong is a "D." They can't see that four wrong makes my heart just a little bit smaller. . . .They can't take the risk of seeing the whole child; it's too

threatening to what they've always done. . . . And it might make them ask

themselves questions, and they're not comfortable with questions.

(Appendix A, interview #1)

Robin and Jenny both show their own perspective-taking, yet at the same

time make strong statements about their own beliefs. Their statements, certain

and yet allowing for differences, remind me of Gilligan's (1982) description of a

"web of connectedness" valued by women above the dualistic notion of right-

and-wrong justice usually favored by men. Robin responds to my hypothetical

administrator who would order her to use basal readers and worksheets in her

classroom, saying,

> I look at those administrators and go, "Oh, poor administrator." Somehow,
>
> we have to make that person realize that all of us can't possibly be doing
>
> the same thing. . . . You know, part of that may be educational on our part
>
> to say, "Read this. . . .I want to know what you think." So, part of it would
>
> be trying to convince that person that there are other ways, that we cannot
>
> all be the same, and be doing those kinds of things. (Appendix B,
>
> interview #2)

Although she understands the administrator's perspective, Robin is unswerving in

her own convictions about the need for teachers to choose their own paths.

Jenny is similarly convinced as she talks of other teachers' different

approaches, saying,

> That's not what I believe. But I would keep it to myself, because I
> wouldn't want that person to think that I thought less of them. Their
> philosophy was different from my philosophy. But, I think, too, that that
> person hasn't done a lot of reading. And they don't know what's out there.
> (Appendix C, interview #1)

She makes an even stronger point about her own beliefs in a later interview as

she talks about the anger she feels when teachers talk *about* one another rather

than talking *to* one another. Jenny says,

> Let's face it, that is the most difficult thing to do. To go to another teacher
> and say, "I don't like what you're doing. I wish you wouldn't do that." It's
> so much easier to go to the principal and tattle than it is to confront that
> teacher. (Appendix C, interview #2)

Jenny is willing to understand the perspectives of other teachers, but she is not

likely to bend to their beliefs, unless she herself comes to new conclusions about

teaching and learning.

Themes of Leaving

Each of the three teachers shared experiences of having chosen to leave a

teaching situation because of disagreements about how school should be given.

Instead of bowing to institutional pressure to conform, these teachers chose to move on, seeking places which would be more accepting of them and which they could better accept. Greene (1978) writes of moral individuals who are "wide awake," and contrasts them with people who are largely unaware:

> For too many individuals in modern society, there is a feeling of being dominated and. . .feelings of powerlessness are almost inescapable. I am also suggesting that such feelings can to a large degree be overcome through conscious endeavor on the part of individuals to keep themselves awake, to think about their condition in the world, to inquire into the forces that appear to dominate them, to interpret the experiences they are having day by day. (p. 43-44)

Kendra, Robin, and Jenny are surely wide awake. Emergent themes centered on leaving include: experiencing barriers from others' need to control, attempting to remove self from stress, feeling guilt, and leaving.

Experiencing barriers from others' need to control

Relatively autonomous teachers who work in schools inevitably run into barriers put up by others, usually stemming from the control needs of other teachers, administrators, or parents. All three teachers with whom I visited mentioned such barriers frequently.

Robin felt barriers to her carrying out her best ideas about teaching at her

former school. The computer system that was developmentally inappropriate and the principal's plan to give trophies to the top scorers on normed achievement tests were two such barriers. She believed that these two incidents were so contrary to her beliefs about school and learning that she ultimately chose to leave rather than compromise further. She also told me of an incident at her former school involving another teacher's firing. The fired teacher and the state teachers' organization decided to appeal the decision, and Robin and other faculty members were called to testify at her hearing. Robin remembers her feelings: "That's how I felt--used by [state teachers' organization] to help prove she should be rehired--used by an administrator when questioned, 'Do you help her?'" (Appendix B, interview #1). After the teacher won her hearing, forcing the district to rehire her, Robin and several other teachers who had disagreed with her dismissal were summarily reassigned to new grade levels for the following year.

Jenny also sees the principal at her former school as having placed barriers in her path, attempting to stop or slow her change as she grew professionally. One such barrier was the principal's personally hostile attack after Jenny wrote a general article on whole language. Jenny recalls,

> I knew that I was doing things differently. And that [the other teachers] weren't moving as far as I was moving. And then, we did get another

principal. And she did not like what I was doing. She felt that I was

moving too quickly, changing too quickly. (Appendix C, interview #1)

Jenny believes that it was the principal's lack of professional growth and

perspective-taking that stood in her way: "*She* was not ready to change. I was

ready to change. . . .And. . .I feel that *principals* need to be reading

professionally, *principals* need to be going to workshops. And they don't"

(Appendix C, interview #1).

After Jenny moved to her present school, the community erupted over a

small group of parents' perceptions that teachers in that building, supported by

the principal, were straying from "basic" education and were spending too much

time discussing feelings and opinions with children instead of concentrating on

core content. Although the principal left a year ago and the situation seems to

have quieted, Jenny reports,

> I think all the problems are still here. Several of the teachers have left,
>
> several of the teachers who did a lot of the talking. . . .But, most of us
>
> teachers are still here. Those teachers who are insecure are still
>
> here. . . .You know, it may not surface again for a couple of years, but it's
>
> still here, because the same teachers are still here. (Appendix C, interview
>
> #2)

Kendra also remembers feeling that others have placed barriers in her

way. Apparently the situation involving the multiage group at her former school

which led her to leave was sparked by other teachers in the building. She says,

"There were basically teachers from the rest of the building, and they had all

these worries and concerns" (Appendix A, interview #1). She recalls the effect of

criticism from teachers and parents because only children who were in

developmental first grade could be part of the multiage group:

> When you can't have something, what do you do? You put that down to
>
> build what you have up. There were parents that went to [administrator]
>
> and did that. So there was parental concern that maybe it was not right.
>
> There were teacher concerns that maybe it was not right. (Appendix A,
>
> interview #1)

However, Kendra believes the largest barrier to her continued success in the

multiage pod was the principal's failure to address teacher and parent concerns

directly. She describes this failure, saying of the principal,

> He allowed the "misperceptions" to exist. He listened when teachers
>
> complained that it took them four months to get our kids up to speed in
>
> workbooks and math pages. They were outraged when our kids would
>
> speak up (talk back) to defend their writings and their experiments.
>
> (Appendix A, written protocol #1)

Kendra also experienced barriers to her autonomous decision making

during her first year of teaching. She writes expressively of her feelings upon discovering that teachers she considered friends were criticizing her teaching to one another:

> By the end of the year I was so wrapped up in my own discoveries of learning, I failed to notice the coolness and disdain emanating from my cohorts. I was working in my room one morning and hadn't gotten around to turning on the lights, when inadvertently I overheard a conversation between two of my third-grade colleagues which began ominously with the words, "She is so ignorant, she thinks she's teaching--I wonder what idiotic thing she has planned for today." I cowered by the sink and listened for another few minutes of criticism and bitterness. The gist seemed to be that a teacher should never be friends or care about their students, teaching should not be misconstrued as fun, noise is contrary to a school environment, and ultimately chaos is the result of losing control. The consensus was that they had tried to help me, but I was stubborn and would have to learn the hard way. (Appendix A, written protocol #2)

This is Kendra's narrative of her feelings at discovering other teachers being critical of her way of being in the classroom during her first year of teaching. It is hauntingly similar to her description of her feelings just two years ago when she felt betrayed at the end of her participation in the multiage pod.

Attempting to remove self from stress

These three relatively autonomous teachers have all undergone stress from

taking unpopular positions about giving school. Although they are strong in their

beliefs, sometimes the stress they experience becomes more than they can

endure. From time to time, they seek to escape the tension.

Robin experienced stress at her former school as a result of the series of

barriers she encountered because of administrative decisions. She remembers, "It

was lots of things. . .[such as] not being treated as a professional. And that

computer thing was just the last straw. . . .If I would have stayed, I can't imagine

what I would be like" (Appendix B, interview #2). The conflict she felt between

her beliefs about good teaching and what she was expected to do as an employee

in that system caused her stress level to build so that she told her husband that

she would become "physicially ill" (Appendix B, interview #1) unless she found

another teaching position. Robin at first attempted to alleviate stress through

closing her classroom door, trying to keep the impact of poor principal decisions

from directly affecting her. However, when she was faced with forced training

and forced installation of a computer system that she saw as inappropriate for her

students, she was no longer able to divorce herself from the principal and his

actions which focused only on improving children's standardized test scores.

Even before Jenny left her former school because of serious philosophical

differences with the principal, she chose to avoid contact with the principal except in group settings. She remembers, "It made me feel uncomfortable. I didn't go into the office. I didn't communicate with the principal. I just felt that we were on different wavelengths, and that there wasn't much that I could do. So I avoided the office. I stayed in my room" (Appendix C, interview #1). She thought her strategy helped her get away from the strain, and it probably did to a certain extent. However, after she had moved to her present school, it was another teacher who told her how much better, how much happier she looked.

Kendra's approach to stress is somewhat different. She is usually oblivious to criticism for long periods of time, and thus indirectly avoids stress. However, when criticism--from other teachers, from parents, from the principal--finally comes to her attention, she is crushed. She questions herself as a teacher, but does not compromise her beliefs, asserting, "I could not stop believing what I believe, to better fit in. I would not go back to a teacher-controlled classroom" (Appendix A, written protocol #1).

Feeling guilt

Perhaps because Kendra, Robin, and Jenny engage in taking the perspectives of others as an integral part of their lives as teachers, they express feelings of guilt, usually when choosing to leave a situation, or when reflection indicates they may be falling short. This guilt can be about not serving children

as well as they could, not communicating fully with parents, not working hard enough to engage other faculty members in a conversation, not giving enough in friendships. Although the guilt these three teachers feel may not be apparent to outside observers, it is very real to the teachers themselves, coming from their own reflection and remembrances.

Robin feels guilt about leaving the children at her former school. The district is wealthy because a large industry provides a sound tax base, but the children and their families, many of them Native American, are generally poor. When Robin left to move into her present teaching position in another town, she knew her students would be mainly middle class Caucasian, and she says, "I felt really guilty when I left, because I thought, 'Those kids probably need you more than these kids.' You know, I look at their home situations, and there's no comparison" (Appendix B, interview #2).

Kendra experiences feelings of guilt when she realizes that she could have foreseen the end of the multiage grouping at her former school if she had been more attuned to the growth of grumbling criticism that built over time. She believes that if she and the other team time teachers had been more aware, they could have worked to counteract the negative sentiments. She recalls, "We were lost in our world. A lot of this was our fault, because we shut out everything around us" (Appendix A, interview #2).She continues at another time,

door about what she's doing in the classroom. Or why she's doing it.

(Appendix C, interview #1)

She sees herself as different from most of the faculty, but similar in many ways

to the teachers in her small, trusted group. She says, "I would say that we found

each other because we kind of saw that we kind of taught the same way, we kind

of did things that might be similar. I think that's how we probably found each

other" (Appendix C, interview #1).

Kendra's circle of friends is the same as Jenny's. They teach in the same

school, and are part of the same group, sharing ideas and learning from one

another. Kendra relates, "We have a small group of seven teachers that share

everything. We run things off for each other and put them in our boxes all the

time" (Appendix A, interview #1). However, Kendra's story of how the informal

group's members found one another is different from Jenny's more vague

recollection. The principal who hired both Jenny and Kendra, as well as most

other faculty members over a ten-year period, came under criticism from a small

number of vocal parents who favored a "back to basics" movement in school,

encouraged by their conservative Protestant churches. The principal--the same

man whose child-centered kindness and avid reading inspired Jenny's

professional growth--was to be transferred to another school in the district.

Kendra remembers how the group of trusted friends began: "We were the ones on

I felt responsible. . . .Because I didn't--I should have had a better picture. . . .I assumed too much. I assumed everything was fine. We were fine, so it didn't matter what the free world was doing out there. I blame myself for. . .never seeing it coming. (Appendix A, interview #3)

She also expresses guilt at her role in ending the friendship between her husband and her former principal, saying, "He and [former principal] were buddies. That was part of my guilt also. . . .That I could not forgive, and because of that [my husband] lost" (Appendix A, interview #2). Having left parents and children behind also haunts Kendra, as she says of her decision to change teaching positions,

I felt guilty. I felt real guilty with some of the parents and some of the special children I knew, that I had waited to get and was not going to get. I did feel that. But I was so devastated in my own self, I couldn't get past my own pain to see theirs. I was too selfish. (Appendix A, interview #3)

Kendra feels a sense of guilt now because of making plans to leave her present school and move to the town where her husband now works. She is worried about leaving a good friend, another fifth grade teacher in the next room who is making great strides in her own professional growth. Kendra comments,

She's just wonderful in so many of the things she's doing. And if I leave that area, that sits her down there all by herself with a lack of support.

She's a young teacher. People are going to--I don't mean that I protect her--but it's sort of protective for me to be there for her. And I have this fear of leaving her there. (Appendix A, interview #2)

Like Robin, Jenny remembers feeling guilty when she made plans to leave her former school because of the children she would leave behind. She says, "There were some children that I knew I was going to get--and really that was one of the reasons--I knew that these children were going to get me, and I thought I needed to stay there for those children" (Appendix C, interview #1). Jenny's feeling of responsibility to the children who would enter her room the following year caused her to turn down her transfer when it was first offered. Instead, she stayed at her old school for one more year, avoiding contact with the principal.

Leaving

The final theme is one of leaving, moving away from an untenable situation. Jenny, Robin, and Kendra have all left teaching positions because of significant differences between their philosophies and those of the principals in the schools they have left behind. The problem is not a matter of lack of support, because none of these teachers seems to need much support from others. The problem instead has stemmed from basic disagreement about children, learning, and how school should be.

These three teachers make small compromises continually, as does anyone

working in a group setting. However, each has some deeply-held beliefs that are
non-negotiable. Each teacher's decision to leave was unique: Kendra's was
sudden and came upon her unexpectedly; Jenny's was equally sudden, but she
chose to stay for another year and-a-half; Robin's built slowly over time, sparked
finally by the last straw of an inappropriate computer system. Each teacher did
not just react to pressure from others, moving *away* from teaching settings;
instead, each also moved *toward* a new setting, more inviting, more promising.

Jenny chose to leave her former school because of pressure from the
principal to conform, to abandon a classroom centered around children reading
self-selected trade books and turn back to a more linear approach of direct
instruction using basal readers. However, Jenny also moved toward her present
school, seeing possibilities for more growth, more acceptance. She remembers

> I knew one teacher here, and we would just see each other at different
> meetings. I might see her just a few times a year, and we would just talk.
> She led me to believe that I would be comfortable here, that this would be
> a good place for me. (Appendix C, interview #1)

I once asked Jenny to tell me what her response would be if a new principal told
her tomorrow, "I want to see basals out and I want to see the workbook pages
going home so parents can see what these children are learning." She replied, "I
would probably move on, try to move to another place. And I don't necessarily

think the grass is always greener on the other side. I do think there's got to be someplace that might be coming along a little bit" (Appendix C, interview #1).

Kendra's decision to leave her former school was partly because of her unwillingness to stay at the school without being part of team time. When the principal encouraged her to move to another grade level in a self-contained classroom, she said, "Oh. You want me to walk past that team every day and not be a part of the thing that was *my conception*, that was mine, my whole thought from the beginning?" (Appendix A, interview #1). She then remembers, "And that's when I said that no, I would not do that. I would ask for a transfer" (Appendix A, interview #1). Her leaving was also connected to her realization that the principal, her friend, had a very different view of children and school than hers. She states, "[Former principal]'s philosophy was, if the teachers are happy, the children are going to be happy. [Last year's principal]'s was, when the children are happy, the teachers will be happy. You know, it's such a nuance, and yet it's such a *major* difference in how they perceive their role" (Appendix A, interview #1). Kendra continues, "[My philosophy] is, I want to be in a building where the children are happy--that's what's going to make the teachers happy, not vice versa. Because the children aren't happy if the teachers are happy: they're submissive" (Appendix A, interview #1).

Kendra moved away from her former school and its principal, but she also

moved toward her present school, knowing that the principal (who also hired Jenny) would support her teaching, sharing her belief that what happens at school must acknowledge children's constant construction of knowledge. She also knew some teachers in the building with whom she could share and grow.

Robin's decision to leave was based on accumulated disagreements with her former administrator about what school should be for children, but it was also sudden, ignited finally by a developmentally inappropriate computer system purchase. After being trained to run the computers, she remembers, "I left that day and knew if I went back I would end up physically ill" (Appendix B, interview #1). She immediately began seeking a new teaching position.

Moving toward another place was also part of Robin's decision to leave her former school. She was impressed by the principal at her current school, partly because of the principal's willingness to accept all her teachers and support individual professional growth. Robin says of moving to her present position,

I knew I needed a change. I had a friend at that school that really sold me as far as, "It'll be a good place. You'll love it." And then when I interviewed with [the principal], I really liked her. I mean, the questions that she asked and the things she wanted to know that I had done with first graders, knowing, though, I was going to be a fourth grade teacher. She actually asked me, "What have you learned as a first grade teacher that

you're going to turn around and do with these fourth grade children?"

(Appendix B, interview #2)

Robin answered, "Well, I know I'm still going to have *their* selection of books,

what they want to read, and *their* writing time" (Appendix B, interview #2).

When I asked Robin to predict her response if a new principal ordered her

to return to more traditional teaching, using basal readers and worksheets, her

first response was that she would do as little as possible to comply in a

superficial way. I pressed her, asking how she would respond if the new principal

"caught" her in noncompliance and challenged her. Robin replied,

> I've thought about this before. . . .I think that's the time I'll say, "O.K.
>
> You're right. I haven't been doing it. I'm going--I'm leaving." I'll sit home
>
> for half a year, and then if I still want to teach, I'll find a school
>
> where. . .our philosophies, our thinking are more the same. (Appendix B,
>
> interview #2)

Summary

The three teachers, Kendra, Robin, and Jenny are individuals with

different personalities, different beings. Yet they share a great deal. I have tried,

through studying my interview transcripts and their written protocols, to gain

some understanding of their lifeworlds as relatively autonomous teachers

working in a system that promotes heteronomy in children and adults.

Through pondering their experiences and their recollections, I have watched themes emerge from their words. The emergent themes fall into four kinds: themes of pedagogy, themes of professional growth and professional stance, themes of relationships, and themes of leaving. These four groupings are my own construction; they are not mutually exclusive and clearly delineated, but are shaded and blurred, overlapping one another, informing one another. My separation of emergent themes is not intended as a final statement of division, but rather as a way to explain lifeworlds, to peel back layers.

I remember Kendra's assertion, recalling her former principal's encouraging her to "lose [her] professional voice and just work with children": "He didn't know. . . .I *am* that. You can't separate the two. I *think* like that. I *am* like that. I *feel* like that" (Appendix A, interview #2).

CHAPTER FIVE

REFLECTIONS

This is Prigogine's point. Reality is not simple, spiritual, and uniform. It is

complex, temporal, and multiple. (Doll, 1986, p. 16)

Musings of the Inquirer: A Postmodern Non-Answer

What have I learned from talking with Kendra, Robin, and Jenny, from

transcribing and carefully examining the texts of those interviews and their

written protocols? What have I learned from developing a scheme of emergent

themes that strikes me as having meaning regarding teacher autonomy? What

have I learned from writing--the writing that "teaches us what we know and in

what way we know what we know" (van Manen, 1990, p. 127)?

I am not quite sure.

Martusewicz (1992), following Lyotard (1984), writes that

"postmodernism. . .is characterized by a crisis in legitimation. . . .That is, our

assumptions about what constitutes everyday knowledge as well as academic

knowledge, indeed the very possibility of knowing, have been placed deeply into

question" (in Pinar & Reynolds, 1992, p. 131-132). In one sense, I feel gripped

by a postmodern paralysis: unable to state, unable to assert, unable to maintain,

unable to voice. There is no right/wrong, no good/bad, no if/then; there are only

shades and nuances--one lifeworld bumping into another, overlapping, flowing

into.

The postmodern paradox is that the non-answer *is* the answer. Even

though I cannot state unequivocally what I have learned, generating free-standing

theory to apply in a variety of contexts, I feel that in a very real sense, I have

learned a great deal, gained a great deal of insight, added much to my

understanding of what it means to be an autonomous teacher in a heteronomous

system. Van Manen (1982) writes of the impossibility of drawing a line between

being a theorist and being a practitioner:

> The charge of the educational theorist is to impregnate his or her
>
> pedagogic tactfulness with hermeneutic expertise by drawing inspiration
>
> from that which draws us nearer to the child. And this means that the
>
> theorist has to take the risk of a different vocation for theorizing, which
>
> task is the edification of pedagogic being. (p. 48)

He also comments, "The irony of metatheorizing is that by taking distance we

may be trying to understand better the nature and good of something we need to

get closer to" (van Manen, 1982, p. 45). I have sought to get closer to Kendra,

Robin, and Jenny and their lived experiences of autonomy in public school.

I have deliberately avoided watching teachers and their students interact,

because I have chosen to focus on each teacher's own understanding of what she does, who she is, instead of my constructions based on watching her in the classroom. No doubt, either approach could be rich. I will attempt to give voice to my understanding.

The Essence of Teacher Autonomy

The essence of a phenomenon is "that what makes a thing what it is" (van Manen, 1990, p. 177). Regarding essences, van Manen (1984) also writes, "The essence or nature of an experience has been adequately described in language when the description reawakens or shows us the lived meaning or significance of the experience in a fuller or deeper manner" (p. 38). In describing the essence of the lived experiences of Kendra, Robin, and Jenny as I understand them to be, I examine teacher autonomy as it: necessitates moral action, depends upon relationships, and fosters autonomy in others. I also hear silences--absent themes. These absent themes are those that are popular in current literature on teaching: themes of discipline and themes of curriculum.

Necessitates Moral Action

Autonomy cannot be separated from action. The autonomously made decision, intellectual or moral, implies a *doing,* a way of being in the world. The idea that autonomy refers to mental activity and that action is something else altogether, is foreign to what I learned from Kendra, Robin, and Jenny. Some

teachers are smug and perhaps a bit self-righteous, claiming to *know* what is best

for children, what is best for learning, but also claiming that the power to *act* on

that knowledge is out of their hands, controlled often by a nameless, faceless

"They"--as in *"THEY"* only care about test scores; *"THEY"* force me to use test

criteria as the basis for what happens in my classroom; *"THEY"* will not let me

integrate subjects; *"THEY"* say good art means coloring inside the lines, and the

children can only do it on Friday afternoon; *"THEY"* have tied my hands. Even

more frightening is the way so many teachers are willing to foreclose their own

possibilities, using the *"THEY"* to squelch ideas, tentative awakenings, before

they begin--as in *"THEY"* would never let me get away with putting away the

basals; *"THEY"* would fire me if I let students write for two hours every day,

especially if I let students "get away" with functional spellings and formative

grammar; *"THEY"* would not let me use cooperative learning groups because the

room would get so noisy.

I almost used the word "childlike" to describe these teachers,

simplistically willing to stop before they begin, but children do not behave that

way. The children I know best are a bit full of themselves, eager and confident

most of the time, ready to take on new challenges and quite pleased with

themselves over the smallest gains. Young children open every door they can

budge. No, "childlike" does not describe the teacher who is willing to concede

defeat before trying. Maxine Greene (1988) says it well: "Even given conditions of liberty, many people do not act on their freedom; they do not risk becoming different; they accede; often, they submit" (p. 117).

Teachers who will not see beyond the expected, closing their eyes rather than risking the sight of other possibilities, remind me of our border collie as a new pup. Flower the dog was part of a large litter, born in the middle of a small sheep pen on a busy farm. The puppies were surrounded from birth by dogs, sheep, cattle, half-grown children, and mud; they slept in stacks of puppies, and the fertile smell of the barnyard was everywhere. When Flower came to our house to live, she was about eight weeks old and had never been outside the sheep pen. She is the only permanent pet at our house, and during the first several weeks we had her she was most comfortable wedged between the back of the sofa and the wall, unwilling to see a living room and beyond--yard and forest--of wide open spaces. We even had to teach her that puppies like to be scratched behind the ears; she was born on a farm of working dogs, not house pets. Teachers can be like Flower--unwilling to see beyond, unwilling to admit possibilities. Greene (1988) mourns the loss of what never was: "When people cannot name alternatives, imagine a better state of things, share with others a project of change, they are likely to remain anchored or submerged" (p. 9).

The three teachers with whom I visited did not talk about a formless

"They;" instead, Jenny, Kendra, and Robin told me about specific individuals who placed barriers in the path, or who acted as barriers with their very being, obstructing these autonomous teachers in some way, hampering their doing what they know is best for children. The difference between the three teachers I talked with and the legion of other teachers, voluntarily holding out wrists and ankles to be bound by the omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent "They," does not stop with Kendra's, Robin's, and Jenny's naming specific individuals, specific barriers. These three also went on to describe *what they--themselves--did about it.*

These teachers are *powerful*--not "empowered" by another a few steps up in an ill-conceived institutional hierarchy--but *powerful*, full of power, in themselves and of themselves. Van Manen (1995) writes, "This lived experience of power appears to be quite complex and subtle in a cognitive, emotional, moral, and relational sense. It contrasts sharply with the theoretical image of emancipatory empowerment as presented in the literature of critical pedagogy" (p. 62).

Their power is not manifested in loudness, boisterousness; instead, they go quietly about their pedagogical work. Jenny carefully listens to the voices of teachers around her, trying to see through their eyes, making a continual, conscious effort not to judge or criticize. Robin feels so strongly about maintaining mutually respectful relationships with her fellow faculty members

that she made a deliberate decision not to discuss them with me, knowing that we all live in or near the same small town: word gets around, and she did not want to risk being misinterpreted. Kendra, especially since moving away from the multiage pod, keeps to herself, sharing important discussions of school and children only with a trusted few. It would be a mistake to equate their generally quiet, unassuming demeanor for powerlessness. Even when one feels guilty because of an action, as Kendra feels guilt, reflecting upon the suddenness of her decision to leave her former school along with its students and their parents, she never questions her ability to decide, her right to make a response. These relatively autonomous teachers are active agents, engaged in meaning-making, engaged in the process of school. They are not passive recipients, routinely carrying on, settling for minimums--minimums for themselves, minimums from their students.

Depends Upon Relationships

Some curriculum workers believe autonomy is an improper aim for the education of children and an improper aim for adults, seeing it as a solitary enterprise, reminiscent of the turn-of-the-century's "rugged individualism." For example, Greene (1988), following Arendt, worries that autonomy implies isolation: "The search for a freedom within. . .denie[s] notions of *praxis* and the public space" (p. 120). Greene (1988) ties the development of autonomy to the

development of freedom and writes, "It is ordinarily associated with an individualist stance: It signifies a self-dependence rather than relationship; self-regarding and self-regulated behavior rather than involvement with others" (p. 7).

Greene misses an important point emphasized by Piaget (1932/1965) and reiterated by Kamii (1982, 1984): *Autonomy can grow only through relationships.* The kinds of relationships upon which the development of autonomy depend are those of mutual respect and social reciprocity (Piaget, 1932/1965; 1948/1973).

I was surprised by the recurring images of mentoring relationships that emerged from my talks with Jenny, Kendra, and Robin. Somehow, even though I asked each teacher about work relationships, I never expected to hear about these significant others who helped shape their lives as teachers. None of them talked about having present-day mentors. Perhaps it is only after reflection over time that one realizes the impact another has had. Each of these women has benefited tremendously from at least one informal mentoring relationship, set up not though mandates or policies, but developing from mutual interest and mutual respect. When Jenny talks about her former principal who read constantly and asked her difficult questions about teaching and learning, his effect on her life is clear. She attributes her dependence upon professional literature to him, and his encouragement of her attending professional conferences helped fuel her quest to

become a better teacher, more in tune with students. Jenny recalls that they shared ideas, reminding me of van Manen's (1982) comment about weaving theory into the everyday: "The theoretical as theatre is a place where in the midst of everyday life we find the possibility of contemplating, beholding, and presenting the good; and the possibility of thus having a transforming experience" (p. 44). This ability to be within a phenomenon, of a phenomenon, and yet outside, able to contemplate, is rare. Even those who master it in some settings are helpless in others--like the excellent, thoughtful, *theoretical* preschool teacher, at a loss when her own toddler throws a tantrum in the grocery store, or the excellent, caring, *theoretical* physician, at a loss when faced with the death of her own parent.

Each of the mentors identified directly or indirectly by the three teachers served the same basic purpose: helping the teacher, and perhaps concomitantly helping him/herself, to think more deeply about the whys and why nots of the everydayness, the taken-for-granted. These important relationships probably did not *make* Jenny, Robin, and Kendra autonomous teachers, at least not in the sense that cookies are made, pressed out onto a baking sheet. The causes and effects surrounding autonomy and its development are not that simple. However, I think the mentors and the memories the three teachers have of them, of their conversations, have contributed to their self-understanding, their *theorizing*. Van

Manen (1982) writes,

> As we theorize more, read more, talk more, write more, listen more, we
>
> remake ourselves, make *more* of ourselves in the deep sense of self-
>
> education. So theorizing as a conversational, hermeneutic activity is
>
> edifying in that it is constitutive of our spiritual and intellectual lives as
>
> pedagogues. (p. 44)

Each of the three teachers also recounts other important relationships that help her, relationships that are in the present. Kendra, Robin, and Jenny all depend upon at least one other person for sharing important ideas about giving school. Robin mentions that she shares with the other third/fourth grade teacher in her building, while Kendra and Jenny are part of the same "group of seven" who meet at least weekly to talk. I do not have a sense that these autonomous teachers depend on others for praise or validation, but that they depend upon these others as fellow travelers, fellow seekers, sharing ideas about learning and school without fear of seeming different. Each of the three has experienced the discomfort of being labeled "different," and each is willing to trust only a select few with her deep thinking, her *theoretical* self. Their descriptions of needing such a small group, not for support but for give and take of ideas, is in keeping with Kamii's (1991) description of children's need for social reciprocity with caring adults in order to develop honesty: "Children who are raised with. . .[an]

exchange of viewpoints are likely, over time, to construct from within the value of honesty. . . .An essential element here is a warm human relationship of mutual respect and affection. . ."(p. 383). Kendra, Robin, and Jenny are adults whose honesty is not in question; however, the "warm human relationship of mutual respect and affection" is still necessary for them, for their maintaining and further developing as autonomous adults.

Fosters Autonomy in Others

Jenny, Robin, and Kendra speak of their students with the high regard of mutual respect, encouraging them to share ideas reciprocally, with other students and with the teacher. The teacher's voice is only one of many, unlike more traditional classroom settings in which "children become convinced that truth can come only from the teacher's head" (Kamii, 1991, p. 385). Each of the three teachers feels that letting students have voice and hearing those voices is the most important part of their lives as teachers. When I asked her what she wished for children, what school was "supposed to do for them," Robin replied,

> I just look at being so interested in living each day to its fullest as far as
>
> noticing things about people, about how we live, and about all the stuff
>
> that they *are* able to do, that they *can* do. That they've got some control,
>
> some power. Which a lot of times I don't think kids realize. But they do.
>
> They're in control of what goes on, as far as what they're thinking and

what they're doing. (Appendix B, interview #2)

Robin never uses the word "autonomy," but her wish for her students to realize their own power is certainly a wish for autonomy, and her way of fostering it is not just through *allowing* student voice, but through *encouraging* student voice. Robin has no standard time during the day or during the week to allow students to be heard by the entire group, through "show and tell" or some other contrived minimum. Instead, student voice is woven throughout her descriptions of her classroom. She values that voice; she needs that voice. When she recalls a period of self-doubt following her switch from teaching first graders to teaching fourth graders, her doubt seems caught up in her students' unwillingness to voice--probably because they were so unaccustomed to a teacher asking for it. Robin worried about her ability to connect with older children, and comments, "It may take months before you have a child finally come up and say, 'Listen to this part of this story!'" (Appendix B, interview #2).

It seems to me that fourth graders are much more used to school, used to heteronomy. They are not used to having a teacher ask them to think, having a teacher ask them to voice their thinking, having a teacher *really mean it*. Kamii (1991) writes, "Unfortunately, in school, children are not encouraged to think autonomously. Teachers use reward and punishment in the intellectual realm to get children to give 'correct' responses. . . .Already in first grade, many children

have learned to distrust their own thinking" (p. 385).

Jenny's account of the boy with little English who suddenly found his voice--literally and figuratively--in loudly taking the lunch count--"ONE! TWO! THREE!"--shows her valuing of his voice, of all the voices in her classroom. I try to imagine being another child in the classroom, present when the little boy began counting, present when the teacher smiled and let it happen, present when the teacher encouraged the little boy to count out loud on all subsequent days in first grade. That other child, who probably learned to count long before and who probably speaks only English, also learned that day. That other child learned from watching Jenny, from listening to the new voice, from knowing Jenny's pleasure at the wonderful addition to their classroom. That other child--not just the little boy who was counting--also learned that day: "Here is a place where children's words have value. Here is a place where children's ideas are cherished. Here is a place where it is O.K. to take risks. Here is a place where we are safe."

Robin and Jenny never use the terms "construct" or "constructivism." Kendra uses them only occasionally, referring to her own teaching approach. However, I believe all three teachers use a constructivist approach in their classrooms, basing what they do and what they plan on the knowledge children are constructing, as well as knowledge they themselves construct about how learning happens. Robin is moving beyond thinking that multiage grouping, in

and of itself, is of most benefit to children in school. She supports such grouping

and is looking forward to this fall when her third graders from last year will

return to her class as fourth graders, but she is working through her feelings, her

beliefs about multiage arrangements. She has watched children and their thinking

be disrupted by a preset "team time," and she has reflected on the meaning of

team time in terms of what she wishes for students in school. She is torn, seeing

advantages to grouping children in a more familial way than leaving them with

traditional age-mates all day, but also seeing that what happens in a self-

contained classroom has its benefits. For the time being, Robin has chosen not to

continue her students' participation in team time, and the other team time teachers

have decided not to continue it as a scheduled part of each day next year. Instead,

they will group children occasionally, focusing on a particular unit of shared

interest. She says,

> Next year. . .we're not going to do the team time. We'll still keep our
>
> multiage [such as her third/fourth], but we want it to be this more natural
>
> flow of, "Oh, you're getting ready to study the ocean! My kids are
>
> interested. Let's do some things together." Not just in our little suite area,
>
> either. Going outside that area, and going to other people in our building
>
> and saying, "I know that you're interested in this" or "Do you want to do
>
> something with this?" (Appendix B, interview #2)

Robin has changed her thinking about multiage grouping because of watching and listening to students, and through her own reflection over time. She is in the process of constructing new thinking about how best to facilitate student learning at school.

Kendra describes her own gradual moving toward constructivist teaching, saying,

> It started out with [college professor's] influence in whole language. From
> there it moved on to a higher degree of child-centeredness, for lack of a
> better word. We went into a "team time" situation in which we had
> developmental first grade, first, second, and third together for two hours
> every morning of the week, sharing activities and constructing their own
> learning as mixed-age groupings. (Appendix A, interview #1)

She is still very committed to the idea of multiage grouping and team time, because she sees it as "an incredible--INCREDIBLE--program for children" (Appendix A, interview #1). However, I see elements of constructivist teaching even in her descriptions of her earliest weeks as a classroom teacher, when she talks of her decision to let her students perform *The Wizard of Oz* rather than just read parts of it. She recalls, "I realized that the children's own involvement was the very thing that was 'learning.' The spark was in the children themselves, not something that I could create, but rather something I could allow. We redesigned

our classroom, together, in small steps at first" (Appendix A, written protocol #2).

Burbules (1993) vividly describes constructivism, in terms of both students and teachers, writing,

> In pedagogical encounters, we do not change other people. They change themselves: They construct their own understandings, they change their minds, they decide on alternative courses of action, they redefine their priorities. . . .This process may be only partly conscious, and it may come as the result of so many microchanges that even the person who changes may see the culmination only after the fact. But beginning from this vantage point leads to a fundamentally different teaching stance, one defined less by "giving" students certain things, "shaping" students to particular ways, or "leading" them to particular conclusions, and more by creating opportunities and occasions in which students will, given their own questions, needs, and purposes, gradually construct a more mature understanding of themselves, the world and others--an understanding that, *by definition*, must be their own. (p. 10)

Jenny, Kendra, and Robin are constructivist teachers, acknowledging their students' construction of knowledge and working through their own constructions. It is the constructivist teacher who is most able to foster autonomy

in students. Kamii (1981) explains:

> If we want children to become heteronomous adults, the best way is to use
>
> behavioristic principles, that is, reward and/or punishment. . . .Teachers
>
> who want to foster the morality of autonomy must think of other ways
>
> that encourage children to construct their own moral values for
>
> themselves. . . .Autonomy is not only more moral than heteronomy; it is
>
> also more intelligent than heteronomy. (p. 10)

Absent Themes

I identified several groups of emergent themes in talking with Kendra,

Jenny, and Robin, themes dealing with pedagogy, professional growth,

relationships, and leaving. However, some common themes, emphasized by many

teachers, *did not emerge*. In reading popular professional journals over the past

several years, one could conclude that various aspects of discipline and new ways

to impart valued [read: designed for cultural transmission] content, through

restructuring the curriculum and reforming schools, are overwhelmingly

important to teachers. Talking with these three autonomous teachers, I found that

they rarely mentioned discipline, and they never mentioned curriculum.

Discipline was only mentioned in passing by Jenny, who described her former

principal's approach to discipline as "different" because "he wasn't the authority,

and he wasn't the person in charge" (Appendix C, interview #2).

These three teachers are not concerned with discipline in the sense of "classroom management," nor are they concerned with curriculum in the sense of predetermined content and classroom delivery. The typical meanings ascribed to both terms are contrary to constructivism. Discipline is usually defined as controlling children's behavior, as reflected in this caveat:

> A recent Gallup Poll (1983). . .continues to find a lack of discipline a major concern about public schools. Some observers attribute discipline problems to the child-centered orientations of educators that can be traced back to the ideas of Comenius, Rousseau, and Pestalozzi. . . (Unruh & Unruh, 1984, p. 3)

A desire for controlling children's behavior in order to force-feed predetermined content makes no sense to a constructivist teacher.

Kendra, Jenny, and Robin never used the term "curriculum" in our talks, but they did discuss aspects of their teaching that are in keeping with the definition of curriculum as praxis, action with reflection. Jenny reflects on her own experiences as a young child in school, and recounts her painful memories of spelling and reading. She continues,

> I remember the spelling and the reading, but all my other experiences of school are of dealing with people. Not so much of when I learned something, or when I didn't learn something. Because I did learn to read

and I did learn to do addition and all that, but what I remember about school are my dealings with people. And to this day, I'm convinced that it doesn't matter what theme you use--that's not the important thing. (Appendix C, interview #2)

Jenny's reflections of her own experiences as a student are part of her construction of what she wants school to be for her students. She speaks passionately of her belief that when a small child visits another classroom and asks to read aloud, the teacher and students in that room should suspend all activity, stopping to form an immediate, attentive audience.

Jenny makes sure that students visiting her classroom are respected and valued, but her students do not always have the same experience when visiting other classrooms. Jenny says, "If my children go to another room, and they come back and say, 'Well, the teacher told us to come back. . .at 10:30. . .' Well, that tells me that obviously [the other teacher] thinks that there are some *real important things* that are going on in that room, and they can't stop" (Appendix C, interview #1). Jenny is critical of this lack of respect for children, believing that respect for a particular child is far more important than imparting skills could ever be. She rejects the traditional definition of curriculum as content, and even rejects the importance of themes, units, or projects promoted by advocates of developmentally appropriate practice (for example, Katz & Chard, 1989),

asserting, "You don't need some theme to be with the children" (Appendix C, interview #1).

"Curriculum" as imposed by a committee or mandated by legislation or arbitrarily contrived by a classroom teacher is foreign to Jenny, Robin, and Kendra. They would certainly acknowledge the existence of such "curricula" if I asked them a question about it, but in terms of their speaking about important aspects of their lives as teachers, this received, external view of curriculum has no place in their lifeworlds.

Implications

I am unwilling to call what I have learned from Jenny, Kendra, and Robin "theory" in the sense that it could be generalizable, standing apart from context and personal meaning. However, I can draw some tentative inferences about public school teaching and teacher education in light of holding autonomy as the aim of education.

I expected to find that these three relatively autonomous teachers see themselves as child advocates, acting on behalf of children. I was not prepared for the depth of their individual commitments to the children with whom they live and work every day. Although I did not ask about "depth of commitment to children," these teachers show remarkable depth, woven throughout their

comments. When Jenny says, "You don't need some theme to be with the children" (Appendix C, interview #1), it seems like a simple enough statement. But I hear a particular emphasis: You don't need some theme to be *with* the children--as if her use of the word "with" has its own special meaning of pedagogic tact. She does not just mean to be with children physically--in the same place, at the same time. She means to be *with* children--trying as best she can to see the world through their young eyes; seeking to understand what they experience in the name of education; choosing to acknowledge that they have their own individual lives outside school that make a difference in everything they do, everything they decide not to do. For Jenny and for Kendra and for Robin, I have a sense that being *with* children goes far beyond what most curriculum workers mean by "being with children," the typical, the taken-for-granted, the expected. They remind me of van Manen's (1991a) comment, "Tact is not a skill we use, it is something we are" (p. 533).

Teachers construct their own knowledge, as do children. However, since teachers are adults, it might seem to make sense to *tell* them to think more deeply about what they do in the name of education, to *tell* them to stay wide awake, to *tell* them to work toward self-knowledge, to *tell* them to learn about being better teachers by becoming better watchers of children, better listeners to children.

Unfortunately, it is usually pointless to *tell* teachers anything, unless a

person happens to be at a critical moment, ready to hear, ripe to explore. I can remember one such *telling* in my past that made a tremendous difference in the way I see myself as a teacher. A graduate professor included a transcript of Constance Kamii's (1982) speech on autonomy and constructivism in a packet of readings, *telling* her students it was worth examining, worth thinking about. I was moved deeply by the text of that speech--everything I had learned in graduate school, everything I had learned from my own young children, everything I had put together for myself, suddenly made sense in the context of constructivism.

Kamii (personal communication, July, 1994) tells me that there comes a time in each person's development at which it is appropriate to begin lecturing in order to impart content. She is not precisely sure when that time comes, because she has not engaged in research with older children, with adolescents, with adults. However, she tells me that the time does come, and she handles her own graduate seminar through lecture.

Optimistically, I hope she is right. I hope that it will be enough for some teachers to be told to think more deeply, to ask difficult questions of themselves, to examine their own best and worst practices in light of the children, their students. I hope that telling and reading and sharing with other teachers can lead to a wide-awakeness, such as that described by Krishnamurti (1953):

There is an intelligent revolt which is not reaction, and which comes with

self-knowledge through the awareness of one's own thought and feeling. It

is only when we face experience as it comes and do not avoid disturbance

that we keep intelligence highly awakened; and intelligence highly

awakened is intuition, which is the only true guide in life. (p. 10-11)

Krishnamurti's self-knowledge is similar to Maxine Greene's (1978) critical

consciousness, as she writes:

If teachers are not critically conscious, if they are not awake to their own

values and commitments, . . .if they are not personally engaged with their

subject matter and with the world around, I do not see how they can

initiate the young into critical questioning or the moral life. (p. 48)

It is this critical consciousness which must be addressed through teacher

education. Teachers and teachers-to-be must be encouraged to find a critical

consciousness within themselves. They must be encouraged to seek connections

rather than to enclose in boxes falsely discrete entities. They must be encouraged

to find voice rather than to accept silence. They must be encouraged to ask

difficult questions *of themselves* rather than to seek the path of least resistance.

When teachers are on the path of critical consciousness, moving toward

autonomous thinking and acting, they are apt to encounter barriers. Barriers may

be placed in the path by administrators, by other teachers, or by others outside

the traditional school. If an autonomous teacher encounters enough barriers, or a

large enough barrier, or a barrier that calls for *too much* compromise, *too much* loss of self, *too much* of what is pedagogically sound, that teacher is apt to leave. However, we should not misconstrue such a decision to leave as a heteronomous decision, made because of sanctions from without. We must instead see such a decision to leave--like the decisions made independently by Jenny, Robin, and Kendra--as an autonomous choice, made on the basis of the best information available. None of the three teachers with whom I talked was forced out of a teaching position; each one *chose* to leave. These three teachers chose to leave growth-hindering places in order to move to growth-enhancing places. They chose to leave non-nurturing environments in order to move toward more nurturing environments. They chose to leave places and people who asked them to behave in pedagogically unsound ways in order to join people in places in which they could teach in ways they see as best for children.

How do autonomous teachers function in the heteronomous system of public education? Bravely, intentionally, critically, quietly, carefully, in a wide-awake manner. They stay while they can, accomplishing as much as possible in terms of helping children to gain a sense of themselves. They leave when they must.

Recommendations

This has been only a beginning in the study of teacher autonomy. I can see many possibilities for enhancing understanding of the lived experience of autonomous teachers, at all grade levels. Some autonomous teachers have left teaching, but their lived experiences would also be worth exploring. One possibility would be through using similar semi-structured interviews with other relatively autonomous teachers, increasing the number of teachers or the length of time spent with each teacher. Another possible avenue for further research would be to observe a relatively autonomous teacher over time in the classroom, observing and gathering information, oral and written, from the students as well as from the teacher. It would also be helpful to examine the effect of specific programs aimed at helping teachers find their own voices, such as the National Writing Project or the SummerMath Institute at Mount Holyoke. In order to better examine the question of how teachers become autonomous, it would be useful to consider context more thoroughly. Placing autonomous teachers within the larger context of schools as political entities could help increase understanding about teacher autonomy.

I found that in looking back at my questions for the semi-structured interviews, my best information came as a result of indirect questions. I gained a great deal about autonomous teachers and their informal mentors from the past

by asking general questions about relationships. I learned about the theme of leaving by asking teachers to recall times when they felt "out on a limb, alone." I did not expect or plan for either the theme of mentorships or the theme of leaving, but through indirect questions I learned a great deal about both themes in the lives of autonomous teachers.

One question has arisen frequently, in one form or another, during the course of my study: *Where does teacher autonomy come from?* I asked Kendra, Robin, and Jenny a form of that question, trying to understand why they are different from so many other teachers; why they are not afraid to ask themselves probing questions about their teaching; why they are never satisfied, seeking always to be better teachers for their students. Although finding the source of teacher autonomy was not my intent, I could not resist asking the question. Professors and other graduate students have also asked me a form of the question: *What makes one person autonomous when those around her/him are not?* I have no answers now; perhaps better understanding could come from asking autonomous teachers about their past experiences, asking them to write and speak autobiographically, looking for emergent themes relating to the beginnings of autonomy for each person.

Concluding Thoughts: Autonomous Teachers, Autonomous Students

If autonomy is the aim of education, it is vital for teachers to reason autonomously. This does not mean that all teachers who "go against the grain" are autonomous, any more than are all children who do so. Kamii (1991) writes,

Although acts of revolt may look like autonomous acts, there is a vast

difference between autonomy and revolt. In a revolt, the child figures out

what is expected and deliberately does the opposite. A child who always

has to go counter to the norm is not autonomous. (p. 383)

An autonomous teacher who truly values student voice, who engages children in relationships of mutual respect, can facilitate the development of autonomy in students. These three relatively autonomous teachers, Kendra, Robin, and Jenny, blend choices for children throughout their existence as teachers, which is the key to development of autonomy in children. Kamii (1991) holds, "Children can learn to make choices only by making their own decisions and evaluating the results of their decisions" (p. 387). Kamii (1994a) also states that it is impossible to segregate the development of moral or intellectual autonomy into an arbitrary schedule:

In the reality of a classroom, the conditions conducive to intellectual

autonomy cannot exist separately from the conditions conducive to moral

autonomy. [Piaget's] reason for saying this was that the free exchange of

points of view, or debate, among children is essential for the construction

of objective knowledge as well as for the construction of moral values. In

other words, the social climate of a classroom cannot foster debate in the

intellectual realm while squelching it in the sociomoral realm. (p. 7)

Burbules (1993) concurs with the need for children to experience mutual

respect in the sharing of ideas, writing of the importance of the "communicative

virtues:"

These virtues are developed, reflexively, through the kinds of

communicative relations in which we are engaged as children and into

adult life. To develop these virtues is to be drawn into certain kinds of

communicative relations; to have such relations, we need to exercise, to

some extent, these virtues. (p. 77)

He continues, describing the communicative virtues that are necessary,

"including patience, tolerance for alternative points of view, an openness to give

and receive criticism, and. . .the willingness and ability to listen thoughtfully and

attentively" (Burbules, 1993, p. 77). His depiction of the communicative virtues

is remarkably similar to Piaget's (1932/1965) descriptions of the foundation stone

upon which autonomy is built: perspective taking in relationships of mutual

respect and social reciprocity.

Kamii (1991) describes the need for teachers to reason autonomously in

order for students to develop autonomy, writing,

> If we want to educate children to become autonomous, it is essential that
>
> educators. . .become more autonomous first. . . .We need to speak up
>
> against the excessive use and dependence on standardized group tests, as
>
> well as individual tests. We need to lead groups who study alternative
>
> methods of assessing children's progress. Irrelevant, fragmented and empty
>
> curricula are undesirable not only for future dropouts but also for pupils
>
> who are highly "successful." Behaviorism, associationism, and
>
> psychometric tests were good enough when heteronomy was the aim of
>
> education. If we want the next generation to develop morally and
>
> intellectually to higher levels, we have to lead schoolpeople to value
>
> critical thinking rather than conformity. (p. 388)

My talking with and writing about Kendra, Robin, and Jenny have

deepened my own understanding of what it means to be an autonomous teacher

in a heteronomous world. Rose (1985) describes the importance of the writing

act, often overlooked: "Composing is not only a process of knowing, it is also a

way of doing--a way of taking action" (p. 4).

Through writing and reflecting, I begin to understand the risks these three

teachers take almost every day. They are advocates for children, working,

consciously or unconsciously, to foster autonomy in their students by

encouraging tentative voices, respecting children's thinking, and trying to counteract the overwhelmingly heteronomous influences that surround them. As Ayers (1988) writes, "There was an embracing of the unique, the particular, the possible" (p. 4). They cannot separate thought from action, theory from practice; autonomous reasoning requires moral action.

My visits with Jenny, Robin, and Kendra and my writing about them is only a beginning. I begin to understand the essence of teacher autonomy--the risks, the relationships, the growth, the children--as they live it every day.

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APPENDIX A
Kendra's Interviews and Written Protocols

KENDRA[1]
Interview #1
March 6, 1995

Hobbies: I consider going to school a hobby. <u>I certainly do, too. It is for me[2]</u>. Yeah. I love reading the professional books, I love thinking about it, and ([Professor]'ll love this. . .) I'm beginning to enjoy the writing part of it. I like to write the papers because they reflect so much of me.

<u>Speaking of writing, I need to ask you something. Do you think you could write, if you haven't already done this somewhere, write for me an encounter or an experience during your teaching career that you felt really put you out on a limb by yourself? Just as long as it needs to be; I'm not looking for anything specific--just whatever you want to give me.</u>

I've been out on a limb most of my life, most of my teaching career. Yeah, that would not be hard at all. In fact, one of [Professor]'s assignments is to do a first year teaching experience, and I'm writing that for her midterm. It was one of those things--I was put out on a limb and didn't know it. The naiveness of a first year teacher. I didn't realize. <u>That would be great, if you wouldn't mind sharing it with me</u>. And then there's another one that just happened this year. I felt out on a limb and very angry. I might write that one up, because I still know that I was overruled, and it was wrong. Everybody was so involved in their own agendas, that they forgot to look at the kid. So I might write that one up too, because I'm still angry about it. Maybe writing it would make me feel better. <u>That would be wonderful. Maybe you can use it as therapy, and I can use it as a data source</u>. Yes. And it would help us both. <u>That's right. Be good for both of us.</u>

<u>O..K. I'm going to ask you a few questions.</u>

<u>How would you describe the story behind your starting your current teaching</u>

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[1]All names of teachers and administrators have been changed.

[2]The interviewer's words are underlined throughout all appendices.

<u>assignment?</u>

Long pause. You mean the one at [current school]. <u>Uh huh</u>. Boy, you get right to it don't you? <u>Yeah. In your case I do, don't I?</u>
Read the question again. <u>How would you describe the story behind your current teaching assignment?</u>

Bad. It was a betrayal. I was at [former school]. I knew there was some dissatisfaction. For the 6 years that I had been at [former school], I had always felt that the administrator was supportive of my constructivist approach to teaching. It started out with [college professor's] influence in whole language. From there it moved on to a higher degree of child-centeredness, for lack of a better word. We went into a "team time" situation in which we had Developmental first grade, first, second, and third together for 2 hours every morning of the week, sharing activities and constructing their own learning as mixed-age groupings. It was a wonderful program. It was an incredible-- INCREDIBLE--program for children, and at the end of the second year on April 28 (laughs), it all fell apart.

Teachers had gone in to complain to the principal. . .<u>Teachers in the team?</u> No. (pause). I shouldn't say that. Yes, there was one. But there were basically teachers from the rest of the building, and they had all these worries and concerns, and so I was called in and talked to, and I pointed out to the administration that they were not accurate. He proceeded to tell me that their perceptions were reality, and there was no way he could change it, and I needed to consider changing what I was doing. (Pause). The end of the "team time"-- then finally it came out, and he said that all in all, as he could see it, I was the one who was hurting the rest of the team effort, and that I was hurting 2 of my best friends in that team. That I *personally* was causing them to be looked down on by the rest of the faculty. <u>How did he explain that?</u> Point blank. And I asked him very carefully. I said, "Now, I want you to say that again. Are you saying that I am the cause of the teachers being cruel to them?" [his answer:] "Yes." [her question:] "Are you saying that *I, [states her own name], am the problem with the team effort?"* [his answer:] "Yes, you, [states her name], are responsible for all of this." And I said, "Because of teachers--because of how they feel." I said, "Those are misperceptions. Are you going to explain it to them?" [his answer:] "No. No, because their perceptions are reality." [her comment:] "But they're incorrect." [his comment:] "Not in their eyes. However, [name], if you'd like to go up to fourth or fifth, I may have an opening there." And I said, "Oh. You want me to walk past that team every day and not

be a part of the thing that was *my conception*, that was mine, my whole thought from the beginning?" And that's when I said that no, I would not do that. I would ask for a transfer. And he said he thought that was good; a good decision.

He withdrew all his support of what we had stood for, what we had made so incredibly worthwhile. Let me ask something. Did you feel that support being withdrawn gradually, or was this sudden? As I reflect back, and look back at some other clues that he had given me up until that time--but again, I was too naive to see it, because I thought everything was wonderful. It was a total shock to me, that all of this was taken, and it was [pause] [small laugh]. . .There was another problem. And it was that the administrator and I and my husband and his wife were best friends. So the problem became also personal. Other people knew that we were friends, and they were feeling that. . .So, he himself was attacked by teachers. Now, I knew that earlier. I didn't know why. They felt that he was too supportive of our program and me because I was a personal friend. So they attacked him personally on how they rated him. So, it was so complicated. But I could not get past the fact that he-- not just once, but twice-- said that I, [states name], was the problem. He didn't recognize that the problems could be from other teachers' jealousies, their insecurities, their misunderstanding of differences. None of it was approached to be worked through. It was done, over. . .that was it. There was no move to correct the situation, and that led me to believe that there was more to it than I understood. Also the fact that the minute I learned that his perception was that I was hurting these 2 other girls that meant the world to me, I could not continue from that point on. And, he's the only one I had to trust, because he was the only one with the big picture. I did not have a big picture--[laughs] I had no picture at all. I was being naive. None of the team--one of the team people now I find was involved. I did not know that then. I did not know it. I do not know to what extent. I've never asked; I never want to know. It was just this total removal of support when I had been led to trust. All this time I felt--and then I found further on, that parents had also begun--parents from other classrooms--had begun to put down what we were doing. Because you had to be in Developmental first grade in order to get into our program, because it went Developmental first grade, the Developmental first grade kids went right to first, the first grade kids went to second, second went. . .Well there were other people who couldn't get it who wanted to. So, when you can't have something, what do you do? You put that down to build what you have up. There were parents that went to him [administrator] and did that. So there was parental concern that maybe it was not right. There were teacher concerns that maybe it was not right. But it was never approached that we could work through it. It was like--O.K., that's it. And after 6 years of feeling that trust and

dependence, the betrayal was complete. It was incredibly hard. And I got through this whole thing without crying. [laughs] And that's probably the first time in a long time.

So you were in that building for 6 years. How long had team time been going on? 2. O.K. You said, I think, that it was at the end of the second year. Yes. And then the year before that, actually, I did some subbing, and I subbed in that building alone 108 days. And then in several other buildings, too. But it was 6 years that I was a teacher there. And team time had been going on for 2 years. And then, when I left, it really folded because [another teacher] followed me, and got a transfer too. Because then it came out that other teachers were saying that if they went to a different room because there wasn't always enough room for everybody in the pod--they would say it took them 6 months to catch them up to being normal. Other teachers were reflecting on our teaching practices, and that hurt [other teacher], so she left too. What do you think they meant by "catching them up to being normal?" I don't know! I think what they meant was, up with the same page as everybody else in their class. I think that's what they considered normal. They didn't have much early childhood background. They weren't very developmental in their approach to teaching in some of the grade levels, in some of the teachers. And those were the teachers, of course, who were most *threatened* by what we were doing.

Tell me a little--just in general--about team time. It's this incredible thing. Now you've got to understand. These kids are so caring. The thing that came out of team time--they did fine academically, they did fine making choices. The most incredible outcome was their consideration of the other guy. When you mix up ages as well as cultures, and the diversity is everywhere, they become helpers. They don't seem themselves as competitors. They see themselves as cooperative. But it spilled over in all areas of their lives. Parents will attest to it. They would come back and say, "What have you done to my child? He's helping out at home. He's helping his brother." You know--[parents would say] "She's picking up her stuff." It was just incredible that on the playground, we had our mixed kids out on that playground. There were very, very few problems. The other people--all fifth grade would be out there--they had nothing but problems. All of third grade would be out there, all of second grade would be out there--they had kids in the office and inside all day. It never happened with our group. When there was a problem, they fixed it. None of us on the team ever fixed any problems. We always said, "Well, when you guys figure out what you're doing, let us know." [children:] "But we're having a problem here." [team teacher:] "I know that. It's going to take all 4 of you to fix it." Now, we didn't fix things, so children learned

to depend upon themselves and each other. And yes, they did fine academically. The second year, when they came to us, we knew them all. The kids knew who their teacher was at the end of the year before. They knew they were going to have me. It was like picking up without a break. It was, "Oh, boy! We're going to start with chants and charts. . ." They knew the whole routine. There was no lost time. There were already relationships formed, and those relationships just bloomed all over again. It was *incredible*! Incredible, happening the second year. And that's when I became a firm believer in having children for longer periods of time. The relationship that you spend so much time working on is *there*. All you had to do was begin building again. And the kindness just--it exuded, from everyplace. And that's the major--I know that's not--some people look on school as being a place for academics, and I look on school as being a place for children, to learn and grow, whether it's socially, emotionally, academically. And team time did it. And I just can't imagine--if, in the 2 hours a day, if it was that important--if you can gain that much trust and relationship and caring, imagine what you could do with a multi-age group all day long. It would be an incredible, incredible experience. And that's where my sights are. I've begged, I've borrowed, I've said, "I'd do anything to get that." I just don't know where we're going with it.

Backtrack a minute. You mentioned earlier that team time was your--baby-Yes, baby. How did you accomplish it to start with?
It really was not easy, because I went to this meeting. It was about a dream school. [Another elementary] was going to change, and we went to this meeting. There were a bunch of us there, and we brainstormed our dream school. The more I thought about it, the more I thought, "We could have that with the layout of [former school.] " I had worked with [Developmental first grade teacher] since the beginning when I got there. She was the Developmental first grade teacher, and I was the third grade teacher. We decided to put our kids together, not just as study buddies, but we put them together for all sorts of different interaction. Academics, art, all sorts of things. The thing that opened our eyes was [district art coordinator]. She came in and did an art lesson with the Developmental first grade children. And [Developmental first grade teacher] and I figured out that it would be lots of fun to have her kids teach mine what [art coordinator] had taught them. So, I brought my third graders down there, and her children taught my kids the art lesson, and the results were incredible. Because my third graders sat there and said, "Look at his picture! It's so much better than mine. How are you doing that?" And the exchange was just like a slap in the face: "Are you people listening to this?" From that time on, [Developmental first grade teacher] and I knew that it was good to be together. So what was did

was add more hours. Finally, she and I and [principal] were at this meeting when we figured out--I reached over and I said, "We can do this at [former school]. We can do this exact thing we're talking about right now." And the principal said, "Uh huh." Then we got back and I said to [Developmental first grade teacher], "Look. We really can do this. I happen to know these teachers are moving." It happened at just the right time. [Principal] would not force anybody to move or anything like that. But if we could work it out. . .and I did. I moved people on paper. I had it worked out. We had to go get a fourth person. We had the Developmental first grade, the first grade--[first grade teacher] and I had worked together already. All she had to do was transfer to first, and there was a first grade opening. So that worked perfectly. She could stay right in her room. [Developmental first grade teacher] would need to move. And then we had a second grade teacher, and we knew [second grade teacher]'s background and her philosophy. So we approached [second grade teacher], and she had to leave her room. So it ended up that 2 people had to move, but there were 2 empty rooms because people had transferred. So it was a perfect set-up.

The problem came when we did it. . .I went to [principal] and told him this is what we need to do, this is how we need to do it, this is when we need to do it. . .We had the parent program set up. Who did you tell? [Principal], the administrator. He agreed that that would be easy, that we could go ahead and do it. And so, the next year, that's what we did. Nobody knew where room assignments were. It was like we snuck it in on the rest of the faculty. It was never approached from an administrative standpoint, as to "This is what we are going to do." It was kind of rumor that went out: "Why is [Developmental first grade teacher] going there? Why is [second grade teacher] going there? What's going on here? What are they doing?" And that's when the whole thing started. I KNOW that we can trace it back to then, in the insecurities of other teachers, and the feeling that they were--that it was a surprise. It was never approached frontwards. It was approached from the back. And now, you know, hindsight is a wonderful thing. Whose decision was that? {Principal]'s. You don't ruffle feathers. O.K. And that's O.K., that's O.K. That's the way he is. I didn't know it. Hindsight's a wonderful thing. I now know lots of things I didn't know, because I was clouded by my own trust. Pure and simple. I didn't understand that it was conditional. Did that answer your question? [laughs] Yes. Whatever the question was, I know it was answered.

I'm not on my list here at all, but that's O.K. Is team time or something like it something that you would want to approach again? Yes. That was my meeting with [current principal] again. What would you do the same and what would you

do differently? I know. I've thought a long time about this. In fact, I had a meeting with [current principal] last week to introduce the idea. I happen to know that [district curr. coor.] is excited about this. I sent him the book *Full Circle* all about multi-age, and asked him to read it. And he has, and he let me know the other night. So I went in to [current principal] to discuss whether or not there's a possibility of a 3-4-5 multi-age group at [current school]. There's only one problem--we don't have a fourth grade teacher. We have two fifth grade teachers and a third grade teacher. We'd have to make a switch somehow. I don't know if that can be accomplished. I don't know if she'll be willing to do it. I've figured out the area in the school that would mean the least movement around.

When I went to IRA a couple of years ago, multi-age was a big thing. They had 2 principals from Arizona whose schools had multi-age programs. One had failed, one had succeeded. There was a principal from one, but a group of teachers from the other, so there were 2 schools represented. They compared, and they came out with 2 criteria that nothing can be a success without: the first is that for multi-age, you must, must have a holistic philosophy. To do a 3-4-5 and try to put it into little. . . The teachers must have that philosophy? Absolutely. Is there anyone else who must have that philosophy? They didn't say. The second thing was that the administration had to be not only supportive, but had to present it to the faculty as a part of the school that enlisted their aid as well as the teachers being involved. [Other faculty members should be told:] "These teachers are going out into a pilot program. They are scared. They need your advice. They need your criticism, because without that they can't grow. They need to hear from you if their program is interfering on your teaching styles in any way, shape or form." Every faculty meeting that they had, one every other week, what they did at the school was the principal would bring up different programs every other faculty meeting. Once a month, at every other faculty meeting, he would bring up the multi-age program, and he would say, "Are there concerns among the faculty? You three that are participating, do you have questions, worries, concerns, cares, anything that you need from the faculty?" Many, many times, people had information for them. Many times, they--they multi-age people--would request to go look at things in other classrooms, that they could do with the different levels. It was more an "us learning from you" than "we're doing it right, and you guys are on the outside."

The other school did the same thing [former school] did. It wasn't announced. It was brought in from the back door, it was a surprise. They were on their own, they were by themselves, and it failed. And it failed miserably. And they stopped it after one year, I think. And the other school is going great guns, and

other people are considering trying to work out new arrangements. The 2 things: They had to have a holistic view of learning, and they had to have administrative involvement with the faculty. With the larger faculty. O.K. Uh huh.

And I explained that to [current principal] and I told her that that was so, if we even had an inkling to do something like this, that the success--a lot of it--came from her involvement. Because that was what was proven by these other 2 schools. She understood what we would do with children, she understood about getting other teachers involved, and what have you. She wanted to know how I would work with vicinity, environment, and parents. She wanted to know how we would approach parents themselves, so I've got that written down and ready to present to her at our next meeting. And after that, we're going to make an appointment with [district curr. coor.], and we're going to go and talk to him.

If there's a chance that it can continue or it can begin, we'll all have to make some commitments--you know, barring moves or deaths, or anything like that--a 3-year commitment to see it through as a pilot program. There are a lot of sacrifices that go in to that. But I know--I KNOW--I don't think, I don't imagine, I KNOW--that it is the best way for children. In this world where things are so unkind and uncertain, that kindness and certainty are the 2 things that can make learning real. and I KNOW that--I don't think it, I don't wonder--I KNOW THAT. And I think it's worth fighting for.

You see, I do know it. Yes, I can tell you do. And I may be wrong, because I'm not allowing for anything else. I know--and I will be so disappointed if I don't get a chance to be a part of, even for a small group of children, to show this district that it can be done the right way. You know, we had a beginning, and even at that time, before I left, when I was talking to the others about the following year, I was talking to them saying, "We can do this. Let's share the kids. You two do Developmental first grade and 1 together, we'll do 2 and 3 together. We can do this." They could not see it. There were 2 of them that said, "No, no, no. You just can't do that. Nobody's ready for that." The other 2 of us [second grade teacher] and I, were going, "Yes we can! We can do it!" And there was a split there. We were going to have to compromise, and I knew that. And that's when things fell apart, and Big Compromise. [laughs]

What happened at [former school] was probably more devastating than anything I've experienced in my life. It was not only personal, but it was professional. Personal and professional to me are all the same person. I can't separate it. But that's not a common feeling. I learned that, too. Some people think you should

separate the two, including [former principal]. When he approached me, he said, "Can't you separate this? Can't we still be friends?" I said, "No!" You know, "No!" He betrayed the person. I am the person, both professional and personal. I am. Just AM. Well, that's like the child this morning was supposed to come to school and to carry on in spite of what had happened at home [arrest of a parent], and it doesn't make sense. No. Any more for an adult that for a child. So the thing--I went about 7 steps backwards in my career and in my faith and understanding of myself, until I was able to look at it in a different reflection. And I'm still working on it. I'm still not back to the total certainty of who and what I am as I was before. It was devastating. It was terrible. And I'm having a hard time forgiving. And I know that's wrong, but I'm still having a difficult time doing that.

O.K. I'm going to switch gears here. Good. Let's talk about professional growth. I'm going to ask this in a couple of ways. First of all, how would you describe opportunities for professional growth in your current teaching assignment?
You mean, do they exist? [Laughs] Yes. O.K. Whether they exist or not, I take them. We have no professional leave in our district. I have to take personal leave. I think any professional growth is worthwhile, at all levels, in all areas. I think discussion of what goes on should not be discouraged in the lounge, but encouraged, because in sharing is how we learn and grow. If we're discouraged about talking about kids--no, no, no! You need to talk about it. Somebody may have a wonderful idea. Professional reading: I think principals should share all pertinent professional reading. If he or she has people that are interested, they should put articles in their boxes. If they have people with early childhood things--they should continually invite conversation. They should say, principals or anybody should say, "Look." We have a small group of 7 teachers that share everything. We run things off for each other and put them in our boxes all the time. That's a small group. How did you find each other? We were the ones on the transfer list when [last year's principal] got transferred. As God as my witness. All 7 of us. When [last year's principal] was transferred from [current school] to [another school] we all signed up on the transfer list, all 7 of us. We were then badmouthed by the PTO who said that these 7 do not care about [current school] or our children. So the 7 of us were grouped together at that time in a very unkind way. So we found each other real quickly when were realized we were are all being talked about, and we went from there. And then we discovered that we were the 7 on the transfer list. So we started as the "transfer 7", and we still meet and talk every Friday. You're all still there? Uh huh. We were not allowed to transfer. Nobody from [current school] was

allowed to transfer, nor was [other school]. So the district put a ban on it. We couldn't get out.

O.K., back to professional. Professional leave? Professional growth. O.K. Professional growth, through sharing, through reflection, through talking with each other. Staff development is a joke, and it doesn't have to be. Professional growth, for instance at conventions and things. In our district, it's never advertised. You have to *really* look for things to go to. We didn't know anything about [national storytelling festival held nearby]. We have known nothing about the early childhood one [in another state] that I'm going to next week. Catherine Fosnot is going to be there! So, any opportunity that you have, you have to be looking for yourself and then share with the other people around you. There is no true professional growth. It's not brought by anybody. Our principal doesn't show us. Quite frankly, when we asked for professional leave for this, the board would not approve it. We were not allowed to go to the administration. We were not allowed to go to the superintendent, because the principals were told: no professional leave. So we weren't even allowed to take our case to a higher court. We were just turned down flat. If you want to go, you have to take personal leave. You know, after 5 personal days, you get docked for your pay. No professional growth is really encouraged in this district at this point.

[Superintendent] tried when he first got here. He tried with all his heart, and he kept being backed off all the time. And I think he's given up at this point. Whether he sends things out to principals and then gives them the idea that nothing is going to be supported, I don't know. I don't know where it's all broken down. Reggio Emilia, when I went there [conference in Minnesota]--all those opportunities I had to seek out myself. It was never.. . .College, you know-- continuing classes and whatnot--is not encouraged.

Staff development in our district is a couple of meetings in the morning and then spend the rest of the day in your room. You know, *professional development days* should be *professional development*! Not spend the day in your room and get it ready for open house! You know, that's on your own time, folks. So I'm discouraged about that.

Professional growth can be within a person if they have somebody to share with. And I don't think many people share. It's a solitary profession, and I think people that leave here at 4 o'clock close their doors, they go home, they're with their family, they come, they open their doors at 8:30 the next morning--they don't

share. They take care of their own little niche in their own little room. Schools are built wrong. They should be all wide open. They should have no walls. No walls, or one wall--a back wall. You know, to hold the door to get out for the fire drill. They're built wrong and they have the wrong emphasis.

There are some buildings--and this is one of the things that I came to realize at [former school]--the building was not for children, it was for teachers. O.K., the teachers had the say of what was going on. And [former principal]'s philosophy was, if the teachers are happy, the children are going to be happy. [Last year's principal] was, when the children are happy, the teachers will be happy. You know, it's such a nuance, and yet it's such a *major* difference in how they perceive their role.

Mine [my philosophy] is, I want to be in a building where the children are happy--that's what's going to make the teachers happy, not vice versa. Because the children aren't happy if the teachers are happy: they're submissive. And I learned that; I watched it; I watched it first-hand. And professional growth is the only way we're going to get out of that cycle. It's the *only* way. And it has to be encouraged and furthered, and it's not being. At least not here. And it makes me sick, and I don't know what to do about it.

What about professional growth opportunities for better behaviorism. For teachers? Yes. For teachers to become better behaviorists. Do you think that that is--would you consider that a professional growth opportunity?

Now this is going to be strange answer. Yes. Because it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that when you apply it [behaviorism], it doesn't work. Remember, I was in ED, special ed. major. I went out 3 weeks--3 weeks, and I knew that none of that stuff was worth anything. It didn't work. Children did not respond to imposition. They responded to caring and love and affection. They did not respond to control in any way, shape, or form. I knew--2 years I spent in that masters program!--I had a behaviorist background in Illinois were I was an aid to a conduct disorder classroom. It was called BD, behavior disorder, program. And I knew then that when you held children down in little rooms that had locks on them, that it wasn't going to work. So I went into ED, special ed., trying to figure out how to change it. You weren't taught any of that. It was more of the same. You know, put their name, put the check, all that assertive discipline stuff. It doesn't work, because if a kid gets 2 checks, he might as well just get the third and fourth, you know. Do the whole thing--it's done anyway.

For a teacher to go and hear these things, and then go back and try them and see the ones that don't work, is an education. For a teacher to go and come back and say at a sharing, "Well, this is what I heard. Have any of you people heard any of this stuff?" And the rest of us can speak up and say, "Oh, yeah. Go ahead and try it, and come see me when you do, because I'll tell you what happened to me." It opens the door for professional growth. Any learning experience, whether it's positive or negative, if it's shared. If it's not reflected upon and shared, then it's worthless. I don't care what it is, I don't care if it's constructivism, it's still worthless if it's not opened up and shared and talked about. That's what makes learning. I believe that, too. I really do. Learning what not to do is as much learning as learning what to try, what options are there. You find out right away what not to do, what's wrong, what's hurtful. And it's so clear in some of those behaviorist things: *when they put a child in a little room and lock the door and sit outside while the child is sobbing*--nobody can tell me there's anything right that you can learn. It's just like that, how wrong it is. I know that isn't the answer you expected.

No, my next question: Then why is it [behaviorism] so prevalent? I think it has to go back to history and to how we were brought up in the assembly line type thing. I don't think we've outgrown any of that. I think there's a majority of people that say, "I came through the system O.K., so it should continue." What they're not under--I shouldn't say they don't understand, because I really think they do--they just don't know. They do understand that things are different now, that society is different now. They don't see how it touches their lives. They don't see a whole picture, they see a narrow picture. They don't understand that supporting any kind of change would be beneficial to all. They don't understand that if doing it the same way was good for them, doing it a different way may be even better. It's the constructs that children have to face now. They don't understand that to have a roomful of children that don't have stable family lives can impact all of them. And that teaching styles have to change to meet those needs of individual children, but it benefits all. All change is healthy--*all change*. Even change that is not because they learn to tell what's right and what's wrong, what's good and what's bad, what feels good and what feels bad. They learn to avoid those bad feelings--it's like creating submissive children. It's the same type thing. But change--then they can look for more change. They can begin to change again. And teachers can grow that way. What was the original question? [both laugh] Then why is it so prevalent--why are those conditions and those actions so prevalent in teaching? And fear. Fear is another part of that. Fear is a major part. They want--and I can relate to it-- they are so afraid of not having a recipe and being held accountable for a risk. If you have a recipe,

you can't go wrong. That's what they've always been told. What they don't know, is that if you put a little of this in, a little of that in, a little of the other in, you can make it better. But they haven't gotten to that. They still want that recipe. They want to be sure. And that's not a bad thing. Look at what they're doing. I was taught this, this, this, and this. It's always worked for years, and it's going to work again. That's not a bad thing. The fact that they can't move forward and add a little of this and a little of that to make it different is fear. And it's a huge fear, because they have children that they can mess up. Imagine--thinking, "If I don't follow this recipe, I can do something damaging to these children." What an *awesome* responsibility. So I can see why teachers fall back to that recipe. That's a terrible thing to waste or to experiment with: a child's mind, a child's being. And unless you're really sure of your own understanding, it is hard to leave that recipe where it's been proven. So you can't fault a lot of these teachers for that fear.

But are there people out there who are sure about the recipe? Yes. Tell me about that. I don't understand it, [laughs] so I can't really tell very well. There are some--and one was my cooperating teacher--my cooperating teacher is: "2 pages a day, this is the way I've always done it, this is what's good for children, I am in control, I will impose this learning on them, and they will learn." O.K. They are sure of their recipe because they only see one facet of that child: that's the academic progress. They don't see what competition does to them, they don't see the demeaning, they don't see the humiliation, they don't see the pain, because that's not what they've been conditioned to see. They only see: "Well, he got this. He got a 90. He only missed one." "Oh, 60 again. D." It's what he deserved. They can't see anything other than that 4 wrong is a D. They can't see that 4 wrong makes my heart just a little bit smaller. Their dimension is limited. And that's why they do it. Ignorance. They don't know any better. They can't take the risk of seeing the whole child; it's too threatening to what they've always done. And, it might mess up the recipe. And it might make them ask themselves questions, and they're not comfortable with questions. It's sad.

O.K. This question is not on my sheet. Why can you ask yourself those kinds of questions, those hard questions? Me personally? You personally. Have you always been able to do that? No. I went through 4 years of college at different rates: 2 years here, 10 years later 2 more years, and I finally got them all done, then went into this masters program. Went out into the free world, the real world, got a classroom, and in 3 weeks I knew everything I'd learned was trash. The kids weren't responding, they were blank, they didn't give a fig about what we were doing. It was meaningless, it was stupid, it was. . .And I had the

[garbled], the group that did what I wanted to please me, but there was no learning going on. All this time I invested in my education, and none of it worked!!? Nothing they told me worked??!! Come on! So I had to ask questions. It was like--It was not only apparent, you couldn't miss it. I don't see how anybody can sit in there and really look and see what's happening.

I found through just playing around what worked. What I did with this class, is I said, "Let's throw this book out, and let's do a play. Let's do something we all know. We'll write it, we'll do it. *Wizard of Oz*. Everybody knows it. Let's cast it, let's do it." And we did. The participation, the smiles, the light in their eyes-- it was all there. That is what I thought I wanted. That is what I had been looking for. It wasn't in any book, it wasn't with any of the behaviorism. You didn't need that behavior management system I started with, because you didn't need it when they were doing that [the play]. That's what I realized--what was right and what was wrong.

And then I had to look for--I needed help. I still wanted a recipe. I thought, "How do I do this?" I see what's happening here. And you know, this is 3 weeks in the life of--so I found this little thing at [university], and it was one of those little things they put in every teacher's box, except I read it--I read everything. And this one said that [university] had mini-courses, and one was called "Literature-Based Reading" with [professor]. A *weekend course*. I went there, and she was talking about what I needed. She was talking about exactly that you had to go from the children first. I thought, "Where were you in my 4 years here? In my 6 years--*6 years!* Where were you?" And then she--I think she felt sorry for me because I was the only one from [town], and everybody else had come in little groups, 3 from here, 3 from there--so she kind of felt sorry for me. She followed through on me to see if I was all right. I listened to [professor], and I heard her say what I had been feeling. And then it was easy to start looking again, and to keep looking. Did that answer your question? <u>Yes. Yes. I just had to ask that. I'm going to quit for now.</u>

KENDRA
Written Protocol
Written Between First and Second Interviews

I know I was in a state of shock, disbelief and confusion. How can it be that I am responsible for hurting our program and 2 great friends. Solely responsible, no less!

Calmly, he explains to me that I have too many observers, too many computers. I get to go to too many school functions, I get special scheduling, I have too many books and I spend too many hours at school along with receiving too many grants and manipulatives. He relates that the other teachers are complaining and their perceptions are that I have, and get, too much. They generalize their perceptions to include our multiage program and the perceptions of me are hurting my two teammates. Immediately I become defensive and explain that I bring computers from home, the school functions were arranged by the PE teacher and the librarian, the observers come because our program is unique, I bought the manipulatives and books, I spend time at school because I'm not organized enough to get it done during school hours, my schedule stinks and I write the grants cause I'm running out of money. This doesn't matter. . . their perceptions (misperceptions) are their reality.

Still in shock, I am feeling around for an answer. "If I leave, will the program be allowed to continue?"------"Yes."

"Will you support the multiage group?"------"Yes."

"Will be teammates be able to function comfortably with this faculty?"-------
"Yes."

* * *

I had only one choice. I put in my transfer request to another building.

* * *

When the decision to work together was made, we had basically committed to four years. D-1, 1st, 2nd & 3rd. In 4 years we would have seen them through our developmentally appropriate, literature-based, whole language-type program. We would have interaction and relationships with the same children for 4 years. The benefits of this "family type" grouping were very apparent already in the second year. The trust was established, the relationships were solid. The caring

and nurturing were intact. The kindness abounded in this competition-less "society." It was good.

And it was gone--from me--in a moment. I had to trust the administrator. He was the only one with the big picture. I, Kendra, was the cause of hurt towards my two teammates, and I was the cause of the unacceptance of our program. A heavy load. Needless to say, I have since reflected in my part and my actions, as well as other people's responses.

I was threatening, I knew that. I was different, I knew that. My classroom was viewed as chaotic and uncontrolled. I was a child advocate even when I had to disagree with teachers and assistant administrators. I spoke out against corporal punishment, timed tests, red ink and spelling bees. Students loved what we did, they requested me. We held parent meetings to help parents understand our program. I developed true friendships with the parents. I signed up to be a part of all PTO functions, I served on numerous faculty and district committees. I was totally involved in the school.

I had waited 14 years to go back to school, to do what I'd always dreamed of doing. My daughter was self-sufficient and very independent, my husband was involved in his work. [Former school] was my living experience. It was in each breath. I was learning every day. I was growing toward a more meaningful learning experience for children. I was absolutely certain that what I was moving toward was right for children. Other teachers were there, but for those two years only 7 of us really exchanged ideas. (LD teacher, PE and music teachers) I was truly wrapped up in my little world, I felt secure. For 6 years the administrator had seemed to value what I was doing. He was supportive in my efforts to learn and to focus on children's needs. I don't know when the change happened.

I could not stop believing what I believe, to better fit in. I would not go back to a teacher-controlled classroom. I did threaten teachers by my energy, my knowledge, my relationship with children. I always handled this by understanding that the problem was theirs. They owned the problem, not me.

It was the withdrawal of administrative support that left me on that limb. He allowed the "misperceptions" to exist. He listened when teachers complained that it took them 4 months to get our kids up to speed in workbooks and math pages. They were outraged when our kids would speak up (talk back) to defend their writings and their experiments. He gave them credence when he didn't explain that the computers and "stuff" were brought from home or bought for school. He accepted their perceptions as their realities and knew that the 2

"realities" could not co-exist without reflecting on the whole building and himself.

I was out on a limb and I have learned to fall back on the certainty of my knowledge. Children learn through relationships and the first relational quality comes from the teacher. The "society" we create by caring is contained to one room. If anything, I am even more convinced that children have reason to fear and be wary of adults who are in charge--me, too.

I am much less involved in the school as community, but still involve my beingness within my students and classroom. I trust less, read more and listen when students question authority. I seek professional growth through college classes. I try always to nurture wonder and lead children to question--all aspects of living--because that is what I equate as learning.

In essence, I feel terribly humbled, and sad. I question my professional existence now, where once I took it for granted. I've moved through the pain and yet acknowledge the dull ache that will ever be a part of me. I am more able to understand and relate to children's confusions when the world seems to be moving too fast and no one is listening when the content of the child is so important.

I also like to think that I have learned to be more professional and to be able to consider many perspectives. I try to have more toleration from a more feeling attitude. I try to judge less on actions than on feelings. It helps to accept the teaching profession where it is.

KENDRA
Written Protocol #2
Written for Graduate Class & Shared With Me

I subbed in the district for a full year and got my first classroom by default due t another's misfortune. I was ready! I had waited fifteen years to be a teacher and I was ready for this. MY room looked great. It had special bulletin boards I had purchased. It had science posters and the rules for unlocking spelling words, it had my classroom rules and my behavior management "card" system. The desks were aligned and the textbooks were neatly stacked on each desk. I would be a prodigy to my "training."

I was one of five third grades and the other teachers were affable and ever so helpful. They taught me to run the copiers and helped me put my daily schedule together. They introduced me to the teacher manuals and to the blackline masters' notebooks kept in our common cabinet. They helped me group my students for teaching. (They advised me to keep the same grouping for math because "usually if they're low in one area, they are slow in everything.")

It took exactly three weeks before I was certain that this was not what I had envisioned. The blank faces, the yawning, the misbehaviors, and the silent submission were robotic in nature. These kids obviously viewed learning as a necessary evil. I was disillusioned, perplexed, and worried. Where were the eager students who performed so purposefully and happily? I searched for something, anything to put that spark in their eye. I stumbled on it, quite by accident. We were doing "The Wizard of Oz" in our basal readers and one of the students wished aloud that we could "Do" it instead of just read it. We wrote and performed our own version complete with props, sets, costumes and script. It was during this time I realized that the children's own involvement was the very thing that was "learning." The spark was in the children, themselves, not something that I could create, but rather something I could allow. We redesigned our classroom, together, in small steps at first.

I also found some outside guidance for myself. I took a course entitled "Literature-Based Reading" from [professor]. She had so much enthusiasm and shared reams of professional materials on child-centered classrooms. This truly made sense and helped shape my understanding. All of it was in keeping with what the children had taught me.

My classroom began to change noticeably. The students were more active, desks were moved out of our way, we worked as small groups and learned that sharing was learning. This was it! I was excited. I shared all my "knowledge" with my colleagues. I took articles and made copies for them to read. I suggested that we do more plays and actual science experiments and make towns out of cereal boxes, and trees out of collected leaves and seeds. I was happy. I found a support system with the media center person and she helped me find sets of books and author studies. Everything was perfect, I thought.

By the end of the year I was so wrapped up in my own discoveries of learning, I failed to notice the coolness and disdain emanating from my cohorts. I was working in my room one morning and hadn't gotten around to turning on the lights, when inadvertently I overheard a conversation between two of my third-grade colleagues which began ominously with the words, "She is so ignorant, she thinks she's teaching--I wonder what idiotic thing she has planned for today." I cowered by the sink and listened for another few minutes of criticism and bitterness. The gist seemed to be that a teacher should never be friends or care about their students, teaching should not be misconstrued as fun, noise is contrary to a school environment, and ultimately chaos is the result of losing control. The consensus was that they had tried to help me, but I was stubborn and would have to learn the hard way.

One of the two participating teachers was my Cooperating teacher on my Entry Year committee. I was surprised. I hadn't paid enough attention to see this coming. Then I was hurt, confused, alone, and afraid. I was too embarrassed to share what I had heard with anyone else.

The impact of my involuntary eavesdropping sent me to question and reflect again on what I was doing. I turned to the professional materials from [professor]. It was the affirmation that I needed to continue in my "misguided" way.

I was shaken but I learned three invaluable lessons.
One:	Children's ideas and current educational research were saying the same thing.
Two:	Change is a complicated affair that highlights determination and fear from all perspectives.
Three:	My chosen profession was somewhat less professional than I had hoped.

The result of this encounter has helped me grow in many and sundry ways, the first being that my resolve to trust children was strengthened. The second resolve was to try and befriend first-year teachers. Thirdly, I resolve to try and heighten my own sense of professionalism and sensitivity.

KENDRA
Interview #2
March 22, 1995

These are some questions that I put together in conjunction with [Professor], because she read the interview and came in and closed the door and said, "Let's talk." She had some suggestions about directions she thought we needed to go, as well. O.K. You know, [the first interview] was almost the first time I could be somewhat objective--the first time in two years. And April 28, was the day; it's coming up for two years. Then when I was writing about it, I thought, "I can write this. . .now. And it's the first time I've ever put it down on paper, because I didn't want to see it in print before. I could actually step back away from it a little bit. Good! So, it is healing. Maybe it will be a helpful process. I am not a therapist--that is not my job! Far be it from me to make any claims, but I'm glad that at least it may be a little bit helpful. It is. It is certainly helpful to me; I hope it is a little bit helpful to you.

Tell me more about the story of how *you* decided to put together a multi-age group at your former school. O.K. We went to this meeting. The administrator was there, and me and [Developmental first grade teacher]. The three of us were there. And in the middle of listening to this meeting--what we had done was to describe our dream school--and the powers that be had nixed all the different things. The powers that be" in terms of-- There were superintendents there. And, you know, they were nixing things as we were bringing them up, saying, "Our dream school would have. . ." "Well, no we can't do that." "But our dream school would have. . ." "No, we can't do that." But in the midst of all this, I sat back and said to the other two, "We can do this. We have the perfect set up." (at that building). "It is *the* perfect setup. If we could just get one other person, I know. . ."-- and I knew one of the other people; [Developmental first grade teacher] and [first grade teacher] would be agreeable right away, and all we needed was one more person. And I knew that [another teacher] was looking to move from first graded, also. So, that's all that was said at that point. But the administrator said, "Yes, we could." He agreed that we could--that we had the perfect setup for what we were talking about with the dream school. So shortly thereafter, [Developmental first grade teacher] and I had been study buddies for years--you know, like three years--and we had enlarged our study buddy with the Developmental first grade/third to meet more and more often, so I sat down with [Developmental first grade teacher] and [first grade teacher] and said, "O.K. Now, [first grade teacher], you can move to a first, [Developmental first grade teacher] can stay in Developmental first grade, I'm in a third. All we need is a

second grade, and [another first grade teacher] wants to move."

The beauty of it was that it fell into place because at the same time [the district] was opening a new building, and they were taking half our teachers away. We were going to lose eighteen teachers to this new building. And the three that were in our area had put in for requests to go, so we had this whole area that was open and available. It was not displacing anyone other than those of us who would move to facilitate. It was--it was ideal. And after we figured that out, [first grade teacher] of course, agreed right away. We approached [another first grade teacher]--in fact, she was down with her mother in Houston, and we called her down there, and she agreed. And then I went in and said to [principal]--what I did was to put out my plans in writing: this is who would move, this is where we'd move, these are the grade levels we would take, this would be the least problem, because we wouldn't be unseating anybody. The grade levels were there; all of it would be, you know, easy to do without disrupting anybody. The part I needed was the P.E. and the music teacher to go along and say that they would take our multi-age groups--one group with five Developmental first grade, five first graders, five second graders, and five third graders. That was my only hang-up--and to get a schedule. I promised to do the schedule, O.K.? For the whole school? Yes, for the whole school. Now, I didn't think it was going to come to that, because I figured, you know--they ask you what your needs are, and you put your needs--but it came to it, and I ended up doing the entire schedule. So the P.E. teacher was very willing to give it a shot. The music teacher was a little bit harder to convince, *and* the biggest supporter when it got started.

O.K. Let me ask you something. If you had not been at the dream school meeting--if it had been the other teacher and the principal and all the other people who were there--if you had been sick that day and hadn't gone, do you think it would have happened? Now this is an egotistical answer on my part: No. A lot of people talk and think, but very few *do*. And I--once I get something, I like to move on it. I'm a doer. I didn't let it go after the talk. I went right back and got [another teacher] and pulled [Developmental first grade teacher]--she was a wonderful supporter. I dreamed up all the things at night. I would wake up at 3:00 in the morning, and would know just how I could present it. And I put it all down on paper, and I went right in. I didn't let it die. I kept it while--I don't know. I mean, I really can't say what would have happened if I hadn't. . .Right. . . .moved, hadn't been the steamroller. But, I've seen enough things die when I backed out of it, to know. In fact, when I left [former school]. [second grade teacher] came with me, and it died. Now, it was still going on, in name at least,

the year after you left, right? Yes. (Pause). Yes. O.K. Because I visited it once that year. And they had--I honestly don't know, except I heard that they were meeting once a week. Right. You know, that's a lot different than two hours a day, five days a week. But whatever they were doing--and it was all on the Q.T. Nobody was really, you know, talking about what they were doing. So I don't know other than that. O.K. I really don't. Did it go on this year? Yes. Same kind of a deal? I-- You don't know. I've never asked. I don't want to know. I don't know, either. I was just curious. I know they're doing some things. I don't know to what extent. It was strange, and I don't know if we got into this in the last [interview], but as it neared the end of the second year, I was already plotting to move it into a different sphere. I wanted that three-four and one-two. . .Yes, you mentioned that. I was nixed by the one set of teachers that said, "It will never work. What we have is fine." They had already gotten into this routine of "what we had was fine." And I kept saying, "But read this book. There is so much more that we could do." [They replied], "No, no. no. We'll never do it here. . ." So it died. That died. And then I left. In my honest opinion, I don't think it would have unraveled without me. I honestly believe I was the driving force behind it. As egotistical as that sounds [laughs]--I may be wrong. Maybe [Developmental first grade teacher] could have carried the ball, but I don't think so. Do you think *could have carried the ball* and *would have carried the ball* are two different things? Yeah. And at that time, [Developmental first grade teacher] had in her life, medical problems with her husband. So I think also that would have interfered with her picking it up and going. Of course, [Developmental first grade teacher] was crushed when [second grade teacher] left. She thought they were going to carry on, just the two of them. And then when [second grade teacher] came with me, [Developmental first grade teacher] was crushed. And she threw up her hands and said. . .She did do something with somebody, but I'm not sure what, and to what extent. I know she moved out of the pod across the hall. That's all I know. [Laughs.] Oh, that's interesting. Yes. And she changed from Developmental first grade to first grade. I knew that. I certainly don't think [former principal] would have--if it hadn't come from me or [Developmental first grade teacher]--he certainly wouldn't have carried it. *He would never have* approached the faculty and said, "I have this wonderful idea. Does anybody want to. . .?" *Never, ever.* That's just not his personality.

I was going to ask: Is it a personality issue with him, or do you think it's his idea that ideas need to come from teachers instead of from administration? I'm overstepping my bounds here saying what he would think, but--and [former principal] told me--he really told me this--that a school is made up of teachers, and if the teachers were happy, the children would be happy. And that's where

we disagreed greatly, because I believe that if the children are happy, then the teachers will be happy. But he was devoted to making teachers happy. So if no one had come to him, he would never have brought it up himself. Never. I know that for a fact. He would never have said, "O.K., we have this place, and would anybody be interested in. . .?" So he would never throw the pebble in the pond? No. But he'd watch the ripples. That's sort of how I think of it, is throwing the pebble in the pond, and sometimes the ripples die, and sometimes they grow. Right. But that was not his style. No, no. But he was supportive when I went to him and laid it all out. And then he pulled all four of us in and talked to us, and he was very supportive at that time.

You once referred to the idea for the multi-age group as "my baby." What did you mean by that? It belonged to me. [Laughs.] We put it together as a foursome, but the drive--again--was mine. I'm the one that pushed everybody to move. [Developmental first grade teacher] was very reluctant, because she had to move. She had to move her classroom? Yes, and she was really reluctant, and she kept trying to say, "Well, we could do it the next year." And I'd say, "No." Did you recognize while this was happening that you were the driving force--that it was yours? Yes. Yes. I did. And we would get together, and they would ask me, "If we did this, what do you think about that?" We finally did things as a group, and we all agreed. There were several times--like in a marriage--where you got started. . .there were several times that we disagreed. And there were some hurt feelings, and there were tears, and a growing--a coming to recognize that you are a foursome, you're not just a twosome. There were times when two would gang up on the other two, and we'd lay it all out. We met every Tuesday, without fail, for about three or four hours. Every Tuesday. And that's where we worked out some of these things, and that's where we got into some hassles. Then as it progressed from the beginning, then we all four took our parts. Then it was no longer just mine. Then it belonged to everybody. O.K. As [second grade teacher] began to speak--she was very quiet when we started--and as she began to be a viable voice in this, all sorts of things opened up, because she's just wonderful. [Developmental first grade teacher] and I bucked horns an awful lot, because we were both leaders. Sometimes when [Developmental first grade teacher] and I didn't see eye-to-eye, we had some problems that we worked through. [first grade teacher] was very quiet when we started, and she drew her strength as [second grade teacher] began to speak up. It evolved into a real team. It didn't start out that way, but it *evolved*, and it was so much stronger that way. It truly was. So then it wasn't--they wouldn't come to me and say, "We had this idea." They'd say, "We decided to do--oh, you missed that last meeting, by the way--we decided to do this." And that was fine. So, it

may have started out--but it changed, and it became more and more. . . .Again, as everybody became more comfortable with their part and realized that they were a quarter--one/fourth of the whole thing--then it belonged to everybody. The ownership at that time. Everyone had ownership. Maybe that's it. Now, it weakened a little when [first grade teacher] left, and [new first grade teacher] stepped into her place. Did that happen at semester? At the end of the first year. [first grade teacher] had maternity leave, and [new first grade teacher] had been [Developmental first grade teacher]'s student teacher. So she stepped right into [first grade teacher]'s shoes, and it worked well, except that link was missing. Then it became a threesome, and [new first grade teacher] was never really a strong contributing member. She was a first year teacher, had student taught under [Developmental first grade teacher], and she didn't have the input that the rest of us did. We all recognized that, and so did [new first grade teacher]. Did she student teach under [Developmental first grade teacher] the first year of the multi-age? Yes. Yes, that's why it was very easy for her to step in where she did. Easy--but hard. Yes. And being a first year teacher, she just didn't have the strength of voice that the rest of us did. And she was ever willing to learn, so she was concentrating on learning and listening. It strengthened [Developmental first grade teacher]'s resolve, because she and [new first grade teacher] became real square then as a team, and so did [second grade teacher] and I. That worked really well, because they were Developmental first grade and first, and we were second and third. So a lot more of the sharing came with [second grade teacher] and I, because we were directly across from each other. When she was doing her math lots of times, we would just turn and around and do whatever. When we were doing--if her kids were interested in what we were doing, her kids would come over to my room. We always knew--were aware of what each other was doing. So the bonds began to get closed in, and yet when we all sat down on Tuesday, everyone was equal. And we had very, very little interaction with the administrator. None. He didn't come sit in on our meetings; he really wasn't a part of what was going on a lot. He just--you know, I always took that as a sign of faith that he knew everything was fine. That everything was going well.

That may bring us to my next question, which is: In retrospect, before things fell apart, what signs were present that your administrative support was dwindling, and why do you think you didn't see the signs at the time? We were lost in our world. A lot of this was our fault, because we shut out everything around us. There was too much to be, you know, taking in. We were like sponges trying to take all this in, to work with all the nuances and the differences and the changes. So we were so involved in our own little world that we didn't look out very often. There were a couple of signs. Now, this is a strange one, and I looked back at it

even shortly after all this happened, and said to myself, you know, "You idiot! It was right there on the blackboard, you just didn't bother to read it." We [she & principal] were personal friends. And suddenly there wasn't as much interaction on a personal level. Tell me more about that: The personal versus professional relationship that you had with your principal. We had a personal relationship. It started out--we were teacher and principal, and then we realized that we were interested in a lot of the same type things. Strange, I think I told you--we went to a Trivial Pursuit game, and that's what brought the awareness that we were interested in a lot of the same things. And then my husband and [principal]'s girlfriend at that time--they were not married yet--we just kind of hung around together. We were together at least twice every week, and we took trips together, and we went to their wedding on Colorado. I mean, we did everything together. We shot pool together, we played trivia together, we roasted marshmallows together, we had all our holidays--we spend Thanksgiving together, St. Patrick's Day. We did--we *were* best friends. And another couple that played with us also. Was the other couple anybody involved in the school? No. She was a teacher, but in another school. That--the professional relationship was--in fact, it was so *divided*, not anybody at the school. . .We had an assistant principal there for a year before she realized that we had any kind of relationship other than-- The professional one. Right. And when she found out--it came out in kind of a strange way--when she found out, she was very, very surprised. She never would have guessed it. Not many people knew, because at school we didn't talk a lot. We did our business--school business--at school. When we went out playing, we didn't do that. Very, very rarely did we ever talk school stuff, and when we did, both my husband and [principal's spouse] jumped all over us. "Uh-uh. You guys are here now, you're not back there." So we didn't have very often. . .He and I did several workshops together in different places, and we went over stuff, but that was all we had done at school.

I don't know how one was. . .(Pause) That was one of his real problems. He said to me after it was all over, "I thought you could separate the professional from the personal." And then he said, "I did." I went, "You *did not!*" O.K. This just occurred to me. Maybe this is overgeneralizing, but do you think that is any--in any way a gender issue? I read Carol Gilligan's book about women and relationships, and some other things as well--Madeline Grumet's book *Bitter Milk*--and so on, that really --what you said about that really struck me as being in keeping with what they have found. What do you think? I agree. In looking back--and again, I may be out of line. This is just from my perspective; I can't speak from any other. From my perspective, I think that he was somewhat threatened by me, and he was the *male* and I was the little *female*. I do think that

was an issue. I think that's an issue--as I see patterns through the years I was there, it establishes itself very clearly, that was a hang-up he had. But I've read elsewhere about men--particularly professional men--being surprised when women intertwine what they consider obviously separate roles. And I just sort of wondered if it. . . Probably. He truly was surprised. I'm asking you to put thoughts into his head, and I don't know. . . And I was surprised that he was surprised, because he'd known me so well to know that I was--I lived everything I believed. And he *knew* that. So when it came out like that, and it was on such a surface level for him. We were at a friend's wedding together, you know, two weeks after all this happened, and he came up behind me and he said, "Are you still mad at me?" And I couldn't even look at him, and I said, "Mad is not the correct word." He said, "Disappointed?" I said, "Bingo." And I walked away. Because I couldn't talk to him. Couldn't talk to him for a long time. (Pause). But I don't think he ever separated his professional and his personal either. Maybe people can do that. I can't relate to that. I don't know--can people really do that? I don't see how. I don't get it. I mean, it doesn't make sense to me either. So, because I can't imagine it--even though he professed he did, I think--I honestly think. . .[Laughs] looking back--this is still part of your question, and this is a terrible thing. I know this from some of the evaluations that came in. You have to do an evaluation on your building administrator, and the evaluation came in and I knew somebody was in that group that did this. One of the things was that he had friendships within the building and those people were getting favors. I think at that point he backed out of a personal relationship, and that's when everything began to . . .I think it interfered with his professional thinking, that somebody else might realize that we were friends. And I was the teacher with all the computers and all the books and all the manipulatives. I was the kid who had everything, but nobody realized it was because I got it. I mean, they were *my* things. They didn't know that. It was never explained to them. They were just allowed to keep on with their perceptions. Which were. . .they were wrong. Misperceptions. Yeah. So tell me more about what signs you perhaps should have seen or could have seen? It's so funny, because it was [second grade teacher] who told me about it afterwards, who reminded me. But I had gone to her and had said, "Something's wrong with [principal]. He has not talked to me in two weeks. I don't know what's going on, but there is something wrong here." And that was the middle of April. On the day that it all fell apart, was the first day he had talked to me. In the meantime, [second grade teacher] had gone in to him to talk about an issue, a discomfort she was feeling with the faculty. She had feedback that they were saying that if they had any of our kids, it took four months to get them back on track. I had said to him on January 28--I remember the day [laughs]--That's amazing. Yes. It was January 28, I had my

evaluation. You know, he comes in and sees what I do. Right! And I had specifically said to him, "How is the atmosphere? I'm feeling lots of coolness." And he said to me as God as my witness--he said to me, "Don't worry about it. It's professional jealousy. Don't worry about it." And I said, "Are you sure?" And he said, "Certainly. Don't worry about it." [I replied], "O.K." And then three months later. . .Did you think he was doing something about it--did you have that impression? No. O.K. Did he assume that it was going to blow over? Yes. Now, I'll never second-guess the man, because he's been right a million times. I've watched it through the years. If you don't do anything, people tend to fix it themselves. I do the same thing with children: I don't interfere with them, and they *fix* it. If you interfere, the fixing then is not the way it should be. And so he sat back and waited for it to fix itself. It got way out of hand. And then we heard. . .How did you find out about his evaluation? My part was--it was a lighthouse evaluation, and there are six different parts to it. I was not on the committee to evaluate the principal. I was on a committee to institute reading goals in the building. So, I didn't have anything to do with that. But, one of the people on there was one of us. O.K. So she told us--point blank. She said--the committee that they did, that was one of their big things. She didn't say anything for obvious reasons, because she knew. So that's how it ended up. So to the best of your knowledge, you were the only person who fit that description, of being a personal friend of the principal? [Laughs.] Quite frankly, with as much time as we spent together, they didn't have time to spend with too many others. I mean, we were together at least two to three times a week, plus all our holidays and stuff. So--he'd had relationships in the past--friends with teachers. And I knew that. And everybody knew that. That was part of what he was. So, some of the other signs were that we heard--[Laughs] mistakenly heard--and it wasn't me either, I think it was [second grade teacher] who heard that there was a group meeting. You know, a group from the school, meeting at one of the local restaurants. We said, "How come we didn't hear about this Friday get-together?" And one of the other teachers said to her, "Well, if they invited you, they wouldn't have anybody to talk about." [Laughs.] So, we knew at that point that there was discomfort. All four of us, in February, went with some ideas, because we knew things were going to change; in fact, it may have been March. We knew things were changing, because of the shifts in the building and the numbers, and we wanted to protect what we had. And that's when I started bringing up going deeper into what we were doing. [New first grade teacher] brought up that she wanted out, because we were getting so much flak from parents. In order to get into our pod, you had to be Developmental first grade. Well, we had a lot of outside parents who didn't have Developmental first grade kids that wanted to be in it. I can understand that as a parent. I can, too. So--

there was a lot of flak, and she had never been on her own as a teacher, so she wanted--and wanted to go: one, two, three, four. And we were trying to figure out how we could get a fourth grade teacher in there, and so we had all of us gone to see [principal] at one point--sat down and talked to him and. . .He was *evasive*. So at that point was [Developmental first grade teacher] going to switch from Developmental first grade to first grade? Yes. To stay with the pod. Uh-huh. In fact, she already had the year before. [New teacher] took the Developmental first grade, and she took the first. Got it. And [new teacher] wanted out anyway, so. . . Yeah. There were lots of little signs that we didn't see until afterwards. You know, hindsight's a wonderful thing. [second grade teacher] picked up on some things. I don't think [Developmental first grade teacher] ever did.

The day--it was the strangest thing--because neither [Developmental first grade teacher] nor [second grade teacher] were there that day. O.K. We had a problem. The P.E. teacher came and wanted me to do something to make his life easier. It was to take the whole pod to this program, then he'd have time to set up and break down, instead of having them individually in their separate classes. I said, "Fine." So I went around and made the arrangements with the subs--Right. Because you had two subs. Right. So I went around and made the arrangements so we would all go to the program. Well. The program was for third, fourth, and fifth graders, originally, but he [P.E. teacher] asked for the whole pod to be involved. One of the pod children--a second grader--*won* a bicycle helmet. Every third, fourth, and fifth grade teacher that was there was angry. [They said], "Why did the pod even go?" Who was I to put the pod in like that? *That* is what started this whole thing. Is that right? And. . .The spark. And I had no idea. [P.E. teacher] had come to me and said, "Can you do this for me?" He said, "I have [Developmental first grade teacher]'s class when I should be setting up, and I have [second grade teacher]'s class when I'm breaking down. So bring the whole pod, and they can have their time that way, and I can do it. I said, "That's no problem." I had *no idea--none*. And then it was just one teacher after another that went in [to the principal] and said. . . Then it came out that I was involved in a library program. We had this visiting author, O.K.? Now, my class had read all her books. We did a whole unit on them. I had *no idea*--the people in the library wanted my kids to sit up front because they had done all the decorations, all the welcome cards, everything, for her. Nobody told me. What they told us is we'd be called when it was our turn to go in. They called me; I came in; there was no room. So, I sit right in front. Well, I didn't know it. Nobody came to me and said, "How come she [her class] got to do that?" But when they brought up the P.E. program, they brought up, "Well, she gets first place at the library, too.

Everybody had to move back to make room for her class. Who does she think she is? She gets everything. She's got *five* computers down there. . .And so on." Well, it all unraveled. And as I sat there listening and [principal] was going on and on and on, I said to him, "But that's not true." and he said, "It doesn't matter. It is true to them." And I said, "But it's not true. *I* had no idea. I didn't set the P.E. program. I didn't do any of that stuff. Those are my computers that I bought at garage sales, and I bought them with you at [another town]." [He said], "Yes, I know that, Kendra." But--and his deal was--those were their perceptions, and *perceptions are reality.* Those were his words. And I said, "But that's not true." [He said], "It doesn't matter. It's true to them." [I said], "So, how do you change that?" [He said], "You can't." [I asked], "So what are you telling me?" And he said, "I'm telling you that *you, Kendra,* are hurting [Developmental first grade teacher] and [second grade teacher], and everybody is *not* supportive."

O.K. Before things fell apart, think back, and try to describe work relationships in general at your former school. O.K. You mean within my group. No. That's all I can tell you. [Laughs.] I didn't know anything else. As God as my witness, I never looked outside. But you were there before the group. . . Yes. O.K. I was there before the group. I had some problems then, too. [Laughs.] I was different. Um. . .No kidding [laughs]. Different is not always good, in people's estimation. I was *very* different. I was also stupid, when I bubbled in and told them how they could do things better and make things better for children. [In a self-mocking voice]: "I know how to do this! All you have to do is--get rid of those books, and you can use this, and this, and this. . .And I was so excited." [Laughs.] Did you wait for them to ask? No. No--[hits fist into other hand]. You know, "I went and took this course and I now know what we've been trying to do--what I've been trying to do--has a name." But isn't that called collegiality? Well, it was not accepted as such. O.K. I was forceful. I had *found the answer.* And I *really* wanted to share it. And I did: [Self-mocking]: "You can do *this* and *this* . . .and [laughs]." And it got to the point where they were going [rolls eyes]. And they stopped running my dittos for me--you know, they did stop those kinds of things. [Chuckles.] You know, they found out that I wasn't doing the same art as they were on Friday. It created problems, because I *really had* found something, and I was carrying it out. And then I'd run over and I'd tell them, "You should have seen the kids this morning! They did thus-and-so and this-and-such. . ." And I went on and on and on. I didn't know--As God as my witness--I did not know until the very end of the year, that they were making fun of me. I thought--again, I get so *focused where I am at* that I can't visualize what's going on around me. When you say "at the end of the year," do you have a clue which year we're talking about? Yeah. First year. First year, as an entry

year teacher. I would go in every morning and work in my room, but I usually wouldn't turn the lights on. And they ended up right outside my door, discussing me, for --oh, ten or fifteen minutes. Then--I knew. Wow. That was my first clue. I was *so busy* getting ready, going to whole language things. I was so involved in implementing literature-based, writing process--I was so involved in that, I never paid any attention to anybody else. Let me ask you something. What you're describing doesn't sound--in terms of your entry year--it doesn't sound like what Lillian Katz or Doris Shalcross or anybody has written about typical entry year teachers being in the survival mode, not looking past tomorrow. Well now, wait. In a way, it was. Because my survival was, I *knew* that those kids were not involved in learning. Now, I had my masters in behavior disorder. Now, think about it. [Laughs.] I was primed for behaviorism. And I did it--I had the charts, the names, the checks. None of it worked, and I knew, folks, just like that [snaps fingers], that it was a waste of my time and theirs. And so I went--it's like I was thrown into disequilibrium. There's no better way to say it, because I knew none of it worked.

O.K. You made the statement earlier that "it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that when you apply behaviorism, it doesn't work." Right. Why were you able to see that so clearly three weeks into your teaching career when so many other teachers never see it at all? I had this interesting class. [Laughs.] And when--this was a class [of students] that just reacted, and when you tried to control them, you got nothing but flak and anger and hurt. Third grade? Third grade. And I mean, anger. And it was clear that the last thing these kids needed was a thumb on their head. They needed an arm around their shoulder, but they sure didn't need to be pushed around any more. I knew it right away by their intense reaction. They were--they had a whole lot more needs. Pushing them around didn't make it. If you did one check [on the board], in their minds--if you wrote their *name* up there, in their minds the day was gone. You might just as well throw it away. In my experience with student teachers and with young teachers--young in terms of their career, at least--I have seen over and over that it turns into a power struggle between the teacher and the students. And when behaviorism doesn't work, then they have a tendency to just apply it harder, longer, faster. Yeah, that's right. If you don't know what four times three is, you write it a thousand more times, and you still don't know it. So what's the difference here, do you think? I was older. I had experience in a classroom. In a behavior disorder classroom. And I had seen a master at work. Her name was Pat Harper, and she was a counselor in her heart, and a behavior disorder teacher in her occupation. And I saw her talking, her thoughtfulness, her process that moved through. I also, with her, helped create a transition program where we

transitioned special ed. kids into the mainstream, and I was for three years the mainstream aid. And I moved around wherever those kids were put in third, fourth, fifth, and sixth grades. And I just moved around and would re-direct any problems that I saw. It was almost like an intuitive feeling of what might go wrong here, or where I needed to be. I could re-direct and re-focus and remove to a safer environment if it got too tough for them. I could say, "O.K. There's too much stress here. Let's go out here and work." So that kind--that was in [another state]--that kind of program that was a *protective* program rather than a forcing type program, I think was what helped me see that nurturing was far more effective than control. Pure and simple. Pat Harper's her name, and I know she had a lot to do with that. Where others in that behavior program got into that battle of wills. Pat never allowed herself to be pulled into that. She always backed up and rethought. My position as a savior when things got too hot, I think had more to do with feelings and caring--I had a lot of background with me that a lot of people don't have.

Describe work relationships at the school where you teach now. O.K. This year? Yes. We [laughs] have a wonderful, supportive group. How many teachers in the faculty as a whole? Probably thirty five. Thirty four, thirty five, something like that. And it's probably--in fact, I know--that's it's the most open-minded faculty in our district. That's due to [last year's principal]. He chose his people carefully. He chose innovators, he chose people that could accept differences. There's nothing--and I was thinking about this the other night-- there's a comfort. At [former school] the atmosphere was open. Everybody knew--we were in such a prominent place--everybody knew what was going on with us. Now, we were in our own little world. You know, there's a comfort for people that are doing their own thing, to close their door. Not seeing what's going on in a place that might be threatening to you, but you don't have to see if you close your door. [Present school] is one of those places. When people feel that they don't want to know, they don't ask questions. They just close their doors and do what they're comfortable with. They grow in their own ways. Some of them have grown with inquiry with the Chapter 1 reading teacher we have. She came in from out of state, and she's writing process, right down the line. She's incredible. She's helped move people at their own pace. Those of us who found each other, with our own theories or our own thinkings--it's easy to find each other because you sort of stick out in different places. You're the ones without your doors closed, and it's easy to see. I noticed that at your building. There are a lot of closed doors. Uh huh. And then there are ours. And they are wide open. We don't care--if anybody wants to come see, fine. It's an inviting type of thing. And if you don't close your door, that's fine. Parents were so

judgmental last year, that it--that I think everybody in this building saw how detrimental judgment can be. Oh, that's interesting. So you think the adversities. .. Within the faculty, it's somewhat removed. But when you have a common enemy, you pull together. Exactly. Let me ask you--when you mention "the parents," I assume that it's not all the parents. Do you have a feel for how large a group it is that's so critical? O.K. And I do. In our whole town there is an organized group [names acronym]. This is an ultra-conservative group that is fearful of values being taught in the classroom. By God, I don't condemn 'em completely, [laughs] because I can understand that they mean well. Their standards can't apply to all. And me in the classroom--I have to be able to reach *all*, not a few. And they don't get that. This group--there's probably seven active members in our building--but the group is only twenty members strong. Seven of them are parents in our building! And they have neighborhood coffee klatsches, so they're pulling in more people from our building. You have, what, 500 students in your building? 600. It's a small percentage; however, their effects have been large. For instance, what they did with me last year. They already didn't like me. I mean, I already had a reputation as being open and doing something different, and then [last year's principal] hired me, which made me a double-whammy because I already came that way and then he approved of me. [Laughs.] So what they did, is they took my class list and they called all the parents and asked them to discuss with me and to demand that I remove the tables and put desks in my room, that I teach only facts and not have children's thoughts honored, to use no journals, this kind of thing. And my parents didn't do it. How do you know that those calls were made? Parents told me. They were very vocal in coming in and saying--At first I didn't get it. At first, they'd come into parent conference and they'd say, "How are you? I just want you to know what a wonderful job you're doing. My child just. . ." After about the fifth one of these, I finally said, "What is going on here?" And the parent said, "Well, we've all had calls!" And throughout the year, at three different times, they had been called. Their reason for not buying into it was *their children*. Children were happy. Their children were not only happy, they were vocal about their happiness. They were exuberant. They were having a wonderful time. They were enthusiastic. They were eager to come to school. They came when they were dying. And that--I don't have to convince parents. I set the stage. I let the parents know right up front that there are going to be differences. The kid's not going to get twenty spelling words and have spelling tests at the end of the week. Their kid's not going to be involved in the same things as the neighbor. They're all going to be doing different things. They understand that. And they are very supportive, but when their kids begin to come home--with the exception of one parent last year. This parent really--wrote the paper and did all sorts of things--

talked to the superintendent, and then when he said, "Well, we'll take your kid out of there." She said, "No! He'll kill me if you take him out." [Laughs.] Which I thought was interesting.

Did you ever consider doing anything differently because of the pressure?   No. Now, I shouldn't say no so quickly. The thought fleets through my mind periodically. It's always there. For instance, I have testing coming up. That thought--the thought of taking that testing worksheet or that first alert test, whatever it's called. You know, the principal went around and gave everybody notebooks for the kids to--you know, notebooks! I mean, workbooks! For the kids to be ready. It crossed my mind that maybe I should *open* it. I opened it. We got it at home. You see, I didn't do it. I didn't do anything with it. I opened it, though.   Everybody else did. And it's things like that, that I keep thinking, "Am I shooting myself in the foot? Am I?" But I don't believe I am. Every year, some of those things go through my head, and it's always during testing time, because there is that pressure. And folks, there is that pressure. They do your scores, you know, in the paper. The whole business. But every year since I've been a teacher, my kids have done as well as anybody else. And I've had all sorts of mixed classes. I'm finally to the point that it was *extremely fleeting* this time. [Laughs.] I just have the faith that what I'm doing is good for kids. When kids spend that much time reading every day, I don't care if it measures what it's supposed to or not--it comes through. My kids are fine, and I don't worry about it.

When all this blew up, my immediate reaction was, "Then I'll leave here so I can continue to do the same thing." My fear was--in fact, [former principal] offered to have me stay in the building and teach fourth or fifth grade, because he had a fourth or fifth grade opening. I would be out of the pod--it could continue. I would be up the hall, and it could continue. I could *fit in*. And I knew what he meant by "fit in." What did he mean--that was my question. What does he mean by "fit in?"   He meant to back off from what I was doing and become a little more typical. In fact, he wanted that for me. At the end--a year later, when I finally said to him, "I still need to work some of these things out in my head. Would you meet with me and talk." I still had to understand that it was. . .And [last year's principal], bless his heart, brought me through a lot of things, but I was still searching for what was wrong with me. How could. . .It had to be me. People just don't *do* that to friends. It had to be me. So I spent a lot of time looking at me, both as a teacher and as a person. When I talked to him [former principal] a year later, I asked him, "How is your building?" He said it was much better. Much better without me. Teachers didn't feel threatened anymore. There

were no huge programs. There was lot less backbiting. Everyone was getting along so well in his building. The building was better off without me. And then he asked me, "And how are you doing here [in present school]?" And he doesn't realize what he's saying to me, O.K.? And he said, "So how are you doing here? Are you vocal at faculty meetings?" And I said, "No." And he said, "Are you fitting in better?" And I said, "Yeah." And he said, "See? I knew you could fit in." And then he said the strangest thing I've ever heard out of a principal: He said, "You are wonderful with children. If you'd lose your professional voice and just work with children." If you'd lose your professional voice . . . I didn't fit in because I had other concerns. If you just stay with children. . .Then he asked me, "So, you're fitting in with the faculty. How about the parents? Did you have your parent meeting?" "Yeah." "Do they understand what you're doing? Have you modified what you--" I mean, he really *hoped* that I would fit in. Which I thought was really strange. And I came out of the whole thing knowing finally that the problems were more his than mine. In your estimation, what did he mean by "losing your professional voice" but "work with children?" He said--he said that I was never a failure when it came to children. He emphasized that: I was never a failure when it came to working with children. Which leaves you to know where the failure came in. [Laughs.] It's like Lillian Katz; you're waiting for the other shoe to drop. You see what he's leaving out. Lillian Katz says never to tell a child, "I like the way that Samuel's behaving," because what you're really saying is, "Because I didn't think he could." Right. But he made it very clear that professionally with other teachers and with administrators and whatnot, I was not very good. That's where my failure was. That was where my failure was. I was good with parents and students. And I think he meant, in his own way, my professional voice was my concerns over what was going on professionally. There was so much out there that needed to be learned, and nobody was learning it. [Laughs.] There's a part of me that can't understand. [Speaking hypothetically to other teachers]: Don't you understand? When you put all that red stuff over there on the paper and the kid wads it up and throws it away, don't you understand what he's telling you? But they don't. *They don't.* So there is that impatient part of me that exists. And that's the other thing he said. He said I spoke more with body language than with words. That may be true. He felt better, because he thought I was doing better. [Laughs.] And then the poor man--he reached down and hugged me and I just stood there. It was a release for me because I finally knew that I was O.K. I did. I knew at that point that it was more his problem than mine. And he didn't know. He could not relate. He didn't see the connection between that professional voice and what you were doing with children. And self! I *am* that. You can't separate the two. I *think* like that. I *am* like that. I *feel* like that. Commitment is *not* one of his

strong suits. [Laughs.] And I am totally committed, and I have a loyalty that can be a detriment at times. I am loyal to an extreme. And that is often times troublesome. To others? Yes. But I personally think it's a good quality. It's not something I would change. It's not even something I would modify. I think to have a commitment, a loyalty, an understanding, a belief system--*is* rather than doing, rather than acting--it's not an acting, it is a being. That's what he did not understand, and that's what I've always known. Although, I've got to tell you, this certainly focused it. [Laughs.] And it was totally devastating. Without [second grade teacher], I'd have never gotten up off the ground. And [last year's principal]. Those were the two--and my husband. Who, you've got to understand, suffered a huge, huge loss here. We were best friends. He and [former principal] were buddies. That was part of my guilt also. Sure. That I could not forgive, and because of that [my husband] lost. And that was one of the things that. . .Sure. That's what Gilligan writes about. She says that with men, they make decisions--sometimes--based on a sense of justice, and have very clear ideas about what is right and what is wrong. Women have more of a tendency to look at things in terms of relationships and feelings and who will be hurt by this and what can I do to alleviate that. But you understand, [former principal] was a wonderful building manager. He got rid of *the problem*, and his building was doing so much better! He was a good building manager. Instructional leader? [Waves hand for "so-so."] Child advocate? [Waves hand for "so-so."] But he was a *wonderful* building manager. So if that's what his goal was, he was doing a great job. But my goal and his goal were not going down the same road anymore. And it had to be a parting. I had a hard time with [last year's principal], because we were friends too, and I wouldn't do anything with him. [Laughs.] Wouldn't do a *thing!* Never again. And then--are you ready? [Former principal] betrayed me and [last year's principal] abandoned me. [He moved to another school out of state.] And I'm sitting there going, "Now what is it about me?" And then. . .[second grade teacher]. [She also moved out of state.] Left. And here you are. How did I function through all this? How did you? This cocky attitude I have. I knew I was making a difference. I know that, as sure as I'm sitting here. That's it.

How do you feel about trying to begin another multi-age group? How is this experience different or similar to your feelings as you began putting together the multi-age group several years ago? O.K. I know so much more. O.K. I didn't quit. I went this year--a month ago--to [current principal] and since then, she's come back to me and told me it's a "no go." [Elementary curr. coordinator] thought there wasn't enough time. Now, that was a cop-out. The major problem with what I proposed--it was a three, four, five. Again, I did the school thing, I

did who would have to be moved, I did the problems, I did the advantages--I had the whole shot and then presented it. She [current principal] took that presentation to [Elementary curr. coordinator]. You see, I had hoped that we were going to talk together. Right. Last time I talked with you, you said that. Except what she did, is she left me out of it. She went and talked to him, and then came back and told me, "Oh, he'd still be willing to meet with me." Why do you think that is? Do you have a sense for why? Oh, yeah. She's a new principal, and she came into a very difficult situation. And she's done remarkably well, and I think ruffling feathers would not be what she needs to do. And I respect that. However. . .they're wrong. [Laughs.] They're wrong. The three-four-five that I proposed had such strong background. Books like *Full Circle,* and, you know, *Multi-Age Classroom.* I mean, there's so much out there now. I've seen a couple of videos. What's her name? I can't remember. . .Anyway, I watched [another teacher in a multi-age in another town] and what they were doing, and it all just bogged right back at me: This is exactly what's best for children. Family grouping, the lack of competition, the fear being removed when you're with a family grouping--a multi-age. There's not a fear to keep up, there's not a fear to outdo, there's nothing to live up to and nothing to go back to. It's just a comfort zone that *allows* so much growth. It allows it, and that's all it does. It *allows* it. It doesn't push it; it doesn't keep it from happening. It just allows it to move where it should move, for each child. When you remove those pressures. . .So they told you no. She told you no. What's your next step? Well, and I do have an option, and I'm just struggling and struggling with this. The next thing I said was--she said he'd still meet with me and look at it for the following year. I--I'm just so impatient. I don't want to wait that long. However, I have several options. One is to change rooms and move up next to a third grade teacher. The room is empty now, see? It wouldn't hurt anybody. There is no moving around, no talking to third grade teachers to see if they'd switch grade levels. It's just cut and dried. I'd move up there and I'd do a *close study buddy* with [third grade teacher]. And I said to her [current principal], "Now when we say close study buddies, once we get these parents in, I'm going to have ten third graders more than half the day. You know. They're really going to be mine, but she's going to keep the rolls on them." [Current principal replied], "Well, yeah, we can modify that a little." And that's fine. Nobody would really *know* what we were doing. I *hate that!!* Everybody wants to hide what's going on. Nobody wants to make any waves. Nobody wants to make a commitment. Nobody wants to move. Everybody wants to keep this smooth. So, you know, nobody would really know, and that would be O.K. Well, if they did the three-four-five, everybody would know--that wouldn't be so O.K. I have that option, and I can make it what I want--that's a three-five. I have a few problems with that. First

off, fifth graders who are separated in their minds from all the other fifth graders--I don't think their initial acceptance is going to be that strong. But I haven't thought all that through yet, I haven't really. . .And I will interview some fifth graders on some of this. But I haven't really worked through all that. My problem with that is, I have this wonderful friend [another fifth grade teacher] who is right next door to me, who is doing exactly what I'm doing. She's just wonderful in so many of the things she's doing. And if I leave that area, that sits her down there all by herself with a lack of support. She's a young teacher. People are going to--I don't mean that I protect her--but it's sort of protective for me to be there for her. And I have this fear of leaving her there. Geographically leaving her there. You would be doing that. Exactly. And so I have this very-- and I'm afraid, she would be really hurt. I don't know.

And then I have a third option that's sort of nebulous; it's out there. My husband is being considered for a job in [another town]. So there's a chance we'll be moving. Which is what I'd really want [laughs] because then I wouldn't be help responsible for either one of those programs back there. I understand that. You're not talking about being held responsible according to what anybody else thinks, but you. That's the important part. Yeah. This is a terrible decision to make. My own needs--sort of--with the three-five, versus [other fifth grade teacher]'s needs and my needs. I don't know. Yeah. It's my own problems. Neither [other fifth grade teacher] nor [third grade teacher] know. You know, it's my own feelings. So, there are several things out there, so I'm just not making any plans. I'm just kind of rolling along. Right. If they had said we'd go with the three-four-five, I'd have stayed, and [my husband]--even if he got the job-- would have gone back and forth. And there's no guarantee that I would get a job in [other town], or that we'd move this year. You know, there's just no guarantees anywhere.

KENDRA
Interview #3
May 10, 1995

I just want to ask you one or two things, to take you back. I want your
feelings here. I want you, Kendra, to recall feelings as best you can. I
know that it may not be particularly easy, but if you can remember
anything specific about the day you realized that support for the pod wasn't
what you thought it was. Oh, I know exactly how I felt. Total devastation.
I was devastated. Surprised. Unbelieving. Blaming. Then it took me
awhile to look at *me* to figure out what I had to do with it. But the initial
thing--I was devastated. Totally devastated. I knew that was the end. I
knew once support was withdrawn and once I was told to look at
someplace else, or, you know, in a different grade level, or whatever--it
was real ending.

Cried and cried and cried. Cried and cried and cried for days. In fact, I
cried for months. I would get up in the middle of the night, at 3 o' clock in
the morning, and I'd cry until 5:00. My husband was worried; I was
worried. Even after I was saved, and I knew I was coming with [principal
at present school], even then I was still devastated. I felt betrayal. . .total
betrayal. And then I felt responsible. Why? Because I didn't--I should
have had a better picture. I should not have--I assumed too much. I
assumed everything was fine. We were fine, so it didn't matter what the
free world was doing out there. I blame myself for not--for never seeing it
coming. I mean, it was such a big thing; how could you *not* see it coming?
How could you not? And then when you look back at it and realize you
had all these clues, then you have to reproach yourself and think, "How
stupid." You have to question, over and over again, "Is it right?"

I felt sadness. Eternally sad. You still are, I think. Yes. I've not
recovered. (Laughs.) I keep thinking maybe I have, but I really haven't.
And then it was on more than one level of devastation. It was professional
and personal, too. And then it was--tremendous sadness. And it put me
into a terrible mood of wondering why. You know, why do you work so
hard? Why do you feel so strongly? Put so much in when its not going to
be valued, it's not going to be even acknowledged? And it's like you're
fighting against the stream, you're swimming upstream. And its always--I
can never find anybody that's going the same way I am at the same time.
(Laughs.) And when you run into that so many times, you again begin to

question your own self.

I am in a different place now. There are people like [second grade teacher] who went with me, who was at the same place I am. We went through the same things, taught. So there's a lot of that. But this constant questioning of self, Where am I compared to everybody else? And maybe--just maybe--I'm not the one; maybe I'm wrong. But I don't think I am. (Laughs.) So I still question myself. That was the beginning.

Up until this happened to me, I never really questioned myself. I did with the kids, I questioned what they were getting--you know, the feedback from them, the caring from them, how I was approaching them, whether I could be better in my approaching. Could I make them more at ease sooner? You know, you question those things. But I never questioned my *own* movement until then.

O.K. Let me ask you a related question. When you made the decision to leave that school, tell me how it . . . You made the decision based on you. How did that relate to the kids, to your students? You mean there? Yes. You made a decision to leave. O.K. The decision was immediate, and I went for it right away. I called [principal at present school], I guess I waited until Monday. It happened on a Friday, and I guess I waited until Monday. I called [principal at present school], made an appointment with him right away. He told me that there would be no problem.

O.K. I was the third grade part of the pod. My kids, I knew, were going to fourth grade and leaving the pod anyway. However, I had also worked with these other two groups, the groups that were not in first grade and second grade--the group that had gone from D-1 to first, and from first to second. And I did have some concerns for them. However, at that time I did not know that [2nd grade teacher] was going to leave also. And when I said I would leave, it was with the understanding that if I left, [former principal] would support the pod. And he promised he would. That's not what he did, but at that time, he promised he would. So I assumed that there would still be [2 of other 3 teachers]--we knew [first grade teacher] was leaving. I made sure that we kept it quiet as long as we could, and then I told my kids, very silently, very quietly, that I was moving to a different grade level at a different building.

And that afternoon [former principal] announced it to the entire student

body. And [2nd grade teacher] had not told her second graders. So her second graders thought they were going to have me the next year. And they were devastated. But he didn't tell anyone he was going to make that announcement in from of the entire student body. Had you turned in an official resignation? That's really an unusual thing to happen. No, I had not. Verbally, we all knew. I knew I was leaving. [Former principal at present school] knew I was coming here. [Former principal, former school] knew I was coming here. [Former principal at present school] had called [former principal at former school] and said, "Kendra has applied and has been accepted as a transfer over here." That's a professional courtesy. And then I was supposed to also to inform my principal that I had accepted the transfer. So verbally it had been done. In writing, accepted by the Board, and all that--no it had not been done. The common courtesy for [former principal] would have been to tell us in the pod that it would be announced. He did not. It took us all by surprise. I would think that would be the very least of common courtesy. Yes. But at that point, I don't think common courtesy was his thing. I don't think he was--I think--this is my own personal opinion--I think he was escaping by having as little (nothing) to do with us at that point as he could. I mean, he was running from the disintegration of the pod. So I think, you know. . .and he made a terrible mistake. And he had to know it, I think, because when he announced it. . .Now you have to understand, there were six hundred kids in this gym. And he said, "I have an announcement. Mrs. [Kendra] is changing grade levels. She is going from third to fifth. . ." And every fourth grader in the school cheered. And then he said, ". . .at [present school.]" And the hush. You could hear the cheers as they thought I was going to be their teacher, and then the shut down, "Oh." You could hear. And it was--you could hear. It was not just my imagination, but by that time, I was already in tears. I had no idea he was going to say it. I was not used to hearing it said. It was devastating for me. I still--it was the first time I had heard it out loud. And I was sitting there in the middle of all these people, crying. And then the second graders were all crying. It was a bad time.

This has nothing to do with anything, except I just want to know. Why do you think he did that? What was his purpose? I don't know. I can't imagine. Sometimes I think it was to hurt me. Sometimes I think it was to--and this is probably more realistic--he'd treat me as if it didn't matter. It didn't matter any more if I was leaving than if somebody else was leaving. And he'd just, you know, pull it out for everybody to hear. It was no big

deal. I don't know. I honestly don't know. I took it very personally.
<u>Yeah.</u> And I had to deal with [2nd grade teacher] who had to deal with
twenty children who were crying. And then that night, all the parents that
called. Because it was out then. See, it hadn't been out until that point.

I knew the kids would do fine. Kids *always* do fine. They always--even
when they go from an environment that we create here into a different
kind, a more regimented environment--they do what's needed. It may not
be as good for them, it may not be as comforting, it may not be as
reassuring, it may not be as comforting. But they will do--children adapt.
So. . .I was not--I felt guilty. I felt real guilty with some of the parents and
some of the special children I knew, that I had waited to get and was not
going to get. I did feel that. But I was so devastated in my own self, I
couldn't get past my own pain to see theirs. I was too selfish.

APPENDIX B
Robin's Interviews

ROBIN
Interview #1 (Written)
April, 1995

Robin chose to take my interview questions home rather than be interviewed on tape. These are her written responses.

How would you describe the story behind your starting your current teaching assignment?

I am currently teaching a 3rd-4th grade combined class at [elementary school]. I have been here for five years. I switched from a very small, rich school district. I needed a change, and a friend called and told me to try [town]. Thank Goodness! I had taught at the small school for 10 years, 1st and 2nd grades (each 5 years). I have taught 5th for one year--right out of college--at another small school.

How would you describe the work relationships at your school?

The work relationships at my present school are good. I have an administrator who recognizes each teacher's individual teaching style. She listens to ideas and if we can justify, she says, "Go for it."

How would you describe opportunities for professional growth in this school?

My professional growth, how do I describe it?? Obsession! Obsession to know more, experience more, see more!!! My obsession sometimes causes trouble because I continually ask questions and wonder. Trouble in the sense that I have questioned administrators, I've questioned practices, I've questioned traditions and sometimes we don't want to justify. Trouble in the sense that I'm always learning something new--I've never done it the same way which causes me to always be changing--no using lesson plans over each year.

Professional growth comes I hope everyday as I listen and notice things about students. I feel this is daily growth. Sometimes their reactions make me stop and think about practices.

Reading professional literature makes an impact. I can take "new ideas" and put them to my use when they've made me think or I say, "That's a neat idea." Professional literature often gets me to think and it's almost like a conversation, someone talking to me and in the margins I'm writing notes,

questions, comments, etc.

Professional growth when I go to conferences--National conferences where it seems presenters are trying wonderful things, having wonderful ideas, asking questions about learning and children.

I think professional growth happens when I'm with some colleagues and we share, discuss, argue and questions. (Addendum: I forgot college courses. I had to look at a transcript to check on dates--I realized I take all these courses and don't have them down as helping professional growth. Some do! Some don't!)

What are some hindrances to your own professional growth.

Hindrances to professional growth would be time--not enough to read those books, talk to colleagues, go to an out-of-state conference. Time--lack of time each day to stop and reflect. Lack of time!!

Have you ever chosen to leave a teaching position? If so, tell me about making that decision. How did you decide to leave?

I wanted to leave my old school. I had gone back for computer training on a mega-buck new system they had bought, with no teacher input. I sat going through the programs and said, "These are 'worksheets.'" This is horrible--it was--no consideration of development of the child. Measuring for 1st grade was to abstract--well you can imagine--measurement on a computer screen. I felt like I was the complainer--the moaner. Hundreds of thousands of dollars on a stupid system. Well, I left that day and knew if I went back I would end up physically ill. I told my husband I was applying other places--I couldn't go back. I didn't.

I didn't tell my administrator right then but word got back--He called [town in which Robin currently teaches] to see if they had hired me. When I went and told him, he said he already knew and that I was going to burn myself out as a teacher. (I had disagreed with him often--once in particular because I was so close to crying was when he wanted to give trophies to kids for high achievement scores.)

Tell me about a time when you felt a lack of support for a teaching decision you made--when you felt that you were alone, "out on a limb."

Alone out on a limb--I guess after I did switch teaching jobs and came to [town] and the first months I felt so alone and indecisive. I just didn't know what to do. I had changed from 1st grade to 4th grade--I had a reputation already I felt for being different, and I didn't know what the hell to do. I wasn't the kind of teacher that wanted to use the textbook--well, I hadn't in the past. I think I lacked so much confidence--didn't feel like I knew anything and I questioned everything

I was doing. When my administrator (principal) called me in and said, "What's wrong?" I literally broke down and cried and cried. She said, "Do your stuff, Robin. Go for it." I guess I suddenly realized she had immense faith in me and she believed I would do things which were different and made kids think. During that time I'd drive home after school thinking, "What am I doing trying to teach?" I questioned my switch. I didn't seek support from anyone. She just gave it.

I'm very glad I switched.

How did your decision make you feel? Describe any changes in work relationships that you believe came about because of your decision.

I think I realized how perceptive my principal was. She saw the problem I had been trying to figure out.

Did you carry through completely with the results of your decision? If so, how did you find the strength to do so? If not, what kept you from it?

Maybe I've learned to be more vocal--I'll say, "This isn't working for me; I need to change or try this."

I thought of another decision. I taught 2nd grade [at my former school] and they did not renew the 1st grade teacher's contract. (Remember, small school. Only one teacher per grade). She had gone through a lot, personally and professionally, that year. So [state teacher's organization] comes in and the hearing rolls around and there are lawyers and school board members and administrators and of course as the 2nd grade teacher, I'm used. That's how I felt--used by [state teacher's organization] to help prove she should be rehired-- used by an administrator when questioned, "Do you help her?" I replied, "Uh, excuse me, we are all here to help each other. Yes, I give her things to read and try. She does the same for me."

Well, it was messy, and they did have to rehire her. But that was the summer when we all got reassigned to different grades--wait, not all of us--some of us--who had disagreed with her dismissal. I went from 2nd to 1st grade; she went from 1st grade to 5th grade. It was wonderful--we loved our new assignments!!

ROBIN
Interview #2
May 15, 1995

Tell me a little bit about your decision to go into teaching. What drew you to
teaching? Um, it was a long time ago. About first grade. (Laughs.) Really?
Yeah. I loved it. I loved school. Did you ever picture yourself doing anything
else? No. Which is sad. I wish I would have. I wish I would have been more
aware of what all was out there. It was just teaching. It seems like back then, it
was just teaching, or nursing, or very few things. . .secretary. And I get grossed
out by blood, so I could never be a nurse. (Laughs.) Yeah. So when you were
going through college and you were taking your education courses, you never
really considered straying from that path? Huh uh. Nope. Just stayed right with
it. So you got out of school. . . Yeah. My goal was to get out and get a *real* job.
And you did that. I did that. Immediately. (Laughs.) Yes, I did.

Now. What are relationships like among the teachers at your school where you
teach now? You don't have to tell me any specifics about people, but just in
general: What are the working relationships like? Well, I guess that's what they
are: working relationships. You don't have very much time really talk or
communicate and chat with people. So I know that there's a lot of times when
nobody knows what anybody's doing. Sometimes, as far as people know other
people--they can go to sometimes for resources, so people will come and say,
"Do you have anything?" You know. So. . .but as far as everyone pretty much
accepting everyone else's--what they're doing. . .sometimes you hear some things,
but as far as everyone being able to work *together*, we can. That's good. That's
not always the case. I know. I know. And I think that's probably due to an
administrator who's real accepting of each individual teacher's style. And doesn't
say one way or the other, something's right. But really, as far as somebody
wanting more information--if somebody finds a workshop they want to go to or
anything like that, she's ready to say, "Do it! Go for it! That's a good idea--try it!
Tell me more." So anybody could be trying anything there, at that school. Did
you know--was she the principal when you came to that school? She was. It
was her very first year there. She was the person that talked to me. And how
long have you been at that school? [Pauses.] It must be five years. . .when did I
change? I guess I changed maybe in 1989-90, so it's maybe going on six years
this fall. O.K. So--yeah, you'll be starting your sixth year this fall. Did she help
draw you there? Did she help--did visiting her help you make the decision to
change? No, not really. At that time, I knew I needed a change. I had a friend at
that school that really sold me as far as, "It'll be a good place. You'll love it."

And then when I interviewed with her, I really liked her. I mean, the questions that she asked and the things she wanted to know that I had done with first graders, knowing, though, I was going to be a fourth grade teacher. She actually asked me, "What have you learned as a first grade teacher that you're going to turn around and do with these fourth grade children?" And it was things like, "Oh. Well I know I'm still going to have *their* selection of books, what they want to read, and *their* writing time." So.

<u>As far a collegiality among the teachers at your school--and I would include the principal in that too--How do. . .you said people come for resources or you perhaps go elsewhere for resources. How do you figure out who to go to, or how do you think the people who come to you figure that out?</u> I don't know, I guess sometimes it's just in sharing maybe a little bit, like at a teachers' meeting, or somebody is seeing you laminate something, and says, "Oh, wow! Your kids did that! What did you do?" Or it's knowing that some people did a certain workshop, and they'll come and say, "O.K. What did you think of that workshop?" You know. Here's some resources. I don't know. . . It's not really gossip, it's just small talk that goes on, that we learn about each other. But as far as actually sharing with the whole group, we don't. <u>Do you have any kind of set grade level meetings, multi-age team meetings, anything like that?</u> Now, we have had--when we had team time--we tried to meet every Monday. And that was just the four--well, the four people in my suite and then special teachers. And I'm sure that we all talked to other people about what's going on. So we had that time there that we shared. Next year, I think that'll change, because we're not going to do the "team time." We'll still keep our multi-age, but we want it to be this more natural flow of, "Oh, you're getting ready to study the ocean! My kids are interested. Let's do some things together." Not just in our little suite area, either. Going outside that area, and going to other people in our building and saying, "I know that you're interested in this" or "Do you want to do something with this?" <u>Tell me how it's been with team time. Describe that to me.</u> Well, team time started as: wonder what it would be like if you put all these kids together? So we said, let's do it with one hour a day, and let's combine all 1, 2, 3, and 4 (grade levels), and then we really mixed up the names. I mean, we randomly drew; we ended up with like 20 or so names, and we made sure that we had equal amounts, like 5 in first, 5 in second, 5 in third, and 5 in fourth. So we said, "Let's do that." So one hour a day, we were doing some *thing*--something that the kids wanted. We listened to them, and said, "What do you all want to learn about?" So there were biomes, and we did the community. And that was fine. And then this year we said, "Well, that worked well last year. We liked it. Let's really"--I mean, if we're really going to do it, I really want a third/fourth

grade. So then all of us in that suite said, O.K., we'll do it. So we've got two third/fourths, two first/seconds. This year we still did team time, but at the same time. Well, I don't know. . .I really struggled with it. I don't know. We'd be doing things in our classroom, and then suddenly stop and have team time. And it was this whole different reorganization. And it was preparing the night before. And I really had to say, "I can't be spending two hours the night before for one hour of team time, when I've got the rest of my kids all day long. That's where my time should be spent." So at one of our last meetings, I just said, "I don't want to do team time." And there were other people who said, "Oh, good" or "O.K. I can see us doing. . ." And I said, "I want to see if it will naturally flow." And there's one person who's just really upset about that decision that I made. But I said, "I don't want to stop anybody else from doing it. You three can do it. You can do it with anybody in this building." Because *I* chose not to do it. And it was like, "Well, won't your kids miss it?" Part of me said, my kids will be so involved, hopefully, that they won't--it'll still *seem* like team time. How long has it been since you made that decision, since you told them? What? Not to have team time? Yes. It's probably been a month. So far, how's it going? Oh, well. . .With *your* third and fourth graders? Oh, good. And they're wanting to know if there's going to be--the fourth graders are going up to fifth, and they want to know if there can be a fourth/fifth multi-age. Which is real interesting, because the friendships that are formed--and they say, "Well, why can't you do third, fourth, and fifth?" And it's like--"Why can't *you* come up and do fourth and fifth with us?" And part of me wants to see the third graders that will be fourth graders--their leadership skills emerge. So I don't want to put them with fifth grade right now. And that's just probably pure selfishness for me, because I've seen what the fourth graders--how they've handled it this year, and their different roles. And I really want to see what happens to those third graders in that. Is it arranged so that you can still have the same third graders that you have this year as fourth graders next year? Uh huh. Yes, I am so looking forward to that. I know so much about them, and they know so much about me. And they know so much about the routine of writing time, and you know, sharing time, and reading time, and self-selection, and when to *abandon* a book. And I know that they're just going to be teaching all of these things to those kids [next year's third graders]. And it's going to be unbelievable--really different. I'll have to get to know in the beginning just *half* my kids. Because I'll know so much about my other kids. I am so excited about it. I just. . . .[shivers]. And the kids are excited, too. They're excited that they already know me, that they're going to have the same teacher. But it's been with the option of saying to parents, "If you feel like--if you don't want your child in here, you know, two years in a row, I won't take it personally at all." But I really would. A little bit, you would.

(Laughs.) Yeah. I would a little bit. But at the same time, I think an education has got to be so important to parents. And they ought to *be* there, all the time, knowing really what's going on. But there's been no difficulty. All our parents have just said, "Oh, I just think it'll be great." So. Well, I recently attended a meeting at which a principal said--she called it looping, where you stay with one teacher for more than one year--she said that she thought the main benefit of it would be in increased test scores, because you could have those kids *so ready* for the standardized tests. Oh, that is so sad. We're talking *narrow vision*. It broke my heart. And I don't know if you could change someone's mind like that. To actually see all of these wonderful things that are going on as far as friendships, being able to learn with others, and, you know, just self-confidence that happens to kids. Describe that to me a little bit more, about what the benefits are for the kids in multi-age groups. Well, it's really--I mean--in a regular classroom, you have a real community, too, I think. They form real bonds. But I look at the kids now, the third and fourth graders that I have, and not only as far as being able to teach one another so much that they were able to do that. I look at being able to.
. .self-confidence that's emerged from different kids. Having that core group that you know is kind of your family. I don't know whether it's just third and fourth, because when I think of multi-age, I think, a lot of the things I do in multi-age are the same as I did in a regular fourth grade class. So sometimes I look back and think it has a lot to do with regular--with how you taught. If you let kids have voice, or were still letting kids have voice in the third/fourth. But the advantages are, there's that mix--children's maturity level, too. I mean, I had a third grader say to me today, "You know, I really have more friends in first and second that I do. . ." And you think of maturity level, though, and you think that they're in an atmosphere where *they can*--they can play with different people. Their recesses-- our recess, team time, are together, so they can, you know, play with each other. And then I look at a little third grade girl who's best friends with a fourth grade girl. And that friendship probably never would have happened given other circumstances. So, I don't know. I mean, there's a lot there, but there's a lot--I look at it that they're a lot of benefits to just having fourth grade, too. Does that make sense? Uh huh. It's just how you look at how kids grow and develop. I mean, I look at from a real selfish point, that I have *two* years to watch them mature and grow. I have *two* years to help them, you know, to see them grow, and they see me grow. So. I think that would be delightful. It's like being a parent. Yeah! And you get to watch them! There's a lot to be said for that.

Was there ever a time when you were a teacher--probably I'm thinking of when you began teaching--when you would consider yourself as having been a traditional teacher? Well, probably when I first graduated--yeah. My first year, I

walked in. . .at the same time, I still remember there were a lot of groups [of children]. I can't remember whether college had impressed that on me, or whether it just made sense. Kids need to work together. Kids need to talk. But, more traditional in the way that there was a social studies book that I relied on. Maybe not chapter-by-chapter, but we did parts of it. So yeah. There was a time. And there was also a time when *looking at kids* was different than how I look at them now, and what they know. And that really came from someone at [university]. I have always considered her my mentor. And she's gone now, but [professor]. And she was involved in math, and she was very interested in Native Americans, and that's when I taught in [former district]. And she said, "Well, do you care if I come out?" And I said, "No." And she came out, and she was just there, and she was the perfect person that would ask questions but you never felt like you were being--it wasn't like she was being critical. She was *genuinely* interested in why you said that, or why you had that person do that. I mean, she started asking me those questions, and I started thinking about those things, too. Gosh, you know, *why did I?* Or, *why do I say*--you've told that child 20 times to carry the one, and they still don't understand. And it was the things that she started saying that I was going, "Wow!" So, she's the first person that really got me started looking at kids and how they grow and what we can be doing. Was it sudden that you had these realizations, or was it gradual? Well, she stayed--I mean, she was really good about coming. Two or three times a week for probably half a year. And it was our conversations, yep. It was our conversations, because a lot of times she would just hang around after school. I wonder how she decided to come into your room--do you have any idea? Not really. I can't remember how I ever met her or anything, but she was interested in that age, and just--we got to talking, maybe about things that were happening, and she just. . .Maybe kind of the same way teachers find each other. You just-- interests and things like that. Yeah. That's interesting. So your views of children changed. Yeah. She really opened my eyes And as far as ways to talk to kids, too. As far as questioning, and making sure you really understand *why* they did something, I guess. Uh huh. That's definitely key. That's definitely a big key. Yeah. I often look back on my life and think, what would have happened--what would it be like now, if she hadn't ever entered your life? [Pause.] And I know that she's up in heaven and that she looks down. And sometimes (laughing) she's disappointed with me and what I've done, and sometimes she says, "That was good." Something you wonder about. Someone special. That's pretty powerful. Uh huh. That's pretty powerful, all right. That one person can make such a difference.

Who do you turn to for support and to bounce ideas around? Oh, probably the

other third/fourth teacher that's at my school now. I--because she's right over there and we can walk back and forth. You know, we share what the kids did and things like that. And at the same time, sometimes [university] classes-- meeting other people in other schools, you can make friends. But as far as daily, the other third/fourth teacher at my school.

<u>I get the impressions that professional growth opportunities help keep you in teaching. Am I right?</u> Probably. . .(laughs). . .definitely! They do! <u>How do you decide where and with whom to seek professional growth? How do you decide where you're going to go, and what you're going to do?</u> Well, sometimes I look at--O.K. What's a weakness. What do you need to be going to? So, I'll think, "O.K., I need to go to a science one this year." You know, there've been times when I went alone, when I couldn't talk anybody into going, but you always end up seeing someone there maybe that you knew, or you make friends. So, you know, usually that happens. I usually don't worry too much about who I'm going with. But, um. . .I mean, it is fun to come back and say, "This is where I went." And then you get other people interested, because, you know, you look at the expense--I don't see how people with kids and families do it. I mean, I have no children. I think, I don't see how they would do the time *or* money. <u>You usually try to go to one or two national things a year, don't you?</u> Yeah. I try to, but this year there haven't been any. But next year, I've got--like our whole little team is really interested in the science one. It's close--it's like in New Orleans or something like that. So we've almost said, well, let's try to look at--Where's IRA? Where's science? Where's National Council for Teachers of English? Let's try to look at those and see--when they come around, how close can we get to one? Well, this year it was the math one, which happened to be in Tulsa. <u>It counts!</u> (Laughs.) It does! But I love those national conferences. And maybe that's why I have a hard time going to our state teachers meetings. Because I look for professional growth there, but. . .I have trouble sometimes with one and two-hour meetings. And at least--like the language arts one I love, because they have that preconference, so the first day you're there you're just immersed in all this stuff. And that makes sense to me. It makes a big difference.

<u>You mentioned while ago that all the parents of your third graders this year would like their children to be in your class. Tell me about communication with parents. What do you do about that?</u> Different years, it's been different. And maybe it's because I've been more concerned--Do they understand what's going on? How much do I need to. . .And it's been different in the way, too, that sometimes *kids* carried out that role. We did a log once, and it went out every Thursday, and it reflected back on every day. And kids kept that log up. And it

was real easy to do. Sometimes I feel like I'm doing less now than I used to, only because more parents know me there, and I think---and they're in your room more, just stopping by, or going on field trips, and they know more about you. So, yeah. As far as a newsletter or anything like that--I don't do any of that. But I try to always make sure that: Anytime you want to come up here, to be in this room--and I have one parent, too who has a small child, and I said, "Bring him!" And I can remember at the beginning of the year, she went, "You're the first person who's every told me I could do that!" And it was like, who cares? A party, or we're going to the park--Bring him! So I don't know. I probably fall down in parent communication. Well, when your door is open to them, and they know that, that's the key. I mean, that's the main thing. Well, one of the things that's we're looking at next year, which I think would really be interesting to do, is to once a month have a Family Night, and try to do family math, or take-home science, or something like that. So that's one thing we're talked about trying to set up this summer. At least get it organized and find a couple of people *besides us* that are saying this stuff for your child. I know I've come across one good video tape that's just about math and how it's changed. It's easy to fill up nine different slots. Oh, definitely. So we're looking at that for next year. Sometimes I think parents are so thirsty for that sort of thing, that I'm amazed at how little you have to do for them to be thrilled and just feel like they've gotten great things out of it. I know!

O.K. I'm going to switch back to your former school. You had mentioned the new computers and the worthless programming that was on them as being one of the reasons that you started thinking about leaving. Yeah, (laughs). It was probably just the icing on the cake. That is my question: Before you decided to leave, were there other occurrences or situations. . . Lots of them (laughs)! What else, if anything, had happened? It was with a principal who said, "We need to get our test scores up. That's all we need to be worried about." It was that man who said, "Let's give medals for the two highest in each." It was--it was lots of things like that. I thought, that's not what this is about. And of him even saying, "You're going to burn out. Why do you do all this? Why do you go and do? You're going to burn out." And just really--not being treated as a professional. And that computer thing was just the last straw. We had *no* input--they had spent *megabucks*. It was--*measurement on a computer screen*. I just went, not in my first grade. Especially in that community. If I would have stayed, I can't imagine what I would be like. Because you don't see a lot of things happening that you think should be happening. But then I felt really guilty when I left, because I thought, "Those kids probably need you more than these kids." You know, I look at their home situations, and there's no comparison.

After you had switched to the school that you teach in now--the first year after you had switched--what were you like as a teacher? What were doing or not doing that upset you so much that you cried in the principal's office? I just think I was so worried. I came with this kind of reputation--and I think that I was real worried about that. Fourth grade was new. The kids--I just felt like they knew much more than I did. I felt very stupid and inadequate. The shift from first to fourth as well as the shift from town to town. Yeah. Probably lots of things. And not having the person--you know, I had a really close friend at my old school. And it happened that--well, you know, she left at that time, too. A lot of people left that school at the same time. All of us--you know. Some people got married and moved away. But she was the person that--and she wasn't going to be there, you know, and I just thought, "This is a good time to make a change." Then when I came here, I didn't really have anybody to talk to. And then, just being worried about what I was doing. I didn't *know* what I was doing! Just being really worried about that. And it took--which is why I still admire my principal. I may not agree with everything, but I really admire her, in that she *knew enough* to have me come in and she said, "What's wrong? Why aren't you doing what you want to do? What are you worried about?" And I mean, she just really said some things, asked some questions, and that's when I just--the floodgate opened. And I just. . .Well, how have you changed in terms of your daily practices? Not a lot. I mean, I can still remember kids reading and doing those things, but it was like--I know. And I even told someone. In first grade *you see growth!* I mean, it's just--it's there *everyday.* I mean, letters, numbers, words, making sense of things, songs, kids making things--and of course, fourth grade is different. You just don't see those things happen everyday. It may take months before you have a child finally come up and say, "Listen to this part of this story!" and read something to you. Maybe I didn't know how to get that--you know, that immediate stuff for first grade. And then in thinking about that, and now when you ask that--I look back on that and I know that part of it was not seeing [growth]. . .giving you feedback that what you're doing is good. That these kids are learning. I don't know. . .maybe it was PMS! (Laughs.) I don't know! Well, I just look back and think, "Oh wow! I was a basket case!" Well, not having much support makes a big difference. It might have been, but part of me looks at--I don't *need* much support. Part of me looks at--I just go do things, and you know, people--we talk about our classrooms, and are good friends, and stuff like that. But it's not like you need constant feedback from your friends. Right. You know that you're doing the right things for these children. Yeah. And I assume you knew it at that time, as well. But it was a different feeling, it sounds like. Or maybe not just realizing that clues were there, that those kids were learning. I don't know. And it just took a while to maybe get to

know them, too. Maybe fourth graders--well, where first graders run in and hug and kiss, and part of me thought, "Do fourth graders like to be hugged? I mean, can I hug fourth graders?" You know, it was asking me those kind of questions, because you didn't want to overstep. Yeah. Three years is a long time in the life of a child. And teaching first and second--I had done fifth one year, then first and second for like 10 or 11 years. And being with that age. Which is now why I think change is probably better for all of us, not to. . .because part of my thinks, you're going to stay at that level until it's *perfect*, until I know *everything*. But that's never going to happen, so don't be afraid of changing grades. It's kind of like doing the third/fourth. I thought. . .hm. . .Well, it's like I hear teachers say-- instead of saying, "I teach fourth grade," saying "I teach children--they happen to be fourth graders this year." Yeah. Uh huh. That's right. Makes a difference. It's a different perspective. So what are you doing or not doing anything now that is different from that first year? Which first year? At the school where you are now. Or is it just that your feelings are different? Yeah, it's probably my feelings. Oh, I know that I've learned things along the way. So, yeah. There's some change. There are some differences.

Who helps you be strong as a teachers? [Long pause.] Who helps me be strong. . .I don't know. I guess kids, if anything. The children in your classroom, because they constantly get--you know, feedback from them.
And. . .I don't know. Just curious. (Laughs.) Well, when I leave here, I'll be thinking about it! I know. I'm really nosy.

If tomorrow--or if at the beginning of next year, you suddenly have a new principal, and she walked in before school started, and said, "Test scores, test scores, test scores! I want to see people using the basal at least three days a week. I want worksheets to go home to parents because that's how parents can see what children are learning. And she basically told you that you had to turn everything you are doing upside down. What would your response be? Well, after the initial discussion of why those things weren't important, and not being able to convince her or him? And that person is still saying this is the way things should be? Uh huh. I would get around it as much as I could. I would shut my door, and if that person wanted to see worksheets, they would be pages out of journals that would be student-composed worksheets. The basal--I mean, I know there are good things. I look at all of those books as resources, and I use them *as resources*. But if somebody dictated three times a week or something, I mean--I wouldn't do it. It's my room, and unless that person were in there with me all day long every day, they wouldn't know. So, I'd be dishonest. (Laughs.) Oh, well. So you would acquiesce, and then do what you wanted to do when the

door was closed? Uh huh. Which is what I think probably a lot of teachers have to do. I think that's true. They have administrators that don't listen, don't know, or don't understand. What if halfway through the year the administrator calls you in and says, "I've been checking up on you. You haven't been doing it. I've thought about this before. What if that ever happened? I think that's the time I'll say, "O.K. You're right. I haven't been doing it. I'm going--I'm leaving." I'll sit home for half a year, and then if I still want to teach, I'll find a school where, you know, our philosophies, our thinking are more the same. Because I don't want to be like that. And the same way, I've thought about if I ever get to be where I'm the person who always needs to be in control, and everything like that, I hope I recognize it and I hope that's when I say, "It's time to retire." I hope I do that. (Laughs.) Yeah, but my husband is pretty good at knowing that we are different [teachers], some of us up there. I mean, it's not unthinkable that someday this could happen. It's true; I know. What if it weren't a matter of use the basals, send home worksheets. What if it were more a matter of "I want you to start having weekly meetings with your grade level folks so that you all can make sure that you're doing the same things"? Well, part of me thinks that it's lots of education on our part. I mean, I look at those administrators and go, "Oh, poor administrator." Somehow, we have to make that person realize that all of us can't possibly be doing the same thing. I mean, that's just . . . You know, part of that may be educational or our part to say, "Read this." And I'm certainly the kind of person who loves to put articles in other people's boxes, and administrators, and say, "Read this. I want to know what you think." So, part of it would be trying to convince that person that there are other ways, that we cannot all be the same, and be doing those kinds of things. (Laughs.) If I was at a faculty meeting--we had a grade level meeting where we all were supposed to be doing the same thing, I mean, it couldn't happen. (Laughs long.) It wouldn't happen! I visit schools where that's the law of the land. I've had student teachers who had a unit prepared--particularly early childhood student teachers--who had a unit prepared and couldn't use them because it didn't align with the other teachers at that grade level. I guess I am so sheltered, I just have blinders. Because that is just. . .I know that there are places like that in the world. Are there more of those, do you think, or less, than places where teachers are treated as professionals? Sadly, in my experience, there are more where teachers are treated more like cattle than professionals. But there are places. . . Well, I look at [current school system] doing Spanish. I'm waiting for the day when they come into my room and say, "You haven't done what you're supposed to." And I think they'll write me up-- they'll fire me--and I'll say, fine, I just can't. Because I heard there's lesson plans and things like that, and I haven't gone to any of the district meetings. I feel like there should be a teacher [for Spanish]. I'm tired, and I feel like everyone should

have just stood up and said, "We do what we can do. Help us here! Give us a professional! That is a subject that should be treated in a professional way, and don't get me to botch up all those numbers!" So, Spanish is one of those things. I look at my friends, and think. . .My principal knows. She knows that I've done very little. And part of it--sometimes I talk to my colleagues, who've done very little too, and we'll say, "Oh, well. They'll forget it by next year." Which is not necessarily true, but at the same time, I'm just so mad at the school system. That was one thing that really disappointed me last year. I thought this school system was so wonderful when I came, I just thought the teachers were the best, and all of those things. And then there are people who don't speak up. [Pause.] What makes you different? I'm not asking this because I'm going to force you to blow your own horn, here, but--most teachers don't speak up when they don't think things are being handled well, with children or with teachers. You tend to--I mean, I don't get the impression that you go overboard or you go nuts or anything like that--but, you do tend to ask the hard kinds of questions of yourself and of others. How did that happen? Part of me thinks nothing can happen to us by asking any of those questions. Someone else may feel threatened, but that's not why I ask the question. I was genuinely interested in why you do the things you do, or why we can't do this, or things like that. So part of me just thinks nothing can happen to me for asking questions. You know, I want to know why they think something. I don't know. [Pause.] I'm just trying to figure it out because you're educational background--where you grew up and where you went to school--is not known as a mecca for free thinking. Is that a good way to put it? (Laughs.) And my family. My family was not either. I had a very dictator-type father, and I had a mother who just stayed home. I look back and them and I think part of it might have been because my father was so dictating. And in my mind I was going, "But why not" and "I don't agree with that." So even though you didn't say it out loud, you were thinking that. I don't know. And I know your undergraduate education wasn't particularly enlightening either. . . Especially back then! Yeah, at that time it was pretty basic. My goal was to get out, too. You know, I had a job, too. I worked hard, like everyone else. You know, I saw that as something to get through. Something to be borne. . . (Laughs.) Yeah. I don't know. I'd just be curious as to why. Because most teachers in my experience, at least, pretty much do as they are told, and a lot of teachers don't ask difficult questions of themselves or of anything else that's handed down to them. And they may complain about, "Oh no! Not another one!" But as far as asking, "Is this good for children?" I don't hear that very often. And I'm really trying to wrestle with where that comes from. I don't know, unless it's expectations we have of ourselves, too. And I feel like I have high expectations for what can happen and what kids can do. You know, I look

at the things that could happen in the summer, and I look at theater, and I look at dance, and I just think, we don't do anything as far as that goes. And I just--I see all these possibilities, and I don't know how to do it all. And there's just--

Tell me what your feelings are about the purpose of school for these children. What is the school supposed to do for them? Well, I *hope* they find lots of things that they are interested in, and that they know how to follow up that interest. I hope they ask lots of questions. And they do. They ask *why* all the time, and sometimes you just go, "I'm so tired of justifying everything!" But then you think, this is what you wanted to have happen. So this is what it's all about. So you want them to ask questions. You just want them to be so interested in things. You know, I just look at being so interested in living each day to its fullest as far as noticing things about people, about how we live, and about all the stuff that they *are* able to do, that they *can* do. That they've got some control, some power. Which a lot of times I don't think kids realize. But they do. They're in control of what goes on, as far as what they're thinking and what they're doing. And a lot of times, it's funny, because so-and-so did it, and you're trying to get kids to think about, "But what made *you* say or do that?" I don't know; it's just knowing that there's *a whole bunch of stuff* out there to learn about. What do you want to know about? And just continue that all your life.

APPENDIX C
Jenny's Interviews and Written Protocol

JENNY
Interview #1
May 10, 1995

How would you describe the story behind your starting your current teaching assignment. How long have you been here? I've been here--this is my fourth year at [present school]. And I started at another school in the district, and I was--thought I was happy there--I was happy there for a few years, and then I started changing. Well, let me go back. I taught half-day kindergarten--I had been out of teaching for a long time--and I had taught one year in New Mexico, then we moved to Oklahoma. I taught half-day kindergarten. And I was thankful to have the job. Then, I got a first grade position. This would have been 10 years ago. And I was teaching first grade. There were five other first grades, and it was about February. I looked at the room, and I said to myself, "These first graders are sitting too much. They're pushing a pencil too much. And they're doing too much work at their seats, and they can't learn that way." And I thought, "I can't teach science from a book. If I'm going to be teaching science, I need to teach it with experiments." And so I found a book, *How to Teach Children Science*, and it had content in it, and it had experiments. And so I decided to start teaching that way.

And then the next year, I got to go to a whole week workshop, "Math Their Way," which is based on Piaget and based on children working with concrete materials at the concrete level. I said, "This is it!" So, that's when I started to change. And then I decided that I wanted to come to [present school], because I had heard about the principal, and I felt that I could work with that principal, that I wouldn't have to keep my door shut, and I got a transfer and came. So this is my fourth year here.

Now, I don't know if you teach kindergarten or first grade. I'm looking around the room, and I can't tell. There's nothing to tip me off one way or the other. Thank you. (Laughs.) I teach first grade. I thought you might consider that a compliment. I do.

O.K. Go back to when you were looking at the first graders and they were sitting in their desks. Did anything particular spark that, or did it just build? No, it just-

-I guess I was just looking at the room. I was sort of reflecting in the middle of the year. You know, at the beginning of the year, this was my first year back in first grade. You have that feeling that you *have* to do everything, and that you have to do what all the other teachers are doing. I will admit, I was getting caught up in that. But anything that I did just didn't quite seem to be--to look like or seem like everyone else's. I think I just stepped back and said, "No. This isn't right." I don't have a degree in early childhood, nor have I ever really taken any classes in early childhood. I think I just came by it, that things just weren't right. You know, everybody at their seats, doing their work. It took a few years to work through it. I think it's a slow process, but I worked through it. So I just saw it myself.

And then when I got to go to "Math Their Way," that was--Wow! That was--it clicked the first morning. Because they gave us work to do out of a little book. We were forced to do it. We were told to do out best. We had to write with our nondominant hand, which for a first grader, they would use their dominant hand, of course--but I could see very quickly how tiring it was, and I was being *made* to do everything. And at the end, they said, "Just for fun, make a picture." Well, I had gotten so tired of the books that by the time I got to the end, I didn't want to make a picture just for fun. Because it wasn't fun. And it wasn't even fun to make a picture. So that was my real--that was a real awakening. At first I just came by it; it was my decision.

<u>Now, when you--you said you were out of teaching for awhile. Tell me about when you started teaching at first.</u> Oh, wow. I started teaching in 1967-68, I taught a first grade. To me it was like everyone else's. And now that I look back, I really didn't have a philosophy. I just went in and taught everything out of the books the way that they told you to teach it. And I had three reading groups, and we did reading time, and we did spelling time, and we did arithmetic time. But it was using all the textbooks that were there in the room. It was so long ago. . .And everyone was in rows. Of course, we had the kind of desk with the chair connected to the desk, and it swiveled and the top of the desk went up. So we had rows. That was my first school, and then we got married, and we went to Syracuse, New York. And that too was--everyone sat in rows. I used the Economy reading series; I remember that vividly. Started with long "o". The teacher two doors down was in an experimental ITA, the Initial Teaching Alphabet. <u>I don't know about that.</u> Oh. She had the Initial Teaching Alphabet, which was 40-some symbols the children. . .they read it that way. Then they went to second grade where they made the transition from the ITA to our alphabet. But I was still--you know, I was using Economy reading series. I was

in that school for two years, and I guess they thought I was a pretty good teacher, because they offered me a student teacher my second year there, and they don't normally do that. But it was all using the books.

Looking around this room, I would say that you don't do that too much anymore. (Laughs.) No. O.K. Now, when you chose to leave your other school and come here, you said it was mainly because of the principal. Yeah, because of the principal. Were there any other . . . Well, I knew one teacher here, and we would just see each other at different meetings. I might see her just a few times a year, and we would just talk. She led me to believe that I would be comfortable here, that this would be a good place for me. And I had decided that I'd like to give it a try. And I realize now that I really was under stress at the old school. But when you're in it, you don't see it. When I got out of it, people said that I looked more relaxed, because I wasn't feeling that stress. At the other school, I kind of felt like I had to keep my door closed, because I was doing things differently.

And I really grew a lot after I got here, because our principal read, so he was a good model. And he had the literature. He had his own personal library, and he had built up a professional library for teachers in the media center, so you could check the books out there to read. And he always read, and he was good at discussing things, and he would question you, but he really couldn't--he wouldn't offend you, or he wouldn't really. . .He would give you questions that would make you think. And I would think about them for *days*. You know, mull them over. But he was that type of person. And he would even be searching. He wouldn't question us just because, he would question us to make us think. And probably to help him think, as well. Yeah. And he always said he had been told at a workshop that the answers were in books, and that's one of the reasons why he read so much. Because he felt that a lot of the answers were in books. And I think they are.

Let me ask you about parents. In my experience, parents--especially of first graders--can be very nervous if they think that what's happening at school isn't what they expected. Right. What do you do about that? Yeah. Of course, at the other school I was going through a transition for several years, and those parents were always very supportive. When I came here, I found out that the other first grade teachers do a weekly newsletter. So I started doing the weekly newsletter. I didn't like to do it sometimes because I wasn't used to communicating every week, but it has been a very good thing, to do a weekly newsletter. So for two years--well, for all four years--I have done a weekly newsletter.

But then last year, I started having parent meetings. I had talked with the principal about this before. We had talked one time about perhaps doing a whole first grade thing, where I would present math to all the first grade parents who wanted to come. But then I decided to go ahead and do it on my own, and I had parent meetings. But I also realized a lot of the children don't even have babysitters. You know, their parents don't go out in the evening, so they don't even have babysitters. And they're not in that socioeconomic group where they would have babysitters. So I decided that it would be a parent-child evening. And they were allowed to bring the whole family, because a lot of them had brothers and sisters, and I knew that their moms wouldn't want them to stay at home. So I invited the whole family. I did tell the first graders, though, that if a brother or sister came with them, and they say their brother or sister doing something that they shouldn't be doing, that they would have to take care of that.

So last year I had parent meetings, and then this year I had parent meetings. With the children, too. I work it so that I give them ten minutes or so for everybody to come, and we just talk. And then I let the children play, and while they're playing, I usually talk a little bit. Then after that, the children will show their parents what they're doing in the classroom. For example, on Spelling Night, I addressed spelling and writing and phonics, and then the children did a spelling lesson for their parents. So the parents got to see them do it. And--I like the program. It's very appropriate for children of this age. So then the children demonstrated the lesson. And then they shared the room with their parents. So that's what I've done for parents.

About how often do you do that? I've done four this year. I started out with spelling, then I did two math--because I had a math video to show them--and then I did a reading night. And I probably talk longer than I should. I also had four last year. Then too, we also have open house and parent night. So I had four on my own, plus parent night, plus open house. So that would really be six evenings that I spent with the families. And then I do the weekly newsletter, and in the newsletter I have a section for at-home things--things that they can do at home. And I tell them what we've done in math that week, what we've done in reading that week, what we've done in spelling, and science activities. Sometimes I put in a math game. Sometimes I put in questions to ask their children when they're reading a book with them. And sometimes I put articles on the back of the newsletter. I save articles that I find, and I put them on the back.

I have a computer now, so they're all on the computer. So they look really professional. Now, last year--for three years, I just hand wrote them on Fridays.

But now I do it on the computer. The parents know that they're going to come home on Friday, and since we don't do a lot of dittos, that does let the parents know what we have accomplished during the week. Particularly for the parents who are caught up in phonics and spelling. I say, "This week in spelling we did the letter sounds for. . ." So they know that their child is being introduced to this.

So, do you feel that you have pretty good communication with your parents? I think I do. And, you know, there are teachers in this school--probably most of the teachers in this school do not even know that I do those family nights, and that's O.K. I would be the first one to tell those teachers that "I understand that you can't do that. I understand that you have a family and that you need to be at home in the evening with your family." I don't have that family that I have to take care of, so if I can do this for this small group of parents, perhaps that will help them understand, so that when that child gets in second or third grade, they won't have as many questions because I have laid the foundation.

Well, that brings us to my next question. Tell me about the work relationships at this school. That's really a tough one to answer. Let me just kind of do it generally. At this school, there are teachers at all different levels. And I think what teachers need to do is to respect each other for the level--for the place that they are at. For some teachers, that's really difficult to do, because some teachers are insecure, and I really feel that it's their problem. I feel secure in my place. I feel secure in my philosophy. You know, I'm not going to do something just because someone else is doing it. And again--but I'm not going to say, "Oh, look at that teacher. She's doing that, and I don't agree with that, and so that is wrong." The important thing is to respect each other for what they're doing. And to respect and to accept that. My hope is that someday other teachers will be in the same place that I am. And of course, I may be in a different place in a year or two myself. I mean, I have grown already, just being here in this district, so my hope is that other people will come along.

How do the teachers and administrators in this building communicate? [Pause.] We're supposed to have grade level meetings, and the first grade teachers are bad about grade level meetings. Who decided that you're supposed to have grade level meetings? Where did that come from? I guess. . .Well, I think they had grade level meetings when I got here. There were grade level meetings when I got here. I think it was felt--and I guess, I don't know where it came from--but there have always been grade level meetings here. I think one of the purposes of the grade level meetings was that it was such a large school, and we needed to

communicate. But the first grade teachers--some grades do meet every week--we don't meet every week. Because we [the first grade teachers] live day by day. (Laughs.) And, um, we just meet when we have to meet. If there's a decision that has to be made by the grade level, then that is when we meet. But we have our lunch together, so we can talk then.

And talk about communication--most of the communication with the rest of the teachers at this school is what I would call superficial, or communication about nonacademic things. There is a group of us at this school that get together, and we will talk more about philosophy and what we're doing with children and what is best for children. And we're not talking so much on the day-to-day activities. Whereas most of my communication with the other teachers is just a friendly communication. But, for example, I don't talk to the teacher next door about what she's doing in the classroom. Or why she's doing it. Is she a first grade teacher? No. She's second.

But I feel very good that we have this group of teachers who get together and talk more about different issues. And that's very. . .it can be a growth experience and a thinking experience. How did you all find each other? That's a good question. Well, the one teacher was the one that I knew before I came here, and so I already knew her. I would say that we found each other because we kind of saw that we kind of taught the same way, we kind of did things that might be similar. [Pause.] I think that's how we probably found each other. And of course, Kendra's story of coming here is a little bit different, but one reason she did come is because of the people. So, I think we just found each other because we started to realize that we taught alike. And, if something should come up at a faculty meeting, then if they made a statement, you might say, "Hey! I agree with that. I agree with that teacher. I think we could get along." Because when we had faculty meetings, things would be open for discussion or you could question something, and that's where you can find out about some people. Are you occasionally surprised? Well, yes, sometimes I was surprised. You know, why are they saying this? That's not what I believe. But I would keep it to myself, because I wouldn't want that person to think that I thought less of them. Their philosophy was different from my philosophy. But, I think, too, that that person hasn't done a lot of reading. And they don't know what's out there. That there might possible be a better way to do
something--well, I shouldn't say a *better* way to do something!--that there's a *different* way to do something. . .that *could be better*. That there even are other choices. That there are other choices.

<u>How would you describe opportunities for professional growth in this school</u>. I don't think they've been great. When our new superintendent first came, he had [professor] come from Tulsa and speak about what was developmentally appropriate. She came one time for the primary teacher, and she came one time for the intermediate teachers, for about an hour and a half. It was a good introduction, but there was no follow-up. So, I don't feel that the district has done that much for us. I think that anything that I have gone to, I have done it on my own. I had to seek it out and find it. Now, they did provide "Math Their Way." They provided "Math Their Way" for the district people, so that was a good thing. In the summer time. And they've done it every summer for seven or eight years. So they have done that in the summer time. But I think there could be a lot; I think there could be more. Several of us are really interested in Reading Recovery. And the Chapter people in [neighboring district] have taken the lead in this. They're going to have people trained next year in Reading Recovery. [Our district] hasn't done anything.

So. . .let me go back. [District] did provide the endowment--no, not the endowment--actually, a professor at Oklahoma City University brought Bill Martin here. So we did have Bill Martin, and the Endowment and the Women's Club brought the McCrackens here. But they haven't done anything really recently. I think they. . .I think they could do more to support us. <u>What would you like to see happen in terms of professional growth?</u> I would like to see professional growth. . .I would like them to bring more people in, more experts in, and give us the opportunity to listen to them and to interact with them in small groups, and to try to get teachers to interact with each other. Of course, there's always the excuse that we're busy, we have other things to do. Yeah. I'd like to see more. And you know, some worthwhile workshops for the teachers. But the problem with that is that everybody gets something different out of it. You and I can sit in the same workshop and take different things out of that workshop and apply them. <u>Isn't that like children in the classroom?</u> Yes. (Laughs.) I'm beginning to think that the only way we're really going to make--we're not . . .--change is going to be very slow, and let's face it, most of the teachers who are teaching now were in a traditional classroom. *I* was in a traditional classroom. But I have made that change because I wanted that change. I felt that the change was necessary. I went out and I *found* it. I found it by reading, I found it by going to workshops, I found it by watching videos, I found it by talking with other people--with other teachers. But most teachers don't. . .aren't making that change. I think the only way that we can possibly be able to make change now is for a teacher to have another person in the room, like a mentor. For example, I'm supposed to be somewhat--in the math field--I'm not--I know nothing about

mathematics, but I feel I have a handle on how children should be learning math. So I could go into a classroom and do lessons with the children with that teacher watching. And then help guide that teacher into, say, making a transition from using a textbook to manipulative math. That's where--because those teachers haven't seen another teacher do that. They don't know how to work with children. They don't know how to question children. They don't know how to use the manipulatives with children. And I think that would be a way to see change. Because I like workshops, but every person takes something different from it, and they may try it for a little while, and then they go back to their old ways. Because that's what they're comfortable with--they're comfortable with their old way. That's the way they were taught. They don't see any need to change. So I think to get something--to get some real changes in education, we need some other people to go in the classrooms and really work with teachers.

I agree with you that most teachers were taught traditionally and teach traditionally. Why are you different? Why is that not true for you? Why am I not traditional? Uh huh. Well, I don't think that's the best way for children to learn. I don't think learning comes from a textbook. I don't think children learn anything when they do a worksheet. They possibly may just be learning to circle things or draw lines from here to here, from point A to point B. That's what they're learning. They're not learning what we *think* they're learning. I think that if--and I've expressed this, too--I think that if teachers would preassess their children in their room, they would probably find out that they already know a lot. Teachers do not individually preassess a child. They should preassess the child, then determine what that child needs, and *then* take that child from that point. For example, I preassess my children in patterning. I found out that they all--all except three children---could do an A/B pattern, so I didn't have to *teach* an A/B pattern. Had I not preassessed those children, I could have said to myself, "Oh, well I need to teach these children an A/B pattern, so we're going to do this, this, and this." Well, I didn't need to. They were already there. Teachers don't preassess their children. They assume that they don't know something. So that's one thing that makes me different.

Another thing that makes me different is that I think children can work in the classroom without me being the authority in the classroom. Without me having all the control. Um, I think children can be responsible, I think children can know what they should be doing, I think they can do it. I think a classroom could run without me being at the head of the classroom. I think you can see in this room--it's kind of hard to tell where the head of the classroom is. If you're in a traditional classroom, it's fairly obvious when you walk in the door where the

head is. And, um, the children kidded me one day and said, "Mrs. [Jenny], if you cleaned off your desk, maybe you could sit down at your desk!" (Laughs.) And I said, "No, that's O.K." But last year--I'm in a different room. Some children didn't even know where my desk was, because it was off in the corner and basically used just for stacking. So, I think that's a difference--can be a difference from traditional, where the teacher is more in charge.

Did you let go of that gradually? Yeah. It's been real gradual. I noticed about seven years ago, I had recess duty. I came inside, and was tired, and so I was just kind of taking a long breath. And a child came up to me and said, "Mrs. [Jenny], can I have a paper bag?" I said, "Yeah, sure." So I gave him a paper bag, and the whole class just started taking off on making things. And I thought--I just kind of stood back and said, "Hey, this class can just go right along here, can't it?" (Laughs.) Everybody started, you know, wanting this and that, and they were just as happy as they could be, and everyone was just kind of. . .But it's been real gradual; it's been a gradual thing for me.

Last year, I had a little boy who didn't speak English, and I could never understand him when he did speak English. And about halfway through the year--we have to ask for lunch count--and he stood there one day, as loud as he could, and went, "ONE! TWO! THREE!" So, he took over counting the lunch count, which was fine with me. I think because I kind of understand what's happening, that it's O.K. for me to let go. Because I've read Kamii, and I'm beginning to grasp autonomy. If a substitute teacher came in here, or that child did that in another classroom. . .Suppose we took that same child who stood up there and went, "ONE! TWO! THREE!" In another classroom, in a traditional classroom, the teacher might say, "Young man, you need to sit down because I'm doing the lunch count." I promise it would happen. Yeah. So, I understand what's going on, so from that day on, he did that.

Another example this year. One day, a child said, "Can I read this book to the class?" And I went, "Sure." Well, now we have a whole lineup, and they'll say, "Are we going to do ten-minute read today?" because they know that--I mean, they just say, "Are we going to do ten-minute read today"--because *they* know, and we have not verbalized it--they know that in ten-minute read, they can choose whatever book they want to read, they can choose whomever they want to read it with, and if they *choose* to put a chair up here in the front and sit down, then they're going to get to read it to the class. And I just let it happen. But I understand why I'm doing it and why they're doing it. But it's been a very--it's been real gradual. And I'm certainly not there. I mean, I certainly need to

probably let go even more. But, I have let go of the control, of wanting the authority all the time. For some people, it could be very frightening. And of course, you always hear the statement that the reason some teachers teach is because they have that control, and they can tell the children to do this, this, and this, and you're going to do it now, and I think for traditional teachers, too, there's that security in the textbook because that's what the textbook does. Textbook tells you when to do everything. It's right there, and you just follow the textbook. But when you break away from that, then you're--you have to do your own thinking, and you have to decide what's best for children, and how you're going to do that. And. . .it's frightening. Scary.

What advice, if any, would you give a beginning teacher? I usually tell--I mean, I've had student teachers, and they've gone out on interviews--and I've told them to take the middle of the road. To try, you know, not to come across that they're totally this or they're totally traditional. Try to go along the middle of the road. I gave some advice last year. I said that I think teachers need to read. I think they still need to go to workshops, even though I think there still needs to be something else. But I just tell young teachers that they need to read, that they need to go to workshops, that they need to find people that they feel comfortable with so that they can help each other. And take it--try not to be too overwhelmed with what's going on and do what they think is best. I do think the colleges are doing a good job, and I think they're preparing them better than I was prepared. Because, like I said, I didn't have a philosophy of what education really is. I was just going through the motions. Just using those textbooks--this is the way it's done, you know--this is the way you do it. I was not very successful in my student teaching. I didn't feel comfortable at all. (Sounds surprised.) You know, I never thought of this before. I *know* that I did not do well in my student teaching, but I've never thought *why* I didn't do well. It just hit me--this minute. I think it was because I was even uncomfortable then, because that was a very traditional situation. And there was something about it that was uncomfortable, but I don't know what it was. Maybe it was--Perhaps you had more of a philosophy than you thought. Maybe you just hadn't thought it through. Yeah. Because she was an old teacher, you know, and I know it was very traditional. And I didn't feel comfortable in the room, but I still can't recall exactly why I didn't feel comfortable. Part of it--I think part of it might have been that she didn't want to give up the control of the room, and I didn't know how to control the room the way she controlled the room. That makes sense to me. But I can translate that into situations that are going on today with student teachers. I mean, I do tell my student teachers that they do--you know, I mean, they know how the room runs for me, but the room doesn't run the same for everybody. I

can't tell--I mean, I can tell someone what I do in the room, but if they take it to their room, it's not going to be the same thing, it's not going to be the same thing. And that's probably where some teachers have difficulty. Because they think, "Oh, it worked for this person in this room", or "I went to this workshop and this is the way that teacher does it" but then I take it back to my room and it really doesn't work that way. That's because we're all individuals; we see things differently, and we do things differently. And the makeup of your room, the children in your room, and you, your personality. I think some of the things we take for granted are very different from what other people might take for granted. Yes. That really may have been why I was uncomfortable. I mean, it was O.K., but I didn't feel great about it. I didn't feel like"Ah! I've done a good job in student teaching!" I didn't have that feeling. I mean, I got through it, but I didn't know why. And at that age, I probably couldn't. I couldn't reflect; I didn't have enough. . .

O.K. When you chose to leave the teaching position at your previous school to come here, did that decision have anything to do with the work relationships at the school you were leaving? You've told me a little bit about what you were coming toward. . . My work relationship with my peers, with teachers--it was O.K. Um, but I knew that I was doing things differently. And that they weren't moving as far as I was moving. And then, we did get another principal. And she did not like what I was doing. She felt that I was moving too quickly, changing too quickly. She had been a second grade teacher for years, and she wanted to be the authority. Well, not so much the authority--she wanted to be in charge. And I wanted to do my own thing, and I was told one time that we--WE as principal and all the first grade teachers--that WE had decided we were not ready for whole language, and where were my basal readers? And that was the beginning of my deciding to leave that school. When she confronted me and said that WE were not ready to do whole language and where were the basal readers? So at that point, I decided that maybe that school wasn't the place for me. I loved the children.

I wrote an article on whole language--it was just a general article, only about 500 words. I mean, it wasn't even about that school. You know? I mean, it was just about teachers making the transition from basal to whole language. She saw it. And she had fire. . .Where was the article? It was in the whole language newsletter, just a local thing. A TAWL group--Teachers Applying Whole Language. It was like, seven years--I've been here four, five six--at least six years ago. It was like a dragon--the fire was coming out of her mouth. She was livid. She just went after me for twenty minutes. Why, do you think? Because

WE had decided that *WE* weren't ready for whole language. I couldn't even get a word in. I mean, I just said, "The basals are right there. They're right there, on the shelf, see? They're right there. I use them two days a week." But you know, it was confusing. I was having the kids do basals like two days a week, with whole language three days a week, and some of them were confused as to what was reading. Uh huh. So, that was the start of my downfall at that school. (Laughs.) I just shut my door and kept quiet. What time of the year was this, when that happened? Maybe November. So did you stay just the rest of that year, or did you stay longer than that? That I can't--I think--no, I left. See, the problem is, is that she came in January. I would say that that was--I think I left that next year. I don't think I stayed another year. She came in January, so she was only there half a year, then her father became ill, and I don't remember if that was before she chewed me out or after she chewed me out that November. I can't recall. [Pause.] I had decided to stay one year. It could have been longer because, in June of one year--the year before I came here--I found out that there was a job available here. So I called and got an appointment, and I was not on the transfer list, so I met with [former principal] and we talked for a couple of hours, and he said he would let me know. So later that week I called him and said, "Well, I've decided that I'm going to stay where I am. Because I've already turned in my order, I've already closed up my room, and there were some children that I knew I was going to get--and really that was one of the reasons--I knew that these children were going to get me, and I thought I needed to stay there for those children. And then the next year, I officially put in my transfer and was interviewed and got the job. So, I'm not sure how long it was after I was chewed out that I left.

I'll never forget her chewing me out. I mean, *she* was not ready to change. I was ready to change, but the principal was not ready to change. And see, I feel that *principals* need to be reading professionally, *principals* need to be going to workshops. And they don't. Except for the principal here [former principal]. And the principal here *encouraged* us. He *encouraged* us to go to workshops, he *encouraged* us to visit other schools. He kept money in his budget so that every teacher in this school could go and visit another school during the year. He kept money for a substitute so that every teacher in this school could go. And there aren't principals that do that. He was such a good role model. You're right. There aren't very many principals that do that.

Tell me about a time when you felt a lack of support for a teaching decision that you made--when you felt that you were pretty much alone, out on a limb? Well, that teaching decision then, when I was at the other school, and I was making the

transition from the basal reader to real literature. She put me down and said that we weren't ready to make that transition. So I didn't have support from her then, but I didn't let it stop me. I did have--I don't think it was before that; I think right after that--I made up a checklist, on my own, of all the skills that were supposed to be covered in the basal. And I had a chart--actually it was four pages--so that if I taught a skill in real literature, then I could just note it. So that if she came back to me and said, "You didn't " because she was afraid that the skills were not going to get covered. That was one of her fears. And I don't recall if I did it before or after that, but I made that checklist so that if she did come back to me and question me, I could validate it. But she never came back to me and asked for it.

How did it make you feel? It made me feel uncomfortable. I didn't go into the office. I didn't communicate with the principal. I just felt that we were on different wavelengths, and that there wasn't much that I could do. So I avoided the office. I stayed in my room. I shut the door, and did my own thing, and if people asked me questions, I'd answer. And if they didn't, I just went about my life. So. . .but I didn't think that it was *that* stressful, because I was secure in what I was doing. So I felt that I was O.K. And that's when I came--when I came to this school, and people saw me, they said, "Oh, Jenny, you look so good!" I guess it was a burden on me and I didn't realize it--that it was so bad.

Did you remember talking over with other teachers what had happened? I. . .the only people that I shared it with at the other school were the two teachers who were doing similar things as I was. Because they could relate to it. Those were the two teachers that I talked to. We were all doing the same sort of thing. One was a kindergarten teacher and one was a D-1 teacher, and I was a first grade teacher. So those are the only teachers at *that* school that I shared that information with, because they would understand. And we had our children going back and forth, anyway. If my children wanted to go read, they would go to that teacher. Or they would go to the other teacher. And they would send their children over to read. You know, they would have children that wanted to share their books--and see, that's your first clue. That's a real clue as to whether a teacher is appropriate or not. Because when I have children come into the room to read, we just drop what we're doing and we let that child read, or children read. If my children go to another room, and they come back and say, "Well the teacher told us to come back in ten minutes," or "The teacher told us to come back at 10:30." Well, that tells me that obviously she thinks that there are some *real important things* that are going on in that room, and they can't stop. Well, my view is that when the child walks through that door and says, "Can we

read to your classroom?" we stop and we listen to that child read, and then we go on. Because obviously that child had a real reason to come to the room, and *that's* what's important.

You see, people think that the skills are important or their lessons are important. And that's not what's important. What's important is the child and how they feel about themselves, and how they feel successful. It gets me--it doesn't matter what your theme is--you don't even have to have a theme in your room--because children are going to learn. You could read and write all day, and that will sustain those children. You don't need some theme to be with the children. And you certainly shouldn't be having first grade children doing a theme on the rainforest, because these children are in the middle of Oklahoma. The possibility of ever going to a rainforest is pretty remote, although I think there are probably some basic things about conservation of the world. But when a child in my classroom doesn't understand the difference between [town] and Oklahoma City, why should I be teaching him about the rainforest, which is totally out of his land? I think Lillian Katz would agree with you. Yes. I've heard her. You see, that was an eyeopener for me too, because one year I had a little child that said, "Mrs. [Jenny]"--this little child is now in sixth grade and my daughter babysat their family for all those years--"why are we doing bears?" Well, a couple of months later, I heard Lillian Katz, and I'm going, here's the answer to my question. Why would a little first grader in the middle of Oklahoma need to know about polar bears or bears, because they're not ever going to see one. I think you need to take them from their real experiences, and their real experiences are not bears. I love polar bears, and of course, there are all those cutesy activities to do with bears: the three little bears, and Goldilocks and all that. But I just don't think the little first graders need that.

But, see the three of us were very comfortable, and we would pass our children back and forth. The children that come to visit me will be the children from the year before. You know, they'll come and they feel comfortable because they know me. But they also know that they can come in the room and read. The only time they can't read is when I have a student teacher and she's waiting for the supervisor to come. I have to say, "You can't read today because the supervisor's coming and she has to do her lesson." But other than that, we'll stop. As a student teaching supervisor I would love to hear the children read. In fact, I've done that before, during a student teacher lesson for me. But I found out that when that happened the child was allowed to come into the classroom because she had earned enough points on the Accelerated Reader program to win the right to read to a first grade class. [Shivers.] My children--the children in the room

now get up in front of the room to read because they want to be there, not because someone was. . .And there was--I don't know if it was the girl from--an observer, and I told her that they [the students] do this. I don't do this.

Sometimes it can literally be the whole class. There might be one person in my class in the audience. And the rest of them are up there wanting to read. Then they sl-i-i-ide around. This chair (a director's chair) sits right there, and then they line up all these blue chairs. So when somebody finishes reading, they get up, and everyone sli-i-ides around, and then there's that chair on the end So somebody goes over and gets that chair on the end and puts it down, and somebody reads, and they all get up, and everybody sli-i-ides around. And I just sit back there and watch the whole thing.

In fact, one day, somebody decided to go from the front of the line--take the chair from the front instead of the end. So they had a little ruckus over that. "No! Can't do it that way! Take it from the end!" So they got it calmed down that day, and then a couple of days later, it came up again. A person tried to take a seat from the front. "No! No! You can't do it that way! Much better to take it from the end!" (Laughs). That's what teaching is about. That's what teaching is about. Not about getting every page in the book done, or doing the rainforest. That's not what teaching is about. If I were to move toward anything--I mean, moving toward autonomy . . .I need to move to more autonomy, granted. But the other thing would be to move away from being in control--because if you have good quality literature and you provide that reading and writing experience, that's what children need. Not dittos. They need to know how--older children need to know how to find the information.

What would you do if tomorrow a principal--not necessarily your principal; say tomorrow you have a new principal. And she walks into you classroom and said, "I want to see basals out and I want to see the workbook pages going home so parents can see what these children are learning." What would your response be? I'd say, "How many more days do I have left?" Um, I wouldn't do it. I wouldn't do it. I wouldn't do it. I would ask her why. I would say, "Why do you want me to do this? What are your reasons? If you can provide me with the articles, if you can provide me with the books that I can read that are going to tell me that that is a better way to do it, I *might* consider it." But I'm too strong in my convictions. I wouldn't do it. I would really question her and ask her why. And I would probably move on, try to move on to another place. And I don't necessarily think the grass is always greener on the other side. I do think there's got to be some place that might be coming along a little bit. Some of us probably

need our own school, need our own space. But that's not going to happen. I daydream about that too. I'm hoping for my grandchildren. Well, Kamii said three generations. ... Yeah. Three generations. Well, I read another book-- *Patchwork Quilts, Pizza,* and something else--it's from the Exxon Project. And it said twenty-five years. Do you know that Unifix cubes have been around since 1953 or 1958? No kidding! I was in school then! That's how long--and people *still* don't have unifix cubes in their room, or they may have unifix cubes in their room, but they don't use them. But that book says--that book talks about the changes. And it says it's going to take a long time. I believe it. I hope for my grandchildren. But you just have to think that, you know, you've done just a little bit. Kind of like my parent meeting. You know, they still have five more years in this school, but I've done one little thing, and maybe it will ease it for another teacher. And for those children.

JENNY
Written Protocol
Written Between First and Second Interviews

Almost seven years ago I was in the process of changing from a basal reading series to a literature approach. My first reading was *Transitions* by Regie Routman. That's where I was--in transition. At the time, Routman's book made sense; when I reread it three years ago, I recall commenting to myself, "What a powerful book!"

During my transition time, I read, attended workshops, visited other classrooms, and discussed with colleagues. Not only did I read about whole language, but I read about how children learn and about developmentally appropriate practices.

I was excited about all this and was anxious to share with anyone who would listen. I wrote a short article for the state TAWL newsletter about teachers being in a period of transition. It was a general article; it was not damaging, nor did it point any fingers. My principal (who had only been a principal for nine months) read the article.

On Thursday afternoon (almost seven years ago), I was walking my first grade class to music. The principal approached me and stated, "I need to talk to you now." We went back to my room. She immediately said, " I thought WE had decided that WE were not ready to do whole language. Where are the basal readers?" Her attack did not stop there. My visual image was one of a dragon shooting fire that would not end. I couldn't get a word in--she wouldn't let me. After fifteen minutes, the fire ceased. My only assurance to her was that the basals were on the shelf and that I had used them (not much). My immediate reaction was one of rejection of my teaching and philosophy, and rejection of me as an individual. During that confrontation, she was the authority, and she was in charge. The only words I remember are the ones I quoted above. I was visibly upset--she had attacked me personally. She had stripped my layers away--the layers of excitement, joy, accomplishment, self-esteem, and worth. I calmed her down by saying I had made a chart of all the skills that were to be covered in the basal. I told her that when I taught one of those skills without using the basal, I would date it on the chart.

From that day on, I avoided the office and her. I went into the office to check in and out, and to do necessary business. It was no longer a place for

everyday conversation. In the next one and one-half years, I went into the principal's office (next to the general office) once--to inform her that I was on the transfer list. To this day when we see each other, it is a forced smile and a not so cordial, "Hello."

[Jenny added: This confrontation occurred in November, 1989. In June 1990, she interviewed with a principal at another building in her district, but called him back and said she'd decided not to move that year. She stayed at her original school for one more school year. Then in March, 1991, she put her name on the transfer list, as did all teachers who wanted to move to other buildings within the district. She was notified in May, 1991, that her transfer to her current school had been approved.]

JENNY
Interview #2
May 16, 1995

Tell me more about your connection to your former principal. You've described him as someone who reads extensively and who asks tough questions. Tell me more about how he helped you grow professionally. Well, first of all, he was a model for me, because he read professionally, and he would--since he had the books, you know, that he read professionally, we could borrow the books from him. He shared his books with us, and he gave us articles to read if we wanted them. He was available to talk to us. He was willing to take part in a discussion. If I asked him a question, I didn't feel that I was being put down or that I was wrong, or even if I was right--I could ask him questions, and he could give me his insight. And so I appreciated his views and his insight, because he did have a lot of insight.

He had a very unique way of dealing with children. Um, you know, he never put a child down. He didn't lecture to children; he tried to gather as much--if something happened, you know, with two or three children, he would try to gather as much information as he could, and he would just have a different way of doing it. I always liked to observe the way he handled children. It was obvious that he respected the child. And it was obvious that he was patient with the child or children. [Pause. Whispers, "Let's see. . ."] And in dealing with children, he was also very careful to gather all the facts and talk with everybody first before he did anything. And his whole approach to discipline was different. You know, he wasn't the authority, and he wasn't the person in charge. It was much more democratic, and much more satisfying. I never had very many children that I had to talk to him about--not many of my children had to visit him, but I liked the way he handled them. What was the question again? Oh, how did he help you grow professionally?

O.K. How did he help me grow professionally. Like I said before, he always encouraged us to go to conferences. He always let us know when there were conferences. He, you know, let us go to other schools, and if we went to him and asked him, you know, if we could go to a workshop, we knew the answer would be yes, that we could go. He tried to have money put aside for us--not necessarily to pay for the whole thing, but to help us, because he knew that it was coming out of our pockets. Um, so really discussions with him helped me to grow professionally. And my respect for him, too. I think that's it. If I think of something else, I'll tell you.

I notice that you haven't really mentioned your current principal. What is your relationship with her like? We're friendly. She was--when I first got here, she was the assistant principal. Then she left to become assistant principal at a middle school, 6th, 7th, and 8th school. Then when he left, she came back. We're friendly. I think she knows that I had a high respect for [former principal]. And I think this year has kind of just been a testing ground, a feeling out of her. I do think she has a different outlook on things, particularly since she's coming from the middle school. I don't think she understands children as much as [former principal] did. And I think that's one thing that [former principal] helped me grow and do, was understanding children and the way they learn, and the whole gamut of what's appropriate for children and how important art is to children. And that art is a way that children express themselves. She's coming from more of a middle school background, so her dealings with children are different. But if I have a concern about a child, I will go to her. But I think this year has been pretty much of a [pause]--a testing, and I think, too, there haven't been a lot of changes this year, so I think she's just trying to keep everybody happy this year. And I think maybe next year, you know, she might make some changes next year. I don't know what they'd be, but it's possible that she could make some changes next year. I don't think she sees things quite the way I do, but I'm not afraid to, you know, try to convince her otherwise or show her, by giving her articles and so forth. So you have done that some this year? No, not too much. I've been so busy this year, with family emergencies and then winning the award, that I just haven't had a lot of dealings with her this year.

But, I did go--I had one problem that I feel very strong about, and I went in to her and told her why I felt that way, and she told me that I could do what I wanted to do, and that it was fine with her; that we didn't all have to do the same thing. So, I did appreciate that. It was over a first grade music program [for parents]. I just didn't feel that my class could handle the program and that I didn't really want to participate in the program. And she said that would be fine, that my class didn't have to participate in the program. That could be my decision. But the problem was, my class already knew about the first grade program, and it was on the school calendar, so it was really too late for me to back my children out of it. But she was willing to let them not be in it, so I did appreciate that. So have they been in it, or not? Uh huh. How has it gone? Well, I wasn't here, I was gone to Washington that week. And I told her why I didn't want my class to participate, and she could understand it, because she does have a little knowledge of my class. But I didn't think my class could handle the program. And they particularly couldn't handle the program without me. But, as I understand it, they did pretty well. So she supported me in that. I'm sure I'll get to know her more

next year. She, um, [pause]. <u>Your voice sounds a little worried about that.</u> Oh, no. I'm getting sick, can you believe it? I'm getting a sore throat. (Laughs.) <u>O.K. But I won't read worry into it--I'll read sore throat into it.</u> It hurts!

<u>You mentioned your own student teaching experience. I wondered if you had thought about that any more and thought about what it was that may have made you uncomfortable.</u> I still think it's that enlightening experience I had last week. Now, I haven't had time to think about it. But, no, I think that was it. That's the way I am. I mean, I can think about things for days and days, and then all of a sudden the answer will come to me, and it's like it's over with. <u>I get it.</u> I mean, I was with one of those old fashioned ones--we can't be trusted. <u>No, no. It has to be preprogrammed.</u> No, I really think that was it. That I just felt--she was a very traditional teacher. She was much older. I was young. I don't know as if my ideas were different, but I was having to do everything the way she wanted it. I didn't have the control that she had, and she just didn't want to give that control up to me. And I just felt uncomfortable--felt that it wasn't that successful, but I didn't know why. I think it was just because I didn't probably like what was going on in the room. I was just going through the motions.

<u>You've had student teachers, I'm sure. Have you ever had that feeling from the other side, of not wanting to turn it over to student teachers, or anything like that?</u> I think it is hard, to turn it over to student teachers, particularly I think with the young child. Because they're so connected to you. You know, you're with them a lot of their waking time, and they'll call you "mother." And it's--it's hard to let your student teacher do it, but I've had so many student teachers now that I let them do it. And I tell them too---because I learn from the student teachers--and I tell them, "Do whatever you want. If you want to try something, that's fine. You go ahead and try it." And I appreciate having the second hand in the room. I try to--you know, for me it's more of an equal-type situation, where I'm working with the children and she's working with the children, too. I really don't like it if the student teacher just sits there, and doesn't become a part of the activity. When she's first watching. But fortunately, most of them I've had have gotten right in there and helped out, too. <u>Yes, sometimes they're so timid when they go out there.</u> Well, it is an awkward situation for them. That's why I always try to make--I always make a point to tell them, "You don't have to do it the way I do it. If there's a better way to do it, or a way that you would like to try, please do it." Because I have learned things from them, too. That's why it is hard for a teacher to let go of her class. <u>Sometimes I think the hardest is when the student teacher doesn't have a good sense of kids. To me that's the most difficult.</u> Yeah. Fortunately, most of the ones I've had have been good.

<u>I notice that you are very careful to take the perspectives of other teachers, even
when you don't agree with them. And what I mean by that is, just taking into
account their difference in views. Tell me more about your relationships here at
school, especially with teachers who have a different philosophy from yours.</u>
Well, I don't--there are probably--there are teachers at this school who have a
different philosophy, and I really don't discuss it with them. <u>How many teachers
are in this building?</u> About 30; almost 5 per grade level, and then you have two
music teachers, two P.E. teachers. So there's 30-some teachers. <u>Wow. So there
are two full time music teachers and two full time P.E. teachers just for this
building?</u> No. There's two full time P.E. teachers, because they teach health,
too. One music teacher and one part-time music teacher. So, I really avoid--if I
know that person doesn't share my philosophy, I don't really bother them, or try
to talk to them. Maybe in the future I will, but [pause] some of them--now see,
in first grade, for example. In first grade, we have five teachers. Three of us are
totally against having a first grade program--music program, where everybody--
where all the first graders stand up and sing. The other two first grade teachers
are totally in favor of a first grade program. So every year, we have a little
discussion over it, O.K.? And so far, we haven't won. But we really made our
point--I think we made a point this year. Last year, the vote was three to two,
three against and two in favor, and the assistant principal said, "Well, I know the
music teacher wants to have the music program." Of course she does. So that
meant the vote was 3-3. And I said at the meeting, "I know that we are never
going to agree. We have these people over here who believe this, and we have
these people over here who believe this. And we will never agree. So, why don't
we just put it in a hat!" <u>And literally draw it out and live with it.</u> And literally
draw it out of a hat, which I would have been perfectly happy with. Because as it
was, the vote was 3-2, and we were the winners because we didn't want a
program--but we were the losers because we all had to do a program. So I
suggested that we put it in a hat, because I thought that was the fairest thing to
do, because we never would agree. And the assistant principal said, "No." So I
said, "Well, I don't even have a chance." And when I voiced my opinion to the
new principal this year, I related that story to her, and she said, "Oh. What
happened." And I said, "The assistant principal said, 'No.'" We'd have to come
to a decision, and the decision was that we would have a program. But this year,
I actually made some headway, because the new principal said if I chose not to
do the program, I didn't have to do it. But--it was already on the school calendar,
and the children already knew that there was a program. So, I decided--in the
end, I backed down and said, "They can be in it." So I think next year, we're
getting there. Since I've been here, the program has been scaled down. So at the
meeting this year, one of the other teacher said, "I know that you're not in favor

of a program, but would you please respect me?" And I said, "Yes." That was fine. So, it's just kind of an understanding that. . .Sometimes you have to agree to disagree. Yeah.

We also don't--I don't go out of the school and discuss it. Right. That was one lesson we've learned here at this school, that teachers should not be talking school business outside of the school, because it gets around. Do you think that led to some of the problems a couple of years ago? That led to--that was part of the problem. The main problem, though, was insecurity. Teachers were insecure about what they were doing in the classroom. And so--then they happened to share some things with parents, and then it took off from there. Because the parents knew some things that were school things that they really didn't have any business knowing. So, there were teachers that told. In fact, I wrote a statement. When [former principal] decided to leave, did that pretty much defuse the problem? Oh, I think the problem's still there. O.K. I had a feeling that it was, but I was just curious. [She gets up and finds a folder, looking for a letter she wrote two years ago.] I've learned from [former principal] to put everything in writing. [Leafs through folder.] She reads from part of the letter [included in its entirety in this appendix]--That's what I was trying to get across! "If you are unhappy, come and tell me to my face!" This one teacher--see we recommended [former principal] for this award, Accents on Excellence. And a *teacher at this school called the PTO president, a* and said, "Well, is there going to be a letter about [former principal] at the Board meeting tonight?" She didn't know what was going on. The PTO president comes up to me and says something to me--it's in here [points to the letter]. So this one teacher did admit at this meeting that I had, that she was the teacher who called the PTO person and talked to her. But her story was different from what the PTO president told me. The whole point was--my whole point is right there. That's my whole point. If you're unhappy with somebody, go to that person. Don't talk behind their back. That was my point. To this day, it would still be my point.

This one teacher wasn't there. She was home sick for a couple of weeks, and when she came back, she came to me and said, "What was this meeting you had?" And I said, yeah, just a minute. Read this letter. She read it, and said, "I had no idea!" (Laughs.) I said, "Well, what can I say." She had no idea that anything was going on. She was totally--and she was smart lady--she was totally oblivious to it. This problem--to me, this problem is still here. See, my old principal at [another elementary]--that was her philosophy. If you have a problem with somebody, you go to that person. Don't come to me and tell me to go see that teacher and take care of it. You need to face that teacher. Let's face

it, that is the most difficult thing to do. To go to another teacher and say, "I don't like what you're doing. I wish you wouldn't do that." It's so much easier to go to the principal and tattle than it is to confront that teacher. So my whole point was, if you have a problem with somebody, go to that person. Don't talk behind their back.

Oh, you should have seen it that day. I stood up and said, "Let's have a meeting after school." The one teacher who had called the parent on the telephone--other teachers were in and out of her office all day. "What's going on? What's going to happen?" You know.

I think all the problems are still here. Several of the teachers have left, several of the teachers who did a lot of the talking. And one of those teachers loves to know everything that's going on, and she loves to tell everybody else--she's gone. And she talked about the school for a year after she left, and the principal for a year after she left. So, really she can't talk about him now, because he's gone. So that does help in that respect. But, most of us teachers are still here. Those teachers who are insecure are still her. What's so amazing is that some of those teachers felt that he had his favorites, and that those were people that he hired. Well, just about every person here was hired by him, because it's been ten years. I think the problems are still here. The teachers that are insecure are still here, and you know, it may not surface again for a couple of years, but it's still here, because the same teachers are still here. Some of the teachers have left. The teacher that called the PTO--she's gone. I don't think the problems go away.

The letter was written April 30--let's see, what year? [Quietly figures, then says, "April 30, 1993."] Let's see. I was doing an internship in [town] in November of 1993, and things were really getting to be a mess.

I want to go back to why it is that you're different from traditional teachers You've explained a lot about *how* you're different--in what ways you stand out-- but I'm curious about *why* you're different. Is there something in your background that's different, or is there any way you can explain that? I have one reason that I can use to explain that: my first grade experience was horrible. Your own, as a first grader? My own, as a student--my first grade experience was terrible. I was in a first grade classroom at the end of my street. Everyone walked to school, and I had Miss E. She was very old to me at the time--she did have grey streaks in her hair. She was "Miss"--she'd never been married. She was *very* strict. *Very strict.* And we all sat in rows; she had a pointer and she banged it on the desk--on your desk. I was scared of her. And she--one time, I

was sitting at a round table with a book. I came from a family that didn't have college educations, and I'm the youngest of seven children. And I'm the first one to go through four years of college education. And we didn't have very much in the home. We weren't a rich family; we weren't even a middle class family. And we had very few books, I had very few toys. Which was O.K., because I used my imagination a lot. And I didn't have a lot of clothes. But I didn't have a lot of books. I had gotten a book--and we still have the book, I don't have all the pieces to it--but I was so *proud* of that book! I took the book to school and I was sitting at the table showing the book to someone else, and the teacher accused me of running around the room. I had to go out in the hall, and I was reprimanded in the hall, and it was a very bad scene. So, for me first grade was a very bad experience. I think that's why I'm a first grade teacher--because of my very bad experience in first grade. My second grade teacher--it was a good experience. Second, third, fourth. . .Fifth grade was so-so. But first grade was a really bad experience for me. I remember having a lot of difficulty. I remember that spelling was very difficult. And I can remember having the--I can remember taking spelling tests every week, and I can remember doing poorly on them. And I can remember that I was not a good reader. I don't remember the reading groups that much--well, I remember that I wasn't in the top reading group. Because my cousin was in the top reading group. My cousin has always been *smarter* than me--in my eyes. And she was in the top reading group. You were in the same class? Uh huh. We were in the same class. She was in the top reading group. . .[Jenny names 3 girls including her cousin, who were in the top reading group.] And I wasn't in the top reading group. I was just barely reading. So, first grade was very traumatic. And I--I remember the spelling and the reading, but all my other experience of school are of dealing with people. Not so much of when I learned something, or when I didn't learn something. Because I did learn to read and I did learn to do addition and all that, but what I remember about school are my dealings with people. And to this day, I'm convinced that it doesn't matter what theme you use--that's not the important thing. The children remember you for the way you respect them. Not for--that you did some cute activity. I think children remember you because they know you respect them. I think that's the key. I feel very strongly about that, that that's the key. Children can tell right away if you are sincere and if you really care about them. And they can tell if you're telling the truth. But if you come give them some cute little story about something, or you try to hide something from them, or if you don't give them a real fact, then I think they *know* it. And some of the most difficult children I've had, I've usually sort of won them over, and they will continue to come back to me every year and see me. And I think they finally realize that yes, we had a difficult time, but there was always that respect there, and that caring.

So I think that's what's important. It doesn't matter what you teach.

<u>Why do you think so many teachers don't ask themselves the hard questions about teaching: How children learn, why some things work better than others, what school should be like? I really don't understand this question; I mean, I don't understand how anybody could *not*, but I know they're out there, and there are a lot of them.</u> There are a lot of them, and I think about it a lot. I think part of it--maybe part of it goes back to we've always done school this way, you know. Um, perhaps some of it is because we don't truly teach it, or consider it professional, like doctors and lawyers. I mean, I think--I don't know any doctors and lawyers--but I think if I were a doctor, or if I were a lawyer, I would think that I would *have* to go to classes to become updated. Particularly a doctor. To me, a doctor *has* to go to class to find out the latest procedures, the best procedure. Teachers don't *have* to go to workshops to better themselves, because they can say, "It's O.K. We're doing this." But I think doctors have to. If a doctor doesn't know the latest thing that's out there, then he's not going to get paid. Maybe it would be a good thing to have choice schools. Because it would be obvious to me that parents would want their children to go to schools that have top teachers. Of course, there's going to be competition. And top teachers are going to know what's current. And the only way to know what's current is to read professionally. I think some people look at it as a convenient job. Let's face it, it is a convenient job. You have your summers off, you have your holidays off, you can have a family and still be a teacher; it's convenient. It's a convenient job. There are teachers who object to having all year-round school. I believe in year-round school; I think we should have school all year around. The first people to object to all year round schools are the ones who want to be spending the summer home with their children.

I can't blame them. I didn't have to teach. *I did not have to teach*--when my children were young. I was an at-home mother. I didn't have to work. The one good thing is that I was able to be home with my children. So, I didn't have to work, so I didn't have to think about all year round school. I totally believe in all year round school. I think we should have it year round. I think children are home too long in the summertime. Six weeks, max. I would love to teach year round, because I think that's what children need. Some children need to be around us 24 hours a day. (Laughs.) <u>Yes. For some children, this is the best they can get.</u> That's a question we all ask--all of us who ask those kinds of questions ask, "Why aren't they reading?" And you know, we can stick the articles in their box; we can say, "Read this book!" But, you know, they don't. . ..but maybe later in life. . .That's a good question. <u>I just wondered if you had any</u>

insight about it. No. We *ask* that question.

What do you think school be like for children--what should school be for children, and what should schools do for children? Well, school needs to be a happy place. Children need to feel secure here. For some children, I think that's the only--I am the only secure thing they have. Um, [pause]. I think that's why they get upset when their teacher's not there, because they're so used to their teacher and the way they do it, and I was gone this year for two weeks. And it just blew some of my children away. They have no concept--children this age have no concept of time. So when I was gone, it was like I was gone forever and I was not returning. One little girl was going to leave the school. I was gone, so she was going to be gone. Her father had deserted her; I had deserted her, so she couldn't confine herself to the school. They had to call the parent and say, "Please come get your child. We can't keep her here. We cannot guarantee that this child will stay in school. You're going to have to take her home." And I think she was just totally insecure. The day I got back, it was like I had never gone, and she was perfectly fine. She did it again in March. I was gone half a day, and she started to lose it. And she *knew* that I was going to be gone. So for children, I feel that I can provide them a happy place, a secure place, a place where they can be respected, and that's also what we do for children, too.

Like I said, I don't think--yes, I teach them to read, and I teach them to write, and I guide them, but I'll do whatever I can for them. But I don't *have* to do all the cutesy things. That's what they're not going to remember. I need to be there for them. And I think another thing is that they want to be heard. They want you to listen to them--particularly this class. This class is very insecure. And they just want to tell me everything. And so I have to try to listen to them. They want to tell me! You know, they don't have other people to tell, so they want to tell me. They want me to hear them. And that's--it's easy to forget, because you think, "Oh, we need to do this, and we need to do that." But that's not what's important.

These children here--some of them don't have their basic needs met. And that's what needs to be met first, is their basic needs. We can't begin the education process without their basic needs. And of course, I think their basic needs are food, shelter, love. . .I think that's what they need. Security. Security. Those are their basic needs, and if they don't have those we can't do anything. Because they may be wondering where they're going at the end of the day, or mom said she was coming, but is she going to come? I have one little boy who doesn't have

his mother here. She's in another state. And he's never talked about her; I never saw her. And all of a sudden at Christmas time, she showed up. And then he mentioned it after Christmas. <u>Has he been with a grandparent?</u> No. He's with the father. But some teachers thought that the mother was dead, because the children never, *never* talk about their mother. And when he talked about her after Christmas--I went to another teacher and said, "Their mother's not dead! He talked about her; she came at Christmas time." So, I'm sure his concerns are seeing his mother. So that's what we have to do, is meet their basic needs first. That's why I jokingly say, "Some of these children should be with me 24 hours a day!" Because they don't have their basic needs met at home. You know, one weekend they go here, one weekend they go there. I've had children--you know you can tell which parent they've been with over the weekend, just by the way they behave on Monday. And I'm certainly not the best one for keeping discipline constant, but some of these children live a very undisciplined life at home. They don't know how to control themselves. They lack self-control. So I try to provide that, too, because they need that.

And they certainly need to know how to cooperate; they need to know how to get along. I think that's a big thing. My daughter is just graduating from college, and she's going to be a problem-solver; that's her job. Solving problems that other businesses have. Whatever problems a business has, she will go in with a team and solve their problems. And we have children that can't get along and cooperate. There's too much of this "me" business--I'll do this if I get this, or I'm going to do this because then I'll get this. Children need to work together and cooperate. So we need to work on that. Those are the big things I see.

And of course, I'm totally against competition. Rewards, and things that are expensive. My daughters would come home--and it's so prevalent here in [town]--"Mom! So and so is getting $10 for every A! If I got $10 for every A, I'd be getting $90." And I just say, "Oh, that's nice. So?" (Laughs.) So I think children need to work on something because they want to. Not because they're getting something for it. And I used to give stickers, but I sure don't any more. If I give a sticker out in the room--I have a whole collection of stickers--if I gave out stickers in the room, it would be a sticker for everybody. And it wouldn't be--it would just be "because." Everybody's getting a sticker. Um, because I don't believe in rewards. So I think that's it.

VITA

Pamela Unruh Brown

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: TEACHER AUTONOMY

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OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

Date: 11-03-94   **IRB#:** ED-95-023

Proposal Title: TEACHER AUTONOMY

Principal Investigator(s): Kathryn Castle, Pamela U. Brown

Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

APPROVAL STATUS SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY FULL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD AT NEXT MEETING.
APPROVAL STATUS PERIOD VALID FOR ONE CALENDAR YEAR AFTER WHICH A CONTINUATION OR RENEWAL REQUEST IS REQUIRED TO BE SUBMITTED FOR BOARD APPROVAL.
ANY MODIFICATIONS TO APPROVED PROJECT MUST ALSO BE SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL.

Comments, Modifications/Conditions for Approval or Reasons for Deferral or Disapproval are as follows:

Provisions received and approved.

Signature: _____   Date: November 8, 1994

Chair of Institutional Review Board