

RESTORYING OURSELVES:
USING *CURRERE* TO EXAMINE
TEACHERS' CAREERS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Overview

Teacher narratives such as *To Sir, With Love* (Braithwaite, 1959), *The Water is Wide* (Conroy, 1972), and those found in the *Chicken Soup for the Teacher's Soul* (Canfield & Hansen, 2002) have been accepted as part of mainstream culture. These “powerful cultural and personal narratives” are part of the “accidental apprenticeships” (Ritchie & Wilson, 2000, p. 33) that shape future teachers beginning in Kindergarten or pre-school. Teacher narratives are one of the few ways others can vicariously enter the classroom and experience the joys and sorrows of teaching, a way of “representing and understanding experience” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). L. Smith (2001) used teachers’ life histories written in a collaborative atmosphere as a way to “meet personal and professional needs at a critical point in their lives” (p. 123). Additionally, teacher narratives can have a profound affect on the teacher writer, providing “a way for teachers to construct meaning and preserve what it is they know and how they think, and rethink their craft . . .” (Lyons & LaBoskey, 2002, p. 12). Many graduate programs and professional development programs such as the National Writing Project use teacher narratives as a way for teachers to reconnect to their classroom experiences (Schwarz & Alberts, 1998). Such reconnection can be useful as a reflective tool to improve practice, to make sense out of the jumbled memories of the fragmented teaching day.

A veteran of twenty years in the classroom, I have long sought an answer to the fundamental questions: “Am I a good teacher?” and, more recently, “What kind of teacher am I, and why am I still teaching?” During undergraduate education I became increasingly focused on pedagogy along with my growing awareness that there is more to teaching than I had observed during my own K-12 education. In *Chicken Soup for the Teachers’ Soul*, Canfield and Hansen (2002) list a myriad of teachers’ roles (p. xix), but a list did not help me understand my own path. Since my undergraduate days I have read and reread numerous accounts of other teachers on this journey (Allen, 2001; Ashton-Warner, 1963; Ayers, 1993; Baldacci, 2004; Braithwaite, 1959; Codell, 1999; Conroy, 1972; Donaldson & Poon, 1999; Ellison, 2003; Goodnough, 2004; Halpin, 2004; Herndon, 1965, 1971, 1985; Jiménez, 2001; Kane, 1991; Kohl, 1967; McCourt, 2005; Ohanian, 2001; O’Reilly, 1993; Rose, 1989; Salzman, 2003; Specht, 1976; Swope, 2005; Tompkins, 1996; see also Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003; Lightfoot, 1983; Palmer, 1983, 1998; Schubert & Ayers, 1999). I felt the struggling teachers who wrote their own narratives reaching across the gap of time to me, urging me to write my own story to make sense of my professional life. I came to realize that writing might generate answers to my questions, and, as a part of participating in the National Writing Project, I began writing my own narratives to tell the story of my teaching career. I find that the events of my past take on a different significance in light of my current practice; writing allows me to rethink, and “re-story” my experiences. But the fragments of my teaching life are jumbled, events recorded in journals as they happened and as I remembered them. It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to follow a cohesive time line of my journey, much less to ascertain who I have been, who I am now, and who I wish to be. The day-to-day

struggles of classroom teaching, at times, wipe out all thoughts of previous teaching years. I become a prisoner in the moment of “Now,” cut off from the guidance of my own past and the vision of my own future.

Currere (Pinar & Grumet, 1976) is a method to reconnect with past memories, especially those memories having to do with educational settings; in short, to write an educational autobiography. Using the free associative techniques common to psychoanalysis (Doerr, 2000, 2004), participants first look deeply backward and write about their educational pasts. After they have written exhaustively about the past, they then project themselves forward in time and write about how they imagine their futures to be. During the third, analysis stage, participants reflect on their previous writings in light of their current lives. In the final stage, participants synthesize the themes of their writings and of their lives. Previous researchers (Doerr, 2000, 2004; Bernard, 2004; Chacon, 2002; Hartsell, 1999; Smith, 1991; Trewin, 1996; Williamson, 1987) found *currere* to be a helpful method for participants in educational settings to associate their past experiences with their present lives and future plans. For example, Trewin (1996) conducted a study of two teachers who were considering leaving the profession (herself and a colleague). Using interviews and written narratives Trewin came to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of why some teachers leave the classroom. Trewin specifically suggests further research of teachers’ stories highlighting “how they perceive and feel about teaching and about themselves as teachers” (p. 119) through autobiographical writings. I began to explore *currere* as a method to uncover stories of education and teaching.

From my own teaching practice and by watching my colleagues, I have observed that teachers in general do not have the time necessary to reflect over their careers as educational practitioners. Hargreaves (1992) reported the lack of reflective time for teachers was due to increased intensification, the controlling of the classroom through “prescribed program, mandated curricula, and step-by-step methods of instruction” (p. 88) as teachers are called upon to deal with continually increasing pressure and increasing numbers of innovations. Intensification is evidenced by teachers’ increased dependence upon “externally produced and imposed behavioral objective, in-class assessment and accountability instruments, and classroom techniques” (p. 88) that focus teacher attention on administrative tasks and away from children (Apple, 1988). With such increases in workload, teachers say, “I’d almost like to give it up” (Hargreaves, 1992, p. 93). A decade later, with the advent of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (No Child Left Behind Act, 2001) legislation, my informal observations lead me to conclude that intensification has only increased. My assumption for this study is that, given opportunity and access, teachers might be interested in reflecting over their careers as a way to make meaning of their professional lives. This assumption is based on data from the National Writing Project (Lieberman & Wood, 2001), the work of Hargreaves (1992), Apple (1988), and L. Smith (2001) and my readings of teacher narratives.

As I read these studies, I began to realize that *currere* could be a way for experienced teachers to organize their memories, to shed light into darkened corners of forgotten rooms of their past, to reflect upon their goals and to discover themes in their careers. Because *currere* includes self-analysis and self-synthesis, the narrative remains entirely in the hands of the writer and does not require a researcher’s interpretation for

validity, thus empowering the writer to re-imagine and re-story. Using *currere*, educators might be able to re-story their professional careers in powerful ways that reflect their current lives. Such reflection might help educators make career choices and perhaps even encourage them to remain in the field.

Focus of the Inquiry and The Question

I began by looking for answers the following questions: In what ways can experienced teachers recreate their professional lives by writing teacher narratives using the *currere* method? How will such professional stories help teachers develop or deepen an overview of their careers? How might teachers identify the themes of their careers and use synthesis as an opportunity to re-story their professional lives? What directions might teachers who write such stories identify for the remainder of their professional lives? How might the writing of teacher narratives using *currere* be a way to help retain teachers in the field? I then narrowed the focus to two questions: Is *currere* an effective method for creating teacher autobiographies? and What decisions do teachers who have participated in a *currere* group make about remaining at their current teaching position?

This study uses the *currere* method to encourage participants to create teacher narratives about past and current practice and to examine the themes of their careers closely in ways they find empowering. Meininger (2005) and Anderson (1998) describe a hermeneutic-interpretive methodology that suggests a lens to help participants synthesize and analyze their life stories. Such a technique requires participants to first read their stories while looking for ways the individual stories work to create a whole. Next, participants “explore the world that becomes visible in the use of language and metaphor” (Meininger, 2005, p. 113). As a group or in pairs the participants then

dialogue about their stories, and through this dialogue the participants “reread, rethink and listen once more to the information” (p. 113). According to Meininger, this process suggests how the material might be rearranged, deleted or expanded upon to create meaning. Through this process the participants may experience a “moment of recognition, insight, and engagement” (p. 113) essential to the synthesis of their stories and the discovery of themes in their careers.

Significance of the Problem

Retaining experienced teachers in the classroom has become a critical issue as the passage of new legislation has changed the way classrooms and schools are conducted, stepping up the speed at which students are taught (F. Smith, 2003). Since the passage of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001) legislation, many teachers have been required to change curriculum content and teaching methods to match criteria determined by others who have only a distant relationship to the classroom (Garan, 2004). Teachers with years of experience and successful students are now forced to return to school to meet “highly qualified” requirements. This may be a substantial burden for teachers in rural areas (Exstrom, 2003; Hill & Barth, 2004). Teachers are accustomed to responding to legislative mandates, adapting instruction to fit current educational philosophy and best practices research.

In an era when the pressures to improve test scores are enormous and failure to do so comes with penalties, teachers resent (too weak a word) feeling like servants who must do what their administrative masters tell them to do and do it in a prescribed way. (Sarason, 2004, p. 126)

To summarize, the implementation of NCLB at the state and local level has, in some cases, systematically reduced teacher agency from the adaptation/adjustment process (Garan, 2004). Teachers forced to swallow the incredible statement that others who have never met their students know what is best for them are resigning from the profession either by actually leaving the classroom or by becoming robotic automatons. Energy for change should come from new teachers, whether they are young professionals or idealistic mature individuals embarking on a second or third career. In point of fact, an incredible 50% of those entering the teaching profession leave within five years (Ingersol, 2001; see also Schlichte, Yssel & Merbler, 2005), a problem so common it has been tagged with a prosaic name, “The Leaky Bucket” (Lurie, 2004). As a result, some school districts have developed mentoring programs to keep new teachers in the classroom (Connors-Krikorian, 2005; Marty, 2005; Strong, 2005a, 2005b; Terrill, 2005; for information on Oklahoma Entry Year Mentoring Program, see Friske & Combs, 1986; Sweeny, 1998).

Regardless of the reason teachers leave, their exodus is costly. The Alliance for Excellent Education (2005) estimates the cost of replacing new and experienced teachers who leave at approximately 2.2 billion dollars per year. This does not include the cost of loss in teacher quality and lost student achievement (Alvy, 2005).

Many states, reacting to federal mandates, have instituted harsh punishment for school districts and individual schools that are not achieving sufficient annual yearly progress (AYP) across all subsets of their population, including English Language Learners and the mentally handicapped. This pressure has a trickle down effect on individual building principals and, ultimately, on individual teachers. Rather than raising

teacher initiative and empowering teachers to seek ways to achieve the given goals, the tiny carrot-big stick system has paralyzed educators, forcing them to rely upon legislative mandates to determine what and how to teach. Unfortunately, such paralysis leads to minimal change effort. Teachers who feel a sense of “personal achievement” (Evans, 1997) in their job satisfaction are more likely to remain in the teaching profession (Woods & Weasmer, 2002). Teachers with more than five years of experience who leave the profession (nearly 16% in 2001 (Ingersoll, 2002)) deprive school reform efforts of the wisdom and experience necessary to ask “hard questions” and provide thoughtful resistance to change (Alvy, 2005). Experienced teachers, expected to be new teachers’ mentors, need reasons to stay in the classroom.

Epistemology and Theoretical Perspective

The theoretical perspective of constructionism informs this study. Constructionism is “the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context” (Crotty, 1998, p. 42). Teaching practitioners “frame problems and shape situations to match their professional understanding and methods, they construct situations suited the roles they frame, and they shape the very practice worlds in which they live out their professional lives” (Schon, 1987, pp. 42-43). Following Schon’s line of reasoning teaching practitioners are of two types. First, some use technical rationality, a practice derived from “an objectivist view of the relation of the knowing practitioner to the reality he knows” in which “professional knowledge rests on a foundation of facts” (p. 36). These teachers are able to deal with slight deviations of

routine, but not events that differ significantly from expected outcomes. On the other hand, teachers who have become accustomed to using unexpected experiences as opportunities to rethink their “knowledge-in-action” (p. 35), behave more like researchers as they construct the situations of their practice with professional artistry. Eisner (1998b) discussed teaching as a performance art that requires reflective deliberation to lead to meaningful learning. Such reflection, dubbed “educational connoisseurship” by Eisner (1985) requires the creation of “professional communities where sharing one’s work is possible and taken seriously” (Eisner, 1998, p. 7). It is this type of community and this reflection process that this study seeks to stimulate among the participants.

In this study, reality is constructed via the participants’ writing about their professional lives as teachers. In the language of the supporting epistemology, this reality is formed over time and is a synthesis of the participants’ self-knowledge and recollections, the projections of their future goals, the analysis of their present lives. This study examines these constructed realities, as well as the reality constructed by the group about the process of writing, through techniques of narrative inquiry and hermeneutics.

Conclusion

Classroom teachers, beginning and experienced, rarely have an opportunity to reflect over their careers. Time for such reflection must be carved out of already full schedules. Furthermore, a supportive community may afford participants the opportunity to fully profit from such reflection. Reflection within a community may provide teachers an opportunity to examine their educational careers and plan for their futures. A structured method of reflection, such as *currere*, may be an effective method for creating teacher autobiographies. Teachers at a career crossroads who have created their

autobiography through the *currere* process and met in a supportive group during this process may choose to remain in the classroom. This study examines both the process and the products generated by a small group of elementary school teachers in an effort to address these issues.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Overview

This chapter is organized into three sections. The first section describes teacher research, narratives and narrative inquiry, both in general terms and specifically focusing on teacher narratives as a form of professional development. The second section examines the question: For what reasons do teachers leave the profession and why do they stay? The final section reviews the relevant research on the three methodologies used in this study: narrative inquiry, hermeneutics, and *currere*.

Teacher Research

Introduction

Some teachers research their students every day. These teachers constantly collect data, both during class times and during paper grading and use this data to make decisions about what and how to teach. Yet these on-going evaluations of students and teaching methods only become teacher-research when done in a systematic way. Teacher-research is also known as action research, action science, action learning, teacher knowledge research, classroom research and other names (Noffke, 1997). Here it will be referred to as teacher-research, including the hyphen between the two words as a

way to (re)place the emphasis on the teacher at the center of the research. Rosiek and Atkinson (2005) state that teacher-research attempts to fill the gap between educational theory and practice and contributes to body of literature by asking questions about the “content, production, epistemology and representation of teachers’ practical knowledge” (p. 421), and this knowledge that is not available from any other method of research. In essence, rather than rely on research done long ago or far away, teacher-researchers use the data of their own classrooms and their own teaching to create and implement theories to increase their classroom effectiveness. In the educational dialogue largely conducted by university researchers and government officials, teacher-research allows teachers to enter the conversation that is all too often “exclusionary and disenfranchising” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, p. 42). Teacher-research, then, can be seen as a more democratic, or perhaps even resistant, way to include practicing teachers in the educational discourse.

Teacher-researchers

Informally, teachers have always looked into the “what” and “why” of students’ learning. Teachers have a special perspective on their practice, a perspective that is not available to researchers who do not teach. Teacher research is a significant way of knowing about teaching (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). Formal teacher-research in North America can be traced to the 1940s (Zeichner, & Noffke, 2001) and is frequently identified with Kurt Lewin and Stephen M. Corey and less often with John Collier (Noffke, 1997). By the 1980s teacher-research came to be seen as an attempt to make teachers’ knowledge visible through narrative inquiry, action research and reflective practice (Ruthven, 2005). From the beginning it was assumed that the teacher-researcher would actively generate theory through research rather than simply act as a consumer of

others' research (Sweeney, 2003; see also Zeichner & Noffke, 2001). Teachers who are researchers are able to formulate questions for their research and find their own answers within themselves and within their practice. They do not have to rely on external researchers to define a research problem and a method of investigation. Fueyo and Koorland (1997) generated a narrative describing the complex work of teacher-researchers:

Teachers as researchers observe and analyze their plans and actions and their subsequent impact on the students they teach. By understanding both their own and their students' classroom behaviors, teachers as researchers make informed decisions about what to change and what not to change. They can and do solve their own problems. They link prior knowledge to new information. Risk takers, they accept failures as learning experiences. Teachers as researchers ask questions and systematically find answers. They observe and monitor themselves and their students while participating in the teaching and learning process. They question instructional practices and student outcomes. They make data based decisions, validating their practice. They implement change. Teachers as researchers are professionals. (p. 337)

In summary, teacher-researchers work in small groups within a school or are part of a larger project spanning many classrooms in many schools, but they all look within their classrooms and themselves to describe their students and their practice.

Teacher-Research

Lytle and Cochran-Smith (1990) describe teacher-research as a system of intentional inquiry that provides external entities and schools with unique, accessible

perspective on education and the educational system. This research comes in a variety of forms, as does the data for these studies. Common sources of data include teacher journals, essays by teachers, interviews and classroom observations and student work (Sweeney, 2003). Teacher-research is collaborative, participatory and self-evaluative (Furlong & Salisbury, 2005), seeks greater understanding of classroom practice through the study of that practice (Loughran, 2002), fosters autonomy (Castle, 2006) and is perhaps one of the most professional undertakings available to the classroom teacher.

Teacher-research begins by asking questions. What is happening? Why is it happening? How would this be different under different circumstances? What am I, as the teacher, doing to further learning and intellectual growth? It then continues by including the world outside the classroom: What is happening in my colleagues' classrooms? What research has been published about this? By looking at one's practice through a variety of contexts, differences can be identified and questioned. Such interrogation can lead to questioning of other, larger educational issues, including education reform issues within the classroom, the school, and the larger educational system (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). The heart of teacher research, then, is "questioning assumptions and common practices in classrooms and schools and seeking ways to take action individually and collectively" (p. 82). Through the dialogic process of questioning assumptions and practices with other teachers, knowledge is constructed.

The knowledge that is constructed through dialogue between teacher-researchers may be local knowledge of a single classroom or a single school, or public knowledge for the larger community of educators (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). Orland-Barak and Tillema (2006) discuss elements of knowledge that is co-constructed with other teachers

through research and dialogue. Dialogue between teachers can be convergent, parallel or divergent. While convergent dialogue between teachers can be affirming and supportive, divergent and parallel dialogue provide important opportunities for learning because they “prompt a discourse in which professionals expose, scrutinize, and contest deeply ingrained assumptions about their practice” (p. 2). Such discourse is vital to the evolution of teaching. Rosiek and Atkinson (2005) are convinced that professional discourses form how teachers discuss their experiences as well as the ways they experience their classrooms. Professional discourses shape not only curriculum and pedagogy, but also how the students and teacher view differences such as race, gender and (dis) ability. By actively researching their own classrooms, teachers have the potential to create knowledge that will shape their future classroom experiences, further changing their practice. If an educator’s primary duties are “to discover, to connect, to apply, to teach” (Shulman, 2000, p. 49), then the dialogue of teacher-research becomes a valuable way to fulfill that function.

Sweeney (2003) examined the role of teacher-research in science education and found that not only does teacher-research have the potential to change what happens in the classroom; by definition, the process of teacher-research is a form of human development affecting the three interactive and interdependent aspects of practitioner professionalism: professional, social and personal development. In today’s No Child Left Behind climate when teachers are held accountable for their teaching through a myriad of tests, to ignore the importance of teachers in the social construction of knowledge (Sweeney, 2003) is tantamount to replacing educators with “patient-tutor” computer

programs. Knowledge construction happens through the reflective practice of teacher-research. Five examples of major studies of teacher-research follow.

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) used Project START (Student Teachers as Researching Teachers) and the Philadelphia Writing Project as sources for information about teacher-research. This seminal study spanned six years and examined a variety of teacher-research projects. In their opinion, such research projects were strategic sites for rethinking education and practice. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) formulated a working typology of teacher-research that has been used across the field to define and describe the work done by teachers about their own practices. They divide this work into empirical (journals, oral inquiries and classroom studies) and essays (narrative interpretations of the beliefs and interactions in the classroom and of the research). Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) have found this typology valuable to enable readers to see the variety of questions, data, analysis and interpretations generated by teacher-research. They conclude that teacher-research not only adds information to the general knowledge base about effective practice, but also generates conceptual frameworks necessary for further research and deeper understanding. They also state that inquiry based learning should be the most important role of teacher education throughout the teacher's career. Cochran-Smith and Lytle's (1993) work with teacher-researchers provides much of the structure for describing and studying teacher research.

Loughran (2002) build upon Cochran-Smith and Lytle's framework to describe the activities of the teachers in PEEL (Project for the Enhancement of Effective Learning) and PAVOT (Perspective and Voice of the Teacher). PEEL and PAVOT are both Australian teacher-research projects. Begun in 1985, PEEL is a two decades-old,

collaborative structure of teachers meeting together regularly with each other and with university professionals (who acted as resources rather than researchers) to discuss classroom initiatives and teacher-research (Loughran, Mitchell & Mitchell, 2002). These teachers conducted action research, reflected upon their results, and changed their classroom practice to reflect their new knowledge. They also collected their documentation into a book, the dissemination of which helped to begin PEEL projects in Canada, New Zealand, Sweden and Denmark. The aims of the PEEL projects are to foster independent students learning through changed teacher behaviors, and through teacher research that engages teachers and students as participants in the process of identifying successful practices that improve the quality of classroom learning. The PAVOT project began in 1994 as a way to increase teacher-researchers' collaboration with university researchers in an attempt to promote more systematic research as well as to help teachers give individual voice to their research findings. Loughran, Mitchell and Mitchell (2002) publish a sampling of the PAVOT research and conclude that an important element of this research is increasing the knowledge base of what teachers know through their teaching and their research about teaching. Critics of teacher-research have often pointed out that teacher-researchers often do not delve deeply into the published knowledge base of university research to support their studies (see below). Loughran, Mitchell and Mitchell (2002) point out that the knowledge base that would support teacher-research is in the process of being published by the teachers themselves.

Baumann and Duffy (2001) reviewed 34 teacher-research studies published in professional journals, as chapters in books, and as full books. The studies spanned a variety of grade levels and topics within literacy. In these studies, teachers generally

used methods grounded in previously published research and theory, although their research sometimes led to the creation of new theories. One finding across all of the studies was the importance of collaboration. Brock, Helman, and Patchen (2005) discuss collaboration in terms of social theory. Effective use of language between people can facilitate shared understandings and “shape the ways in which conversants create knowledge” (p. 74). Knowledge creation, as well as our ability to act as change agents, is shaped by interactions with others and by our shared and separate historical and cultural backgrounds (p. 76). Collaboration, then, is a continuous, dynamic process of coming to know and coming to know each other. Collaboration comes in a variety of forms: within school teams, teams of teachers and university researchers, teams of students and teachers, and even teams of teachers and parents were among the collaborative groups (Baumann & Duffy, 2001; Prestage, Perks, & Soares, 2003). Similarly, Brock, Helman, and Patchen (2005) found diversity in methods of data collection and methods of reporting findings. Throughout all of the studies, however, they found the common thread of teachers studying issues that mattered to them, to their students, and to their teaching. Teachers questioned their assumptions about their students, about themselves and about their practice.

The Best Practice Research Scholarship program (BPRS) was launched in 2000 as part of a series of initiatives aimed at improving teacher practice in England through supporting teachers’ professional development (Furlong & Salisbury, 2005; see also Prestage, Perks, & Soares, 2003). BPRS was intended to foster teacher-research by providing up to £ 3,000 scholarships to teachers across England each year from 2000 through 2003. The teachers applied individually or in small groups for the funding. In

their applications they indicated what they wished to study, how they planned to study their topic of interest, and how and to whom they would report their results. These projects ranged from short-term classroom observations of a single new teaching technique to complicated studies involving multiple teachers over a year or more. Furlong and Salisbury (2005) sampled 100 cases of the 3000 funded research studies. Of these 100 cases they selected 20 to study in depth in an attempt to discover the effectiveness of BPRS at its goals. BPRS goals included helping teachers to “develop their professional knowledge, understanding and confidence; enhance their professional practice; and engage and encourage the sharing of effective practice and professional knowledge within the teacher’s school and the wider educational community” (Furlong & Salisbury, 2005, p. 46). Prestage, Perks, and Soares (2003) note the differences between traditional Ph.D. research that takes between one and three years to plan and execute, and the BPRS research which was accomplished relatively quickly and therefore encouraged flexibility and on-the-job learning, perhaps to the point of compromising the results of the study.

During all three years of the program, a key feature of BPRS research was the pairing of teacher-researchers with university mentors who supported the teacher-researchers in a variety of ways, including training them in research paradigms. Furlong and Salisbury (2005) found that teacher-researchers undertook a wide range topics, the majority of which were related to pedagogy and produced knowledge that was hierarchical, transient, and located within the researchers themselves. Such embedded knowledge resulted in increased confidence and changed educational practice. Perhaps one of the most significant changes in many teachers’ practice was the embedding of the

research stance into their daily classroom lives. Whereas before teachers commonly engaged in lecture and question/answer formats as a primary pedagogy, now interactive teaching methods including study inquiry are the norm at the school. Part of this change was created because teachers were funded by a national agency, thus validating their abilities to think and create knowledge by analyzing evidence. Prestage, Perks, and Soares (2003) counter the idea of national validity with the awareness that government officials often view student test scores as proof of a teacher's professional development. While the government may have improvement of student test scores as a primary focus, the researchers found developing teachers' critical intelligence to be of more importance. (Prestage, Perks, & Soares, 2003). Teacher-research can and does change practice beyond the individual classroom, but it takes time (Poetter, Badiali, & Hammond, 2000).

Poetter, Badiali, and Hammond (2000) report on teacher-researchers from schools connected to Miami University's Institute for Educational Renewal. During their review of a partnership of teachers and interns from a junior-senior high school, they stress the importance of writing for the researchers. Writing completes the research cycle (Poetter, Badiali, & Hammond, 2000), helping teachers incorporated their learning into their classroom practice. Writing appears to be the difference distinguishing between teacher-research with lasting results and research in a classroom that fades over time. Poetter, Badiali, and Hammond (2000) also discuss the necessity for the school climate to be receptive to teacher-research; otherwise such work is seen as extraneous. In summary, effective teacher-research is a product of collaborative environments where teachers work with each other, and sometimes with university researchers, to develop questions,

research strategies, and reporting methods that reflect classroom practice as currently exists and as it might become.

Significance

Although far from the usual lecture format of professional development, teacher-research may be an effective way to affect classroom practice. Because questioning is at the core of teacher-research (Zeichner, & Noffke, 2001), Brock, Helman, and Patchen (2005) remind the teacher-researcher that without continuously questioning and challenging their practice and education in general, opportunities for growth are lost. Conceptual growth is professional development. Tatto (1999 in Sweeney, 2003) reports that not only do teachers' values and beliefs about their work influence their classroom choices and behaviors, the values and beliefs are stable and resist change. Teacher-research may disrupt this stability and nurture change. Encouraging teacher-research means advancing professional development throughout a teacher's career, not just as an intern teacher or when pursuing an advanced degree. Encouraging teacher-research means resisting stability and continually improving classroom practice.

One of the outcomes of teacher-research is the realization of the teacher-researcher's personal practice theories (Cornett, Yeotis, & Terwilliger, 1990). Personal practice theories, beliefs that guide teachers, (p. 520) are the result of past experiences both inside and outside the classroom. Examples of such personal practice theories might be "children learn best from doing, not hearing," "children learn best when seated and quiet," and "written expression is a valuable learning tool in all subject areas." Such personal practice theories are part of an overall unified theory of teaching and learning which teachers consciously and unconsciously employ to shape classroom decisions

(Sweeney, 2003, Zeichner, & Noffke, 2001). Sweeney (2003) also found that personal practice theories might change over time, particularly if these theories are part of a teacher's conscious practice. Teacher-research that involves developing systematic knowledge of a conceptual framework guiding classroom practice and articulation of personal practice theories is one method for making these theories visible to the teacher and allowing metacognitive reflection upon their validity. These practical insights may lead to further research (Rosiek & Atkinson, 2005), thus including university research in the teacher-research discourse and teacher-research in the university research discourse. Outside observers can infer many of these theories by watching classroom interactions, but such observations should be triangulated using multiple forms of observation and interviews with the teacher participants. However, it is important to remember that even when teachers examine their classroom behaviors in light of their values and beliefs and identify desirable changes, they may not be able to accomplish their goals. They need collegial, administrative, and possibly even legislative support.

Teacher-research is a form of teacher education (Schön, 1987). Although the common paradigm relies on the university for the dispensation of pre-service and in-service knowledge, teacher-research challenges this view. Placing teacher-researchers as a source of knowledge adds a voice to the discourse that is normally absent (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). Teacher-research generally contributes to one of four main categories of education knowledge: school organization and governance, professional development of teachers including pre-service teachers, instruction and curriculum development, and assessment of teaching and learning (Orland-Barak & Tillema, 2006). Teacher-research, created in a collaborative climate, "rings true" for the practitioner and

brings the teacher's perspective to the educational discourse (Foster, 1999; Paulsen, 2001). The goal of such research is frequently to change current educational practice through personal observations and collaborative interaction. However, collaboration alone is not enough for teacher-research to result in learning and change. Tillema and van der Westhuizen (in Orland-Barak, & Tillema, 2006) identified three conditions necessary for teacher-research to result in learning. First, the participants in the collaborative group of teacher-researchers must be studying common problems. Second, the participants must be willing to change their perspectives. Finally, the participants must be committed to participating in the group (see also Wenger, McDermott, & Synder, 2002). These criteria attempt to validate the collaborative aspect for teacher-research.

Noffke (1997) identifies three main purposes for teacher-research: social change concerned with the evolving meanings of "action" and "research" and the intersection between the two, professional change both at the level of local problem solving and as a challenge to existing epistemologies, and, bridging the first two, personal change, which always takes place "in relation to a particular ideology and embodies issues of power" (p. 322). Seen this way, teacher-research denies the importance of neither social nor professional change, but instead focuses on improved knowledge and understanding of classroom practices. Furthermore, teacher-researchers acting in collaboration develop personal relationships with one another that encourage further collaboration. Regardless of the purpose, teacher-research is about issues of power and control. Whether the research is locally sponsored as part of a professional learning community (DuFour & Eaker, 1998) or in conjunction with an outside entity such as a university, teacher-researchers challenge and resist the norms of isolation, silence and bureaucratic control

often cited as characteristic of the teaching profession by maintaining a cooperative stance with fellow researchers and with university professionals (Noffke, 1997).

Teacher-researchers, therefore, generate power over their own work, constructing their identity and knowledge within their society, using their power to maintain their privilege or to transform it (Noffke, 1997).

Although Noffke (1997) found less teacher-research that resulted in social change and more that resulted in individual change focused on children of individual classrooms, critical-cultural teacher educators (Rosiek & Atkinson, 2005) are principally concerned about cultural control through cultural hegemony and professional discourses that serve to support an inequitable status quo. Such discourses influence how teachers think about teaching, and subsequently, how they teach in ways that perpetuate societal inequities. On the other hand, identifying hegemonic and professional influences becomes a way for teachers who desire to enact resistance in their classrooms. In this sense, teacher-research sanctions classroom professionals' roles as active teachers of other teachers. However, as Noffke (1997) points out, teacher-research with one social focus is no more holy than teacher-research with a scientific focus. The potential of teacher-research resides in the "action" of the research and the researcher, "the dual agenda of interrogating the meanings of democracy and social justice at the same time as we act to alter the social situation" (p. 334). In short, educators who give voice to concerns of improving classroom practice, equality, or social justice are among those who may find a home as teacher-researchers.

Concerns

Some researchers question the purpose of teacher-research: Does teacher-research actually add to the body of educational knowledge or does it simply serve to reify current educational practices (Orland-Barak & Tillema, 2006)? One way to examine this question is to review the ways teacher-research is constructed and disseminated. In the dominant research culture, the researcher first usually identifies a space in existing research. Furlong and Salisbury (2005) questioned to what degree teacher-researchers situated their findings within the currently accepted body of educational research. They found that while the majority of the teacher-researchers they studied did attempt a systematic and rigorous research design, most did not read widely within the field prior to their research. Most did not view their research as adding to the overall education dialogue, nor was that ever their goal (see also Cross & Steadman, 1996). They sought only to improve their classroom practice (Furlong & Salisbury, 2005). Creating knowledge about education and improving practice do not have to be separate. On the other hand, teacher-research may have trouble identifying a specific space in which to situate research because the voice of the classroom teacher, the objectified consumer of educational research, is generally absent from education discourse (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993).

Secondly, research that is widely accepted is generally conducted within certain structures that seek to ensure such characteristics as generalizability, reliability and validity. Foster (1999) reviewed the work of teacher-researchers in the 1996 Teacher Research Grant Pilot Scheme and found that the majority of the 27 studies (each funded for approximately £2000) focused on improving practice as opposed to creating

knowledge about education. This may have been due, at least in part, to the researcher's perceived difference in goals between improving practice and creating knowledge and the need to produce results in both areas. Much of what Foster (1999) describes as difficulties with the studies may also be caused by a lack of formal training in the ins and outs of conducting formal research. He cites difficulties with data collection methods, analyses, and substantiating claims with enough appropriate data as problems of the studies' final reports. Apparently, some of these problems are due to the rushed nature of the reporting process and the lack of a peer review process for publication (see also Shulman, 2000; Rosiek & Atkinson, 2005). Finally, Foster (1999), in recognizing that the strength of teacher-research may not be to produce knowledge but rather to broaden the base of practitioner knowledge, suggests that expecting teachers to become researchers may underestimate the difficulty of both the research tasks and the teaching task.

Another problem frequently mentioned as a problem for teacher-researchers is the "Hawthorne Effect" (Furlong & Salisbury, 2005; Lewis, 1999). Sometimes participants in a study, (for example, students in the researcher's classroom) improve simply because they are part of a new situation or receive increased attention. Teacher-researchers may not be skilled enough to control for this effect (Furlong & Salisbury, 2005). Zeichner and Noffke (2001) discuss this problem in terms of the tendency for those who study their own practice to self-validate what they find. It may not be possible to completely control for this effect during teacher-research, precisely because the caring, compassionate relationships teachers nurture with students improve their effectiveness over time,

regardless of the intervention. However, teacher-research may be replicated by other teachers in similar situations, adding to the generalizability of the study (Lewis, 1999).

Critics of teacher-research point out that validity of research findings is normally checked through the peer review process for professional publications. Teacher-research, however, is often published in non-peer-reviewed venues (informally through conversations and personal communications and more formally through electronic listserv groups and in non-peer-reviewed journals). Proponents of teacher-research fear that the peer review process might distort the research by dismissing identified problems and perceptions in favor of university priorities (Rosiek & Atkinson, 2005).

Sweeney (2003) reminds the teacher-researcher that in the past, teacher-researchers have worked primarily on the edges of both the school and the university communities. Networks and forums can be established to help teachers accomplish systematic and self-critical analysis required by teacher-research. Such forums facilitate ongoing collaboration. Groups of teachers, working together as researchers, can form a network that reduces the isolation of the classroom and fosters connection (see below discussion of the effects of isolation on teacher retention). Teacher-research challenges theory and practice, including the examination of the relationships between university and classroom partnerships, as well as those between educational reform and current school structures (Lytle & Cochran-Smith, 1990). Teacher-research is often seen as a method of professional development used to improve classroom practice, but is less often seen as contributing to the bank of professional knowledge, or even drawing upon the existing bank of knowledge (Ruthven, 2005). Noffke (1997) discusses teacher-research in terms of challenging existing epistemologies. It is conceivable, therefore, to envision a

research tradition of teacher-research that describes and validates teachers' perceptions and practices while adding to the body of knowledge that is called educational research. One way to accomplish both is through generation of teachers' autobiographical stories using a structured system followed by analysis of these stories.

Teacher Retention

Introduction

Teaching is a profession with a high turnover rate; in point of fact, 50% of those entering the teaching profession leave within five years (Ingersol, 2002; Schlichte, Yssel & Merbler, 2005; see also Allen, 2005). In this section I discuss the reasons teachers leave the profession and the resulting consequences.

Ingersoll (2002) states that school districts that hire teachers who leave within their first five years are not able to recoup the costs of recruitment and training (see also Teacher Attrition, 2005). This does not include the cost of loss in teacher quality and student achievement. Some researchers (Ingersoll, 2002; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Murnane, 1984; Murnane & Vegas, 1997), regard teacher turnover as a positive outcome in terms of lower salary costs, addition of new personnel and new energy, and the elimination of under performing workers. Others (Chapman & Green, 1986; Colgan, 2004; Greiner & Smith, 2006; Grissmer & Kirby, 1997; Schlechty & Vance, 1983; Strong, 2005a; Wulsin, 2006) stress the negative effects of teacher attrition and ways to increase retention. Ingersoll (2001) reported that high turnover, regardless of whether the teachers are moving to another post or leaving the profession entirely, affects the "sense of community and cohesion among families, teachers and students" (p. 526) that educational sociologists have long held is important for school success. Indeed,

Chapman (1984) found that teachers who never left the profession were more effective in the classroom, perhaps due to maturity and experience. Finally, experienced teachers who leave the profession, nearly 16% in 2001 (Ingersoll, 2003a), deprive school reform efforts of the wisdom and experience necessary to ask “hard questions” and provide thoughtful resistance to change (Alvy, 2005).

Research on the teacher workforce appears in waves each decade, generally after a prediction of a future shortage of teachers. Because most current research includes summaries of previous studies, and because data more than twenty-five years old has a limited applicability to current trends, this review is limited to works published after 1980. It is appropriate, at this point, to address the types of studies upon which this literature is usually based.

Studies on teachers in the workforce are approached from either a retention perspective, asking the question “How do we keep teachers in the classroom?” or an attrition perspective, asking the question, “Why do teachers leave the classroom?” while some studies address both. A majority of the data in all of these studies comes from large, survey-based samples of teachers and former teachers. The responses to these surveys are then statistically analyzed in an attempt to discover patterns of correlation among the tested variables. One example of these large studies is the National Longitudinal Studies (NLS-72) study of twenty thousand high school students. Follow-up interviews were conducted in 1973, 1974, 1976, 1979, and 1986 (Heyns, 1988) and included a separate questionnaire sent to individuals who had trained to become teachers. Another survey-based study is the Metropolitan Life Survey of Former Teachers, an on-going, yearly telephone survey of current and former teachers (Heyns, 1988). The U.S.

Department of Education also conducts several large, on-going surveys including: Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) of fifty-six thousand public and private school teachers, the Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Survey (B&B) of eleven thousand students completing degrees in 1993, and the Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS) (Provasnik & Dorfman, 2005). Data for the SASS, the most frequently cited study, was collected in 1987-88, 1990-91, 1993-94, and 1999-2000 (Ingersoll, 2003b). The data from the most recent collection is not included in Ingersoll's work or in a majority of the work of other researchers. Trends observed in data that is now twelve years old may not be valid. Such data does not include information about current, experienced teachers who have left the field after the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act. Perhaps future studies will identify the percentage of experienced teachers who left the profession prior to retirement post NCLB and the reasons they gave for leaving.

Similarly, individual states collect data on attrition; for example, California conducts the Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) to compare state teacher retention rates with those of other states and of the nation (Strong, 2005a, 2005b). These studies, then, provide the basis for predictions of future California teacher attrition/retention and strategies to stabilize the teacher workforce. The data in these studies is from 1995 to 2000, but is based on employment records which only track school district employment, not whether a teacher remains in the classroom or becomes employed elsewhere in the community. Strong (2005a) provides charts comparing percentage of teacher retention over a six-year period, but the data has been extrapolated from SASS trends rather than being pulled directly from the BTSA data. Like any

statistical research, these studies of teacher retention can be used in a number of ways to demonstrate a number of conclusions.

Attrition is a factor not just in education, but also in all areas of employment because there is a demonstrated link between high levels of employee turnover and how well an organization functions (Ingersoll, 2001). Attrition is especially important in places like schools where, unlike factories, there is extensive interaction between participants (Ingersoll, 2001). Examining the link between employee attrition and organizational effectiveness requires examining who chooses to be a teacher and the conditions of the organizations where teachers work.

Who Becomes a Teacher

Teachers choose the profession for a variety of reasons and at different times in their lives. Yee (1990) classified teachers into four categories: those who were “good fit” or “weak fit” for education as well as those who stayed in the field and those who left. Thus there were “good fit” stayers and leavers as well as “weak fit” stayers and leavers. Yee (1990) found those who view teaching as a first career may be exploring teaching as a career choice, choosing teaching as a way to contribute to society before they begin their life’s work in a different professional field (Peske, et.al, 2002). Teachers from either group may be either a “weak fit” or “good fit” for education. These teachers, with the shortest commitment to teaching, were highest on an academic index that accounts for college selection and grade point average (Schlechty & Vance, 1983). New teachers may also choose teaching because they do not or cannot pursue other professions. The “weak fit” teachers did not originally intend to become teachers, but ended up in the classroom by accident or through a lack of other options, sometimes due to lower academic abilities.

As opposed to “good fit” teachers, “weak fit” teachers had a casual attitude toward their profession in general and their job in particular. The “good fit” teachers choose teaching as a career because they want to make a difference in the lives of children (Yee, 1990; Flatt, 2006). These teachers had a strong sense of mission, were committed to service, were strongly interested in the subject they were teaching and/or were inspired by other teachers (Yee, 1990). Hargreaves (1992) found that teachers gave generously of their time and operated in patterns of commitment and care. Gunter et al. (2005) found that teachers’ job satisfaction and motivation were part of their larger beliefs and attitudes. Satisfied teachers were committed to “teaching, working relationships with children and colleagues, or the ethos of the school” (Gunter et al., 2005). Finally, some teachers arrive at teaching at the end of their working lives and view teaching as a capstone, a way to give back to society after one or more successful professional careers (Peske, et.al, 2002). These teachers often enter the field through an alternative certification route and may not have had a student teaching experience (Jorissen, 2002). “Capstoners,” as well as those who specifically trained for a career in education, are often a good fit for education (Yee, 1990).

Historically, although some female teachers taught for a time before marriage, in general teaching has been a profession of “unmarriageable women and unmarketable men” (Waller, 1932/1965). This began to change during the period from 1950 to 1970. During that time, the number of teachers grew from under one hundred thousand to just over two million (Schlechty & Vance, 1983). This growth in the profession was due to three factors: the increase in the number of college graduates (particularly the influx of G.I. Bill servicemen), the increase in the population of school aged children, and the

increase in the number of children completing high school (Schlechty & Vance, 1983). Teachers are an estimated 4% of the total workforce in the United States (Ingersoll, 2001). The number of teachers has increased as schools have expanded to accommodate the increase in students attending until graduation.

Teachers were originally trained in Normal Schools, then later in Colleges of Education within universities. Beginning in the 1950s the demand for teachers was so large that administrators were forced to hire less capable individuals and Colleges of Education were forced to accept less capable students (Grissmer & Kirby, 1997; Schlechty & Vance, 1983). This was particularly apparent in high schools where teachers' workrooms were filled with "an influx of young men who attended college as a result of the G.I. Bill and who attended colleges willing to accept an expanding population" (Schlechty & Vance, 1983, p. 472). This finding led Schlechty and Vance (1983) to state "the qualities and characteristics of older teachers, particularly older males, will have a dominant impact on the character of secondary school facilities" (p. 472). Although these teachers had almost entirely left the work force by the year 2000, their legacy remains in an administration and secondary education work force disproportionately comprised of men.

Secondary education and administration may also attract men for a different reason. The dominant model of schools is that of a factory, where teachers are the line workers, equivalent and replaceable, and administrators are the supervisors (Schlechty & Vance, 1983; Wulson, 2006). This practice and perception of teachers and administrators "was encouraged by the perception that many of those the schools were compelled to hire were underqualified or unqualified" (Schlechty & Vance, 1983, p. 481). Accordingly,

the most able scholars, as measured by the Scholastic Aptitude Test and the Graduate Record Examination, do not become teachers (Chapman & Green, 1986; Heyns, 1988). Men have historically held positions of responsibility while women have found a place in nurturing, caring occupations. As the role of teaching has changed over the years from one primarily concerned with building citizenship to one concerned with mastering sets of skills, the teaching workforce has often been viewed as flexible, deployable (Gunter et al., 2005), and interchangeable cogs in the educational machine. Women were perceived as more suitable “line workers” and men as more suitable “supervisors” in the education factory.

Integration is the importance people assign to the various ways they measure success, their accomplishment of these criteria, and their self-rated skills and abilities (Chapman & Green, 1986). The more integrated a person is in a profession, the more likely that person is to remain in the profession. Chapman (1984) measured integration into teaching by determining the importance assigned by participants in three areas: selected criteria of success, level of accomplishment of those criteria, and self-rated skills and abilities. Statistical measures such as the SASS reveal the level of integration of those who leave and who stay in the teaching field (Ingersoll, 2001) and provide insight into the most cited reasons for teacher attrition. Based on this data, teacher retention is a function of personal characteristics, educational preparation, quality of the first classroom experiences, professional and social integration into teaching, and external influences such as the general employment climate (Chapman & Green, 1986).

Much of the literature about teacher attrition and retention approaches the situation as a problem to be solved. In fact, much of the literature on education in general

is quick to point out problems, and many times “teachers have been told that they are the problem in education” (Gunter et al., 2005, p. 451). Trewin (1996), conversely, based her qualitative research on teacher retention on the principle that “teaching is not a problem to be solved but is a reality to be lived” (p. 10). She points out that the general characteristics of teacher attrition and retention are averages and trends of groups of real people in real classrooms “quite literally entrusted with passing on our way of life and our culture to the next generation” (Ingersoll, 2003b, p. 217). The significance of the discussion lies in society’s wish to perpetuate itself by educating its children.

Attrition

Supplying teachers for the nation’s classrooms is sometimes viewed in terms of a factory supply line. Schools of Education must know how many education students to admit to meet the need for new teachers. This prediction is complicated by how the teacher workforce changes over time. Teachers may leave to change positions within the profession (movers), may leave and return later (leavers) or may leave and never return (also called leavers) (Bobbitt, et.al. 1994; Ingersoll, 2001). Those teachers who leave have the choice to return at some future point, forming a reserve pool which makes it difficult to predict the number of new teachers needed (“Unraveling the ‘Teacher Shortage’,” 2002). Grissmer and Kirby (1997) found the size of the reserve pool to be only one of six factors affecting the timing and magnitude of demand for entry level teachers. The other factors were: student enrollment, pupil-teacher ratios, teacher attrition, early retirement incentive plans, and the number of new teachers waiting for positions. Baker and Smith (1997) found that the majority of new hires identified in the SASS data were not entry level teachers but were either transfers from other posts or

teachers re-entering the field from the reserve pool. In summary, teacher attrition data may demonstrate a larger number of teachers leaving specific posts than are leaving the profession.

Movers and Leavers

In general, teachers who leave generate expenses for their employers. There is a monetary and quality loss incurred by a school district to find and train replacement teachers, regardless of whether the new teacher is a mover or a leaver. Teachers who move from school to school or district to district are “indistinguishable, in terms of loss of continuity and resources, from those leaving the state’s education system” (Gritz & Theobald, 1996, p. 478). Gardner (2005) estimates that it costs approximately \$18,000 to \$48,000 in recruitment and training to replace each teacher who leaves. Ingersoll (2001) adds that high turnover rates in schools lead to a lack of continuity of the school community, affecting both school quality and student performance (see also “Unraveling the ‘Teacher Shortage’,” 2002). Many of the reasons for teacher turnover are discussed below.

According to current research, the youngest and oldest teachers are the most likely to leave the profession (Ingersoll, 2001). Fifty percent of the professionals who begin a teaching career will leave the classroom within the first five years with 30-45% of those leaving within the first three years (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Inman & Marlow, 2004; Schlechty & Vance, 1983). Inman and Marlow (2004) found beginning teachers at two distinct stages. Phase I teachers had between zero and three years of experience. They were eager to implement what they had learned in college and were idealistic. Inman and Marlow (2004) reported that previous studies noted that between 25% and

50% of Phase 1 teachers leave teaching. Phase 2 teachers had between four and nine years of experience. They were hopeful of making changes to education in general but sought a balance between what they had learned in college and what they had experienced in the classroom. The most experienced teachers also leave the classroom in large numbers, primarily at retirement age. Ingersoll (2001) reported that 27% of the teachers that leave teaching each year retire (see also Grissmer & Kirby, 1997). This pattern of teachers leaving at the beginning and ends of their careers produces a U-shaped curve of attrition.

There are additional patterns to teacher attrition that have little to do with level of experience. Teachers in secondary schools leave sooner and more often than do those in elementary positions (Gritz & Theobald, 1996, Heyns, 1988; Ingersoll, 2001), and men leave more often than do women, primarily to pursue other, higher paying, careers (Gritz & Theobald, 1996, Heyns, 1988). Women often leave teaching during their 20s and 30s to begin families (Grissmer & Kirby, 1997), but once they return to teaching, women often remain in their positions because family commitments decrease mobility of female veteran teachers more than men (Gritz & Theobald, 1996). Female elementary teachers are more likely to return to teaching after they have completed the family commitments of raising a family than are secondary teachers (Heyns, 1988). In summary, there is a difference in the attrition patterns of men and women and of elementary and secondary teachers.

Another group that historically tends to leave are the academically more able. This group includes those with the highest verbal abilities leaving within three years of beginning their first teaching position and those who trained to be teachers but never

begin teaching at all (Schlechty & Vance, 1983). Schlechty and Vance (1983) state that the “decline in quality of teaching corps results from reduced population electing to enter teacher education and a tendency for the most academically able to enter other fields” (p. 475; see also Heyns, 1988). This exodus of the more academically able is troubling to administrators and to the public in general because they assume that the more academically able leavers are better teachers than those perhaps less academically able teacher who remain. However, of those academically able teachers who stay, those who go on to receive advanced degrees leave the profession less often (Strong, 2005b). The most common reason given for attrition of the more academically able, particularly among secondary educators trained in math and the sciences, is the availability of higher paying jobs outside education.

Where a teacher works has an effect on length of service. Private school teachers leave more frequently than do public school teachers, but this is generally attributed to school organizational issues such as lay-offs, closings and reorganizations (Ingersoll, 2001). Additionally, private school teachers are frequently uncertified or have alternative certification – conditions that lead to attrition (“Unraveling the “Teacher Shortage” problem,” 2002). Ingersoll (2001) found that teachers in urban schools with higher poverty rates leave sooner and more frequently than those in suburban or rural areas. On the other hand, Haun (2004), in a sample of 271 current and 37 former teachers in a Midwest state, found rural teacher attrition higher than urban attrition (17% as compared to 4%) and Salazar (2007) cites annual teacher turnover in rural districts above 40%. It may be that poverty, rural or urban, contributes to teacher attrition in that teachers are required to teach more subjects with fewer resources (Salazar, 2007; see also Frantz,

1994). In summary, the public school teachers most likely to leave the profession are academically more able secondary male teachers in urban, high poverty areas who have been teaching less than five years. A second group of teachers recently identified as possible future “leavers” are experienced teachers of either gender, particularly those in urban and rural schools, who are not “highly qualified” by NCLB standards (Exstrom, 2003; Hill & Barth, 2004).

Why Teachers Leave

One common assumption is that teachers either leave for personal/family reasons or leave to go to careers with higher salaries (Provasnik & Dorfman, 2005); however, teachers leave the profession for numerous reasons that can be grouped into two broad categories: personal factors and working conditions (Strong, 2005a). Among the personal factors are retirement, pregnancy and family concerns, and moving due to a spouse’s job change (Baker & Smith, 1997). Working condition factors affecting teacher attrition and teacher migration include inadequate support from administrators, discipline problems and lack of student motivation, limited faculty input into decision making, and low salaries (Baker & Smith, 1997; Certo & Fox, 2002; Ingersoll, 2001; Ingersoll 2002), as well as stress caused by out of level/field teaching (Baker & Smith, 1997).

Experienced teachers leave the field for a variety of reasons, including retirement (Provasnik & Dorfman, 2005). Unless a district is offering a special incentive for early retirement, most teachers who retire remain in the field until they are eligible to receive their full retirement benefit and/or social security. Many teachers do leave the profession to begin families (Ingersoll, 2001; Inman & Marlow, 2004; Provasnik & Dorfman, 2005; Strong, 2005a); however over the years, the family dynamic has changed substantially.

Whereas before the 1980s, teachers who left to begin families did not return soon or in large numbers, research since the 80s shows that women with children are “more likely to remain in or to re-enter the profession than single women or married women without children” (Heyns, 1988). Leaving teaching due to a family move was not a variable singled out by any major study.

Several studies have identified sources of dissatisfaction among movers and leavers. Low salaries were cited by 48% of leavers and 54% of movers as a source of dissatisfaction among teachers who transferred to another school or another school district (Provasnik & Dorfman, 2005; see also, Black, 2001; Buckley, Schneider & Shang, 2005; Inman & Marlow, 2004; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). In general, it is easier for teachers who are economically secure to leave (Heyns, 1988), economic factors are not the only factors pushing teachers out of the classroom door. Teachers who leave the classroom, whether to change jobs within education or to leave the profession, also list school staffing issues, student discipline problems, lack of administrative support, poor student motivation and lack of influence over school and classroom decisions as sources of dissatisfaction (Certo & Fox, 2002; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Trewin, 1996). Gritz & Theobald (1996) studied teachers’ optimal career path and found six contributing factors to teacher retention: salary and benefits, job requirements, working conditions, length of time in the current position, length of time between positions, and availability of alternative career paths. Inman and Marlow (2004) also found uninvolved parents, invasive bureaucracy, poor job security and lack of collegiality to be factors contributing to teacher attrition. Peske et al. (2001) summarized the research nicely, “Retaining teachers depends a great deal on their conceptions of career, their specific interests, and

the day-to-day experiences they have in their schools” (p. 309). The most frequently cited reasons for teacher attrition are discussed below.

Salary, Benefits, and the Job Market.

Teaching lags behind other professions in terms of both starting salary and pay raises due to experience and performance. The American Federation of Teachers Survey and Analysis of Teacher Salary Trends, 2004, shows the average salary of accountants at \$56,102, computer systems analysts at \$73,269, engineers at \$78,023, and attorneys at \$89,989 while the average teacher’s salary is given as \$46,597 (Muir, Nelson & Baldaro, 2005; The Condition of Education in 2006, U.S. Department of Education; Budget Overview, U.S. Department of Education, 2006; see also Baker & Smith, 1997; Murnam & Vegas, 1997). Salary increases for the above professions over the last ten years range from eight to ten percent while teachers’ salary increases average only 2.2%, less than one-half of one percent the rate of inflation. The comparison between professions may not be valid given the difference between the ten-month work year of teachers and the twelve-month work year of other professionals. However, Muir, Nelson and Baldaro (2005) found that the gap in annual hours worked is narrowing. In 2000, the average teacher reported working 49.8 hours per week as opposed to 46.3 hours per week in 1991. Extrapolating 49.8 hours per week for the average school year of 36 weeks results in an average total of 1792.8 hours worked. Other professionals with two weeks of paid vacation and two weeks of paid holidays who work forty-hour days work for 1920 hours per year, a difference of approximately three weeks. The three weeks difference might explain some of the underlying gap in pay, but it does not explain why the gaps are increasing. The average salary increase in teacher salaries is not adjusted for the average

increase in experience as the workforce grays (Grissmer & Kirby, 1997; Schlechty & Vance, 1983), a change of an average of eight to fifteen years (Murnam & Vegas, 1997).

Muir, Nelson and Baldaro (2005) in the 2004 AFT Survey and Analysis of Teacher Salary Trends, reported that in 1994 the difference between the average beginning teacher's salary and the average overall teacher's salary was \$14,893. The average teaching experience was estimated at 14.8 years (Muir, Nelson & Baldaro, 2005). Assuming a correlation between experience and pay, then each year of experience should be worth approximately \$1,000 on average (Muir, Nelson & Baldaro, 2005). However, between 1988 and 2004, "the real increase in average teacher pay was \$1,774 or \$111 per year" (Muir, Nelson & Baldaro, 2005, p. 9). Currently, teacher retirement programs provide strong incentives for remaining in a position until retirement eligibility, usually between ages fifty-five and sixty-five (Grissmer & Kirby, 1997), thus the measure of teacher salaries will continue to appear better than it actually is. Evidently, experience is not an underlying cause in the lack of growth in teacher salaries over the last decade.

In general, schools are not organized to retain the services of the best and brightest after they are recruited (Schlechty & Vance, 1983). Teachers need attractive work environments and career opportunities as incentives to stay (Buckley, Schneider & Shang, 2005). Among the problems associated with creating and maintaining these incentives are standardized salary scales, where there are no monetary incentives for outstanding performance, and lack of different career stages within the job of classroom teacher (Schlechty & Vance, 1983). Furthermore, Wulsin (2006) found that the bureaucratic hiring systems present in most school district prevent incentives for both teacher ability and difficulty of school placement.

On the other hand, while higher salary is correlated with less attrition, fewer teachers leaving the profession means fewer opportunities for new teachers (Heyns, 1988). A decreased job market may lead to a decline in academic ability of teachers. Weaver (1979) found that decline in demand for new graduates in any particular field results in the decline of the quantity of potential students and also a decline in the quality of the applicant pool. Maintaining the proper flow of new teachers into and out of the profession, then, is a matter of delicate balance.

Perception of the Profession.

Most professionals in every field are motivated by intrinsic rewards such as self-respect, responsibility, and a sense of accomplishment (Black, 2001). Beyond that, the way teachers view their jobs also affects their decisions to stay or leave. Teachers view teaching in different ways, primarily in terms of their length of commitment. Greiner and Smith (2006) found that the “single strongest predictor of retention was initial commitment to teaching” (p. 654). Teachers who view teaching as a calling often select teaching as their primary or only career (Peske et al., 2002). They may leave teaching for a while to raise a family, but they do return (Ingersoll, 2001; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003), finding it easier to rejoin the teaching workforce than other professions (Heyns, 1988). These teachers are generally motivated by the desire to connect with students and to improve their lives through nurturing growth (Schlechty & Vance, 1998). These teachers are not as concerned with salary and advancement as they are with the lack of time to think and talk with colleagues, the lack of support by administrators, and the lack of meaningful input into classroom and school wide decisions (Ingersoll, 2001; Schlechty & Vance, 1983). Where there is conflict between teachers who advocate nurturing and

administrators who dominate their schools with a bureaucratic, punishment centered management structure (Schlechty & Vance, 1983), teachers who are able will leave.

Administrative and Collegial Support.

One of the more difficult to study facets of teacher retention is morale. Black (2001) found a link between increasing job performance problems and low teacher morale caused by poor working conditions and low salaries. At first, teachers with low morale became indifferent to their jobs. They gradually developed cynical attitudes toward students and lower initiative in their classrooms. They experienced depression and often took an increased amount of sick leave. Leaving the classroom was the final symptom of lowered teacher moral, yet some stay because they believe that few jobs have comparable benefits (Yee, 1990).

Another way to discuss morale is to look at quality of life, an issue present in nursing literature. Dale (1995) applied the hermeneutic cycle to data collected from patient quality of life surveys and interview transcripts and discovered quality of life to be subjective – different for each person and changing with time, place and situation. Quality of life was linked to the concepts of happiness, positive attitude, independence, respect, morality, value of life, interpersonal relationships, autonomy, and spirituality. Bertero and Elk (1993) found quality of life to be identified with security, support, respect, information and conversation. These findings fly in the face of most quality of life research which finds objective issues such as salary to be of primary consideration (Dale, 1995). It is commonly believed that quality of life and morale can be improved through administrative and collegial support (Black, 2001; Certo & Fox, 2002; Mullen, 2000; Schlechty & Vance; 1983; Strong, 2005a, 2005 b).

Teachers need support from administrators and from each other to feel self-confident and secure. Feeling competent changes a teacher's classroom interactions because psychic rewards and positive feedback from supervisors and colleagues increases performance efficiency (Strong, 2005b). Student discipline problems and influence over school and classroom decisions are two areas commonly identified by teachers leaving the field. Strong (2005a) found lack of support from the principal and low student motivation to be among the top five sources of dissatisfaction among teachers who left the profession. Provasnik and Dorfman (2005) looked across all 2000-2001 teacher retention data gathered by the National Center for Education Statistics (U.S. Department of Education) and cited problematic student behavior as one of the top five sources of dissatisfaction both among those who transfer between schools and those who leave the profession. Schlechty and Vance (1983) cite administrators who do not share decision making with teachers as one of the top four reasons teachers leave. Administrators need to give teachers a voice, provide a strong support system, and create a sense that their work is significant (Black, 2001). Clearly, teachers and administrators must work together collectively and collaboratively to further their common goals.

The heart of professional action is the ability of teachers to make classroom decisions (Gritz & Theobald, 1996). Many of those decisions concern student discipline, yet most schools set discipline policies and require teachers to set and/or enforce school rules (Ingersoll, 2003b). Enforcing proper student behavior is part and parcel of teaching societal norms (Kincheloe, 2003). But, as Ingersoll (2003b) points out, this work is "neither easy nor peripheral to the central activity of teaching" (p. 102). While teachers need to maintain a balance between optimism and realism about student behavior and

learning (Flatt, 2006), they also need to feel as though they have a hand in deciding how students should behave. Power without accountability is irresponsible; accountability without power can be unfair and harmful (Ingersoll, 2003b). Usually finding a balance between teacher control and administrative control is a struggle rather than a dance, but this need not be the case. Ingersoll (2003b) found that allowing teachers more control had a positive effect on teacher-administrator relations. Teachers also need to know that their administrators will support the decisions they make in the classroom and need to feel free to make decisions necessary to run their classrooms.

Teachers also need to have collegial support. Collegial support can create feelings of positive self worth and a support network despite difficult working conditions (Black, 2001; Inman & Marlow, 2004). While the need for collegial support for new teachers is well recognized (Black, 2001; Gardner, 2005; Grissmer & Kirby, 1997; Inman & Marlow, 2004; Strong, 2005a, 2005b), experienced teachers also need qualified mentors because experience alone does not make classroom problems disappear (Flatt, 2006). Furthermore, collegial interactions can lead to worthwhile contributions to the curriculum and more positive interactions with parents (Inman & Marlow, 2004). Because lack of support and low student motivation can be a function of administrative decisions, support by administrators and colleagues could reduce negative stress due to job design (Strong, 2005b). The implication of this research is that teachers who experience strong administrative and collegial support will experience less stress and possibly will remain in the classroom longer.

Chapman (1984), however, found the opposite. In a statistical survey study of nearly three thousand college graduates with teaching degrees from the years 1946

through 1978, personal characteristics such as sex, age and race were correlated with professional characteristics such as salary, career satisfaction, and professional and social integration into teaching. Chapman (1984) used this data to explain why teachers stay or leave in terms of social learning theory, where “psychological functioning can be explained in terms of the interaction of personal characteristics, previous behavior (learning) and environmental determinants” (p. 645). The findings indicate that the quality of a teacher’s first classroom teaching experiences is strongly related to subsequent attrition. Because the first classroom teaching experiences frequently occur during the college years, the most important correlations of attrition/retention are not under direct influence of the practicing teacher’s current school administration (Chapman, 1984). Gardner (2005) lists some of the problems of student teaching. First, not every supervising teacher has effective classroom management skills, so some student teachers see strong models of effective teaching while others do not. In addition, student teachers don’t always get to try their skills under difficult situations; by the time they arrive, the regular classroom teacher has already established the discipline and learning patterns in the room. On the other hand, some teachers do not have the skills, interest, or energy to effectively mentor a student teacher, so some student teachers are simply thrown into the waters of the classroom without life jacket or swimming lessons. The quality of pre-service teaching experiences, then, varies from person to person.

Teaching Out-of-Field.

While administrators do not easily influence some factors determining voluntary attrition like family, salary, benefits, and student teaching experiences, they can have a long-term impact on the career development of teachers by giving attention to assuring

the quality of professional life that teachers experience (Chapman & Green, 1986). For example, one way to handle teacher shortages is to assign out-of-field teachers (Baker & Smith, 1997; Ingersoll, 1997). Principals faced with difficulties finding suitable teachers for their vacancies commonly hire less qualified teachers, use substitute teachers, or assign teachers trained to teach at another grade level or field. Ingersoll (1997) maintains that out-of-field teaching is more a result of teachers leaving their current job, either searching for better career opportunities within education or leaving the field due to career dissatisfaction. He cites SASS data that suggests that the practice is wide-spread: over 25% of secondary math students, 41 % of high school chemistry students, and 54% of all history students are taught by out-of-field teachers. Furthermore, over 4 million students each year take English classes from teachers without at least a college minor in some form of English. Out-of-field teaching is positively associated with poverty, low achievement and low track schools (Baker & Smith, 1997), areas where teaching is frequently difficult due to student behavior problems, lack of parental support, and lower salaries. Teachers who are placed in out-of-field classrooms may be doing the best job they can; however, they are not interchangeable blocks (Ingersoll, 1997). Out-of-field teaching has been targeted by recent legislation in an attempt to improve instruction by placing qualified teachers in every classroom (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001). Out-of-field teaching can change a teacher's perspective of what is important. When comparing sources of dissatisfaction between experienced leavers and out-of-field leavers, the out-of-field leavers were more dissatisfied with their salary (62% to 42%) while the experienced leavers were more dissatisfied with a lack of planning time (64% to 49%) (Provasnik & Dorfman, 2005). Refusing to allow out-of-level teaching is one

way administrators can affect teacher morale and attrition; however, this is not currently possible, particularly in poorer school districts (Exstrom, 2003).

Working Conditions.

Teachers' work has changed during the last five decades. In general, the workplace is defined by the hours worked and the type of work done; the educational workplace is no different. People who work in professions where they are considered "professionals," as opposed to "employees" or "workers" are viewed as possessing special knowledge and skills. They make unique contributions to their field through their freedom to make decisions, opportunities to organize their own time, and ability to direct their own work (Inman & Marlow, 2004). Teachers generally classify themselves as professionals, yet they frequently have little control over the way they organize their time and direct their work. Black (2001) found that teacher satisfaction is measured by partaking in the decision making process, having and using valuable skills, freedom and independence, and having access to challenges, outlets for creative expression, and opportunities to learn. Trewin (1996) found that challenges in the classroom provided teachers with opportunities for self-affirmation. Logically, teachers who are not allowed to participate in decision making, use their skills in ways that are valued, have freedom or independence of decision will be dissatisfied and more likely to leave. In the same manner, teachers who are challenged and are allowed to express their creativity and encouraged to learn will likely be more satisfied and more likely to remain in the classroom, the school district and the profession (Trewin, 1996).

The tendency to view teachers as workers and administrators as managers is facilitated by the perception that the schools were compelled to hire underqualified or

unqualified teachers (Schlechty & Vance, 1983). Because teaching includes an ethos of nurturance and growth (Pascale & Athos, 1981), it is viewed in a similar way as other caretaking occupations such as nursing. As women moved from the home into the world of work, they were accepted into classroom teaching while men have moved from the classroom into administration (Allen, 2001). To deal with the increasing shortage of teachers it became common practice to staff “the principal’s office and the superintendent’s office with a few good men to manage the activities of the women who were perceived to be well-meaning though technically and intellectually less than outstanding” (Schlechty & Vance, 1983, p. 481). The perception that the school’s most capable employees are in management positions reinforces the “school as a factory” model of educational management. Because this model views individual school corporations as sub-units of the total educational industry, Schlechty and Vance (1983) identify this model as being used to justify state and federal mandates for student progress.

Teachers who feel a sense of “personal achievement” (Evans, 1997) in their job satisfaction are more likely to remain in the teaching profession (Woods & Weasmer, 2002). Many states, reacting to federal mandates, have instituted harsh punishment for school districts and individual schools not achieving sufficient annual yearly progress (AYP) across all subsets of their population, including English Language Learners and mentally handicapped students. This pressure has a trickle-down effect on individual building principals and, ultimately, on individual teachers. Rather than raising teacher initiative and empowering teachers to seek ways to achieve the given goals, the tiny carrot/big stick system (Hargreaves, 2000) has paralyzed educators, forcing them to rely

upon legislative mandates to determine what and how to teach. Unfortunately, such paralysis leads to minimal change effort. Moreover, narrowly defined working conditions in some schools stifle innovation and enthusiasm for teaching (Wulsin, 2006). Personal achievement is difficult in the current punitive climate where teachers are afraid to try new techniques or to challenge curriculum or methodology legislated from outside the classroom.

Time.

From a different perspective, teachers' job satisfaction involves more than just time on the job. Gunter et al. (2005) did not find a "systematic relationship between job satisfaction and hours worked" (p. 448). Hargreaves (1992), however, did find a link between job satisfaction and the type of work a teacher does. For teachers, clerical work is less valued and leads to less job satisfaction than does contact time with students. This result grows from Hargreaves' intensive studies (1990, 1992) on the ways teachers construct their work through the ways they construct their time. Hargreaves (1990) found time's "definition and imposition form part of the very core of teachers' work and of the policies and perceptions of those who administer such work" (p. 303). The structures of time structure the school day.

Hargreaves (1990) described four specific types of teacher time beyond instructional time in the classroom. The first was group time, time spent with other professionals, in meetings, solving problems. This time is perceived as a "voluntary, moral commitment" (p. 305). A second type of time is snatched time consisting of rushed consultations between teachers often in the hallways as children moved from one activity to another. Personal time is time teachers devoted to professional development,

planning, and school related reading outside of the school day. Finally, other contact time, or preparation time, is time during the school day designated for preparation and parent meetings, but not as contact time with students. This time includes lunch time, before and after school time, and any time students are under the instruction of another teacher (music, physical education, computer, library, etc.). Other contact time is usually used for relaxing and collegial networking and is extremely important to reducing job stress and improving job satisfaction (Hargreaves, 1990).

Time can be viewed in a number of different ways. When time is a finite resource that can be manipulated to serve desired educational purposes, it is viewed in a technical-rational dimension. Time, in this instance, is an objective variable (Werner, 1988), a variable to be manipulated in the educational experiment. The job of administrators under this paradigm, then, is to structure a teacher's time for maximum productivity.

Time can also be viewed in a subjective, or phenomenological, sense. This inner sense of the pace of time may not always match actual clock time; it may seem to drag or to fly by quickly (Hargreaves, 1990). Furthermore, time does not seem to pass the same way for individuals engaged in the same activity but tends to vary "with the kinds of work we do and with the kinds of roles we take on in life" (p. 307). The rate of phenomenological time has a great deal to do with the level of engagement of the individual in the activity and the challenge that the activity poses (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). Csikszentmihalyi (1997) describes the optimum experience as one of "flow" in which time seems to stand still and which tends to occur "when a person's skills are fully involved in overcoming a challenge that is just about manageable" (p. 30). Classroom teaching can be a flow experience, provided that teachers are allowed to structure their

time to take advantage of those “teachable moments” when they occur. Teachers do have some discretion in their classrooms, even when using scripted curricula; but scripted curricula forced upon teachers can undermine their roles as experts (Winans, 2005) and reduce their ability to structure their own time. Based on ten years of research into the reasons for and the results of teacher attrition, Ingersoll (2000b) concludes that teachers’ lack of influence over curriculum is a major reason for teachers to leave the profession before retirement age. Quantitative data to support his conclusions came from the previously mentioned Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) years 1987-88, 1990-91, and 1993-94, the International Survey of the Locus of Decision-Making in Educational Systems. Qualitative data, including interviews, observations, and document reviews, were obtained from field studies of four high schools in the Philadelphia area chosen to be as varied as possible (Ingersoll, 2000b).

Time can also be examined as monochronic or polychronic in nature. Werner (1988) found that teachers experience time as a group of events all happening at approximately the same time, or polychronically. Administrators, on the other hand, experience time as a series of events, or monochronically. In general, male time is monochronic; female time is polychronic (Hargreaves, 1990). This difference in perception of time translates into frustration for teachers and administrators as well as for men and women. Hall (1984, in Hargreaves, 1990) identifies the completion of scheduled priorities as of primary importance to those who perceive time as monochronic. Among those who perceive time as polychronic, success is measured by how well each interpersonal interaction is experienced by those involved, regardless of the clock time the interaction requires. Technical-rational, monochronic time perception

helps business get done in large organizations where “many separate activities require effective co-ordination and integration” (Hargreaves, 1990, p. 330). Even though schools may look like such organizations, they just don’t work that way (Ingersoll, 2003b).

Improving Teacher Retention

Suggested methods to improve teacher retention either directly address teachers’ concerns or target general improvement to the educational system under the broad label of school reform. School reform can be about changing many different aspects of education, but it is most often about changing some facet of teachers’ work. Both types of methods are discussed below.

School Reform

According to Ingersoll (2003b), there are two prevailing viewpoints concerning the control of schools, teachers, and teachers’ work. The first is the school disorganization perspective. Because the “work” of schools has as much to do with interactions among the participants as with “producing” knowledge in the form of skills, schools are difficult to bureaucratize (Ingersoll, 2003b). Such organizations are referred to as “loosely coupled systems,” “organized anarchies,” and “decoupled organizations” (Ingersoll, 2003a). Schools following this paradigm seem to have a common internal focus and methodology but, in fact, have less centralized hierarchical control (Ingersoll, 2003a). Those holding this prominent and pervasive perception of schools as disorganized seek to solve societal problems through education reform (Kennedy, 2005; Lortie, 1975/2002).

School reform in this paradigm has one of four change foci. Views commonly perceived as “right wing” adopt economic improvement (through improved academic

standards) and/or moral improvement (through improved behavioral standards) as the focus for educational reform (Ingersoll, 2003b). Competition and morally based words and phrases such as “world-class, back to basics, excellence, accountability, moral virtues, standards, character traits, tightening the ship, and raising the bar” (Ingersoll, 2003b, pp. 35 – 36) are often terms used to describe the school reform the proponents desire; a return to a time remembered as being right and good. Views commonly perceived as “left-wing” embrace racial and/or gender equality as the reform focus, stressing equality of resources and opportunities. First, from an equality standpoint, because children are not all given the same opportunities, they should not be held to the same accountability standards. Furthermore, because the difference between educational opportunities is often reduced to differences in the quality of teaching faculty in the schools, there should be no increased standards for students until all teachers meet high standards in their classrooms, including the implementation of academic and disciplinary practices that do not unfairly discriminate against children (Ingersoll, 2003a). Regardless of the political orientation of the educational perspective, the prevailing viewpoint is that schools are broken because teachers are broken. Both need to be repaired through the application of additional external control over teachers’ work (Ingersoll, 2003b). Apple (1988) links the perceived need for increasing amounts of external control of teachers to the process of intensification.

Intensification (Apple, 1988) is a paradigm that draws parallels between the changes in teachers’ work in the last fifty years and the changes of the Industrial Revolution. During the Industrial Revolution, articles were mass-produced through a factory system that rewarded conformity rather than individuality. As each position on

the assembly line became more specific, each worker knew less and less about the overall product and therefore was forced to rely more and more on the decisions made by management. As each job became more specialized and less complicated, the pressure to increase productivity rose accordingly. This cycle of decreasing knowledge and increasing speed leads to stress and worker dissatisfaction. However, workers do not just quit factory jobs; instead, they find satisfaction in learning how to do the jobs they are assigned, becoming experts in the completion of those jobs. Kincheloe (2003) argues that the standards movement in education is designed to produce a similar result, disempowering teachers by replacing teacher-based knowledge production and curriculum development with pre-packaged curricula (Kincheloe, 2003). “Deskilling of teachers and dumbing-down of the curriculum take place when teachers are seen as receivers not producers of knowledge” (Kincheloe, 2003, p. 19). Teachers are required to give, and many times grade, multiple assessments to assure that their students are achieving the pre-set goals, becoming test-taking experts in the process. Apple (1988) ascribes this cycle of dependency and technical control to intensification of teachers’ work. This intensification, Apple believes, undermines educators’ professionalism.

When monochronic time meets intensification, colonization results (Hargreaves, 1990). Colonization is the process whereby administrators absorb, or colonize, teachers’ preparation time for their own ends. Sometimes this is as simple as requiring teams of teachers to meet during their preparation periods or as invasive as requiring all time not with students to be structured by the administration. This might include time before and after classes, time during lunch, and time during recess, considered “back regions” (Goffman, 1959). Preparation time for teachers to think about their teaching and to

consult with others may improve education in the same way that attorneys and physicians improve their practice through effective preparation (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). By remaking all of the “back regions” of teachers’ work lives into “front regions” (Hargreaves, 1990), the administration removes the “pressure valves” of stress release and interrelationships necessary for teachers to operate in the “polychronically packed and complex character of their working life” (p. 316). Stress produced by colonization may actually have the opposite effect than that desired; teachers may choose to waste collaborative planning time rather than using the time effectively (Hargreaves, 1990). DuFour and Eaker (1998) call for collaborative planning time, separate from preparation and instructional time, to be built into the school day (see also Hargreaves, 2000; and Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000, for a discussion of collaborative mentoring).

Opposing the school disorganization perspective is the disempowerment perspective. This view holds that schools are too centralized and that improvement will be found when schools delegate, deregulate and decentralize, and seek ways to empower teachers, administrators and parents (Ingersoll, 2003b). The exact mechanisms for empowerment differ depending upon which group is perceived to be the least empowered. If the community and parents feel that they are disempowered and families have no voice in their children’s education, as they began to in the 1960s and 70s, they tend to increase the accountability of schools by giving more power to community and parent groups (Ingersoll, 2003b). This is a common argument used by home school advocates. If school principals are perceived as overly controlled by school boards and centralized bureaucracies and are without the power to effectively manage schools, they will work to increase the accountability of teachers and disempower teachers’ unions.

Despite the fact that these two perspectives are presented from a disempowerment point of view, they result in the same types of reform movements: more control of teachers' work and less autonomy of teachers' actions (Ingersoll, 2003b).

The teacher disempowerment perspective, on the other hand, advances the position that additional hierarchical control contributes to the problem rather than providing a solution (Ingersoll, 2003b). Based on self-reports such as those in the SASS, teachers believe they are not autonomous and do not have much influence over school decisions (Ingersoll, 2003b; see also Shann, 1998; Winans, 2005). According to those in organization theory, employees exhibit negative behavior and attitudes under overly centralized organizational structures. Where schools are most like factories, teachers are denied "the autonomy, authority and flexibility necessary for caring, engaged, efficacious, committed teaching" (Ingersoll, 2003b, p. 43; see also Futrell, 1999; Wulsin, 2006). In turn, demotivated and deprofessionalized teachers become alienated and apathetic, students misbehave and become disruptive, administrators become frustrated, and schools become sites of inefficiency and ineffectiveness (Ingersoll, 2003a; see also Provasnik & Dorfman, 2005; Strong, 2005b).

In short, those who propose that education is suffering from teacher disempowerment desire education left to those who best understand it: the classroom teachers. Rather than implementing the decisions of outside groups, teachers would have autonomy and authority over what happens in their classrooms and would be able to control their teaching goals and programs. Teachers would also have far more control over the requirements of schools in general (Ingersoll, 2003b). The focus of education

would move from individual teacher competencies to become humanistic in orientation and organizational structure.

In summary, some reformers want to “fix” schools by addressing school disorganization. Other reformers focus efforts on remedying teacher disempowerment. This conflict between the two paradigms of school disorganization and teacher disempowerment creates a tension at the center of school control and school reform. Ingersoll (2003b) points out that over the years these two paradigms created the pendulum effect in education. For a while, the pendulum swings toward more accountability and more control; after a while, however, it swings back toward more teacher autonomy. Recently, however, the swing toward more control has brought to general mindfulness long-standing and basic disagreements over the purpose of schools (Ingersoll, 2003b). As the two groups gather money and legislative power, the conflict begins to resemble the black and white “Spy vs. Spy” cartoons of MAD magazine where both factions demonstrate a belief that the ends justify the means, regardless of the collateral damage. In this case, teachers and students are damaged (Garan, 2004; Sarason, 2004; F. Smith, 2003).

Reform Efforts Aimed at Improving Retention

A variety of education reform efforts emphasizing positive rather than punitive changes have been proposed over the years. One way of examining these strategies is to group them according to what is being changed. First, scheduling changes have the potential to improve job satisfaction through restructuring the day (Gunter et al., 2005; Hargreaves, 1990, 1992). Second, addressing the unique needs of new teachers may provide the lifeline of support necessary for success in education (Gardner, 2005;

Grissmer & Kirby, 1997; Gunter et al. 2005; Inman & Marlow, 2004; Strong, 2005a, 2005b). Third, developing teachers' potential through professional development targets improved competency as a way to improve performance and therefore satisfaction (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Gardner, 2005; Gunter et al., 2005; Inman & Marlow, 2004; Sparks & Hirsh, 1997; Strong, 2005a, 2005b). Finally, changes to the ways salaries and benefits are apportioned will help educators receive a wage commensurate with their experience and expertise (Black, 2001; Buckley, Schneider & Skang, 2005; Grissmer & Kirby, 1997; Schlechty & Vance, 1983). These four changes are the types of modifications often suggested as having the most potential to reverse the attrition of teachers from the field.

Preparation Time, Job Satisfaction, and Reduction of Stress.

At the lowest difficulty level, administrators can arrange faculty schedules to increase the amount of time the teachers are released from direct classroom supervision. Gunter et al. (2005) reported on the outcomes of "Transforming the School Workforce (TSW) Pathfinder Project" that took place in thirty-two English elementary and secondary schools. The purpose of this project was to transfer general administration and other non-classroom duties from the teacher's job description to administrators and teaching aides in an attempt to decrease teacher workload and increase job satisfaction. The eight identified duties (preparing and mounting pupil work for display, clerical photocopying, filing, database entry, form filing, and money collection) resulted in a savings of nearly one hour per week for elementary educators. Secondary educators, on the other hand, did not receive save as much time from the same types of support. One of the purposes of this study was to identify correlations between the ways teachers spend

their time and their overall job satisfaction. While there was a negative correlation between hours worked and job satisfaction for secondary teachers, teachers of primary or “special” students did not report similar results (Gunter et al., 2005). Chapman (1984) found that teachers who remained in the profession had a higher commitment to teaching, sought out additional educational opportunities, and held the belief that they were making a difference; in other words, these teachers remained engaged in educational activities for more time each week. Simply reducing work hours does not amount to job satisfaction for most teachers, particularly for elementary educators. Gunter et al. (2005), may be correct in speculating that “teachers’ sense of satisfaction and motivation is embedded in a larger set of beliefs and attitudes . . . and that securing higher levels of satisfaction involves a wider set of changes than focusing on hours alone” (p. 447). However, researchers did find that protected preparation time has a positive effect on the classroom.

Increased preparation time leads to a reduction in stress, a restoration of teachers’ lives outside of teaching, and an improvement of teacher student interactions due to an improvement in teachers’ overall classroom temperament (Hargreaves, 1992). Increased preparation time also allows teachers to make extra investments in classroom instruction (Hargreaves, 1992). Such investments in the classroom include extra parent contacts, creating games to teach a concept rather than duplicating worksheets, and grading papers to provide prompt feedback to students, actions that can make teaching more effective.

Professional Development and Mentoring/Induction Programs.

Professional development is often tried as a way to improve teacher retention. Effective professional development is not just the “sit-n-get” one-time performance of an out-of-town “specialist.” Cabe, Green and Clevenger (2002) found that the most

successful programs for school improvement respected teachers as professionals and focus on increasing teachers' professional abilities. Such programs last months and years, rather than days and respond to the professional disequilibrium (Wunner, 1993) that happens as new professionals work through the challenges of each unique school setting. District and school leaders play an essential and irreplaceable role in creating high-quality professional learning for all teachers (Sparks, 2002), as do collaborations between universities, school districts, and state departments of education (Greiner & Smith, 2006). However, as Wunner (1993) points out, school districts are under a great deal of pressure not only to attract and keep new teachers, but also to rapidly turn novice teachers into skilled professionals, considering the challenge of maintaining classroom excellence while coping with professional disequilibrium to be a critical problem. Administrators must lead the charge to help teachers view professional development as not only valuable, but vital to their continued improvement of practice.

Grünberg, and Armellini, (2004) highlight the crucial role collegiality plays in the success of educational change and professional development. But it is important to note that teachers quickly resent and resist imposed collegiality (Hargreaves, 2000). When teachers are placed in circumstances where centralized government and other outside interests dictate classroom purposes, forced professional collaboration is not an effective means of professional development (Hargreaves, 2000). In summary, it is not enough for an administrator to create time within the school day for collegial work; if teachers see professional collaboration as a ruse or a waste of time, they simply won't participate. Eaker and DuFour (1998) envision effective collegial interaction as professional learning communities, where, through research, groups of teachers become experts at what

children need to learn and share their knowledge with each other; in other words, teacher-researchers. The only caveat found to the proposition in the literature is that every teacher is not at the same professional level as every other teacher.

Based on Hargreaves' (2000) evolutionary model of professionalism, some of today's teachers operate as though they were teaching during the pre-professional age, when good teachers were loyal servants who knew how to teach and how to maintain control. Then again, the age of the autonomous professional (beginning in the 1960s) is still enacted in some schools where teachers are left to solve their own problems and wrestle with competing demands and ideological conflicts. Professional development of this age was frequently offered off-site by outside professionals, leaving teachers to return to the classroom with no collegial support for their new learning (Hargreaves, 2000). The 1980s brought what Hargreaves (2000) terms the age of the collegial professional where teachers began to turn to each other, rather than to outside professionals for "a sense of direction and mutual support" to deal with the "increasing complexities of schooling" (p. 162). Some teachers today operate from within this paradigm, working together with the administration's support with collaborative discussion and action as the focus. Finally, Hargreaves (2000) points to the future as an era of post-modern professionalism characterized by lack of local level professional development. In this future target behaviors, imposed standards and accountability paperwork "have subjected teachers to the micro-management of ever-tightening regulations and controls that are the very antithesis of any kind of professionalism" (p. 169). It is in this environment that Hargreaves (2000) emphasizes the need for teachers to work together with colleagues and parents to protect and advance educators'

professionalism. Hargreaves and Fullan (2000) make the case that including mentoring of new teachers is “integral to our approach to teaching and professionalism” (p. 50). They postulate that including new teacher mentoring as an integral part of all teachers’ professional development will lead to deeper, more meaningful reform (see also Friske & Combs, 1986; Sweeny, 1998)

Linking professional development and mentoring of new teachers is important to teacher retention (Greiner & Smith, 2006). Chapman and Green (1986) found a strong correlation between attrition and the quality of a teacher’s first teaching experiences during college and during the entry year. If teachers are to remain in the field beyond their first few years, they should be supported through some type of entry year program (Inman & Marlow, 2004). Grissmer and Kirby (1997) suggest a testing and apprenticeship process, presumably to weed out unsuitable teachers before they are given control of a classroom. The NCES’ Schools and Staffing Survey (Knox, 2005; Strong, 2005a, 2005b), on the other hand, views mentoring as a way to support new teachers and reverse the effects of stress, lack of outside support systems, and communication difficulties with administrators. They found a correlation between mentoring and new teacher retention. Based on the SASS 2000-2001 Teacher Followup Survey (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003), approximately 92% of teachers who participated in some form of new teacher induction, including mentoring, remained in their jobs for at least a second year, as opposed to approximately 84% of those who did not participate in an induction program. However, induction programs vary from state to state and district to district (Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004).

New teacher mentor programs have traditionally been assistance for novice teachers in their first year of teaching and “was largely seen as a matter of apprenticing oneself as a novice to someone who was skilled and experienced in the craft” (Hargreaves, 2000, p. 155). These programs were optional, providing encouragement and support for beginning teachers as well as information about the local school and the district policies (Norman & Ganser, 2004). Over time, however, many of these programs have undergone massive changes, becoming not only mandatory, but standards based, subject to the same sorts of high stakes, external influences as the rest of education (Norman & Ganser, 2004). This tendency to change the central, nurturing role of the mentor/mentee relationship was predicted by Hargreaves and Fullan (2000). As Norman and Ganser (2004) point out, outcome-based mentoring programs do not deal effectively with the developing professional. These authors suggest that effective mentoring should be grounded in a counseling perspective. Mentors must listen without preconceptions, must avoid the impulse to comfort protégés who are reliving bad teaching performances, must give examples of personal successes and failures while reminding them that they are normal, and must help mentees define their centered, focused “Self.” The job of mentor is not trivial, and the authors suggest that mentors have a support group of their own. Still, mentorship which “involves more than guiding protégés through learning standards and skill sets and extends to providing strong and continuous emotional support” (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000, p. 53) is likely to help teachers retain their passion.

While the effectiveness of various induction and mentoring structures is still being assessed, some general characteristics of successful programs are emerging. Strong (2005a) identified seven components necessary for a successful induction

program: “a mentor, common planning time, new teacher seminars, communication with administration, a support network, reduced teaching load, and a teacher’s aide” (p. 2). Boston Public Schools found that mentoring works best when new teachers are paired with mentors from the same school and grade level and/or subject area (Colgan, 2004), but this is not always possible. Fletcher and Barrett (2004) evaluated the effectiveness of mentoring programs by measuring the gain scores of students in classrooms of a suburban school district of 15 - 20,000 students. They compared the student Stanford Aptitude Test (SAT/9) gain scores of grades second through sixth, differentiating between students taught by new, mid-career (3 to 9 years experience), and veteran teachers (10 or more years experience). They found that new teachers’ students generally have lower beginning scores and are more likely to be Latino, English Language Learners, and/or receiving free or reduced lunch than are children in classes with experienced teachers. However, students of new teachers receiving guidance from an induction or mentoring program showed comparable gains to those in classrooms with experienced teachers. Students of mid-career teachers made the largest gains, leading the researchers to tentatively conclude that the presence of both teacher induction and experience are more important than either factor alone.

Fletcher and Barrett (2004) used a survey to discover the collegial effectiveness of including mentoring in an induction program. By measuring a teacher’s willingness to interact with principals, other teachers and a mentor, they found that new teachers who had been effectively mentored were more likely to see teaching as a collegial activity. They speculated that mentor-based induction may help new teachers to learn how to discuss instruction with colleagues. Removing the isolation from the classroom could be

an important factor in reducing teacher attrition (Colgan, 2004). Additionally, mentor based induction may have a positive effect on a school's faculty. New teachers can act as brokers, moving between groups of people within the school carrying information between groups and improving faculty communication (Cobb et al, 2003, Fletcher & Barrett, 2004). New teachers seek out help from colleagues, mentors and administrators and tend to report their learning back to others they have asked for help (Fletcher & Barrett, 2004), thus linking together people and passing knowledge. Ingersoll and Smith (2003) sum up the need for mentors, using a sink-or-swim metaphor. Evidently, mentoring and induction programs have the potential to make a critical difference for new teachers, but mentoring does not have to be limited to new teachers. Mentoring structures that foster collaborative work between faculty members have the potential to reverse the trend of teacher attrition.

One common way to provide support to both new and experienced teachers is to create opportunities within the school day for collaborative planning time. Greiner and Smith (2006) found that collaborative planning time decreased teachers' feelings of isolation. Hargreaves (1992), however, did not find a direct relationship between increased preparation time and enhanced association, community and collegiality between teachers. Without a building-wide or district-wide commitment to working collegially, preparation time becomes absorbed into teachers' day to day work life. (Hargreaves, 1992). It is important to remember Hargreaves' (1990) discussion of colonization when evaluating the effectiveness of preparation time.

Hargreaves (1992) identifies two types of classroom coverage during preparation time. Segregated coverage, saving time and money, has children attending classes such

as Music or Physical Education while their classroom teachers have planning time. Integrated coverage involves job sharing between one or more traveling teachers, for example, teachers of Spanish or, in some schools, gifted education who replace the regular teacher for a short amount of time on a regular basis. While segregated coverage worked well, in reasonable quantities, under integrated coverage teachers felt as though they were losing valuable time with their students because they were not in their classroom while a different teacher or a substitute or aide was providing the classroom contact time. Too much preparation time led, apparently, to disengagement with the classroom and a loss of personal accountability for student learning. Hargreaves (1992) refers to these problems as the “perversities of preparation time” (p. 100). The balance between enough preparation time and too much may be somewhat different for each individual and is not, therefore, easily arrived at or agreed upon. Collegial collaboration may also be found in induction and mentoring programs referred to above (Colgan, 2004).

Increased salaries.

According to the 2000-01 Teacher Follow-up Survey of the SASS (Provasnik & Dorfman, 2005), low salaries were a source of dissatisfaction for all groups of leavers and movers except highly qualified teachers (defined by this report as teachers who have both a major and certification in the field of their principal teaching assignment). Gritz and Theobald (1996) investigated teacher attrition in light of increased district spending without changing teacher salaries. They found that beginning female teachers in districts with such increased spending patterns were no more likely to remain at their first teaching assignments than were teachers in lower spending districts, and beginning male

teachers were only slightly more likely to leave. Increased educational spending that is not reflected in increased teacher salaries may be the result of additional spending for teacher aides to support mainstreamed special education students (Gritz & Theobald, 1996). Under these conditions, new teachers are 7% more likely to transfer to a different district, possibly due to the increased burden of supervision of aides and instruction of special education students on a novice teacher. When increases in district spending are the result of increased administration salaries, new male teachers are slightly more likely to transfer to another public school district than are new female teachers (Gritz & Theobald, 1996). In other words, “simply increasing spending levels, without changes in spending patterns, has little or no effect on teacher career paths” (Gritz & Theobald, 1996).

Researchers next turned to the question, would increased teacher salaries reduce attrition and, as a result, lead to a more skilled workforce? In the 2002-2003 school year, 52.3% of the total U.S. Education budget of \$88.9 billion was spent on teacher salaries (“Expenditures in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools, 2006,” p. 199; Budget overview, U.S. Department of Education, 2006). Increasing salaries is frequently listed as a way to reduce attrition rates (Unraveling the “Teacher Shortage” problem, 2002; Chapman & Green, 1986; Grissmer & Kirby, 1997). Some researchers argue that increasing teachers’ salaries would reduce turnover among all teachers, including the least effective ones, removing the opportunity for new teachers to take their places (Ballou and Podgursky, 1997; Murnane & Vegas, 1997). This would ultimately produce a less skilled workforce. Gritz and Theobald (1996) investigated teacher salaries in terms of salaries of other opportunities and found that raising teacher salaries as much as

\$3,000 did not have a measurable effect on teacher attrition. However, when the average annual earnings in a community are lowered by the same amount, teachers, particularly male teachers, are more likely to remain in their initial teaching positions for at least the first ten years of their careers. According to these studies, salaries are only a factor in teacher attrition if there are more attractive job opportunities in the same communities.

Reforming the teacher compensation system is another way to address teacher salaries. Wulsin (2006) advocates a professional staffing system where teachers would be selected by building principals who were “no longer constrained by locked pay scales, district bureaucracy, encyclopedic contracts, and tenure” (p. 27). Grissmer and Kirby (1997) suggest that the failure of the current compensation structure to provide differential pay for outstanding teachers prevents higher quality individuals from entering the field. They link the lack of differential compensation with fewer high-quality entrants, opportunities for a more demanding course of study, more high-quality teachers within the profession, and a more even distribution of high-quality teachers (Grimmer & Kirby, 1997). Chapman and Green (1986) suggest that administrations need to target incentives to the group of teachers they most wish to retain and remember that non-monetary rewards are often of greater importance than salary to returning teachers than they are to new teachers (see also Gunter et al., 2005). These suggestions may be at odds with goals of teachers’ unions, particularly in states with strong teachers’ unions and high percentages of union participation.

Improved teacher preparation.

Of all the solutions proposed to increase teacher retention, improving teacher preparation is perhaps the most time-consuming and has the potential to be the most

expensive. Teacher preparation occurs at the college or university level, as well as through mentoring and induction programs previously discussed. Price (2003) notes the five challenges of teacher preparation to be considered: cost, commitment, content, continuity and control (see also Greiner & Smith, 2006). Of particular importance to Colleges of Education are considerations of commitment to teacher education as demonstrated by the alignment of mission and commitment to the university's mission and commitment and by having full professors teach undergraduate teacher education classes (Price, 2003). These authors also stress the need for teacher preparation to include a bridge into a life-long learning-to-teach model capable of attracting and supporting effective teachers, a model supporting the strong mentoring and professional development discussed above. Improved teacher preparation may improve teacher retention (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Gardner, 2005; Grissmer & Kirby, 1997; Unraveling the "Teacher Shortage", 2002), and subject matter BA followed by an MA in teaching may increase retention of new teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

Gardner, (2005) reports that the average four-year teacher preparation program may not be enough time to incorporate all of the requirements of an effective teacher education program: subject matter mastery, pedagogical knowledge, and clinical training (pre-service classroom observation and practice experiences including student teaching), and reports on eleven studies suggesting that a fifth year of supervised teaching practicum will reduce new teacher attrition. These studies suggest that a fifth year will be particularly effective if the supervision is done by teachers with effective classroom management skills, possibly in a professional development school (similar to the laboratory schools of the past).

The suggestion of a fifth year practicum is somewhat in line with Schlechty and Vance's (1983) recommendation that the responsibility for teacher education should be removed from institutions of higher education and returned to the public schools. The difference between the former Normal Schools of teacher education and Schlechty and Vance's model is an emphasis on site-based educational research, absent from the original Normal Schools. They see the future of education as a marriage between these new teacher-training programs and schools of education with a focus on producing students of teaching and instructional process. In this model, graduates of university education programs must be nominated as candidates for further training to become teachers, in a similar manner to the way graduates of pre-medical undergraduate degrees must complete further education in a medical program including a residency practice. Schlechty and Vance (1983) propose changing the teacher preparation model in this way to improve the talent pool of potential teachers and to draw talented pre-professionals from other fields of study (see also Hargreaves, 2000). This type of intense program is an economically sound decision, as the cost of teacher preparation for teachers who stay in the profession is likely to be less than the cost of preparing wave after wave of teachers who do not stay (Unraveling the "Teacher Shortage", 2002). Even if it costs more to prepare teachers through one of these more demanding models, if teacher attrition is reduced, the benefits will quite likely outweigh the costs.

Conclusion

The average classroom teacher is a white collar professional trapped in a blue-collar job. The metaphor of the school as a knowledge factory is still common in today's schools. In fact, some of the literature speaks to the working conditions of teachers in a

way that is reminiscent of the discussions of child labor conditions in the early textile mills. Such discussions include condition of facilities, availability of textbooks and supplies, and class sizes as well as administrative support and input into decision-making (Unraveling the “Teacher Shortage”, 2002). Because children’s abilities, as raw materials, vary substantially from school to school and classroom to classroom, teachers’ salary scales are structured to reflect rewards for length of service rather than achievement. Where teachers are unionized, and the unions are the most powerful, (i.e., states such as Michigan), teachers’ salaries lead the nation. Discussions of preparation time and professional development attempt to lend credence to teachers’ professionalism; however, these are issues that are givens in other fields where professionals have the flexibility to schedule their time in ways that support continued learning. Moreover, although increased preparation time appears frequently in teacher retention literature, working a twelve-month year does not. Teachers may never enjoy the same status as other professionals unless education as a profession is restructured to become a year-long occupation. In the end, some researchers propose that for teachers to be viewed as professionals they must “submit themselves to a radical restructuring regarding standards and accountability, devolution and delegation, flexibility and incentives, expanding choice within education” (Gunter et al., 2005, p. 450).

Another metaphor of teaching common throughout the literature is that classrooms are battlefields and education is war. Various textbooks and teaching strategies are proposed as weapons in the war against illiteracy. Groups of educators are referred to as teaching corps (Schlechty & Vance, 1983, p. 475). Teachers who leave the field are disillusioned idealists, burned out veterans of internal strife, refugees (Heyns,

1988), or are simply burned out (Zabel & Zabel, 2002; Strong, 2005b). Legislatures and universities are working to combat teacher shortages, but recognize that some teacher wastage (teachers leaving the profession) (Smithers & Robinson, 2004; Strong, 2005b) has the positive effect of pruning (Grissmer & Kirby, 1997). In this holy war, teachers may be mercenaries and defectors (Schlechty & Vance, 1983) who move from school to school, apostates hotly pursuing higher incomes (Heyns, 1988), or simply victims of wanderlust (Peske, et.al., 2001). Wars are not always won; Korea, Vietnam, and battles in the Middle East demonstrate that selecting metaphors of conflict fail to produce resolutions. Research positing teacher attrition as a war may never produce a magic bullet that will cure the ills of the profession. Researchers may be more successful in reducing teacher attrition by changing their metaphors and investigating why teachers remain in the classroom rather than why they leave.

Research Methodologies

Overview

The purpose of this section is to provide explanations of hermeneutics, narrative inquiry, and *currere* as well as to indicate something of the historic/theoretical roots of each. This section will conclude with description of how the three work together in this project.

Hermeneutics

Introduction

The word hermeneutics comes from the Greek word, hermeneuein, meaning to understand and interpret (Guralnik, 1984). Just as Hermes was the messenger of the gods, hermeneutics act as a messenger of meaning. Hermeneutical research assumes that

humans experience the world through language and that the language expressed creates understanding and knowledge (Byrne, 2001). In today's hermeneutic paradigm texts are interpreted in light of the culture in which they were created (Downing, 2004; Patton, 2002), and that interpretation requires the meaning making actions of a group of people (Patton, 2002; D. Smith, 1991; Thiselton, 1992). While systems theory looks at how the entire world worked to shape the text (Patton, 2002), hermeneutics analyzes at a smaller level, focusing on how the text meaning changes as it is read and how the interpretation of the text changes the way in which it is read. Each reader brings background knowledge and experiences to the reading of the text, and it is in the interaction between reader and text that meaning is created. An understanding of the hermeneutic cycle ground the analysis of the participants' writings in this study.

Hermeneutics has been described as "a tradition, philosophy and practice of interpretation" (Moules, 2002, p. 105) and is defined as the close analysis of texts in relation to the times in which they were created. The process of hermeneutical analysis is compared to a cycle where the researcher is constantly shifting from inside the topic of inquiry to outside the topic (Moules, 2002). Attempting to achieve an insider's perspective, hermeneutics is a practical philosophy in which researchers (and the subjects in some studies) interpret the world through the reading and interpretation of texts (D. Smith, 1991). The practical philosophy of close text analysis was first used to analyze biblical texts, seeking ways writings of the Bible may become transformative through understanding the writers' creative contexts (Thiselton, 1992). Close text analysis has since been applied to other writings as the definition of text has been expanded to include interview transcripts, interview tapes, written comments, field notes and observations and

non-verbal expressions (Fleming, Gaidys, & Robb, 2003, p. 118). As a result, such textual analysis has become “an ubiquitous feature of the contemporary intellectual landscape” (D. Smith, 1991, p. 187). Hermeneutic inquiry provides the foundation for much research in the social sciences, particularly in nursing and education.

People have long sought the meaning of the words they say and write. In recent times, through the early 20th century, such interpretations were seen through the lens of scientific positivism. Traditional forms of logic and authority carried the day and the dogmatic-normative traditions of epistemology and metaphysics (Apel, 1985; D. Smith, 1991) provided the foundation of the “establishment and continuation of contemporary discourse domains” (p. 188). As living in the modern world became increasingly more difficult, so did the search for meaning. D. Smith (1991) points out that the difficulties of traditional (Western) forms of discourse to explain and analyze modern problems make (re)interpretation of today’s language and organizations necessary. With the complexities of modern life and the need for interpretation came the complexities of modern education and the need for understanding such basic terms as curriculum, research, and pedagogy (D. Smith, 1991).

In summary, hermeneutics is a systematic search for meaning in the words of our world. It is the peeling of an onion with unlimited layers, each thought-filled contemplation the result of reading and re-reading the texts of our lives. Hermeneutics is a search in the form of a journey rather than a dissection; a journey that takes into account such defining issues as gender, power, and living responsibly on our planet (D. Smith, 1991). It is as though the researcher travels inside the recursive images made by a pair of mirrors when they reflect each other’s images. The researcher moves back and

forth, from text to interpretation to text, leaving the hermeneutic cycle only when time, energy and resources are exhausted and knowing that there may be yet other layers of meaning left unpeeled, work unexplored for another researcher at another time. Remaining in the hermeneutic cycle throughout the interpretation is of primary importance; distance from the cycle can distance the interpretation from the original text (Whitehead, 2004). The purpose of such interpretation is “human freedom, which finds its light, identity, and dignity” (D. Smith, 1991, p. 189). Hermeneutics has the capacity to retain the “human” in the “humanities” of social sciences.

Whitehead (2004) reminds the researcher of the difference between hermeneutics as a philosophy and a specific methodology grounded in that philosophy. To derive a methodology, the researcher must read the philosophy, deduce the underlying principles and apply them to the research at hand. One of the major challenges of generating hermeneutically based methodology for many researchers is that the original works upon which the philosophy is based were written in German. Many researchers constructing such methodologies rely on translated versions of the original authors; and, as such, come to view the various theoretical perspectives perhaps through interpretations not intended by the original authors (Paley, 1998). This limitation is present in this review, but has possibly been mitigated by the attempt to read widely from a variety of interpretations and from a variety of studies using methodology based in hermeneutical philosophies. After an exploration of the history of close text analysis, a sampling of current hermeneutically based research studies follows. This section concludes with summary and short description of why such a methodology was chosen for this study.

Historical Roots of Hermeneutics

In the beginning, there was the word. And the word was the Torah, five books of history and laws that could be, at times, rather ambiguous. From this parsimonious economy of words rabbis and scholars sought meaning in these texts as a way to decipher the will of God for their people. Interpreting, reinterpreting, teasing the meaning out of each passage, each phrase became, in and of itself, a work central to the survival of the Jewish people. The Torah provided the foundation for the new religion of Christianity, and with it came the search for meaning within Biblical texts. The Western hermeneutic tradition grew from this search for Biblical meaning, and it is this tradition that is explored here.

The idea of what is a text is significant to the discussion of hermeneutics. Thiselton (1992) identifies a text as one piece of written language with a beginning and an end. Lyons (in Thiselton, 1992) discusses the basic units of language behavior as heavily context-dependent utterance units that include questions, statements, and commands. This discussion, while germane to conversation of how texts carry meaning, is the work of semantics and will be left for another time. It is sufficient to say that in the classical paradigm, texts are pieces of language used to express thoughts and ideas (Thiselton, 1992). Derrida and Barthes (in Thiselton, 1992) redefine the notion of text. To them, a text is no longer a finished piece of language but, “a differential network, a fabric of traces, referring endlessly to something other than itself, to other differential traces” (Thiselton, 1992, p. 57) becoming plural in a way that cannot be reduced. While it is possible argue precision in terms of how many words or phrases or thoughts are a text, hermeneutics is foundationally about creating what D. Smith (2003) dubs “intertexts,” those ideas that exist within and between our understandings, a life “that mediates,

announces, repudiates, or cajoles “ (p. xv) formal texts. In sum, previous hermeneutical research focused upon the meaning of the text while recent research focuses upon the meaning of the texts in the lives of the readers.

The central point of hermeneutics is that what something means depends on the context in which it was created as well as the context in which it is being interpreted (Patton, 2002). The founders of this practical philosophy, Frederick Schleiermacher, Wilhelm Dilthey and other German philosophers, believed that the meaning of a text is based on the values of the interpreters. Thiselton (1992) recognizes three major theoretical models at the root of hermeneutic traditions: the Romanticist tradition (Schleiermacher, Dilthey, and Betti), existential interpretation (Husserl and Heidegger), and Gadamer’s hermeneutical system in which judgments and understandings arise from the universal phenomenon of language (Thiselton, 1992). It is to a brief description of the foundations of these three theoretical models that this discussions next turns.

According to D. Smith (1991), three themes of inquiry have been present in hermeneutics since Schleiermacher: the nature of creativity in interpretation, the importance of language in understanding, and what is now called the hermeneutic cycle, the movement from part to whole and back to part again. It is this back and forth from macro to micro that D. Smith (1991) finds to be greatest contribution to the field. Another Romanticist, Dilthey, was primarily concerned with the socially diverse and particularly individual lived experiences of humans (Thiselton, 1992). Dilthey saw the expression of this interaction in *Lebensäußerungen* (expressions) including all manner of verbal and non-verbal linguistic representations. Thiselton (1992) judges the heart of Dilthey’s hermeneutic approach to be the relationships between patterns of language and

ideas. Such analysis recognizes the search for meaning as a basic part of human life (D. Smith, 1991; see also Fleming, Gaidys & Robb, 2003). Thiselton (1992) reports that Betti takes this approach further, establishing hermeneutics as a fundamental intellectual discipline rooted in a continuous, ongoing process of understanding, ever open to revision and dependent upon openness. According to Thiselton (1992), Betti divided the hermeneutical process into four stages which work together to facilitate understanding. The researcher first analyzes the linguistic phenomena of the text. Next, the interpreter looks reflectively within for interests, ideologies, and prejudices that may affect the interpretation (Thiselton, 1992). Later the researcher uses imagination and insight to discover what it is like to live the life of the researched subject, in this case, the writer of the text. Finally, the researcher reconstructs the set of conditions and entire situation that led to the production of the text under study. These four stages, or “moments” as they are frequently called, outline a method for hermeneutical inquiry. The evolution of romantic hermeneutics pointed the way for the next phase, existentialist interpretation and the later rejection by Gadamer of the notion of hermeneutical method.

Husserl and his student Heidegger have been grouped together for purposes of this discussion, but each offered different and distinct contributions to the hermeneutic conversation. Husserl presented *Lebenswelt* (life-world), the idea that each person has a sense of the world prior to interactions with the world (D. Smith, 1991). Equally important was Husserl’s theory of intentionality, demonstrating that each person thinks and interprets the world in a precise rather than a general way (D. Smith, 1991). This sense of the interactive nature of the world grounds hermeneutic interpretation in the “dialogical, intersubjective, and conversational nature of human experience” (D. Smith,

1991, p. 192). While Husserl still saw a distinction between Self and Other, he also envisioned ways the two parts of the dichotomy communicate and may one day become united.

Heidegger concentrated on the question of Being and incorporated hermeneutics as he rewrote Western philosophical tradition (D. Smith, 1991). Heidegger introduced the concept of horizon as a place within which humans experience the world, in the past, the present and the future. This idea grounds understanding in the forestructures already present in each person through prior experiences (D. Smith, 1991). Through Heidegger's writings, hermeneutics becomes the foundation of Being where "interpretation is the means by which the nature of Being and human be-ing is disclosed" (D. Smith, 1991, p. 192). Heidegger laid the groundwork for his student, Gadamer, to argue that the only acceptable method for interpreting any phenomena could only be found within that phenomena (D. Smith, 1991).

With the 1960 publication of the first edition of *Truth and Method*, Gadamer moved the dominant paradigm of hermeneutics from existentialist interpretation to the total avoidance of any notion of hermeneutic methodology (Thiselton, 1992). At the same time Gadamer incorporated a model of dialogue or conversation that allows truth to come forth (Thiselton, 1992). D. Smith (1991) highlights Gadamer's idea of pre-judgment, or prejudice not as a negative, but as a requirement necessary for all understanding" (see also Fleming, Gaidys & Robb, 2003). Whitehead (2004) states that the interpreter's pre-understandings originate with "being-in-the-world" (p. 396) or Dasein (Paley, 1998; Fleming, Gaidys & Robb, 2003). In this paradigm, all readers are interpreters of the texts they encounter. All of a reader's past experiences are part of that

person's horizons, a origin for thoughts and actions (D. Smith, 1991; Whitehead, 2004). Thus temporally located, the reader speaks and writes with language that manifests the society from which it derived (D. Smith, 1991), and produces a constantly evolving interpretation of each text (Whitehead, 2004). Therefore, D. Smith (1991) has interpreted Gadamer's work to suggest the impossibility of establishing one correct method of hermeneutic inquiry that will work for all texts because the nature of the text itself determines, in part, how it should be analyzed. In summary, Gadamer's model acknowledges that text interpretation is not static but varies as time and the perception of reality change and challenges the idea that one and only one interpretation is correct or true.

Since the beginning of the 1980s, Thiselton (1992) finds several relevant responses to Gadamer's model. First, some theorists have pursued interpretation with an emphasis on "metacritical evaluations of theoretical criteria and pragmatic operations" (p. 11), deriving the contemporary hermeneutics of Derrida and Kristeva (D. Smith, 1991). Another view emphasizes the socio-ethical aspects of historical tradition and language as a socially relevant part of critical theory (D. Smith, 1991). For a third group, the reality of the readers and the texts prohibits metacritical exploration; instead they explore the practical effects of texts within communities (D. Smith, 1991). A fourth group has chosen to move away from Gadamer's perspective and champion more traditional hermeneutic approaches. D. Smith (1991) concludes that Gadamer's hermeneutic prefigures post-modern hermeneutics because he describes play as a basic way to understand, he explains the presence of hidden meanings, and he presents a theory of the relationship between writing and speech. Further, D. Smith (1991) discusses four

requirements of the hermeneutic imagination, all grounded in Gadamer's writings, which must be present for a reader to interpret a text. First, it is not possible to establish one hermeneutic methodology because, "*what* is being investigated itself holds part of the answer concerning *how* it should be investigated (p. 198, emphasis in the original). Secondly, to participation in hermeneutical explorations a person must develop a deepening sense of life's basic interpretability. Third, because hermeneutics is not concerned with self-definition, it is able to work, instead, "to rescue the specificities of our lives from the burden of their everydayness to show how they reverberate within the grander schemes of things" (p. 200). Finally, Smith states that the focus of hermeneutics is on creating, rather than reporting, meaning. Therefore, rather than bracketing off a personal perspective, the hermeneutic interpreter responsibly acknowledges personal subjectivity aiming, through analysis, to deepen the collective understanding of the world (D. Smith, 1991). Gadamer's work, then, grounds hermeneutic research of the past and in the present by proposing new ways, grounded in tradition, to analyze text.

In the field of social sciences, Paley (1998) identifies Bhaskar's list of the three achievements of the hermeneutic tradition as the segregation of: the "preinterpreted character of social reality, the nonpresuppositionless character of social enquiry and the indexical character of the expressions used in social life and social science." (p. 821). In other words, hermeneutical methodology identifies the nature of social reality prior to any interpretation, describes assumptions made when conducting social inquiry, and analyzes the language used to describe the world. After this brief tour of the foundations of hermeneutics it is appropriate to see how hermeneutically based methodologies are used in current research.

Current Research

In general, hermeneutics answers the questions: Under what conditions did this act take place? Under what conditions was this product produced? (Patton, 2002), and what do these writings mean to those who produced them and those who read them today? The purpose of this section is to demonstrate the range of studies that employ a hermeneutically based research methodology and how the researchers handle each of the major issues of such research. One group actively employing hermeneutically-based methodologies are researchers based in Canada and the United Kingdom studying nursing and palliative care (Bennetts, 2004; Fleming, Gaidys & Robb, 2003; Geanellos, 1998; Koch, 1996; Mak & Elwyn, 2003; Moules, 2002; Paley, 1998; Whitehead, 2004). This section explores a sampling of these studies, focusing on both the methodologies and the philosophical underpinnings and is organized by key issues: reasons for methodology selection, data collection, data analysis, and trustworthiness.

Justification for Methodology Selection.

Researchers come to hermeneutically based methodology for a variety of reasons. Mak and Elwyn (2003) found five reasons that justified the use of hermeneutics in understanding patients' desires for euthanasia: hermeneutics brings understanding into the meaning of a phenomenon, values human experience in cultural, temporal and social contexts, allows for multidimensional data collection with an ethical and compassionate approach to collection, and is scientifically rigorous. The researchers below find one or more of these reasons applicable to each of their studies. Wallace and Loudon (2003) approach the scientifically rigorous nature of the analysis of language structure in their study of science teachers. Whitehead (2004) chose the hermeneutic cycle as a

methodology for researching chronic fatigue syndrome patients because its principles enabled analysis at both macro and micro levels over time and through changing political, social and personal contexts. Dale (1995) chose hermeneutics methodology to analyze the case studies of patients with quality of life issues as a way to promote validity, while Geanellos (1998) based her decision on hermeneutic necessity to bring the researchers' pre-understandings to consciousness. Moules (2002) elected to use Gadamer's hermeneutic perspective in her examination of letters in clinical nursing because language, interpretation, history and understanding are bound together to answer questions that can be asked in many ways. Finally, Bennetts' (2004) study of the mentors of creative individuals utilizes philosophical hermeneutics both because of the rigor of the process and the capacity of the researcher to co-create meaning with the participants.

Data Collection.

Hermeneutics data always involves texts, even when the texts are based on interviews or observations. Fleming, Gaidys and Robb (2003) stress the importance of verbatim transcription of interviews and possible necessity of repeated interviews with the same subjects. Wallace and Louden (2004) included field notes, informal discussions and formal interviews with teachers and students in their data. Mak and Elwyn (2003) used unstructured patient interviews as a data source and focused on the patients' perspectives, as did Whitehead (2004). These interviews, and sometimes multiple interviews, encouraged in-depth personal narratives. Medical records were also used to contextualize the patients' experiences (Mak & Elwyn, 2003; Whitehead, 2004; Dale, 1995). Due to the length of interviews, sample size was small and sampling was purposeful (Mak & Elwyn, 2003) or purposive and snowballing (Whitehead, 2004).

Neither Dale (1995) nor Wallace and Louden (2003) disclose how the cases chosen were selected, but Moules (2002) explains that her two participants extracted were from a larger doctoral research study based in a family nursing unit that analyzed nurses' letters to patients as well as interview transcripts. Finally, as points of contrast, Geanellos (1998) analyzed her own writings about her pre-understandings and her stories about her patients and Bennetts (2004) studied thirty-five psychologically healthy individuals who were identified as creative and who self-selected to be part of the study. Evidently, while studies using hermeneutically based methodology tend to be smaller, there is a range in both sample size and sample selection procedures.

Data Analysis.

Fleming, Gaidys and Robb (2003) explicate the process of the hermeneutic cycle in great detail, emphasising that understanding must be systematic, with every phase gaining from the previous. Mak and Elwyn (2003) used the hermeneutic cycle' iterative process of part to whole to part to analyze the collected data as a way to discard inadequate preunderstandings and gain new understanding. Wallace and Louden (2003) employ Halliday's (1993) analysis of scientific texts as a way to examine the collected data. Whitehead (2004) also used the hermeneutic circle in an attempt to recognize the temporality of truth while recognizing the possibility of divergent interpretations. As the interrelationship between whole and part were examined, Mak and Elwyn (2003) formulated a thematic analysis of codes and categories and constructed paradigm cases and concepts. Dale (1995) used the hermeneutic cycle as a way to achieve objective distance by identifying and challenging the researcher's personal beliefs and consciously acknowledging fore-understandings that might bias data collection or analysis. Moules

(2002) analyzed data both at a text level, including the spirit of questions, and also at an internal level, reflecting upon the differing ways sentence end marks affect the reader, causing changes in inhalation and exhalation. Bennetts (2004) interviewed participants over a period of a year through a continuous hermeneutical cycle of remembering, revisiting, reconstruction, reflection, revealing, and reviewing. In short, researchers employing hermeneutic methods work through the data in a cyclic fashion, forever developing deeper levels of meaning.

Trustworthiness.

Qualitative methodologies such as hermeneutics often require special attention to issues of trustworthiness. D. Smith (1991) states that good interpretation demonstrates connections between expression and experience. Fleming, Gaidys and Robb (2003) state that researchers employing a Gadamerian perspective must establish trustworthiness of the research process through auditability, credibility and confirmability. Koch (1996) states that researchers must demonstrate trustworthy and believable methodology and analysis to claim legitimacy of knowledge, thus reconceptualizing the notion of rigor from that of reliability and validity found in empirical-analytical research to an alternative paradigm useful in qualitative research. In discussing auditability, Whitehead (2004) points to Koch (1994) who locates the decision trail of theoretical, methodological and analytic choices as an important indicator of trustworthiness. Dale (1995) made the decision trail apparent by writing up findings as they were uncovered and by constantly reframing her fore-understandings as she moved through each stage of the collection and analysis process. Mak and Elwyn (2003) used a research journal to reflect upon the data, make transparent the process of the hermeneutic cycle and formulate an analytic

framework for the data. Whitehead (2004) also journalized the content and process of interactions throughout the study while Geanellos (1998) relied only on her own perceptions of the writings she completed. Wallace and Loudon (2003) do not discuss the trustworthiness of any part of their study or their analysis, leaving the question of trustworthiness unreported and perhaps unasked by the researchers. There is a range of approaches to trustworthiness in hermeneutics literature.

Credibility is established by ensuring that participants' perspectives are presented accurately and clearly (Fleming, Gaidys & Robb, 2003). While these studies do not use bracketing as a way to remove observer bias, they do make use of verbatim translations of interview transcriptions to ensure that the participants and the researcher are interpreting exactly the same texts. The difficulty for the researcher, then, is to reinterpret the texts in light of the lives and times of the participants without introducing the researcher's own agenda. Whitehead (2004) controlled reactivity, the potential of the researcher to effect the data, through a process of recording the researcher's background and experience. Moules (2002) addresses the voice of authority contained in texts, remarking that the written word is highly valued due to the historical privilege of literacy. In discussing ethics, Moules (2002) also cautions that a study's participants live the consequences, good or bad, of the study and so the researcher must focus not only on the intervention, but also on the people involved. Bennetts (2004) established credibility for her study by incorporating large portions of interview transcripts into her published work.

Confirmability requires the researcher to return to the participants throughout the research process (Fleming, Gaidys & Robb, 2003). Studies with multiple interview protocols (Dale, 1995; Whitehead, 2004; Mak & Elwyn, 2003) may demonstrate

confirmability if the participants are included in the hermeneutic circle. Moules (2002) returns to the research question as a place from which to re-read data and check for confirmability. Here the researcher concluded that the current research is not sufficient to decide how meanings of letters arise (Moules, 2002). Using herself as her subject, Geanellos (1998) relied entirely upon the process of returning to participant as a part of the hermeneutic circle. As Fleming, Gaidys and Robb, (2003) point out, objective understanding in hermeneutic research cannot be achieved in an ideal form because understanding is based on common language, culture and time and every reader's interpretations will be different by definition. Confirmability will therefore never reach levels achieved through quantitative studies yielding statistical outcomes. Confirmability was established in Bennets' (2004) study through the process of up to five interviews per subject, each involved with constant checking for understanding. While studies may be judged by standards of trustworthiness, there does not appear to be one set of trustworthiness criteria to which all studies adhere.

Summary

Hermeneutical methodology is analysis based in written texts. A rich philosophical tradition arose through the works of Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Husserl, Heidegger and Gadamer. Even though the boundaries of hermeneutics continue to be pushed through post-modern philosophers, a majority of the studies reviewed here were generated in the tradition of Heidegger and Gadamer. Gadamer's hermeneutics recent narrative and story research (D. Smith, 1991) and is used when researchers are analyzing interviews. Personal narratives, generally but not always the product of interviews, are included in hermeneutic study when they are written texts (Byrne, 2001). Because this

study is based on written teacher narratives, a hermeneutically based methodology that includes a narrative inquiry component is a logical choice for research methodology.

Narrative Inquiry and Teacher Narrative as a Form of Teacher Research

Introduction

“Tell me a story. Pleasee.” These words are on the lips of children every night. They settle down into their beds to the sound of the answer, an answer as old as time: “Once upon a time.” Storytelling is a magic act (Ozick, 1995; Brody et al., 1991). Stories can heal and are the best way to “overcome loneliness, develop compassion and create community” (Keen, 1988, p. 47; see also Brody et al., 1991). Stories offer the readers and the listeners models to (re)describe the world (Witherell & Noddings, 1991). But stories are more than flights of fancy spun for the young; stories are the other half of ourselves. Where one side is rational, predictable, and scientific (also known as the logioco-scientific or paradigmatic mode (Bruner, 1986)), the story side, the narrative mode, “strives to put its timeless miracles into the particulars of experience, and to locate the experience in time and place” (p. 13). In short, stories are the glue that bonds the bits and pieces of our lives into meaning-filled shapes. The formal study of stories is narrative inquiry.

Narrative Inquiry

Stories engage the reader, make the reader a part of the knowing, and allow the reader to write themselves into the interpretation of characters and events (Bruner, 1986). Writing, either the writing of the storyteller/author or the rewriting of the reader/listener contains power by connecting cause with effect, continuity with change (Makler, 1991). Chang and Rosiek (2003) point out that if we believe that some teacher knowledge is

available through teacher stories, then analyzing these existing stories as well as finding ways to create new stories to shape teacher practice are both possible valid research agendas. Such stories might be a way to counteract the hegemony in society. Narrative is an effective form of resistance for four main reasons (Munro, 1996). First, the storytellers are heard in their own voices, unmediated through another person's perspective. Second, a narrative gives voice to the entire story, even incomplete and contradictory parts. Therefore, the story reflects the complexity of the situation. Third, the collaborative nature of storytelling reduces potential exploitation. Finally, narratives allow the teller the self-reflexivity needed to reveal and deal with biases. Lewis (1999) adds that teacher-research in the form of teacher narratives presents a more complete, useful, and meaningful portrait of the data by surrounding it with all of the messy, noisy, and incomplete context of the classroom.

Clandinin and Connelly (1996) posit the idea of a professional knowledge landscape at the "interface of theory and practice in teachers' lives" (p. 24). This intellectual and moral landscape is composed of the interactions between people, things and places. Teachers' personal practical knowledge is mediated by and finds expression through sacred, secret and cover stories. Policy makers, theoreticians, and practitioners give their view of practice through sacred stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996). The stories of what actually happens in a classroom are secret stories, the stories of lived practice. For the most part, teachers tell secret stories only to themselves or to other teachers in secret places.

Cover stories (Crites, 1979; Olson, 1995) are the stories teachers tell about their practice when they are in public, professional places that allow them to continue to teach

and to continue to believe in their own stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996). Sometimes teachers tell cover stories in an attempt to recover a sense of balance and harmony; these stories have been termed fragile stories by Beattie and Conle (1996). Other times teachers use cover stories to “spin” classroom events so the teacher will seem to be more in control or more professional. These stories place the teacher’s story “within the acceptable range of the story of school being told lived at the school” (p. 25). Sometimes cover stories are told when their teacher stories are marginalized by the current stories told by the school; these stories, therefore, change as the school stories change (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996). Outsiders who listen to cover stories may develop a diminished view of teachers’ knowledge. Such stories create flat caricatures of teachers that do not capture the complexity of teachers and teaching (Ritchie & Wilson, 2000). These stories serve to inform the cultural myths of teaching and teachers as adults idealize some teachers of their pasts and denigrate others who did not meet their needs (Lightfoot, 1983). Cultural myths portray a good teacher as a warrior for standards or a saint (Ritchie & Wilson, 2000) or a social activist martyr (Kozol, 1967). Media images of teachers contribute to these myths (Boragina, 2003; Lightfoot, 1983; Speir, 2000; Underwood, 1992), blending and combining to create new sacred stories of teachers and teaching which increase the gap between the reality of teachers’ secret stories and the cover stories they are compelled to tell.

Jean Clandinin and Michael Connelly have written extensively on narrative inquiry as a way of looking at stories, untangling the sacred from the secret and the cover, identifying the boundaries and tensions between the boundaries, and detailing the construction of grand narratives. A summary of their work follows.

Narrative inquiry is “a process of telling and retelling stories of the lived experience of teaching and learning in order to live more expansive lives” (Rath, 2002; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). They identify three ways to read narratives: to recover meaning, to reconstruct meaning, and to read at the boundaries. Boundaries are defined as places where narrative inquiry thinking approaches the intellectual territory of other ways of thinking (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Reading to recover meaning and reading to reconstruct meaning include the reader as an author in the recreation of the story. Reading at the boundaries situates the narrative both within the reader and within the world. Tensions are situated at these boundaries, and it is these tensions that drive the meaning of the narrative for the individual and for the larger community.

When enough people tell the same story about something, that narrative acts as a grand narrative – a structure for “how we do things.” I think of grand narratives as large cruise ships. Most people on board have no idea how the ship works; in fact, the trip is so smooth that they sometimes forget they are on a moving ship and not in a stationary resort. It is possible to change the course of the ship, but it takes both planning and time. A small percentage of the people on the ship understand how it all works together, but most are either working hard to maintain a discrete part of the total cruise experience or are passengers along for the ride. In this manner, grand narratives are hegemonic because they perpetuate the power of a few with the willing consent of the majority (see Craig, 2001).

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) identify the grand narrative of education as a place where “. . . teachers implement curriculum programs to meet preset objectives and to achieve certain outcomes” (p. 28). In the grand narrative of education, measurement of

student outcomes demonstrates not only how well students learned, but how well teachers taught. This convolution of curriculum and instruction relegates the teacher to a role of either an obstacle or a facilitator for objectives achievement (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In summary, the grand narrative of education is filled with stories of measurement.

I think of tensions as places where ideas are rubbed raw when they rasp against each other. If the grand narrative of education is the story someone else has written, the tensions are located at those places where teachers don't fit and where students' needs bump against those dictated by some larger educational community. Teachers can be either impediment or catalyst (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), and this role choice establishes some tensions; some spots rubbed raw and others smoothed over. Marking a difference between narrative thinking and the grand narrative of education puts the student, the teacher and the curriculum theorist on the boundaries apart from the grand narrative of education. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) discuss the concept of the grand narrative as they identify tensions at the boundaries. Among the tensions Clandinin and Connelly (2000) define when comparing the grand narrative of education to individuals' narratives are: temporality, people, action, certainty, and context. These are discussed in detail below.

Temporality, time sense, relates to the way events and objects have pasts, presents and implied futures. Events do not happen at an exact moment, but over time (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; see also Ricoeur, 1980, for a discussion of narrative time). When an event occurs, it is the product of events prior and, in turn, imposes a particular reality upon future events. Teachers and administrators view time in different ways (Hargreaves,

1990). Hargreaves explains that administrators view time as monochronic, each thing happening after the next, while teachers view time as polychronic, many things happening simultaneously. This difference in the way time is viewed leads to a dynamic tension as teachers construct how they work within time as they are concurrently constrained by time. Temporality in the grand narrative contains the ideas of hierarchical objectives, pre-, current, and post-instructional times, and whose notion of time shapes the curriculum – that of the students, the teacher or some other entity (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Some of the tensions between boundaries are played out through the ways people are perceived (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Although as teachers we assume that people are always in the process of change, the grand narrative encourages teachers to instruct all children using curriculum programs designed to meet pre-set standards and achieve specified outcomes. Narrative thinking clearly separates itself from the grand narrative on this point, insisting that “the immediate educational history of a child . . . is central to narrative educational thinking” (p. 30). The power of narrative thinking is the ability to generate a more complete picture of the student, the teacher, and the curriculum than can be created using objective measures. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) intend that curricular actions be interpreted as teachers’ and students’ narrative expressions. Without the narrative information surrounding a particular child’s performance on a particular test, the results are misleading at best. For example, if, due to a family emergency, a child scheduled to take a test to determine placement in a gifted education program comes to school with very little sleep and no breakfast, that child might very well test below his or her potential. Without the understanding of the child’s narrative, the

meaning and importance of the child's test performance is unknown. The grand narrative, as a story of groups of children, allows test data to be taken as direct evidence of ability and achievement, and the child to be placed in a regular education program. On the other hand, the child's teachers are able to contextualize each child's narrative and therefore will interpret test performance as part of an entire portrait of the child.

Certainty has to do with the interpretation of events. The education grand narrative is a collective idea that searches for and applies causality to action and reaction, between performance and cognitive level, with a great deal of certainty (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Narrative thinking, on the other hand, allows for interpretation of events in terms of each child's and each teacher's narrative. In terms of the previous example, the grand narrative would see low performance on the gifted placement test as an indication of less than gifted abilities. Accessing the student's narrative, however, would lead the teacher to retest the child in the future when the home life has become more stable. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) concern themselves with the tradition of narrative inquiry and multiple interpretations as a way to resist the grand narrative, and address the difference in perception between individuals and groups (see also Munro, 1996, for feminist resistance in teachers' life history narratives).

While the meaning making of narrative thinking centers around context and the individual person in context, "In the grand narrative, the universal case is of prime interest" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 32). To support this position Clandinin and Connelly (2000) reflect upon their experience participating in the development of a taxonomy that could be applied to all educational contexts. In this process, the educational context was broken down into variables that were ranked by importance and

correlated to each other. The focus, then, became the individual variables, the bits and pieces, rather than the individual students, the gestalt. Researchers applying narrative thinking resist this tendency to decontextualize students' lives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Context includes concepts of time, space, and other people. To continue with the previous example, if the student taking the test comes from a non-English speaking home, administering the test in the home language would be a way of taking that student's context into consideration. The grand narrative assumes that each individual student is comprised of a group of variables that can be described, measured and weighed (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The grand narrative disregards context as a condition necessary for meaning making in that it assumes that all people operate within the same context.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and Clandinin, Connelly and Chan (2002) also identify two other boundaries of narrative inquiry: reductionistic and formalistic boundaries. These boundaries are seen as being primarily concerned with the direction of researched inquiry. The grand narrative of education supports either a reductionist or a formalist model. The reductionist model assumes that by exploring the parts, one can move downward and reduce a complex system, all of the variables of all of the students, to achieve an understanding of the whole, the universal case of the average student. On the other hand, a formalistic stance attempts to describe a system using far-reaching, extensive, formal explanations in an attempt to move upward toward abstract forms (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Furthermore, formalism is primarily concerned with the formal structures of objects and ideas; people are seen as not people but as

representations of the theoretical foundation of the inquiry. The primary difference between these two perspectives is the role of experience in the meaning making process. While the inquirer from the tradition of the grand narrative views experience as “a black mark on the slate to be wiped clean” (p. 40) thus creating a *tabula rasa* (the blank slate ready to accept formal education), the formalist ignores experience altogether concentrating instead on power in the form of political, cultural, gender and framework hegemonies (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

At the boundary between formalistic thinking and narrative thinking, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) find tensions in the place and balance of theory, participants and researcher. The balance of theory refers to the amount and type of emphasis different perspectives are given during one study; however, theory remains at the core of a formalistic study while narrative inquiries frequently begin with experience expressed through stories. Regardless of methodology, this tension, located in the place of theory in a study, exists throughout an inquiry, not just in the beginning. During the study decisions are made regarding the prominence of literature review and theoretical grounding. As the final report is made, the importance of either previously identified theory or creation of new meanings generates different final results (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). While the formalistic researcher generates a final product with a definitive answer or set of answers, the narrative inquirer “creates texts that, when well done, offer readers a place to imagine their own uses and applications” (p, 42). In other words, each researcher’s results continue their research tradition; the formalist presents a *fait accompli* while the narrative inquirer invites the reader to join in and continue the narrative process. *Currere* was chosen as a method for creating participants’

autobiographies because the nature of *currere* leads the participants and the researcher to a continuous, narrative process.

The theoretical framework of an inquiry determines the place of people in that inquiry. A simplistic way to explain this is that in a formalist inquiry, people are not center stage. If people are identified, they are examples of ideas, theories or social categories (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). As such, people can embody a culture, a race, a gender, or a type of power. In contrast, narrative inquiries study people as “the embodiments of lived stories” (p.43) where the emphasis is on the individual rather than on the group(s) to which that individual belongs. Sometimes, though, a narrative researcher must struggle to see the person as a part of a lived story rather than as an outstanding example of some artificially constructed social category. This location of tension also exists within the researcher.

The place of the researcher in inquiry is a final source of tension. A researcher comes to the task with a variety of experiences with formalistic and reductionistic research paradigms. Each researcher arrives at the research process with specific perspectives on and attitudes about inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). To be an effective narrative inquirer, the researcher must explore his or her own narrative history and be able to separate the lived experience of the researcher from the lived narrative of the subject.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) add Dewey’s theories to support their thinking about narrative inquiry. They define a three dimensional space where one axis represents personal and social interaction, the second represents continuity or temporal ideas of past, present, and future, while the final axis is the location of place (p. 50). Using these terms,

the researcher can locate any particular line of inquiry at the intersection of the three lines. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) also identify four directions in any inquiry: “inward and outward, backward and forward” (p. 50). *Inward* designates internal conditions such as emotions, morality, and aesthetic reactions. Designating something *outward* means “toward the existential conditions” (p. 50) or toward the environment. *Backward* and *forward* are temporally located concepts similar to past, present and future. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest researchers generate questions by combining the three dimensional aspects of narrative space with the four directions of inquiry to achieve the experience of the experience (p. 50).

Narratives as Stories

Sitting around the dinner table after the plates were cleared, my parents told my brothers and me the stories of their youth, of their courtship and marriage, and of their lives together. They also told the stories of their families: my father’s father coming to America from Armenia and my mother’s grandparents emigrating from Sweden. Those stories became a part of our lives, the repetition etching them into our memories. We also learned how to tell stories, how to structure the narrative, how to hold the audience breathless as the story winds to the climax, much like a roller coaster pulls itself slowly to the top of the hill before plunging into the abyss, the *dénouement*, below. Bruner (1986), Witherell and Noddings (1991), and others identify the many different functions narratives perform and the different roles narratives fill.

Stories are a way of recording life experience. We are all authors, whether we put words on paper, speak them out loud, or only repeat them inside our own heads (Tappan & Brown, 1991). The stories we choose to tell and the ways we choose to tell them

influences our thoughts, feelings, and actions (Tappan & Brown, 1991). Through journals and diaries, people record the daily happenings of their lives (Cooper, 1991; see also Pinar, 1994; Rose, 1989; Tompkins, 1996). Stories, then, can be a catalogue of happenings, a way to remember and keep the past alive in the present.

As a story unfolds, the storyteller constructs “both action and consciousness simultaneously” (Bruner, 1986, p. 14). While it is true that a story can be simply a recitation of events, the storyteller brings an immediacy to the tale, drawing listeners in and making the characters real (Narayan, 1991). Because the teller and the receiver of the story become part of the story and part of the process, storytelling is not neutral. With every telling, there is a separation of the self from the story that demands that researchers admit that the telling separates the story from the teller and, in the process, diminishes the teller (Grumet, 1991). Through storying, teachers “craft their personal habits of being” (Rosiek & Atkinson, 2005, 439). Researchers must therefore develop an ethic for collecting these stories (Grumet, 1991). Even if stories are merely recitations of events, they inherently carry the values of the teller and the receiver. They must therefore be analyzed in terms of the types of stories being told, the response that these stories might create in the reader, and the ends the stories might seek (Rosiek & Atkinson, 2005).

The receiver of the story also plays a role in the story’s creation. Whether reader or listener, the recipient becomes a part of the meaning, making “. . . a strange text his own” (Bruner, 1986, p. 35). Grumet (1991) cautions the researcher to remember that because the storyteller experiences a separation of self as the recipient takes possession of the story, the researcher must develop a way to receive stories that “. . . mediates the

space between the self that tells, the self that told, and the self that listens: a method that returns a story to the teller that is both hers and not hers, that contains herself in good company” (p. 70). Despite the separation of self that occurs with the telling, stories remain important to us because they instruct us in the definition of our lives by giving examples, role models, limits and explanations (Farwell, 1988; Cooper, 1991).

In addition to simple reporting, stories provide form and structure for our experiences, because stories impose form on experience (Grumet, 1988). As people tell their stories, they use their narrative capacity “the way each one of us reorganizes, reassess, realigns our life experience so that it is continually integrated into our present personal schema” (Brody et al., 1991, p. 257). Telling stories requires the experiences to be sifted through, organized and reorganized, until the internal structure of the story resonates both with the storyteller and with the culture of the receivers (Stafford, 1991; see also Narayan, 1991). As we bring structure to our experiences, we also organize and make sense of our emotions. Narayan (1991) repeats Rosaldo’s (1984) linking of emotions to stories: feelings are social practices organized through the enacting and telling of stories. Linking events and emotions through the organizational structures of stories allows both the storyteller and the receiver to (re)present and give meaning to the events of our lives, be they mundane or momentous (Tappan & Brown, 1991). Telling stories enriches the meaning of our lives.

Stories are a way of knowing. For example, Belenky et al. (1997) used narrative research techniques to describe women’s ways of knowing. During the interview process the researchers asked questions that encouraged the women in the study to explain their lives and tell their stories. Telling their stories enabled these women to come to know

who they were and what they believed; simply living their stories was not enough because experiences are not meaningful until they are reflected upon (Grumet, 1991). Belenky et al. (1997) developed a hierarchical structure for identifying the ways women know what they know based on the stories the women told during the interview process. A discussion of this structure follows.

In the tenth anniversary edition of *Women's Ways of Knowing*, Belenky et al. (1997), describe a continuum of women's voices, "different perspectives from which women view reality and draw conclusions about truth, knowledge, and authority" (p. 3). They found some women living in without voices, "cut off from others in a world full of rumor and innuendo" where "words arise out of wrath, and they provoke wrath" (p. 25). Women in silence look outside themselves for power and authority and see blind obedience to these powerful others as being the highest priority survival skill because learning the reasons for acting were neither possible nor important. This pattern of silence and inability to express an inner representation of the world begins in childhood, at home and in some cases at school, and continues through adult life unless it is disrupted from the outside.

Women who begin as voiceless first begin to become self-aware when they are thrust into positions of responsibility, usually when they become mothers. These women take their first, tentative steps out into the wider world when they seek answers to problems they have self-identified. Belenky et al. (1997) list listening to friends and listening to authorities, including family members, as ways women know through received knowledge. Women at this developmental level believe that by listening closely to others they will be able to behave correctly and get along with others. Belenky et al.

(1997) also highlight a central moral theme for women at this stage of development that is a central theme for all women (Gilligan, 1982 and Miller, 1976 cited in Belenky et al., 1997). This theme decrees that women should “devote themselves to the care and development of others while remaining ‘selfless’” (p. 46). This moral precept is particularly important in the world of teaching where just such heroic behavior is not only acceptable, it is encouraged and embraced.

Belenky et al. (1997) next discuss the emergence of subjective knowing through the development of the inner voice and the quest for self. Women begin this journey because the authorities upon whom they had come to depend, all male voices, had failed them. All of these women described an “inner voice” or a “gut feeling” that led them to believe that they knew something different from what others believed was the truth. Many of the women also found one or more female friends or relatives to help them transition from relying on others for knowledge to redefining authority and developing a sense of self, agency and control. One result of the growing self-awareness is the driving need to push away from others and create a distance in which to grow. Gradually these women began to value their own interpretations over those of others. These women were rarely confrontational because they wished to avoid conflict and hurt feelings, and they used watching and listening to others as tools to develop skill in analytic and reflective thought. Experienced classroom teachers sometimes arrive at this point when they become members of a professional learning community in their schools, when they begin graduate work, or when they accept positions of leadership in their schools.

Belenky et al. (1997) finally turn to the development of procedural knowledge through an inner voice of reason engaged in separate and connected knowing. This is a

time of demanding time of reshuffling beliefs and values, of searching for knowledge through “acquiring and applying procedures for obtaining and communicating knowledge” (95). Whereas these women were once able to rely on the authority of others or on their intuition, they are now pulled into reflective analysis that abolishes their clean-cut, black and white worlds and introduces an overwhelming number of shades of gray. These women may hold themselves separate, choosing to accept or reject ideas as they are encountered, in much the same way the bouncer at the trendy nightclub admits only the select few. Separate knowers have difficulty admitting their emotional side to the conversation. After all, the bouncer loses his job or even goes to jail if he crosses the line with one of the customers. In the classroom, many teachers are tempted to become emotionally engaged with the students. It is difficult for caring teachers to wait for the family court system and Department of Human Services to remove children from abusive situations. It is nearly impossible for teachers not to provide lunch for a child without one. But it is difficult to jump into an emotional ocean when you don’t know how to swim or where the life preservers are stored. Teachers at this stage may close their hearts to their students, saying that they must set boundaries so they don’t get absorbed into the students’ trauma and drama. Helle (1991) suggests that such distancing “conforms to expectations of what external authority sounds like” (p. 54). When their internal moral voice sounds like external authority it may be easier for teachers to remove emotion from the classroom decision making process.

The other way of approaching procedural knowledge is through connectedness. Connected knowers work from empathy to develop an understanding of another person’s perspective. Belenky et al. (1997) state that the ability to gain experience and knowledge

by understanding another person's perspective is easier for women than for men. Believing in the value of another person's experiences feels real to women because it reveals truth deemed valuable because it is "personal, particular, and grounded in firsthand experience" (p. 113). In a similar manner, teachers are reluctant to participate in professional development offered by those who do not have classroom teaching experience.

Belenky et al. (1997) found that while many women find seeking the separate knowing of experience or the connected knowing of understanding other's perspectives to continue to be desirable, others eventually buck the label of "selfish" (p. 129) and begin the process of "sorting out the pieces of self and of searching for a unique and authentic voice" (p.137). This is a constructivist perspective where "the knower is an intimate part of the known" (p. 138). Women at this level find constantly re-evaluating their own knowledge and assumptions about knowledge as necessary and refreshing as a deep drink of fresh, cold water. They are passionate about their knowing and use "connected 'passionate' knowing as the predominant mode for understanding" (p. 141). The ability to engage in "real talk", to engage in thoughtful and thought-filled conversations allows women to cycle back to the role of caregiver through the commitment and action of what Freire termed conscientization and praxis. I am not sure that today's test-driving school climate lends itself to the development of this final level. On the other hand, writers resisting the current trends of educational reform (F. Smith, 2003; Garan, 2004; Sarason, 2004, and many others) as well as the impact of high-stakes testing on actual children in actual classrooms have begun to encourage school system administrators like Sisney (2007) to write:

“‘No Child Left Behind’ has produced ‘good’ lists of schools and ‘bad’ lists of schools; kind of like a scoreboard during an athletic event. I want you to know though that I don’t particularly care what the numbers say on the NCLB scoreboard. What I do care about is how this game is played and what life enhancing skills are being taught to our students on the playing field, which in education are our classrooms” (p. 3).

Belenky et al. (1997) also found distinctive family patterns as markers of the different ways of knowing. Interview questions focused on familial rules for speaking and listening, parental roles, and parental teaching styles as well as descriptions of feelings and intimacies shared by family members and descriptions of the style, form, and content of conversations (pp. 156-157).

When we reflect over our lives and tell our stories, we decide how much of ourselves to admit, how much to reveal. We can use our stories as “the masks through which we can be seen, and with every telling we stop the flood and swirl of thought so someone can get a glimpse of us, and maybe catch us if they can.” (Grumet, 1991, p. 69). But we cannot bring our stories to life without creativity and imagination, imagination grounded in self-knowledge (Wetherell, 1991). Wetherell (1991) also states:

Imagination plays a central role in the formation of the self, including its narrative structure. It is imagination that enables us to ask the “what if” and “as if” questions that can guide our explorations of human events and actions of the past and our sense of possibilities for the present and future. (p. 88)

We connect our creativity and imagination to our stories as we seek meaning within the stories of our lives. The narrative process, therefore, connects knowing and becomes a connected medium for knowing – a manifestation of an intimate relationship between the knower and the known (Helle, 1991). As we come to know ourselves through our stories, we situate ourselves in time and space, in form and structure, and in knowing.

Stories are also a way of claiming power. Belenky et al. (1997) discuss ways women claim power through the stories they tell. One pertinent finding identified the differences between the ways women and men respond to authority figures. According to Belenky et al. (1997), previous studies of men responses to authority figures found that men identify with authority figures and align themselves in with those in authority against those not in authority who are seen as others who are alien, illegitimate, and wrong (see also Perry, 1970). Women, on the other hand, are “awed by but identified less with authorities than did Perry’s men” (p. 44). Belenky et al. (1997) also reported that in most studies concerning language dominance, women do a majority of the listening and men do a majority of the talking. Taken together, these two results suggest that while women may not consciously model their behavior after the male authority figures in their lives, neither do they put forward views different from men, views that men might need to hear. Grumet (1991) states that discourse tradition “understands storytelling as a negotiation of power” (p. 68). In education where a majority of the teachers are women, this might result in the most frequently repeated stories, education’s grand narrative, being heavily loaded with male stories and male power and possibly unrelated to the realities of the classroom. By writing their stories, teachers of both gender may gain power because, as Makler (1991) says: “The power of writing a

narrative lies in the ordering of the experience of others, in tracing connections between cause and consequences, continuity and change” (p. 46).

Narratives are power-filled because they are the ways history is reported and repeated. As an illustration, because the winners write history, historians assert their authority by emphasizing particular events and particular interpretations of those events (Tappan & Brown, 1991). When applied to the individual, Tappan and Brown (1991) suggest that the inclusion of moral perspective as a legitimizing force distinguishes historical narrative from a simple listing of events in temporal sequence. Accordingly the authors suggest, it is not only the ordering of events that establishes the authority of a narrative, but also the inclusion of a moral perspective that adds the power of truth to a story.

In addition, stories are a way of providing sustenance and healing, “an ancient form of nurturance” (Cooper, 1991, p. 104). The personal knowledge embedded in our stories helps us cope, problem solve and take action (Grumet, 1991). The entire health care industry is based upon the idea that humans require caring to heal both physical and mental damage. Noddings (1984) insists that reciprocity must be present in a caring relation (see also Cooper, 1991). Telling and receiving stories establishes a caring relation between two people, even if time and space separate them, or perhaps they never meet. If this were not so, there would not be words inside greeting cards. Writing one’s own story can be a way to care for oneself because honest stories, even if painful, can relieve or heal that pain (Cooper, 1991). Because teachers, particularly female teachers, often maintain a sense of self-worth by giving to others despite a lack of economic rewards, they often give of themselves until they are emotionally depleted (Cooper,

1991). Writing and/or telling the stories of our lives counteracts such depletion (Cooper, 1991). The acts of telling and receiving stories have the potential to augment the healing process.

Finally, stories are a way of changing people's lives. Children use their tremendous powers of imagination to create and recreate play worlds all day long. Adults can choose to do the same, using stories to (re)describe the world (Ricoeur, cited in Witherell & Noddings, 1991). But we must be carefully selective of the ways we choose to restory ourselves. The futures we imagine for ourselves determine, in part, how we view current events (Pagano, 1991). To change our lives and those of others, we must examine our current stories carefully. It is "Only through meaningful work reflexively reconstituted that we can invent ourselves in stories powered with an intellectual and moral passion strong enough to empower others" (p. 193). If we are, as Grumet (1991) states, at least somewhat composed of the stories we tell, then we must recognize that the power struggles created in narratives and through the narrative process have to do as much with what we believe to be real as with what society defines as reality.

Teacher Narratives

Teachers' stories have power for all of the reasons listed above and for several additional reasons specific to education: Teachers' stories represent the world of school to society. They help construct preservice teachers' views of pedagogy and the new teachers' reality of the school. Teacher narratives produce scaffolding from which teachers construct their own personal and professional identities. This section explores teachers' stories in terms of these reasons.

Representing the Educational World to Society

Teachers' stories have power as part of the collective culture of schools and education. Stories are both performance and verbal art (Sunstein, 2000). Like a play, the teachers' stories transport the listener into a different world and subsequently transform the listener's world long after the performance. As teachers read and reread their own stories during the creation process, the performance aspect of these narratives enables teachers to examine their teaching publicly in a collaborative learning space (Barone, 1997; Diamond, 1993; Elbaz-Luwisch, 2002; Estola & Elbaz-Luwisch, 2003; Olson, 1995; Shank, 2006; Webb & Blond, 1995). Shank (2006) found this collaborative learning space to be based on "trust, validation, collegiality, authenticity, and open doubt" (p. 712). Golombek and Johnson (2004) posit that when teachers write the stories of their experiences, they create a temporary other within themselves. The mediational space of teacher narrative allows the teacher to step back and ask questions, giving voice through externalized understandings to previously inaccessible inner dialogue and creating an ever changing zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986) that fosters personal and professional growth (Golombek & Johnson, 2004). Diamond (1993) expanded on this by using autobiography to reclaim his first person voice in preference to his third person, academic voice, when telling the story of changes in his pedagogy.

Teachers' narratives are handed down from in-service teachers to preservice teachers through oral recitation in faculty workrooms, through printed media in the form of teachers' autobiographies and fiction about teachers, and through movies and television. In the same way that we recognize our name as we are called by a friend

while crossing a street, those who identify themselves as teachers-to-be “hear” themselves addressed by the stories of teacher identity available from practicing teachers and through media and culture (Ritchie & Wilson, 2000). The memories of real and media teachers are filtered through each person’s “personal histories, their personalities, and culturally inscribed desires” (Ritchie & Wilson, 2000, p. 36) and form the basis for decisions about a career in education (Lightfoot, 1983) and the ways individuals perceive teaching and kinds of teachers they become (Ritchie & Wilson, 2000).

The stories about teaching often found in the media create flat caricatures ill suited to representing the vast difficulty and complexity of teachers’ lives (Lightfoot, 1983). Several authors (Boragina, 2003; Nelson, 1993; Tan, 2000; Underwood, 1992) each explore the images of teachers in popular film and print culture. Such caricatures present a dichotomy of the “good teacher” as a self-sacrificing warrior, “dedicated, creative, caring and valiant” (Ritchie & Wilson, 2000, p. 34) and poor teachers as inept, burnt-out victims of changes in society, lack of support from administrators and parents, and increasing burdensome exterior controls. Neither of these visions is able to capture teachers as complete individuals connected to their classrooms (Ritchie & Wilson, 2000). Few teachers equate themselves with either end of the spectrum, yet their accidental apprenticeship (Ritchie & Wilson, 2000) constantly and consistently provided reinforcement of these cultural models. Teachers who tell their own stories sustain both their uniqueness and their growing awareness as members of society rather than simply as actors portraying culturally scripted roles.

Freire (1986) described the process of conscientization as learning and knowing through reflection and action. By naming (reflecting) and narrating (action) their stories

teachers produce the themes of their lives and their work, the foundation for conscientization. The action of the narrative “is a form of interpretation analyzing, and finding meaning” (Ritchie & Wilson, 2000, p. 23) and becomes a way to find silences and tensions. Webb and Blond (1995) discuss teacher knowing as embodied in their stories of caring. Autobiographical writing can lift these stories of caring relation from the background of a teacher’s daily life to the foreground of consciousness where they can be reflected upon. When teachers reflect on their own stories, they come to see who they are, what they do, and their place in the larger world.

Construction of Teachers’ Pedagogy

A teacher’s pedagogy may be compared to a photo mosaic in which each piece of the larger picture is itself a complete photo. Seen up close, each photo has a unique subject and a distinctive style. Seen from a distance, the individual photos merge into a larger portrait. During many pre-service undergraduate classes and later, during in-service training, teachers are told what to do in the classroom. Each class provides the specific teaching methodologies and background knowledge that form one or more squares of the teaching mosaic. Using the idea of recursion (Wang, 2005), the researcher can imagine looking inside each single photo mosaic tile to reveal an additional layer of detail: the experiences where knowledge is created by but is not separate from the knower (Dewey & Bentley, 1949). Such peering within each layer continues to include increasingly fine details. Taken together and seen from a distance, each square of the mosaic comprises a portion of the teacher’s pedagogy, the portion concerning teachers’ roles.

Webster defines role as “a part or character that an actor plays in a performance, or a function or office assumed by someone” (Guralnik, 1984, p. 1233). A pedagogical mosaic could be a one-dimensional work of art focusing entirely on teachers’ roles, but teachers operate in many dimensions. More than just a list of roles, a pedagogical mosaic is a multi-dimensional portrait of the teacher’s actions, the knowledge the teacher constructs through experience (Olson, 1995), and the teacher’s beliefs. Each of these dimensions is shaped and reshaped over time through experience by the qualities of the experience itself and our own conceptual structures (Eisner, 1988; see also Gallagher & Stenberg, 2002). Teachers are more than the actions they perform, the knowledge they claim, or the beliefs by which they act because “teaching is not a problem to be solved but a reality to be lived” (Trewin, 1996, p. 10). Therefore, rather than a flat, lifeless two-dimensional work, a pedagogical mosaic can be envisioned as a photo mosaic sculpture, layered and nuanced, constantly under construction, composed of a multitude of individual tiles set into an matrix shimmering with energy; tiles which may at any time be removed, re-placed or recreated.

In general, teachers are encouraged to attend to the individual bits of the mosaic. Appropriate actions for teachers are often found in the form of lists in teachers’ contracts (Elk Island, 1996). The verbs providing, promoting, encouraging, evaluating, maintaining, supporting, adhering to, encouraging and engendering begin these statements of the roles teachers should play in the classroom and, sometimes, in the community. These words are supposed to help teachers develop their teaching techniques, to improve their individual mosaic tiles. Teaching manuals are filled with tips, techniques, and even scripted lessons, reducing or removing the need for teachers to

think about how to teach and to reflect upon the learning process. While teachers are often encouraged to leave the style and shape of their overall mosaic to professional curriculum writers, the process of teacher narratives resists a forced march toward conformity (Munro, 1996) and fosters teachers' professional growth (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2002).

Apple (1982) and Giroux (1983) argue that education is part of an all-encompassing hegemonic social narrative that values positivist knowledge, teaching and learning (see also Ritchie & Wilson, 2000). Such pedagogy generally does not treat learning as a process of construction and therefore does not create new knowledge. To stay with the mosaic analogy, the kinds of mosaics teachers create consistently employ the same mosaic tiles and design elements and therefore strongly resemble each other. Stories are a way for teachers to resist the boundaries established for them by others, to create new mosaics and even three-dimensional art. Ritchie and Wilson (2000) found that preservice teachers who wrote the stories of their educational backgrounds were able to articulate and shape their understanding about themselves as teachers and their emerging pedagogy, discovering teacher development in writing and collaborative reflection (Ritchie & Wilson, 2000). Because stories are used both to teach and resist tradition (Sunstein, 2000), teachers become more than their roles when they tell their stories. Teachers tell the stories of their mosaic tiles, and in telling the stories, rearrange the tiles into new patterns, changing themselves as they reshape their pedagogical sculptures.

Construction of Teachers' Personal and Professional Identities

Print media, television, movies and popular culture have produced narratives that are both confusing and contradictory and often “construct teachers’ identities and practices in ways that subvert their real potential to develop as teachers, diminishing their authority and undermining potentially powerful concepts of teaching, literacy and selfhood” (Ritchie & Wilson, 2000, p. 19). Shank (2006) found that telling stories about teaching and learning resisted such artificially constructed identities by helping teachers connect individual classrooms, teachers and students with public educational issues (see also R. Smith, 1990). Elbaz-Luwisch (2002) used a writing workshop as a method of inquiry that allowed participants to story their teaching selves. Through the writing workshop, participants explored their writing and their reasons for writing, including the pleasure of creating their narratives and the need to express the feelings they held within. These teachers “became” as they wrote, fully engaged in all their senses and emotionally and cognitively united (see also Golombek & Johnson, 2004).

If learning to teach is a socially mediated activity (Golombek & Johnson, 2004), then bringing personal and professional development into dialogue affords teachers the opportunity to write and rewrite their stories. Teachers also story and restory themselves to “resist and revise the scripting narratives of the culture” (Ritchie & Wilson, 2000, p. 1) as well as to write new personal and professional stories. Teachers’ stories are autobiographical and characterized by narrative, constructivistic, contextualistic, interactionistic and dynamic features (Kelchtermans, 1993). Analysis of ten experienced teachers revealed themes of concern with job stability and vulnerability (Kelchtermans, 1993). Such findings led Ritchie and Wilson (2000) to suggest that professional and personal identity development are inextricably intertwined. In general, when people tell

their stories they select the events that help them make sense of their jumbled experiences, thus constructing the plot of their lives (Pavanko & Lantolf, 2000, in Golombek & Johnson, 2004). In education, storytelling works as an intentional act, with teachers and students purposefully choosing those stories that cement connections between them and academic achievement (Cardwell, 2002).

The literature explores one important caveat regarding teacher narratives as research methodology. Although it is commonly written that multiple ideologies “script teachers into their personal and professional identities” (Ritchie & Wilson, 2000, p. 1), Convery (1999) and Diamond (1993) both suggest that teachers may not be able to write about the process of the creation of their identities with enough distance. Diamond (1993), while encouraging teachers to write autobiographically, also cautions that written, published voices risk impersonation and silencing. On the other hand he reminds the reader that once teachers have accomplished the writing process, their voices are protected and privileged. Convery (1999) takes this argument further, stating that while teachers use opportunities to describe themselves as a chance to reconstruct their identities (p. 137), such reconstruction tends to cast the teacher in a positive light, either as an educational hero or as a victim of administrative abuse. Such narratives serve to construct a teacher’s identity in such a way as to be unassailable, sometimes to the detriment of the students. Convery (1999) even goes so far as to suggest that researchers may become bound up in the collaborative relationships with teachers that put at risk the truthfulness of the researchers’ conclusions. In such a case, the research is compromised by the inability to triangulate the story’s events against contemporary landmarks because “the story has been deliberately contextualized in relation to external events” (p. 138).

As a result, the sacred story of education is bolstered by yet another heroic myth of teaching because the researcher is never able to challenge and disrupt what may have once been a teacher's cover story

Summary

Witherell (1991) finds two reasons to use narratives in researching teaching. First, humans are constantly writing their autobiographies, telling and retelling their stories to themselves and to others while L. Smith (2001) suggests that teachers' life histories are key to understanding classroom practice. Stories allow individuals to integrate value, purpose and meaning into a structure or shape for their lives, past, present and future as "the coherence of self is grounded in its narrative structure" (Witherell, 1991, p. 92). Second, it is through stories that an individual can imagine a future and imagine a self in that future. Stories can help provide teachers with fertile ground for reflecting on practice and pedagogical possibilities (Shank, 2006). Furthermore, "story and metaphor provide a form of educational encounter that renders us human and frees the moral imagination" (Witherell, 1991, p. 94). Although teachers should be aware of the problems of their uncontested, storied voices, the stories they tell have the potential to represent not only what has happened, but of what might be.

Currere

Introduction

Currerre is a Latin word meaning to run and is the root word for the word curriculum. Pinar uses *currere* as an active verb for creating and running the curriculum course (Pinar & Grumet, 1976). *Currere* is not the forms and structures of the curriculum, the nuts and bolts of worksheets and books, but rather how the individual

reacts and interacts with those experiences that *currere* seeks to divulge. The experience of education is central; therefore “*currere* is a strategy devised to disclose this experience, so that we may see more of it and see more clearly” (Pinar & Grumet, 1976, vii). *Currere* is not about intentions only, nor is it about general processes or artifacts. These are all objects, individual things whereas *currere* is a form that is “distinctly human” (p. 84). Rather than a record of a person’s passage through education, an assignment to check off as completed, *currere* is “a source of energy and direction for the journey” (p. 111). To understand *currere* is to understand its origins in philosophy.

The Foundations of Currere

The theoretical roots of *currere* begin with a discussion of the nature of reality (ontology) and how reality is known (epistemology) (Palmer, 1983). Pinar & Grumet (1976) locate this discussion within an individual’s experience, and use the German term, *Lebenswelt*, to indicated lived experiences in a life-world; (i.e., more than just one experience, a system of being through experiencing). If experience is “one’s living through of one’s life” (Pinar & Grumet, 1976, p. 18), one of the basic tensions of ontology is whether something must be experienced first-hand to have meaning or if an individual can extract and share the essence of an experience through a process called reduction. A variety of philosophers’ views are germane to this discussion. First, Husserl (1962, 1970, in Pinar & Grumet, 1976) urged “mental discipline of abstention from the natural attitude” (p. 42) in order to achieve the distancing that is necessary to examine oneself. Husserl believed that bracketing the infinite possible experiences off into an *epoche* allows an individual to “go through the particular to the general in order to grasp the essential structures of consciousness and the world” (p. 43). If a person is able to

bracket experiences and respond to the world independently of prior experiences, does that person make decisions based solely on intuition? Heidegger, on the other hand, attributed consciousness to the entire world and “rejected any dualism that distinguishes consciousness from objects” (p. 43). For Heidegger, *dasein*, being-in-the-world, was the only domain of consciousness (p. 43). *Dasein* implies using prior experiences to frame current situations, a view that negates intuition. Merleau-Ponty (1962, 1963, in Pinar & Grumet, 1976) felt that while an individual could extract the essence from an experience and bracket it off into an epoch it “need not divert our attention from being-in-the-world” (p. 43), a sort of compromise to both views. Kierkegaard (in Pinar & Grumet, 1976), more interested in knowledge of the world than action in the world, held a view that reality has infinite possibilities and that social systems were “ridiculous structures erected in fear to protect the citizen from the anguish of infinite possibility and the terror of death” (p. 43). Sartre and Nietzsche (Pinar & Grumet, 1976), however, responded differently to the question of reality. While Nietzsche celebrated the freedom of man’s will (p. 43), Sartre wished to “liberate the individual from his history in order to have him realize his innate freedom, first leaps into nothingness, then in action in the world” (p. 45). Nietzsche, Sartre and Kierkegaard distinguished intuition from society’s structures of doctrine, morals and institution. It is against the backdrop of these tensions that Pinar and Grumet (1976) delineated their method of educational autobiography known as *currere*.

Currere as a Research Methodology

Currere, defined in the Latin, is “the running of the course. The course most broadly is our lives, in schools and out, and the running, is our experience of our lives” (Pinar & Grumet, 1976, p. 18). To discover the course, the participant must re-

experience life through reflection and self-representation. Autobiography is one way to discover and recover personal perspectives. The autobiographical process of *currere* “reveals self-as-object through reflective self-representations” creating “self-as-place” (p. 69) while describing how the individual acted completes the third interdependent profile of the self, “self-as agent” (p. 69). Together these establish the physical, emotional and intellectual self who has been educated and who educates others. The process of *currere* allows the individual to “articulate the relationship of curriculum to this dynamic self-system” (p. 69). *Currere* does not attempt to resolve the tensions between conscious and unconscious, individuality and humanity, but rather uses these tensions to fuel continuous development of self and community (Pinar & Grumet, 1976).

Summary

Because our lives tend to be progressive, we say that we evolve. This evolution is education; it is the “synthesis of cognitive and psycho-social development” (Pinar & Grumet, 1976, p. 18). Teachers, like all others, are constantly evolving. The path of a teaching career may be short or long, influenced by the amount of mentoring and collegial interactions available to the teacher and dependent upon salary, administrative support, and ways time is constructed by and for the teacher. The path of that evolution may be examined through teacher-research, narrative inquiry, and hermeneutics. One way the path may be revealed is through the structured autobiographical technique of *currere*. It is therefore time to turn to the use of *currere* in this research study.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Theoretical Basis

This study employs *currere*, a technique for constructing an educational autobiography. *Currere* is an interpretivist/constructionist methodology and assumes that individuals construct knowledge rather than discover it. In *currere*, knowledge is constructed by the participants through a series of structured and free – association writings over a period of time. In this study, the researcher took an emic position by participating in the *currere* process alongside the subjects.

Pinar and Grumet (1976) developed *currere* as a way to focus on the “educational experience of the individual as reported by the individual” (Doerr, 2000). *Currere* is grounded in psychiatry, psychoanalysis, existentialism and phenomenology. This method of creating an educational autobiography consists of four steps. First, the participant regresses back in time and describes past events. Next, the participant progresses forward and describes an imagined future. Then, the participant analyzes the writings from the first two stages as well as examining the present. Finally, the participant synthesizes all of the writings in terms of a larger sociological or political picture. This can be a demanding task; therefore, this study was constructed so that the participants met as a group to provide mutual encouragement and support.

Participants

Sampling

This study took place from October 2006 through February 2007. Participants were to be selected using snowball sampling (Ostrander, 1984; Patton, 2004). Snowball sampling is a purposeful sampling approach used to locate “information-rich key informants or critical cases” (p. 237). For this reason, the researcher initially approached all of the elementary principals in her school district for expert recommendations and approximately 30 individual elementary teachers (elementary buildings in this district do not have layers of administration such as lead teachers). Although no one referred another person for the study, five teachers from the researcher’s elementary school agreed to participate in the study. The sampling technique, therefore, was more one of convenience than one of purposeful sampling, but resulted in a final group of six participants including the researcher that was a typical case of the population of this school district’s experienced elementary teachers (Patton, 2002).

Participants in this study were experienced white, female teachers with at least 8 years of classroom teaching experience (Ingersol, 2002; Strong, 2005a, 2005b) who were at what was self-described as a turning point or crossroads in their professional careers. In pre-group discussions they described themselves as “unsettled”, “unhappy”, and “unsure” about their current teaching position. They were able to devote at least sixty minutes once a week to a group meeting as well as time outside of the meeting for writing. The participants that volunteered to be in the study ranged in age from 42 to 58 and ranged in experience from 8 years to more than 30 years. Additionally, all the participants self-reported both dissatisfaction with one or more aspects of their

professional career decisions and the possibility of leaving the classroom for another career or early retirement. All participants agreed to participate in the entire process although each was aware of one or more meetings that would have to be missed for outside commitments or health reasons.

Compensation

Participants were not monetarily rewarded for their participation, but because group meetings took place immediately after school, in the researcher's classroom and at one participant's home, refreshments were provided. The major benefit to the participants was the opportunity to reflect back upon their teaching careers, project forward a direction for the future, and to reframe their personal narratives in light of this reflection process.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality of participants was maintained through three basic methods. First, participants chose a pseudonym and were referred to in all researcher-generated text by those pseudonyms. Second, all materials pertaining to this study were placed in a locked cabinet at the locked home office of the researcher. Finally, as part of the first group meeting, the group discussed and agreed to maintain confidentiality regarding what was said during group meetings.

Process

Overview

Participants met as a group 14 times from October 2006 through February 2007 and wrote both during group meetings (quick writes) and outside of group (*currere* writing). Descriptions of the quick write process and group meetings are below. Next

there is a detailed description of out-of-group, individual, *currere* writing. Then there is a description of the hermeneutic cycles that occurred for the researcher and the participants. Finally, a detailed example of data collection and analysis illustrates how themes of the participants' writings were identified and analyzed.

Quick Writes and Group Meetings

During the quick writes, participants wrote short responses to one of four different quick write prompts during the first few minutes of the group meeting (see Appendix A). The purpose of this writing was two-fold: first, the writing helped refocus the participants from classroom concerns to thoughtful reflection of their personal and professional lives. Secondly, the prompts were designed to help participants discuss the process of autobiographical writing using *currere*, as well as to allow the researcher insight into the participants' reasons for working through this process. The four quick write prompts were used a total of three times each, and were collected each week for analysis, for a total of twelve sets of quick write data. The researcher participated in the quick write process. After each quick write, participants discussed their content of their quick write and their experiences writing their individual educational autobiographies. An explanation of the group meetings follows.

The purpose of the hour-long group meetings was to build collegiality and community necessary for effective self-reflection (Eisner, 1998; L. Smith, 2001). The meetings were held in the researcher's classroom and at one participant's house, both places convenient to the participants. The researcher took field notes during the meetings. In addition, the researcher recorded general impressions of the sessions and the

participants after each meeting in an effort to contextualize the discussions recorded in the field notes. These field notes and reflections were included in the data to be analyzed.

Each session began with a quick write that was collected at the end of the session. The quick write session was followed by discussion of the content of the quick write. Participants were also encouraged to discuss the content and process of previous week's out-of group individual *currere* writing, writing in general, and all of their experience of the writing process. The researcher took notes during the discussion. The *currere* writing prompt for the next week's out-of group, individual, *currere* writing (a specific *currere* prompt for each successive step in the *currere* process) was distributed at the end of each session (see Appendix B). In group, quick write prompts and out-of-group, independent, *currere* prompts were suggested by the work of Doerr (2000, 2004) and L. Smith (2001) as well as Pinar & Grumet (1976).

Currere writing

Participants wrote on their own time, out of group (individual educational autobiographies using the structured system of *currere*). A description of the *currere* writing prompts for each part of the *currere* writing process follows.

During October, participants wrote in response to the regressive stage of *currere*, looking back over their educational lives from pre-school or early school years. During each meeting in October the group discussed their education, beginning with their early days in pre-school or Kindergarten. Outside-of-group, independent, *currere* prompts used to stimulate outside writing included suggestions to reflect back over elementary and secondary education to identify teachers that helped or hindered. Other *currere* prompts suggested reflecting over the first few years of teaching to identify positive and negative

experiences with children and colleagues as well as a final prompt requesting the participant to identify changes in practice over and as well as those children and adults who helped or hindered classroom work. A complete list of these prompts is included in Appendix B. Participants submitted a final draft of their four weeks of regressive writings during the first meeting in November.

During November and December, participants were asked to write in response to the progressive stage of *currere*. The progressive stage asks participants to imagine where they will be and what they will be doing in the future. During the progressive stage, participants were given a new out-of-group, independent, *currere* writing prompt each week for four weeks. Participants were asked to submit a final draft of their progressive writings in January when they returned from Winter Break. One *currere* prompt for the progressive stage asked participants to imagine they were the stars of their own television show about teaching and to describe that show. Another *currere* prompt suggested that the participant was about to receive an award for teaching and asked the participant to describe the award and the award ceremony. The final two *currere* prompts asked participants to imagine they were five years in the future and set new goals, and to imagine they were retiring and to write a letter to the principal or superintendent explaining why they were retiring, what they planned to do, and how education could be improved. The final meeting in December was held at the home of one of the group members who had recently had surgery. In the party-like atmosphere, the participants handed in the second stage of writing, relaxed, and enjoyed each other's company. Participants also wrote a quick write about the process of *currere* to that point and shared their stories of writing.

The first two stages of writing were returned to the participants at the first meeting in January. During January participants wrote to the analytic stage of *currere*, but held on to their final draft of that section. Since the analytic stage of *currere* calls for skills the group members may not have possessed, I introduced this analysis the first week of January by having the participants sort buttons. First, they sorted the buttons by physical characteristics. Then they sorted the buttons by a characteristic they identified that was not a physical characteristic. After the first January group meeting, the participants were asked to use a high lighter to mark on their first and second drafts to identify what they liked and disliked about their stories. The second week I demonstrated how to use note cards to sort ideas into groups much the same way that the participants had sorted the buttons the week prior (see Appendix C). Participants used writing and note card sorting over the next two weeks to generate the analytical stage of *currere*.

During February participants were asked to synthesize their *currere* writings, bringing together the pieces of their experiences and re-storying their lives in light of themes generated through their writing. Out-of-group, individual, *currere* prompts during synthesis asked participants to identify ways they were unique and special as well as to list what they learned about themselves and what was confirmed through their writing. They were also prompted to select a story to view through a different lens and to rewrite that story, as well as to set specific future goals and time lines. Finally, participants were asked to reflect individually over the entire autobiographical process and identify the big ideas of their lives, their new decisions, and their new stories. This final *currere* draft was collected at a celebration meeting on the last Wednesday in

February. At this meeting the group discussed the process of *currere* as well as making suggestions for ways to improve the process for a future group.

Approximately two months later (May 2007) the group met for one last time. A week prior to that meeting, participants had been given two documents to check for accuracy, and these were returned to the researcher at the last meeting. The first document was a the summary of the group's quick write process. Each group member was also given a copy of the analysis of her individual autobiography. Group members returned these documents with corrections at the final May meeting. The culminating work of the group was reading the poem "I am a Teacher" (see page 170) which had been created by the researcher from participants' writings and from quotes from the researcher's field notes. Participants read only those lines they felt applied to them. The result was recorded on audio tape.

Hermeneutic Cycle

There are four basic principles for hermeneutic research design (Patton, 2002). First, the researcher strives to understand a human product or act by interpreting a text. The method for doing this interpretation was as described above. Secondly, the researcher attempts to ground all interpretation in tradition; in this case, the tradition of teacher narratives was used. The process of *currere* produces multi-layered, educational autobiographies. The hermeneutic cycle could have been limited to the texts created during group meetings. By analyzing the educational autobiographies created by the group members as part of the hermeneutic cycle, the researcher was able to view the group members as three-dimensional individuals rather than simply as two-dimensional composites of their roles as teachers. Third, to form interpretations, the researcher is

required to be open to questioning the text. By continuously rereading and reflecting upon the texts, questions were formed, then checked across the texts. Finally, the researcher's reality shapes the interpretation of the text. The limitations implied in this final statement are outlined later in this chapter.

A graphic representation of the hermeneutic cycles of the researcher and the participants is found in Figure 1. Participants engaged in quick write sessions. These

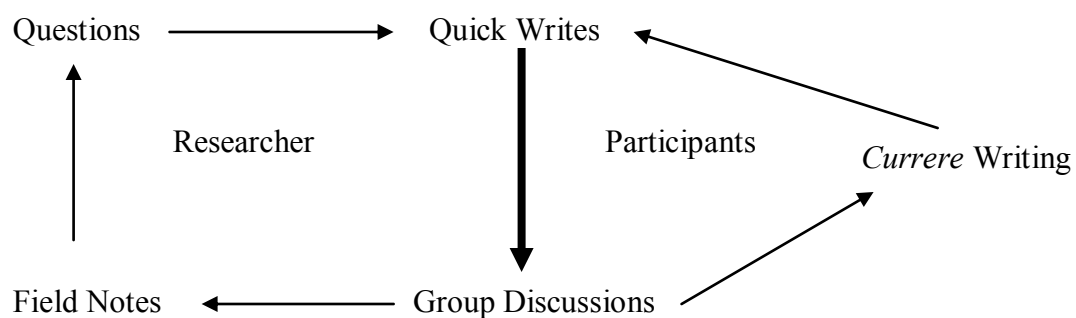


Figure 1. Hermeneutic cycles of participants and researcher. Researcher's and participants' hermeneutic cycles overlap at the Quick Writes and Group Discussions areas as marked by the darker arrow.

reflective writing sessions were immediately followed by group discussions. Group discussions focused on the *currere* writings and the process of creating these writings. Individuals' reflections during group discussions plus new *currere* writing prompts led to further *currere* writings. In a similar manner, as the researcher I participated in the quick writes and group discussions. During the discussions I took notes, attempting to simultaneously capture as many contextualized quotes as possible while maintaining confidentiality by abbreviating stories participants found too revealing (i.e., the Las Vegas Rule – what happens in the group stays in the group). In the evenings after the group meetings, I wrote up my field notes in a more complete form while converting

them from handwritten to typewritten form. While writing up these notes, I added my impressions, marked by [], and more involved reflections and questions marked by { }, to the participant data. As an example of this process, in the text that follows I first give an example of the data from quick writes and annotated field notes. In the next section, I use the Bubble's data from this group meeting, as well as portions of her autobiography, to illustrate how the data was analyzed.

The January 24, 2007 meeting came after a week of school break due to an ice storm. The January 10th meeting had included the *currere* writing prompt:

As you reread your writing, what parts are you drawn to? What parts do you wish you had done differently? Which experiences are you proud of? Which experiences make you sad? Which experiences make you angry? Which experiences leave you with mixed feelings? What decisions do you make today that are influenced by your past? How are decisions you make today influenced by what you hope for your future?

Due to the storm, the participants had two weeks to work on their *currere* writing for the next meeting, assuming they took the prompt and their writings home before the storm. Charlotte and Elaine Russell left the *currere* prompt at school and did not have the opportunity to write during the storm. The January 24th quick write prompt, provided in written form to the participants, was designed to help participants describe how they responded to the previous *currere* prompt. Writing to this prompt met with a little bit of resistance as participants struggled with the time gap between sessions, remembering what they had written, and reflecting upon how they felt about their writing. After a short discussion of the *currere* assignment I repeated the quick write prompt:

Two weeks ago you were asked to read over what you had already written in your autobiographies. You were asked to highlight the parts that seem to come up over and over again, or that you thought were important. If you thought of additional things you wanted to say, you were asked to write them into the text or add them to the margins. In what ways did your writing this week challenge you?"

Bubbles responded:

Even though this was the simplest thing to do, I kept putting it off – not knowing why. As I got into it I realized that what I feared was something coming out that I didn't want to deal with or that I didn't like about myself.

The thing that came out most is that I have planned my life a little too much too long. The other thing that came out was Yuck! At how often I referred to my dreams – my passion as being teaching – gets sickening.

Charlotte wrote:

I suppose the writing would have challenged me to think more, and do more editing (had I done the assignment). Now the only thing I know that I do over and over is not take charge. I'm kind of "Live and let Live!" and just letting people do whatever sometimes gets me in trouble!

Elaine Russell explained:

I didn't have time to do the activity because I left my papers at school over the ice storm week, and otherwise haven't had time. I truly am not looking forward to re-reading everything because some of it was very emotionally driven and I've already re-lived it once! I'll try to finish what I started, however.

Madeline stated:

This work has been challenging by having to think deeply into my past. Talking/writing about myself has always been difficult because I was raised with the idea that it is considered bragging which is not polite. It was also a challenge to think about the future because I have no burning passion or desire to be anything "special".

As Madam Curie, I clarified:

While I didn't do the *currere* writing assignment, I do remember reviewing my *currere* writings during a graduate class. I remember that going back through the past again was less painful. It was easy to see themes of pleasing, power and family coming from both the regression and the progression. I remember that the writing itself, making notes and marginal notations, was more difficult. Other than single words like "hmm" and "wow", my comments about my own writing were limited.

Teiko concluded:

The work was challenging in the way reoccurring themes slapped me in the face. I have few expectations for the educational system. I believe in the children, but not in the process. Pride in my own successes is minimal, because I do not believe in the evaluation or the evaluator. Teaching has intrinsic value for me. I cannot understand the game.

The annotated and expanded field notes from the group discussion are below.

Elaine Russell read her quick write, [a bit hesitantly, and paused, looking up and around the group. It appeared as though she was waiting for a response before she added any additional thoughts.] Madeline smiled encouragingly at Elaine, then commented:

"I highlighted on my writing, but I didn't write in the margins. Then I wrote more at the end of the stuff I had written."

Elaine and the rest of the group nodded at Madeline. Madeline then read her quick write, going on to explain about her current health challenges. Bubbles asked if Madeline would talk a little more about her health challenges. Madeline repeated what she had said before. Bubbles responded, "I wrote basically the same thing." [I found this puzzling later when I discovered that Bubbles had not written about her health at all during the quick write.]

Elaine Russell continued the discussion, relating physical health to mental well being, "When I feel good, I feel better about myself." [The group discussion used

personal anecdotes to link physical well being to happiness in the classroom.] {Estola & Elbaz-Luwisch (2003) discuss body as a thing connected to knowing and learning. I think that most American teachers think of body as something to be controlled so that the mind can be assessed and filled. Perhaps they think of body as something to be harnessed, as if it is a draft animal – dumb brute to be driven forward toward a goal. Teachers and pupils demonstrate power by what they do with their bodies, who gets attention and when, what is ignored and by whom. “Teachers use their bodies, voices and gaze to create routines which organize classroom work” (p. 712). Furthermore, the body of a teacher can know teaching as a physical labor. Participants in this group sit in their chairs at the beginning of each session, but I hesitate to use such a simple verb as sit to describe the exhausted collapse of their weary bodies into unyielding, student-sized chairs. The tale of the physical labor of teaching shows in this group of six (including the researcher) where one participant suffers from depression, three have immune disorders, one experiences debilitating glandular difficulties, and one had an substantial tumor removed the previous year. Another example of the embodiment of teaching is the perception of teachers by their pupils as attractive or not attractive. Not all of these perceptions are based on measurable physical characteristics, many are culturally based (for example, a teacher’s hairstyle and wardrobe may determine a student’s perception as well as whether the teacher uses a kind voice or strident tones. “Teacher’s body voices are simultaneously concrete and culturally bound” (p. 714). I wonder how much of these participants’ feelings of exclusion are based on their own perceptions of themselves and their bodies, perceptions that may have been formed in childhood. Are women teachers still competing against the popular girls of their youth?}

Bubbles added, "Losing weight would help me feel better." Teiko responded, "Me, too. I think that, too. But could it be that your joy lies outside the classroom? Could something outside influence your teaching?" [At this point, I thought Teiko was going to redirect the discussion into something more resistant or feminist. However, a simple nudge was not enough to make that happen.] {Teiko often leads the group into deeper thinking. Is this a function of her own quest for knowledge or is she trying to help group members to reflect on new levels? Perhaps this is just a natural skill she uses in her classroom on a daily basis. At times it feels like Teiko is constantly weighing and measuring what individuals say compared to what they have said in the past. I wonder how many of her musings become verbalized?}

Madeline cycled back to a previous theme, "My dad is so negative." However, this time she went on to add, "But yesterday he sent me an e-mail with one of those inspirational stories, What do Teachers Make? It made me feel good that he seems to be beginning to understand why I teach. I want to change my thinking about myself. I'm tired of always seeing the negative on my part." Teiko replied, "I never see you like that. You're always so upbeat." Teiko went on to tell a story in which she had gone to Madeline with information about ordering products from a catalogue for gifted children. According to the story, Madeline had initially refused the catalogue, claiming she wasn't a gifted teacher. Teiko said, "I'm always amazed at how smart you are and how much you don't realize it." {I believe Teiko's story was meant to demonstrate that Madeline puts herself down inappropriately.}

[Madeline seemed nonplused by Teiko's remarks and changed the subject.] "I just want this year to be over. Bubbles added, "That's the way I was last year." Elaine

Russell chimed in, “Me, too.” Charlotte said, “Did you get that e-mail from the principal? The same one Madeline got from her dad? I wrote the principal back and told her that if I won the lottery, I wouldn’t care what I made.” [Teiko tried again to move the conversation to different level, this time it worked.] “Did you ever think that there is another place for you in education?”

Madeline answered Teiko’s question: “I could be a counselor. But by the time I’d get finished with my National Board Certification money and get the counseling degree, who would want to hire a 55-year-old counselor?” The entire group responded with encouraging comments including: “You’d be surprised.” and “You should go for it.” Madeline sighed and said, “I just couldn’t get everything done with all the other stuff counselors do.” Elaine Russell countered, “I’m a regular classroom teacher, and I feel that way now.” Charlotte agreed. Bubbles moved the conversation back by asking, “I didn’t know you were interested in counseling. That’s kind of exciting. However, being a counselor is sort of lonely sometimes.” Madeline returned, “I know I do a lot of counseling in my room everyday, already.” Bubbles replied, “Every teacher does. I’m glad to hear that you’re counseling, too. I’ll come to you when I get frustrated.” [The group laughed appreciatively.]

Madeline went on to add, “I have to use counseling. Detention doesn’t work.”
{Based on other remarks, I believe Madeline was contrasting her style of discipline with that of other teachers who sometimes sent misbehaving children to lunch detention.}
[This could have been received as an insult, since Bubbles handles detention for the building. Rather than respond in a hurt or angry way, Bubbles chose to explain her perspective.] “I like being in there with the kids because we do get down to what is

bothering them sometimes.” [The conversation became sidetracked at this point while the group discussed recent plumbing problems caused by the ice storm that had been difficult for students and staff.] Charlotte summed it up nicely, “Sometimes when one kid has to go, everyone has to go.” [Charlotte went on to discuss a specific incident at length. The content of this story is summarized for clarity and confidentiality.] “I have one student who is very smart and argumentative. And he cries! He’s a second grader, and he cried to get his way! He is so loud he disturbs the other children.” Madeline commented, “How much teaching time is lost for the entire group when one child needs so much attention so often?” [Charlotte went on at length about problems with this specific child. The rest of the group nodded encouragingly.] {Charlotte seems to speak only when something is deeply troubling her. It frequently takes a while for her to talk her way to understanding her concerns.}

[While she had the group’s attention, Charlotte went on to read her quick write. After she read, she explained her writing to the group.] “The only thing I know is about taking charge. We had this test in college, the rabbit and the turtle. Guess which one I was.” Both Madeline and Elaine Russell responded, “The Turtle.” [Charlotte agreed, then went on to add more information about her difficulties in taking charge.] “For example, all this stuff with Accelerated Reader. It doesn’t really make any difference. But sometimes I just let things slide and that gets me in trouble. [Here Charlotte told a personal story illustrating that she is more comfortable letting her mother make decisions than she is in standing up for herself to others.] That’s what I see coming up in my writing. I don’t take charge and then it bites me in the hmmm. I should have a set of rules and stick to them, at school. I’d like to be more like Mrs. S. When she says

something she sticks to it. My mother was like me, but now she's speaking up. Like Dr. Phil says, you own part of the problem.”

[This was a long monologue. It was apparent that others wanted to add comments, but waited until Charlotte finished. Teiko spoke first.] “I agree with you on the part about your family, letting things be more relaxed. But kids need structure. However, gracious behavior is something everyone needs.” [Charlotte nodded, then switched back to discussing school.] “The class I have this year!” Betty responded, “There are some years like that.”

[Bubbles used the opportunity to segue into her own writing.] “Yeah, there are.” [She read her quick write. After she read, she looked around for encouragement. When no one jumped in immediately, Bubbles went on to expand on what she had read.] “I have planned my life down to every step. It didn't always work out the way I planned, but it did most of the time. I hope in the future I'm more relaxed about all this planning.” I asked, “So, going back over what you had written gave you some distance so you could come to this conclusion?” Bubbles answered, “Yes. And the illness thing came out in my writing. I don't want it to impact my life as much as it does.” Madeline responded, “It helped me when I found out that I wasn't alone. That other people have what I have. That I wasn't just making this all up in my mind.” [As the conversation moved toward health issues, Teiko had comments to add.] “It's the wrong time of time for me to be sick. This isn't what I wanted to do. I didn't want to focus on my illness like I've been forced to.” I responded, “Health issues bring up quality of life issues.” [The group nodded.] {Several researchers (Bertero & Elk, 1993; Dale, 1995) found health care professionals and their patients perceive a difference between the way quality of life is measured. This

may also be true when comparing teachers who are well and teachers with chronic illnesses.}

[Madeline reflected back over her recent past.] “I had a fabulous summer. I felt wonderful. So rested and refreshed. Then I got to school and things started to get worse almost immediately. And having that surgery hanging over my head all first semester made it hard to really get into what was happening in class. I was just too tired most of the time.” Teiko asked, “Do you ever imagine that you’re not teaching? I wouldn’t be happy. I think it is a lack of control that makes me unhappy. But who in the world has control?” Madeline answered, “While I was off, I was imagining teaching next year. It was like I had already given up on this year. I was already planning for net year.” Teiko said, “Isn’t planning for next year fun! I always like that.”

[At this point Elaine Russell shifted the conversation, perhaps in response to Teiko’s question about wanting to do something else besides teaching.] “One of the public libraries wants a librarian.” [Everyone encouraged her to try for the job.] Teiko takes this opportunity to read her own quick write after volunteering, “Summer’s only four months away!” [After reading, Teiko expanded on her writing.] I think pride is intrinsic. There are very few people who can give me an ‘atta boy’ that would mean something. On the whole, I respect teachers, but the system doesn’t give me much to applaud.” Elaine Russell responded, “So, are you stuck?” {I found it interesting that Teiko asked most of the leading questions during this meeting, but did not ask those questions of herself, at least out loud. Perhaps an individual’s experiences are too close and too personal for reflection ‘on the fly’. Perhaps it takes someone else, looking in from the outside, to put things into perspective. In this case, it took Elaine Russell,

asking the questions, to encourage Teiko to discuss her own writing.} “No,” Teiko went on, “I’m not stuck. But it’s not just this district, it’s education in the United states. We are asked to jump if its good for the kids. You know you’re not capable, yet you have to try.” Elaine Russell voiced her feelings about not being capable, “I care a lot about what other people think, so I’m constantly trying so hard to get everything right.” Madeline added, “I’m very concerned in how people perceive me.” [Madeline continued her statement by telling a story of deception and exclusion on the part of one of her former colleagues. A particularly difficult child did not enroll in school until mid-December. Madeline had more children in her class than one of the other teachers, but asked to have the difficult child in her classroom because that child had been on her original class list. Another motivating factor was the other teacher’s obvious dislike of the incoming child. Madeline reported that the other teacher made it clear to her that taking this child in her class would be a substantial imposition. Shortly after Madeline approached the principal about taking the child, the teacher with fewer children approached the principal and asked for the child to be placed in her class, stating that she would love to have the child. This teacher then came back to her grade level team and reported that she was going to take the difficult child rather than Madeline. Madeline reported that she felt left out of the decision making loop. Madeline felt excluded by the teacher and believed that the teacher had misrepresented her true feelings to the principal. Teiko closed the session with a remark.] “Since when do we get to pick who we get in our room?” [The group nodded and sighed. I reviewed the writing assignment for the next week, and the group disbanded.]

This set of quick write data and annotated field notes were typical of the data that were analyzed in addition to the individual autobiographies. A sample of this analysis, using this same data, follows in the next section.

Data Collection and Analysis

This study is based on constructionist epistemology – the premise that knowledge is not something to be discovered, but is created through interaction with others. The interaction in this study was between the researcher and the texts generated through the *currere* process. Each quick write was collected for analysis, as were the notes generated during the sessions by the researcher. Individual, informal question and answer sessions occurred in the hallways and common spaces of the school as participants had questions, and results of these meetings were recorded. Field notes were generated after each group meeting. Each participant’s final resulting work was collected for analysis. The texts generated by the participants were read through a post modern, feminist lens as part of the hermeneutic analysis. Narrative and hermeneutic analysis techniques, explained below, were used to create different perspectives on the participants, their writing, and the group interaction. The narratives were treated both as separate stories and as one text jointly created by the group. To achieve this effect, the texts were read continuously and simultaneously. Themes were tracked across the writings as well as isolated within each narrative. This process continued until no new themes were generated. The method used in collecting data was dubbed “recursive hermeneutics” (P. Brown, personal communication, January 28, 2005).

Speir (2000) used narrative inquiry to understand education through the researcher’s own educational story and those of ten participants. She created a dialogue

between participants about the story themes of educational issues, then analyzed the dialogue to discover the archetypal characters and significance of events. This form of narrative inquiry is very similar to the methodology I used to analyze the data in this study. Rather than artificially create the dialogue, I used the group members' actual dialogue generated during the group meetings and recorded in my field notes to discover the significance of the events they included in their autobiographies. Moving back and forth between the written autobiographies, quick writes, and field notes of group dialogue, I wove a tapestry of analysis through the hermeneutic cycle. Figure 2 illustrates how hermeneutic cycles were used to analyze the data, and how this analysis led to the culminating poem, *I Am A Teacher*. Using the quick writes and annotated field notes from January 24, 2007, a sample of this analysis is given next.

I began the analysis of this data by searching for my own preconceptions. First, I noted the general unrest I felt. I knew this was a result of spending so much unscheduled time away from school. The unsettled nature of winter weather leaves me uncommitted to the prospect of traveling on icy roads to school where many children will be absent. I find I put off or ignore tasks that are not absolutely necessary in hopes of a snow day that would make these duties unnecessary. After identifying lack of commitment due to weather and time of year as a factor, I then examined my own health issues. I have spent the last ten years learning to deal with chronic fatigue syndrome and its satellite symptoms. Compensating for debilitating health issues on a daily basis has changed my activity level and classroom management style. These days I sit more than I stand, I walk more than I run. I pick and choose where I will expend physical and mental energy. I

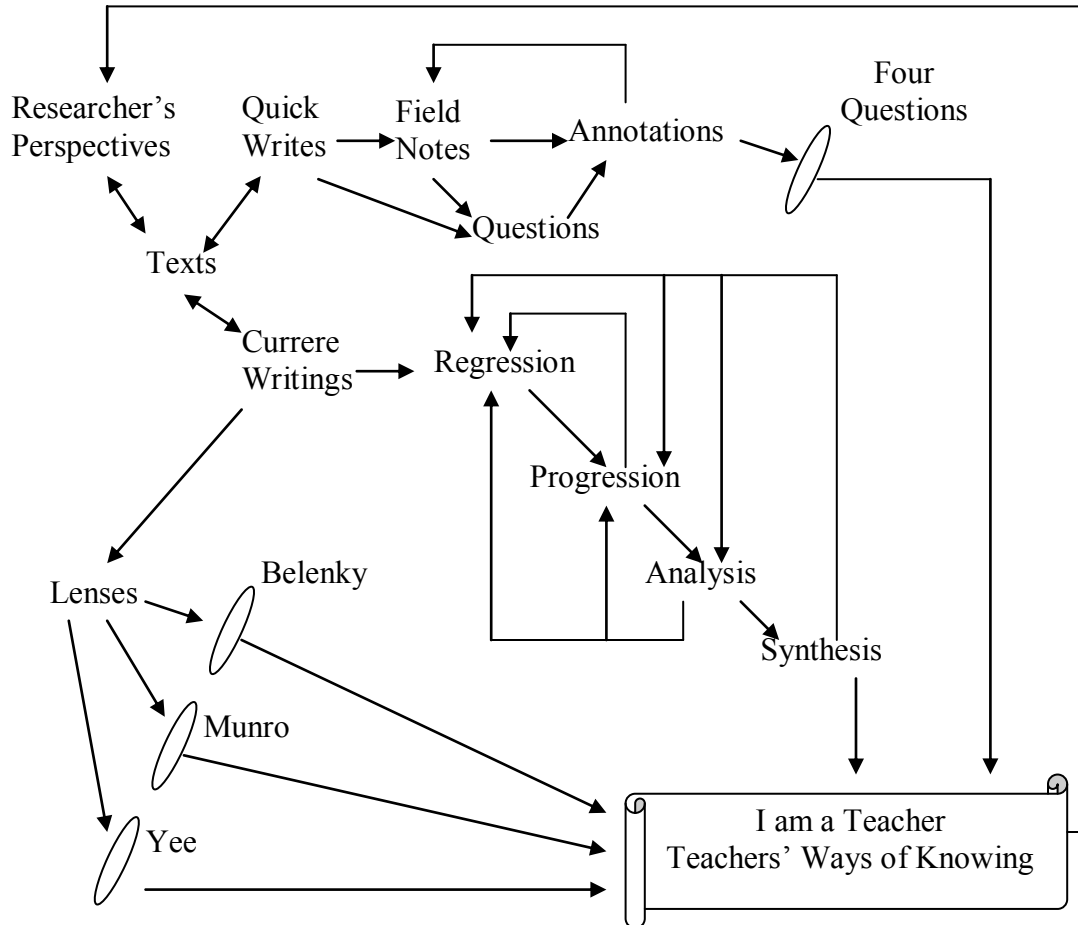


Figure 2. Hermeneutic cycles of data analysis. Texts are read and reflected upon through different lenses. This figure illustrates the whole to part to who cycle of the research process.

make allowances for others' illnesses, perhaps even to the point of looking for health-related reasons for actions and behaviors even when there are no obvious physical signs. The criteria by which I determine my own quality of life have changed a great deal since I became a teacher. A good day is not necessarily one in which a lot is "accomplished"; more often a good day is one in which a child or children understand a new concept or solve a difficult social problem. I decided that my own health issues frame the ways I construct my life and a provide lens through which I view the world.

Another concept I considered was the question Teiko revisited several times: Is there a place for a teacher other than his or her current classroom? My monetary investment in classroom books and equipment is one of the major factors binding me to my classroom. Over the years I have purchased several thousands of dollars of children's books and teaching tools. I have also written and received grants for thousands of dollars of mathematics manipulatives, the storage of which requires substantial shelf space. Even transferring from building to building within the district involves a major packing, moving, and unpacking endeavor. Second, I find the children and their parents tie me to my classroom. After only a few years in my current teaching position, I frequently have siblings of previous students request to be in my classroom. Parents throughout the building recognize me as someone to whom they can come for answers or a listening ear. Being known as a good teacher and a problem solver improves my self-confidence and my sense of well being. Finally, positive relationships with other teachers and with administrators in the building link me to the classroom. I feel as though I am part of a group who cares and supports me as I care and support them. For these reasons, thinking about leaving my current classroom is a difficult and even painful process. I wondered if perhaps Teiko was trying out the idea of leaving the classroom on the group before she made a final decision for herself.

Finally, the group session from January 24 explored the idea of exclusion. Exclusion was a theme in many of the group sessions, and a feeling I had experienced frequently as a child and occasionally as an adult and a teacher. As a child I was strongly focused on academics and was somewhat of a tomboy. I was never one of the "cool kids", and my social life, particularly in high school, consisted entirely of band-related

activities. I dressed in work clothes, jeans and tee shirts, because I held a part time job at a landscape nursery immediately after school. As a result of my choices to dress and act in ways that were not fashionable, I had few friends. For the most part, I was not bullied; I was just ignored. College was better. I made lasting friendships, but I knew I was not, nor would ever be, one of the “beautiful people”. As I began to work in schools, I found happiness in the beauty and wonder of children. For me, pouring attention and affection into children yields mutually nurturing and sustaining relationships. While I no longer fear being excluded, when other teachers have formed cliques I choose to make friends with individuals from all groups rather than to stay miserably on the edge of a single group where I will never really belong. I resonate strongly with the recurring theme of exclusion.

The next step in data analysis was to interpret the texts and ground them in the tradition of teacher narratives. Teacher narratives are frequently described in the literature as composed of sacred, secret, and cover stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996; Crites, 1979; Olson, 1995). Teachers’ stories have also been termed fragile (Beattie & Conle, 1996). As I read the quick write responses and shifted through the annotated field notes, I recognized a mixture of sacred, secret, cover, and fragile stories throughout the three big themes of the participants’ writing – the importance of planning, dreams of being a teacher, and isolation due to health problems and the nature of the work. I selected Bubbles’ writing to illustrate the analysis process.

In a secret story within her quick write, Bubbles admitted putting off her writing because she was afraid of what she might discover about herself. She continued her secret story by discussing health issues with Madeline and identifying with Madeline’s

difficulties. She admitted that she was concerned about her weight. She also shared that in the previous year, she had been anxious for school to end. One way to tell this secret story might be “I am not who you think I am, and I may not be who I always told myself I was. I am vulnerable. I make mistakes. I am afraid I might not be able to admit my mistakes, and I might not be able to change.”

In her quick write, Bubbles discussed feeling uncomfortable with the amount of preplanning she did with her life. Throughout her autobiography, she highlighted in blue three passages reflecting the planned parts of her life: “My life had gone as I planned,” “Everything had to be so well planned,” and “Another goal is to do all those home things. I want to redo my bedrooms now.” The tension between planned and unplanned events is especially strong when Bubbles discusses health issues. Bubbles recorded a few phrases on cards and sorted the cards into piles as suggested during the analysis phase of the *currere* writing. One on of these cards is simply the phrase, “planned life”. Another card says, “Health (unplanned)”. She also made marginal notes throughout the autobiography. Two of these notes: “So does my life have to be very planned for it to feel successful!?!?” and “One reason why this illness is difficult – because I didn’t plan. There is no plan for it!” both speak to the importance in her life of planning. In another part of her autobiography, Bubbles supported the notion of the importance of planning when she wrote this story:

I then went into administration as a half-day counselor and half-day assistant principal. I had 13 hours in administration, but that was not where my heart was. I had a great principal to team with – we worked well together. He was half-day principal and half-day football/wrestling coach. By then I had a family and when my boys were school age they went to school with me. My husband’s job was a mile from school so we spent all our time at sporting events, etc., things connected with the school. It was a busy time. It was a hectic time, but we loved it and I

seemed to thrive on work and family. My principal left to go to a different community and I was, of course, offered the position. I asked for a certain salary, not much more than the vacating principal had made. The board turned my offer down so I declined their offer. In return they hired an out-of-state lady non-certified at the time. I could tell she was pregnant the first time I met her. Superintendent said they asked her if she was and she said no. She was and had complications. I wound up being the principal for counselor's pay! She was out 6 months counting time off with the baby. For the rest of the year after she returned there were complications because I had gained the community support over the years and she was like an outsider to them. This was very difficult for her and me because I also did not have faith in her abilities. The next year I took a 6th grade homeroom teaching position that was under her administration. However we were housed in another building – this was great.

In this story the school board did not have a plan for replacing the principal that included methods for negotiating salary. Furthermore, the woman principal's pregnancy was not planned for by the school board, and the complications of the pregnancy were not planned for by anyone. In another unplanned move, the school board asked Bubbles to take over the leadership role in the school, and she did. The unexpected result of this short-term replacement was the difficulties the principal had with the community when she returned after Bubble's tenure. Bubbles dealt with the tensions created by the series of events by moving to another building, a planned move. This story is a good example of a cover story. People usually tell cover stories to justify their behavior or decisions. In this story the reader does not know the specific details of the replacement of the principal or the details of Bubble's administration of the school. Bubbles writes this story in such a way to show that she was both victor in the situation and victim of the new principal. By being a victor, Bubbles can demonstrate the power she derives from planning and carrying out her plans. She was justified in aligning the community with her rather than the absent principal; after all, she was only filling in during an emergency caused by lack of planning. By being a victim, Bubbles allows herself the freedom to

make mistakes, justifying those mistakes by telling herself they happened because others did not plan carefully enough so those mistakes could be avoided. It is not her fault that the principal had trouble transitioning back into the school – the principal should have planned the transition process better. No matter which side of the story is emphasized, Bubbles appears victorious at the end.

In a secret story from her childhood, Bubbles wrote at length about her high school shorthand/typing teacher. Because she was good at the classwork, Bubble's teacher released her and a friend from class to run the teacher's errands. She reports that missing class was a "privilege", but she had mixed feelings about

this teacher's pet experience. We fooled ourselves into thinking that the other students didn't care that we had extra benefits, or I wonder if we really cared. In the back of my mind I played with the thought that this wasn't responsible teaching – that Mrs. G. shouldn't be letting us out of class so much or just sit and chat with us. Keep in mind, we both completed our work and did A quality work – speed and accuracy!. Should she have challenged us further or used us as tutors? I remember feeling special and great because this teacher liked me and trusted me. I also remember thinking, 'Boy, she has an easy teaching job.'

A marginal note, "still wonder about this – is it natural?" highlights this tension. Being allowed to do unplanned errands left Bubbles feeling "privileged" and "special" but also a little uneasy. As a student, Bubbles was encouraged by this teacher to cross the boundary between work and social interaction; as an adult, she feels uncomfortable about encouraging students to cross the same boundary:

One afternoon a mother knocked on my door and announced she wanted to get her daughter out of class to go shopping with her. She needed her to carry the packages. Never mind she was in 4th grade and could not print her first and last name correctly!!!

Bubbles' later marginal note, "Expand your life – you never know how something you can do will open doors" that marks a tension between the planning Bubbles needed to

feel comfortable in the past and the realization that unplanned things have gone well, too. When she discussed her quick write with the group, she chose to emphasize the aspect of over planning her life as something she would like to change.

Bubbles struggles with her sacred story of teaching. Throughout her writing, Bubbles gives evidence that her dream from a young age was to become a teacher. “When I was 7 years old, all I wanted to become was a teacher,” “They [mom and dad] have always supported me in my dream to become a teacher,” and “My first year of teaching was a dream come true,” are all examples of this sacred story – the story of a little girl who wanted to grow up to be the best thing in the world, a teacher. Bubbles even goes on to write, “my teaching career is and has been the passion of my life. I really have not wondered much about doing anything else.” This sacred story is pervasive throughout the entire autobiography; however, Bubbles never discusses this story in the group. During the analysis phase, Bubbles identified her passion about teaching as “sickening”, but during group meetings she completely ignored her characterization of her passion for teaching as being sickening, instead bringing up sickening in a different way by discussing the way her illness impacts her life. In the marginal annotations she made on her autobiography, Bubbles writes “Yadda! Yadda! Yadda!” next to “My career in teaching is the greatest fun I could have and I knew it when I was seven years old.” It appears as though the analysis process of rereading her autobiography forced Bubbles to confront the contradiction between her well-worn sacred story of teaching as her best possible life’s work and her secret stories of the difficulties of being a teacher. When reflecting over her most influential teacher, a man who taught English literature, Bubbles asks, “How do we as teachers keep those sustained feelings [of excitement for subject

matter]?” This question indicates a tension between the sacred story Bubbles tells herself of the importance of her role as a teacher and her uncertainties of how to be a perfect teacher.

In a similar way, Bubbles identified Madeline’s interest in counseling as “kind of exciting”. She told a sacred counseling story of the counselor as a friend to children and a problem solver, “I like being in there [lunch detention] with the kids because we do get down to what is bothering them sometimes.” The word “sometimes” marks the edge of the sacred story and the beginning of a secret story. Bubbles warned Madeline, “being a counselor is sort of lonely sometimes.” Bubbles might have continued with the secret story of the isolation of her work, but instead, in a joking way, she indicated that she gets frustrated in her job, causing the group to laugh and move on. Deflecting the need to tell the sacred story by using humor is a common way for Bubbles to react to difficulties.

Another theme from my writing was that I have a good (or what I call good) sense of humor. In fact I’ve even been told that I laugh too much. Humor is such an important part of life. Sometimes people forget to use humor to alleviate a situation or put things into perspective.

There is a boundary between using humor as a coping mechanism and using humor as a avoidance tool. Bubbles is the only person who can truly explain her use of humor, but it appears that at least during this group meeting, the intensity of self reflection is too large an emotional burden without some humor to lighten the mood..

Viewing this set of stories through a different lens, Bubbles seems to be telling the fragile story that she is afraid she is slowly losing her battles with her health, despite her best efforts. She fears that she has not always been the teacher she wanted to be, and she may not ever be able to accomplish her goals.

The final step in interpreting the text of Bubbles' stories is to question the text. As I read and reread Bubbles' writings, I asked, "How does Bubbles' illness shape her quality of life and her perspectives on her own teaching career?" Bertero & Elk (1993) found that people whose health is compromised by prolonged illness have different criteria for judging their quality of life than do those who are healthy. Dale (1995) found quality of life to be a subjective concept linked to independence, happiness, respect, spirituality, morality, and value of life. Most of these sub-concepts require community support and interaction. Extrapolation of these results may have implications for the quality of classroom life. Because quality of life is linked to numerous interdependent concepts (Dale, 1995), the isolation caused by chronic illness may reduce community support and interactions and lead to classroom challenges.

Looking at the participants in this group through this lens leads me to suggest that teachers with health issues may have different perspectives on what is important in a classroom and what is not. Based on previous studies (Bertero & Elk, 1993; Dale, 1995), the only person who could judge the quality of the Bubbles' classroom life would be Bubbles. This then leads me to question how administrators are able to evaluate the quality of classroom life created by a teacher whose quality of life perspectives are informed by illness. What effect does such an uninformed evaluation have on the teacher with the chronic illness? Speaking from my own experiences, such evaluations tend to isolate me from other teachers and distance me from administrators. Bubbles stated that she "did not have faith in her [previous principal's] abilities" but always presented positive perceptions of her current administrator, "I have a fantastic principal and an absolutely outstanding staff to work with." On the other hand, Bubbles did mention that

she was “lonely” and “frustrated”. The tension between the written and spoken statements marks a possible disconnection between Bubbles’ sacred and secret stories of teaching. In her current position Bubbles spends at least fifty percent of her time interacting directly with children in classrooms. Such interactions are primarily open-ended discussions about social issues with elementary-aged children and generally take place without the presence of the “regular” teacher. They are emotionally nourishing times for the children, but perhaps not emotionally sustaining for Bubbles. This lack of supportive community may encourage Bubbles to create cover stories to compensate for the solitary nature of her job.

A final questioning of the text takes place when comparing the written quick write data with the annotated field notes of the group discussions. Bubbles states that she wrote about her health during the quick write, yet there is no evidence of that in her text. It is possible that she was referring to her *currere* writing; the context of her statement is somewhat unclear, “I wrote basically the same thing.” This question speaks to the validity of the study because participants discussed more than what they wrote during the quick write time. As the group leader I allowed the conversation to move from topic to topic, interfering only when participants had wandered far afield and time was short or when specific details about students came close to crossing confidentiality lines. In this study, therefore, the group discussion acts as a method of triangulation, giving participants an opportunity to clarify and expand their writings; a sort of instantaneous member check of their own work. It may also be possible that participating in a group discussion helps participants generate new ideas. This supports the participant/researcher hermeneutic cycles detailed in Figure 1.

The final step of the analysis requires returning from the analysis of the parts of the texts to add information to the knowledge created about the whole text. In this instance, Bubbles' concerns about the way she planned her life and her deteriorating health led to statements in the poem *I am a Teacher*, "My dream came true. That's sickening," "The best job in the world," "I want to be perfect," and "I'm so tired, exhausted, weary." Adding these lines to the poem was a way to include Bubbles' concerns without breaking the confidentiality agreements made by the group.

Summary

In this study, participants' writings and field notes from group meetings were analyzed in light of the four recurring questions asked in the quick writes (See Appendix A). This narrative analysis was reported in the findings chapter. Also in the findings chapter, participants' autobiographies are grounded using narrative analysis and read through two separate feminist lenses (Haig, 1997). Finally, the writings of the group are combined into one voice as a way to disrupt the privilege of any one voice over another producing a poem, *I am a Teacher*. Questions raised by the researcher are reflected upon in the final chapter.

Limitations

The principles outlined above limit the study, as does the selection of certain texts from all of the texts reviewed for the study. *Currere* is not a well-known, well-documented methodology. Further, it requires substantial skill to implement in the method by which it was originally intended. Therefore, the results of this study were limited by the skill of the researcher.

As a researcher who is a teacher and a participant in the study, my emic position necessarily limits this research. Additionally, like the other group members, I am American, white and female. I am not male nor am I Black, Latina, Native American or Asian. I cannot fully understand what is like to live the life of another. Like the other group members, I am a Christian, not Muslim or Hindu or Buddhist. I bring to the research my personal beliefs in a higher power and in the promised value of and reward for hard work. I do not think my beliefs better than another's, only different. I am 49 years old. I understand growing up in the shadow of the Cold War, the uncertainty of nuclear weapons, and the race for space. I have seen the Berlin Wall fall and understand the significance of the kiss Pope John Paul II planted on the ground of Poland. I watched the brothers of my friends return in caskets from Vietnam and the sons of my friends return from Iran and Iraq. I am the sum of my experiences, and as a result, I read the world in a particular way.

Participants of this study come from the same school, are all over 42, white, and female. They may therefore not be representative of all teachers everywhere, but they are representative of elementary teachers in their school district. They brought to the study their personal educational backgrounds that color the stories they told and their interpretations of those stories. The requirement for face-to-face meetings limited some group members' participation due to school absences and other commitments. The group dynamics changed when participants were absent, and that change affected the amount and quality of the data collected. Finally, because this study requires participant writing, teachers who felt uncomfortable writing experienced difficulties completing the assignments.

Conclusion

The focus of this study is on teachers and teacher narratives. Through writing about their worlds – past, present and future – teachers were, at times, able to envision themselves in new and empowered ways. The researcher’s purpose was to participate in, to observe, and to reflect upon the process of using *currere* to write teachers’ autobiographies. The goal of the study is to answer the questions: Is *currere* an effective method for teachers to create their autobiographies, and how does the process of autobiographical storying using *currere* help experienced teachers make decisions about their futures in educational professions.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Overview

This chapter concerns the findings of the research into the creation of autobiographies of experienced teachers from one rural elementary school located ten miles outside a small town in a south-central state. Six teachers including the researcher met weekly from October through February. We met after school in my classroom, sitting at student desks I had pushed together to form a table of sorts. On this table I spread the tools of our work: piles of sharpened pencils with bright cap erasers, stacks of lined paper, and snacks. Chocolate, fruit, cheese and crackers were part of our meetings because I know how drained I feel at the end of the day, a little bruised and battered by the time the last cheerful voice leaves the classroom for the bus. I am hungry for companionship of adults and for comfort foods. I wanted to create a safe space where my colleagues and I would relax into the telling of the stories of our lives. I wanted the space to act as a cocoon to hold us in quiet reflection until we were ready to break out of the chrysalis and spread our wings.

This chapter is the story of these meetings, the participants, their writings, and their reflections upon the writing process. In the first section I discuss the responses to each of the four quick write questions in terms of the participants' responses and how

these responses changed over time. The second section of the chapter examines the participants' autobiographies through several lenses. The iterative hermeneutic cycle of analysis concludes in a poem written by the researcher and composed of the participants' voices entitled "I am a Teacher."

Quick Write Questions

Introduction

This is the story of our group, and as any good story begins, so shall I. Once upon a time... it was the first Wednesday in October 2007. I was nervously awaiting the arrival of the teachers who had volunteered to participate in my doctoral research. They had agreed to meet weekly whenever possible, and to write about their lives and their teaching careers. As the participants entered the room, I smiled at their familiar faces. Our first item of business, besides filling plates with chips, fruit, and chocolate, was selecting pseudonyms, and we did so with giggles and flair. Bubbles seemed eager to please, but confident that she could write about her education. Previously an elementary classroom teacher, she was now a school counselor. Elaine Russell, middle grades classroom teacher, was beginning a Master's program after a successful experience with a National Writing Project site during the summer of 2005. Charlotte was a teacher who returned to the classroom this year after some time as a "specials" teacher. She seemed very unsure of her ability to do the writing she feared would be required to participate fully in this group. Ironically, Charlotte was the only participant who consistently turned in her writing prior to the deadlines. Madeline, a National Board Certified teacher, came into the room in a bundle of energy and enthusiasm, so like her young students. Madeline seemed comfortable with the idea of writing and with her ability to look back

over her educational career and her life. Teiko was missing in action at this meeting. Her job required traveling from school to school, so she was not always able to attend the meetings. I chose Madam Curie for my pseudonym as the researcher. This somewhat obvious name evokes, for me, thought-provoking discussions, diligence, and reflection. These seemed like good qualities for me to emulate as I conducted this research. After munching a bit, we got down to business.

One of the first orders of business was the discussion of confidentiality. We were all teachers in the same building. The school is only a medium-sized elementary school; every grade level in this building had at most three classrooms. Because confidentiality could easily become a problem, I suggested that the group abide by a “Las Vegas Rule,” based on a popular television commercial with the slogan, “What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas.” The group unanimously agreed to keep everything discussed in the group confidential. They also asked me to take handwritten notes rather than tape record the meetings. Several times during intense discussions participants asked exactly what I was writing in the notes. I would then read the notes back to the group to check accuracy. As a result of this method of recording the meetings and the understood confidentiality, when participants used specific names of students, parents or co-workers, these names were replaced by pseudonyms. When participants told detailed stories of interactions with family members, staff, or students, these stories were summarized in general terms rather than recording in specific detail. By using this method of data collection I was able to maintain confidentiality while encouraging participants to write and speak their stories.

Question 1 – Why are you participating in this group?

I began with this prompt in an attempt to help group members identify why they took on a task I suspected would prove to be time consuming and difficult. I hoped that by answering this question we would each be able to delineate reasons that might serve as motivators as the writing process became more difficult. I haven't read anywhere in the literature that friendship and loyalty are reasons to participate in a study. However, the participants in my study began by explaining their individual relationships with me, not as a researcher but as a friend, as a student, and as a colleague:

I chose to participate in your group because I consider you a friend and loyalty is a major part of my make-up. I also believe in what you are doing educationally – you have my full support. (Bubbles)

The way they saw this as a project and left me wondering: “Am I also part of the project?” The key ideas of *currere* as a project, and the interactions of loyalty and friendship, then, became concerns for me as the researcher.

I know from personal experience that the work of *currere* is extensive and time consuming. Regression requires participants to (re)create the world of their youth sometimes by forcing memories to the surface and examining them through today's lens. I feared that the process might be somewhat painful. Although the emotional pain was certainly not what my study was supposed to be about, I did recognize that such an outcome was possible given the nature of regression. During the first meeting the quick writes also mentioned curiosity and the desire to explore career alternatives as reasons to continue. Madeline seemed to grasp the intensity of the entire process, even before the first writing prompt had been distributed.

I enjoy reflecting/analyzing myself and seeking ways to be a better person and teacher.

Later we would discover just how difficult reflection became for her as she shared memories and emotions from her childhood.

Because the writing prompts reappeared at the same place in the rotation each month, I was excited and a bit anxious about how the participants' perceptions of the process would be revealed in their fifth week quick write. During the fifth group meeting I voiced my concerns in my own quick write:

I love the group times. We are getting really close. With teachers, close connections are important. If I were not the researcher, I'd probably come for the snacks and stay for the conversation. I just hope I'm not losing any friends by asking them to do so much.

Moreover, I worried quietly to myself as the pencils scratched across the papers, if the participants were only creating their worlds because I asked. I wondered "How will they be able to reach valid conclusions? Who judges that validity? On the other hand, if the process changes focus, would I be able to spot when the participants began to do the work more because they felt driven to know about themselves than because it was something I asked for help on? Would the later writing, powered more by internal drive (I hoped), be any more or less valid for the individual than the early writings?" At this point Bubbles seemed to reach out reassuringly to me as she continued to discuss loyalty to the researcher as a friend. She also began to reflect on the quality and supportive nature of the group:

Another reason to continue in the group is it's fun and relaxing when we have our meetings. It's a very interesting collection of educators. Our leader makes it relaxing and non-judgmental.

Apparently the faith that group members like Bubbles had in both *currere* as a process and me as a leader freed them from the questions that plagued me. Because

loyalty to the friend/ researcher seems to be so center stage in her writing, a possible theme throughout Bubbles' writing might be loyalty to others, to family, to students, and even perhaps to self. The idea of loyalty to self does not appear in other writings that I've read regarding teachers' narratives. Loyalty to the researcher might compromise results; on the other hand, loyalty appears to be a topic previously unexplored in teacher narrative research.

Themes for individual and group work begin to emerge from the data during quick writes. Bubbles spoke of the need to explore possible retirement solutions as she interjected the idea of health as a determining factor:

Probably the last reason I continue in this group is that I actually enjoy the reflection about my career. Due to health reasons I could face the possibility of retirement. This is a good time for me to reflect.

Later, health challenges became a group theme as we realized that every group member had experienced significant health challenges currently or in the recent past. Madeline also discussed the importance of collegial interactions:

I am enjoying getting to know colleagues on a different level and learning about how their pasts influenced them to be the teachers they are now.

Elaine Russell was able to state succinctly another overriding theme for the entire project:

I am participating because I usually enjoy "looking back" on my life. Everything we do is based on something that happened in the past.

Again the idea of the past influencing the present arose. The participants had finished the reflection phase and are beginning to see their current personal and private lives through the relatively fresh lens of the recently discovered past. I wondered, "Are we more like Columbus (re)discovering the New world, the Natives discovering Columbus or both? What sort of New World are we creating together as a group? Together with our

historical, Native selves?" I wonder now, after having experienced the entire process, if there are any teacher-classroom interactions not shaped in whole or part by our past.

By the time January 10 came around the general mood of the group was unsettled but comfortable. We seemed comfortable together as a group, but the general atmosphere of the school and of the weather was unsettled primarily due to an impending ice storm that would begin in two days and close the schools for a week. This time the question of "Why are you still participating?" was met with some of the same ideas as before. Among the repeated ideas were commitment to completion, loyalty to the researcher, and the sustenance of a nonjudgmental support group of colleagues. Among the new ideas was Elaine Russell's statement:

It's always fun to have a do-over. Which we, as teachers, get twice as year... A time to reflect and adjust.

During the discussion that followed Elaine Russell clarified her point in this way: January First is an automatic "Do over," a fresh start because there is a new year. Even though the student population remains basically the same, plus or minus the occasional student who moves, the children and the teachers returned, somewhat energized by the time apart and ready to face the second semester. Although Elaine Russell did not discuss the point further, her quick write also mentions the notion of the time required to think reflectively. Time is a precious commodity to teachers whose lives are bounded by bells and schedules. Time to sit still and think deeply over the events and interactions of the classroom is rare. For teachers, extended breaks act as refueling times. Continuing the metaphor, teachers are long distance truckers who drive continuously through the semester, stopping only for a cup of coffee or a bit of conversation before pushing on to meet the next goal or deadline. Time to study the road map carefully, to shift and re-tie

the load, and to contemplate possible obstacles along the way, is a luxury frequently left for vacations. This intensity merges work and leisure, leaving the teacher burnt out long before retirement.

At the same January 10 group meeting, Madeline voiced a new theme “Am I enough?” when she said: “Even though I forgot about today’s meeting I began to feel anxious about getting the new assignment to write about.” Madeline met me frequently in the hall and cafeteria after this group session and restated her feelings of inadequacy to the task and insecurity with her ability to write what “was required” over and over. Juxtaposed with her need to “get it right for the researcher” was her need to find answers and closure within her writing and within herself.

I’ve put a lot of thought and mental energy into this project thus far and I want to see the end result.

Charlotte also referred to the idea of conforming to another person’s standards when she remarked that her mother was “so judgmental” whereas she prefers to be around people who are non-judgmental. The difference between these two perspectives lies in who is doing the judging. For Madeline, the judge is both external in the form of the researcher and internal as to the quality of writing she is determined to produce. In Charlotte’s case, the judge is an older family member. Part of this difference may have to do with the fact that Charlotte has children and is still very connected to her family, while Madeline does not have any children and is largely estranged from her parents, stepparents and sister.

Elaine also spoke about family. She told the story of her daughter’s impending marriage and move. Elaine was searching for something to do, using the *currere* autobiographical writing and church work as ways to stay connected to life while at the

same time struggling with the unsettling feelings that change causes. The subtext of these feelings lies in the idea of becoming disconnected. There was a disconnection from Elaine's past occurring at the same time that she was becoming physically distanced from her daughter. The juxtaposition of connectedness and disconnectedness became a theme for the group when, later in the year, several of the participants discussed a distancing between students in their classes or parents of these children and themselves. I questioned: What happens for the participants at this tension of connectedness and how does this tension change the landscape of the place created by a *currere* writing group? These are questions for further research.

As a participant in this group, my perspective seemed to take a turn for the bleak in January:

Perhaps we can write our way out of the grip of depression that seems to be so pervasive throughout education.

Some of the business of our group was conducted in common spaces such as hallways and the cafeteria. During these informal discussions I developed a feeling that the participant were depressed about how powerless they are with respect to their jobs. I wonder if powerless is the same as helpless? Although for Charlotte the quality of the group interactions help her in her other school situations: "It's helpful to have their insight," the growing despair I felt in the dark days of January lead me to write: "Can we write our way to understanding and empowerment?" I had seen such transformations during Writing Project, but I worried that I might just be taking the group down Alice's rabbit hole and that the eventual landing would not be soft.

This was the final time this question appeared as a quick write due to the ice storm and the craziness that followed as teachers scrambled to make up lost instruction time before the state mandated tests in the Spring. In summary, the majority of the group reported that they began and continued their participation because they wanted to help the researcher, they believed in finishing what they started, and they enjoyed and felt supported by the group. Additionally individuals felt that participating and continuing to participate might help them see a larger picture of themselves and help them make career and life decisions.

Question 2 – How did the Writing this Week Challenge You?

By the time the second meeting occurred, members of the group were already deeply into the writing process. They had begun their regressions, focusing on their childhoods and their education prior to their first year of teaching. Personally, I had difficulties choosing particular memories to record. The entire topic of writing about my writing was so difficult for me that I reduced my thoughts to a list:

- First, it was hard to make the time to write.
- Second, once I finally sat down, there was so much to write about I didn't know where to begin.
- I finally ended up thinking about my brothers, probably because I had been sorting photos the night before. I realized that in a lot of ways I frame my education in terms of my interactions with and feelings about my brothers.

I found myself engaging in substantial editing, selecting the bits and pieces of my life that most closely resembled the portrait of myself I wanted to project. Madeline had similar problems with the writing:

This past weeks' writing was a challenge in that I felt I was getting off track. I tried to keep it connected to "education" but found I would get

into family and personal explanations. I sometimes became angry as I remembered situations. I was also challenged with how much detail to include.

Bubbles reflected about the creation process:

My writing this week challenged me to get my thoughts in order. As I was writing I noticed that I would write about one thing- then jump to another, go back to the first thing. This caused me to internalize this and think is my life disorganized? I also have to write by pen first – my thoughts don't flow at computer. Here I go – jumping around.

Elaine Russell added an emotional dimension to her reflection:

Also, I kept tearing up at certain times of writing when a memory came to the surface that had been buried deeply.

I'm very glad that I did it. The writing was beneficial to me because I began seeing patterns of behavior by adults and myself. Now I am more aware of certain things.

I believe I could have added 20 or more pages!

Charlotte and Teiko were not present at this meeting, but their voices on this topic were not heard until five weeks later when the question arose again. The previous week's outside writing prompt had been to project into the future and imagine receiving a reward for teaching, Charlotte wrote:

Guess I never thought about getting a reward now or later. Having to think what it might be was thought provoking.

Really and truly I started out loving this job. I still like the kids and teachers along side of me, but the rest of it... I'm sick of it all. I have so much I want to do outside of this job. The main reason I stay is because of the extra money and insurance. In 1 ½ years, my husband can draw Medicare and until then I need to work to carry the insurance benefits.

During the discussion that followed Charlotte revealed:

I guess it was a challenging assignment because I don't think of myself ever getting a reward. I thought about a perfect classroom where all of the

kids at different levels are motivated. So, I decided I would win for the most motivated class.

Charlotte took substantial risks during the session, revealing that while she didn't want to use corporal punishment, she did want motivated students and parents who would let her teach rather than trying to run the show. When Charlotte revealed that she felt like she was sinking, Teiko added, "without a rope" and went on to reflect about her own teaching:

I thought it was hard looking at the future. It was fairly negative, It's painful to watch teachers and parents struggle with paperwork. I'm concerned for students. They aren't being given challenges they are seeking. I see so much literature that's pointing to other things. But no one is paying attention.

This speech illustrated another emerging theme-desperation. As the conversation continued, more voices joined in:

Elaine Russell – Our hands are tied, too. We know the best way to teach is by doing.

Teiko – You're being judged by what an odd group of kids you got.

Elaine Russell – In Colorado, they're going to merit pay.

Teiko – Who's going to judge? They haven't been in the classroom. It's hard to look at inequalities.

Elaine Russell-I hate the testing.

Charlotte –I've been here long enough to know you can have a low class where everyone fails.

Teiko – It's nonsense. I want kids to have great expectations, but I want to be realistic.

It seemed obvious that by week six, mid-November, the group had grown close and developed a trusting attitude. At the first group meeting, the members had agreed to abide by what they called "The Las Vegas Rule" (what happens in the group, stays within

the group). This mutual agreement to support and nurture a safe environment for communication allowed group members the freedom to admit their secret stories. As I read over my field notes, I was struck by my own desire to have others be less human and more “heroic” teachers.

Listening to her being so discouraged made me feel like I was intruding into her personal space, seeing into a part of her life that is usually kept private. Sort of like a dirty secret.

I wanted to read and to remember a sanitized version that would support the sacred stories of education. Instead, I found I have my own secret stories that make me feel completely un-heroic, ordinary, and less of the “good” teacher than I wish to be. Allowing a safe space for others to admit their own flaws was uncomfortable because it made me face ways I felt I failed to measure up to my own perception of the characteristics of a good teacher. I wondered if others in the group felt the same way.

By the time the third and final quick write with this theme occurred the group was deeply into the synthesis phase of *currere*. Doerr (2004) found synthesis to be a time in which it was difficult to get participants to talk about their writing. Our group also found synthesis to be a challenging activity, and writing about these challenges to be equally difficult. Teiko offered some insights into the emotional reasons this proved to be a difficult stage:

The work was challenging in the way recurring themes slapped me in the face. I have few expectations for the educational system. I believe in the children, but not in the process. Pride in my own successes is minimal, because I do not believe in the evaluation or the evaluator. Teaching has intrinsic value for me. I cannot understand the game.

Charlotte revealed that she found her self-discoveries led her to a flurry of editing of her work while Bubbles and Elaine Russell both put the assignment off as long as possible,

citing fear of emotions that might arise during the rereading of the regression. However, during the discussion of the quick write and the writing prompt for that week, Teiko asked a question that proved to be the turning point for several members of the group: “Did you ever think that there is another place for you in education?” Everyone had an answer for this. Madeline was considering becoming a counselor but felt tied to her classroom to receive the National Board Certification money. Elaine Russell was working toward a Master’s that would take her out of the regular classroom. Teiko was considering applying for a Ph.D. program that would lead to a professorship. Bubbles wanted to stay in her current job, and Charlotte wanted to win the lottery and leave her classroom permanently. As the researcher, I became excited as I watched the spark contained in Teiko’s question ignite the room. I was puzzled by the discrepancy between the despair the members had voiced when discussing the future during the progression phase and the new life that pressed upon us from all sides during our discussion of the synthesis process. I wondered, “How does fear of the unknown and fear of the forgotten chain our present lives and cage our futures?”

Question 3 - What am I Learning about Myself and my Practice by Writing?

The first time this writing prompt was given was on the week following the regression prompt: “Write about your first year of teaching.” By this point the revelations made during the first week of regression were beginning to make ripples into daily life. For some, like Elaine Russell and Madeline, the ripples came in the form of strength, both to face the new day, but also to face old challenges.

I have learned that I am the teacher I am, because of my teachers in school when I was a kid and also from teachers I have worked with. I do a lot of things in my practice because of my educational history. (Elaine Russell)

I am learning that even though I was “brainwashed” into believing I am insignificant and lack intelligence, personality and beauty. I really do have some good qualities that I like and am proud of. (Madeline)

Bubbles discovered that events of her childhood “in fact have had a big effect on me as a teacher.” Charlotte worried what to include without becoming too personal, and Teiko discovered “a lesson of major importance – I can write.” While this voyage of self-discovery sometimes took place in shark-infested waters, the members of the group were generally excited by the revelations their writing brought and amazed by the connections they made between their current practice and the events of their childhood. When this question was asked for a second time, the responses were not nearly as dramatic or as enthusiastic.

That second time group met on a cold and blustery day in December. Madeline was absent due to surgery and would not return until after winter break. The group, usually infused by her ebullient outlook on life, seemed dull and wooden. More than one participant commented on how much Madeline was missed. They found it difficult to imagine a better future, feeling as though “still stuck in the rut of low self-esteem. It’s so hard to get out of it!” (Elaine) and pressured because “Time is flying by, money is tight, and I often feel too busy to make my dreams come true.” (Teiko) We were also a small group that week, illness and doctor’s appointments keeping Bubbles and Charlotte away. Unable to clear the cobwebs, perhaps caught up in the mad dash from Thanksgiving to Christmas, as a group we refused to examine what we were learning about our practice from our writing. One positive note of solidarity came toward the end of the session as the three of us devised a plan to bring dinner to Madeline and her family the next week and sneak in a group meeting while we were there.

The final time we approached the question of what are we learning from our writing was during the last formal meeting prior to turning in all of the writing. The group was small; the push toward testing was pressing in on us all. While Charlotte wanted only to finish the writing, others gave voice to hopes:

It has been good for me to re-live some of my life memories, but also painful. I am still hoping to gain knowledge about my inner self that will help me determine the rest of my future. (Elaine Russell)

I'm curious to see where else this leads me. I'm sure there are other things I can learn about myself. I also proved I could do this writing !! (Bubbles)

If the joy of life is found in the journey, then Elaine Russell and Bubbles seemed to have found their tickets and boarded the train.

Question 4 –How are the Group Interactions Affecting your Writing and Sharing?

At first this prompt led participants to discuss their writing process. The actual process was alternatively described as “grueling,” “a joy,” and “calming and cathartic” by group members. None of the participants wrote directly to how group interactions affected the writing process; therefore, I changed the prompt for the next time we wrote on this topic. The new prompt asked, “What has come up from discussions that is important?” and therefore the quick writes had an entirely different focus. Group members talked about the group interactions in terms of “increasing confidence,” “a sense of trust,” and “a place to vent” in a group setting based on mutual trust.

At times the writing and group interactions seemed to cause members to pull away. Charlotte evidenced this distancing from others’ life stories as she notes in a quick write:

Interesting to note everyone has “their crosses to bear.” It’s just that we often can only see our own burdens.

But she was not willing to relinquish the group interactions as she went on to write:

Sharing with others is always helpful. Sometimes getting another's opinions puts what you already know in your heart in perspective and validates you.

The phrase "know in your heart" seem to be to be very pivotal to how Charlotte sees herself as a teacher and perhaps as a family member. The idea that Charlotte makes decisions based on an internal moral compass is clearly delineated here. I wondered, "Who else makes classroom decisions based on what they believe to be right and wrong?"

Summary

By examining what members were and were not saying about group interactions, I began to see the group functioning like members of a small ensemble, each with a melodic line to play. Grumet (1988) states that her selection of metaphors "for educational experience combines observation with hope" (p. 80). I would go a step further and claim observation as well as optimism in my selection of this metaphor. I believe it is possible to create beautiful music together as women and as educators. I often felt as though I was responsible for the "music" the group created, not only because I had started the group, but also because the other group members wanted a leader. My role, therefore, was as the conductor of the group. As a conductor I could be responsible for tempo, regulating the flow of the group's interactions. Group members brought their instruments, in the form of their stories, to a space mutually created as a safe place, and joined together to create and recreate the music of their lives.

When group members are viewed as players of orchestral instruments, I see the theme of the music first voiced by Elaine Russell playing the violin. Elaine was able to

attend all of the group meetings. Her group voice was strong but not strident. These examples from quick writes and group discussions illustrate her ability to speak the music of the group:

I put off writing a lot –I have never really thought of myself as a writer anyway.

I always get the worst kids and I feel like such an idiot.

Work is the only place I feel like I succeed.

Other players joined in. “Listening” to the music of the writing I “hear” the melodic addition of Madeline’s viola

I’m realizing that many people have had major influences on me and my life, but most of them in a negative way. I truly feel I’ve been alone most of my life.

while Charlotte’s cello grounding the group with its smooth and slightly melancholic voice:

I just write everything down on computer and edit later. If it’s a college thing I do it right away. If it is something I have to turn in, I get it done.

It’s just the opposite with me, I feel happier at home. My home is my haven. When things are going badly here, I just want to hit the door and get out of Dodge.

I guess I’ve realized how much I love teaching and being with other teachers just like me, but on the flip side, I realize that I’m getting tired of the battle.

Although this music is somewhat dark, Elaine Russell adds a note of optimism when she told the story of a disruptive student who returned the next year to apologize. This optimism is echoed by Bubbles’ flute, or perhaps her piccolo, as she accentuates the positive aspect of a medical problem that led to a fall:

After I regained my body composure I thought, “I’ve got to write! Who’s this talking?” I thought. These words or thoughts are a new awakening in me! I want to write!

In our imaginary ensemble Teiko plays an oboe. Although she was frequently absent, Teiko provided a strong, thoughtful voice when she was able to attend. She used reflective listening techniques to provoke self-examination in others:

It’s hard to tackle something unpleasant.

It’s neat that you realize that you like the challenge of a new grade. Some people need to create change.

The voice of her own story is equally powerful and self-reflective:

I can’t look far ahead because education doesn’t support that kind of dreaming. I’m worried about whether my project will continue. There are people here who wouldn’t hesitate to badmouth you for the very things you think are your strong points.

As a representation of the group’s interactions, the comparison works on many levels. I can “hear” the music of the group. Individual voices blend to form melody and counterpoint, telling a larger story of how writing influences practice and how the support of a strong, trusting group is necessary for individuals to take the risks involved in unpacking their instruments (stories) and sharing with the group. The metaphor also seems to accurately represent, at least in part, the researcher’s role in the group. Conductors are often silent during the performance of the music; and I, too, felt the need to still the voice of my stories so others’ would be heard. After an orchestral concert, the members of the audience leave whistling the melody while the individual musicians continue to hear their own contribution to the performance inside their heads. Each perspective is representative of the experience from each individual’s perspective.

I am not entirely comfortable using this metaphor for group interaction for two reasons. First, the researcher as conductor has the potential to limit the music the members are able to play. By using more or less direction during group meetings, researchers can privilege certain voices over others. While conductors theoretically “know” which orchestral voices to highlight and when to do so to achieve a predetermined, desirable outcome, researchers are theoretically supposed to be able to encourage all participants to share their stories equally. As the researcher begins to collect and analyze data, the conductor’s role is shifted to one of music editor. In the “booth” the music is homogenized and becomes one voice. In the end it is the researcher’s voice that is privileged over the participants’ voices. Just as a tape editor leaves miles of tape on the cutting room floor so that the final result will be coherent, cohesive, and pleasing to the ear, so also does the researcher seek to wrap up all of the loose ends of the participants’ stories into tidy, sanitized packages safe for public consumption. By writing the stories of Bubbles, Charlotte, Teiko, Madeline, and Elaine Russell from different perspectives I have attempted to invite the reader into the booth to be a part of the editing process.

Autobiographies

Introduction

This section begins with analysis of the group member’s autobiographies. Two touchstone works, *Women’s Ways of Knowing* (Belenky et al., 1997) a qualitative, sociological study spanning twenty-five years and conducted by women researchers, and “Resisting “Resistance”: Stories women teachers tell” (Munro, 1996) are used to facilitate understanding of the participants’ voices through hermeneutical analysis. In this

section the voices of women teachers are “heard” through their writing. After close and careful reading of the group members’ autobiographies, I found evidence of multiple levels of voice in each teacher’s writings. I postulated that these women teachers operate in at least two different environments (home and school) and have different voices, different ways of knowing in each. Furthermore, because how we teach is a product of how we have been taught, the childhood school experiences continue to act as a way of knowing about the world, even if subconsciously.

Reading the group members’ stories through a post-modern feminist lens affords a different perspective. Such a lens is found in “Resisting “Resistance”: Stories Women Teachers Tell” (Munro, 1996). This section, then, seeks to build an understanding of women teachers’ voices by beginning with a review of the levels of development of voice presented in Belenky et al.’s work. These are also referred to as ways of knowing. This section concludes with each member’s autobiography viewed through the ways of knowing and through Munro’s resistance lens. The second section of this chapter uses a technique suggested by Gallagher, Gray and Stenberg (2002) and blends the individual voices into one poetic voice, a voice representative of the collective consciousness of the group, *I Am A Teacher*.

Bubbles

Bubbles is a teacher in her late 50’s who has been involved in the schools for her entire career. She wrote about her childhood prior to school as being very “normal” and identifies mother, father, brother and grandfather as pivotal and supportive family members. In fact, Bubbles wrote that during group meetings she “felt like that kid who’s the oddball because she’s the only student living with both biological parents.” Feeling

supported by her family allowed Bubbles to communicate easily with most others throughout her childhood.

Bubbles remembers several teachers in her writing. During kindergarten she argued with her teacher about her birthday, asserting that her knowledge was more accurate and more important than that of her teachers. Birthdays are usually very important milestones to children, so it is not surprising that Bubbles had an opinion on the topic. Bubbles was able to voice this opinion despite the possible consequences for contradicting her teacher. This type of conversation primarily focuses on mutually exclusive assertions rather than collaboration. No resolution was reached because Bubbles knew she was right and would not compromise.

In seventh grade Bubbles had a male math teacher who was physically intimidating. He actually threw an object at her to engage her attention. She used words such as “very large body frame,” “very large presence,” and “roaring” to describe this man. Such experiences capture the essence of “failed authority” (Belenky et al., 1997, p. 56). Contemporary American society teaches that girls can expect to be able to count on their male family members as “defenders, suppliers of the economic necessities, interpreters of the public will, and liaisons with the larger community” (p. 57-58). It is a reasonable leap to include male teachers in this group to whom society bestows power and authority. By physically assaulting Bubbles in public in front of her peers, this teacher disrupted Bubbles’ perception of what a man is and what a teacher should be. Bubbles writes that this incident influenced how she interacts with children in the classroom: “when I ask students to do things I make sure I look them in the face and am sure they have connected with me to hear my request.” As a counterexample, Bubbles’

senior English teacher, also male, introduced her to *Les Miserables*. She writes that it was the great in-class discussions that held her attention and made her look forward to that class every day. This teacher more closely resembled other men in Bubbles' life. Bubbles concluded that teaching children correct speech and writing is her passion was a direct result of her interactions with teachers.

Reflecting back while writing this, it has just dawned on me that the teachers that stand out as the good teachers were English teachers! That has never dawned on me until just now.

She mentions how much it bothers her when professionals release items to the public with mistakes, and how often she corrects children's written grammar "regardless of the subject." It appears that Bubbles relies on received knowledge as a way of warrant for some of her classroom practices.

Once she finished school, Bubbles began teaching in an elementary classroom. She had two mentors – one helpful and one dictatorial. Belenky et al. (1997) discuss the importance of maternal authority for women who are transitioning from locating intellectual and moral truth in an outside authority and moving toward relying on "their experience and 'what feels right' to them as an important asset in making decisions for themselves" (p. 61). The women who act as mentors in *Women's Ways of Knowing* (1997) are seen more as equals experiencing the same problems than as exterior sources of knowledge. It is in much this way that Bubbles viewed her helpful mentor whom she describes as "always groomed, slender, students loved her." Bubbles further reports, "I did not have to ask her for help, she just came down to my room knowing 'when' I would need help." The other mentor who "proceeded to tell me that if I wanted to know anything to ask her instead of the principal or anyone else because she knew better than

they did,” demonstrated a struggle for power documented elsewhere but absent from the analysis by Belenky et al. (1997).

Belenky et al. (1997) discuss women who have begun to journey beyond an awareness of themselves as a source of knowledge through instinct and toward a discovery of “personal authority and truth.” They state that women at this level are preoccupied with the choice between self and other, acting on behalf of self as opposed to denying the self and living for and through others” (p. 77). It is precisely at this cusp that Bubbles has found a home. She felt pulled by her family away from a career in a field of interest (criminal justice) and toward counseling where her nurturing stance allows her to connect with many children each day.

I was not unhappy at all that I stayed in education. However, since that time I have not felt so strongly about changing my career. I really wonder why? I don't have another answer.

Bubbles balanced the various stresses in her life at the expense of her health. Now fighting illness almost daily,

I found out how important our health is!! Oh I knew how important it was – I thought! Had I known then what I know now, is that to love each and every day that you and your family have health and energy.

As her health declines, her energy diminishes and her professional voice is gradually dimming. However, Bubbles has experienced somewhat of a re-awakening during the process of *currere*. She wrote:

Now that I have experienced the writing on this project I understand the positive effects of journaling. Before this I honestly thought journaling could not be that beneficial. Now I feel a stronger connection between writing, reflecting and clarifying things in my life. Thanks for the opportunity to find a new way to enhance my life.

Bubbles may have been simply giving up her interest because her husband “was against the idea of going into criminology.” On the other hand, getting a Master’s degree in counseling may have been a way to enacting resistance (Munro, 1996) by actively refusing to contest her teaching career which she found to be, at times, “fabulous” where she was “in her element” as part of her “dream come true.” Perhaps Bubbles will explore this question in her own writings in the future.

Charlotte

Charlotte is an elementary classroom teacher in her early sixties, proudly a part of “that huge group of men and women” called Baby Boomers. Charlotte situates childhood in the time of “Happy Days,” “The Nelson Family,” and “I Love Lucy”. These were times when women were no longer “staying at home to raise their families and cook, and clean for their husbands.” Charlotte entered the American way of life as part of the “Happy Days” generation of the 1950s but did not attend college immediately after graduation because

my mom said that I would never finish college because I would probably get married and those one or two years would be wasted. It was one of the biggest disappointments of my life! But, she was my ‘mom’ and mom always knew what was best. To me, her words were ‘the law’ and ‘gold.’

Charlotte’s father was completely absent from her autobiographical stories, possibly because he had passed away twenty-five years prior and “he’s been gone so long I don’t even think about him.” During quick writes and group discussions, however, a few details were offered that suggested that her father was abusive to Charlotte and her mother.

Charlotte finished high school during the end of the 60s and “took her place in society” three or four years after high school by marrying, working in an office, having

two children, and finally working at an elementary school in the office and as a teacher's assistant. In between her first and second children, Charlotte began a college career, but "one thing led to another and for whatever reason, I did drop out for a few years," thus proving her mother right. Later, when her children were grown, Charlotte went back to college and commuted to and from campus with her daughter. Charlotte graduated after her daughter and changed careers from teacher's aide to classroom teacher.

When Charlotte wrote during the synthesis phase of *currere* she traced the course of her life. She began her journey in a voiceless childhood who "was taught to NEVER question authority. And to this day, I don't." This is a problem that she experiences to this day:

Somehow if I am questioned, I seem to become a bit scattered. I just immediately assume that I am in the wrong, because why would someone question me if I were not in the wrong. I never assume that they may have made the mistake and misunderstood.

After she graduated high school Charlotte left the circle of influence created by her family and married a man who "felt different, so he encouraged me to take a few college courses" in addition to being a wife, mother and employee. At this point Charlotte found a voice and sought knowledge from outside sources. Her son had difficulty in school and Charlotte was relentless in searching for answers to help him. This process of searching forced her to give up the answers offered by those in authority, adopting a watching and listening subjective attitude (Belenky et al., 1997, p. 83), and becoming somewhat trapped in "a kind of existential loneliness and despair" (p. 84). The stresses of this time were evidenced by her self-reported tendency to become impatient with her children, and then sad and angry at her inability to live up to the ideal she wished to achieve. When given the opportunity to rewrite some of her stories as though her adult self could

intervene, Charlotte responded that there was no point to such an exercise. What was done, was done. What had happened, had happened. The best thing to do was to just get on with her life.

Charlotte is now a mature woman who seeks answers from within herself. She is still sometimes sad and angry, particularly when she is impatient with her mother. Charlotte appears to be somewhat isolated within the school and not in dialogue with others outside of our research group. However, in the safe space of our Wednesday afternoon meetings Charlotte was able to articulate what she wants: to learn how to “stand up for myself and to think on my feet,” and to retire quietly to pursue the next phase of her life.

Through the lens of Munro’s (1996) discussion of women teachers’ resistance, Charlotte’s story becomes similar to those of women as much as a half a century older. Munro’s women defied the idea of resistance primarily by pursuing their hopes and dreams, regardless of what societal pressures prescribed. Munro had taken for granted that “women’s resistance would be covert (and thus previously undiscovered and untheorized)” (p. 17). She found that women did not name their personal and professional decisions as resistance because they saw their lives as being comprised of individual decisions made for a multitude of complicated reasons. By locating resistance in terms of power and authority, Munro discovered she was replicating the very hegemonic structures she wished to disrupt. When examined through Munro’s lens, Charlotte authored her life as contextualized by the decades in which she lived as well as the family she strove to support emotionally and financially. She didn’t tell stories about powerful men’s force in her life; if anything, it is powerful women, like her mother, that

Charlotte resists. Charlotte's choice of profession as teacher's aide and teacher is more of a statement about her desire to support and motivate children than as a relinquishment of power and authority. Charlotte's resistance of authority was strongest when she was actively mothering her children, and has been reawakened, to some degree, by her involvement in her grandchildren's lives. To force Charlotte's stories into an interpretation of resistance against male power structures would not represent the intent of her writing.

Madeline

Madeline is a 42-year-old classroom teacher. Classroom teaching is her second educational career. At one point she was a "specials" teacher and provided subject area instruction to every child in her building. Madeline came to her current elementary teaching position after receiving her National Board Certification at a different school. She identifies strongly with teachers who are studying to improve themselves and their practices. She also identifies strongly with children from troubled households.

Using the Belenky et al. (1997) criteria, Madeline lived as a silent woman throughout her childhood, teen, and college years. She found her first school to be a refuge vital to her survival, "I'm too scared so I hide under the covers and sing. Tomorrow I'll go to school and I will be safe." As she moved from state to state and school to school, Madeline found some teachers who helped her, but she has forgotten their names. She has strong memories of other teachers, male and female, who belittled and abused her verbally and physically, "There was a mean teacher that would hit me on the head with his big ring when I wasn't keeping up with everyone doing sit-ups and other exercises." In Junior High School other, more popular girls who had been her

friends in elementary school shunned her. The only friend she retained from grade school died during a sports event. Madeline was so afraid of the other girls that she did not attend her friend's funeral, "I really liked my friend and I cried. I don't remember much else about Junior High. I really don't want to."

Madeline's high school life continued in the same pattern. Family and friends abused her trust. Her father put her into potentially dangerous and definitely scary positions, "Why did he do that? Did he set me up? I thought daddies protected their little girls." The best memory of high school was of a tall handsome teacher who used a popular book to lead the students through a unit of self-awareness and discovery. This was the first time Madeline was able to separate what was happening to her from who she was as a person and proved to be pivotal to her later development.

Madeline went to college to pursue a career in social work. Instead, she found music. In music she felt success, "'Wow, you made it into the good choir. Not many freshmen make it in' I was told." Despite her family's dismissal of music as a waste of time, Madeline continued to sing in various choirs, even the elite group that traveled on a European tour. Some of the male vocal teachers, however, continued the abuse she had endured from childhood. As an emerging adult, this was all the more difficult to resist. She had come to trust her college professors as dispensers of the received knowledge (Belenky et al., 1997, p. 35) she so desperately desired. It was at this point that Madeline found a way past the abuse, "Yeah, I have a problem. YOU!" she announced angrily, then fought her way into the presence and onto the teaching schedule of the best teacher in the department, along the way stating in no uncertain terms that she was not going to receive anything less than the best he had to offer.

This marked the beginning of the transition for Madeline from respecting exterior authority to listening to the voice of her heart. The road has been bumpy at best. At each crisis she asks herself, “Why don’t people like me? Why does everyone in my life want to change me? What is so wrong with me that I can’t satisfy anyone?” These questions haunt Madeline even today. A successful, National Board Certified teacher married to a strong, stable, supportive husband, Madeline feels excluded, at times, by younger faculty who do not understand her teaching methods. She, too, carries her stress inscribed on her body in a variety of health challenges, some severely debilitating.

The process of *currere* was extremely demanding for Madeline. During the analysis stage she wrote,

As I reread my writing I find a reoccurring theme of being a weak person who is easily manipulated and used. Why did I let that happen? I wish I had had a stronger sense of self-worth to stand up to the negative attacks and influences, like my sister had. How did she get to be such a ‘strong’ person and I so weak? She was the rebellious one as we were growing up so I guess I felt I needed to keep the peace? I easily conformed to others and trusted so easily.

The process of writing the regression, as painful as it was, brought a new sense of distance for Madeline from her past. Now she writes that she wants to “build a bridge and get over it,” and she recognizes that she is now able to “show the real me” to those she trusts.

I have learned that I value the opinions, perceptions, and attitudes of other people more so than my own. This is not always so good, but explains how my childhood experiences have controlled my present self-perception.

She also realizes that it is precisely the experience of growing up in a culture of physical and mental abuse that allows her to identify with her most vulnerable students.

Viewing Madeline's story through Munro's (1996) lens, the metaphor of a fly caught in a pitcher plant comes to mind. As a child Madeline was caught in a family situation that was literally devouring her self-esteem. Much as a fly caught in a carnivorous plant lives longer by not struggling, so also was Madeline counseled by her mother to "pretend she was asleep" as a way to avoid attracting wrath and abuse. Through strategic acts of resistance, Madeline has moved from the pitcher plant's well of digestive juices up its sticky sides and now teeters at the top, ready to fly away. One day after the group meetings ended, Madeline caught me in the hall. She was excited about writing she was doing on her own. "I'm so happy about our group," she said. "I am still learning about myself. I don't know where I will end up, but I'm excited by the experience." Through her life experiences, Madeline learned that careful resistance can propel her forward into a new way of knowing.

Elaine Russell

Elaine Russell is a 46-year-old classroom teacher. She is the single mother of a daughter who was recently married to a serviceman. Even though Elaine Russell is a self-selected pseudonym, she always elected to sign the complete name to her writing, never simply signing as Elaine. In an attempt to preserve her voice, I use the entire name throughout this analysis.

Elaine Russell wrote extensively about her childhood, constantly reflecting on how experiences in her childhood have influenced her pedagogy, particularly her classroom interactions. Unlike other children in her peer group who had "boughten" sleeping mats for nap time in Kindergarten, Elaine Russell's mother provided an "ugly gold rug."

The memory of that gold rug reminds me that many children come from homes that are poor, and the supplies they come with to school may not be acceptable in the eyes of the school, but I always let them know that whatever they bring and use is fine with me.

I learned that all children are special in their own ways. They may appear to others to be ugly and poor on the surface, but I always remember that under that outside shell, there is a little person who craves positive attention from their teacher.

To this day I am never critical of a child doing their art projects in the way they like.

I do remember my third grade teacher dumping my desk because all my papers were stuffed into the front – half-finished. Stuffing a desk is truly an ADD symptom. She taught me how NOT to treat a student with ADD.

Elaine Russell begins her progression with Kindergarten and progresses methodically through each grade or grade level. The writing is filled with details of specific teachers, projects, and friends. Elaine Russell's voice is clear and strong throughout this story. She writes comfortably about teachers who were positive and angrily about those who made her feel stupid, poor, or excluded. Tucked in at the end of the progression is a paragraph about Elaine Russell's parents. While her mother taught her the skills necessary to succeed in domestic arenas, camped with her in Girl Scouts and taught her to read and spell before Kindergarten, her father

taught me how to do woodwork, paint walls and houses, build simple furniture, bake bread and drive. He taught me to always tell the truth, no matter what. He was a man who made and kept promises and worked desperately to teach me multiplication and other math skills.

Elaine Russell felt "always welcome on my dad's lap – even now if I so desire!" and reports that her parents

taught me to love everyone, no matter their skin color, religion, or socio-economic situation.

She believes that

everything that has happened to me in my life has been for a reason – maybe I’m not supposed to know why in every case, or try to change it.

After one year of college, Elaine Russell married, “went out into the world of LIFE education,” had a child, divorced, and finally reentered college at age 26. Her parents helped her through her last year financially, and she came away from her excellent student teaching experience ready to face her own classroom. The first year of teaching happened in a rush, beginning with being hired the Friday before school began the following Monday. She was “brave (or stupid, as some teachers thought) enough to try lots of new and different things in class,” some of them spectacular successes. The second year was a string of disasters. The students were difficult, from troubled backgrounds who, “didn’t deserve any of the special things I had done with the previous year.” Reflecting back on her teaching career, Elaine Russell realized that she goes through a honeymoon stage with each grade level, “the first year is a delight, the second is horrendous, the third is pretty good, and after that is just a blur.”

Applying the Belenky et al. (1997) lens to Elaine Russell requires looking at the differences between how she talks about her teaching during the final stages of progression and during synthesis. In the time between progression and synthesis, Elaine Russell’s daughter moved across the country, and she began to experience some extremely challenging circumstances in all parts of her private and professional life. She seems to be struggling with relating her separate knowing to a larger, connected knowing (Belenky et al., 1997, p. 100) introduced during her graduate classes and visible on the distant horizon.

I am much more confident in my teaching practices than I was that first year. I think I did a fabulous job that first year, and I continue to think I am an awesome teacher. (progression)

I think the most surprising thing I found through this writing process is that I do have a voice. I wish I had had one earlier in my life – maybe people wouldn't have trodden on my back so frequently. . . . I think I am a great teacher, just burnt out. I am, again, at another crossroads in my life. The not knowing, it is the worst for me. I always like to plan ahead, and I am just lost. (synthesis)

Despite the desperate quality of some of the writings from Elaine Russell's progression, she is not about to become a victim.

The process of doing this writing just led me to my belief that I could serve a better purpose – I want to do something DIFFERENT – I just don't know what it is! . . . I have made some decisions based on my findings – I just want OUT. I hope my new story has me in a different place – physically and mentally in the coming year. I have no idea what my new story is . . .

Elaine Russell's story clearly demonstrates that measuring the progression from one way of knowing to another is more like using a slinky than a ruler. Moving across space and time, circling around and ever upward, women like Elaine Russell pull themselves a little closer to their dreams at each turn while still being able to reflect backward along the spiral, seeing events of the past in new perspectives.

When I read Elaine Russell through Munro's (1996) lens, I find the disruption of traditional norms (p. 23-24) as a way to resist the pressures of society. Elaine Russell read at third grade level when she entered public school, yet she was ADD and very unfocused. She was skinny and smaller than other children, wore an eye patch and glasses, and felt "very poor and ugly." Other children called her "Mouse" and her teacher "literally scared the pee out of me!" Yet another first grade teacher saw beyond her physical appearance and was Elaine's "saving grace." It is my contention that the

seeds of Elaine Russell's resistance were sown in the discrepancy between these two teachers. Her restless nature, perhaps fueled by her ADD, led Elaine Russell to

never teach the same class or subject for too long – I just like to learn and do new things

This could be read as resisting in the form of drifting (Munro, 1996, p. 23), but is more likely the result of an abiding self confidence in her own ability to succeed at whatever she attempts.

Teiko

Teiko is a 50-year-old teacher who moves from building to building throughout the week. Belenky et al. (1997) usually begin by looking at a woman's past as a way to understand her future. Teiko's storytelling resists such linear analysis, therefore her story begins where she is today. Teiko provides a small group of children at each grade level enrichment activities designed to stimulate creativity as well as intellectual and social abilities. This cross-district assignment provides her with a unique perspective:

My special lens allows me to see the day by day impact that all of us have in the classroom.

From this vantage point Teiko finds that:

Survival is a primary instinct for me these days, so many other "things" have fallen to the wayside.

I have found that I can do. I am weary of juggling roles and activities, yet I can do. It is a requirement to keep keeping on to survive and I have found that I can do.

At the time of the writing, Teiko was preoccupied not only with family, health, and work issues but also with course work she was taking to explore the possibility of a Ph.D. in the Social Foundations of Education. Teiko was apologetic about her somewhat limited attendance at group meetings and felt that she "often faltered at the task" of writing.

Nevertheless, she reported that the writing and the group have been “freeing, enlightening, sobering, and fun.”

Teiko found her educator’s voice early, on the driveway of her suburban home. She held lessons for the neighborhood children, doled out the snacks they brought, and supervised recess all before she lost the attention of her young charges: “My approach toward teaching was akin to a monarchy.” Her teaching style was modeled on her beloved Kindergarten teacher, in whose presence she felt safe. The story of Teiko’s childhood rests on “joyous memories” and “meaningful friendships.” She wrote, “I honestly felt that I owned my world at all times.”

Shortly before college graduation Teiko had an excellent practice teaching stint in the classroom of “a mentor and a champion.” Teiko writes that this teacher, her classroom, and students “all fit my dream profile of teaching.” Shortly after graduation Teiko was fortunate to find a full time position in the same program. She never felt as though she was a first year teacher because she had many of the same students she knew from her student teaching experience. Although she felt she “often fell short of perfection,” she was “gratified to see laughter and learning occurring daily, perhaps in spite of me!”

As time has gone by, Teiko has remained in the same district, shifting roles and schools, but always maintaining,

My greatest priority in the classroom is to reaffirm what each child suspects to be true – that each one is a wonder of possibilities whose talents must be explored, that each one will experience failures from which they can learn, that each one can greet the day with an attitude of his/her choosing, and that each one of them has a fan club who believes in him/her.

It would not be possible for Teiko to hold these beliefs if it were not for her ability to use her personal knowledge, look beyond procedural knowledge (Belenky et al., 1997, p. 123), and challenge society's system of education (p. 127). Teiko teeters

between a great renewed joy and an utter amazement/frustration at the way we educate children. There is a rather rigid manner in which we approach school. While seeing the need for certain procedures, I would prefer to view our interactions with students on a more open and flexible approach.

She triumphs reciprocal teaching/learning and finds that this occurs “when every member of the classroom, including the teacher, is encouraged to be creative.” Teiko rails against the time constraints imposed by school schedules and sees an unfortunate and dismal future when children will attend school only to prepare for THE TEST. On the other hand, Teiko also imagines the time in the near future when her family and former students will attend the hooding ceremony for her Ph.D. that she imagines will be accomplished by resisting self-doubt with a “tempered spirit.” Teiko wants to live a life not “driven by the status quo of our educational system”, a life that includes creative expressions and joyful activities. She hopes:

To be more of a learner, better able to help those around me with their essential needs. I picture myself involved with those who are not in a position to help themselves. Teachers are used to the struggle. I just want to change my playing field.

Through her writing, Teiko locates herself in the process of “moving outside the given” and “reclamation of the self” (Belenky et al., 1997, p. 133). She is a “passionate knower” (p. 141), dealing with “moral imperatives,” on her way to a professional life of “commitment and action” (150).

Reading Teiko's autobiography through Munro's (1996) lens is a way to discuss the issues of power and authority with which Teiko struggles in her professional life. By

moving from building to building and assignment to assignment Teiko attained a sense of autonomy that is not common for a public school teacher. A common career change for similar teachers is to move into an administrator's position (Munro, 1996, p. 21). By beginning her course work in social foundations, Teiko resists becoming part of the problems she sees with education, opting to expand her influence by potentially entering higher education or educational policy making. By continuing to teach full time, Teiko also resists the role of full-time student, opting to keep her hands and her heart in the classroom.

Belenky et al. (1997) conclude their discussion of the ways women know with this statement:

What stands out most strongly in narratives of constructivist women and particularly in the part of their story that pertains to the future they foresee for themselves, is their desire to have 'a room of their own,' as Virginia Woolf calls it, in a family and community and world that they helped make livable. They reveal in the way they speak and live their lives, their moral conviction that ideas and values, like children, must be nurtured, cared for, placed in environments that help them grow (152).

It is my contention that the teachers of this group want this, also. They want a classroom of their own, in a school where they have a voice as to how the children and adults are nurtured, and how the environment is structured to promote such growth. Each teacher is on an individual path at a particular place; yet, as a group, we all walked forward together.

Summary – I Am A Teacher

After looking through the lenses of Belenky et al. (1997) and Munro (1996), I was able to synthesize the group members' autobiographies into a statement of teachers' ways of knowing. This was cast in poem form (Feldman, 2004) and follows.

I Am A Teacher

The words of Bubbles, Charlotte, Elaine Russell, Madam Curie, Madeline, and Teiko
compiled by the researcher.

I'm sure there was a time when I was ignorant
of what a teacher was and did,
but I can't really remember not wanting to be one.
My early years were filled with school and sadness.

Why sadness?

I felt

Alone. Excluded. Embarrassed.
My family was not a happy place.
Speak for yourself. Mine was.
My childhood was normal.

Whatever that means.

It means I survived.

School was safe for me

I drew strength from my teachers, I wanted to be like them.
Some of them. Most of them. A few. The ones that stood out.

Yes, well, nobody's perfect.

But I tried to be from the moment I first lined my dolls and bears up for lessons.

The back porch/ the garage/ the driveway

in the summer / in the evenings / on the weekends

My first classrooms where I was in charge /ran the show/ made the rules

And then it was college

No, first family. The marriage, the baby

My family is integral to my existence

My home is my haven

Not for me

No marriage, no baby, I'm out on my own

I'm struggling, juggling, who am I first? Who am I best?

First job. I made it. I have a class. My dream came true.

That's sickening.

No it's not. Don't you remember? Eager faces, smiling faces,

I remember sad, tear streaked faces; cold, frozen faces

So many faces. So many pulls

On my hands, on my time, on my heart.

The best job in the world.

Oh please. Get real.

The kids! They leak!

They vomit on the carpet, in the hall, on the desks

They vomit on my desk

Ick

I want to be perfect. I want to teach

These are sometimes mutually exclusive
Sometimes the job ends
Cut backs, transfers, reduction in force, Now what?
I can quit.
Get a real job.
One with a lunch hour and bathroom breaks
But I like the children
Well, most of the time
Except when they're mean to each other
Or unmotivated
We must remember that when one door closes another opens.
Uck. Too preachy
But I'd like to be closer to God.
I'm so tired, exhausted, weary.
I want to slow down,
I exist in a crunch of deadlines
Which I didn't set
Which I deeply resent.
I suppose at times I am not a good teacher
I think I'm a great teacher, just burnt out.
Yeah!
I am still learning
To stand up for myself
To think on my feet
To feel included
And I still have my goals
To play with my grandchildren
To travel and see the world
To become person freed from my past,
A Librarian / A Counselor/ A Professor,
Retired!
Oh, yes!
To feel loved
For who I was / am / and will be
Can you feel the love?
Sometimes I can.
I am a teacher.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter begins with a discussion of teachers' ways of knowing. Next, the five questions that were raised during the *currere* process are discussed. Directions for future research follow a review of the initial research questions. Finally, I discuss my emic position as researcher and participant.

Teachers' Ways of Knowing

Belenky et al. (1997) discussed women's ways of knowing in terms of voice and location of knowledge. On their continuum, unvoiced women had no knowledge of their own; for them knowledge was located with powerful males. As women gained more powerful voices, they sought out increasingly complex knowledge. At first this knowledge was located in others and in books; later the women recognized their own knowledge and sought to reconcile what they knew through experience with what they had learned from others. Finally, the women moved from knowing to social action. Teachers' ways of knowing progress somewhat along the same lines (see Figure 3), beginning with a knowledge of self in the role of teacher and ending with a knowledge of self as a teacher in a nation.

I am a Teacher

At the top of the diagram is the knowledge of self as a teacher. Yee (1990) developed a classification system to help non-teachers understand how teachers story

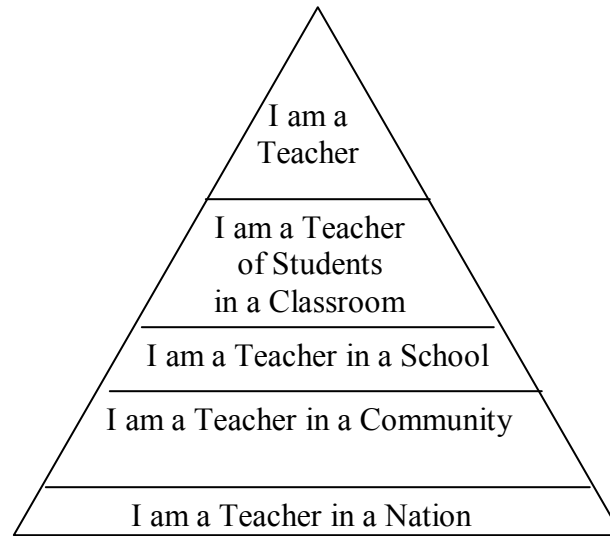


Figure 3. Teachers' Ways of Knowing. Teachers beginning by knowing themselves as teachers, then as part of an increasingly wider group of educators.

themselves as teachers. When discussing educators it is assumed that teachers are committed to children and to learning; in other words, good fit teachers (Yee, 1990). At the most basic level, teachers know what they know through their views of themselves as teachers. Yee (1990) identified good fit teachers as individuals who chose teaching as a way to make a difference in the lives of children. Good fit teachers have a strong sense of mission, are committed to service, are strongly interested in their subject and are inspired by other teachers. Using these criteria, it is possible to identify the “fit” of each group member.

Bubbles may be classified as a good fit teacher. Early in life she committed to teaching as a career,

When I was 7 years old all I wanted to become was a teacher. Not unusual. The unusual part is that I never wavered from that desire.

and to English as a subject area:

Reflecting back while writing this it has just dawned on me that the teachers that stand out as the good teachers were English teachers. That has never dawned on me until now. Thus, my passion for always wanting to teach children correct speech and writing may be connected to the impact of those particular teachers.

While Bubbles has toyed with idea of a career outside education, she has remained in the field, and in the same school system, for most of her adult life. Bubbles, then, may be classified as a good fit stayer. Accordingly, Bubbles has chosen to remain at her current position as an elementary school counselor.

Charlotte may be classified as a weak fit teacher. Charlotte did not start out to be a teacher, but

Instead of going back into the 'secretarial field' and working in an office, I chose to work at an Elementary school as an office worker, or teacher assistant. It would give me days off when my daughter was off and it was always where I wanted to be.

Yee (1990) classifies weak fit teachers as high or low involvement. High involvement teachers are highly rated because at some point in the past they experienced mentoring and personal growth that changed their perspective on teaching and informed their choice to remain in the profession. Low involvement teachers receive average ratings and remain in the profession because it is easy or convenient.

Charlotte did receive mentoring in the form of returning to college as an older, undergraduate student after many years of working as a teacher's aide. She completed her degree with a 3.8 GPA and graduated with honors. Charlotte returned to the school where she had previously been a teacher's aide, but was now as a teacher. However, perhaps because she was an aide for so long, or perhaps because she returned to the same school where her colleagues may have seen her in some lesser capacity, something has never ignited the spark for Charlotte:

Well, here I am today – some days I wonder what ever possessed me to do this, but then there are those special students that pass through your doors and then it confirms why you are here.

In the big picture of scheme of things, I don't know if anyone will ever remember me as a teacher.

I have never had to work, but now, I find that I need to work a few more years to carry health insurance for me and my husband.

Using this classification, Charlotte may be considered a weak fit, low involvement stayer. It is no surprise, therefore, that Charlotte has decided to remain at her current teaching position. It is important to note Charlotte's voice is missing from much of this discussion of teacher in classroom, school, community and nation possibly because

Whether you say it with style, in a sincere and giving way, people at the top do not like to have others tell them or suggest what they should or should not do. (Charlotte)

Madeline may be classified as a strong fit teacher. She was strongly influenced and inspired by her teachers. She remembers the names of all of her teachers beginning in Kindergarten, despite multiple moves and school changes. Madeline was blessed with a fantastic opportunity to audition for a major opera company:

The only other singer he talked to was one of our music faculty members who had had professional opera training. When he returned he told me that there were no current openings for mezzo-sopranos, gave me his card, and strongly recommended I contact him in a couple of months. I was currently doing my student teaching in music, but I seriously considered quitting to pursue a career in Opera Performance.

Madeline, however, as a result of her lack of self-confidence, wondered:

What do I do? The competition aspect scared me, so I decided to continue with teaching.

The choice marks Madeline as a strong fit, but the reason doesn't necessarily support that conclusion. Madeline took a part time position as an entry position, and remained at that school for three years before moving to her current city of residence. Upon relocation she obtained certification in Vocal Music:

I had been working different temp jobs and finally got a permanent position at the bread factory as receptionist, payroll, and data clerk. Boy did I miss teaching. My supervisor responded with, "You're just a music teacher," when I asked to be let to do typing or other stuff to keep me busy. I had to get a teaching job.

When Madeline found her job, she also found a friend and a mentor in the principal.

I loved my principal, Mr. B. He genuinely cared for and loved the children and his staff. Everyone respected him.

My evaluations were all very good, but what I particularly appreciated was how he gave specific examples of the qualities he was evaluating me on with quotes from the observation. He made me want to do the best job I could!

Unfortunately, after three years, Mr. B. left and the replacement was not of the same caliber. After several years of teaching music to every child in the school and receiving very little respect,

I was even told by a 4th grade teacher, "You are not a real teacher, you just teach music." I had had it. I knew I could have a stronger impact on children by being a classroom teacher with a small group of children. That's why I decided to get a certification in Early Childhood.

Unable to find an appropriate job within her home school Madeline first transferred to a low-income urban school for five years, then to her current school.

I again have a wonderful class. It becomes very difficult as a teacher to meet the needs of every student all of the time, especially in Kindergarten. I am finding it hard and harder to keep up. I am angered that requirements are put on these little people to read and calculate by the end of Kindergarten, without paying any attention to their individual needs. I don't know how much longer I can continue, yet I can't imagine doing anything else with my life.

Although Yee (1990) does not identify a category of teacher between weak fit and strong fit, Madeline's writing about her teaching makes a case for such a category. Assuming a moderate fit category, Madeline may be categorized as a moderate fit, involved stayer. Another possible way to categorize Madeline is to recognize her as someone for whom arbitrary boundaries and categories are not especially helpful or accurate. Using Yee (1990), Madeline may have begun as a weak or moderate fit to education, but she is currently a highly committed, proactive advocate for children. As a National Board Certified teacher in Early Childhood, Madeline also advocates for professionalism in the classroom. Madeline's decision to remain in the classroom and search for grants to support her work with children confirms her fit in the classroom and in the profession.

Elaine Russell may be categorized as a good fit for education. She has detailed recall of her elementary and high school teachers and was inspired by many of them.

I remember that she was in tears at the end of that book, along with the rest of the class. It kind of scared me that she cried, but it just made me love her even more! She introduced me to the world of chapter books. I think she instilled my love of reading that year. I have tried throughout my career to do the same thing for my students.

Mrs. W. taught me to be independent in my learning.

Mrs. T. taught me compassion.

Mr. H. made me feel like I fit in.

Elaine Russell does not discuss choosing a career in education, other than to say that she had a marriage / baby detour before finishing her degree in elementary education. Of her pre-service education she mentions that her supervising teacher

taught many organizational and educational ideas that I still use to this day! I've seen her since then, and she is proud that she could be part of my education.

Elaine Russell has taught in two different school systems and at several grade levels. She attributes some of this amount of change to her natural need to be in constant motion and some to professional development classes she chose where

I have become more aware of individualizing lesson plans and using the different styles of learning to enhance student learning.

For Elaine Russell, however, the bottom line is the students. As part of a prompt, Elaine Russell wrote exhaustively about individual students from her teaching career.

My students have come to visit me over the years. I'm always touched when they remember me, and something specific that we did in my class.

Based on her writing, Elaine Russell would be classified as a good fit stayer. Yet she is planning on changing directions yet again, this time to work in the field of library science, preferably at a school library. Perhaps a better classification for Elaine Russell would be good fit, mover.

Teiko may be classified as a good fit for teaching. She remembers as a child setting up a school on her driveway where

Summer was cool enough for a few good lessons, a snack, and a recess to transpire before my students abandoned me.

At school

I felt safe in my Kindergarten teacher's presence. I remember feeling valued in her classroom.

Teiko was strongly influenced by this teacher, keeping in touch across the years and across the miles. Other teachers influenced Teiko, leading her to her chosen career.

I had spent my life longing to be a "real" teacher, so when it finally happened, it was surreal. Like many heart-felt dreams, it was a true-to-life situation that was difficult to fully grasp.

Teiko also found a strong, positive mentor during student teaching.

Ms. C., her classroom, and students all fit my dream profile of teaching the hearing impaired. When a new position was added to the program the following year, I had to have it.

Teiko has remained in the same school district for her entire career. She has been a teacher of the hearing impaired, a librarian, and a teacher of the gifted. Following the criteria previously cited Teiko might be classified as a good fit stayer. But something has changed for Teiko during the time she has taught.

My current day experience teeters between a great, renewed joy and an utter amazement/frustration at the way we educate children. There is a rather rigid manner in which we approach school. While seeing the need for certain procedures, I would prefer to view our interactions with students on a more open and flexible approach.

My net set of goals for my future includes a minimal role in traditional education. I can't imagine some form of education ever being far from my life. I can imagine a life where I am not driven by the status quo of our educational system. Teachers are used to the struggle. I just want to change my playing field.

Teiko has decided to leave the classroom to return to graduate work and pursue a Ph.D. in the social foundations of education. She has become discontent with the status quo and has decided to work to change it; Teiko has developed an attitude of conscientization (Freire, 1986). It is not completely accurate to cast Teiko as a good fit leaver. Like a square peg that refuses to accommodate a rounded world, perhaps the title refuses-to-fit shaker would be more appropriate.

I am a Teacher of Students in a Classroom

In addition to knowing themselves, teachers know in their classrooms through their students. When teachers look into children's eyes, they search for evidence of the spark of learning. Although this is frequently described as something seen, "I saw the light bulb go on," often the only visible clue is a subtle change of expression on a child's

face, or perhaps a violently waving hand. Interpreting these signs accurately is a way teachers know. An elementary teacher averages twenty-five children each year, or 600 children during a twenty-year career. During the thirty-six weeks of the school year an elementary teacher develops a relationship with these children that rivals that of a parent.

I've had so many students in the last 17 years, but I could probably list some detail about each one. I tell my kids that once they're in my class, they are always one of "my kids," and I will always love them and care about them. (Elaine Russell)

One of my students had a very serious problem with odor and having accidents in his pants. The shocking thing was that he wouldn't tell me when he went. I would notice the wet spot on the carpet or the puddle in the chair. It became my mission to properly potty train him and get him help. (Madeline)

Teachers often tell challenging stories of previous students and their families.

I knew who I wanted to be with them – these beautiful, bright children who could not hear. The surprising factor of real life soon entered in and I found myself less patient than I ever had imagined. Though I often fell short of perfection, I was gratified to see laughter and learning occurring daily. They managed to learn in spite of me! These children were not only beautiful, they were amazing! (Teiko)

I remember one 6th grade girl urinating on herself in the classroom. She had not asked to go to the bathroom. That was an experience! One ill student threw up on my desk – all over the grade book, papers, my shoes, etc. (Bubbles)

I will never forget the day a girl came to my room and asked if I was the same person who had been a music teacher at her old school. I recognized her and told her whose class she had been in, but I couldn't remember her name. This was 7 years after I had seen her last. I couldn't believe she remembered me. Well, she was at my current school doing Community Service in place of going to jail. She told me she had a child and had been messed up with drugs but she was all straightened up. I of course had to give her a "lecture" about her responsibility to her child and the sacrifices she will have to make for her child. I felt happy that she wanted to see me and visit with me. I never saw her again after that day except in the newspaper. She had been brutally murdered during a drug deal. (Madeline)

One of my students who was learning disabled and from a poor family gave me the angel topper off of his family's Christmas tree because they didn't have money to buy me a gift. I still use this angel on my school Christmas tree all these years later and tell the story to all of my kids.
(Elaine Russell)

These stories become part of the sacred story of each teacher's classroom. This sacred story often teaches moral values such as kindness or persistence. These examples can also be part of a teacher's cover story, demonstrating the wisdom of the teacher's actions.

I was very challenged to try to help this kid – I just truly didn't like him. However, the last day of school came, and he gave me a HUG! Then, before his bus left, he gave me another one! I was very surprised. Now he stops by my room frequently to share some tidbit of information about his life. I hope that I affected some change in his behavior. (Elaine Russell)

One of my boys had a serious speech impediment as well as serious anger issues. He was retained in my class for a second year. We developed a relationship of trust, love and understanding. He learned how to maintain his self-control and patience. There were ups and downs, but we really made progress. He moved over the summer and I received a call from his first grade teacher the other day. She was having difficulty with his behavior and she told me that his parents spoke very highly of me and asked if I could give her suggestions. That really made me feel good! He will always have a piece of my heart and I will forever remember the homemade peanut butter and jelly sandwich he made and gave me for Teacher Appreciation Week. The best gift I have ever received.
(Madeline)

Teachers want to “get it right,” although what is “right” shifts under local and national legislative pressures. During the Progression phase of the *currere* writing Charlotte imagined an award for teachers called “The Perfect Education for Elementary Students” given to her for creating a “self-motivated, self-educated classroom for elementary students of all grades and ages.” Universally, the teachers recognize that the pressure for perfection inevitably falls back onto students' performance.

It becomes very difficult as a teacher to meet the needs of every student all of time, especially in Kindergarten. They are not self-sufficient enough to do activities without supervision and/or reminders of instructions. I am finding it harder and harder to keep up. I am angered that requirements are put on these little people to read and calculate by the end of Kindergarten, without paying any attention to their individual development. Kindergarten is no longer the place to play, learn how to socialize and practice sharing and getting along with others. Performance expectations are rising, but the natural growth and development of young children remains the same. The success of a child is awarded to the parent and the failure is blamed on the teacher. (Madeline)

It comes back to judging teachers based on the kids' scores. (Teiko)

Teachers who know through their classroom practice, know how hard and when to push a student to achieve.

Mostly what bothers me about kids is when they refuse to try their best, or want me to accept mediocre work when I know they have the ability to do something quite wonderful. It bothers me when kids don't live up to their potential. I set high goals for my students, but nowadays, kids just aren't motivated to do things on their own – they expect rewards for everything. (Elaine Russell)

This desire to achieve perfection through the learning and actions of students shapes classroom life and classroom knowledge. Teachers know through their internal curricula generators, the often unvoiced compasses that guides them through “teachable moments.”

This knowing sets classroom standards and teaching priorities.

My greatest priority in the classroom is to reaffirm what each child suspects to be true – that each one is a wonder of possibilities whose talents must be explored, that each one will experience failures from which they can learn, that each one can greet the day with an attitude of her/her choosing, and that each one of them has a fan club who believes in him/her. (Teiko)

Knowing through students drives teachers' classroom decisions. This is a form of knowing not available to those outside of the classroom. It is this knowing that gives weight to teacher-research.

I am a Teacher in a School

Teachers know what they know because they are a part of a school. Mentor teachers, some assigned by the administration and some self-appointed, loan their experienced voices to less experienced teachers until the new teachers are able to develop expert classroom voices of their own. Belenky et al. (1990) found that women at the bottom of the power hierarchy transition to knowers in their own right by seeking knowledge from their peers. In a similar way, less experienced teachers borrow the voices of mentor teachers because mentor teachers' are closer to their own experiences than are administrators or college professors. This process begins during student teaching:

My major was Deaf Education and the positions in the area were few and far between. Luck intervened during my practice teaching and I found myself with a mentor and a champion. (Teiko)

The teacher I did my student teaching with was Mrs. W. She taught many organizational and educational ideas that I still use to this day! I've seen her since then, and she is proud that she could be a part of my education. (Elaine Russell)

and continues throughout a teachers' career.

One of my first memories – I was putting up a bulletin board during those pre-school work days when a “mature” 3rd grade teacher stopped in and introduced herself. Then she proceeded to tell me that if I wanted to know anything to ask her instead of the principal or anyone else because she knew better than they did. (Bubbles)

The other teacher that I will always remember was my voluntary mentor teacher. There were no paid mentor teachers then. Mrs. J was about 45; always groomed, slender, students loved her. She did not believe in giving students failing grades. I did not have to ask for help, she just came down to my room knowing “when” I would need help. (Bubbles)

Open communication between teachers creates emotional connectedness and belonging, strengthening the bond between the teacher and the school community.

I was hired at 5:00 p.m. on Friday. 8:00 a.m. Monday I had to be in meetings for the beginning of the year! I didn't have much time to do any decorating in my room, so the teachers on my grade level helped me out with some bulletin board stuff that was already made. They were pretty helpful all year. (Elaine Russell)

I also have a great appreciation for my fellow participants. They are neat people! I am ever grateful for the opportunity to work with amazing adults and children. (Teiko)

A kind word from a colleague or comment about something I've done to affect change to them or something in my school is great. (Elaine Russell)

On the other hand, offering or withholding help and advice are ways teachers enact power over each other.

I don't remember a whole lot about my first job. I guess I don't want to. I recall doing my first music program. I had heard some of the teachers talking about how they disliked having to help the other music teacher with programs by helping with the costumes, lines, and organization. So, I did it all myself. I must have proven myself to the other teachers because from that day on they were so nice to me and offered to help me anytime with anything. I felt good. (Madeline)

One thing that sticks out about that day was when we were taking a bathroom break before lunch, and a third grade teacher walked by me and griped me out in front of both of our classes because my kids were "blocking the hall" when hers were on their way to lunch. (Elaine Russell)

As teachers gain experience, they may become mentors for less experienced teachers entering the field. Additionally, as teachers gain experience, they have a reference for judging the value of other's advice. They become less accepting of other teachers' ideas if they judge those teachers to be less competent.

My first year, I didn't have any students that qualified for special education classes. The next year, however, I had two. I didn't have any experience as to how to modify work or how to help them in the classroom. Our special ed teacher was incompetent – I received notes

from her that didn't make any sense, and she couldn't spell at all. All they did in her class was play games and eat snacks. (Madeline)

I didn't have too many teacher "role models" at my school. There wasn't anybody else who liked doing new things and creative things like I did. I haven't really allowed a colleague to impose changes on me or my way of teaching. I've had many try, and their negativity has rubbed off on me. For several years, I taught with some very negative thinkers. Unfortunately, I picked up this personality trait. The negativity didn't just affect me, but also the way I treated others, including students. I regret that ever happening. I made a huge change when I decided to leave that position and change schools. It has made all the difference. (Elaine Russell)

Of course there had to be a music program! I knew nothing about putting on a music program. Somehow the students pulled it off and put on a great winter wonderland type of program. I became friends with a 3rd grade teacher who had some music background, and she helped a lot. She was also more than happy to take credit for the program. I really didn't mind. I was just happy I didn't embarrass myself. (Bubbles)

I would have to say that every teacher I have worked with has been helpful. I've learned how to do things, and how NOT to do things by my coworkers. One of my current coworkers has been instrumental in the way I teach. She is an excellent teacher with twice as many years of experience than I. (Elaine Russell)

Some teachers experience "unhelpful" mentoring because they are of a different race.

I had one interview and was offered the job. It was in the northern part of the city, an area known for drive-bys, drug dealings, murders, etc. The houses and few businesses in the neighborhood had bars on the windows and the population of the school was 100% African-American. Boy, is it a new world. They speak their own language, and the neglect and abuse is common and almost expected. The most challenging aspect of the job was being the minority in the school. There were 9 teachers that were white with the rest of the faculty and staff being black, including the principal. I was so naive. I didn't think color had anything to do with being a teacher. After all, aren't we all there for the same reason, the kids? Well, it was made perfectly clear to me that I was inferior being that I am white. 'You just don't know how to teach our children.' (Madeline)

The school climate that fosters positive mentoring is established by the building administration.

I wanted to quit teaching during that year. I told my principal that several times during the year. He just kept on telling me that next year would be better. He was pretty supportive with my discipline policies and stood up for me with parents. (Elaine Russell)

On the other hand, the administration can cause a teacher to lose confidence and voice.

Our new principal, Mrs. H., began her first faculty meeting by standing on a table and calling the teachers to order. Everything went down hill from then on. She had her “favorites,” talked behind teachers’ backs and then stabbed them. She even had teachers stabbing other teachers. The morale in our school went so low that no one was happy. She was the devil. Things got so bad for me that I would become sick to my stomach hearing her voice or seeing her in the hall. I would walk around the outside of the building or down opposite halls so as to avoid her. (Madeline)

I found it encouraging that our group provided warmth, friendship, and support for each other.

I have enjoyed the sharing of issues and experiences, but most of all the feeling of trust. I find it difficult to “vent” with other teachers about school related issues because I have been a victim of gossip, lies and betrayal. This group has given me a greater sense of security with “true” friends who can relate. (Madeline)

Being part of this group has made me realize how much I love teaching and being with other teachers just like me. (Elaine Russell)

The spirit of vulnerability in our group was a precious commodity.

I am a Teacher in a Community

Teachers know because they are part of a community. Teachers, particularly elementary teachers, are substitute mother figures and as such are responsible for nurturing children’s bodies and emotions as well as their minds. The responsibility may be nerve wracking.

I was very nervous that first day of school! What would my students look like, be like, and would they like me? (Elaine Russell)

During my second year of teaching I was often heard saying, “If I had this group last year, I would not be teaching this year.” The students were

academically lower over all. Parent involvement was not good. Nothing else had changed much. Same administration. Just one of those classes where you think there must have been something in the water the 9 months these babies were in the womb. (Bubbles)

Something that bothered me about that year was when I had to explain menstruation to two students. They started at school and were not prepared at all! Yikes! I was also dismayed when I had to inform parents that their kids needed deodorant and baths! (Elaine Russell)

As a part of a community, teachers are expected to be “on” any time that they are in public, be it going to church on Sunday or grocery shopping on Saturday. When a teacher’s family situation changes, that teacher’s new emotions and behaviors can affect classroom performance.

It was a rough adjustment. I was single at the time, in the process of divorcing my first husband. You cannot party at night and stay awake for reading groups during the day – even at a young age. I eventually moved back to 6th grade and started counseling an hour and a half a day. The community where I lived is a close knit, small community. (Bubbles)

My daughter is leaving and I can’t talk about it. I’m tired of being broke. I’m at a crossroads. Is this what I want to do? Is this where I want to be? I can’t sleep. (Elaine Russell)

What a teacher does in the classroom can have ramifications in the community.

We had gone to an older gym for a program and were seated on bleachers. I kept asking my students to be quiet to no avail. I looked around and could not tell who exactly was talking – looked like they were all talking to me. So I assigned “I will not talk” sentences to the whole class. One of our janitor’s daughters was in my class. He came to school before I arrived the next morning and told my principal it was a good thing I wasn’t there and that he (the principal) had met him because he would have beat me up – because his daughter was not talking. I was very conservative about using mass punishment after that. (Bubbles)

By threatening Bubbles with physical violence, one parent changed her discipline plan.

On the other hand, connections with the community can be a powerful, positive force in shaping classroom and personal interactions.

There is a lot of reflection with teaching that has to do with the fact that we see the kids and their siblings grow up and see their challenges.
(Teiko)

One year I had twins who were extremely bright and participated in the gifted program at the school. Their family became my second family for many years, as their younger sister was one of my daughter's best friends, and I also had their little brother in fifth grade by request. (Elaine Russell)

Stories like this are an example of the fragile story many teachers tell which might be entitled, That's When I Became a Different/ Better Teacher.

I had a bond with these youngsters like no other. It became my mission and personal goal to learn methods and techniques to deal with angry/difficult children. I also realized that I may be the only one in the system (or even their life) who will fight for them and will never give up on them. I will love them all forever. (Madeline)

These fragile stories frequently appear in the midst of secret and cover stories.

I am a Teacher in a Nation

Near the end of the progression stage of the *currere* writing, participants were asked to write a letter to a superior as though they were about to retire.

Interestingly, no teacher mentioned salary concerns. In these letters, and discussions about these letters, the members of the group began to think beyond the boundaries of their classroom, school, and community. They considered the general state of education in the nation. First Charlotte spoke of the futility of the idea of changing the system:

I don't wish to say anything about improving education. That mostly falls on deaf ears, and there's no use leaving a bitter taste in my place because I "sounded off" so to speak. I would just like to leave quietly and pursue the next phase of my life.

Teiko put words to her emotions:

My underlying frustrations with the current focus of teaching comes to the surface when asked to imagine the future. I can't look that far ahead

because education doesn't support that kind of dreaming. I'm worried about whether I'll have enough positive supporters and whether my project will continue. I cannot imagine some form of education ever being far from my life. I can imagine a life where I am not driven by the status quo of our educational system. It's painful to watch teachers and parents struggle with the paperwork. I'm concerned for students. They aren't being given challenges they are seeking. I see so much literature that's pointing to other things than what No Child is concerned with. But nobody is paying attention.

Elaine Russell seemed to agree with Charlotte and Teiko:

I'm glad that there are people who think and feel like me about certain subjects. I have a hard time looking much farther ahead than four to six months. I'm glad to know I'm not the only one who feels like I do about the destruction of my idea of being a teacher. I realize I am getting tired of the battle.

Madeline expanded on this theme by including a metaphor of education as a machine:

I am so tired and frustrated with the educational system and their unrealistic "solutions" to low performance and success of students. I am disgusted by the politics and super-egos who continue to dictate how to teach, what to teach, when to teach it, and claim they know what students need to learn, how they learn, and why they learn. The children are seen as cookie-cutter gingerbread boys and girls in an assembly line. When one comes out of the machine undercooked, missing a button or with two different colored eyes, the teachers working on the line are to blame . . . even when funds are not provided to maintain the ovens and provide enough ingredients. I am tired of justifying my job, qualifications, expertise, and self-worth being a teacher to know-it-alls who continue to insist that teaching is the easiest profession with summers off and other breaks and holidays. These people have no idea what is involved with being a teacher, and they have no desire to try and find out. They're afraid that if they discover the truth there will be no one left to blame but themselves for the failure of their children.

Perhaps Bubbles summed it up for the group:

I want kids to have great expectations, but I want to be realistic. As I think about new goals my mind keeps going back to working with children in some way. Some things don't change – maybe just situations.

One of the poignant moments of this study came during the recording of the above statements. In a room full of bright, compassionate, competent teachers, the light of the

future of education had been nearly dimmed to extinction. If this group was representative of experienced elementary teachers, there may well be a mass exodus of educators from the profession long before legislators repair the damage done by No Child Left Behind.

A Review of the Initial Questions

The challenge of drawing conclusions in a qualitative research study is supporting the conclusions with “hard data.” This study has the advantage of being able to offer a few benchmarks. The first question addressed by the study is whether *currere* was an effective method for creating teacher autobiographies. First, all members of the group completed all the writing prompts and shared a copy of all of their writing with the researcher. Second, all members of the group remarked during group discussions that the group interactions were supportive, sustaining, and fun. Furthermore, each member approached me individually at least once during the month after the study ended and remarked how much they missed the time together. Finally, all but one of the participants reported that the process of writing, particularly the regression stage, helped them understand their present pedagogy and life choices. Overall, then, I conclude that *currere* was a successful strategy for this group of teachers to both encourage them to develop bonds with each other and to use to create their autobiographies. The caveat to this is that the analysis and synthesis portions of the autobiographies were short, usually one to three pages. While quantity does not signify quality, I question my ability to facilitate these two stages effectively. Synthesis was especially difficult for group members to process and the idea of rewriting a previous story in light of the present was so totally foreign that no one attempted the task. However, all members did reach

conclusions during the analysis and synthesis stages, and all participants did negotiate plans for their educational careers.

Viewing all of the texts as a single work, two themes emerge. First, the group members all wrote and talked about the importance of caring. Loyalty to others, family, students and self was a strong component of this caring attitude. Group members often voiced concern for each other's physical and mental health during meetings. They also discussed, in group and through their writings, the importance of collegial interactions, of sharing in a safe atmosphere. Finally, the theme of caring was demonstrated through the stories they told of themselves as children and of their students. As Elaine Russell said, "What we do today is based on the past." As an outgrowth of this realization, everyone discussed the importance of creating caring classroom environments for children. Because this was a group whose members cared about each other, we were inspired to be brave and share our secret stories.

A second theme throughout the writings and discussions was fear. Fear of being judged by others often appeared in group member's writings. Fear of being judged by peers who were younger or slimmer was often voiced during group meetings. Participants were afraid of being weak, afraid of being excluded, and afraid they were not "getting it right" (Madeline). They held themselves to the standard of perfection and feared falling short of this mark. Fear was behind the tension between home and school. "What will happen if I don't get it all done?" was a common question. Fear also dominated discussions involving the powerlessness of teaching and the desperation of being held to impossible expectations. During the second semester of the school year, a number of problems surfaced. Pay increases that were promised by the state legislature

were challenged at the local level. Teaching contracts for the current school year were not offered until early May. Within the building it became apparent that changes involving special education, English for second language learners, and math instruction for the coming year were going to have a strong impact on everyone's classroom. To add to the mix, the building administrator and some of the staff were experiencing interpersonal difficulties. The building administrator and the staff were pulling faculty into the problem, sometimes by indirectly suggesting that faculty should choose sides. This was discussed at length during group meetings but not recorded by members' request. Group member's powerlessness over these situations led to an increase in health related problems across the group, including but not limited to headaches, nausea, depression and flair ups of auto-immune conditions. Palmer (1998) states that fear is so basic to humans that "all the great spiritual traditions originate in an effort to overcome its effects on our lives" (p. 57). Looking at the world, or the classroom, through a fear-colored lens must certainly change interactions between teachers and students. This is a direction for future research.

The second question addressed by the study is whether autobiographies written using *currere* affect teacher retention. During the final group meeting the members shared the ways their lives had changed during the year and their plans for the years to come. Bubbles and Charlotte plan to remain in then current positions until they retire in three to five years. Teiko was formally accepted into a Ph.D. program in social foundations at a major state university. Elaine Russell is actively seeking a public librarian's position for the upcoming school year as she completes her Master's in library Science. Madeline has recommitted to moving forward with her classroom career by

writing grants for innovative materials while she completes her degree in counseling. If the question is specifically “are all of the teachers now committed to completing their careers in their current classrooms,” then the answer must be no. However, it is obvious from the career choices the members of this group made that writing through the *currere* process was helpful both as a way to analyze present choices and as a way to recommit to at least some portion of education as a career choice for the future.

Yee (1990) reports that classroom effectiveness and job satisfaction, two measures of teacher attrition/retention, are closely linked with teachers’ belief that they make a difference in the lives of students. Examining group member’s writing demonstrated that the teachers who were categorized as “good fit” felt that they had given a great deal to children through their work in the classroom. The writing, however, worked to disrupt the classification system. First, it may be that the categories of weak fit, good fit, stayers, and leavers need to be supplemented to include moderate fit, movers, and shakers. Second, there is some evidence, through the group members’ writings, that such categories may not remain stable over a teacher’s career. Teiko, in particular, has left the category of good fit because she can no longer be a curricular spectator, implementing programs she knows are detrimental to children’s creativity. Although these categories may be helpful when administrators are attempting to predict which new teachers will stay in their school and teach children effectively, collegial interaction and mentoring, as well as administrative support, are possibly more important predictors of whether a teacher will stay or leave and how successful that teacher will be.

Discussion of Questions Generated by the Research and Directions for Further Research

The career teachers in this research group have all made substantial commitments to the profession. Within their classrooms, they have specific roles as educators and substitute parents. In our group, members gradually took on distinctive roles during the time we spent together. My roles in the group included bringing the snacks, taking the notes, providing the prompts, and asking the questions. It is to these questions that I next turn.

Question 1 - Am I also part of the project? How will the group members be able to reach valid conclusions? Who judges that validity? On the other hand, if the process changes focus, will I be able to spot when the participants began to do the work more because they felt driven to know about themselves than because it was something I asked for help on? Will the later writing, powered more by internal drive, be any more or less valid for the individual than the early writings?

The first question that I generated as I worked through the narrative analysis of the data stemmed from a concern about the selection process for the group members. Despite my best efforts to use a purposeful sampling technique, what happened was that colleagues I knew and who respected me volunteered to be part of the group. Part of my concern was that a sampling that was of convenience might not be representative of the entire population of elementary teachers in the district. Checking district records I discovered that the members of the group were representative of district elementary teachers in terms of ethnicity and gender, and although somewhat older and more

experienced than the average, very close to typical case sampling (Patton, 2002, p. 236). This district tends to retain their personnel for many years. While some teachers transfer between buildings, the majority remain in the district for a substantial portion of their careers. However, the average elementary teacher's age and number of years of experience for the district are 44 and 14 respectively while our group average age was 51 and average experience was 23 years. Because the group was older and more experienced than the average, the results may not be representative of younger, less experienced teachers in the same district.

My second concern with the group members was that because I was friends with each one individually, I might be placing too great a burden on them. They would feel pressured to continue the process even if they were not comfortable with it, just because they felt they owed it to me, personally. Through the informed consent process I explained what was required. When no one asked to leave the study, I assumed that the level of participation required was not onerous. In reviewing the quick writes, I came to realize that the group members put huge amounts of time and effort into their writing for the group. Their synthesis statements lead me to believe that they feel they learned enough about themselves to justify the effort.

The third part of this question dealt with concerns about validity. Group members were guided through the process and reached conclusions. I rejected the impulse to judge the "correctness" of the conclusions the group members reached. They were not pressured to submit their work, and all indicated that they had ample time to write. The conclusions each reached must stand as accurately representing the writer's intent. They judged their own validity.

The remainder of the questions proved to be moot. The writings showed clearly for each person when process changed focus from writing to please the researcher to writing to please the writer. It is possible that the analysis and synthesis steps may contain information that is more helpful to understanding the writer's motivation, but that is more a result of the design of *currere* than to validity issues.

Question 2 Are we more like Columbus (re)discovering the New World, the Natives discovering Columbus or both? What sort of New World are we creating together as a group? Together with our historical, Native selves? I wonder now, after having experienced the entire process, if there are any teacher-classroom interactions not shaped in whole or part by our past.

The first part of this question considers whether group members were enacting colonization, resistance, or both. Colonization happens when an individual or group with more perceived power usurps the space of an indigenous population. Sometimes colonization includes creating a self-sustaining hegemony. A researcher without an emic perspective might have acted as the colonist and the teachers as natives. Had I participated more fully in the group discussions and not held myself at a distance by note taking, I would be able to categorically state that we were all natives, and any colonization that occurred happened as individual group members claimed or reclaimed their own psychic territories. Because I was, to some degree, an observer, there is a possibility that the group members may feel exploited for the purposes of my research. There was no evidence of such in the writings done in or outside of group, or in the group discussions.

The second half of the question reflects upon whether there are teacher behaviors that are different from those created by our early experiences. Although patterns of interaction form when we are young, it is also possible to change them. I know I am a much different teacher now than I was when I began my career 21 years ago. If Dewey is correct, and we are the sum of our experiences, then I do not see how it is possible to remain the same, day after day at a teaching position in an elementary school where each day is different from the last. Therefore, while our oldest memories and behavior patterns have a profound effect on who we are and how we teach, it must be true that some, perhaps many, of our teaching behaviors are consciously constructed by comparing the teachers we see when we look in the mirror with the teachers we want to become.

Question 3 - What happens for the participants at this tension of connectedness and disconnectedness and how does this tension change the landscape of the place created by a *carrere* writing group.

This tension is located where teachers and students make contact in emotional and intellectual arenas and has a great deal to do with how vested teachers are in their pedagogy and in their students as well as how involved students are with their learning and their teachers. In many ways, teachers are substitute parents, elementary teachers more so than teachers of middle and high school are. As parents, educators not only want the best for their students, they are charged with ensuring that the children are behaving properly and developing character traits that will result in good citizenship. As teachers, educators are charged with providing appropriate instruction to all children so that they will achieve at least grade level competency, and hopefully their potential in each subject. A popular pro-teacher statement lists all of the many jobs a teacher does each day, then

states: You want me to do all of this, and I don't get to pray. The clear intention in that statement is that heroic efforts are required to be an effective teacher and that the boundaries between teacher and parent are not all clear. In my experience, these boundaries are constantly being negotiated on a day by day, if not minute by minute, basis. Locating this tension in the landscape of a *currere* writing group and tracking the connectedness and disconnectedness of the participants to each other and to their students is beyond the scope of this study. It is safe to say, however, that tensions were identified and reflected upon through individual and group writings and through group discussions.

Question 4 How does fear of the unknown and fear of the forgotten chain our present lives and cage our futures?

This question is best answered through further exploration of psychoanalysis, which assumes that our fears have a substantial control over our current lives and our future choices. *Currere* is grounded in psychoanalytic techniques, so this question could be explored by a more in-depth study with writing prompts designed to delve into ways teachers' fears affect their pedagogy and educational decisions.

Question 5 Who else makes decisions based on what they believe to be right and wrong?

It is assumed that all teachers, and really most adults, make decisions based on what they view as right and wrong. What Charlotte was describing was more like Belenky et al. (1997) classification of the inner voice of subjective knowledge, the "infallible gut" (p. 53). Despite the fact that only Charlotte specifically mentioned such a process, it cannot be assumed that others would not have similar rational for their actions

in their classrooms. It is also quite conceivable that other group members make classroom decisions based on a “rightness” located in exterior authority or, conversely, in “moral imperatives” (p. 149) and/or praxis (Freire, 1986). This question could be redesigned as either a research question or as an interview question for an interview or series of interviews to follow up the writing process.

There is currently a regular radio feature broadcast on National Public Radio entitled “This I Believe.” Based on a 1950’s radio feature hosted by Edward R. Murrow, this revival invites Americans from all walks of life to submit short essays that share their core values and personal philosophies. Some of these essays may be found at: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4538138>. Such essays are limited to 500 words, are written in the affirmative, and are written in plain, rather than academic language. Because I believe in brevity and clarity, I use this format below to suggest additional directions for further research.

I believe that every person has been shaped by the stories they tell themselves and the stories they tell others. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) discuss the stories we tell in great detail – the sacred stories of the larger world, the secret stories private and personal, and the cover stories where we recreate ourselves as the most acceptable beings we can imagine. I would like to locate public and private stories, conversations, and dialogues of the teachers and discover the physical and mental spaces where these conversations played out. I would like to journey to the safe space teachers’ lounge not as a voyeur but as a friend, intent on producing accessible research to help teachers consciously create curriculum. I believe further research using *currere* might delineate the boundaries and

edges of these dialogic spaces for teachers and spark an attitude of self-awareness and self-observation.

I believe that experienced teachers will soon be leaving education for other careers. This is not a trend predictable from current research. From the informal discussions I have had with other teachers and the public statements teachers have made regarding the imposed regulations bundled with the No Child Left Behind Act, however, it appears that health insurance and retirement benefits may be among the few things holding experienced teachers in the classroom. Losing our nation's experienced teaching force while at the same time losing 50% of newly trained teachers will create a disturbance in the educational system that may not be correctable. I believe that further research is needed to develop ways to retain experienced as well as new teachers.

I believe that the most pivotal aspect of this study was the group interaction. The trust that came from imposing "The Las Vegas Rule" on ourselves allowed group members to take risks and begin to tell their secret stories. While there is a wealth of information regarding group dynamics and adults learning, there is a space for research linking the autobiographical techniques of *currere* to teachers' personal growth, professional growth, and group dynamics. Too often elementary schools become micro-societies replicating high school where the pretty are popular and those in the background snipe and gossip. To be treated as professionals we must act as professionals, putting the education of the students above all else and seeking to add our professional voices to the educational dialogue that shapes public policy. I believe that further research designed to help educators discover and challenge their professional voices may serve to improve education on the local and global levels.

My Emic Position

In retrospect, I find it pretty presumptuous on my part as both a group member and a researcher to assume that the participants want to assess and change their level of empowerment. Sometimes the stories we tell ourselves, be they sacred, secret or cover, are comfortable and comforting. To do and think another way is frightening and possibly not beneficial. In this group of teachers, Bubbles and Charlotte are nearing retirement age; Madeline, Elaine Russell, and Betty have all at least 15 years before they are eligible to retire. Yet all are considering leaving the classroom and joined this group, in part, to search for answers to their question: “What do I want to do with my career?” I have assumed that since they seemed to be at a crossroads, and they joined the group, it was my job to lead them to a deeper understanding of themselves. Throughout our meetings I worried “What responsibilities do I have to this group and to the individuals? Am I pushing this transformation agenda on them and offering no recourse?” while at the same time I silently cheered whenever group members seemed enthusiastic about the (re)storying process.

Clandinin and Connelly (1996) describe the world of the teacher as consisting of two places: the classroom and the professional space outside the classroom, a place “littered with imposed prescriptions” (p. 25). Each participant came to this professional space outside the classroom with a wealth of sacred, secret, and cover stories. My own sacred story is: “Researchers learn important information. By becoming a researcher, I will learn important information about teaching.” My secret story can be summarized as: “I am a researcher. I work in a space above this group. I decide what is important because I have spent five years learning what other researchers believe to be important. I

am the most important person in the group because without me, there would not be a group.” I find this story to be in conflict with the beliefs I have always espoused regarding equality and respect. The cover story constructed to justify holding this academic elitist perspective can be stated: “I am here because I believe in you, and I believe this research may lead each of you to an enlightened perspective. I am part of this group, not just the researcher. I am learning about myself just as you are learning about yourselves. We are in this together because we are friends as well as colleagues. You can trust me.”

During the course of this study I intended to act as a participant in the study. I felt that by telling my own secret stories of classroom and personal disasters I would allow the others in the group to share their secret stories instead of relying on their cover stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996). What I found was that I had serious difficulties acting as both researcher and researched. While I did tell a few of my stories during the group time, for the most part I shared only my quick writes, and then only after the other group members had exhausted the topic themselves. I was exhausted by the physical note taking during the group times, although the group preferred my note taking to tape recording the sessions. In short, from my perspective I was a part of the group only by virtue of my presence at the weekly meetings. Yet, in the eyes of the members of the group, I am forever one of them.

There were other sacred stories I might have learned and lived, but the story I chose was a force in the shaping group dynamics and outcomes. I would like to revisit this methodology at a later time without the pressures of dissertation creation. My stories might be different, and less conflicting, by then.

Conclusion

Madeline introduced the idea of getting to know her colleagues in situations that transcend normal teacher-to-teacher interactions. This idea appears again later in others' writings as they reflect on the changes they notice as a result of this project, signaling a shift for the members of the group. Initially we spoke rarely in the hallways unless we had specific school business with each other. Working through the process of reflection and sharing of our reflections opened up a great deal of vulnerability. The payoff for opening up was the connection with each other. This was a study that changed lives, mine included.

Realistically, teaching salaries may never approach levels comparative with those of other professions requiring a four-year degree. However, teachers frequently cite not just salary, but also lack of collegial support and lack of time for reflection among the reasons they leave the profession. Unlike decisions about salary, decisions to support teachers in achieving collegial and reflective interactions can be made by building administrators. During this study, the building administrator was supportive of the process in a peripheral way: she allowed the group to meet in the school, to have food in a classroom, and she allowed the group members to be released from classroom duties ten to fifteen minutes early on meeting days. As a result of this minor investment, five teachers who began the year unsure as to their futures in education came to career decisions. Although not all stayed at their assignments, the ones who stayed grew to understand why they stayed. Those who left gained an understanding not only of why they wished to leave, but what they planned to do in the future. It is important to note that, in one way or another, all five remained in the profession. Using a structured,

supportive system like *currere* to help teachers create their educational autobiographies and to reflect over their educational careers is one way administrators may improve teacher retention.

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APPENDIX A

Sample Writing Prompts

In-Group, Quick Write Writing Prompts (one prompt per session, rotating through the four phases of the project):

1. Why did you agree to participate in this study? (Why are you continuing to participate in this study?)
2. In what ways did your writing this week challenge you?
3. What kinds of things are you learning about yourself and your practice through your writing?
4. In what ways are the group interactions affecting your writing and the sharing of your writing with others?

APPENDIX B

Prompts for Out-of-Group, Independent Currere Writing (1 set of prompts per week)

Stage One – Regression:

1. Think back to when you were a child and going to school. What people and events do you remember? How did they make you feel? Describe how you were taught in elementary school, middle school, high school, and college. Describe some of the teachers you had. Which ones stand out? What happened that makes you remember them? Who influenced you to become a teacher?
2. Think back to your first year of teaching. What happened? Which children stick in your mind? Which colleagues are easy to remember? What was the best thing that happened? What was the worst thing that happened? Who were your teaching role models? How did you spend your time?
3. How was your second year different from your first? Which children stood out? Who were your teaching role models? In what ways (if any) did you find your role in the classroom to be the same. In what ways (if any) was it different?
4. In what ways has your teaching changed from your first year? What changes have you made yourself? What changes did a colleague or a principal impose on you from outside? Who helped you most during your professional career? Who helped or even hindered you? Which children stand out? What made your day? Who or what exasperated you?

Stage Two – Progression

1. Imagine you are in a room, watching television. The name of the show is: “My Life as a Teacher”. It is a show about you. The show is set in the future – perhaps five or ten years from now. It is your future, so you write the script. What is happening in the show? Besides you, who are the main characters? What is the setting for the show? What are the children like? What is your classroom like? What is the school like? What are you teaching? How are you teaching? How do you feel? What is going to happen next to the main character?
2. Imagine you are about to receive recognition for something you have accomplished in the field of education. This was something you only dreamed would be possible back in 2006, but now it is accomplished. What did you do? How did you do it? Who did it with you? How do you feel about this? Who is in the audience? Who is presenting the award?
3. It is five to ten years in the future. You have attained your professional goals. Write a new set of goals for the next five to ten years. How is this new set of goals different from the goals you already attained?
4. You are about to retire. You are writing a letter to your superior explaining why you are retiring and what you have accomplished during your career. You can also take this opportunity to thank those who have helped you and to point out problems that should be resolved to improve education.

Stage Three – Analysis

1. This stage is about looking at what you have written, and write about what you have written. This is a time to link the past and the future with your present. As you reread what you have written so far, what ideas show up over and over again? In what ways do these ideas ring as true for your past as for your present and your future?
2. As you reread your writing, what parts are you drawn to? What parts do you wish you had done differently? Which experiences are you proud of? Which experiences make you sad? Which experiences make you angry? Which experiences leave you with mixed feelings? What decisions do you make today that are influenced by your past? How are decisions you make today influenced by what you hope for your future?
3. As you reread your writing, and your writing about your writing, try to put your experiences into different categories. Here is one way to do that. Take a stack of note cards and put a word or two about each experience on each card, just enough to jog your memory. Now sort the cards into piles that make sense to you. What categories did you come up with? Which categories did you create that you thought would have many cards but just had a few, or vice versa? Which categories surprised you? Did you have any categories that made you feel sad or angry or confused?
4. Take the note cards out again, this time sort them into different stacks with new categories. How are these new groupings different from the original groupings? Do these categories feel more “safe” or less “safe” than the first set? What are the “big ideas” or themes you see in your professional life? How are they played out in your past, present and future selves?

Stage Four – Synthesis

1. In what ways are you unique, special, different, creative, empathetic, etc.? What have you learned that was surprising? What did you always believe about yourself was confirmed through this process?
2. Select a story from your past that you weren't happy about. Imagine you are holding up a magnifying glass with a special lens. This lens only lets the good things through. Use this special lens to look at the story you selected. What were the good parts? Now rewrite the story emphasizing the good parts. How do you feel about your new story? Repeat this as often as possible with the stories you feel the least happy about. Do the same with stories from the future.
3. What do you want to do? What are you going to do about it? Make a First/Next list to set yourself off on the path toward your goal. List the thing you need to do first, followed by the next steps. Set out a realistic timeline. Who will help you keep on track? What are the obstacles? How will you overcome them?
4. What have you learned about your life from this project? What are the big ideas of your professional career? How does the process of writing and reflecting change the way you see yourself and the way you think about your past and your future? What do you find yourself doing differently now than you did back in September? What decisions have you made as a result of this process? What are your new stories?

APPENDIX C

Prompts for the Last Week of Analysis

Quick Write Prompt -

In what ways are the group interactions affecting your writing and the sharing of your writing with others?

Currere Prompt - The wrap up of Stage 3

As you reread your writing, and your writing about your writing, try to put your experiences into different categories.

Here is one way to do that. Take a stack of note cards and put a word or two about each experience on each card, just enough to jog your memory.

- Now sort the cards into piles that make sense to you. Name each stack.
- What stacks did you come up with?
- Which stacks surprised you?
- Did you have any stacks that made you feel sad or angry or confused?

Take the note cards out again, this time sort them into different stacks with new categories.

- How are these new groupings different from the original groupings?
- Do these groups feel more “safe” or less “safe” than the first set?
- What are the “big ideas” or themes you see in your professional life?
- How are they played out in your past, present and future selves?

If all of that didn't give you something to write about, try this:

Pick 3 ideas or events from the past few weeks that remind you of something that happened from your past and/or something that you imagine for your future. Describe each event/idea, tell how it links to the past and/or to the future, and tell how you feel about that.

Bring this with you next week or send it to me by e-mail.

Here's the beginning of my draft –

When I first sorted my cards I had the stacks named family, achievement, struggles and pain, broken promises and bad mistakes, stuff I don't understand, and work as a hobby.

I was not too surprised to find a family stack or an achievement stack. I knew the struggles and pain stack was there but I didn't want to call it that for a long time. The broken promises and bad mistakes stack is full of stupid stuff I've said or done over the years, especially stuff that has hurt kids. I was surprised to see so many of my cards falling into that stack. I guess I carry a sort of idealized version of myself around in my head that allows me to get up and get on with the day. When I pulled out the things I remember from the past, and the stuff I'm doing today, I found a lot of stuff I wasn't very proud of. Of course, I probably don't remember the good stuff because that's just the stuff I'm supposed to be doing. The bad stuff sure sticks like glue.

I had a short stack of stuff I don't understand, but that's probably because I've been working through this process and have answered some stuff about myself. The stack that made me both sad and angry was the work as a hobby stack. I realized that I never really have done anything much but work, and I've never really wanted to. I see myself as a

timid mouse in areas other than work, and I'm angry I haven't used much more of my life to make connections to others outside of work and to develop interests beyond the classroom.

On my second sort I had: ugly ducklings and swans, overworked and underpaid, waiting, and fears.

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Monday, July 10, 2006
IRB Application No ED06139
Proposal Title: Restoring Ourselves: Using Currere to Examine Teachers' Careers

Reviewed and Processed as: Expedited

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 7/9/2007

Principal Investigator(s)

Diane S. Brown 200 S. Indianwood Ave. Broken Arrow, OK 74012	David Yellin 254 Willard Stillwater, OK 74078
--------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Beth McTernan in 415 Whitehurst (phone: 405-744-5700, beth.mcternan@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,



Sue C. Jacobs, Chair
Institutional Review Board

VITA

Diane Sue Brown

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis: RESTORYING OURSELVES: USING *CURRERE* TO EXAMINE

TEACHERS' CAREERS

Major Field: Curriculum and Instruction in Education

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- | | | |
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| 2002 – current | Oklahoma State University Writing Project | Stillwater, OK |
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Candidate for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major Field: CIED

Scope and Method of Study:

This qualitative study was designed to address teacher retention by increasing teachers' opportunities for reflection and collegial interaction. Five participants and the researcher met fourteen times over a four-month period. Participants were all at a self-described career turning point and came to the group seeking answers about the viability of continuing in their current teaching placements. Participants wrote their educational autobiographies using *currere*, a structured system designed to assist in the reflection of a person's life in education. During group meetings the participants wrote about and discussed the process of creating their autobiographies. Data was analyzed using narrative analysis and the hermeneutic cycle.

Findings and Conclusions:

Themes of caring and fear emerged from the writings and group interactions. Participants increased collegial interactions outside of group meetings. All participants claimed discoveries through their writings. Data analysis showed that participants' childhood backgrounds had a great influence on their teaching. In terms of retention, three of the five participants chose to remain in their current teaching positions, one left to begin a doctoral program, and the fifth began a job search for a position as a school librarian.

ADVISER'S APPROVAL: Dr. David Yellin
