When Teachers Speak of Teaching, What Do They Say? a Portrait of Teaching From the Voices of the StoryCorps National Teachers Initiative

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When Teachers Speak of Teaching, What Do They Say?
A Portrait of Teaching
from the Voices of the StoryCorps National Teachers Initiative

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DEDICATION

To teachers,

ancestors and living,

in and out of the classroom,

who help us learn,

who use their power,

who give their love,

whose purpose is to not let schooling

get in the way of education.

Aché.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

There is a significant lack of educational research in which teachers' talk about teaching is not mediated by researchers. In the public sphere, teachers' voices rarely reach us unfiltered by the media, union and school district representatives, education reformers, and policymakers. What if we could listen to teachers talk about teaching unconstrained by any topic or agenda, in a conversation initiated by them? The StoryCorps National Teachers Initiative (SCNTI) provides an unparalleled opportunity to answer this question. In 2011-2012, hundreds of teachers talked about teaching with someone significant to them. Listening to these conversations enables understanding of teaching from the perspective of those doing the work, in their own voice.

This study addresses the meanings and conceptualizations of teaching articulated by teachers. Three basic assumptions guide this research. First, because teaching is an uncertain craft (McDonald, 1992), I suggest poetics of teaching (Hansen, 2004) as a listening lens. Second, because the experiences of teaching are expressed in conversation, I suggest a prosaic approach to language (Morson & Emerson, 1990) which considers form and function. Third, I conceptualize teacher voice as a source of knowledge about teaching and the phenomenon by which we can comprehend its humanity, uncertainty, and unfinalizability (Bakhtin, 1981). Building on this conceptual framework, I propose a unique empirical approach to studying teacher voice: a synthesis of hermeneutics, metaphor analysis, and portraiture.

The answer to the question *When teachers speak of teaching, what do they say*? is in the form of a portrait, a portrait of teaching composed of teachers' voices. I find that teachers talk about four essential human phenomena: love, learning, power, and purpose. Within these constructs, I provide a critical interpretation of teacher talk about teaching that illuminates the complex and varied nature of teaching work.

This study privileges teacher voice—literally and epistemologically—and presents research as an act of listening. It transmits and amplifies teacher voice to constitute a refreshed and reexamined cultural record (Lamothe & Horowitz, 2006) of teaching. And as critical interpretation of human experience, this research invites participation: a response to teacher voice.

I   INTRODUCTION: WHEN TEACHERS SPEAK OF TEACHING

Teachers have always had to confront the fact that others in society are often eager to characterize or define their work for them. There always exist multiple ways of accounting for the work that are fashioned by those who do not do the work themselves. This political and often public condition generates tensions, ambiguities and confusion. It triggers debates that all too often devolve into either cheerleading for the profession or throwing mud in its face. However, the practice of teaching has resources and integrity enough to withstand such praise and blame. Consequently, while the politicized talk proceeds, so can the conversation among educators about the purposes and meanings in teaching. (Hansen, 2004)

Teaching is studied, measured, rated, simultaneously vilified and exalted. The prevailing spirit is that of reduction, expressed in the quest to delineate the exact characteristics of effective teaching and in the totalizing representation of teachers as the single most important means for attaining student achievement. Heroes and saviors, unprofessional and resistant to change, the solution and the problem—teachers and their work are the topic of much talk. Amid this talk is an equally pervasive ethos of silence—a scarcity of public discourse by teachers talking about the work of teaching. Their talk rarely reaches the public unfiltered by critics or advocates in the media, union leaders, education reformers and policy makers. Public and policy conversations about teaching are indeed driven by "those who do not do the work themselves." Outside the policy and public realms, in educational research, teachers' talk about their work is almost exclusively elicited and collected by researchers who ask teachers about their experiences, beliefs, thoughts, and meanings. Though teachers are ostensibly the integral subject—the source of knowledge and experience of teaching—their talk is material for the research inquiry. No matter how unstructured the interview or focus group, how unobtrusive the observation, how inclusive and self-reflective the researcher, or how active the teachers in co-designing the research—teachers' talk of teaching is mediated by the researcher's presence, teachers are almost always positioned as respondents and objects of observation, teachers' words are data to answer the researcher's pursuit.

This relative lack of agency in talk, as well as the silence, is also experienced in the microcosm of teachers' personal lives. I remember the experience of "talking about teaching" with acquaintances and friends, or at social gatherings, or when meeting people for the first time. I deliberately use quotation marks because it wasn't really talking about teaching, not in the way that talking is the give-and-take of listening, speaking, and recounting of experience. It was responding to their statements, questions and observations:

> So what do you do?
> Wow, I could never do that. God bless you.
> So what do you think about testing?
> What would you do to fix schools?
> I can totally see you as a teacher.
> Don't the kids drive you crazy? You must be so patient.
> What is your take on charter schools? The union?
> So do you want to be a principal some day?

I remember feeling a kind of falsity, a sense of being spoken *to* or spoken *about*, but not really talked *with*, a deep-seated conviction that how I responded and what I said didn't really matter, as if the set of topics and issues about teaching was already there and the conversation was an inconsequential variation on the theme.   Even with close friends or family, conversations about teaching are filled with too many assumptions and misunderstandings, and I feel I have to explain so much and at the same time feel very little desire to do so. I end up feeling like a representative of the profession, reduced to giving sound bites. I remember becoming quiet, staying polite; inside me grew the feeling of being misunderstood and unheard. At other times, I started fighting the words and ideas which I did not want applied to my work.

When teachers "confront the fact that others in society are often eager to characterize or define their work for them," we respond or we stay quiet. But those are not the only options. Teachers also *start* the talk about teaching—on their own, with each other, when they want to, and concerning the topics and issues important to them.   There does exist "conversation among educators about the purposes and meanings in teaching," talk about

teaching by the people who do the work. This teacher voice has always been there, even if seldom heard. What do we know of this teacher talk? What if we could listen to teachers talk about teaching unprovoked by a research agenda, not in response to policy, not in reaction to popular perceptions? What if we could listen to teachers talk about teaching when *they* initiate this conversation, when *they* choose their listener, when *they* own the flow and parameters of talk about teaching? When teachers speak of teaching, what do they say?

The 2011-2012 StoryCorps National Teachers Initiative (SCNTI) provides exactly this opportunity to listen to teachers talk about teaching—when they speak of their own accord and volition. SCNTI was launched in September 2011 with the goals of honoring the work of public school teachers and amplifying their voices in the oftentimes contentious national conversations about education (Berger, 2012; StoryCorps, 2014). Over a period of 18 months, nationwide, 687 teachers recorded a conversation with someone significant to them about the "meaning of the experience of teaching." These conversations are preserved at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress and available to the general public. Short excerpts of some conversations have been shared on the StoryCorps website and Friday morning NPR broadcasts. In total, there are over 340 hours of audio recorded conversations of teachers talking about teaching.

SCNTI is part of StoryCorps' mission to "provide Americans of all backgrounds and beliefs with the opportunity to record, share, and preserve the stories of [their] lives" (StoryCorps, 2014). David Isay founded StoryCorps in 2003, driven by the belief that the stories of everyday people are interesting and important and that listening is an act of love (Isay, 2010). Most often described as an oral history project—the largest in the world, with approximately 40,000 recorded conversations (Burns, 2012)—StoryCorps functions as an archival project, a radio broadcast, and a unique experience for the participants (Lamothe &

Horowitz, 2006). Though StoryCorps describes SCNTI as "a celebration of the work of public school teachers across the country…that calls attention to the invaluable contributions teachers have made to this nation," the recorded conversations are not always, or even often, celebratory. Like all human conversations, they are complex: circumspect and spontaneous, sad and uplifting, wide-ranging and singly-focused. Like all human conversations, they vary: "some are colorful, precious, others are torn and unattractive…often surprising, sometimes puzzling, but never uninteresting" (Pozzi-Thanner, 2005, p. 104).

It is this specific nature of SCNTI as *teachers' talk about teaching* that presents a unique, phenomenal opportunity. There are numerous examples of teachers' academic and popular writing about teaching, written for various audiences and with multiple purposes (e.g. Ashton-Warner, 1963; Lampert, 1985; Kozol, 1981; Ballenger, 1992; Ayers, 1993). Today's social media venues, such as blogging, Twitter, and FaceBook, allow any teacher, anywhere, to communicate about teaching to an audience of their "friends" or "followers" or anyone at all. In the form of writing, teachers' words about teaching are widely available. This research inquiry, however, focuses on teachers' spoken conversation about teaching with another teacher. There is something in the human encounter we call conversation—speaking, listening, question-asking, story-telling, misunderstanding, interruptions, finishing each other's sentences, silences—that is very different from writing. Teachers' writing generally follows essay, article, book, or social media posting conventions, and is edited. However, conversation between two teachers has the in-the-moment spontaneity of everyday talk as well as the intersubjective context of shared experiences, vocabulary, and reference points. And while teacher talk about teaching may be produced in great quantities during in-depth interviews in which a researcher introduces topics and encourages teachers to elaborate, ordinary

conversations—while not entirely free of agendas (Rubin & Rubin, 2005)—are more authentically sociable, more reciprocal, and composed of everyday language.

It is in everyday language that experience is represented, meaning is constructed, conceptual understanding is made tangible, and cultural ethos becomes visible (Zanotto, Cameron & Cavalcanti, 2008). This is possible with two crucial mechanisms: metaphor and storytelling. Lakoff and Johnson (2003) proposed that metaphor provides frameworks for understanding, defining and structuring experience and Schön (1993, p.137) theorized metaphor as a generative phenomenon, "central to how we think about things, make sense of reality, and set the problems we later try to solve." (Jackson, 2006, p. 12-13) conceptualized storytelling as fulfilling the human need to sustain a balance between being a subject and being subjected, being an actor and being acted upon. Storytelling allows human beings to reconstitute events and relationships with others to experience themselves as subjects, "actively participating in the making or unmaking" of their worlds It is within the metaphors and stories comprising the *everyday language of teacher-to-teacher talk about teaching* in the SCNTI conversations that we have an opportunity to more deeply understand the work of public K-12 teaching, to expand our ways of "characterizing, defining, and accounting for the work," and to enrich and humanize our academic, policy, and popular conversations about teaching.

Why should our understanding of teaching be deepened, our "accounting for" it expanded, and our academic, policy, and popular conversations about it enriched? Listening to teachers talk about teaching is important for practical reasons because teachers "manage the work day by day as it actually is…this knowledge embeds itself in what they say" McDonald (1992, p. 8). In addition to this practice-based impetus, listening to teachers is also significant politically and conceptually. Scheffler (1984, p. 154) notes that education policymakers should be "multilingual not only with respect to the disciplines of inquiry, but also with respect to the

ordinary languages of those people whose problems such inquiry addresses." This political purpose of listening to teachers complements the symbolic significance of acknowledging teachers as subjects (p. 155):

> people taken as *objects of study* by social scientists and policymakers are not for that reason to be thought of as *objects*… [we] need to view them as subjects—active beings whose field of endeavor is structured by their own symbolic systems, their conceptions of the world, self, and community.

As subjects, teachers are originators and speakers of knowledge about teaching—not only respondents to policies, theoretical assumptions and research questions—who represent and shape their "field of endeavor" in their talk. This study, then, takes up Scheffler's call to learn "the ordinary language" of teachers, whose "problems" are constantly the subject of research inquiry and public policy. In attending to *what* teachers say about teaching in the SCNTI conversations, this inquiry respects teachers' subjectivity and acknowledges *who* they are, exemplifying research practice that is a "recognition of human dignity" (p. 156).

Research that aims to "learn the language of teachers" often cedes ground to research that aims to "help" teachers or to "improve teaching practice." McDonald (1986, p. 377) defined *uncertainty of teaching* as an essential attribute of teachers' practice that theorists and policymakers sidestep, the "messy practicality, ambiguity, irrationality, and conflict which teachers are used to feeling in their bones." He named an opposing force: the conspiracy of certainty, in which the general public, researchers, policymakers, teacher educators, and school improvement entrepreneurs believe that teaching is a fixed, relatively simple, measurable mix of skill and method. This conspiracy of certainty cripples the practice of teaching as well as the efforts to improve it; the certainty of "definitive settlement" is a greater danger than an "honest accounting of the uncertainties in the craft" (1992, p. 8). In listening to and analyzing the unknown, messy, and complex domain of teaching work as recounted by teachers in the

SCNTI conversations, this study responds to McDonald's call for the uncertainty of teaching to "become as much a cornerstone of theory as it is a reality in the classroom" (1986, p. 377).

Because dealing with uncertainty is as difficult in education research as it is in all of life, it is helpful to have a perspective on teaching that supports its uncertainty—a way of understanding teaching that encompasses its essential "unfinalizability" (Morson & Emerson, 1990). One such conceptualization of teaching, on which this research builds, is the *poetics of teaching*. In broad strokes, poetics refers to the aesthetic dimension, the integration of emotion and reason that allows for deepness of understanding and fullness of living. The concept of poetics has been used by social scientists to understand human practices, such as Geertz's notion of explication (1973), Herzfeld's ethnographic poetics (1985), and Brown's cognitive aesthetics (1989). Hansen (2004) uses the term "poetics of practice" to extend the idea that *how* something is done is as important as *what* is done, and that all human endeavors possess intellectual, aesthetic, and moral aspects as well as the qualities of intention, style, and manner. A poetics of teaching has four key elements: a deeply human vision, a holistic perspective, an emphasis on goodness, and imagining teaching as an offering. First, teaching is an act of responding to the human, an act of moving into the unpredictable with more than subject matter knowledge and pedagogical skill, a capacity for growth in perception, insight, and judgment. Second, a holistic view of teaching counters the narrow definitions we have imposed upon this work. Teaching must be regarded as more than "a sum of its occupational parts: preparing a curriculum, managing the educational environment, and assessing student learning" (Hansen, p.119), more than "an engineering problem" (p.121). Third is the notion of goodness. Neither the "goodness" of service, nor the "goodness" of idealistic optimism, goodness is defined as "discerning, fueling, and remembering the emergence of a new insight, a new disposition, a new understanding—of something that, in a more than figurative sense,

shines" (p.133). Finally, conceptualizing a poetics of teaching is to dramatize "what teaching offers to the men and women who take up the role" (p.137). Counter to the view of teaching as an offering to others, Hansen positions teaching as enrichment, a gift to be received, "rich soil in which to cultivate humanity, a terrain of freedom: the space and the time (however limited) to consider and to respond to questions of meaning, purpose, and understanding that inhere both in the curriculum and in life" (p.137).

In attempting to learn from the "ordinary language of teaching," in acknowledging teaching's uncertainty, and in assuming poetics as a way to understand teaching, this study privileges teacher voice—literally and epistemologically—and presents social science research as an act of listening. In the spirit of Hannah Arendt's assertion that "the actor, the doer of deeds, is possible only if he is at the same time the speaker of words" (1958, p. 179) and the phenomenological maxim "to the things themselves" (Moustakas, 1994), I listened to and analyzed a set of SCNTI conversations, focusing on the stories teachers told and the metaphors they used. Using the complementary methods of hermeneutics, metaphor analysis and portraiture, I provide a critical interpretation of teacher voice to illuminate the meanings and conceptualizations of teaching articulated by teachers. It is my goal that this critical interpretation—a portrait of teaching composed of teachers' voices—will deepen the understanding of teaching and expand the conversation about it.

This study holds additional potential. First, this research builds on and extends the public good work that StoryCorps has begun with the National Teacher Initiative. As oral history, SCNTI already promotes a more democratic understanding of teaching; this research inquiry can further amplify this potential to constitute a refreshed and reexamined cultural record (Lamothe & Horowitz, 2006). Second, this work may alert other researchers, policy makers and practitioners to the SCNTI archive, inspiring their interest, inquiry and attention

to promote more complex and respectful research, inform policy to support teachers, and provoke questions about our ways of being in education. Third, this study's unique methodology can contribute to scholarship in the fields of educational research, metaphor analysis, and portraiture.

Guide for Readers

This thesis continues with a *Literature Review* that examines how teacher talk has been investigated in educational research. The third chapter, the *Theoretical Framework*, concerns the conceptualizations of teacher voice relevant to this study. The next chapter, *Research Design*, delineates the challenges in working with this unique data and presents the study's design and methods. The fifth chapter relates the *Research Context* of this study, describing the landscape of public K-12 teaching in New York City as well as the detailed context of the SCNTI conversations. The *Findings* chapter answers the research question with a portrait of teaching, composed of teachers' voices. In the final chapter, *Implications,* I consider the value of listening to teachers talk about teaching to educational research, policy, and practice.

II   LITERATURE REVIEW: RESEARCHING TEACHER TALK

Again and again…four or five teachers will ask me to sit down and chat. They open up a bottle of wine, or a six-pack of beer, and quietly start to speak about the struggles, fears, dilemmas of a life's career.
(Kozol, 1981)

The nature of teacher talk Kozol describes is a thoroughly familiar experience for teachers: over and over again, we sit down and talk with each other about our work. For researchers, however, the content and form of such talk is not easily accessible. Because this study investigates the meanings and conceptualizations of teaching revealed through the *everyday language of teacher-to-teacher talk*, it is important to consider how teacher talk has been previously researched. How have researchers operationalized teacher talk and how did they analyze it? What are the limitations of this literature? This chapter is an overview of how teacher talk has been investigated in educational research. I start with defining "teacher talk" and then provide a review of educational research on teacher talk and some related literature.

Defining Teacher Talk

Teacher talk provides a representation of teaching, the way that all language provides representation of experience. Through analysis of teacher talk, educational researchers can better understand teachers' beliefs and perceptions, the social relations and pedagogical concerns of teaching, and specific characteristics of teacher discourses (Kosko, 2012). Teacher talk reflects and shapes the work of teaching (Little, 2008). As conversation, teacher talk is a basic human action, oral communication that consists of speaking and listening, and a way to understand, process, and negotiate the meanings of one's own and others' experiences (Orland-Barak, 2005, p.381). Teacher talk, like all conversations, is shaped by the social, historical, political, and cultural contexts at the time and location of its production and reflects the beliefs and social practices of not only the teacher-speakers, but also the larger society in

which they have become acculturated (Fairclough, 1989; Cherryholmes, 1988; Gee, 1996; Luke, 1996). Finally, teacher talk can be said to have three functions: everyday interaction, professional interchange, and philosophical dialogue (Orland-Barak, 2005).

In addition to these conventional ways of characterizing teacher talk, I add some of my own assumptions and definitions. I use the phrase *everyday language of teacher-to-teacher talk about teaching* to describe the SCNTI conversations. There are three components to this description. First is defining teacher talk as *everyday language*: the language of the SCNTI conversations is demotic, an ordinary vernacular. In conversation, everyday language means that the speakers feel free to move from topic to topic, ask questions, tell stories, make jokes, be sarcastic, or sit in silence. The second aspect of teacher talk relevant to this study is that it is *teacher-to-teacher* talk. This means not only that the speakers are teachers, but also that there is no researcher presence in the conversation. This lack of researcher presence is manifested both literally and conceptually: there is no researcher physically present with the teachers at the time of their conversation, and there is no research frame or agenda guiding the teachers' conversational encounter. For the talking teachers, research on teaching is not the cause of their conversation. Finally, *talk about teaching* means that there is no defined set of topics for discussion. This describes the space and the freedom a conversation about teaching can have, its "openness" and mutability.

Educational Research on Teacher Talk

Teacher talk in empirical educational studies on teaching has been overwhelmingly operationalized as the discussions that occur between teachers in small group settings and professional development contexts (Kosko, 2012). A perusal of literature that concerns K-12 teachers engaged in teacher-to-teacher talk shows that most studies consider teacher talk

within study groups, professional learning communities, critical friends groups, graduate courses, and other professional learning settings. For example, Florio-Ruane (1994) studied conversational dynamics and teachers' beliefs as they read, discussed, and interpreted biographies; at a book club dinner meeting at the researcher's house, the participating teachers' discussion was recorded. Another researcher (Carroll, 2002), studied interactive talk in professional learning by analyzing the conversations of teachers in meetings with the university supervisor of their student teachers. In many studies (e.g. Arbaugh, 2003; Crespo, 2006; Richmond, 2010; Stanley, 2009) teacher talk was audio-recorded by the researcher and supplemented with observation notes. In other studies (e.g. Chamberlin, 2005; Curry, 2008; Herbel-Eisenmann, 2001; Gonzalez, 2011; Horn, 2007, 2010; Little, 2008; Males, 2010), the discussions were video-taped. Only a few studies (e.g. Coady, 2008; Gesner 2009) relied solely on the researcher's field notes for collection of teacher talk.

Researcher presence in these teacher groups and influence on their conversations varied. For example, Arbaugh (2003) was the facilitator of the teacher discussions being studied. The Herbel-Eisenmann study (2001) had an action-research design, where the teachers participating in a study group devised their own discussion topics and focus, facilitated by the researcher and two graduate students. Other studies, like Horn (2005, 2007, 2010), involved extensive participant observation and long-term ethnographic research. In one study (Richmond, 2010), facilitation of the teacher study group shifted from the researcher to a district content specialist. There was also variation among groups as far as what the teachers talked about and the materials they used. For example, in one study (Gonzalez, 2011), teachers discussed a video of classroom instruction. In another study (Chamberlain, 2005), teachers discussed mathematics problems they used in their classrooms. In almost every case, there was a specific topic of discussion, mostly pedagogical in nature: student thinking in

mathematics (Chamberlain, 2005), reading-writing connections for primary students (Coady, 2008), analysis of student work (Crespo, 2006), race, culture, and privilege (Florio-Ruane, 1994; Henze, 1998), or student-teacher division of labor during instruction (Gonzalez, 2011). At other times, teachers discussed more general topics, such as instructional problems of practice (Horn, 2007), school conditions (Kjellin, 2008), or challenges faced as beginning teachers (Doecke, 2000).

Notable exceptions to the study group setting as the context for teacher talk were one-time discussions between teachers, arranged and sometimes facilitated by the researcher. For example, Doecke (2000) arranged and recorded a discussion between three first-year teachers and their English methods professor. Another researcher, Henze (1998), studied teacher talk about race and power: during a week-long professional development session, in a fishbowl exercise, four teachers discussed a Lisa Delpit article, observed by the rest of the professional development participants and recorded by the researcher. In other studies, researchers were more active in facilitating teacher talk. For example, Kjellin (2008) conducted focus group discussions on the question "What is it like to be a teacher at your school?" and McGinnis (2003) facilitated a group interview with teachers about math and science education. In another study (Orland-Barak, 2005), the researcher taught a teacher education course; in one class meeting, a discussion about mentoring was recorded and analyzed.

There were few examples of studies where the presence of the researcher was muted or diminished. For example, Strong (2004) investigated direct and indirect pedagogical suggestions in conversations between two teachers. In this study, mentors recorded conversations with beginning teachers; though the conversations were not "entirely naturalistic" because they were guided by conversation protocols, the mentor teachers did decide when to record their conversation and the topics. The researcher was not present at

these conversations, but received the audio tape. And there was one study in which a researcher gathered teacher-to-teacher talk without facilitating it and without setting any purpose. Kainan (1992) spent two years doing ethnographic research in a staffroom of an Israeli high school. Kainan wrote this of his method of collecting teachers' talk: "I spent the whole day there, sitting, looking, and listening…the stories were written down while I listened to the conversations." While Kainan acknowledges the effect of his presence on the "natural situation" of a teachers' staffroom, the teachers in his study could, theoretically at least, speak to a fellow teacher of their choice, about anything they wanted.

The latitude to talk about anything concerning teaching, as in the Kainan study, was very rare for teachers as subjects of educational research on teaching. Only one other work used "free" teacher talk as data: Nelson (1993) investigated "what it means to be a teacher from the perspective of practicing teachers" by sending a letter to teachers in a suburban district, asking them to "share a story or stories about memorable or meaningful moments in their teaching careers." Teachers who agreed to participate were sent a blank audio tape, recorded their response, and sent the tape to the researcher. Nelson explained her method:

> Requesting stories rather than straightforward answers to open-ended questions was intended to reduce the degree to which investigator expectations influenced what the teachers said. Specifications or suggestions for topics were deliberately vague so that the stories would be spontaneously self-selected and more accurately reveal what the teachers' work meant to them.

The clear parallel to the SCNTI data is that the participating teachers in Nelson's study "spontaneously self-selected" what they said about teaching. However, this teacher talk was not conversational; it was a soliloquy. While teachers knew there would be a listener—the researcher, however "unobtrusive,"—to their talk, the making of the talk about teaching was an autobiographical, solo act.

Nelson's study comes the closest to the spirit of teacher talk as expressed in the SCNTI conversations, even if the talk was not conversational and even if it was still solicited by a researcher. The Strong (2004) study is the only other example where the researcher was absent during the production of teacher-to-teacher talk. A handful of studies (Kjellin, 2008; Doecke, 2000; Nelson, 1993) had a relatively "open" format that gave teachers some degree of freedom as far as what they could talk about. In the rest of the studies, teachers had clearly articulated discussion topics, their talk was facilitated, and the researcher was present. The SCNTI conversations, therefore, are different in their lack of conversation parameters, the lack of the researcher, and the lack of any research agenda. They stand apart from any other example of teacher talk in educational research.

Other Perspectives on Teacher Talk: Oral History and Metaphor

Because there is no research on teacher talk the way it is expressed in the SCNTI conversations, I considered two other research lenses. First is thinking about the SCNTI conversations as oral history. Though not all researchers consider StoryCorps to be a true oral history project (Abelman, 2009), StoryCorps belongs to this genre because it fits the basic definition of oral history as "the recorded reminiscences of a person who has firsthand knowledge of any number of experiences" (Janesick, 2007). Considering the SCNTI conversations as oral history means viewing them as "more than anecdotal embellishment" and as novel data that can lend "new perspectives and generate fresh insights" (Rogers, 2008) to the field of education. Because "the infusion of teachers' voices into the historical record is a challenge" (Warren, 1998), the SCNTI conversations—as oral history—are valuable. The SCNTI conversations not only illuminate teachers' individual lives and perceptions but

"acknowledge the crucial interactive relationship between teachers' lives and social contexts and events" (Goodson, 2001). These are teachers' stories <u>and</u> stories of teaching.

Though oral histories of teaching are valuable (Dougherty, 1999), educational researchers might share the skepticism of other social scientists who consider oral history "insufficiently scientific as sources of evidence" (Rogers, 2008). In the debate on "what really happened," a simple truth can get lost: no matter how "flawed" or "inaccurate" a personal narrative, an oral history will inevitably "highlight important contradictions between official, elite versions of 'what happened' and the ways that ordinary individuals perceived, responded to, and understood events of the time" (Rogers, 2008). Teachers' testimony of their own experience of teaching, then, is a precious source of data—especially as their voices can get drowned out in "the larger national narratives" and "the sentiments of self-appointed leaders" in education (Quantz, 1985). The lens of oral history positions the SCNTI conversations as record of "pedestrian, serendipitous, or chance influences that may shape lives and history" in education (Rogers, 2008).

The second lens considers the SCNTI conversations' place in research on teachers' metaphors about teaching. Metaphor analysis has been long been used by researchers as a tool with which to describe and understand the work of teaching (Liefshitz, 2012). Assuming that experience and concepts are both reflected in and constructed by language (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Schön 1983; Ortony, 1993), researchers have used metaphor as an epistemologically legitimate (Jensen, 2006; Saban, 2006) meaning-making instrument. In empirical works on metaphors of teaching, researchers used metaphor as a tool with which to investigate the experience of teaching (e.g. Adams & Cessna, 1993; Schwartz & Williams, 1995; BouJouade, 2000; Massengil et al, 2005), teacher identity (e.g. Knowles, 1994; Cortazzi & Jin, 1999; Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011) , and teachers' professional knowledge (e.g. Patchen &

Crawford, 2011). In nearly half of the empirical studies on metaphors of teaching (Liefshitz, 2012), teachers were asked to select or write their own metaphors (e.g. Stofflet, 1996; Saban, 2004; Berci, 2007; Strugielska, 2008; Alger 2009). Where teacher talk was the source of metaphor, most researchers used semi-structured interviews (e.g. Porter, 1998; Scribner, 2005) for data collection. No metaphor analysis studies on teaching used large quantities of unprompted talk or text. Just one work examines metaphors produced in teacher-to-teacher talk: Carter's (1990) research on conversations between experienced and novice teachers around case studies of instructional practice.

Even though metaphor studies on teaching do not include language data comparable to the SCNTI conversations, three important ideas emerge from this body of literature. First is the governing assumption that because of the dialectical relationship between language and human experience, metaphors of teaching constitute educational activities, events and realities and act as mediators of foundational assumptions about teaching (Botha, 2009). Second, even if "fixed" in a particular occasion of talk between two particular people at a particular time and place, metaphors of teaching are dynamic and always in motion, always revised and reshaped, and exist within multiple domains of culture, time and space (Patchen & Crawford, 2011). The idea that teaching—like any human action—is "contingent on [the] reception, replication, and revivification" of metaphor (Neaderhiser, 2010) is important to the task of interpreting the SCNTI conversations. Finally, there is the message that teachers—like all people—are not "cultural dopes" (Sparkes, 1991) using and being used by culture, but also makers and breakers of culture. Although teachers inherit metaphors of schooling and education (Philion, 1990), their use of metaphor can also be seen as conscious choice in thinking and action. To consider the SCNTI conversations as metaphor-in-use means considering teacher talk about teaching as both the reflection and the making of teaching.

Extending the Literature on Teacher Talk

This study extends the literature on teacher talk significantly because the SCNTI data is the first of its kind as an example of teacher talk. The unconstrained nature of the SCNTI conversations invites an equally open consideration of teacher talk beyond the functions of everyday interaction, professional interchange, or philosophical dialogue (Orland-Barak, 2005). Moreover, an empirical study of the SCNTI conversations answers the call of conceptualizing teaching based on teachers' *living* language: language constructed, shared, and mediated between teachers. As long as there is teaching, there always has been and will be such teacher talk. That this kind of teacher talk comes so rarely to the educational research table indicates how much we are missing in our knowledge about teaching.

III   THEORTICAL FRAMEWORK: CONCEPTUALIZING TEACHER VOICE

By voice I mean voice. Listen, I will say, thinking that in one sense the answer is simple.
(Gilligan, 1982)

In the last chapter, I used the phrase *teacher talk* to name the conversations teachers have about teaching in which they make meaning of their work, interpret their day-to-day experiences in classrooms and schools, and add to the cultural constructions of teaching (Biklen, 1995). *Teacher talk*, however, is not the same as *teacher voice*. There would be no teacher voice without teachers talking, but teacher voice encompasses more than talk. The term *teacher voice* has been used frequently, in many contexts and situations. We speak of "giving voice" to teachers, of teachers "having voice" or "being voiceless." This term is synonymous with teacher agency; and can have professional, practical, political, and moral features. It is a construct in need of a clear definition. This chapter concerns the way I conceptualize teacher voice. I start by describing how the concept of voice has been addressed in a range of social science literature. Next, I suggest an over-arching frame for teacher voice relevant to this study. I then articulate two ways with which I conceptualize teacher voice.

The Concept of "Voice"

A basic understanding of what is meant by "voice" itself, not specific to teaching and teachers, is necessary to conceptualize teacher voice. In the quote that opens this chapter, Gilligan (p. xvi) continues:

> When I think of the question more reflectively, I say that by voice I mean something like the core of the self. Voice is natural and also cultural. It is composed of breath and sound, words, rhythm, and language. And voice is a powerful psychological instrument and channel, connecting inner and outer worlds. Speaking and listening are a form of psychic breathing. This ongoing relational exchange among people is

> mediated through language and culture, diversity and plurality…voice is
> a new key for understanding the psychological, social, and cultural order.

In this beautiful passage, Gilligan presents voice as a multi-dimensional entity: voice is relation between people, voice is intensely personal but also cultural, voice is physiological, psychic, linguistic, social. This enthusiastically inclusive characterization of voice has its critics. Watts, (2001, p. 185), for example, writes

> "Voice" is an ambiguous and redundant concept. It is another term for
> the "speaking" subject. It represents the vocabulary of an interpretive
> community. It is a synonym for "style." It is a catchall term that means
> too many things and, thus, means virtually nothing.

Between Gilligan's exuberance and Watt's cynicism is a range of explanations, definitions, and theories of voice. Briefly, I will discuss three perspectives: political, phenomenological, and relational, all relevant to this study on teaching based on teacher talk and teacher voice.

In the realm of politics, voice can be understood primarily as participation (Bifulco, 2013). Hirschman (1970) famously positioned voice alongside exit and loyalty as a possible response to institutional change and as a way to influence an organization; voice is viewed as the "messier" option because it implies public, straightforward engagement (Bifulco, 2013) in which stakeholders can "contest, challenge, and reshape relationships of accountability" (Dempsey, 2007, p. 316). The exercise of voice can also be seen as loyal opposition (Gerken, 2013), the contestation that promotes well-being for all members of a group (be it a nation, organization, or institution). Indeed, voice is necessary because individuals' well-being is mediated by collective, public decisions. Sen (1999, p. 15) defines capability as the freedom to acquire well-being through public discussions and participatory social interactions; voice, therefore, is "neither an alternative nor accessory." Likewise, Appadurai describes voice as a capacity to "debate, contest, inquire, and participate critically" (2004, p. 69) and positions not having voice as one of the most severe manifestations of poverty (Bifulco, 2013). Viewed

through this political lens, public K-12 teachers can be said to *have voice* in the sense that they are key actors in the institution of schooling—an institution that socializes and transmits capital (Beynon, 2006; Bourdieu, 1986)—and thereby participate in the collective construction of our nation. Additionally, teachers can act as the "loyal opposition" that agrees with certain fundamental educational goals or values but not on "how these commitments ought to be carried out" (Gerken, 2013). Teachers can also *exercise voice* by defining and negotiating the structural contexts that position them and constrain them (Beynon, 2006). Teachers' well-being, then, depends on their capacity to publicly "debate, contest, and question" issues of schooling and education—issues that concern them as individual persons and as polity members. To the extent that teachers are limited in their capability to be heard in public discussions and participatory social interactions, they can be said to *lack voice*. Alternatively, teachers can be said to have *bounded voice* (Dempsey, 2007) by which their agency is limited to particular arenas or processes.

In a phenomenological perspective, no person totally lacks voice because to be human means to have voice. A phenomenology of voice starts with the premise that to understand voice is to understand "the thing itself" (Fisher, 2010; Moustakas, 1994) as a bodily, lived phenomenon. Voice has become a metaphor for "awareness and expression, empowerment, and representation" and a symbol of "presence, intentionality, subjectivity and identity, agency, selfhood and discursive power" (Fisher, p. 84). But voice is not only metaphor and symbol, performance and construct; it is also a corporeal, material experience. The material voice has presence and significance: examples include physical characteristics of voice (such as tone, volume, register, timbre) that change the meaning of what is being said, the power of silence, the effect of imitating voice in parody, or the recognition of another human being (and their well-being) by their voice. In a phenomenological perspective, the physical, material body is

our original and always-present relation to the world and each other; voice is "our opening and access," a "crucial, fundamental link" between self and world. Teacher voice, therefore, has not only symbolic meaning but also material presence: it is the actual point of contact between individual teachers and the educational worlds, meanings, and cultures they inhabit. Here, it is interesting to note that public K-12 teaching in the U.S is a predominantly female occupation. From a critical feminist standpoint (e.g. Cavarero, 2005, Dunn, 1994), the association of femininity with nature and the body has "feminized" voice and therefore diminished it: the material, embodied, psychic and emotional (female) voice is "secondary and inessential" when compared to the abstract, symbolic, rational (male) voice (Fisher, 2010). If teaching is literally and culturally embodied as feminine work, then teacher voice is devalued in the same symbolic and material ways that the feminine voice is devalued.

A political perspective emphasizes voice as participation in the world; the phenomenological highlights voice as embodied access between subject and world. A relational perspective on voice continues to build on these notions of well-being and intersubjectivity. For linguists and scholars of rhetoric (e.g. Watts, 2001; Olson, 1998; Huspeck, 1997; Risser, 1997; Baumlin, 1994; Appelbaum, 1990; Hall, 1980, 1996; Bakhtin, 1981, 1986, 1993; Black, 1978; Gusdorf, 1965), voice can be understood in two distinct but related ways: *voice as speaking*, and voice as *language*. Watts (p. 184) writes:

> As the capacity of the speaking subject, "voice" emanates out of the distinct lived experiences of persons. As a function of language, however, freed from its material and organic moorings, "voice" can signify identity across history…metaphorically, "voice" operates as a vehicle for a set of cultural meanings. Concepts of "voice" arise out of a history of bifurcated scholarly interests between speaker agency and critical interpretation—between the phenomenon of speaking and the possibilities of language.

When teachers speak, they transform their experience into discourse, into relation with others. For example, when I talk about the math lesson I taught this morning, I "announce my

idiosyncratic presence to the world" (Watts, p. 181). At the same time, I am making sense of my experience with the math lesson and signifying the meaning of these experiences to others through language. I do this by using the vocabulary, idioms, and cultural referents of my world. My narrative of the math lesson is my making sense of my life as a historical and cultural event, and so my voice is as much of "life," or of "the world," as it is of "me." Voice is "how we think about who we are in the world," writes Watts. It is the enunciation and the acknowledgment of the obligations and anxieties of living in community with others…the *sound* of specific experiential encounters in civic life (p. 184). As such, voice is the connection, the relation, between self and others. Voice is not merely speaking but also being heard; it depends on listening and is "an intensely relational act" (Gilligan, 1993, p. xvi). In this way, voice is also responsibility—the sound of civic life—because the "consequences of not speaking in a relationship, the abdication of voice" (p. x) renders a relationship empty. Voice serves as connection because it is "the ability to listen to others and learn their language or take their point of view;" it is "having a language" (p. xix-x). Voice is relation with others. We know there is little relation when our voice is not heard, when there is no resonance (p. xvi). "To have a voice is to be human. To have something to say is to be a person" (p. xvi).

A Frame for Teacher Voice: Teachers are Poets of the Classroom

Teacher voice as *voice* is a political, phenomenological, and relational entity. Political teacher voice is teachers' response to the systems and institutions of education and schooling; it is the capacity to participate critically in the making and contestation of these systems; and it is something necessary for their well-being. Phenomenological teacher voice means that there are human individuals speaking, not abstracted, theorized constructs; that their voices are their encounter, their point of entry into the education world and relation to everyone in

it; and that by virtue of being embodied in a feminized profession, teacher voice may be devalued and diminished. Finally, relational teacher voice exists as both speech and language; it is the expression of, response to, and responsibility for every experience.

But I want to move the discussion of *teacher voice* to a more down-to-earth place, away from politics, phenomenology, and the ethics of relation, framing it simply as something that—when we listen to it—teaches us lessons about teaching. I use novelist Paule Marshall's classic essay *From the Poets in the Kitchen* (1983) as the model for this frame. Here is how she described her development as a writer:

> I grew up among poets. Now they didn't look like poets…They were just a group of ordinary housewives and mothers, my mother included. While my sister and I sat at a smaller table over in a corner doing our homework, they talked endlessly, passionately, poetically.

Marshall writes that these "unknown bards" talked at the kitchen table about anything and everything—"no subject was beyond them"—and that their talk "restored them to a sense of themselves and reaffirmed their self-worth," that it was self-expression and a creative art, a refuge and a weapon to fight against "the fact of their invisibility, their powerlessness." To Marshall, these women were poets because they were saying something beautiful: "the insight, irony, wit and humor they brought to their stories and discussions and their poet's inventiveness and daring with language." But it wasn't just beauty that made their talk poetry. They expressed deep, big ideas in ordinary, simple language:

> Using everyday speech, the simple commonplace words, they gave voice to the most complex ideas. Like Joseph Conrad they were always trying to infuse new life in the "old old words worn thin by careless usage." And the goals of their oral art were the same as his: "to make you hear, to make you feel…to make you see." This was their guiding esthetic.

I draw on Marshall's homage to the poets in the kitchen as a "guiding esthetic" for teacher voice: *teachers are poets of the classroom.*

Regarding teachers as poets of the classroom is this study's first over-arching conceptualization of teacher voice. There are several reasons for this. First, if there is a poetics of teaching, as explained in the *Introduction* chapter, then teacher voice is the expression, the explication, of that poetics. Teacher voice is where we can "hear, feel, see" the humanness, uncertainty, and unfinalizability of teaching. Second, imagining teachers as poets of the classroom positions their voice as poetry: teachers are the everyday speakers of ordinary language about teaching, the "unknown bards" giving voice to "the most complex ideas." I am not arguing, however, that what teachers say is beautiful or a "creative art," that their talk has panache and inventiveness, like Marshall's kitchen poets (although it certainly can). Instead, I emphasize the fact that Marshall developed as a writer because of sitting in the kitchen and listening to the "ordinary housewives and mothers" talk. Learning about teaching happens through "sitting down and listening" to those in the classroom.

Defining Teacher Voice: Language and Text

Imagining teachers as poets of the classroom frames teacher voice as the source of understanding of teaching. In addition to a compelling frame, teacher voice deserves a rich definition—a definition that can enhance our capacity to listen to it. I define teacher voice in two ways: *as language* and *as text*.

Teacher Voice as Language

To understand teacher voice as language means to consider its form, function, and essential nature. In the SCNTI teacher conversations, teacher voice inhabits three language forms: conversational talk, story, and metaphor. Its function is to represent and present the

work of teaching. And the essential nature of teacher voice as language is prosaic. In this section, I describe each of these characterizations of teacher voice as language.

In this study, the linguistic shape of teacher voice is threefold: conversation, story, and metaphor. Interpreting the meanings and conceptualizations of teaching will come from close examination of the metaphors teachers use in the SCNTI conversations, the stories they tell, and their conversational dialogue. In considering these linguistic forms, I draw on three classic works in educational research: McDonald's essay on teacher voice (1986), Featherstone's writing on storytelling (1989), and Provenzo et al's study of teachers' metaphors (1989).

In his essay on teacher voice and theory, McDonald portrays his experience with a group of high school teachers who met regularly to talk about teaching. He describes the group's progression from talking about teaching (voice as expression) to thinking about what they are talking about (voice as content), to developing an awareness that what they are talking about "has something to do with what Schön calls the complexity, uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and value conflict which lie at the heart of practice" (p. 362). McDonald and his colleagues decided to study their voice (p. 362):

> To explore the content of the teacher's voice in our group, we needed only a means to focus it, a tape recorder to trap it, and a way of presenting it to ourselves and others.

They agreed to tell each other "reflective anecdotes" about teaching and began to realize the "essential difficulty of framing a portrayal of teaching that is true at once to its banality and its mystery" (p. 363). The group's tape-recorded conversations about teaching gave concrete form to teacher voice. The second linguistic form that holds teacher voice is story. Defined as "events, characters, and settings arranged in a temporal sequence implying both causality and significance," stories are modes of knowledge and evidence of thinking or sense-making (Carter, 1993, p. 6). Stories teachers tell to each other—not for research purposes, and not as

part of graduate school papers or class discussions—are particularly important as they represent the spontaneous, everyday confidences told "not to strangers" (Carter, 1993; Morgan, 1992; Gudmundsdottir, 1991). The stories teachers tell get at the "heart of practice," as Featherstone (1989) explains: "teachers, like other clinicians, get at the important stuff in their practice—the moral and practical heart of the matter—by telling stories." Stories constitute teacher voice and are perhaps the most obvious linguistic medium by which to attain understanding of teaching. Within storytelling, teacher voice finds expression, meaning, and significance. The third linguistic shape of teacher voice is metaphor. In their empirical study of teachers' metaphors, Provenzo et al (1989, p. 551) argue that teachers' experience in schools makes metaphor a necessary feature of their language:

> Working in the fundamentally ambiguous context of schools, teachers are in need of a language that enables them to clarify meaning in the midst of complexity. Metaphor becomes an extraordinarily powerful tool through which the teacher can express more fully the meaning of what he or she does in an ambiguous work setting.

Provenzo et al found that teachers' metaphors described the discrepancies between what teachers expected and experienced, reflected multiple meanings and plural values of any given situation in teaching, and allowed for new sense-making (p. 552). Teacher voice, then, is accessible through and within metaphor.

Having explored the form teacher voice takes as language, it is important to consider the function of teacher voice. Here, I draw on the work of Freedman (1996) to articulate how teacher voice—as language—both represents and presents teaching. Teacher voice is language data that is informational: it tells us *what* teaching is. In this way, teacher voice represents teaching. But language can also be analyzed for *how* it portrays the world, not only for what it says about the world; language is not only "expressions of individuals, but rather statements of connection to and within these social systems. Language provides a map of these

relationships" (Freedman, p.744). Teacher voice, therefore, presents *how* teaching exists in the world. By representing and presenting teaching, teacher voice is an example of the collective nature of language (de Saussure, 1916) and translinguistics (Bakhtin, 1981). In structural linguistics, words have linguistic value because their meanings are held in collective agreement. Translinguistic theory extends this social perspective: language is a relationship: "the word in language is half someone else's (Bakhtin, 1981, p.294). The meaning of teacher voice,then, lies as much with the listeners as with the speaker. Teacher voice is not just a vehicle by which teachers communicate meaning but also a "fabric of relationship" (Freedman, p.749) that connects the teacher with others in the social community. Teacher voice, therefore, does not only represent teachers' internal and external worlds but also presents teachers' experiences for interpretation (Gee, 1990; Lave & Wenger, 1991). As language, teacher voice simultaneously concerns both the individual experience and the social nature of teaching.

Having ascertained the function of teacher voice (representing and presenting teaching) and its form (conversation, story, metaphor), there remains the issue of the essential nature of teacher voice. As language, teacher voice can be succinctly described as prosaic. Building on the work of Bakhtin, prosaics is an overarching assumption that the commonplace and everyday is important. Approaching teacher voice with a prosaic attitude is to adopt "a philosophy of the ordinary" (Morson & Emerson, p.23). Teacher voice is noteworthy and interesting precisely because it is ordinary and concerns the regular, habitual work of teaching. To consider teacher voice prosaically, means, first of all, that there is no unitary "Teacher Voice." Though written and conceptualized in the singular, teacher voice is always plural, always particular—it is many teacher voices, many utterances (speech acts that communicate meaning). Teacher voice exists always in context and never in the abstract; it is inextricably grounded in the speakers' and listeners' sociocultural positions. Second, a prosaic perspective

on teacher voice admits its unfinalizability—Bakhtin's term for the heterogeneous and infinite nature of everyday life that invites innovation, surprise, newness, openness, potentiality, freedom and creativity. (Morson & Emerson, p.36-37). The abstraction of teacher voice into generalizations and prescriptions can diminish its meaning and dissolve its potential for innovation and iconoclasm. Third, a prosaics of teacher voice means acknowledging ownership of it. This means going beyond passive description of what teachers say to active construction of meaning. Bakhtin (1979) explained ownership of language by saying "there are no words that belong to no one." Finally, a prosaics of teacher voice means that with ownership comes responsibility. Teacher voice can be understood as the naming of critical experiences of teaching, akin to Freire's "generative words" (Provenzo et al, p. 571). Evoking Freire's concept of conscientization implies the next step: cultural action. Teacher voice—by belonging to the teachers who say it, and those who hear it—calls out for a response.

Teacher Voice as Text

Teacher voice as language—language that it belongs to the speaker and the listener, language that names critical experiences of teaching, language that both represents and presents teaching, and language that takes specific forms—emphasizes the *voice* in teacher voice. From another angle, one that emphasizes *teaching*, teacher voice can be perceived as text. Here, "text" is not meant literally, as teacher voice in this study indeed exists as oral speech. To consider teacher voice as text means to think about it as a *text of teaching*: something that is separate from teaching, but of it. This conceptualization of teacher voice builds on McDonald's concept of "reading teaching" (1992). Impressed by Scheffler's (1984) call to "hear teachers in their own voice." McDonald (p. 10) said:

> I received the phrase like a mysterious gift. By various means, over the
> next several years, I tried to discover my own teacher's voice—to hear

> it softly in my work, then transform it into something I could read;
> which is to say something I could puzzle over, learn from, show to
> others. Some distance, however slight, is crucial for reading: apartness
> turns life to text.

"Reading teaching" is exactly the way I consider teacher voice in the SCNTI conversations: something to "puzzle over, learn from, and show to others," something separate from teaching but indelibly of it. One of the many significant points McDonald makes about "reading teaching" is the value of studying teaching indirectly—that is through a text of it—instead of directly observing it. To him, a text of teaching, if closely read, can be richly revealing (p. 16):

> Access to teaching that is mediated by teachers themselves offers
> opportunities not only to see what is shown but to study how and why
> it is shown, and thereby to glimpse what teachers value, what they
> choose to frame and fail to frame, what they know and what deep forces
> influence them.

This is especially true when the text of teaching is teacher voice, literally "access to teaching mediated by teachers themselves." But though a text of teaching can be revealing, it can also be ephemeral—"fast and evanescent, authored serially minute by minute" (p. 17). To counter this evanescence, McDonald recommends "gripping" a text of teaching by considering it in light of other texts or by using some external analytic framework. Finally, teacher voice, as a text of teaching, can be doubted. In fact, it should be doubted:

> The reader of any text must let doubt have an edge over belief in order
> to gain the upper hand in the experience…Reading teaching takes some
> courage: an almost physical capacity to ride the thrust of the other's
> story, yet hold oneself apart from it (p. 19).

Taking teacher voice as text of teaching means studying it, understanding it by doubting it. How to do this is the topic of the next chapter.

IV   RESEARCH DESIGN: INTERPRETING VOICE

It is one thing to conceptualize teacher voice and another to research it, albeit the theoretical and the empirical stances inform and enrich each other. As discussed in the literature review, teacher voice is uniquely manifested in the SCNTI conversations. Studying teacher voice as talk between teachers completely unconstrained by researcher presence or research agenda poses unique empirical challenges. First, how to account for the fact that the researcher does not "know" the participants? There is very little to know about the speakers of the SCNTI conversations except what they say to each other. Demographic data is available from StoryCorps: the teachers' gender, race or ethnicity, age, religious affiliation, their place of birth, and years of teaching experience. In the conversations themselves, there is of course some biography (sometimes surprisingly little) and sometimes there is mention of the schools where the teachers work, the universities they attended, or some other identifiable social/historical markers. These teachers' voices stand in a strange relationship to the researcher, who—without being the interviewer, or even a participant in the conversation—has to rely mostly on the words themselves and minimal contextual "background" to make sense of the talk.

The second empirical challenge concerns the unpredictable nature of teacher voice in the SCNTI conversations. Human conversation goes in unpredictable directions and depends greatly on the relation between speakers. The SCNTI conversations, ostensibly about "the meaning of the experience of teaching," contain a great deal of uncertainty, or, to put it less poetically, a certain amount of chaos. Real life, real experience—real teaching—is more chaos than any research can contain. And talk between two people important to each other about a topic important to them carries all the chaos that real conversation implies. But the *value* of the

chaos within unconstrained conversations about teaching does not diminish the difficulty of *dealing with it*—composing a shape of the whirlwind one entered but had no part of making.

Third, previous studies using StoryCorps data does not provide much guidance for research design. StoryCorps conversations have been used as research data in only four empirical studies (Davidson, 2011; Dickson, 2010; Mobley, 2010; Huisman, 2008). None of these studies used *whole* StoryCorps conversations in their audio format: their data were audio excerpts available on the StoryCorps website or edited transcripts from StoryCorps publications (e.g. Isay, 2007). None had a research question as "open" as this study's. To date, no works exist that use the SCNTI conversations as data for empirical research on teaching.

This lack of methodological precedent, having little background knowledge of the speaking teachers' lives, and the chaotic nature of human conversation are significant concerns. And yet learning about teaching from the teacher voices in the SCNTI conversations is too precious an opportunity to relinquish. In this chapter, I describe a methodological solution as unique as the data, an innovative empirical approach to teacher voice. Then, I articulate the research question and the kind of inquiry this study represents. Next, I describe the data collection and provide a detailed account of the data analysis. I conclude with a discussion on validity and issues of interpretation.

Methods and Rationale

I visualize the StoryCorps conversations about teaching as a treasure—a huge, valuable trove of teacher voices, a wealth of information about the experience of teaching, something precious. At the same time, these conversations are very regular, ordinary, almost pedestrian. Teachers talk about what teachers talk about: students, lessons, the conditions of their schools, the pressures put on the profession. There are no surprises and yet every conversation *is*

surprising; what teachers say feels familiar and at the same time revelatory. Something a teacher said in one of these conversations perfectly illustrates this paradox:

> We were going to describe a piece of writing by a second grader. It was part of a journal entry, an observation of something out in the natural world. I remember looking at it from my lofty fifth grade position, looking at it and thinking, "Not much there." And then we spent an hour describing the work, just going line by line, talking about what the second grader had written and really immersing ourselves in it. And at the end of it, I absolutely remember thinking this was one of the most profound reflections on human relationship with nature that I've ever seen.

This vignette could be read as a parable of my empirical and aesthetic approach toward the SCNTI conversations (as well as my research journey with them). These conversations deserve "immersion," deep attention and time. They need disciplined analysis. Like the second grader's piece of writing that is both "not much" and "the most profound reflection," these conversations require a methodological approach that favors critical interpretation, close attention to language, and analysis which balances the researcher's voice with her data, sensitivity with empirical rigor. This method must also facilitate making sense of something that was not arranged or framed by the researcher. A synthesis of three qualitative methods seemed promising: *hermeneutics*, *metaphor analysis*, and *portraiture*.

Hermeneutics is the theory and practice of interpretation with which a reader, listener, or observer can make sense of someone else's writing, speech, or actions. There are three central elements of hermeneutic analysis: the "fixing" of speech or action into text through transcription (Ricoeur, 1981); the systematic articulation of the interpreter's subjectivity (Smith, 1991); and engagement in a back-and-forth process where close analysis of particular elements of the text is combined with critical consideration of the text as a whole (van Manen, 1990). A concise description of the major thinkers in the history of hermeneutics would include six seminal figures: Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, Gadamer, Hirsch, and Ricoeur

(van Manen, 1990, p. 179-181). Schleiermacher was concerned with hermeneutics as a "technology of interpretation." To him, interpretation was both critical (uncovering multiple understandings and identifying misunderstandings) and romantic (attempting to understand the author's thoughts or intents). Dilthey expanded the notion of interpretation into *understanding*, particularly the understanding of the lived experience objectified by the text. For Heidegger, hermeneutic understanding meant not only a fuller understanding of the world as it is, but also an opening up of that world through uncovering the possibilities of meaning in a text. Gadamer contributed the idea that the reader/interpreter is not separate from the meaning of the text and that interpretation as a dialogue between text and reader, always specific to the context and tradition of both the text and the reader. Hirsch, too, advocated that interpretation is a dialectical phenomenon and theorized issues of validity in interpretation. Finally, Ricoeur formalized the idea that "text" can be not only the written or spoken word but any human action. Because hermeneutics is particularly appropriate in situations where the researcher was not part of creating the text and because teachers' talk about teaching is an expression of lived experience, it is a fitting method for analyzing the StoryCorps conversations.

A key aspect of hermeneutic inquiry is deep attentiveness to language (Smith, 1991), and metaphor analysis accomplishes this purpose. Ricoeur (1974) theorized that it was through explicating metaphor that a deeper understanding of the text—and its relation to the world—can occur. Metaphor has long been understood as something much more than an element of speech. In linguistic theory, metaphor shares the broad characteristics of language, and, as such, metaphor is constructed through collective learning and social practices (Saussure, 1978); metaphors are symbols mediating thought and action (Vygotsky, 1978); and metaphor has both material and ideological nature (Voloshinov, 1973). Classic metaphor theory includes the

substitution and interaction views of metaphor (Black, 1977); the conduit function of metaphor (Reddy, 1979); the generative and framing functions of metaphor (Schön, 1979); conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980); a constructivist view of metaphor (Ortony, 1983); metaphors' capacity to mark boundaries and conditions of membership (Taylor, 1984); and metaphor's capacity to express emotive meaning (Richards, 1990). Critical socio-cultural theorists have argued that metaphor can interpret and shape social practices, power relationships, and individual identities (Bourdieu, 1991); that culture involves struggle over the dominance and interpretation of metaphors, symbols, and images (McLaren, 1986); and that metaphors can provide framing for feminist advocacy (Buzzannell, 2004). And in educational theory, Dewey (1910) suggested that proposing a substitute or different metaphor from the one consistently used can provide the disequilibrium necessary to catalyze reflection; Scheffler (1960) claimed that new metaphors can open up fresh possibilities for thought and action; Polanyi (1966) proposed that metaphors express tacit, rather than explicit, knowledge and understanding; Munby (1987) theorized metaphor to be a heuristic tool for reflection and self-understanding; and Schein (1999) proposed that metaphors decipher and label reality, structuring what we see and how we think about it. As a linguistic feature of everyday talk, such as the talk in the SCNTI conversations, metaphor is especially useful as the object of close analysis because of its deep connection to everyday experience. Attending to teaching's uncertainty through listening to teachers' experiences in all their rich and complex ordinariness requires a focus on metaphor. In the seminal study on teachers' metaphors, Provenzo et al (1989, p. 551) advocate metaphor as "a tool for interpreting the meaning of what it is to be a teacher in American society." Because metaphor analysis is a strong method with which to understand the meanings of teaching, and because it meets the hermeneutic criteria of close examination of textual elements, it is an appropriate mechanism for interpreting teacher voice.

Although hermeneutics presupposes strong and imaginative writing (Smith, 1991), it is portraiture that affords both the parameters and freedom needed to work with this teacher voice. The SCNTI conversations cannot be dissected, stripped of their essence, and left disembodied as facts and findings. Nor is it appropriate to begin with oral history and regular conversations and produce writing meant solely for the academy, removed from the everyday world. The analysis of teacher voice should mirror and honor the complexity, humanness, and authenticity of teachers talking about teaching. As a research method, portraiture is imperative for this study. There are four key ideas that express portraiture's usefulness for this research. First is the search for the universal in the particular. Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005, p. 13) writes:

> The portraitist seeks to document and illuminate the complexity and detail of a unique experience or place, hoping that the audience will see themselves reflected in it…the reader will discover resonant universal themes. The more specific, the more subtle the description, the more likely it is to speak to an eclectic and broad audience.

It is indeed with particular teachers' particular metaphors and stories that I intend to uncover essences of teaching that will resonate with a broad audience. Second, portraiture presents a complex notion of goodness. While StoryCorps intended to honor and celebrate public school teachers, the conversations are not simple celebratory accounts but as complex and multifaceted as any human experience, containing disappointments, sorrows, and fears—as well as satisfaction, joy, and hope. Third, portraiture as a research method has an explicit purpose of solidarity, a deliberate intent to *not* stand outside of ordinary human experience, safely ensconced in the gated community of academia. Featherstone (1989, p. 376-377) writes:

> Surely analysis and solidarity could stand as two poles of scholarship. Much research has neglected the second, studying teachers, for example, as though they were fruit flies…[but there is] a buried tradition of American scholarly writing that values voice, portraiture and storytelling, and the intertwined truths of analysis and solidarity…a people's scholarship. It is [the] intellectual ideal of solidarity.

In choosing portraiture, I acknowledge my responsibility as an intellectual to tell truths that matter (about teaching) and to serve people (researchers, the public, teachers, and other educators). Moreover, I aim to produce scholarship that doesn't merely study teachers, but stands *with* them. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, portraiture is itself scholarship of voice and therefore particularly fitting as an empirical method to use with the SCNTI conversations. In fact, portraiture can be seen as a continuation of StoryCorps' mission to share and preserve "the stories of our lives." Featherstone theorized portraiture as "writing that explores how what looks like a mere anecdote can reveal a teacher's search for the threads of meaning and value through the uncertainties of learning and the mazes of human intention" (1989, p. 378). This research study is truly about "mere anecdotes" of teaching, the metaphors and stories of teachers whose voices are often unheard, lumped together, represented and misrepresented, and used. Using portraiture as an empirical approach to teacher voice, I do not "give voice" to teachers; my stance as a portraitist is that of listener and interpreter.

These three methods—hermeneutics, metaphor analysis, and portraiture—are appropriate to the nature of my data and complement each other. Portraiture aligns with hermeneutics in its practice of witnessing and interpreting, elucidating coherence and wholeness (Kim, 2012) and executing disciplined skepticism and critique (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005, p.11). Portraiture is also at home with metaphor in its emphasis that resonant metaphors hold tremendous value for understanding and expressing human experience (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997). In concert together, this combination of methods can be a powerful way to study the teacher voice manifested in the unique StoryCorps data.

Research Question

Considering the SCNTI conversations to be a powerful expression of teacher voice and having composed a methodological approach with which to study it, I framed my research inquiry with the following question:

> What meanings and conceptualizations of teaching are articulated by New York City public school teachers who participated in the StoryCorps National Teachers Initiative oral history project?
> - ➢ How do they describe their experience of teaching?
> - ➢ What stories do they tell? What metaphors do they use?

This research question is within the *human science* tradition, in which a phenomenologically oriented inquiry arises from a strong and vivid interest in a particular problem, topic, or issue—in this case, teaching. As human science inquiry, this study adheres to several key principles (Moustakas, 1994, p. 105): first, it seeks to reveal fuller understanding of the meanings of human experience, namely teaching; second, it focuses on the qualitative aspects of behavior, language, and experience; third, it is connected to my personal history and sustains my deep engagement; fourth, it does not predict, generalize, or establish causal relationships; and finally, it provides comprehensive, vivid and accurate descriptions. This research question is also *particularistic* (Maxwell, 2005, p. 71) because it investigates the experience of teaching for a particular group of teachers (public school teachers in New York City) in a particular context (the conversations they had about teaching recorded for the StoryCorps National Teachers Initiative oral history project). Though the data sample is relatively representative of the New York City public school teacher population, these teachers' voices do not represent a sample from which to generalize. The goal, rather, is to produce rigorous description and interpretation that can build understanding of the human experience of teaching.

In addition to clarifying the research question's tradition and type, the structure of the question and a few terms deserve particular attention (all terms of the research question are

defined in Appendix A). The core question concerns the meaning of teaching, expressed in teachers' voices. This is supported by two sub-questions: one concerning the descriptions of teaching experience and the other focusing on the two linguistic forms—stories and metaphors. I use the term *story* broadly, viewing it as a dominant source of discourse as well as a central part of how we organize our social interactions and understanding of the world (Ritchie, 2010). In conversation, storytelling does not necessarily have to be an intentional "let me tell you a story…" for entertainment or instructional purposes. As per Ritchie (2010, p. 125) I take story to be "any representation of an event or series of events." As far as metaphor, it is basically defined as a word or phrase applied to something to which it is not literally applicable in order to suggest a resemblance or a new meaning. To use metaphor is to see, describe, or interpret one phenomenon in terms of another. Metaphor is ubiquitous in everyday conversational talk. This research question, therefore, relies on two ordinary features of everyday talk to understand the meaning of teaching.

Data Collection

The data in this study are 17 audio files of NYC public school teacher-to-teacher conversations, recorded for the StoryCorps National Teachers Initiative in 2011-2012. On average, each is 50 minutes (5500 words) in length, for a total of approximately 16 hours of conversation (110,000 words). This sample is heterogeneous within its dimensions across several demographic characteristics and fairly typical when compared to all SCNTI conversations. The descriptive statistics of this sample are provided in Appendix B and a comparison of this sample to all SCNTI conversations is in Appendix C.

I selected this sample because it is from a context I know intimately. As a former student, teacher, and administrator in NYC public schools, and currently working with

NYCDOE principals and teachers, the places and events that characterize NYC teachers' working lives are deeply familiar to me. This knowledge and experience help me produce deeper and more sensitive interpretations. The serious interest, care and commitment that are central tenets of human science research (van Manen, 1990) characterize my relation to NYC teachers, students and schools. Second, in selecting teacher-to-teacher conversations, this study follows the empirical and theoretical precedent set by McDonald (1986) who focused on teacher voice as expressed in teacher-to-teacher talk. Finally, the quantity of data was a consideration. Because the research design includes multiple close readings and detailed metaphor analysis, the selected sample size minimizes data overload that can lead to missing information or over-weighting some findings (Huberman & Miles, 1998). The size of the data sample, however, does conform to the standard definition of a specialized corpus in metaphor scholarship (Deignan & Semino, 2010). Because StoryCorps recordings are archived at the Library of Congress and available to the public, IRB approval was not needed for this research. Upon my request, StoryCorps provided all the NYC audio files (N = 45, from which I selected the 17 teacher-to-teacher conversations) and demographic information for all SCNTI (N=666) released recordings. Though teachers identify themselves by name in the recordings, I used pseudonyms in my record-keeping, transcription, and writing.

<u>Data Analysis</u>

Analysis began with critical consciousness of the roles of hermeneutic interpreter and portraitist. With "hermeneutic attitude" (Moss, 2005; Binding & Tapp, 2008), I intentionally assumed the belief that the conversations were coherent, meaningful, and that there is something to be learned from them. As a portraitist, my relationship with these conversations is characterized by respect (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). With this mindset, I

undertook a series of analytic steps that combined the methods of hermeneutics, metaphor analysis, and portraiture. This analytic design is, to my knowledge, the first of its kind in its combination of the three methods, in its application to StoryCorps (or any oral history) data, and in its use in educational research. The analytic design's value lies not only in its function for this particular research inquiry, but also in its potential as a meaning-making mechanism for other researchers to implement, critique, and modify.

Though the analytic steps are described in sequential order, there is an iterative, non-linear relationship to analysis and writing. In brief, the design is as follows: I first *simulated the SCNTI experience for myself* by asking a teacher (and close friend) to have a conversation with me about teaching; I recorded this conversation and listened to it, but did not transcribe or analyze it. Next, I formally engaged in *distanciation* by writing a memo on the pre-understandings and preoccupations I bring to the topic of teaching and listing theoretical constructs, etic themes, and metaphors from the literature. Third, I *listened to all 17 conversations*, and fourth, *listened again, writing listening notes* for each. In the fifth analytic step, I *transcribed each conversation* and; next, *read each transcript*. Seventh, I *wrote an initial interpretive response for each conversation*, followed by a *second reading of each transcript*. The ninth step was to *analyze each transcript for themes through coding* and begin writing *integrative memos* describing the emergent codes and possible themes. The coding for themes was followed by *metaphor identification and analysis* (the steps of the metaphor identification and analysis procedure are detailed in Appendix E). The eleventh step was *seeking alternative explanations* from the conversations themselves and from reconnecting with etic themes and theoretical constructs. Next, I *constructed emergent themes*, and, in the thirteenth step, *wrote the portrait*. Last, I *checked for resonance and authenticity* by sharing my portrait. Appendix D provides a detailed explanation of each analytic step, as well

as a matrix mapping the overlap of hermeneutics, metaphor analysis, portraiture, and general qualitative research methods.

Validity

This study adheres to the common sense definition of validity as the credibility of an interpretation to the goal of inquiry (Maxwell, 2005, p. 105) as well as to the principle of analytic realism, which acknowledges that the social world is already and always an interpreted world. There were five particular ways in which the validity of this inquiry could have been challenged. During the analytic process, there was the risk of (1) researcher bias in which data could be selected to fit my pre-suppositions and pre-existing theories or to which I have the strongest reactions; (2) the salience of first impressions; and (3) concerns specific to metaphor identification and analysis (Low, 1999). In addition, there was a need for (4) finding evidence to challenge the findings; and (5) soliciting respondent validation (Huberman & Miles, 1998; Maxwell, 2005).

I addressed these validity concerns through the research design. The analytic steps of *distanciation*, *writing initial interpretive responses*, *identifying alternative interpretations* and *sharing the portrait* seek to address the issues of researcher bias, salience of first impressions, challenging findings, and soliciting respondent validation. The resolutions to validity concerns specific to metaphor analysis are addressed in Appendix F. Because the research design does not include communication with the participating teachers, I shared the portrait with several NYC public school teachers with whom I have personal and professional contact and with colleagues and friends who are not teachers. In these ways, I received feedback on the plausibility of my interpretations and assessed how (or if) the portrait rang true for teachers and those who know teachers. To help readers engage with my interpretation the portrait contains rich excerpts of

the teachers' talk; McDonald's (1986) article on teacher voice was used as the standard for quote length and frequency. Additionally, there are supplemental analyses of the conversations' content provided in Appendices L – P.

Complementing these specific strategies is an understanding of validity specific to hermeneutics and portraiture. Ricoeur (1976, p. 75-79) maintained that the subjective meanings of the speaker are ultimately irrecoverable and that interpretation is like seeing an object from several sides at one time, but not from all sides at once. Though validation of interpretation can never be verification, not all interpretations are equal and some are indeed more probable than others. There is no universal certitude, but a veracity based on purpose and context (Packer & Addison, 1989, p. 291). Moreover, hermeneutic inquiry is not only seeking meaning and understanding but also an engagement with the world. To that end, validity is "uncovering of truth" that matters, a determination of whether the concern that motivated the inquiry has been answered adequately (p. 288). Making sense *of* the world *to* the world and *for* the world relates to portraiture's concepts of authenticity and resonance (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). To be valid, the portrait should hold truth and value for its readers, for teachers whose voices are its subjects, and for the interpreter who asked a question that mattered.

On Interpretation

It is this last point of "truth and value" as the criteria for research validity and the measure of the quality of interpretation that I want to address in concluding this chapter on research design. There are two ideas I will briefly discuss: first, me as the interpreter and thereby the instrument of research, and second, the idea of interpretation as a three-way encounter between voice/text, the interpreter/researcher, and the reader.

Concerning me as the instrument of research, it is important to understand the parameters—both the limitations and the potential—of acting as an interpreter of other people's voices. First and foremost, this is a position of power: because the readers of this study have most likely *not* heard these teachers' conversations, there is some degree of reliance on my "objectivity," the way that I can transmit the voices while at the same time make meaning of them through analysis. Every research design decision—from the selection of the sample, to the creation of my method, to the way I "fixed into text," or transcribed the conversations— influences and informs the meaning-making. Related to the issue of power, it is important to acknowledge that this study is a literal act of transformation: I have found teachers' voices, listened to them, made them into text, analyzed them, and wrote about them. The end product of interpretation (text) is a different format than the thing being interpreted (voice). Interpretation, then, is a process of loss—one I felt keenly—even as it has value. Being the instrument of research meant being the person who fundamentally changed the shape of these teachers' voices.

Another dimension of being an interpreter is the issue of one's purpose. Writing about phenomenologically-oriented research on lived experience, van Manen (1990) explored the nature and purpose of interpretation. He writes that interpretation of human experience is never abstract but always intentional, always about the real world of subjective beings. Interpretation is an act of creation as it uncovers understanding. As such, interpretation can "yield not only a fuller understanding of the world, but also an opening up of that world to new possibilities." That is my intention. In choosing to write about teaching, I want to not only make deeper and fuller our understanding of teaching but also to open us up to different possibilities of how teaching could be. Unsatisfied with limited understandings and representations *of* teaching, my purpose is to help us imagine a different world *for* teaching.

Finally, being the interpreter of other people's voices is itself an exercise of voice—my own. In the *Introduction* chapter, I wrote about my difficulties in "talking about teaching" with others—the silences, the sound bites, the misunderstandings, and sense of falsehood that I experienced. The StoryCorps conversations about teaching are profoundly different; they are an exercise of agency, not response. These teachers *wanted* to speak about teaching, compelled by their own desire to talk about their experience; they *chose* a person to speak with, someone for whom they knew their words would matter. Because I have experienced my own lack of voice as a teacher, I came to these conversations already loving them. In listening to these conversations and in writing about them, I reconstitute my own experience of not being heard. Researching these conversations about teaching—ironically, *responding* to them—is an act of my own agency, the use of my voice.

The last point to make about interpretation is to articulate the role of the receiver of the interpretation: the reader. Though interpretation has been described as a dialogue between text and interpreter, this does not account for the fact that the interpretation becomes a text itself. Therefore, there is another actor in the space of interpretation: the reader, who, in turn, becomes an interpreter too. If there is "truth and value" to this research, it exists in the space I have given the readers to make their own meaning of teaching, based on the material and the interpretation I have provided here. Like speech that is meaningless without a listener, or text left fallow without a reader, research has value only in its reception by a critical audience, who add to the interpretation through their encounter with it. Etymologically, the word *hermeneutics* draws on the figure and character of the Greek deity Hermes, the god of boundaries and transitions, of messages and mediation. Deeper etymological derivation links Hermes to the Greek word *hermae*, the marker piles of stones on the sides of roads, to which travelers would add a stone as they traveled that road and passed that marker. I see the road as a metaphor for

interpretation. The researcher and the reader both add stones to the road, both contribute to the living text of human experience.

In the next chapter, on research context, I start providing some of the background necessary for the reader to comfortably "walk the road," to engage fully with this interpretation of teaching based on teachers' voices.

V   RESEARCH CONTEXT: BACKGROUND TO THE CONVERSATIONS

The context of this study is described in three parts. First, I depict the general setting of teaching within which this research occurs: public K-12 schooling in the United States in the year 2011-2012, particularly in New York City. Second, I describe the teachers whose voices compose this portrait of teaching. Third, I provide a structural account of these teachers' voices, characterizing the production, form, and content of their conversations.

K-12 Teaching Landscape: National and New York City

To listen to and interpret the SCNTI conversations, it is necessary to have some general knowledge about teaching as a profession in the United States at the beginning of the second decade of the twenty-first century. Who are the teachers in our public K-12 schools and what conditions influence their practice? In terms of national demographics, 35% of teachers work in suburban areas, 26% in cities, 25% in rural schools, and 14% in towns. Half of all teachers work in elementary schools, 28% in high schools, 12% in schools of combined grade levels, and 10% in middle schools. 76% of all teachers are women, with increasing proportions of women occupying middle and high school positions over the past fifty years. The great majority of teachers is white, at 80%, with Black and Latina/o teachers at less than 10% each. The proportions of younger (under age 30) and older (over age 50) teachers have both increased, while the percentage of teachers ages 31-49 has declined. Between 1987 and 2007, the modal years of teaching experience decreased from fifteen years to one year, with 25% of teachers having five or fewer years of experience and 50% having eleven or fewer years of experience. While teachers' experience has decreased, a reverse trend is seen in teachers' educational attainment, with the percentage of teachers with master's degrees (52%)

becoming, for the first time, greater than the percentage holding bachelor's degrees (47%).

Almost 30% of all teachers with less than five years' experience hold a master's degree or

higher (Drury & Baer, 2011). The overall demographic description of the profession is best

summarized by Ingersoll and Merrill (2011): the number of teachers has outpaced the increase

in student enrollment; the teaching force has simultaneously aged (grayed) and grown younger

(greened); the proportion of female teachers has been steadily increasing; the turnover rate—

teachers leaving particular schools or the field itself—has also steadily increased; and there is

a demographic mismatch between a largely white teaching force and an increasingly racially

and ethnically diverse student body.

   With regard to working conditions, middle and high school class size has stayed

relatively the same over the past two decades, while elementary class sizes have modestly

dropped. Public school K-12 teachers work, on average, 50 hours per week on instructional

activities such as in-class instruction, preparing lessons, and checking or grading student work.

Teachers reported an additional minimum of 5 hours a week on non-instructional activities.

The average teacher salary is just under $50,000, above the average social worker salary, but

below the average salaries of registered nurses, post-secondary teachers, engineers, doctors,

and lawyers. The top reasons for remaining in the profession were the desire to work with

young people (also the top reason to enter the profession), the belief in the value of education

for society, and interest in the subject matter field. Factors that keep teachers in the profession

include having cooperative, competent and helpful colleagues, support from administrators

and specialists, resources and facilities, and professional development (Drury & Baer, 2011).

Teacher satisfaction, however, has dropped over the years. 44% of teachers, the lowest level

in decades, said they were very satisfied in teaching, and 29% said they were very or fairly likely

to leave the profession. Feelings of job insecurity have increased to 34%, and 53% of parents

and 65% of teachers report that teachers' salaries are not fair compensation for the work they do. 63% of teachers reported that class sizes have increased, and 64% said that the number of students and families needing health and social support services has increased. At the same time, 30% of teachers have reported reductions or eliminations in social services and after school programs (MetLife, 2011). Overall, beginning teacher attrition has increased by 40% over the past three decades.

In New York City, there are some slight variations from these national patterns. Here, the median age of teachers is 40 and 76% are female. There is greater diversity, with 59% white, 20% Black, 14% Latina/o, and 4% Asian teachers (Crain's, 2014). The percentage of white teachers is lower and the percentage of Black and Latina/o teachers is higher in high-poverty schools compared with low poverty schools. Likewise, teachers in low-poverty schools are older and more experienced than teachers in high- and medium poverty schools (IBONYC, 2014). The base salary of a NYC teacher with no prior experience is around $45,000 and the average class size is 27 students. The average years of experience is 10 years, camouflaging the bi-modal age distribution in the teacher population. About 2200 NYC teachers are Teach for America (TFA) corps members and about 8700 are New York City Teaching Fellows (NYCTF), comprising approximately 15% of the entire NYC teacher population (Crain's 2014; NYCTF, 2014; TFA, 2014). These teachers do not have prior teaching experience and teach in primarily hard-to-staff schools while earning their master's degrees in education. One in nine NYC teachers will quit after their first year of teaching. Overall, 30% of teachers quit the NYCDOE within three years, and about 20% within two years. In high-poverty schools, new teachers are more likely to leave within their first, second, and third years than teachers in medium- and low-poverty schools (IBONYC, 2014).

Alongside this statistical background, it is important to understand the policy and workplace conditions which illustrate the complexity of the contexts in which teachers work. Though this list is by no means exhaustive, the following aspects characterize the significant issues around the work of teaching at the time of the SCNTI conversations: professionalism, teacher evaluation systems, training and licensure, induction and professional development, teacher roles and leadership, and a move toward more collaborative conditions at schools (Drury & Baer, 2011). Briefly, I will describe each of these.

In terms of professionalism, some policymakers and researchers have advocated a medical model for the professionalization of teaching, invoking practices as instructional rounds, residencies, and lab schools as the way to improve the quality of teaching and its perception as a profession (Aguerrebere, 2011; Duncan, 2011). Others argue for a more coherent and robust development of core knowledge (Rotherham, 2011) or accountability for student outcomes (Grossman & Brown, 2011) as the ways toward greater professionalization. In fact, accountability for student outcomes has become a point of contentious debate as states develop teacher evaluation systems based on student performance on standardized assessments. Measurement of teachers' effectiveness is based largely on a combination of ratings produced from observation of their practice and the "value" they add to students' standardized test scores. To supplement these state-legislated mandates, there are recommendations to increase the level and quality of teacher involvement and participation in standards-based evaluation systems, such as peer assistance and review (Van Roekel, 2011; Weingartner, 2011) and subject-specific evaluations by content experts (CPRE, 2006).

Connected to teacher evaluation are issues of teacher learning and improvement, as well as preparation to enter the profession. The pressures of accountability have led to a re-examination of what constitutes effective preparation in order to have effective teaching.

Debate on licensing requirements, teacher education programs, the benefits and drawbacks of alternative pathways into teaching, and the impact of graduate degree programs in education are some of the issues surrounding the realities of teacher turnover and the performance of schools. In this mix is also the issue of teacher diversity and the "under-performance" of students of color and poor students on standardized assessments (Moore, S. J., 2011). Once hired at a school, teachers may experience induction, mentoring, and professional development, with wide variation in both the content of such support and the methods of its delivery (Van Roekel, 2011). To some degree, the egg-crate culture of schools—in which teachers work in isolation—is eroding. To greater extents and in a greater variety of ways, teaching practice is becoming increasingly public, collaborative, and shared. And as teachers experience greater interdependence, more roles for them open up; various teacher leadership positions, expanded career opportunities, and new roles in schools all contribute to what Moore (2011) calls "role diversification in teaching." Teacher leadership has also assumed many guises, with teachers being involved in school governance, peer review, curriculum design, and school-community relations (Drury & Baer, 2011).

NYC teachers work within and contend with all of these contexts. Perhaps what is amplified is simply the scale and intensity, working in the nation's largest school district (serving over a million students) where everything is fast-paced, high-stakes, and constantly scrutinized by media, legislators, and other school districts. The SCNTI conversations reveal some bits and pieces of these conditions: teachers talk of being observed by their principals and the measures of effective practice, the pressures of standardized testing, the roles they have outside of the classroom, and collaboration with their colleagues. A teacher evaluation system was being piloted in some NYCDOE schools in 2011-2012, and the shift to Common Core Learning Standards was well on its way. There was an unyielding emphasis on

accountability and school performance based on students' test scores, as well as constant organizational restructuing. New information systems were introduced to collect and manage data on students and teachers. In the 2011-2012 school year, Chancellor Joel Klein just ended his tenure under Mayor Bloomberg; with 8 years on the job, he was one of the longest serving New York City schools chancellors. His name, as well as Bloomberg's, is mentioned in several conversations as a kind of shorthand for the context, briefly summarized here, of these teachers' working lives.

The Teachers

The 35 teachers whose voices I heard were as young as 22 and as old as 67. One teacher had more than 40 years of teaching experience, and two were in their first year of teaching, with 22 teachers having less than 10 years in the classroom. 21 of the 35 were women and 5 identified as gay or bisexual. 18 of the 35 were white. 11 were born and raised in New York with the remainder coming from other states. 4 entered the teaching profession through NYCTF and 8 through TFA. 18 taught at the high school level, 13 at middle school, and 4 in elementary school. Most teachers spoke with their school colleagues, with a few talking to friends or former colleagues, and one pair was a married couple.

As mentioned previously, one of the unique characteristics of researching the SCNTI conversations is the fact of not "knowing" these teachers except for repeated listening of their conversations and the consequent intellectual, spiritual, and emotional encounter with their voices. From what they say in their conversations, and from the demographic data supplied by StroyCorps, there is enough to have some description of each teacher, provided in concise profiles in Appendix G. These profiles add some context to the teacher voices. I suggest reading these profiles prior to reading the portrait.

The Conversations

      The recording of these teachers' conversations occurred in the late fall of 2011 through the early spring of 2012, in New York City. Funded in part by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Joyce Foundation, the National Teachers Initiative was StoryCorps' first-ever occupation-specific oral history project (see Appendix H for a list of other StoryCorps initiatives). It was also part of the public media initiative *American Graduate: Let's Make It Happen*, supported by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and designed to help address high dropout rates in rural and urban school districts across the nation (Appendix I). In the official press release of the launch, (Appendix J), the work of teaching was cast in celebratory terms, and U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers, enthusiastically endorsed the effort. Media attention to this project included a press conference at the White House, profiles with Diane Sawyer and NPR, and an article in Education Week.

      Teachers were solicited to participate in SCNTI through town hall meetings organized by the *American Graduate* project and through community partners. These partners were for the most part schools, but also included community-based organizations, non-profit and government organizations, and school districts (Appendix K). StoryCorps transmitted the message that teachers' voices need to be amplified in conversations about education and about teaching. Acknowledging that such conversations are often contentious, the voices of teachers as "everyday people" were needed (Berger, 2012). StoryCorps' mission of honoring and celebrating ordinary people was communicated to all participants. Teachers who signed up to record a conversation were advised to bring a conversation partner with whom they had a meaningful relationship and that the emphasis was not on "telling good stories" but rather to talk about "the meaning of the experience of teaching" (Berger, 2012). Community partners

identified a location for three days of recording and StoryCorps provided a facilitator, who managed the recording equipment. Teachers completed demographic, contact, and release forms, and, at the completion of the recording, received a CD copy of their conversation.

Such were the conditions in which these conversations were produced. What of the conversations themselves? In writing a portrait of teaching composed of teachers' voices, a technical linguistic analysis of each conversation is not necessary; relevant description of language—such as volume, the pauses and silences, laughter, etc.—is provided, when such description informs the interpretation. However, there is something that needs to be said about tone: the quality or character of the conversations, aside from their content. Each of the conversations could be easily described as intimate. Sometimes, this intimacy was quite literal, like the conversation between Mr. Nevins and his wife Mrs. Morse in whic they talked about meeting and falling in love. Other intimacy was lighter, like Mr. Grant's and Ms. Weiner's talk about student behavior in middle school, which segued into flirtatious stories of their own misbehavior and first kisses. But intimacy was not only romantic. Mr. Lowry and Mr. Chase had a palpable rapport, an enjoyment of each other's company. Mrs. Tully and Mrs. Wayne spoke in unison sometimes, finishing each other's sentences and giving affirmative, supportive "uh-uhs." Between Mr. Wang and Mr. Burke there seemed to be an under-current of tension, maybe competition, as did with. In Mr. Drake's and Mrs. Adams' conversation there was a spiritual flavor, and between Mrs. Thomas and Ms. Mays there was an atmosphere of familial care and love—Mrs. Thomas was talking to her best friend's daughter, who she watched grow up. I mention all these examples of intimacy because it seemed that these conversations indeed occurred within "meaningful relationships." I also mention this because of the caveat that belongs to all oral history and perhaps to StoryCorps in particular: the tendency to perform, to speak in a way conscious that one's words will last

beyond the moment. I can make no conjecture to the teachers' level of performance in these conversations. What I can make is an observation: despite StoryCorps' designation of one conversation partner's role as "storyteller" and the other's as "interviewer," the talk between the teachers was more conversation than interview. There were questions and stories from both sides, there was veering off topic, there were elaboration and disagreement and interruptions. There were the closeness and openness that mark "real" conversations.

In addition to the common characteristic of intimate tone, the conversations' content also held a pattern. When looking at the body of the conversations, there seemed to be a common set of topics, like an arc along which the teachers traveled in their talk. There were five major topics, in approximate temporal order. First, teachers spoke of becoming a teacher, talking about their family upbringing, their childhoods, their career dreams, and the planned routes or serendipitous moments that brought them into teaching. Second, teachers spoke of their first years of teaching; many stories came from this place in the conversations. Next, teachers spoke of learning and developing in the craft of teaching; alongside this theme was talk about satisfaction, pleasure, enjoyment of the work, and growth—as well as disillusionment, dissatisfaction, and boredom. Finally, teachers spoke of staying in or leaving teaching. Almost every conversation ended with the teachers thanking each other for making the time to talk and for the conversation itself; here was the lament of always being too busy and never having enough time, as well as the appreciation of the work of teaching as a central aspect of their lives.

To fully describe the conversations, however, requires content analysis. I have analyzed the conversations to identify the specific questions teachers asked of each other, the stories that they told, and the discourses that they used. In addition, I identified the themes in the conversations, which is the first step of structural analysis in hermeneutics. Lastly, I

analyzed the conversations for metaphors, which is the second step of hermeneutic analysis that considers deep structures beyond narrative themes. This breaking-down, or pulling-apart, of teachers' talk into discrete conversation acts or components (questions, stories, discourses, themes, and metaphors) was necessary in order to produce the analytic synthesis—a whole interpretation, in the shape of a portrait. Here, I will provide some very brief examples of these distinct conversational aspects with the purpose of illustrating the breadth and depth of the linguistic material which, along with the audible tone, pace, and affect of the conversations, was used to form the portrait.

The questions that teachers asked each other in these conversations (Appendix L) are excellent evidence of the conversations' variety in terms of form and structure. For example, the conversation between Ms. Lang and Mr. Cohen contains 20 questions, 19 of them asked by her. Another conversation, between Mrs. Royce and Ms. Quinn, contains 1 question, asked in the beginning of the conversation. There was no correspondence, however, between the number of questions asked and the form of the conversation: some questions provoked long stretches of talk in response, some questions were unanswered, some questions were elaborated and answered by both conversation partners. It might be reasonable to assume that some of the questions, such as "How did you get started in teaching? Did you always want to be one?" were planned—that they were considered and selected in preparation to the conversation and therefore more intentional and not purely spontaneous. Many more questions, however, were "on the spot" and arose in the conversational flow. For example, Mr. Simmons was surprised to learn that his friend Mr. Lowry was a theater major in college before he switched to mathematics. His question, "Do you see the classroom as a stage?" was obviously unplanned, but natural in the moment.

The stories told in these conversations (Appendix M) also held this dual quality: some were well-worn tales, told and re-told and finely tuned as narratives, while others had a more casual structure and feel. For example, Mrs. Thomas told a quick story of a child who made beautiful creations out of clay: her story served as a small but powerful example of how her classroom atmosphere served the needs of the children. Other stories were more involved, like Mr. Pelles' long story about musical education, which he started with recounting his mother's experiences as a musician. His meandering narrative contained multiple stories on the themes of discovering talent, developing interest, and learning. Ms. Levy's story, on the other hand, came in response to her colleague Mr. Wells' request that she tell a story about "chasing a student," because "every teacher has such a story." Here, her story was not only ready for the telling, but also of an identifiable genre.

That teachers have a set of standard, ready-to-tell, stories is what a friend of mine called *the canon of teacher stories*, stories that teachers tend to tell and that tend to be recognizable to many people. This notion of recognizability—that within a particular cultural and social sphere some experiences or narratives have become something everyone "knows"—is not only a characteristic of stories in conversation, but also of discourses. There are some things we tend to talk about when we talk about teaching; some ideas, characterizations, issues, and beliefs about teaching are so popular that they are already formed into words and ready for us to speak. For example, the discourse of *teacher effectiveness* is prevalent these days, as are the discourses of *college readiness* and *social justice*. Other discourses are even older and more standard, such as the discourse of *teachers as workers* with all the attendant issues of unions, salary, competence, etc., or the discourse of *education reform*, or the discourse of *valuing education*. The teachers in these conversations used these discourses, and more (Appendix N), in their talk with each other. In this regard, their conversations were like any other conversations

about teaching, drawing on the discourses available to all of us—teacher and non-teacher alike—in our cultural sphere.

Likewise, the themes within these conversations (Appendix O) are recognizable, and relatively standard to not only teaching but to any conversation between people who are "not strangers" to each other. Teachers talked of their families and childhoods and their own school experiences; they talked about their career paths and the places they have worked; they talked of their feelings and beliefs, of important things they have realized and learned; they criticized the way things are and talked about how things should be. These themes encompass the universal experience of being alive in the world: where we came from, who we have become, and what we want.

Metaphor too expresses human experience, and the task of accounting for the metaphors in these teachers' conversations proved to be onerous. Appendix P provides a selection of just a few metaphors, as the total number was in the thousands, organized into 300-plus vehicle groups (categories of metaphors) on 5 topics (teachers, teaching, children, schools, and education). In the *MONEY* vehicle group, for example, there are 75 metaphors (sell, pay, funded, capitalize, invested, credit, etc.). A phrase such as "instructional time is golden" uses the money metaphor golden to express the high, precious value of time spent on instruction in the classroom. As another example, the *THEATER/ACTING* vehicle group contains 52 metaphors (drama, pretend, climax, tragic, director, repertoire, character, etc.). The phrase "they bought my act and they sat quietly through it" uses both money and theater metaphors to describe a classroom atmosphere, the relation between students and teacher, and issues of power and control in the classroom. The thousands of metaphors in these teachers' talk fell into some patterns across conversations and within conversations. What these patterns indicated, and how these metaphors—as well as the stories, discourses, themes,

and questions—were used, extends beyond content analysis or brief description of what the conversations contained. The interpretation of meaning in conversation comes from all these components but is not solely of them, nor limited to them. The analytic, synthesized, interpretative whole—the portrait of teaching composed of teachers' voices—is contained in the following chapter.

VI   PORTRAIT: WHAT DO THEY SAY

INTRODUCTION: FINDING MEANING

Yeah, I am constantly astonished at how education wants to leave out the whole meaning…you know, everyone wants to reduce it to skills or knowledge and leave out the fact that there is actual real meaning to be found. A boy, just the other day in my class, was practically jumping up and down in place because he suddenly understood something and it just struck him with such force. And I thought, [whispers] yes.
Aaron Drake (58, m, W, MS History, 25yrs)[1]

What "actual real meaning" of teaching did I find in these teachers' conversations?

Like the boy jumping up and down in place, the understanding I gained struck me with force.

Oh my god, you have to hear this teacher's story, I would tell a friend. *The things they say are beautiful!*

And terrible too, I would say to another. At other times, understanding came slowly and

unexpectedly, washing over me, unsettling. I did find meaning…and as I found it, I became

petrified of telling it—afraid I would reduce it to facts and knowledge, afraid I would be unable

to find the words to express it, afraid that I would lose it in the very act of bringing it out. I

did not want to merely describe what the teachers said. I did not want to separate their stories

and metaphors into bundles of facts; I did not want to distill their conversations into pieces

of analysis. I wanted to write about the essences of their conversations, the big ideas and

phenomena they talked about. I wanted to be able to tell a story from the meaning I found.

The famous title of Raymond Carver's short story, "What We Talk About When We

Talk About Love," came to mind. Carver was haunted by "the difficulty of talking about what

really matters" (Marsh, 1981).   And I remembered McDonald (1986), who wrote about the

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[1] Please refer to Appendix Q for formatting conventions used in the portrait.

challenge of "framing a portrayal of teaching that is true at once to its banality and its mystery." These words gave me some comfort and courage, reduced my self-consciousness, and helped me regain the enthusiasm and wonder I first felt when listening to these conversations. So I start my portrait—the findings section of the dissertation—with this short confession about me as listener, thinker, and writer. I want to acknowledge both the labor and joy of communicating meaning found in listening to hours of teachers' conversations about teaching. I want to acknowledge the search for emotional resonance and an aesthetic whole, inseparable from intellectual insight, that writing this portrait requires (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997). And I want to tell the reader of the spirit with which I do this work and of my intent.

Carver's (1981) phrase, "what we talk about when we talk about ___," is a well-worn aphorism. Undoubtedly cliché, it has been used in hundreds of book and article titles—academic and popular—in fields as disparate as law, restaurant management, cell biology, history, religion, race, and medicine. In my disciplinary home, educational research, Roemer (1991) uses the phrase to argue for "uncovering more complicated diversity and multiple perception." For Hahn (1990), the phrase is a reminder that there is always a text and a subtext. My adaptation of Carver's phrase, "what we talk about when we talk about teaching" accentuates the relationship between *what teachers say about teaching* and *the meaning of what they say*. I also use the phrase to highlight my dual and inseparable roles of meaning-finder (listener/thinker) and meaning-maker (thinker/writer) and to acknowledge that the portrait you read is an interpretation—my encounter with these teachers' voices, put into written words. This interpretation needs another meaning-maker: you, the reader.

Reading this portrait is an encounter too. To engage fully, I recommend that you read aloud the portions of the text that are direct quotes from the teachers; reading aloud will help you experience the power of these teachers' voices, impossible to contain on the page.

What, then, did these teachers talk about when they talked about teaching? They talked about love. They talked about learning. They talked about power. They talked about purpose. In the following pages, I will try to tell a story composed of these teachers' voices: a story of the ways teaching is love, of teachers' and children's learning, of the experience of power in teaching, and of teaching's purposes. I invite the reader to meet the meanings of teaching that I found and to make your own.

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LOVE

I obviously really loved those students and had a wonderful time working there.
(Lana Quinn, 27, f, W, HS guidance, 5yrs)

I was really excited just to have this group of kids that I love.
(Chase Lowry, 29, m, W, HS math, 5yrs)

I know that I care a lot about them and that I am wearing it, quite literally, on my sleeve.
(Harriet Weiner, 22, f, W, MS, 1ˢᵗyr)

"Love" is a word abused, almost meaningless in its ubiquity: we love people, as well as objects and movies and songs and colors and food, the things we do, the places we go, the ideas we hear. Many people say they love or like children, so teachers are not alone in their overuse of the word. And yet, theirs is a particular refrain: the love of children is invoked as a reason for entering and staying in the profession, as an emotional facet of the work, and as a counterbalance to all there is *not* to love about teaching. Often used interchangeably with "caring about" or "liking," love of children seems to be ever-present in teachers' talk. Teachers use these words intentionally, like Alicia Baker (32, f, W, HS, 5yrs) who explains: "I know people like Paulo Freire said all this kind of stuff…that teaching is an act of love." In other instances, love can be felt in their words, like Adam Nevins (32, m, W, HS English, 5yrs) saying: "The kids were wonderful, even when they were terrible." Whether teachers say it explicitly or it is an undercurrent of their conversation, love seems to be an essential component of teaching. But what does it mean for teachers to "love" their students? My answer to this question begins with one teacher's theory.

One Theory of Love

Rachel Thomas (67, f, W, pre-K, 40yrs), born and raised in New York City, has taught in daycare for almost all of the forty-plus years she has been teaching. For SCNTI, she spoke

with her best friend's daughter, who had just started teaching. When this young woman asked

her for advice, Mrs. Thomas first spoke about having a great personality and a sense of humor.

She then said:

> In daycare there are three roles, head teacher, assistant teacher, and teacher aide. The head teacher is not my favorite position. Even assistant teacher is not my favorite position. Teacher aide is my favorite position. I love…nothing gives me more joy than cleaning off the table, straightening out the toys, and tying the children's shoes and zipping up their jackets, just to enjoy them.

> Well, now I'm going to go way out on a limb. Okay? Because here is the big theory: love. It's where you have a loving heart and that is what sends out a vibration to the whole class and they are suddenly so at peace with themselves that they can do anything that you present to them. The proper emotional tone in the classroom of young children is half of your work. The other half is the setup of the classroom. So, theoretically, a well set up classroom and a loving teacher, the job is done.

When I first heard Mrs. Thomas' words, I admit I was surprised with the direction she took.

I was profoundly touched by how she described being with children—cleaning, straightening

up, dressing them—as joy. Incongruously, I was reminded of the bible story of Jesus washing

his disciples' feet, and I felt my eyes become full. I remembered how annoyed I used to be

when my third graders took forever getting out of their winter coats and scarves on cold days,

and how tedious it was to clean up, day after day after day. Mrs. Thomas' joy, in contrast, was

amazing, mysterious, almost sacred. The second surprise was that *she had a theory*. Conditioned

as I am to think of teachers as "practitioners," to witness a daycare teacher be a theorist, name

her theory and explain it, was beautiful. It was something I didn't realize I needed to hear until

I heard it. In a few sentences, she breached the boundary between theory and practice that I

have come to accept. I loved Mrs. Thomas for her audacity and wisdom, for knowing she is

teacher and theorist, both.

My third reaction was to the substance of her theory. Even as it sounded a little cheesy,

there was undeniable truth to it. I have been in classrooms where "the proper emotional tone"

was as palpable and obvious as it was ethereal and indescribable. And, likewise, I have been in classrooms where I wanted to run out the door, overwhelmed by an instinctual need to protect myself and hide from the children's pain. I recognized what Mrs. Thomas was saying, but I wanted more. Yes, I could shape my thoughts around the concept of proper emotional tone, but her conciseness bothered me: "half of your work"? "the job is done"? Was it really so simple? And what does it mean to be a "loving teacher"?

Mrs. Thomas's conversation partner must have wanted more too, because almost half an hour later, she came back to the topic: "You were talking about love, needing love. Because I want to ask, how would you teach that to somebody? How would you teach someone the right emotional tone? Can you teach that to someone?" Mrs. Thomas replied:

> I don't know. I think it's something we have, we just have to be encouraged to use it. I don't think it can be taught per se, but it can be encouraged. It's a way of thinking. I guess it's a mind-body connection as well. It's like allowing thoughts of love to generate. See, we don't know about the invisible…if we can't see it we don't know what it is. But we all can tell, "Oh that person looks sad. That person is jealous. That person is tired." We can tell about people by looking at them without words. Well, love also can be created. You meditate on it. You read about it. You value it and it comes, it rises within you. So I think it can be encouraged. Maybe it can't be taught, but if you could think in these kinds of terms, if we could tell each other that this would be good.

In response to a first-year teacher's worry, Mrs. Thomas makes it sound entirely possible to become a loving teacher. She presents a lovely paradox of being in possession of something— "it's something we have"—and yet having to consciously bring it out, and I was struck by this idea of having love and creating love, especially by the promise of "you value it and it comes."

But my desire for elaboration of her theory was left unsatisfied. And so I turned to the other teachers' conversations for understanding. In this chapter, I write about the manifestations and meanings of love in teaching that emerged in listening to these teachers' voices. I describe four dimensions of love: *pleasure, respect, care*, and *true self*. I then explore an

additional facet, the experiences and meanings of teaching that are *not love*. I conclude with another teacher's theory, a complementary way to understand love in teaching.

Pleasure: Falling in Love with Teaching

Would it be love if there was no pleasure? Whether love is romantic, between parents and children, or among friends, the beloved gives happiness, enjoyment and satisfaction. We admire the ones we love, we want to spend time in their presence, we revel in their love for us, and we feel good with them. Though the love teachers feel for their students is neither romance nor friendship, nor the love one feels toward one's own child, love in teaching does share the contours of love's pleasures. "It is very easy to fall in love with teaching," says Michelle Morse (32, f, W, HS history, 6yrs), "and I think we need students as much as students need us."

Could one teach if there was no pleasure in it? From listening to these teachers conversations, pleasure is certainly part of the love that characterizes the relation of teacher to child. Of the four dimensions of love in teaching—pleasure, respect, care, and true self—pleasure is the easiest to describe, perhaps because it is so easy to feel, a way of being we "fall into" without effort or much decision-making. But its easy nature makes pleasure no less essential an experience of teaching: it is the pleasure of enjoyment of children's company and fun nature, it is the pleasure of admiration of children's talents, and it is the pleasure of receiving what children offer.

<u>Enjoyment</u>

Chase Lowry (29, m, W, HS math, 5yrs) and Shaun Simmons (30, m, A, HS math) talk about teaching math with gusto: their conversation is peppered with mathematical terms and

vivid descriptions of their students and their mutual respect and affection is evident. Mr. Simmons asks his friend a question:

> I think it's pretty disingenuous when most teachers say they love all their students equally. I feel like that's the politically correct answer. So evaluate my claim that all teachers like all their students equally. But if you do have preferences, in the sense that certain student just light up the life of the classroom, what are those students like?

Mr. Lowry replies:

> There are definitely students that have that little extra something that makes me really happy to go to work. In class I like the thoughtful student. I don't care if they're not the best at calculations and things like that, but when we have a deeper discussion, they stop and think and ask questions. And there are always two or three students in every class that just are excited—excited about things like zero, like why does it exist. And there are one or two that have a personality that makes me laugh every time. I just know they're going to roll their eyes when I do something goofy or they're going to, in a loving way, do silly things and I love having them around. And then there are those kids outside of class: we have developed a relationship and we can joke with each other and have a good time and I just think sometimes, "I can't wait until you go off to college and come back in four years to see the adult you've become. And I think you'll be really fun and I want to go have dinner with you and get to know you as an adult and laugh with you."

Mr. Lowry's voice is animated but also gentle, his words bubbling out and full of affection. His answer seems to come straight from the heart as he describes a multiplicity of ways in which being with his students makes him happy: he enjoys their thoughtfulness and intellectual enthusiasm, he loves their silliness and humor and the way they tolerate his own "goofiness." The energy and warmth of his words transmit the enjoyment he feels; his language is especially loving as he imagines a future where he can continue to enjoy his students' company: "I can't wait," "have dinner with you," "get to know you." Though he doesn't name them, I imagine Mr. Lowry talking about specific students, and I like how he takes the generic platitude—that teachers love *all* their students equally—and transforms it into something meaningful and real, as real as the individual students whose presence and personalities give him pleasure.

Over and over, teachers called their students "funny" or "fun," said that they made

them laugh, and noted their sense of humor. They told anecdotes of students doing funny

things: dancing in class, lighting up the room with their smile, or "saying the darndest things."

These repeated references to laughter and fun made me think that their appreciation of humor

and playfulness went deeper than simply liking the funny things children said or did. For

example, Rob Geller (25, m, B, MS Soc. St, 4yrs) told a story of having a hard time with a

student in his class:

> It's literally the funniest thing that's ever happened in my life. I had a
> student who was having a hard day. I needed to send him to the assistant
> principal because it wasn't working out in the classroom. As he walks
> out, he gets to the door, he stops, he turns around, and he says, "You
> have not seen the last of Julio Cruz." And any sort of professionalism
> that I was trying to uphold in that moment went out the window,
> because it was so hysterical. I just laughed and we all laughed. And he
> went and he eventually came back and things were fine. He was a really
> good kid.

Whether or not this was indeed the funniest thing that ever happened to Mr. Geller, I am

convinced that he enjoyed the student's humor not only because "it was so hysterical," but

also because that humor healed the moment. In the precarious struggle for power and

authority in the classroom, Julio's funny retort made possible the dignity of both student and

teacher. Like a good joke that can defuse a tense moment or relieve pressure, the student's

humor made it possible that "things were fine," and that the teacher can now remember and

tell a story of pleasure, not of difficulty. When Mr. Geller says that "things were fine" and "he

was a really good kid," I hear gratitude and love in his voice, something more than appreciation

of a good joke or a fine sense of humor.

Teachers also connected children's humor with the quality of unpredictability,

something that gave them enjoyment in teaching. For example, Jennifer Vindal (30, f, A, MS,

8yrs) says: "I think that one of the great things about teaching is that you can never predict

what's going to happen, because you have real life students in your room that can do anything at any moment and just really make you laugh." And Mrs. Morse echoes this: "There is a certain unpredictable quality in schools that can't be replicated, or reproduced anywhere else, that when you have five hundred or a thousand kids in a public school building, there's the potentiality of something really funny or good to happen." One can think of schools as highly regulated places, sustained and constricted by the predictability of routines, schedules, and procedures. And yet, the humor of children makes possible a surprise, the "anything at any moment" that holds potential. Children have a capacity for fun and play, even in a constricted environment—something that adults either lose altogether or cannot freely express. Children's humor, therefore, not only heals but also opens up the space of school. In the company of children, teachers can attain some degree of freedom and "potentiality" that gives profound enjoyment. Ariadna Levy (28, f, W, HS, 6yrs) puts this succinctly: "They are kids. And they are fun…and I really enjoy being with them and I laugh every day." And I could picture the smile and the energy of Michael Grant (28, m, W, MS, 3yrs) who said that when he returned to teaching, he felt like "Yes! I am getting back into the classroom! Yes! I am going to be around kids…yes!"

Admiration

In addition to pleasure that comes from the enjoyment of children's company and fun nature, there is also pleasure derived from admiration of children's talents. Teachers described their students as wonderful, gifted and special. Mrs. Thomas was talking about the collaboration among the daycare staff when she stopped to remember a particular child:

> He had a hard time concentrating and doing everything that the average child was doing. And one day we worked with clay and he just made the most beautiful creation. Ursula [the head teacher] and I were stunned

> because he was a very distracted child and yet with this material, he
> really, really expressed himself. That was an exciting moment. The
> children offered up all kinds of different observations all day all the time.

There are two levels of admiration here: one is for the child's particular talent with clay and the beautiful creation he produced, the other is for the fact that even though each individual child's talent can be stunning, these "exciting moments" are actually frequent, happening "all day all the time." For Mrs. Thomas, it was a daily experience of pleasure to witness the wonderful things children do. This sense of wonder was echoed by other teachers, like Peter Cohen (24, m, A/L, MS English, 5yrs) who talked about a lesson that didn't quite work out:

> We did a poetry lesson on Walt Whitman and read "Crossing Brooklyn
> Ferry," and then the idea was to walk across the Brooklyn Bridge, to
> Dumbo, and check out Whitman's inscriptions along the fence. But that
> never happened. So we just went to the Hudson River to write some
> poetry and I was blown away by what the kids produced. Like Molly
> and Jackson…absolutely amazing, the stuff that they wrote. I wish I had
> the poems in front of me to read out loud.

Even though the lesson didn't go according to plan, the students produced "amazing stuff." Serendipitously, Mr. Cohen was able to see and admire his students' capacity and talent with poetry. It feels like he wants to share the beauty he found when he wishes the poems were in front of him, so that others could be "blown away" too.

While Mr. Cohen's admiration of his students held the pleasure of discovery, other teachers were conscious that the very talents they admired in their students were the ones made invisible in school. Janice Ferner (60, f, ES, 25yrs) remembered one of her first teaching assignments, a remedial class:

> I got the kids who for two years haven't been able to pass the fourth
> grade. And they handed me this book and told me to teach the kids
> math from this book. I told the kids to bring in a dollar and the next day
> we went to the supermarket, and I thought we could make pizza and at
> least the kids would learn fractions. After, I would have them do
> centers. And there was this one kid, I'll never forget him, who really

loved cooking, and he would find these recipes and he would cook. Another kid really, really liked wood-working. He could measure and had spatial understanding that was incredible and made these amazing things, but he couldn't really read or do much math.

Segregated into a remedial class and expected to learn from "a book," the children who "couldn't really read or do much math" were also gifted. Their talents were first nurtured, then admired, by a teacher who chose not teach from the book. Similarly, another teacher, Vera Smith (42, f, B, MS, 2yrs) spoke of students' talents that were evident only in an after-school apprenticeship program:

> What I enjoy most is seeing students shine who academically may not be performing as well. They're able to use their other skill sets to show that they're leaders and have wonderful oral communication skills that they may not otherwise get to display during the school day.

Even though they have to somehow subvert the regular school environment or look outside of it, these teachers' pleasure in seeing their students "shine" is undiminished.

In other cases, teachers' admiration for students had very little, if anything, to do with school altogether. Mr. Nevins and Mrs. Morse, husband and wife who taught in the same school, talked about students who had made an impact on them. Mr. Nevins said:

> Rasberry Simpson is the finest student I have ever taught, and I think in many ways the kind of student very few teachers will ever teach. She had grown up with what seemed to me extremely difficult circumstances. She slept in a car a portion of the eighth grade, which is how she ended up at our school, which is a good school, but she was so clearly…she was a jumbo jet when the others were paper airplanes in terms of her intellect. She could talk to me, even in her freshman year, the way an adult might about literature. She'd overcome her privation and she was determined to overcome any others that came her way, and she wanted to be one of the great African American astrophysicists.
>
> She left the school after the second year to go to Bard Early College in Massachusetts, and as sad as I was that she left, it was the right thing for her to do to get out of New York and to be in a more intellectual environment. I also come from an intellectual family where intellect is not valued with disregard for everything else, but it is valued above many other things. Her intellect was so obvious and it was so valuable. There

> were other students too. But to me, a student who overcomes as much
> as she did and is able to achieve so much and to retain a life of the mind
> when the material life is so difficult, there's something immensely
> impressive about that.

Mr. Nevins makes no claim of being a participant in Rasberry's development, of helping her discover her talents, or of any in-class or in-school activities that supported her intellect. In fact, he seems almost like a bystander, or a passerby, someone who has had the fortune to come across something beautiful and impressive. His admiration of Rasberry is not of her as a child doing amazing things in school, but more of an appreciation of her as a person-in-the-world: sleeping in a car, talking about literature, thinking about astrophysics. Embodied in and lived by Rasberry, the principle of "retaining a life of the mind when the material life is so difficult" has become "obvious" and real. His admiration is for something rare and exceptional, something he values "above many other things." It is the pleasure of witnessing the phenomenon of intellect itself.

Receiving

Though Mr. Nevins' admiration seems high-minded, he nevertheless was touched by Rasberry's presence. After all, he spoke about her when discussing the impact students made on him. One can think of Rasberry's impact as something he received, a gift. The gifts children offer teachers constitute the third aspect of pleasure in teaching. Some offerings that give teachers pleasure seem unconsciously given, such as the gift of children's energy. Ms. Vindal, for example, talks about the capacity of children to revive her and reduce her fatigue:

> Usually when I come to work I'm really tired from working at home,
> and as soon as I see the first child come in the door, I just feel their
> energy and I'm awake. No amount of coffee can get me as awake and
> ready to go as a child, just their energy.

Another teacher, Ms. Linden (27, f, L, MS bilingual, 5yrs) says: "I feel like I come alive in front of a classroom full of kids." And I myself have felt that inexplicable energy, that feeling of aliveness in teaching to which nothing else comes close. Children's energy becomes sustenance and a source of pleasure for teachers.

Another unintentional offering is conversation. Talking with children, hearing their views and being able to respond to their questions, gives pleasure and satisfaction. Tiffany Royce (56, f, NA/B, HS, 25yrs), a principal and teacher in a transfer high school, explained:

> It's the ability to have that semi-adult conversation with a young person. Just listening to the logic behind what a young person thinks, and having that dialogue is the highlight of my day. Kids will wander in and say "I have a sore throat, I need tea." I have tea, I have lemons, I have whatever it is that they need. And although there is someone else I can send them to, when a child walks through this door and directs that question to me, that's the highlight of my day, pulling them in, and having that conversation. That is the fulfilling part of my work.

Any adult who has ever spent time talking with children knows that feeling of wonder and insight when "listening to the logic" of a young person's thinking, the sense of hearing something true and uncontrived, something different and special. To have this feeling on a daily basis, with numerous individual children, is indeed a rich pleasure, a deep fulfillment.

While children's conversation, like their energy, is an offering that comes simply from being in children's company, other gifts seem more intentional. There is an undertone of reciprocity when teachers receive the gifts of respect and gratitude from children. For example, Mrs. Morse told Mr. Nevins:

> I was drawn to your incredible strictness and sense of humor and the respect that you earned from the students. You had these high expectations and the students really loved that about you, so that you were one of the favorite teachers in the school.

Similarly, Ms. Baker talked about her students' gratefulness: "When I am doing a really good job in the classroom, I know. Students do thank me, or thank us, in a variety of ways. That's

a beautiful thing." Teachers received the pleasure of students' thankfulness and respect alongside what they themselves gave: high expectations and a sense of humor, and "doing a really good job." Perhaps these were not intentional exchanges in the sense of consciously giving *because* one has received, but there seems to be a mutual generosity, a desire to give something good to the one who gives good to you.

And then, teachers received clearly intentional offerings from their students. Ms. Weiner received the gift of protection and care from a girl in her class with whom she had previously experienced a big confrontation.

> The same girl who had made me really upset the week prior, she stood up for me when another kid was being defiant. She got up out of her chair, and she goes, "You don't talk to Ms. W like that, nobody yells at Ms. W like that!"

Though there is some irony in the situation because the week before this student was the one "being defiant," there is an undeniable satisfaction when someone stands up for you in a difficult situation. For a child to defend a teacher, it is a considerable gift: a reversal of roles that indicates intent. Another teacher, Mr. Grant, also received an intentional offering, a letter from one of his students:

> This student had written me this four page hand-written note. It was unbelievable….it was indescribable. She didn't share a lot during class, she wasn't very open with anybody. She just really opened up. And she wrote me about her dreams and how she always hated social studies and history but mine was the one class she looked forward to every day. It was four pages, there was a lot there, and I keep it in a very secure place. You will get notes like that and you open those up on those rainy days.

It is obvious how much Mr. Grant treasures the letter, not only for the praise he had received from the student, but for the gift of her sharing and opening up. Like him, most teachers get notes from their students—drawings and letters and cards—that make us feel very special. We gladly receive our students' appreciation, their praise, and their sharing of themselves with us. The pleasure of receiving what children offer keeps us in love with teaching.

Respect: A Deeper Love

While pleasure is an essential part of love, there has to be something else that binds teachers with students. Pleasure can be fleeting as well as powerful; it can change shape as well as remain steady; but while it wouldn't be love without pleasure, love is more complex than pleasure alone. In searching for understanding of what is love in teaching, I found love's meaning to also be respect—the respect teachers have for their students.

The typical notions of respect in teaching are either traditional, deficit-oriented, and teacher-focused. We expect children to respect their teachers, at the very least by conforming to the hierarchical relations of power in classrooms and schools. We lament the lack of respect given to the teaching profession, even as we laud teachers as heroes and "agents of change." And while *loving* and *liking* students easily rolls off teachers' lips, it is not often that we hear a teacher say *I really respect my students*, or *I have always respected children*. But teachers do respect their students, deeply and profoundly.

The married teaching couple, Mr. Nevins and Mrs. Morse, spoke about teacher education. Mr. Nevins became a teacher through the New York City Teaching Fellows program, an alternative certification route where college-educated professionals teach in hard-to-staff schools while taking graduate courses in education. Mrs. Morse has recently earned a doctorate and began working as an adjunct professor of teacher education at several local colleges. Mr. Nevins, recalling a field supervisor who advocated hand clapping to "get children to sit down," asked his wife what methods she recommends to her student-teachers for getting children to listen, pay attention, and work. She replied:

> I think the education school answer is that the key to keeping students
> in their seats, or staying at their desks, is a good lesson. But I think that's
> only one piece of the puzzle. I think it's a mutual respect. Once your
> students know that you respect them, they want to work for you.

How do teachers enact this respect? Among the four dimensions of love in teaching—pleasure, respect, care, and true self—respect is perhaps the most radical and challenging. It is a reverence (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2000) for children that is at once attitude, belief, regard, intention, and action. In these teachers' conversations, respect was manifested in two ways: seeing goodness and believing that all children matter.

<u>Seeing Goodness</u>

Seeing goodness in children goes beyond admiring their many talents and beautiful gifts. It is a positive regard that persists. It persists on principle: the idea that children are always and already good. This goodness is contained in positive characteristics, like intelligence, sense of humor, or talent, but it is more than that; it is an innate worthiness, an original condition of being that is good because it is human. When Mr. Nevins says his students were "wonderful even when they were terrible," he is expressing positive regard for children; no amount of terribleness will erase the inherent wonderfulness that is there, nor will the terribleness make the wonderfulness less wonderful. Positive regard is not a passive pursuit, with teachers waiting for students' goodness to float across their field of vision. Rather, it is an active *looking for*. Ms. Levy illustrates this, as she described one of her students, Maria:

> From the beginning, she could be very resistant, very confrontational, the type of student where you felt like if you said something to her—even the most neutral comment possible, like "please start your work"—she could snap at you, disrupt the class, walk out of the room, anything along those lines would not be unheard of for her. And on the other hand, there would be these glimpses that I saw in her where I noticed that she had just the biggest heart. She loved listening to other students' stories, she loved empathizing with people, she had the most beautiful smile and when she decided to smile, it would just light up the room. Nothing I am doing is really working, and I am still trying so hard because I believe in her and I want to see this good side of her more. I believe because I have seen that seed in her.

Ms. Levy saw the wonderfulness and the terribleness, both vividly described. In her description of the wonderfulness, the "good side," there is a yearning, a loving and wishful desire to hold on to the positive that she saw. And what she "glimpsed" in this student—and believed—was tremendous: the biggest heart, a smile that would light up the room, and empathy. Ms. Levy's regard is firmly, intentionally, positive; she holds a respect that found what it was looking for.

Seeing goodness also means seeing something that is not apparent to others, something not easily seen, or obscured. For example, Mr. Cohen spoke about his own teacher, who he credits with his love for literature and writing. He remembered her like this:

> Mrs. Roberts was my seventh and eighth grade English teacher. I think when you go to an all-boys school, when you think of literature it's kind of like a no-no, maybe a taboo. She was the one that instilled an affinity for poetry and she's the one that reawakened the silent voice in me. I remember in eighth grade when we graduated she gave me "Touching the Fire: The Top 15 Latino Poets from the Latino Renaissance," as a gift. And she wrote this really long, long, long, long note inside the cover. To paraphrase it, "You have a powerful voice. Never forget that. Use it." She didn't have to. I guess she saw something that I didn't see in myself.

Mrs. Roberts saw in the young Mr. Cohen something powerful he didn't see in himself, or perhaps suppressed in his environment. It was his teacher's seeing—and communicating what she saw—that made it possible for him to have a richer vision of himself, to have his "silent voice reawakened." Mrs. Roberts' positive regard opened up her student's sense of himself. Another teacher, Jerry Wells (33, m, W, HS, 10yrs), also spoke about seeing what others— perhaps purposefully—don't:

> As sad as it seems to say this, I don't think the world at large thinks students in the Bronx or students in the so-called inner city are as capable as everyone else. I really don't think the world sees that. I think they write people off, they avoid the entire borough as this kind of wasteland. I think that stereotype is dangerous. Our students are incredibly gifted and smart and they have a lot of potential. They need

> to be invested in and publicized and celebrated as much as any student
> in a thirty-thousand dollar private school would be.

Here, the connection between seeing the good and respect is made explicit. Because people "write off" or avoid certain neighborhoods and communities, the people there—the students—become invisible. Their giftedness, potential, and intelligence become invisible too. Worse, their invisibility is then re-interpreted as their deficit: they are not capable. This logic is maddening and it is rooted in the disrespect of willful not-seeing. Mr. Wells feels the need to say what he *does* see, to proclaim the reality of his students' goodness as a way of showing respect, a way of acknowledging children's humanity that has become unseen.

It is clear, then, that respect for children in terms of seeing goodness is a deliberate, conscious choice teachers make. Sometimes, teachers make this choice not so much because it's "the right thing to do," but because positive regard is a fruitful way to relate to students and a sensible way to go about the work of teaching. This perspective is expressed by Aaron Drake (58, m, W, MS History, 25yrs), who spoke about parent conferences:

> If you remember…that is something that I figured out: oh, if I just listen
> and stay focused on the good of the child, there is no conference that
> will not be really beneficial, even if it did not end up being exactly what
> I thought it was going to be.

Maintaining positive regard, here, is a matter of remembering, listening, and "staying focused;" it is an attentive, vigilant stance of respect. The effort and intent to keep seeing goodness can, in fact, be formidable, which convinces me that such respect is indeed a dimension of love. Rose Tully (59, f, B, MS, 25yrs) told a story that illustrates the work of positive regard:

> I was teaching fourth grade and I had a particularly difficult student, I
> mean a student that from day one was difficult and to the last day, which
> is the 180th day of school, every single day was a problem. I worked as
> hard as I could, but I could not make a dent in this boy's behavior. And
> when he finished up in June I left feeling that I had failed this kid. I had
> 30 students and the other 29 were fine, and I felt like a failure, because
> I had this one that I couldn't make any kind of inroad into changing his
> behavior. Well, the sad part was that two years later I had this student

again in sixth grade, and I was thinking, "Oh no." I remember pleading with my principal, "I can't go through this again. This kid was a problem, and I didn't succeed with him and maybe someone else could do a better job." Well, I went through the whole school year, day one to the 180th day, and again I didn't make a change in this boy's behavior. In fact, he was worse because he was older. He would lie, he would steal, and at one point I remember him throwing a Christmas tree, because he was angry with me.

And I remember having so many conversations with this boy: "Why are you doing this? Why do you have this bad behavior? You're a nice kid. You're a good-looking kid. You have nice parents. Why are you behaving this way?" And he could never answer me and he was always in trouble. So when he left at the end of the year in June, needless to say I was happy that he was gone, but also kind of feeling sad for myself. Here I thought I was such an experienced teacher and I couldn't make any headway into this kid. I didn't reach a student.

Ten years later, I get a phone call. I'm in my classroom, it's 10:00 in the morning, and they said, "There is someone here to see you." As soon as they said, "It's Ralph," I knew exactly who it was and I felt my stomach twist and knot. I didn't want to see this kid. So I told them, "Well I'm teaching and I can't be bothered right now. If he wants to see me he has to wait until lunchtime," and lunch isn't until 12:00. I was thinking, "He's not going to wait. Who is going to wait around two hours?" 12:00 came, and just to be sure, because I did not want to see this student that I had so miserably failed, I snuck down the back stairs hoping I could cut out the building and go to lunch. He just happened to be going around the back to use the men's room, and he sees me, and he opens the door and says, "Yo, Ms. Tully." And I said, "Oh I totally forgot. I'm so sorry," lying.

I bring him up to my classroom and I said, "Well, what brings you back here? It's been such a long time." He said, "Ms. Tully, I know I was a ballbuster. I lied. I stole. I did all these things. And then what's worse, I had you twice, and I was even worse the second year." And I'm standing there listening to this and inside feeling tenseness, anger, annoyance, curiosity. I said, "Okay." He said, "I just came back to tell you that out of all the teachers I've had after you—and I acted the same way with my other teachers—they all said that I was no good, they all said that I would never amount to anything, and to tell you the truth even my mother said that to me. I came back to tell you that I had reached a crossroads in my life where I could have really been a thug and a criminal. But I heard your voice in my head saying 'Why are you doing these things, Ralph? Why? You're a nice kid. You have everything to live for. You're a good-looking kid. You're smart.' When I came to that crossroad, I heard your voice and it made me go another path, and I came back today to share that with you to say thank you."

> And it was at that moment—and right now I feel emotional about it—
> it changed my life. Teaching. It made me realize how effective and how
> much influence and power a teacher can have. Even though you plant a
> seed and you don't see it flourish or bloom, it's there and it grows.

I recounted Mrs. Tully's story at length, because there is a wholeness to this account to which it was important to remain faithful. Every time I listened to this story, I cried, and if you did read this story aloud, I am willing to bet that your voice broke and you might have had to pause, take a breath to continue, maybe blink to clear your eyes. Why? It is certainly a well told story, crafted with cadence and rhythm, internal dialogue, humor and hyperbole and suspense. The choice of words and the structure of the narrative support its emotional tone. Mrs. Tully has certainly told this story before, and yet she herself cries telling it one more time. I think the thing that touches us so deeply in this story is the power of positive regard, the power of another's affirmation not for any great thing that we are or that we do, but for seeing our very being as good. Mrs. Tully's voice stayed inside Ralph, telling him of his goodness, his inviolable, true, good self. Her constant, unwavering positive regard for Ralph—even as she felt like a failure, even as he gave her no "glimpse" of goodness, even as he got worse—is nothing else if not love. Mrs. Tully interprets her story as planting a seed that fourished. But I hear it as a story of sight—sight and belief. Mrs. Tully saw and kept on seeing, giving her student the reverence of respect.

The idea of respect as a kind of reverence for children was evident in other teachers' conversations. For some, this was expressed as a sort of humility in front of children's mental and spiritual strength. Zoya Gill (26, f, H, 4yrs) said:

> I think that our students are incredibly strong and have experienced
> some things that most people in their lifetime will never experience and
> maybe don't have the mental strength to get through. I thought I have
> experienced some trials and tribulations in my life, and I have been
> completely humbled by the strength of my students. I think they need
> to be recognized for that.

These days, to describe some students, we speak a language of weakness and lack: the children are "at risk," they need "supplemental" education and "enrichment," we have to get them "up to standard" and college-"ready." So speaking of children's strength is already different, already a positive way of seeing. But the strength of Ms. Gill's students calls for more than admiration, it calls for acknowledgement; it is something that needs to "be recognized," in the sense of giving respect where respect is due. The teacher's use of the word "humbled" suggests an inward attitude as well as an outward regard. We stand humbled in front of someone who has done what we have done even better, who has lived through things we could not live through, who has surpassed our own capacity. To acknowledge that about your own self is to pay homage to another; when this homage flows from adult to child, or from teacher to student, it underscores the depth of respect being felt.

Another teacher used the word "humbled" to describe her relation to children as a learner and witness. Ms. Levy said:

> I know that I myself have learned so much from them, and I am humbled, every day, by who they are and who they have become, and who they'll be in the future.

In these words, there is respect for the ineffable human experience: what children have gone through to become who they are in the present and the unknown, yet magnificent, potential of their future. Ms. Levy's humility lies in the acknowledgement of learning from children and in the wonder of encountering children's present and future selves. This stance of learner and witness is a stance of deep respect. Like seeing goodness, humility is an intentional, conscious way of being for teachers. It is an attitude to take on and enact. Ms. Baker used the metaphor *guests of honor* to describe the development of her relationship with her students:

> I know people like Paulo Freire talked about this kind of stuff…teaching is an act of love. But you can't teach until you are really able to be in this relationship of love with your students, and have this kind of

> openness with them. So it wasn't until I was able to feel that with my students, to welcome them as guests of honor to my classroom every day…Yeah, that's when I felt this is really fun and I couldn't be doing anything that is more important. And even today, I feel that. It's never easy.

To receive guests, we open up our home and ask them to come in; to welcome guests of honor, we give them our best: we clean the house, we prepare a special meal, we make fresh coffee, we ensure they are comfortable and that their needs are met. We anticipate their coming and imagine the ways we will honor them. It is intentional effort, "never easy." I hear echoes of Mrs. Thomas, who loved nothing more than cleaning up after children and zipping up their jackets; in her hands, her students were guests of honor too. And I see Mrs. Tully, who kept telling Ralph how good he was; she was tirelessly generous with her difficult guest. For Ms. Baker, the respect one would give a guest of honor is the frame that holds the relation of teacher to student. To be that host, to give that respect, makes teaching an act of love.

<u>All Children Matter</u>

Something different than seeing children's goodness is teachers' belief that all children matter. This too is a way of honoring children, a way of showing respect. The concept of "all children matter" can seem vapid, as tired and flavorless as the jargon of "the children are our future," "all children can learn" "no child left behind," and "children first." Yet in these teachers' conversations, what it means for children to matter was expressed poignantly and powerfully. Two teachers' stories illustrate two different perspectives..

Mr. Nevins, the teacher who remembered Rasberry as his "finest student," told the story of another student who made an impact on him. He recalled:

> Kiana Thomas was a very different type of student than Rasberry, and that's not a comment on intellect or any other aspect. She was a completely ordinary kid, and I mean that in the best possible way. A sweet kid, who sometimes did her work and sometimes, like every other

kid, myself included, didn't. Sometimes wore her uniform properly, and again, like almost every other kid, sometimes tried to get away with the un-tucked shirt or the unbuttoned collar.

Mr. Nevins goes on to explain that two years later, when he had left teaching and started working on the editorial board of the Daily News, a former colleague called to tell him that Kiana had been killed.

> She ended up stabbed, slashed in the neck at three in the morning on a deserted Brooklyn street. What troubled me was that if she was an ordinary kid in the suburbs, say in Connecticut where I grew up, with people much wealthier who drink and drive and do drugs…the consequences were minimal. Whereas for her, to sneak out at night in Brooklyn meant her death. And I can't begin to understand those inequalities, much less correct them, but they trouble me.

He then talked about his reaction and response to her death:

> I was in something approaching shock…I didn't know what it meant. What does it mean this student is dead? What does that mean? I understand what it means she didn't do her homework, I understand she's ill and she won't be in for a couple of days. Slashed in the neck— that's not in the guidebook, they don't teach you that in the teacher preparation program. So I was a little bit stunned. I remember not being able to sleep very well, and waking up. I already wake up quite early, but waking up even earlier than usual and writing something for the Daily News and then just sending it off to an editor. I said maybe you'll want to run this and he very graciously did, a fairly long story.

> By and large, the reaction was positive. But a few people from Kiana's community called the Daily News to express dismay at what I had written. They thought that I had been disrespectful in my appraisal of her character and the fact that I called her ordinary and that I pointed out certain very quotidian faults, for example the lack of a uniform or not doing homework. One woman called and said, "How could you do this before they buried her?" and my response to that was if I didn't do it, nobody else was going to write a word about her. She's not Natalie Holloway, she's not a pretty blonde who disappeared in Aruba. She's just another Black girl dead in some part of Brooklyn that people like myself don't generally go to.

> And I'd rather say the truth, which was fairly innocuous, really. She was an ordinary kid. I'd rather describe that ordinariness in vivid detail and honor her thus as opposed to just let her be buried with the four or three inch police report that otherwise would have eulogized her.

Kiana matters. That is the essence of Mr. Nevins' response of respect—respect for the tragedy of her death, and respect for the ordinariness of her life. The first thing that matters to Mr. Nevins is the fact of Kiana's death itself, the ceasing of the existence of her living presence. "What does this mean?" is an existential question about death, indeed not taught in teacher preparation programs. The second layer of reaction, what also troubles Mr. Nevins, is the injustice, the "inequality" of life. Kiana's ordinary behavior, being out late at night, was extraordinary in its dénouement. It matters that if she was out late at night in suburban Connecticut, she would most likely be alive. Mr. Nevins steps back from comprehending or believing he is able to "correct" this inequality, but he is troubled by the social imbalance where life is a bigger gamble for some people in some places than for others. And though he feels he cannot do anything about this imbalance, Mr. Nevins can show that Kiana matters by writing about her. He wrote about her, in all her glorious ordinariness, to honor her. Her ordinariness was something to be treasured because it contained her humanity: her unbuttoned collar, her homework done and not done, her sweetness. Kiana is nothing more nor less than any other child in the world, full of potential, worthy of respect because she is human. Mr. Nevins' regard for Kiana's ordinariness, his honoring "just another Black girl dead in some part of Brooklyn," is his loving grief, his cry to the world that all children matter.

This principle that children matter in the world was expressed by another teacher, less tragically but no less poignantly. Joy Adams (65, f, W, 40yrs) started teaching in Washington Heights in New York City, an area similar to Kiana's part of Brooklyn, in the early 1970s. She too saw injustice:

> These children were poor. They were very poor and they were sort of shoved around all over the place. With that first class of 36 children, the work was really about coming to know themselves as people, and I think what was most influential was that children began to see that they mattered. They began to see that they not only mattered to me, but that they mattered for each other. And I began to feel that I mattered. When

> the relationship between teacher and a child—or two people at all—is around how much you matter, not only to me but to everybody, to the world, that helps people open up and see their own possibility and broaden their capacity, or understand their capacity.

Mrs. Adams, unlike Mr. Nevins, saw a way to "correct the inequality." Perhaps that is not fair to say, because Mr. Nevins did try to combat or make up for injustice by writing about Kiana. But it seems like Mrs. Adams found a way to do that in her classroom. Somehow, she found a way that the 36 children whose experience was of being "shoved around" began to feel like they mattered *to* the world, not only *in* the world. I like how Mrs. Adams goes beyond the fact that her students recognized that they mattered to their teacher, important as that is. She talks about children "coming to know themselves as people," seeing, understanding, and broadening their own capacity. "They mattered for each other," she says, and in those words there is an abiding respect for children's very being, a love for children that honors how they love themselves.

Care: Love's Work

One way Mrs. Adams helped children feel that they mattered, that they had a place in the world, was through listening. True listening—something so simple and so profound—was explicitly mentioned as integral to the relation between teachers and students. "I would be with a child [who] was upset and after the child was able to talk…it was really about listening" said Mrs. Adams. This listening was an act of respect, and it was also an act of care. Care seems almost too obvious to mention, something that comes before, or with, love, or is subsumed into it. Care is the presumed appropriate relation between adult and child, a responsibility and an obligation. Teachers are expected to "care about their students," a concept whose meaning and embodiment has wide variation. What does care really mean to

teachers, the adults who spend more than six hours a day in an institutional setting with dozens of children who are not their own?

Unlike pleasure, respect, and true self—the other three dimensions of love in teaching—care also describes a way to do the *job* of teaching, from the very mundane tasks like taking attendance or supervising at the playground, to the more interesting like planning lessons or taking a class on a trip. In none of these things would it be good for a teacher to be care-less, and because schools are institutions acting *in loco parentis*, teachers, as employees, have to act in the best interest of children. But to think of care as a dimension of love in teaching means to consider it as a deeper concern for the needs of children, understanding and supporting them in all their potential and all their vulnerability as human beings. In these teachers' conversations, care was disclosed as paying attention, nurturing, and being in relationship.

Paying Attention

Paying attention to children starts with listening to them, acknowledging that there is value and meaning in everything they say. Nothing children could say is too small or insignificant, as it opens a window into an experience and reality that helps teachers figure out what the children need. Mrs. Thomas told a humorous—but incisive—anecdote:

> With an individual child, I try to be as kind and listen. Listening, that's the other thing. Children will always tell you the truth. You just have to listen. Like one time I was at a street fair and a kid came up to me. He had a Superman shirt on, and he goes, "I'm Batman." I said, "Wait a minute, you're Superman." He lifted up the shirt and underneath the Superman shirt was a Batman shirt. That's when I realized they are telling you the truth. We don't have time to hear them.

One could interpret this as a story of a kid with a great sense of humor, a trickster who enjoys playing games with adults. But Mrs. Thomas tells this like a parable, evoking meaning far

beyond the simple, though funny, scenario. What would have happened if Mrs. Thomas did not respond to the child's statement? What would have happened if Mrs. Thomas thought the child didn't understand what he was doing, couldn't read, was confused, or worse, was a liar? How often is it that when we hear something that does not make sense to us, or flies against our worldview or understanding, we label it as "crazy" or "wrong"? Children always tell you the truth, says Mrs. Thomas, meaning that there is sense in what children are saying, even if it is not obvious or apparent to adults at first. We don't have time to hear, says Mrs. Thomas, meaning that adults' kindness or care sometimes stops short of the desire to listen or understand. Making the time to pay attention is a critical way of showing care to children.

Beyond understanding the significance of listening, teachers were also aware of their own capacity to listen. Mr. Drake spoke of the Quaker practice of sitting in silence for an hour or so, what he called "listening to self," in order to "sort out what's in there that is really of import and what is just the fluff of the week." That practice helped him to truly hear what his students were saying:

> That listening to self and to spirit helps me to listen to them and to try to listen from a deeper place. Because sometimes—there have been a lot of times when kids have said something and not until the subway ride home do I figure out what they were really talking about. And I have to come back the next day and say, "I finally heard you," and I am sorry I didn't pick it up then.

Developing this deeper place inside himself sharpens Mr. Drake's sense of hearing: he is better able to discern the real meaning, the "truth," of what his students express. Moreover, Mr. Drake's care doesn't stop with his understanding but continues when he communicates to his students that he has understood; they know that he is paying attention. Similarly, Mrs. Thomas talked about the effort needed to figure out what children mean:

> There was another child, Abdor, who was a very grumpy, grouchy child. At naptime, he had a little trouble resting and he used to say, "I'm cold."

> But what he really meant was, "I'm hungry." And I realized that he was talking to me in code and I understood him a lot better from that. Just realizing that sometimes children will say something but that's not really what they mean. There is a secret to what they're saying.

Beyond making time to listen and honing the ability to listen, there is also a need to decode, to uncover the secret of what children mean. It was paying careful attention that allowed Mrs. Thomas to understand that her student was hungry; instead of covering him with an extra blanket, she could take care of him in the way he needed.

Mrs. Thomas probably figured out how to take better care of Abdor by observing him as well as listening to his coded talk. This idea of coming to know and understand children through close observation was voiced by several teachers. Paying attention through watching and describing what their students were doing was a way for teachers to "see" their students more deeply. Larissa English (52, f, ES, 30yrs) spoke about the ways her vision expanded because of her school's practice of descriptive assessment:

> Being able to watch kids at work, it's such an interesting problem. Before I was only looking at do they know their colors, do they now their numbers, could they make their buildings stay up. But now, there are so many other things to look for and think about that it keeps on opening up rather than closing down. Look at the rich ways they are thinking about their world and how much they have developed as children and as thinkers.

What parent wouldn't feel joy at knowing that their child's teacher has "so many things to look for and think about" when it comes to their child? And isn't it the most beautiful, affirming feeling when the person who loves us "keeps opening up," understanding us better and deeper? While descriptive assessment does serve the pedagogic function of determining the next instructional steps, it is clear that Mrs. English's care goes beyond that. She is able to see more than her students' knowledge of content; she cares about children as thinkers, about

their being in the world. Because she is able to see more, she can do more. Her conversation

partner, Mrs. Ferner, affirmed this:

> I think that every year you get better and better at observing the children,
> and you help the children more and more and more. It's knowing more
> and being able to do more and be a better teacher.

Another teacher, Ms. Baker, put this realization in an imperative form: "Teachers, we have to

study our students."

<u>Nurturing</u>

Paying attention to their students goes hand-in-hand with another facet of care: the

ways teachers nurture children. Teachers in these conversations demonstrated a concern for

children's psychic wellness, or their spiritual or emotional health. They saw the ways that their

students were being diminished and worked to ameliorate the children's pain or reduce the

constraints of circumstances. The most obvious way this was manifested was in the creation

and maintenance of a physically and psychically healthy environment. For some teachers,

visual appeal and aesthetic order signified a healthy atmosphere. Jake Burke (30, m, W, HS

English, 6yrs), for example, described his colleague's classroom with a sense of awe:

> she has desks in U's around the room, so they're neatly put together, all
> the chairs are pushed in. The board looks nice. You could walk in and
> eat off this floor.

Ms. Vindal also noted the care her colleague put into the physical appearance of her classroom,

noting that "everything is focused and orderly and neat and you have a lot of wonderful visuals

and the colors are very bright." Other teachers talked about the idea of safe space. Mrs.

Adams remembered her first year teaching this way:

> The children were fighting, I got a black eye, it was very unsafe in that
> classroom, physically unsafe, forget about emotionally unsafe. So I had
> to create some kind of equanimity there. I knew that I had to make the
> most vulnerable person feel safe, and that if it was safe for him, it would

> be safe for everyone. It was so intriguing to me and so challenging about
> how we were going to create some kind of community in this room. It
> seemed to me that doing work with the kids was the way to create it.
> And so the whole year centered on how we can become more aware of
> our surroundings and make choices that would be in the best interests
> of ourselves and other people.

Instead of assuming a disciplinary role, or acting like a savior, Mrs. Adams talks of "vulnerability," "community," "creating," "awareness," and "work." Perhaps the most important word she uses is "we." The insight of her love is captured by that word. Only if children were full participants in the creation of their safety, only if they were aware and making choices for themselves and for others, only if they were fully involved could they attain fullness of being. This teacher's care is perceptive, even if it was instinctual and unsure in her first year of teaching.

Mr. Lowry was another teacher who worked to create a psychically safe space in his classroom, aware of his students' struggles. It too was his first year of teaching:

> I tried really hard. I had ninth graders who were in a remedial type math
> class. They really struggled with just adding and subtracting and fractions
> and things like that, and I bought some costume pieces and we played
> lots of games. There was a sequined blue top hat and sunglasses that
> had big dollar signs in sparkling silver on them. I tried to be as
> entertaining as possible to convince them that math was fun and not
> scary.

Though this seems lighter in substance, it is also a deep care. There is a touching foolishness, a certain vulnerability—this time, on the part of the teacher—that paradoxically works to create safety. Listening to Mr. Lowry's story, I imagine a group of ninth graders who have repeatedly struggled and failed, starting a new school year; their teacher is wearing a goofy costume and trying to entertain them. I can see a lightness in the room, a lifting of the fear of failure, a frivolity that helps the students to forget, or unlearn, that math is hard and scary. Something in Mr. Lowry recognized that his students' sense of themselves as learners had to be replenished. His silliness is care, restorative and loving.

A more seasoned teacher five years later, Mr. Lowry still works on keeping his classroom a safe place; he continues to care about his students' state of mind and feelings. And while he retains his light touch, his students have become more fully involved in sustaining a safe, joyful classroom:

> Classes always begin with a mathetation. We meditate with math. Kids are always rushing from class to class and bringing all this stress and chaos from the hallways with them, so we begin with a moment of silence and there is a gong. Right now we're reciting the digits of Pi and we're going to 10 decimal places. We're going to keep going further so that when Pi Day comes in March we can be awesome, because we'll know so many digits.

Mr. Lowry understood that the stress and chaos had to be ushered out of the classroom in order for children to be comfortable, to learn, and to "be awesome." The math meditation was a practice of care; it created a boundary, or a kind of buffer, that diminished the harm of stress on his students' being.

Other teachers also spoke of boundaries, but in a different way. They spoke of how much—or how little—of themselves children could bring and be in the space. These teachers cared about supporting the "whole child," that is the totality of children's being. Mrs. Adams remembered some advice she gave to a new teacher:

> She called me the night before school and said, "Joy, give me some advice." And I said, "Miriam, let the whole child come to school." I just think how many children learn so quickly what to leave behind, and often what they are leaving behind is their spirit. And if we can welcome them all into school, they can negotiate what needs to stay at home, what needs to stay at school, what needs to stay on the street. But for us to limit them without knowing them is a very damaging thing. Be open to really finding what that spirit is and nurture that spirit, even if in a sentence a day.

Nurturing students' full being depends on the teacher's openness and desire to come to know the students, a desire to welcome the unknown. It is significant that Mrs. Adams did not develop a grand, expansive definition of children's spirit or delineate what exactly needs to be

supported by the teacher. Instead, her care lies in her commitment to look for the spirit of

children, to welcome it, to let it be, and to nurture it. Caring enough not to limit children was

also expressed by Mr. Drake, who spoke about "making space" for children:

> My view of human beings is that we are all unique and that we are all
> actively and deeply seeking to make meaning, to make sense out of life
> and to find meaning in it. If you let kids be themselves in the classroom,
> you start to see kids making meaning. So you make space for it.

The fullness of being that is possible when given space to "make sense out of life" seems to

me a wonderful promise, really the best that we could wish for another person. Not wealth,

not success, not even happiness or health, but the ability and space to make meaning of our

lives is the most precious treasure. Believing that children possess this human need and caring

for it is a special, life-giving love teachers can show their students.

Being in Relationship

Finally, teachers' care for their students was evident in their being in relationship with

them. Paying close attention to students, listening to them and "studying" them, as well as

nurturing their spirit would be impossible outside some kind of relationship, some kind of

closeness. Attention and nurture live within a loving relationship. And the reverse is true as

well: it is hard to develop a relationship or any kind of intimacy without listening and watching,

without nurturing someone's whole self. One can think of relationship, then, as both a space

where care happens and as a space created by care. It was *within* relationship that teachers

enacted care, whether with one student or with a group. Mr. Lowry gave an example:

> And then there is one student who is kind of my shadow. She is a senior
> and is free at the same time I'm free, so she is always around and
> following me. I give her money and she goes and buys the two of us
> lunch so I can work during my lunch period. And I joke with her that
> she's going to be a teacher someday, because she's starting to develop
> some of these qualities and other teachers have said the same thing to

her. And lately she's starting to think, "Maybe I could. Maybe I could."
Because we get along like that.

It is important to note that teacher-student relationships do not have the two-sidedness of adult ones. Though there is no doubt that Mr. Lowry receives pleasure and satisfaction from eating lunch with his "shadow," it is clear that what he values is his students' growth and development, their needs: the student begins to think she could be a teacher, because they "get along like that." Being in relationship and having these deep connections enables Mr. Lowry to care for his students in ways that enrich their development.

In other conversations, teachers alluded to the timeless quality, a certain magic, of being in relationship with children. Mrs. Adams described this phenomenon of relationship-in-the-moment transcending time:

> And the kids who come back—who aren't kids anymore, they are older than my own children—they come back for a dose of that relationship. It's funny, even if I meet them on the street, it's as though they saw me the day before and I am still interested in them, and they are going to tell me… And it is that relationship, that connection, that knowledge, that knowing each other that we are seeking. We never completely know the other but we are seeking this and we care about each other.

Teachers being in relationship with their students is a care that lasts. Most teachers have had the experience of their students reaching out to them years later to say "you were my favorite teacher." Recently, a student who I taught in seventh grade found me online. He is a grown man, just turned 30, an athlete—a martial arts boxer—and though I barely recognized him in his online photos, I felt a wash of tenderness. I remembered him in seventh grade: how skinny he was, how smart, how he laughed and how he always did his homework, how his mood could swing and how he never backed away from a fight, and how he asked if I could tutor his best friend. That tenderness was the memory of caring. And when he wrote to me that I was his favorite teacher, that was *his* memory of being cared for.

Being in relationship with any human being is beautiful but also complex. Caring for children is not like caring for a house plant, where the decisions and interaction flow one way, the plant standing ready for water, light, and occasional dusting. The space of relationship is an open terrain, full of danger and possibility: a space where teachers encounter their students as fully participating subjects, a space in which teachers have to calibrate their care. The complexity of being in relationship with students is the content of Ms. Levy's story about her student Maria, another narrative that needs to be told at length. Ms. Levy saw "the good side" of Maria, but it wasn't often. She recounted:

> Unfortunately most of the time I was seeing the nasty side of her which left me, as a still-pretty-new teacher, feeling like I was at the end of my rope a lot of the time. She had a couple of friends in class and they could be kind of nasty together and it could be intimidating, to be honest, to face this group and get them to listen to me. It's three young Latina students, of Mexican descent, who bonded very well with each other and I felt like they, especially Maria, looked at me as somebody who was an outsider and who really had no business telling them anything about their life and what they should be doing. And I looked into finding role models for them, anything I could think of. I felt that it was something about me that I wasn't reaching them. Nothing I was doing was really working or changing their behavior at all.

> So it was the last week of school and I was walking these three students to their next class because they would skip and leave after my class. They start walking ahead of me, obviously not going to class, not doing what they should be doing, not listening to me as I am calling for them. I see that they are walking out the doors to the street, and I don't know what got into me…I definitely did not think about this rationally, but I followed them. And when they saw that I was following them, they started to run. Maria started running ahead. The other two didn't actually leave the school building, but Maria did and I continued to follow her out. She shrieked and ran and I chased her. The security guards must have thought that I was a crazy woman, and I know for sure that Maria thought it. I chased her all the way from school to the highway, about six blocks. It's not a small distance and she ran the whole way and I chased her and I told her I was going to follow her until she stopped, that I wasn't going to stop following her no matter how far she ran.

> I remember, I was feeling so emotional, so raw on the edge…anger, and a little bit of fear, because as teachers in this day and age we are told not

to even touch our students, not to have any kind of personal contact or relationship with them at all. And here I am chasing a student. It just seemed reckless. So I was feeling all of these things and she is ahead of me and finally she stopped. And she started to cry. I am going to cry [voice shakes]. She started to cry and she was yelling at me, "Why are you chasing me, why won't you just let me go, just let me go home, I just want to go home." And I said, "I am not going to let you go home, Maria, I care about you too much, I want you to come back to school. Tell me what's wrong, why are you crying." And she couldn't talk and I was completely choked up, I was pretty much sobbing at that point. We were both sobbing at the side of the road in the middle of the Bronx, and we hugged each other. I hugged her and I said, "Maria I love you, and I won't let you do this to yourself."

Finally, we started to calm down and she told me that her grandmother had just died and that her grandmother was the only person that she felt cared about her, and that she was afraid of what would happen now that her grandmother was gone. We talked on the side of the road and I tried to convince her to come back to school and finish up the day. And she wouldn't come back. So after being out there with her for a little bit, I let her go and I walked back to school.

I didn't see her again for the rest of the summer. I was so worried about what would happen when she came back. Would I ever see her again? Would she come back to the school? Would she be angry at me? What would happen? When she did come back the next year, she actually brought up in the class the fact that I had chased her. She would make comments to other students like, "Don't skip, or Ms. Levy will chase you," And I said, "Yup, and I would do it again," and I got to kind of play off that for a little bit. But we never really talked about it one-on-one and I always wondered how it would affect our relationship. Now, three years later, I feel like we have a very special relationship, despite the fact that we've never talked about it. She came to me last year and confided in me in a way that she never would have done in ninth grade, and just a couple of weeks ago, she made me a drawing that said, "To my special teacher, thank you for always supporting me." It meant so much to me.

One thing I remember thinking in that moment was that this was my Dangerous Minds, my Freedom Writers, moment because it was quite cinematic, there on the side of the road. But the thing that they don't show you in the movies is that change takes so much time. That was really the lesson that I took away from that experience: you can't force change.

Like the story about Ralph who heard his teacher's voice when he came to a crossroads in his

life, this has a high emotional charge. Ms. Levy's narrative traces the evolution of her

relationship with Maria: seeing the good/nasty sides of her, being intimidated and feeling like a failure, not being able to reach her but consistently trying, and then the climax of the chase. Did Ms. Levy "catch" Maria, did she "reach" her? I don't know. But it seems to me that Ms. Levy was able to finally hear Maria, to see one place where Maria was "making sense of life." Here was a child who lost her grandmother and was afraid that no one else would care about her. Nothing Ms. Levy could do would change that fact. But Ms. Levy being there—not just on the side of the road, but there from the beginning of the school year—maybe gave Maria a person to lean on, maybe gave her hope that there would be care for her, still, in the world.

Ms. Levy didn't do anything miraculous, something she herself alludes to when she mentions the popular Hollywood portrayals of teaching. She didn't plan to chase Maria; it was a reckless action with the simple purpose of making Maria go to the next class. And in fact, Maria didn't go back, and Ms. Levy had to "let her go." It was on Maria's terms, on *her* response to the chase, that the story has a happy ending. The lesson Ms. Levy learned was that change takes time, and though I do not disagree, again I have a different interpretation. To me, Ms. Levy's chase began in those first days of school, when she realized she needed to be in relationship with Maria to care for her. She saw she was an "outsider," who had "no business" with Maria and knew that she wasn't "reaching" her. The effort of making a connection was year-long. The work of "following" Maria was year-long too. Ms. Levy's loving care—her perception, her persistence, her own ability to let go and be "on the edge"— found its match: Maria, a child who needed care.

True Self: Show Me

"I don't know what got into me," Ms. Levy said of her chasing Maria. "I definitely wasn't thinking about it rationally," she continued, describing how the school security guards and Maria must have thought she was "a crazy woman," and how her action was "reckless."

But it was the way she named her feelings as *raw on the edge* that struck me. The words were certainly appropriate to the drama of the situation, the emotional tempest combined with the physical exertion of the chase. At the same time that this phrase resonated and made sense, it was also extraordinary in some way. What edge? What rawness? There was a sense of exposure, like an uncontrolled openness; there was an image of a sharp boundary, a precipice on which she was perilously balanced. It made me think of the risks we take and the boundaries we draw in love, how much of ourselves we open and share.

The love teachers have for their students is not romantic: there are the boundaries of adult-child relations compounded by the norms of professional behavior. Yet there is something in teaching that has to do with vulnerability and disclosure. It is not a question of teachers being their "whole self" in the classroom, certainly not in the same way children can. Rather it is the idea of a *true self*, how teachers constantly decide what and how much of their authentic personhood they bring into their relation with students. In these conversations, true self was a vivid part of teachers' relation with students. Along with the other dimensions of love in teaching—pleasure, respect, and care—teachers' true self was manifested in different ways. At minimum, teachers acknowledged that there were different selves they brought into the classroom, different selves they shared with their students. At the deeper end, teachers actively questioned what true parts of themselves they needed to discover and give children.

Mr. Simmons and Mr. Lowry talked about a true self when they discussed the "split" between the teacher in the classroom and the person in the outside world.

> Mr. Simmons: I've talked to a lot of teachers who feel like they are two different people. There is the one person who is in the classroom and then there is the person outside of school, and it's sort of like a split. Do you feel like that or is there a different way that you look at yourself?

> Mr. Lowry: I guess I never thought about it that way. In some ways I can see that. I have some friends who are teachers, but many friends, including my roommate—I couldn't talk to them about my job, because

> they don't really understand what teaching is. So, it's not like I can
> discuss much with them, and that keeps my two worlds separate. But I
> don't feel like my whole personality changes. It's not two different
> things. I enforce discipline and so on with the kids, but I'm still pretty
> much myself. I feel a little more in charge, a little more demanding
> respect, than when I'm with my friends, but I try to still be myself

Mr. Lowry does not think there is a radical split between who he is in the classroom with

students and who he is outside of school with friends. There is a difference in feeling "in

charge" and "demanding respect," but that seems like an additional layer to Mr. Lowry's self;

he does not claim to keep parts of himself hidden from his students. In fact, he seems more

concerned that it is the outside world that has trouble understanding him, that the part of him

that is teaching is invisible to his friends, not part of his relation with them. With his students,

however, he can still be himself.

Mr. Nevins, on the other hand, acknowledged a well-developed "other self" that he

shows his students, a character that he becomes in the classroom:

> My character was the crusty curmudgeonly authoritarian who had no
> patience for fun or joy of any kind. So let me just amend that: it was
> important not to break character, but also to let the kids know that it
> was a character. I think if they thought I really was a mean taskmaster,
> they wouldn't have bought it.

It's fascinating to hear how this self of Mr. Nevins—the crusty authoritarian—existed only in

negotiation with the students, possible only because of their acceptance. They "bought" the

act, or played the game with their teacher. And if they knew it was an act, then they also knew

that there *was* a true self, someone their teacher was besides the character he played. There is

some sense of intimacy in this game playing, some sense of closeness, an affirmation the

children gave their teacher. Even though his students do not know his true self, Mr. Nevins

was sincere in letting the children know he was acting.

This idea of intentional hiding, a kind of hide-and-seek of self, was echoed by other

teachers. Sometimes, added to the theatrics, was an accidental revelation that bonded teacher

and student. Mr. Grant told such a story when he shared his love of punk music and culture, and his ear piercings.

> Mr. Grant: It just feels so good to have the earrings in, it's special, it's like here I come. I remember one time—I always took them out before school—but one Monday morning I forgot. And there was this one kid, Tinepat, who was always at the door five minutes before the rest of the class. I go to open the door, and he says "Mr. Grant, did you get your ears pierced?" And I was like, "No. No I didn't." And I shut the door, and I take them out really fast. I open the door and I say "Tinepat, that's our secret. You don't tell anyone."

His conversation partner, Ms. Weiner, replied: "Tinepat must feel so special that he knows Mr. Grant's secret." I am sure that Tinepat did feel special, not so much because he now knew some juicy personal detail about his teacher (although that is a real pleasure for children) but because Mr. Grant asked him to keep it a secret. The earring exposure was accidental, but the request to keep this part of his true self hidden was an intentional act. Mr. Grant asked Tinepat to protect his vulnerability, his privacy. Even though this is a funny, probably inconsequential incident, it highlights that edge where the teacher is vulnerable before the child. Asking the student to honor that openness, is a way of giving something special to the child—a loving trust coming from the true self.

Other teachers, however, revealed their true self to children by more conscious choice. Teachers remembered their childhoods and their own favorite teachers as those who shared something special about themselves. This sharing not only opened up the teacher, but opened up the students to a bigger world. For example, Mr. Wells remembered his junior high teacher, Mrs. Moore, as his favorite because "she always taught us like we were adults, she was never condescending." Mrs. Moore did this by sharing her taste in literature with the students:

> She would tell us about the books she was reading, she would call them her "lost in the drainage" books. If she was reading a romance, she called them trashy. We learned that some books are trashy and that it is ok to read those, and there are also some things called literature and those are good too.

Another teacher, Ms. Levy, remembered her high school teacher specifically because she

"brought herself" into the classroom:

> My Spanish teacher, Cathy Birkland, came my sophomore year of high
> school and was a little bit older. She was about fifty, but so beautiful
> and so exotic for the middle of nowhere, Ohio, where so many of us
> kids—especially the girls—were just yearning for something exciting.
> The rest of the world—we wanted that so badly. She had been living in
> Colombia for many years and was just a breath of fresh air and really
> inspired us as students. She was one of those first teachers who had
> really brought herself into the classroom, and that has inspired me in my
> teaching. I feel that while it's important to have some boundaries, I like
> to be myself. And I am a much better teacher when I am.

Though the ways this teacher brought herself into the classroom and inspired her students is

not known, it was probably more than just being her outward self, exotic and refreshing as it

was. Perhaps it was her sharing her experiences with her students that was enough to inspire

Ms. Levy to be more fully herself in the classroom. This is how Mrs. Royce shared her self

with her students, by talking about her life experience. She did this purposefully:

> The students are blown away when I tell them that in my ninth grade
> year my mother died, and I came to New York for school. I was so
> ahead of the students in my school that I quickly learned how to play
> hooky, and every day in ninth grade I was drinking wine and playing
> handball. I roped myself back in and went back to upstate New York
> to graduate. When I share with them that I was born in Bed-Stuy and I
> am no different, they begin to get it.

Here, Mrs. Royce reveals her young self making choices that she probably would not want her

students to make. The revelation of skipping school and drinking wine, in addition to

disclosing a personal loss, makes her human. It makes her "no different" from her students.

Sharing her true self by talking about her difficult experiences in youth was a way of connecting

with children.

It makes sense that opening their true self in the classroom helps teachers' relation with children, as trust is the foundation of relationships. Ms. Baker talked about openness as a requisite for good teaching:

> Good teaching can't happen until there is a sense of openness that comes from both sides, from teacher and students. And a sense of trust. Once you have that, the motivation to listen and learn, again on both sides, snowballs into something bigger. And then, teaching can happen.

It would be hard to trust people, to listen and learn from them, if you didn't know much about them and if they did not in some way take a risk and open up. Likewise, students might need their teachers to open to them in some way, so that they can trust the relationship and what happens in the classroom space. This is probably what happened with Ms. Weiner, a teacher who was having a very difficult time with her students. After breaking down during class one day, pushed to her limits by her students' behavior, she reflected on how she could make it better. She said:

> I realized maybe that was the part missing so far, that I haven't opened up to them. Not so much in a crying or emotional sense, but that I haven't told them what I was like when I was in sixth grade, I haven't shared with them parts of who I am. And so maybe this was one of the first times when they actually saw me as more than just a teacher, but like a person.

Maybe Ms. Weiner had to break down—be on that edge—to see the need to bring her true self to her students. Maybe this is why students push their teachers to their limits, provoke them, so to speak, in order to force a true self to come out. Maybe without seeing the "person," students cannot accept "the teacher." For a teacher to respond to this provocation with opening up, not closing down or retreating, is an act of love.

This idea of children pushing teachers' true self into the light was explored by Mrs. Adams and Mr. Drake in this very interesting exchange:

> Mrs. Adams: We were saying that no matter how long we've taught, that class coming in the next morning, that's the class that's going to show

that you are a fraud, that I really don't know what I am doing. It's like being an actress or an actor, that bit of nervousness that elevates you in certain ways. But it's scary.

Mr. Drake: It is. And that's the class that reveals the place I have to grow. With some classes, it flows from practically day one. And with other classes, it's like: ok, this class really needs work—I am going to have to change. That, for me, is part of the hard work: I have to change in order for them to respond to me differently. And I do feel like a fraud, like: oh god, I don't know what I am doing.

Mrs. Adams: Yes, and I always thought about the kids who keep you honest. They are usually the kids that other people don't want in the classroom. They say, "Ok, you're Mrs. Adams? Show me." They don't really say that, but they mean that. And I am reading that, and I say: I have to figure this one out.

Mr. Drake: A girl once said to me, "How come you got that fake smile on your face all the time?"

Mrs. Adams: Because my shoes are too tight.

Mr. Drake: Yeah, right…yeah.

So much about love in teaching is contained in this conversation. So much that teaches *how* to love, too. One part of love is the willingness to grow for the other, in this case the willingness of the teacher to change so that the class can "flow." I think of how many times have I been in an argument or some hard place with a loved one—family, friend, or romantic partner—and later, after the heat of the disagreement, thinking of the ways I made the situation worse. I think of how many times, as a teacher, I have thought about things not working in my classroom, the students I wasn't reaching or helping, and searching in myself for what I could do differently, knowing that I have to grow and change even if I didn't exactly know how. And I think of the times I have expected the other person to change, when I blamed my students for not understanding, not following, not going along. Part of true self, when speaking of love, is the acknowledgement of "the place to grow," followed by the willingness to change.

Students help teachers love them because they can push in a way that only children can. The complement to the idea that "children always tell the truth" is the idea of children keeping adults honest. *Show me yourself* is asked of the teacher. This request can be unstated, implicit, a mild undertone; or, it can be a demand, a cry, even a taunt. Whatever way, it is a request for the teacher's true self. Children can see a "fake smile" from miles away and they know if it is our true self—or not—in the classroom with them. And we know, too, that when people ask us to be honest it is because we have somehow not been real with them. Responding to this demand for honesty, this push to reveal a true self, is a way for teachers to love their students.

Revealing and being your true self with someone is never free of risk. But what did Mrs. Adams and Mr. Drake mean when they talked of feeling like a fraud, feeling that they did not know what they are doing? I don't think it is about knowing the subject matter or pedagogy. I think part of feeling like a fraud is that being called out by children to be honest, to show yourself, can feel like an accusation of holding back, being fake, not true. And it can indeed be "scary" to respond to the accusation, to determine the boundaries and accept the risks of revealing yourself. Perhaps there is an even bigger fear than that. When we are called out to be real, we have to know who we are, we have to know what our real self is. It is a deeply existential question. We might spend our whole life, consciously or unconsciously, searching for that knowledge, always feeling like a fraud deep down because we have to go on living while not knowing. So when children push teachers to be their real self, that deep unresolved mystery is exposed and confronted, and the only real answer is *I don't know what I am doing.* It is a true answer. And it is scary. Paradoxically, feeling like a fraud can come in a true relationship of love—the answer to the question *Who am I?* comes no more easily when

we want to have the answer for the ones we love, when they demand the answer of us. Love in teachingis making the effort to find one's true self, so that it is there to give to children.

Not Love

I wish that I could stop right here, having shown love in its many beautiful forms as a meaning of teaching. But for me to be true to this project, and to teaching itself, I have to acknowledge that not all is love in teaching. Indeed, there is *not love* in teaching: experiences, emotions, and ways of relating with students that demand description precisely because they are related to love, but not of it. The *not love* in these conversations sometimes didn't make me feel good. A part of me just didn't want to write anything "bad" about teaching. And something didn't feel right using these teachers' voices to point out love's absence or its distortion in teaching. However, I think that writing about *not love* could serve love's purpose. In her theory of love, Mrs. Thomas said that love can be created:

> You meditate on it. You read about it. You value it and it comes, it rises
> within you. It can be encouraged. Maybe it can't be taught, but if you
> could think in these kinds of terms, if we could tell each other that this
> would be good.

In writing about love's dimensions of pleasure, respect, care, and true self, I valued love and listened for it. It did come, rising from these teachers' conversations, encouraged by my attention. This same attention sees what love isn't. Shining a light on love's absence and its negation can perhaps be a way to value it too, another way to encourage it.

For some teachers, school is simply not a place where they can feel good and be their best selves. Unhappy, miserable, wanting something else—they wanted out. It was not a matter of lacking love in their relation to children but a matter of not being happy in teaching itself. Mr. O'Brien and Jasmine Miller (33, f, W, HS chemistry, 3yrs) discussed this:

Mr. O'Brien: Kids know when you're enjoying your job and when you aren't. And they're never wrong in that. They love you or hate you based on whether you're miserable or not above all else. And if you are miserable, then you are on this slippery slope of they're probably going to make you more miserable.

Ms. Miller: Our classrooms are a prime space. We share so many hours, five days a week, for the majority of the year, that to not be happy in that space is a crime to both them and to us. And you're right, kids can tell when adults hate being in the space, don't like being in the space, don't like them, and they just reflect that. Some faculty would probably say, "Well it's not that I don't like them"…

Mr. O'Brien: So it is about whether you like them or not, but I believe there are some teachers who are miserable in their jobs that love the kids plenty. That's why I use the term whether you're enjoying yourself, because I think you can love kids and you know it's miserable.

To me, this exchange clarifies the concept of love in teaching. Love is a relation *between* teachers and students, but it also exists *in* the "space" of teaching. Ms. Miller identifies this space as classrooms, but I think that is a metaphor for the whole of teaching itself. One has to be willing to be in that space and happy enough to stay in it. Perhaps it goes back to pleasure, the enjoyment teachers received from their students. Mr. O'Brien makes the point that there is enjoyment outside of that, a wider enjoyment of the job itself. Without that enjoyment or "happiness"—or enough of it—teachers cannot stay in the space of teaching, not if they are true to themselves. Ms. Miller and Mr. O'Brien acknowledge the harm for both students and teachers when the job of teaching cannot be enjoyed. It is the "crime" of remaining in a space of unhappiness, even if one "loves the kids plenty."

The absence of happiness in teaching was an aspect of *not love* that I took as a matter of fact: not everybody loves teaching, and even if one enjoys being with children, there are certainly circumstances—the stifling bureaucracy, the intense loneliness—that can make teaching an unhappy experience. However, there were ways teachers talked about teaching that did trouble me. In their language I heard not the respect and care of love, but something

else—a sense of distance. The sense of distance—some essential lack of relation between teacher and student—was evident in the way teachers used some very common vocabulary when referring to children. These phrases I have heard a million times: "those kids," "this population," "the demographic," "urban setting," "diverse population," and "inner city kids." Some phrases were newer to me: "under-resourced kids" and "historically under-served communities." All these words suggest the distance created by categorization and marking difference: *those* kids instead of *our* kids, an abstract *population* instead of actual *people*, *inner city kids* instead of just *children*. Perhaps this way of talking about children is just jargon, and doesn't carry the weight I give it. And very likely these words are euphemistic, coded ways to name race and class in a society that is unwilling to confront its inequalities. But these words might also show a relation to children as an Other. While there were several teachers who used such language to talk about their students, there were also idiosyncratic ways they expressed children's difference. For example, one teacher said she wanted to teach in Harlem because "I have always liked to put myself in challenging situations, really different from my own home life." Two teachers shared a chuckle about their students' names, saying that "there is not a single student in our school named Mary." Another pair of teachers talked about how the students did not get their jokes. And several teachers talked about teaching in schools that were "so different" from the ones they attended. In all of these ways, the social differences of class and race between teachers and the students they taught were emphasized.

The sense of distance was also manifested in deficit-based descriptions of children. These descriptions of children—maybe intended hyperbolically or to emphasize a particular point—seem opposite in spirit to the consistent positive regard heard in other teachers' descriptions of their students. For example, Ms. Weiner said:

> The one thing that I have to keep reminding myself is that even if I have
> an unproductive lesson, at least it's better than them going home, sitting

> on the couch for four hours, playing video games, eating fast food, being surrounded by unmotivated siblings or parents or fighting or I don't even know what.

And Mr. Burke described a student from his first year of teaching:

> I remember a student, she was incredibly learning disabled. She lacked a lot of the skills, that creative aspect, that work ethic aspect, and she had really low self-esteem too.

Such deficit descriptions of children were not common in these teachers' conversations. What was somewhat more frequent was a sense of disjuncture, of connections not happening or missed. One conversation in particular made me think about this. Bill Wang (26, m, A, HS, 4yrs) was talking about his first year of teaching and remembered a student in his class who kept telling him: "Mr. Wang, you don't know what the fuck you're doing. Get out of here." His conversation partner and colleague, Mr. Burke, responded:

> Mr. Burke: And you don't understand that this has nothing to do with you.

> Mr. Wang: As a first year you take it so personally…

> Mr. Burke: Kids look at that as just how they need to treat first year teachers, to earn their stripes. When I changed schools I got met with that same thing, like first year all over again. The kids looked at me as like "Oh you're new." And I said: "No, I've been teaching for three years." And they're like, "Yeah, but you're new." And I said: "Well you guys are ninth graders. You're new. What does that have to do with anything?"

Listening to this exchange, I couldn't help but think of Mrs. Thomas, who said that children always tell the truth. And Mrs. Adams, who said that there are children who keep you honest. And Mr. Drake, who talked about listening from a deep place to really hear what students are saying. And Mrs. Thomas again, when she said that sometimes children speak in code. The child who said "you don't know what the fuck you are doing, get out of here" was saying a truth. One could say it was an objective truth, in the sense that Mr. Wang was indeed a first

year teacher and most likely did not really know what he was doing. Her vehemence in making this statement could have had a larger truth to it too. Many children in New York City schools experience year after year after year of brand-new teachers with no preparation in education, rotating substitutes, and last-minute hires. The poorer the neighborhood, the more likely this is to be true. This child could have been truly sick and tired of repeatedly having teachers who did not know what they were doing or who left the classroom mid-year. She could have been railing against the neglect. As well as telling the truth, I think this child could also have been keeping Mr. Wang honest, in the manner of students telling their teacher "show me." By saying "get out of here," she might have been speaking in code: reaching out, asking for care. If this was the case, then interpreting the situation as "this has nothing to do with you" is missing the essence of what the child is saying. The conversation moves on, the child's behavior understood as making first year teachers "earn their stripes." Similarly, when Mr. Burke's students call him new and he responds by saying "What does this have to do with anything," he might be missing his students' coded desire to connect and get to know him. Perhaps these students were asking for care and attention, opening up and showing themselves. They might have been unheard.

Another Theory

Bakhtin famously said that hell is the absolute lack of being heard. This essential human need to be heard—that is, listened to and understood—is somewhere at the heart of love between human beings. In exploring what is love in teaching, I started with Mrs. Thomas' theory of a having a loving heart and enabling love to exist in the classroom. I end with another idea, one that in my mind accounts for both the love and the *not love* that I found. The idea belongs to Mr. Drake, who brought it up when talking about his start in teaching. Unlike

Mrs. Thomas who clearly said she had a theory, Mr. Drake, makes no such claim. But to me

it is a theory, in that it gives a coherence and an ideal to love's meanings in teaching:

> When I went into teaching, having had no formal preparation for it whatsoever, I had one thing that I hung on to. My senior year in college, going to a Quaker retreat, I had found a pamphlet called "On Confirming the Deepest Thing in Another." It was by a retired philosophy professor there, who was a Quaker. In it, he began by telling a story about when Martin Buber had come to the college. In a worship meeting, the president of the college stood up and said that at this time, after the Second World War, one of the most important things we can do is reach across boundaries and meet people. And, you know, Quaker silence followed that. And then evidently Buber stood up and said, "There is perhaps one thing that is even more important, which is that we can see and confirm the deepest thing in another."
>
> I don't know why that idea struck me so deeply. But I sort of carried that idea into teaching. All of us need to be seen and recognized for who we are and what we really care about. Of course, I had no idea how to do that in my early years. It was just a thought that that mattered.

Through this story, I understand some of the *not love* I found in teachers' talk about teaching.

The *not love* is when we are unable to see or hear our students, making the "confirmation" of

them impossible. It is not seeing children because we see a population. It is not seeing the

goodness because we are blinded by stereotypes. It is turning away from children when they

tell a truth about the world. It is not hearing when children reach out and want to know us.

It is not knowing how to see and confirm.

Love in teaching is when teachers *do* see and confirm the deepest thing in children. It

is Mrs. Thomas figuring that her student was hungry. It is Mrs. Tully recognizing and insisting

on the goodness in Ralph. It is Ms. Levy chasing after Maria so that she can finally connect

with her. It is Mr. Nevins wanting the world to see Kiana's ordinariness and confirm her

humanity. Mr. Drake's recollection of Buber's saying made me see clearer the love there is in

teaching and touched something deep in me. It is a thought that matters.

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LEARNING

I was teaching Social Studies and we were doing a project on ancient Egypt. There was literally a moment where every single kid was on task, working, engaged, and I was like, "Oh my god this is it…it's happening. They're all here. They're all doing it." And then the next realization was, "Okay, but what are they actually doing now that I've got them working and everybody is invested and into it?"
Lucy Fields (30, f, W, MS Soc. St., 8yrs)

My grandparents used to tell me that teaching was a way of life: that you learned and you thought and you taught and then you learned again, and that it was very organic.
And I said yes to them, but I never really got that.
Larissa English (52, f, ES, 30yrs)

If love is an essential relationship of teaching, then learning is its essential work. Our children come home from school, and we ask them: "What did you learn today?" We listen to their responses and we inevitably think of the adult in the classroom responsible for that. Away from the kitchen table, in the realm of policy and practice, we measure children's learning with standardized tests and then use these metrics to judge the effectiveness of their teachers. To the extent that schools are places where learning "happens," teachers are widely regarded as the agents of that process and the deliverers of that product. In personal experience, by popular opinion, and with political action, we hold teachers accountable for children's learning. They are the human bodies doing the work of a public institution; they are the face, hands, and minds of education.

Children's learning is indeed the essential work of teaching, but it is not the only learning that "happens" in schools. Understanding the experience of teaching would be incomplete without perceiving teachers themselves as learners, *their* learning an essential phenomenon. Though teachers' learning is neither clearly defined nor lauded as the purpose of education and schooling, it is the element that makes everything possible.

In this chapter, I write about the ways that teachers talked about learning—their students' and their own. I first describe how teachers conceptualize children's learning,

exploring three related themes: motivation, the power of children's interest, and how children learn. I then turn to the idea of teachers as learners themselves, examining two facets: learning how to teach and what teachers learn from teaching. I conclude with the idea of the inseparable nature of teaching and learning.

Motivation

Motivation is a topic much discussed in educational research and practice. When talking about children, motivation is usually understood as something that children *have* or *are*, in the sense of possessing a certain quality or trait, or a way of being. We describe children as motivated or unmotivated; we talk of children gaining or losing motivation; and we quantify it, saying children have a high level of motivation, or little of it. When talking about teachers, however, motivation is positioned as something teachers *give* or *do*—the teacher is the one causes, incites, impels, or induces children to learn; there is a sense of action or movement rather than possession. This teacher-as-giver or teacher-as-maker perspective of motivation was clearly evident in these teachers' conversations. For example, Sandra Cameron (42, f, IA, MS, 17yrs), an experienced teacher who recently started coaching other teachers, spoke of motivation as teachers' responsibility:

> I have yet to figure out what to do when people don't take personal responsibility for what happens in the room. Teachers will say, "Oh this number of kids are failing my class because they're just not doing the work. They're not motivated," not realizing that, "Well, it's my responsibility to make sure that they are motivated and to hold them accountable."

Another teacher, Mrs. Royce, used the image of turning on a light bulb, remembering her own education and connecting it to her students' experience:

> What I never received during my education was the one-on-one attention that I now know is required to spark the light bulb, if you will, that motivates a child to think about who am I and who do I want to be

when I grow up. We're in a transfer school, which has an older student population, so those students need it even more because they have missed much of what it takes to motivate a student.

Whether seeing motivation as something a teacher does to compel students to do their work, or something that children "missed" along the way that a teacher can spark up, the teachers in these conversations gave great weight to the work of motivating children. They talked about motivation often, much more frequently than about the subject matter they were teaching or student behavior and classroom management. Motivating children's learning was a challenge and a puzzle, a central task of teaching. Mr. Geller, for example, wondered about making his subject matter interesting enough so that his students would want to learn it:

> How do I take this social studies content that I love, American Revolution through the Civil War, and the things that I truly, truly, truly enjoy and make it meaningful and accessible for eighth graders? It's something that I'm still working on figuring out and refining, and there are some lessons where I'm sure they are like, "Nobody cares about this but you."

Another teacher, Ms. Miller, was worried that her teacher education program did not prepare her for the work of motivating student learning. She said:

> I'm still sitting in Master's classes and the literature that we read all confirms that learning can happen when people want to learn, that motivated students will learn quicker, will learn on their own, are self-directed learners once they are curious… And yet I am not at all taught how to do that. And I go to a very preeminent university.

Andrew Solomon (27, m, B, HS, 5yrs) echoed her concern, as he explained the complexity of getting students to want to learn:

> How can one person in one classroom motivate students to become intrinsic learners for themselves? We want everybody to have some motivation for whatever it is they want to learn, whether it is about the legal system in the United States or how to fix a toilet. How do we motivate people to motivate themselves so that they show up to class and they turn their paper in, knowing that turning this paper in and showing up to class will help them get to their end goal, as opposed to somebody else's end goal for them?

The "how" of motivation, then, was an undercurrent of much talk about children's learning. Even when they did not explicitly name motivation as their concern, teachers talked about their methods of getting students to "want to produce some work" and to learn. Three major themes emerged: teachers motivated learning through acting, entertainment, and humor; teachers thought of motivation in terms of persuading students of the value of learning; and teachers provided motivation by connecting what happened in the classroom to the "real world."

Acting, Entertainment, Humor

The metaphors of teaching as acting and school as theater are enduring. In research literature (Liefshitz, 2012) and in everyday talk, the images of classroom as a stage and teacher as performer are evoked consistently. I remember explaining the exhaustion of teaching to my non-teacher friends, trying to describe the feeling of being "on" all day long, the energy that required as well as generated. I don't remember concretely visualizing my students as an audience, but for sure I was trying to reach them, connect with them, and even please them. And I wanted them to "get" the content of my performance, the lesson. The way teaching felt to me could certainly be described as performing or acting, even if I was not consciously "putting on an act." For some teachers, however, acting was more intentional: it was a deliberate way to get children to learn. This use of acting as motivation for learning was expressed by Mr. Nevins, who described his persona in the classroom as the "crusty curmudgeonly authoritarian" and a "mixture of Mr. Rogers and Stalin." For Mr. Nevins, creating and playing a character created a certain atmosphere in the classroom. In conversation with his wife, he explained it as a balance of order and play:

> Mr. Nevins: There was a lot of order in my high school class. I knew
> how to maintain order and made sure that order was maintained. At the

same time, I believe that there is a need for creativity, so I try to balance order with a little bit of strategic disorder, so occasional games, jokes. My character was the crusty curmudgeonly authoritarian who had no patience for fun or joy of any kind. I believe I professed a love of the semi-colon on numerous occasions…

Mrs. Morse: You told me that your shoes and the sound of the heels on the floor was very important, that it kind of confirmed the authoritarian…

Mr. Nevins: That was when I administered detention for a year, and then I did have an English heel on my shoe and it would make a very loud sound against the linoleum, and I relished that, maybe too much so.

If one takes the classic psychological definition of motivation as stimulus that arouses, sustains, and regulates behavior, then Mr. Nevins' acting—his curmudgeonly crustiness and the sound of his heels as he paced—provided some conditions conducive for student learning. I can imagine feeling safe in his classroom, even if a little nervous; tolerant of and entertained by his authoritarian act, even while submitting to it; conscious of the acting but playing along. Mr. Nevins' character was the embodiment of order and play that provided the stimuli of pressure and fun for learning. I could see his students laughing at his ludicrous love of the semi-colon, but wanting to use it correctly. And indeed his students learned. Mr. Nevins' wife told him:

They complained about you, but it was a loving type of complaining. They made a lot of comments about how hard you were, or how crazy you were, and then they would also do the best impressions I have ever seen of your walk, your mannerisms, your tics. You were their freshman English teacher, and I think they felt that the challenges that you presented them in class bonded them together. You had them read the Odyssey, the Iliad, Aeneid, the Epic of Gilgamesh, these classic works of literature which many people never read, while at the same time taking Latin…that was a valuable learning experience, to do something really hard and to work really hard and to see yourself successful.

I think that Mr. Nevins' students were able to meet the challenge of their curriculum at least partially because of his theatrics, motivated by the atmosphere of high expectations he created. Their "loving complaining" and impressions of his classroom character seem like a

reciprocation of his acting, an affirmation of his motivation of their learning and their joint

success in his classroom.

While Mr. Nevins relied on a set character and some degree of fear or intimidation as

part of his act, other teachers used more simple entertainment as motivation. For them, it was

the theater of amusement that helped students learn. Mr. Lowry, the math teacher who wore

sparkly costumes and played games in class to convince students that math was fun, tried to

be "as entertaining as possible" in order to counteract the fears of math and failure that were

detrimental to his students' learning. Watching and participating in the entertainment helped

his students relax enough to learn. Mr. Lowry clearly saw entertainment as important to

learning, although not enough by itself:

> I was a graduate student of mathematics and I was teaching
> undergraduate calculus and pre-calculus classes, and so I came from this
> world where I was an entertaining lecturer and the students enjoyed it.
> My focus was on my lecture being entertaining and informative and then
> I learned at the high school level there is so much more to teaching.

Another teacher, Mrs. Tully, spoke of a method she was trying out in her classroom, using

guitar music to help children learn facts. She said:

> Guitars could be a useful tool for teaching kids basic facts, whether it's
> mathematics facts or social studies facts or learning about good
> punctuation. You can use music as a tool to get these ideas, instead of
> just doing the standard drill and practice kind of thing.

Perhaps guitar music was not only an entertaining way to "teach basic facts," but also provided

a familiar genre—music—for young people, something they could more easily enter. In the

sense that entertainment is something "easy" or light, teachers could serve it for consumption

in the classroom. It too can be a stimulus that provokes desire and interest for engaging in an

activity or lesson, a motivation to learn.

In addition to acting and entertaining, teachers saw humor as an important factor in

motivating student learning. While teachers received a lot of pleasure from their students'

sense of humor, they worried if their students found *them* funny. This worry was partially the comedian's fragile ego, but it was also a concern about students "getting" the lesson, similar to the way one "gets" a joke. Mr. Burke and Mr. Wang explored this dynamic in their conversation:

> Mr. Burke: My biggest obstacle is getting kids to understand that I'm funny. I tell some really great jokes in class and make some really fantastic references and I throw them out there right on point with great timing. But because I'm not animated enough, I get met with such resistance or just blank stares, which is sometimes worse. I talk about it with the teachers: "I'm giving them gold today and they're just not getting it."

> Mr. Wang: No, they don't have to laugh at whatever we say. But even if they don't think it's funny, it's understanding why it could be funny. The more the kids understand, "Hey, this guy is trying to make a joke right now" or "He's making a pop culture reference. We have no idea what he's saying," they are getting different access points to anything that we give them, whether it's for science class or just in life.

Here, the medium for learning is humor. Like the comedian's joke that falls flat, learning is harder when a teacher's references do not make the point, when the attempt at humor does not work. Perhaps there are two issues here: one is that references, analogies, and jokes really do help children learn, whether the learning is science or "just life." Humor opens up people's thinking and helps make cognitive connections. But the other issue is that of relation: it is hard to learn from someone we "don't get," someone whose idea of "gold" is so different from ours. Laughing together and finding similar things to be humorous is an essential element of closeness; "not getting it" is the counterpart, a signal of distance and difference. Humor motivates learning because it establishes emotional and social closeness between teacher and student. In turn, this closeness makes possible the "different access points" for learning.

I used the terms <u>acting,</u> <u>entertainment,</u> and <u>humor</u> to describe how teachers talked about motivating their students' learning. Typical of metaphor's function in everyday

conversation, people use metaphors but seldom intentionally: we speak of the sound of heels on the floor instead of talking about theatrics and performance as pedagogy; we speak of students not getting our jokes instead of cognitive and relational dissonance. These metaphors express and provoke understanding of what is "really" being talked about[2]. But sometimes, metaphor is consciously and explicitly used to make meaning of experience. This is what happened when Mr. Lowry spoke about switching majors from theater to math in college. He and Mr. Simmons riffed on the metaphor of classroom as a stage:

> Mr. Simmons: Fascinating that you went from being a theater major to falling in love with math. One might think that they're very polar opposites in some sense. I guess I'd like to ask you: do you see the classroom as a stage?

> Mr. Lowry: Absolutely. Every day I write, direct, and star in my own production. That's what every lesson is to me. I think about it as a story. Every lesson is a story I'm telling. There is a flow to it. There is a climax to it where the most important stuff is brought forth and I make sure everyone gets it and it's flashy and it's big, it's climactic. And then we wrap up. It has a whole story arc to it, every lesson. My goal though, lately, has been to stop being the star and just be the director while the students…so I have to write a play that the students are going to direct in the moment.

> Mr. Simmons: So then in some sense you're moving from the front to the back. Maybe a different way to think about it, which is the way I've been in my own teaching, is that I still see myself as an actor. I'm not at the point where I feel myself away from that, I'm still the leader. But I guess I'm trying to see how to break down the fourth wall. You have the production, but you're not at the front of the stage. You can be walking around, and the audience can be a more active participant in this larger play or story.

I was struck by the creativity and fluidity of Mr. Lowry's and Mr. Simmons' improvisation, the way their metaphors of playwriting, acting, directing, and storytelling, made me think about teaching and learning. While there are so many different and rich meanings made here, I want

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[2] In metaphor terminology, the *vehicle term* (for example, the sound of heels on the floor) is a word or phrase that conveys the meaning or concept of the *topic term* (in this case, theatrics and performance as pedagogy). In spontaneous talk, topic terms remain implicit across significant stretches of discourse.

to consider how they conceptualized student learning. Mr. Simmons imagines students as the play's audience, separate from the teacher on the stage, where the action takes place. He would like to break down "the fourth wall," that invisible barrier between actor and audience; he sees the possibility of the lead actor—the teacher—coming off the stage and "walking around," with the audience participating directly in the play. When the boundaries of the stage dissolve and the roles of actor and audience fuse, student learning can be understood in terms of participation in the "production," with greater or better learning dependent on the amount of action students can have. Mr. Lowry is also concerned with how much students get to "act," but from a slightly different perspective. To him, students are already actors in the play, albeit minor ones: they need to understand the flow of the story the playwright has written, they have to follow the director's stage instructions, and they must give the star actor enough space. They are on the stage and they act, but they do not lead. Mr. Lowry feels his students' role needs to be bigger—bigger in terms of acting, because he wants to be less of a "star," and bigger in terms of directing, so that they have some choice in how the play gets performed. Student learning, here, is conceptualized in terms of self-direction, agency, and interpretation. While the teacher still "writes the play," the students not only enact the script, but also share in the creative task of "directing in the moment." Both Mr. Lowry and Mr. Simmons see greater involvement as motivation for learning, where there is a direct relationship between what students get to do on the classroom stage and what they can learn.

Persuading of Value

The idea of greater participation as something that motivates learning resonated with my experience of teaching. The more choice my students could exercise, the more responsibility I gave them, and the more they could be the creators of their own roles in

learning, the more interested and engaged they became in the lessons I planned for them and in the daily life of our classroom. But action—in itself—was not enough; like Ms. Fields who remembered the moment when "every single kid was on task, working, engaged" and then asked herself what her students were actually doing, I remember coming to view my students' activity with a critical eye. What were they learning? Late at night, planning "activities" for the next set of lessons, I remember the questions swirling in my head: Is this interesting? Can they do this in more than one way? Why would this be important to them? Can they connect this to something else? In some inchoate way, I was concerned with the substance and purpose of my students' learning, not only with getting them *to* learn. The teachers in these conversations were likewise concerned with *what* they offered their students and thought of motivation in terms of students recognizing and understanding the reasons to learn something and the benefit it would bring them.

Much of this was articulated with metaphors of *BUYING, SELLING, INVESTMENT, WORTH,* and *VALUE.* Instead of acting, putting on or directing a play, telling jokes or entertaining, the teacher was selling or offering. The students, instead of audience members or fellow actors, were buyers or investors. Money metaphors are not unique to education and permeate everyday talk: if we are <u>invested</u> in something, it is important to us; when we <u>buy into</u> something, we believe it; to <u>give credit</u> is to appreciate and acknowledge someone; we <u>spend</u> and <u>save</u> time or energy; and we go for <u>broke</u> when we try our hardest. We use money metaphors to articulate the importance of something, and it was no surprise to hear teachers use this language to talk about students' learning and their teaching. Ms. Vindal, for example, remembered her own motivation as a student as the reason she wanted to become a teacher, explaining that "I always had great teachers growing up and I was really motivated and they really influenced my life so much and I wanted to <u>pay it forward</u> to future students." Mr.

O'Brien, who started teaching through Teach for America, recalled being trained that "instructional time is <u>golden</u>." Another teacher, Lisa Linden (27, f, L, MS bilingual, 5yrs), described how she was a substitute for a class that was making masks: "I had to tell [the students] that we were going to be typing up artist bios in the computer lab instead of mask making. But it was fun and they had a good time, and I think it's all about how you <u>sell</u> it." And Ms. Weiner remembered going home after a particularly difficult day, thinking about how her students "didn't really have any reason to feel that we had to offer them anything of <u>value</u> and they acted accordingly."

It was particularly when talking about the challenge of motivating their students' learning that teachers relied on money metaphors. For example, Mr. Burke, whose students were "not getting" the <u>gold</u> of his jokes and humor, talked about struggling to teach his students writing. He used the image of not doing a good job selling:

> I give them time to work, which is about 20 minutes every class, and I spend the time working also and I'll model my writing by showing it to them, reading it aloud to them. They don't understand how much time I spent thinking about the things I'm going to write and the lessons that I'm going to do on my way into work, how over the course of the day I'll edit the same story with every class period to make it really good. I model it, but I don't think that I sell it as much. Writing and reading is such a hurdle and it's such a grueling process to become good…I'm trying to sell it to them poorly, or moderately, mediumly. It's tough.

It seems that what Mr. Burke wants his students to learn is not only the mechanics of writing, but the time-consuming work of writing, reading, thinking, editing, and re-writing. He feels that he is not selling the real learning—the "grueling process"—well enough, because his students do not yet see or understand the connection between such effort and a "really good" piece of writing. With better salesmanship, he could get his students to understand and learn what is important.

Other teachers did not speak directly of *SELLING* and *BUYING*, but of getting students to see the value of what they were learning. In these cases, motivating students to learn was a matter of demonstrating relevance and need. Ms. Vindal described it like this:

> Everything that I taught my students I had to make purposeful, because otherwise they would be bored. One student, as much as he drove me crazy, became one of my favorite students because he really made me push my teaching. If I was doing something that didn't connect to him or if he couldn't understand why he was learning something he wouldn't do it. But if I said, "Well, in high school you're going to write an essay like this," then it connected to him. He said, "Okay that makes sense. I can do it." So he—well, all of my students—really needed to see the transferability of the skill.

Ms. Vindal's motivation came in the form of connecting her students' learning in the moment—writing an essay, making inferences—to future learning in high school. She was showing her students the value of what they were doing for their future; it was her ability to persuade that things "make sense" that helped them engage with the curriculum. Another teacher, Mr. Lowry, wanted his students to realize that what they were learning was important to their lives in a larger sense, beyond school. If his students could see that connection, they would be motivated to learn. He said:

> I do one lecture about the history of math in my pre-calc class every year. I created it because so many students asked who invented math. It seems like an ignorant question, but I heard it so many times. Kids were frustrated like, "Who invented math? This is so dumb. Why did they invent math? I want to go back in time and get rid of the person who invented math," as if not having math they could still have the life they have today. They don't realize any connection. And so I talked to them about the development of numbers and technology and all that stuff from cavemen to now and how math is a big part of all that and how it was influenced by or influenced historical movements and eras and things like that. My hope is that will help them appreciate why math exists. I think our number one goal should be to get kids to love math and to explore math and understand why it exists and why it's so cool and why without it we wouldn't have any of the technology we have today, right?

Mr. Lowry's enthusiasm about the subject he teaches is evident, as well as his disappointment and disbelief in how his students have come to want to "get rid of the person who invented math." His lecture on the history of math is a means of persuasion, an attempt to show the value of learning mathematics to his students. He is hoping to motivate his students' learning by showing them how math is "so cool."

Connecting to the Real World

The attempt to connect what students were learning in the classroom with what was "real" in the larger world was the other significant way in which the teachers in these conversations motivated their students. The purpose was not so much to convince their students of the value of their learning, but to expand the learning that was possible in the classroom, which some teachers thought was too easily circumscribed or limited. Mr. Wang, for example, expressed this concern, saying

> I just wonder what else is there out there that we can get the kids to see.
> It's not just in a textbook and definitely not within the 42 minutes within
> the four walls of our classrooms.

One solution was to bring the "out there" to their students. For example, Mr. Simmons talked about bringing a mathematician to meet with his classes:

> I invited a mathematician to my classroom last year. Before he came, I
> asked my students what is a mathematician, and what does he or she do?
> And the students' responses were all like, "I don't know. Someone who
> just sits in a room all day and is a little crazy." And then this person came
> and opened their eyes through his love of what he was doing and his
> description of how he went about his day and his work and why he
> found it so fascinating. They started to suddenly appreciate it.

Seeing a real mathematician in their classroom made the subject come alive for Mr. Simmons' students, probably in a way that sticking to the textbook could never do. Their narrow

expectations of what a mathematician does were stretched and their learning was motivated because they could that there was more to mathematics and could "suddenly appreciate" it.

Another example of connecting classroom learning with the real world was given by John Borden (25, m, W, MS music, 2yrs). His friend and colleague, David Pelles (26, m, W, MS social studies, 3yrs), was planning to open a school the following year and was concerned that his lack of musical talent and ability would be detrimental to how he planned music instruction for the students. He asked, "You love music and you know music, so what would you do? How would you bring music to a school?" At first, Mr. Borden took the question very literally:

> You can incorporate songs and ways of teaching content musically, you can play soothing music over the intercom during class transitions, or have school chants or call-and-responses, just building culture with a school related song.

But Mr. Pelles was more worried about music class being overbearing, where students' experience could be "you will do music in this very specific way." At heart, he was concerned with the children's motivation for learning music, explaining that "for kids who don't love music, that won't work. And for kids who do love music, I don't want to kill their creativity and love for that." Mr. Borden then explained how to keep all students motivated to learn:

> There will be a range of kids, with some who will be very musical, some might understand it but not have very much interest or a passion for it, and then there are people whose brain just doesn't recognize rhythm and pitch. I try to make it accessible to students who aren't necessarily musically inclined or talented: I emphasize the lyric writing process, which is something verbal. And conversely there are kids who are very musical but not very verbal, so by teaching them basic music theory they are better able to articulate their musical ideas. I also have other roles, like the art directors who design CD artwork. I teach professional recording software so there are kids responsible for engineering and producing recordings. It opens itself up to a lot…

Here, it is bringing the different ways that people actually work with music into the classroom that motivates and "opens up" learning music. By teaching his students real roles and real

tasks in the professional music-making process, Mr. Borden motivates music learning to be bigger or beyond the traditional music class.

At other times, teachers did not bring the world into the classroom, but brought their students to the real world. One teacher, Mr. O'Brien, thought that the classroom itself could be detrimental, or at least not conducive, to learning because it was a "comfortable" space. In such a space, learning had to be pushed and provoked; it had to be motivated. Taking students out into the real world—particularly a world very different from the one they usually experience—made learning a necessity, not a choice. Mr. O'Brien described how this happened:

> There's the trip to Maine, four years ago. We put 18 students on an airplane and they stayed with the students there, like homestays. I can point to things that a lot of them learned, but I can't point to the curriculum of this. I had them sit in classes in a totally different part of the world with students that they didn't relate to too well and they learned so much just from seeing that. And then we went and played. We sledded and we had a snowball fight on the University of Maine campus and went on a ferry…anyway, there is a lot more to this trip, but what it did is it took people out of their comfort zone where you have no choice but to learn. I was no longer trying to force people to learn. The hard part was getting them out of the comfort zone. It's very hard in the school building.

Mr. O'Brien's literal displacement of his students, out of their classroom in the Bronx and into the homes, ferries, university campus, and classrooms of Maine made the metaphorical "being out of your comfort zone" a concrete reality. It is interesting that he says he "can't point to the curriculum of this" even as there was so much that his students learned. Perhaps what they learned could not be ever learned in a classroom or contained in any curriculum. What stayed with Mr. O'Brien was that he no longer had to motivate his students' learning. The most important thing was opening the classroom door and letting students out, moving them out of their comfort zone. From there, learning happened.

The Nature of Motivation

"I was no longer trying to force people to learn," said Mr. O'Brien. That statement made me pause. Is the teacher-as-giver and teacher-as-maker perspective of motivation built on an assumption of teacher action and student passivity? Is student agency in learning limited to responding to the teacher's stimulus? On one end of this spectrum of extrinsic motivation are crude elements like force, fear, and reward. Mr. O'Brien, for example, recalled the "schoolhouse model" of motivation,

> when you could smack the kids and scare them, and you had the fear of god [and] it worked for the learning, because that was your motivating factor.

On the other end are the more subtle stimuli, like bringing high-interest, real world activities and opportunities into the classroom that invite and compel the students to learn. Somewhere in the middle is the teacher putting on an act, telling jokes, persuading students that what they are doing is important—all acts of manipulation, in some sense. "Manipulation" is a strong word, perhaps too full of negative connotations, especially when these very manipulations can bring joy, lightness, playfulness, spirit and purpose into the classroom. And what is so bad or wrong in *making* learning happen, in provoking it? After all, adults are responsible for the development of children, and the teacher's charge is student learning.

But I couldn't shake the sense of teacher as subject and student as object when thinking about motivation as something a teacher *does*. Mr. O'Brien's words, again, gave shape to my unease. Speaking of the exhaustion he felt in "telling kids what they should know or what they should do," he said:

> that's a big part of who I see myself as a teacher. I try hard to not just be authoritarian, to use other handles on kids. I have several handles, ways to motivate, push, direct. I have no problem motivating people using whatever means come naturally.

Listening to these words shook me out of my teacher's point of view and helped me put on a child's perspective. It was the handle metaphor that focused me: ridiculous as it sounds, I visualized myself as a cup or a suitcase (something with a handle) or as some kind of animal, like a pet, or something in a zoo (something to be handled) and then as a child. I was in my teacher's hands. But what was in me?

Is learning in the classroom possible when the teacher is not the originator of the motivation, when there is no—or minimal—pushing, directing, or "handling"? What would that learning look like for children? And what would be the teacher's role in that learning?

The Power of Children's Interest

Some teachers did not entertain, act, or use humor to motivate children's learning. They did not attempt to persuade their students of the value of the learning in the classroom by trying to connect it to future schooling or career interests. They did not bring real world people and activities into the classroom nor did they "put" their students out into the real world with the intent of motivating learning. What they did was follow children's interests. These teachers *started* with the children, with what *they* brought into the classroom. The governing assumption for them was that children were always and already motivated, inherently interested in the world around them and in how they fit into this world. Students brought their interests into the classroom and the job of the teacher was to uncover that interest, to nurture and develop it, to help children give it shape and depth and purpose. The work of teaching was to connect the curriculum—the skills and knowledge prescribed by academic standards—to children's interests, to what was intriguing *them*. When learning and teaching was driven by children's interest, motivation—in the sense of providing a stimulus to

motivate learning—was a non-issue. The issue was the teacher's response to the students' stimuli.

How did teachers manage to do this? It started with a certain openness and attention: seeing, listening for, and accepting the interests children brought as the starting place, the springboard for learning. This didn't have to necessarily translate into a specific set of learning activities, but it was a way of recognizing that children came into the classroom endowed with ways of being from which—and with which—others could learn. For example, Mrs. English remembered the year she had two Japanese students, Ai and Toki, in her class:

> All these lovely aesthetics came in from having this Japanese cultural presence in the class. Snack looked different that year, and the way kids arranged things looked different, and we learned songs in English and in Japanese and everybody learned how to make rice balls. What we learned, and what I learned, that year from the kids who were in the class became part of the repertoire and the activities that I have done since then. But no year is going to be exactly like the year before, and part of that drive toward standardization is assuming that each community and each classroom is the same.

It seems that Mrs. English did more than appreciate or celebrate her two students' Japanese culture. She talks about "what we learned," "what I learned," and "part of the repertoire." She doesn't speak of what Ai and Toki learned to do, but rather of what others learned and did because of their presence. In her description of the aesthetics of snack time and songs and arranging things, I can sense her openness to modifying her classroom routines and activities; instead of "motivating" children to meet the standard ways of doing things, it was how things were done that changed. Behind Mrs. English's complaint about standardization is the message that classroom learning should be driven by the unique individual children in the classroom and the communities they come from, different from year to year.

Other teachers were also sensitive to the interests and preoccupations their students brought into the classroom. Mr. Drake, for example, recalled how some students he advised followed their interests and "educated themselves." He said:

> I have been teaching for thirty-five years now, and I was thinking that when there is a group of kids and a shared interest and some sense of community, the most remarkable things happen in the classroom. I had this social action committee which was a group of girls and one occasional boy who had—in middle school—very strong political commitments. They ended up holding protests against the beginning of the Iraq War. They were making up their own fliers and chants and we were out on Broadway, protesting. The intensity and the energy of that group and the way that they educated themselves…people would ask them questions and they wouldn't know the answers. They would go back and look it up and study, and their fliers the next week would be revised. Kids get interested in things, and we acknowledge the intense power of interest that kids bring and that we have to draw on.

While this experience was to a large degree outside the traditional classroom, Mr. Drake's story highlights the depth and richness of children's interests and the connection they feel with the world and about the world that the teacher doesn't have to incite or initiate in any way. Their interests are there to "draw on," and the teacher's role is to support the community created by the "intense power" of these interests. The task of teaching, as Mrs. English put it, was helping "kids do the work that they wanted to do."

The challenge of "doing the work kids want to do" within the constraints of a prescribed curriculum was definitely felt by the teachers. Mr. Simmons, for example, described the tension of balancing his students' interests with what they "had" to learn:

> There is something really interesting about those times when something in class sparks their mind that maybe I wasn't expecting. In one of my calculus classes, the kids really want to break math, they were very explicit: "I want to break mathematics." The discussion was about dividing by zero and then your paper bursts into flames, because if you divide by zero the world comes to an end. And then we started talking about limits and they start thinking, "Okay, this is really wacky." And I said, "You know math is fundamentally broken." It was one of those things where I was like, "Do I really want to go here? I have 20 minutes left of class. I have all of this to cover." And then I was like, "You know

> what, this is more important, because I'm capitalizing on their interests."
> I started talking about Gödel's Incompleteness Theorem which just
> fascinated them. Then I stopped myself after two minutes and I pointed
> to two students and said, "You're going to do research on this, you're
> going to do research on that, and do a five minute presentation." And
> they came in the next day and did a presentation. And then I copied
> reading for them to see if they were interested. And I just feel like those
> moments are so underutilized.

Mr. Simmons is attentive, sensitive to the surprise, the spark that he wasn't expecting, of his students' interest. He meets that interest, indulges it…until he remembers the parameters of time and curriculum: "20 minutes left and all this to cover." He makes the decision to go with the flow of his students' interest because "this is more important" and, probably, because he is interested too. In effect, *he* responds to his students by bringing them the mathematics that fascinates them; their interest drives what they learn from him. Cleverly, Mr. Simmons puts the work of learning back on the students when he "stops himself" and asks two students to do some research on the topic. While this pedagogical move allows him to get back some of the time he needs to "cover" the required curriculum, I think he also manages to preserve the students' ownership of their interest and control of their learning. He is not continuing to entertain them with an interesting mini-lecture on Gödel; rather, he is giving his students the opportunity to pursue their interest. They are leading.

Another example of balancing students' interests with the demands and constraints of schooling can be seen in this story of a lesson gone "off track" in Mr. Drake's classroom. Here, he joins his students' quest to understand how the world works:

> We were discussing inventions that had arisen from the discovery of
> agriculture. You know, sort of a teacherly topic. And in the middle of
> it, Tally goes, "I think the invention of money was a really stupid idea."
> Well. The class exploded. The whole rest of that period they argued is
> money a good thing or a bad thing. And the next day, someone came
> in and said, "I have another thought about that." And again, for 45
> minutes…I didn't have to do anything except point at people and throw
> in a few ideas of my own. They just wouldn't let go of this idea. Then
> they wanted to go further. They said, "Can we have a debate on it?" I

said, "Well, we are studying ancient Egypt," which was a civilization without money, "let's finish this study so we have some grounding." Three months later when we were done with Egypt, they looked at me and said, "Can we have that debate now?"

I said, "You have to structure this because I hate debates, I don't believe in them." So they structured and organized it. But giving them the time…the debate went on for about ten days, and their arguments got very sophisticated. Some saw money as the root of all evil, and others saw money as a kind of vehicle and that it was the way money was used that was the issue, but that money made things work much better. I could tell by the passion and the energy and the amount of work they put into it that this was something that they really cared about. What they were really wresting with were issues of economic injustice and fairness, and also what makes a society work. They were trying to figure out what makes for a good society and how do we do that. These kids cared very deeply about the state of the world and they were trying to figure out where we'd gone wrong and how we could make it better. They were trying to figure out a way to respond to the world around them.

A lot of our curriculums are composed of "teacherly sort of topics," ones that would require some motivation, most likely, for our students to become involved. In the middle of this typical classroom situation, Mr. Drake's students' interest arrived and "exploded." Mr. Drake gave his students the time and space needed to pursue their interest, which on the surface was about the role of money in the world but at heart was about something much deeper. Mr. Drake saw and heard his students' desire—what they really wanted to know and understand—and he was able to support them in that exploration and learning together. It was probably Mr. Drake's deep attention to his students and his affirmation of them as learners and people that sustained them for the three months before they could explore their desire. Mr. Drake constrained neither the substance nor the shape of his students' interest, letting them structure and organize a learning format—a debate—that he did not particularly like. How much freedom and agency his students had in his classroom! And, to recall the love in teaching, how much of their teacher's respect and care. Recognizing his students' interest in figuring out a way to respond to the world around them made "bringing the real world to the

classroom" an unnecessary motivation; the students already were motivated by the world and brought it with them to school. The teacher's work was to acknowledge the motivation already inside children and to follow, wholeheartedly.

Is there something magical and unreal, almost unbelievable, in these stories? Could I, when I was teaching, have dedicated ten days to a debate my students wanted to have? Was it possible for me to make rice balls in my classroom or accompany my students to anti-war protests? Maybe it was more possible than I think. But the real question is: Was I willing? Was I open to seeing what was there, the interests my students already had and brought with them? Or was I already trained to motivate? Was I already limited by my belief that the desire to learn emanated from the teacher, transferred to the student? That my job was to *make* learning interesting and meaningful?

I have to confess to feeling a kind of melancholy, a grief for what I did not see, did not look for, and did not acknowledge. This sadness is a feeling of loss for the beauty, joy, and learning that I know I missed by not following where my students led me, by not being open to responding to them. One of my favorite stories in these teachers' conversations evokes this beauty and wonder, the miracles that can happen when learning and teaching are driven by students' interests. This is Mrs. Ferner's story of her pre-K class putting on a play:

> I started thinking about that year I had the parent who had a collection of African masks and I asked him to bring them into class. Then I had a kid transfer into the class and turns out his father lived in one of the African countries and was a drummer. He brought in slides of the village where he lived and he taught us a couple of the dances. So he is drumming, and we are doing the dance going in a circle, so you see their arms going up and their arms going down, and getting up high and going down low. And one of the kids, the four-year-olds, he said, "This is so cool."
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> Then I brought in some materials so we could make masks and the kids really liked that, and they wanted to make more masks and I brought in some different materials. And one of these four-year-olds says to me, "Well, we got all of these masks, what are we going to do with them?"

And I said, "I don't know, Mattie, what do you think we should do with them?" And he said, "I think we should make a play." So then we started developing the story together, the kids were narrating the storyline. We had this parent in the class who was this very prominent jazz musician, Marty Ehrlich, and also Sheila, my paraprofessional, was a dancer. So we started blocking the play and Sheila was doing some choreography. We made this play, "The Deer and the Man," and we rehearsed it and Marty played the music for it. The minute Marty played the music, the kids were electrified. Their stance was so energized and they were so different because they were having this really beautiful music.

All of this just happened from a couple of parents who had these things they could give us, and then the kids were electrified and wanted to do all these things…in interaction with my paraprofessional and me and the parents, so it was a real collaboration and it was real democratic. It was not some mask on a page that the kids could color in, it wasn't some music that was on Wee-Sing or something. It was real stuff and the kids knew they were experimenting with real stuff that was exciting to the adults as well as to them. There wasn't a child who wasn't involved in that, and it took on a life of its own…I keep feeling that Dewey is underlying all of that. You are learning how to do real work, you're not learning how to do somebody else's work.

I was touched and inspired by Mrs. Ferner's ability to let the children guide the classroom's activities—bringing in more materials when they wanted to make more masks, and helping Mattie's idea to make a play come to life. Another important element in this story is how the concept of what children bring with them is expanded to include their parents and their parents' experiences and talents. Sometimes it seems we forget to see the children in front of us as part of families and communities, part of traditions and talents and unique experiences. The learning in Mrs. Ferner's classroom—from the masks to the drumming to the dancing to the play writing to the jazz music—was indeed a "democratic" collaboration that was as exciting to adults as it was to the children. This excitement, this "life of its own," is what I think Mrs. Ferner meant by her reference to Dewey and "real work" and "real stuff." More than just "bringing the real world into the classroom," these four-year-olds were making something real *for* the world, merging their interest with the abundance of material and

aesthetic support available for their creativity. Again, I remembered Ms. Fields' epiphany when she finally got all her students engaged and working and then had to ask herself what they were actually doing. What Mrs. Ferner's students did and learned with their masks and play and dancing was something precious. They were "electrified," not only by the beautiful music, I believe, but by the magic of seeing their creation and their work. The learning that happens when following children's interests and responding to their intellectual and aesthetic inclinations is magical but not impossible. Mrs. Ferner's friend and conversation partner, Mrs. English, saw it as the work—the challenge and the "very interesting problem"—of teaching:

> If I just had to open a book and say, "Ok, do this worksheet and if you don't do this worksheet I will call your mother," then there is not much to do other than hand out the worksheet. But if the job of the teacher is to figure out a way that skills get interwoven into…to be thinking really deeply about a narrative, as you were when you were describing doing the play, and how do you build in literacy skills into that, or the math skills that kids need, or any of those content areas. So it becomes this very interesting problem.

The work of teaching, then, is the "interweaving" of skills and content with children's interests, with the work that they want to do. It is hearing children say they want to break math and responding with Gödel's Incompleteness Theorem; it is allowing a student's comment about money flower into a ten-day debate; it is inviting a child to answer his own question about what to do with all these masks. Mrs. Ferner says: "Enter their world through their interests, and enter the curriculum and learning through where the children are."

How Children Learn

Mrs. Ferner articulated a pedagogy of learning that started with children's interests by positioning the teacher as a traveler, entering the children's world and making a path to curriculum and content. In these conversations, there were other clearly articulated views about how children learned and the nature of learning itself. In addition to motivation and

children's interest, teachers spoke about the conditions under which children learned best; the role of feedback; and the fact that children's learning was not confined to classrooms and schools.

Conditions for Learning

One way teachers believed children learned best was when they were able to go into considerable depth in a certain topic, so that the sustained attention provoked deeper understanding. Mr. O'Brien gave an example:

> Our system encourages breadth and learn, learn, learn, and then new topic, learn, learn, learn. Whereas if you can go in enough depth to a topic, it becomes interesting to the majority. It takes time. If you can spend a couple months… on the subway project I did, I would say more than 50% cared and were learning, because they were curious, because they suddenly really were interested in how many tunnels there were beneath them and how this changed the direction of the city and how this empowered people who couldn't afford transportation and all of these things. I tricked them into learning math, because it was my math class, but it was creating a need to know by staying on a topic long enough that it wasn't just memorization. It was like a picture began to form about this. They love or they hate it, but they understand it.

I know I myself have felt frustrated as a student when racing through a curriculum, unable to pause long enough to become truly interested, make connections, or simply to care. Likewise, Mr. O'Brien's students might have felt a "need to know" because by staying on a topic long enough, they developed some curiosity. There were probably students who did not care much about the subway system but still were able to "understand it," and to form "a picture" of related topics such as city planning, economics, and development.

I also think that Mr. O'Brien's students were able to learn the curriculum content and skills in a way that made sense to them. Being "tricked into learning math" was a by-product of more meaningful learning; students didn't learn math *in order* to study the subway system, but *because* they studied the subway system. Learning discrete skills in order to understand life

does not seem like a sequence that makes much sense. It is the experience of life—taking the subway, experiencing delays, thinking about how and when the stations were constructed, etc.—that leads to learning the math that underlies it. In fact, another teacher, Mrs. Ferner remembered her own experience as a student as "learning a whole set of skills that don't make sense." Her friend and colleague, Mrs. English, gave an example:

> When I grew up, school felt second-hand, it felt like it was about somebody else. It felt like they were just having you do these things that were either boring or uninteresting, or that you already knew how to do, or liked doing better in a different way. Like writing about books, book reports. If you love to read and you love to talk about books and you love to write about things that are interesting to you, why do you have to write in an uninteresting way about books that interested you in a different way? I dreaded reading a book because then I would have to write about it, even though I loved reading so much at home that is all I ever did. But at school it wasn't the same.

Learning, then, is best when it makes sense and isn't "second-hand," which I picture as an ill-fitting coat, or a suit that needs to be tailored. Mrs. English's memory of loving reading, talking about books, and writing about interesting things makes a stark contrast against school being "about somebody else," "having to do things that you already knew how to do," or having to do things that did not make sense, like "writing in an uninteresting way about books that interested you." Skills—like writing—could easily become disconnected from any meaningful purpose, something that children can always sense and feel.

That concept of learning "making sense" to a child is complemented by the idea of having and making choices about learning. Making choices and having the ability to "try out" ways of learning or venture "off course" was something that teachers believed helped children learn. Mr. Lowry described a moment like that in his classroom:

> This particular day we were discussing different types of numbers, natural integers, rational numbers, and where they came from and what properties they have. There were just great discussions going on. We had a whole discussion about the number zero, and I said, "Oh that's so

wonderful that you bring this up, because I wanted you to read this book *The Story of Zero*." I copied the first chapter out of it a couple days ago, because I was rereading it and I was like, this would probably be really interesting to them. I told them, "This is no pressure. I thought I would try it this year to see how you like reading a mathy kind of interesting book." And I said, "Let me know. We'll talk about it about on Monday." I'll find out on Monday, and if they like it we can read more; if they don't, we can scrap it.

Mr. Lowry's approach seems the opposite of children "having to do" things in school. Building on his students' interest and curiosity, Mr. Lowry was able to support deeper learning and greater understanding—but as a choice. He did not make the reading required, but he offered it. This "no pressure," "see if you like it" approach would probably never make children dread math the way Mrs. English, as a child, dreaded reading in school. Being able to make a choice about how far and in what direction they wanted to take their interest was a condition that strengthened children's learning and supported their autonomy and selfhood. Having the power to make choices in one's learning, could make school feel neither "second-hand" nor "about somebody else."

<u>Feedback</u>

Teachers also spoke about feedback—the praise and criticism—they gave their students, and how this feedback played a role in their learning. Some teachers seemed primarily concerned with the way that students, over their years in school, have been receiving feedback that did not advance their learning. Mr. Burke, for example, spoke of children receiving empty feedback and equally empty suggestions on "things they need to do better." He explained:

My coaching style is kind of nitpick and make better, and that's also my teaching style. When I read their work I can't write good comments on it, but I have been taught since student teaching, "You always have to write one or two positives." They start to see these canned responses

and evaluations from teachers like, "I like your thought process here," and "Great story idea." Then they see the canned things that they need to do better, "Add more details." Every kid in the city will say, "I need to add more details here" and that's like the one piece of advice that they've gotten. That doesn't mean anything, that's nothing. I don't know what that is.

While Mr. Burke seems to have a low opinion of the pedagogic method of pointing out "positives" and says that he can't write good comments on his students' work, I am sure his students' writing is not devoid of strengths. His main frustration, it seems, is with the meaninglessness of "canned responses," feedback that does not "make better." Not only does the critical feedback mean nothing in the sense of helping students write better, the praise can actually deter further learning. He continued to discuss this issue with Mr. Wang, exploring the meanings of praise and criticism:

> Mr. Wang: This month's *Atlantic*, the cover story is about narcissism and self-esteem, and the big question is are we doing our students a disservice by this kind of lovey-touchy model of sticker charts, providing constant positive feedback, and holding their hands? That's something that we've talked about a lot at our school when we say, "Hey, is there something that's missing? Is there something else they need to go explore themselves?" I guess that's my question: are we doing them a disservice that every little thing they do it's, "Well this is great."

> Mr. Burke: Blowing smoke.

> Mr. Wang: Blowing smoke. So what's the answer to that?

> Mr. Burke: I feel like we do a really good job of not blowing smoke, but then you get met with "I'll just drop out. I'll just do something else." And when you hear that, it makes me, no matter how mean and surly I want to be, it makes me draw back. A lot of our students have enough problems outside of the classroom, that it's enough of a struggle that you want to make school a safe and inviting place and try to hook them in that way. But I also think that that's not the way to hook them in. And I don't know what is…

> Mr. Wang: I wonder, at the high school level, how does the encouragement look?

In this exchange, Mr. Burke and Mr. Wang touch on the tenuous balance of encouragement and high expectations, of support and developing independence. Do teachers have to "blow smoke," essentially lie to children, in order to make school a "safe and inviting" place where students will be "hooked in" and stay? Do critical feedback and less hand-holding actually push high school youth out of school, confirming their sense that school is not for them? These are not theoretical questions for Mr. Wang and Mr. Burke; in New York City, high school graduation rates have risen, even as more and more students are unprepared for college-level work and enter higher education institutions required to take—and pay for—remedial classes. The crucial role of feedback for children's learning, both in the moment and for the future, is rightfully on these teacher's minds.

A related story about undeserved praise comes from Mrs. Tully, who remembered herself as a young reader. The youngest of nine children, she "had the benefit of my older brothers and sisters, watching them come home from school and read," and by the time she entered school, she loved reading. She said:

> Fast forward to kindergarten, and I kind of know how to read. It's not like I need to know my ABCs. I know all that. I know I can read and recognize words. Fast forward now to first grade, when you get your basal reader. I look at this book, seen it, saw it, had read it, but now I have a teacher that's rewarding all the kids who are reading haltingly and slowly. She is praising these kids who are reading with no fluency at all. And they sound bad. I'm watching in amazement as she's saying, "Good, wonderful, excellent." So now it's coming around to me and it's my turn, and don't I want to get praised, don't I want the teacher to say, "Oh you did a good job, Rose"? I see what gets the praise, the kids who are reading really strangely and not fluently. So I pretend and I start reading like them, and she says, "Wonderful, wonderful."

The twist in the story is that little Rose Tully received praise completely incommensurate to her reading ability; the reading that was deemed "wonderful" was in reality far worse than what she was capable of and had already achieved. I can completely understand her teacher's encouragement of the children who were reading haltingly and un-fluently. I myself have

praised such faltering, barely-there steps of progress, acknowledging the effort my students made. After all, how would children ever learn to read if every little measure of putting sounds into words was not rewarded and affirmed? Yet Mrs. Tully and her friend Mrs. Wayans saw an underside to praise, the danger of it becoming an end in itself, not merely the means to help children learn. They discussed:

> Mrs. Tully: It wasn't until much later that I realized the importance of having sincere praise, because here she had a student that was fluent, but because she gave such over the top praise to those who were poor readers that I thought that's what she wanted and that was the desired goal. So I went and started acting like all the other kids. I think about the power that a teacher can have to make you achieve higher or beat you down.

> Mrs. Wayans: I was thinking that the praise could be double edged. You were getting praise from the teacher and that was important, you needed that confirmation. So you're a good reader but you're willing to dummy down to get that praise. You knew you could read better than that, you were aware of that. You knew it, but yet you would sacrifice that to get the praise.

> Mrs. Tully: Who doesn't want to be praised, and at age seven? At that tender age, everybody wants praise and recognition.

The "double edged" nature of praise that Mrs. Wayans and Mrs. Tully talk about presents a challenge to teachers, similar to the challenge of finding that balance of encouragement and critical expectation that Mr. Wang and Mr. Burke discussed. Giving children the confirmation they need—at any tender age, adolescence included—has to be balanced with the goal of helping children "achieve higher." Whether children struggle in the classroom or they come ready to shine, their teachers' feedback is a decisive factor in their learning.

Learning outside the Classroom

Another important aspect of children's learning was that it did not happen only in the classroom. In talking about teaching and children's learning in school, the teachers in these

conversations frequently spoke of children's learning in a much wider sphere. Mrs. Ferner, for example, remembered taking a class with Lawrence Cremin at Columbia University when she was studying to be a teacher:

> It was so fascinating to me because he really put education in a social context. School wasn't the end-all and be-all. Becoming educated through school was one way you learned, but you learn through your family, you learn after school, you learn in so many ways. You are learning as you live.

Why would it be important for teachers to understand education in a "social context," the fact that children also learned outside of school? For Mr. Pelles, this expanded idea of learning informed his pedagogy. He explained:

> Sometimes I think that kids won't know something when in fact they know it very deeply in their own experience and it's just a matter of finding the right connection for them. They can learn almost anything that way.

Mr. Pelles recognized that children already have come to know and learn some things "very deeply in their own experience," and that his work as a teacher was not to assume that they didn't know, or that they were a blank slate for learning, but to make connections between their knowledge and past learning to the school curriculum.

Other teachers made clear distinctions between the learning that happens in the classroom and the learning that can happen outside of it. For example, Mr. Geller described the learning that typically does not happen within a classroom:

> I would like to see more extracurriculars for our kids. Even if it's a flag football team, go travel to another school, play a game. I'd love to see mandatory arts. We offer it the form that we can based on what time allows, but I'd love for every kid to play an instrument or participate in a play or do something that stimulates a part of the mind that we can't always reach or haven't always done the best job of reaching. I'd love to see us tap into their creativity.

While Mr. Geller acknowledges the constraints of school schedules and mandated curricula with the qualifiers "the form that we can" and "what time allows," he also seems to put some

responsibility on schools and teachers for not always "doing the best job" of reaching—or connecting with—students' learning needs, particularly their artistic creativity. Some schools attempted to solve the problems of a too-narrow curriculum by engaging in programs that supplemented what children learned and expanded both the content and the time for learning. Several teachers spoke about Citizen Schools, an afterschool program that helped students learn in different contexts. Ms. Linden described it:

> We invite volunteers, we call them citizen teachers, to come into our schools to teach their career, their passion, their expertise to kids. Right now we have a solar speed racer apprenticeship and the kids are learning about how to build solar cars and they're learning about energy. We have a gardening apprenticeship called Leave It Better and we have an entrepreneurial apprenticeship called Do Something, and it's all about making positive change in the community. And we cover all kinds of different topics with these apprenticeships.

Gardening, building solar cars, entrepreneurship—indeed it is a rare school that offers such wide variety and such open space for learning to children, especially in an era dominated by standardized testing and reduced school budgets. The "citizen teacher" volunteers were able to offer students the kind of learning that schools could not. But other teachers were themselves the volunteers, building learning experiences for their students outside and beyond their classrooms. Mr. Lowry described how he developed a debate team for his school, and what it meant to his students:

> The most important part of my teaching is outside the classroom. It's my after school program of speech and debate where I've developed the deepest relationships with students, and where I've helped the students grow the most. I developed it from scratch to be a very large competitive program now. I find that on top of the beauty of math, it's probably one of the most important experiences for my students. It's their glee club, it's their family. It's a chance where they learn to find their own voice and to express it and to be confident and strong. As they're going off to college and job interviews, those skills—whether they realize it or not—all came from their involvement in that program. To me it's almost more important than my day to day teaching, because those students are gaining so much more.

Listening to Mr. Lowry, I was so touched by his humility, by his deep understanding of what can be achieved beyond the classroom and the power of children learning with each other. This is a teacher who loves his subject, who wants his students to know "math's beauty." And yet, the speech and debate program is more important than his "day to day" teaching. And while he is suitably proud of starting a program from scratch that has become large and competitive, he does not claim that it is his own prowess or teaching ability that makes the difference. He created the space, but it is the *students'* club, *their* family, *their* opportunity to "find their own voice and to express it." Comfortable enough to say that the most important part of his teaching is outside the classroom and perceptive enough to see that students' capacity lies in their voice, their confidence and their strength, Mr. Lowry acknowledges his students as learners in full.

Learning How to Teach

To talk about learning "in full" means to consider oneself as a learner, not only as actor in other people's learning. Though the work of teaching is *children's* learning, it was impossible for teachers to talk about that work without talking about *themselves* as learners. Explicitly and implicitly, they talked about how they learned to teach—how they developed in the craft, art, and skill of teaching. They talked about their childhood experiences and the work they did prior to teaching, learning "on the job," and learning from the people they encountered while teaching. In all these ways, the teachers in these conversations revealed their ways of learning and themselves as learners.

<u>Socialized into Teaching?</u>

It was fascinating to hear in these conversations how many teachers "played school" or "played teacher" as children. It was as if the beginning of learning *how to be a teacher* was

expressed in childhood role play. The "work" of teaching was practiced on family members, toys, and other materials. For example, Mrs. Tully and Mrs. Wayans reminisced:

> Mrs. Tully: I was from a large family. If I couldn't get my brothers and sisters to play school with me and be my students, then I remember taking all the dolls—and I had three other sisters—and I'd line them up, sit them in little doll chairs, and get my little chalkboard and I would be the pretend teacher.

> Mrs. Wayans: I lived in Park Slope in a brownstone all my life, so we had stoops. And I remember I would ask kids the questions and if they did answer the question they would kind of go up to the next step. And maybe I was thinking about those teachers back in the day on TV, they had that stick, and I do remember having some kind of…I must admit, maybe a belt.

Another teacher, Ms. Fields, remembered how she "played school all the time as a kid, the full bit…made mock bulletin boards in the den, all those kinds of things," and Mrs. Cameron said that she "always played teacher with my siblings." The ritual actions of lining students up, asking questions, rewarding and punishing, writing on the board, and creating visual displays were part of childhood imaginary play for some of these teachers. It could be that "teaching" has become relatively standard make-believe material in children's play, at least for girls. Teachers brought up these childhood memories when talking about how and why they became teachers, usually making the point that they "always knew" they would be a teacher. But in addition to indicating this initial desire or inclination, I think these memories also speak to the idea of learning *how* to teach, in that they show how children, sometimes even before they attend school themselves, already "know" what the work of teaching is, socialized by popular images and other people's experiences.

Another implicitway of learning how to teach was evident in the number of teachers who spoke of having family members who were teachers. This experience, unlike the make-believe play, was true for both genders. For example, Mr. Nevins' grandmother, a teacher in Russia, "inspired [him] with her stories of the classroom." Mr. Drake grew up around

boarding schools, where his father was a teacher and chaplain. Ms. Mays said that her mother "was a teacher forever and I was always aware of that." Moreover, some teachers considered teaching to be a family tradition or legacy, such as Mrs. Ferner, who said:

> I come from a teaching family: my grandparents were both Hebrew teachers and my great uncle started a teachers' college for the leftist Kibbutzniks in Israel. He was an expert on John Dewey. My mother was also a teacher and lots of cousins were teachers.

Another teacher, Mr. Solomon, said that his becoming a teacher was "maybe predestined," explaining:

> Family members on both my mother's side and my father's side were in education, from teaching to principal. I don't know if it was in the cards for me to continue that family tradition having some role in education.

Like the memories of playing school, these family histories were brought up when talking about the reasons for entering the teaching profession, to say that teaching was something literally "in the family," and therefore somehow already familiar. I think it is likely that living with family members who were teachers or educators somehow helped to "know" what teaching is. Implicitly, subliminally, some images and ideas of what teaching is might have been absorbed or imprinted. It is possible that learning how to be a teacher started, however unconsciously or unintentionally, through hearing family members' "stories of the classroom" or "always being aware" of their teaching work.

The final "unconscious" dimension of learning how to teach was when a teacher-like quality or characteristic was detected by others and communicated to these teachers-to-be. In a way, this was a predictive kind of socialization, where ways of being a teacher were "recognized," valued, and thereby reinforced. These could be generalized associations, such as when Mrs. Wayans remembered being perceived as a teacher, even as an adolescent: "people looked up to me or looked to me to be a teacher." Other encounters were more specific, such as Ms. Baker being told she was a teacher:

> I never really thought I would become a teacher. I did a presentation in college in a literature class, and after the presentation my professor came up to me, and said, "You know, you're a teacher. You are a teacher." And I was like, "I am?

There must have been something in Ms. Baker's presentation that inspired her professor to pronounce her a teacher, and she might have walked away from that encounter with some idea of what a teacher does or what a teacher is—and that she had "it." Another teacher, however, was told precisely what he did that would make him a "great" teacher. Mr. O'Brien remembered this:

> I went on Cooljobs.com and found a tour guide position in Ketchikan, Alaska. One of the tourists said to me that I would make a great teacher because I made up stories and I told them about the history. And in retrospect, it had absolutely nothing to do with real teaching. The skills involved were very different. But that said, I think that stuck.

Even though Mr. O'Brien later came to decide that "real teaching" did not have that much to do with telling stories, at that moment as a tour guide in Alaska he learned that storytelling was part of teaching and that he was good at it. That sense of how to teach, or what it means to be a great teacher, "stuck" and carried forward into Mr. O'Brien's subsequent experiences in the classroom.

Learning by Doing

Along with these subliminal or unconscious impressions of how to be a teacher and what teaching is, the teachers in these conversations also spoke of learning how to teach through formal teacher education received in graduate school, alternative certification programs, and organized professional development opportunities. The general feeling, however, was that teacher education programs and even prior experience working with children did not prepare teachers for the tasks of teaching. Much like life shows us how to live, teaching teaches teachers how to teach. Behind the oft-heard lament that teachers are

left to "sink or swim" in schools is the undeniable fact that teaching is intricate work that calls on all of a person's imagination, agility, responsiveness, decision-making, and resourcefulness—on top of solid content knowledge, pedagogical skill, and highly developed social and emotional acuity. One of the teachers, Mrs. Cameron, expressed some of complexity when she spoke about observing other teachers:

> it really makes you appreciate the profession even more so, to be able to sit back in the room and think of, wow, there are so many different moves that a teacher makes, it's a really complex way to think.

Another teacher, Mr. Simmons, emphasized the unpredictability of teaching, speaking of "thinking on your feet and the flexibility and unpredictability of not only what you've planned but what actually happens in class." Thinking in a "really complex way," making "moves," and dealing with "what actually happens in class" were things that teachers learned by doing. It was the act of teaching itself that helped them learn how to teach.

One way teachers in these conversations acknowledged this "on the job" method of learning was by talking about the ways they failed. There were many, many stories of how things went wrong in the classroom, some still carrying the scent of frustration, some more humorous. Ms. Fields, for example, remembered making a mistake, speaking with a sense of weary exasperation:

> I made a very bad rookie error and left the room for a minute, which of course is a colossal mistake, huge no-no, but in my head I was like, "It's just a minute." It literally was four steps. And when I got back another kid had gotten into an argument and it just was like an all-time low. I left for four seconds to deal with one massive issue and something else already happens.

I don't remember going over a list of things that were a "huge no-no" in any of my teacher education courses, but everyone knew the obvious things, like not leaving the classroom unattended. But no matter how obvious, like Ms. Fields, I had to make those "rookie mistakes" because the sense of it, the meaning, came through action. Sometimes the learning

came through experiencing a disconnect between what I thought would happen and what actually did happen, even when the main actor was myself. Mr. Lowry gave such an example when he spoke of a "failed" lesson plan:

> I remember I made what I thought was a full lesson plan with multiple activities going on in the first day. Our classes are one hour long and the whole lesson took 15 minutes, and I was like, "Okay, I have to pretend that I planned it this way and I still have 45 minutes' worth of things that I wanted to do."

The learning here was not in anticipating what the students would or wouldn't do, but rather in experiencing the internal miscalculation of how a lesson plan would play out in real space and time. Though student-teachers typically compose lesson plans and even whole units during their training, it takes actual instruction in the classroom to reveal the worth of the plan and feel its pace.

How did teachers transform their experiences of failure into the substance of learning? For many, the experience of failure was new, or at least infrequent, prior to teaching. Ms. Baker, for example, found "being bad at something" to be personally motivating:

> My first year was horrible, it was so bad. I had never really been bad at anything before, but I was a horrible teacher. I decided that I wasn't going to stop teaching until I got good at it, so it became a personal challenge to me. I also felt horrible I wasn't serving my students better, and so I felt I needed to stay in until I got good.

The personal challenge, combined with "feeling horrible" for her students, probably helped Ms. Baker adjust her feelings of incompetence into an openness for learning and a stance of perseverance. Other teachers spoke of reflection as a way to handle the steep learning curve of teaching. Mr. Burke and Mr. Wang discussed:

> Mr. Wang: When I came into teaching I definitely failed and struggled every day.

> Mr. Burke: But you're also reflective and you think about those things. When you said the word failure I was met with that too, of course. But let's just say it wasn't so painful. Let's just say the first year kind of

> happened and you got through it, and it wasn't necessarily a failure, it
> just didn't hurt that much. Would that have made you reassess?

Here, Mr. Burke raises an interesting point about learning: is some amount of pain and failure that comes with experience necessary for learning? Would teachers learn how to teach without "hurting" in the classroom? For some teachers, preventing their failures or learning from them was almost a moot point. Experience on the job—struggles and successes both—was the best learning itself. Ms. Linden expressed this point of view, speaking of new teachers:

> there are so many things that I feel they need training in, but some of it
> just comes with experience and no one can necessarily teach you how to
> handle that situation. You have to go with your instincts.

Indeed, alongside the stories of things going wrong in the classroom were stories of teachers "going with their instincts," having learned through experience what pedagogical decisions to make in the moment. For example, Mrs. Thomas, the daycare teacher aide, talked about deciding how to help a child:

> Now one child I was helping, she was putting numbers in order, and she
> put the seven, but the seven was backwards. I thought to myself, "Shall
> I tell her the seven is backwards or should I leave the seven there so the
> teacher can see that she is having trouble with that?" And then she put
> the nine backwards, and I said, "You know what, I'm going to tell her
> that they are backwards."

Instinctually, yes, but also because of her years of experience, Mrs. Thomas knew that letting a child keep on forming numbers or letters incorrectly would make learning the proper format more difficult later on. Such minute, split-second decisions are grounded in pedagogical training as well as in countless hours of observing and working with young children. Similarly, Mrs. Ferner gave an example of the subtlety, rigor, and insight into children's learning that teachers develop through experience:

> I was observing my student teacher, and she was making pancakes with
> the children, and the kids were doing their mixing and everything. After
> they made the pancakes, they wrote something about it. And one of the

> children wanted to know how to spell a word. Tiger was asking how to spell "sugar" and he wasn't comfortable sounding it out. He was looking around the room trying to figure out if he could find a sugar box or something, and Izzy turned to him and said, "Tiger, it ends the same way as your name." So then I came to her afterwards and I said, "Oh, Izzy is ready for word families."

I love how much there is in this story about children's learning and the skillful teaching that makes it possible. And I love how the ending is not about Tiger finally figuring out how to spell "sugar," but rather about Izzy and where *she* was in her learning. How much there is for a teacher to pay attention to, and how much work this is! Beginning teachers would struggle with the pancake-making activity itself, making "rookie mistakes" about organizing materials and managing space and giving children clear instructions. Or they might be challenged by finding multiple ways of helping children learn how to spell, besides sounding words out. Or they could narrowly focus on the "accomplishment" of correct spelling for one child, missing the crucial information another child was offering about her learning needs. Much of this comes with experience: years of making pancakes in a classroom, years of collecting sugar boxes, years of letting children find their own way to spelling, years of listening and observing? I love this pancake story because it shows the beauty of teaching—its artfulness and its discipline—and how much learning it requires.

Learning from Others

If teachers learned from time and experience, they also learned from and with other people, the people they encountered in their school lives. The teachers in these conversations specifically named their students, their students' parents, and their colleagues as those from whom they learned how to teach. It almost goes without saying that teachers learn how to teach from their students, if only because we are in some sense learning to teach *on* or *through* them, every day lpracticing the pedagogical skills, techniques, and moves whose purpose is

student learning. But teachers did at times explicitly point to their students' contributions to their learning the craft of teaching, like Ms. Vindal who remembered the student who "pushed her teaching," Mrs. English who expanded and enhanced her "classroom repertoire" because of the two Japanese students in her class, and Mr. Drake who said that "children reveal the place you have to grow as a teacher." One teacher, Ms. Baker, was completing a doctoral degree in the anthropology of education while she was teaching. She spoke directly about the need for teachers to learn *from* students and *about* students in order to learn how to teach. She said:

> I think one of the most important things—and I don't think I can separate anthropology from this—is that we have to study our students and we have to study as intellectuals as well. So, study books, study our students. I don't think you can be an effective teacher unless you are open to and informed by the realities and interests of the people you are teaching. I mean, that's how learning takes place. And hopefully you are inspiring the same kind of thing in your students: an engaged curiosity about the world and being motivated about each other and other people.

Learning from students, it seems, is both a literal and a philosophical stance. One can't learn how to teach without attending to what the students are doing in the classroom, literally "studying" them in order to learn how to respond to them, be with them, and instruct them. But there is another dimension of this "studying students," a more philosophical or spiritual perspective, which is an openness to "the realities and interests of the people you are teaching." Learning how to teach comes from "an engaged curiosity," an openness to students *as people*, not as receptacles of knowledge or followers of directions or indicators of success and failure. Ms. Baker's perspective subverts the inherent regard of students as the *objects* or *recipients* of teaching and positions them in a more subject relationship with teaching—as sources, causes, and activators of teachers' learning.

Teachers easily acknowledged learning from students, whether they considered them as the material of their learning or actors in it. But mention of parents as people from whom they learned how to teach was much less frequent. Mostly, teachers mentioned parents as important actors in their children's learning; for example, Mr. Drake expressed how "incredibly helpful parents are," and Mr. Solomon said he was disappointed in how little interaction he saw between teachers and their students' families and communities. This acknowledgement of parents was primarily about the effect of teacher-parent collaboration on students. One notable exception to this theme was Mrs. Adams, who told a story of how a parent changed her teaching:

> I was twenty-two and teaching during the war in Vietnam and I was ardently opposed to it. I would often say things in my class about what was wrong with the war and I was very outspoken about it. I was trying to garner the enthusiasm and support of these 8- and 9-year old children and I was doing this, I thought, in the true interest of this community and the world.
>
> But a parent came in early in the morning, very irate because her son was in Vietnam. She told me I should really think about what I am saying to children and that it isn't fair to tell them how to think. She didn't really ask for a response from me, she just wanted to tell me how she felt. I thought about it and then spoke with the class about how our opinions and points of view are negotiable, that it isn't okay for me to say you should feel this way. That was it, we never talked about it again.
>
> It did change how I was with the children. I thought I was giving them the materials to be open-minded and come to conclusions on their own, but in fact I was being as dogmatic and ideological as the people who I objected to myself. I have learned how to reframe and remodulate my passions in order for them to mix with other people's and not dominate, or alienate myself from them, as a result of that.

The parent had a clear lesson for Mrs. Adams: that she "should really think about" what she said to children and that "it isn't fair to tell them how to think." From this encounter, Mrs. Adams learned not only that it was inappropriate for a teacher to "garner the enthusiasm and support of children" about a political situation and that a teacher shouldn't tell children how

to feel, but also that she had to learn how to "frame and modulate her passions" to not alienate or dominate others, to not be dogmatic. To this powerful example of learning, Mrs. Adams adds the equally potent idea that parents can change how a teacher "is with children" and significantly impact what they are doing in the classroom. In this story too, I noticed a unique take on teachers' learning. Parents—in the role of lesson-givers and learning-causers—are repositioned from their typical relationship with teachers as helpers or supporters of their children's learning, or, less charitably, as non-factors or even problems. In how many teacher preparation programs or professional development sessions are teachers taught to view parents as people *from whom they can learn about teaching*, not only as partners in students' learning? Mrs. Adams' story opens a space to consider parents as "learning partners" in a new light.

Though the teachers in these conversations spoke about parents infrequently, the role of colleagues in their work as teachers and in their learning was much more prominent. First, teachers often mentioned their school's culture, or atmosphere, as conducive to learning. For example, Mr. Geller spoke about the trust and commitment among his colleagues, which was helpful in focusing everyone on student learning:

> I love the commitment of the people that work here. I just trust everybody. And that's a lot. It's just easy to work in a place where you start from a point of trusting everyone, because then you can cut to the chase with what the actual issue of the day is or what the needs of the kids are. We can focus on those things and not sort of work around issues of mistrust.

Another teacher, Mr. Wang, said of his colleagues:

> we all understand ourselves and our own flaws so well, and we realized we were in it together. We were like, "This guy does this well, but doesn't do this so well." And we were accepting of that.

It seems that a sense of shared purpose and a camaraderie made it "easier" for teachers to work together, and that trust and acceptance of each other was a way of being "authentic" that made learning how to do the work easier too. Mrs. Ferner expressed this idea:

> I think in our school you could feel yourself, you didn't have to hide behind a name, you didn't have to hide behind authority. You were who you were, your practice was open to everybody. Just like how you wanted children not to feel different at home or at school, you didn't want the teachers to feel different at home or at school.

In fact, Mrs. Ferner left her previous school, realizing she "had gone as far as she could go" and "wasn't learning anything from anybody." In her new school, where "practice was open to everybody," she found a collaborative atmosphere that drew on people's strengths.

But it wasn't only supportive school cultures that teachers mentioned as helpful to their learning. They also spoke frequently about their colleagues' influence on their own teaching. For example, Mrs. Thomas spoke about the head teacher with whom she worked in daycare, and how much she learned from working with her:

> Ursula was the head teacher and had come from Germany, and as you well know Germany is the country of origin of kindergarten. The way teachers are trained in Germany, it's just to the max, the most wonderful multiplicity of skills and activities, so Ursula was a fabulous resource.

Another teacher, Ms. Levy, also shared a similar thought about being able to learn from what her colleagues were doing. She said:

> As my colleagues, you inspire me. I see you with students, or hear about the projects that you are doing, look at your work on bulletin boards…I am learning something about how I can become a better teacher, and I can't do without that.

Other teachers were even more specific about how their colleagues helped them learn how to teach, naming both practical ideas and pedagogical values. For example, Mrs. Ferner and Mrs. English told each other:

> Mrs. English: It was my first public school teaching and you helped me set up my room. I remember feeling you helped me so much in all of my teaching, but particularly in those early years. Our school was on the fourth floor and I had no idea how to get the kids up and down the stairs. All those practical ideas about teaching, where some people would say you give them gold stars or you reward them or you scare them, the things that you said were very consistent with my own values. Like how do I entice this kid to want to be a part of this community?

> Or want to get up the stairs with a partner they don't like? I felt you really understood how kids could do the work that they wanted to do and that they could become this very productive community together.
>
> Mrs. Ferner: I remember in my class I had these blocks and I didn't know what to do with them and that was the first thing I asked you when we met. What are these blocks for? And you told me they were unifix cubes and how to use them and that opened up a whole world of curriculum to me. So I thank you for that, because I couldn't have been a good teacher without you.

I can feel the reciprocity of Mrs. Ferner and Mrs. English learning from each other: one not knowing how to get kids up and down the stairs, the other not knowing how to use math manipulatives, both telling each other how much they helped their teaching practice. And I like how their talk shows—again—the complexity and beauty of teaching: how the mechanics of moving a class of children up the stairs are inextricably tied with notions of community, use of reward and punishment, and the building of relationships between people. Such multi-faceted intricacy of teaching work was especially vivid in the conversations of older, more experienced teachers. To them, learning how to teach was a never-ending pursuit; learning from their colleagues never stopped. Mrs. Wayans and Mrs. Tully expressed this wonder and appreciation:

> Mrs. Tully: We haven't plateaued out and we haven't given up. We're always working on bettering ourselves as people and as teachers, and we take that into the classroom.
>
> Mrs. Wayans: With some modesty, I think we're like a think tank, both of us. We're always talking about new ways, new ideas, new thinking, and we don't always have to agree. I love that too, we don't agree all the time. But you strengthen me…what's that saying—iron sharpens iron. You keep me sharp.

Learning from Memory

In addition to learning how to teach from their colleagues, their students, and their students' parents, teachers also learned from themselves—that is, they learned from their own

experience as students. The memories of themselves at school influenced the ways they related to students as learners, the ways they set up their classrooms, and what they thought was important to learn. Some of these memories centered on the teachers they used to have. For example, Ms. Levy who remembered the Spanish teacher who "really brought herself into the classroom" and influenced her to be her full self with her own students, remembered another teacher of hers:

> I had Ms. Price grades 1 through 3 and she was just so wonderful, so loving. She always brought her miniature schnauzer, Sugar Bush, into the classroom and that dog smelled so bad and was really old, it had warts all over its body, and would just roam around the classroom. We always had singing time which was just the best, because she was a great song leader and she would sing the funniest, most fun songs…

Memories such as these are precious and irreplicable. The experiences of a "so wonderful, so loving" teacher, fun songs, and the lovable but disgusting dog combined to form a feeling that stayed with Ms. Levy. It is possible that she carries this feeling into her own teaching, not replicating it, but letting it shape the contours of comfort and care she wants her students to feel in the classroom. Such memories can be an influence that is subtle, possibly unconscious, but powerful. Other teachers' memories were more precisely connected to teaching. For example, Mr. Lowry remembered a favorite teacher:

> I didn't like math in high school, and then I ended up becoming a teacher. I had a great teacher in college who did lots of exploration and discussions and just really intrigued me. He had a broad range of knowledge and he would bring it to whatever we were discussing and add more and make it exciting.

Though Mr. Lowry does not say it, his own teaching is just like his math teacher's: he too makes math exciting by adding more interesting things to the curriculum, he too encourages his students to explore and discuss, and he too works hard to dispel his students' dislike of

math. It is as if the experience of having a "great teacher" who helped him love math now

fuels Mr. Lowry's own passion for helping his students learn and appreciate the subject.

Teachers also remembered particular experiences as students that influenced their

teaching. For example, Mr. Nevins talked about being a student in a Soviet classroom and

how that shaped his focus on order and discipline when he became a teacher:

> I grew up in the Soviet Union and a Soviet classroom was above all
> orderly. It wasn't about learning, though we did learn a lot, it certainly
> wasn't about fun. It was about order. Students sat with their arms
> perfectly placed on the table, you had your uniform with your Lenin pin,
> your tie had to be perfect, your posture had to be perfect, you raised
> your hand at a ninety degree angle from the desk, nobody ever called
> out, nobody ever laughed, and if they did a teacher could hit you. I left
> the Soviet Union when I was in the third grade, but in many ways the
> format of the classroom stayed with me. And so when I became a
> teacher, I didn't want to replicate a Soviet classroom, but it seemed to
> me that order, especially in rowdy Brooklyn, would be very important.

Hearing Mr. Nevins say that "the format of the classroom" stayed with him even though he

left the Soviet Union resonated with me. I myself was born in the Soviet Union, but did not

attend school there. However, the format of the Soviet classroom was nevertheless imprinted

on me, from the school stories my mother told me. When I started teaching, those images

that filled my head as well as my own school experiences in the US, and it was with all those

images that I "built" my classroom. Mr. Nevins is conscious of his experience as a student

and does not want to "replicate" it as a teacher; still, he is aware of how his past mixes with

what he values in the present.

This blending of past and present was articulated by other teachers, who heard echoes

of their own experiences as students now that they became teachers. Ms. Gill, for example,

talked about her students' struggles in her classroom while remembering her own:

> All through school math was my worst subject. I remember having Ms. Melissa Hill my sophomore year taking algebra, and I remember she told me that I needed to have self-confidence. I never really thought about it in terms of having confidence. I always doubted myself around a test, an assignment, even a set of questions in the classroom. It was just intense anxiety because I felt that I was going to let her down, or I would feel embarrassed that I couldn't get the problem.
>
> With my students, I see them get so frustrated with what I am asking them to do, whether it is a question or an essay or even a discussion. I can tell that they want to say the right thing, they want to please me. I tell them that it's ok to get it wrong, that is why I am here. I am here to help you figure it out. I tell them they need to have confidence. You have to own your greatness, you have to know that you do know this, you just have to work through it.

Ms. Gill's teacher helped her understand herself better as a learner, to see the ways that her anxiety was sabotaging her efforts and to appreciate what self-confidence can bring. Now that Ms. Gill is a teacher, she can recognize herself in her students: she sees their frustration and their desire to "say the right thing." Like her own teacher did with her, she tells her students to have confidence, to "know that you do know this." Would Ms. Gill have responded to her students' frustration in the same way if she did not carry her teacher's "lesson" with her?

Identifying their former student-self with their students was a powerful way to learn how to teach. Mrs. Wayans and Ms. Tully, for example, talked about how their experiences as students shaped them as teachers:

> Mrs. Wayans: I was definitely the struggling student and that's why a lot of times when I look at my students I am so connected.
>
> Mrs. Tully: Because you identify with them?
>
> Mrs. Wayans: I identify. When I was a kid in school I just did not understand anything. There were no connections to my life and learning. Now I'm a teacher, and I put a lot of emphasis on trying to develop analogies, examples, or looking at the child's expression just to see whether or not they do understand. Sometimes you and I would disagree, and I'll say, "Rose, that's because you were the good student. When I was a student I didn't think like that." Or for example you might say, "Well, they're lazy." And I'll say, "Well, no, no, no," because I can remember the days when I didn't understand something and the teacher

would think that I was lazy, but maybe I didn't have the skill or I didn't have the ability or I wasn't taught.

Mrs. Tully: So you think all your early experiences kind of shaped and made you the kind of teacher that you are today?

Mrs. Wayans: Definitely. A lot of these things I understand, and when I teach I keep that in mind. Things that happen in my own personal life and in yours made you make those decisions about what kind of teacher you wanted to be.

It was from her own experiences of struggling as a student, not connecting life with learning in school, that Mrs. Wayans "made decisions about what kind of teacher she wanted to be." She is the teacher who works on developing analogies and examples for her students, who searches their expressions to see if they understand, who does not think they are lazy. She is the teacher who has learned the importance of connection and understanding because she did not have enough of that as a student herself. She has become a teacher who can "identify."

What Teachers Learn

Exploring the ways teachers in these conversations have learned *how* to teach, brings up *what* it is that they have learned. Like Mrs. Ferner learning not to force her political passions on children or Ms. Gill learning to encourage her students' confidence, other teachers articulated the growth and development they have noticed in themselves because of teaching or through teaching. These "lessons" were about teaching and learning, about children, and about themselves as teachers and people. Mr. Lowry, for example, spoke of learning how to adjust in the moment, of "perfecting my lesson even while I'm giving it:"

Every day something happens or I get an idea in the middle of a lesson. Something that I hadn't planned ahead of time. Right before we do something, something else strikes me because I've been thinking about the lesson the whole time and what my goals are. And I just keep altering and adjusting and perfecting my lesson even while I'm giving it. That's become a natural tool that I have now. I adjust lessons in the moment as things happen, as kids get pulled out of class for an appointment, or the kids are unhappy with the way things are going or confused.

The speed and energy of Mr. Lowry's words reveals their essential meaning: there is so much going on inside a teacher's head when teaching that it is hard to describe the thicket of in-the-moment ideas and possible modifications, hard to explain the split second pedagogical choices overlaid on the instructional decisions already made. Acting on "an idea in the middle of a lesson" is something that Mr. Lowry has learned how to do; it has become a "natural tool." That ability, however, is not what Mr. Lowry considered his greatest learning. Even more important was what he has learned about connecting with students. He explained:

> One thing I've progressed as a teacher is really paying attention to the details of the students and personal connections. I feel like my first year I was focused on the subject of math and the quality of the lesson and the worksheet and cold impersonal things like that. And now there is a lot of thought and time spent developing student relationships and really caring about their growth, their understanding. Checking in with kids, that's a big part of my practice and my thought process. Making sure the kids actually understand what I'm saying, not just making sure that I feel a lesson is good but that everyone is on the same page. Helping them outside of class, giving calls home to talk to them, "I saw in your face you were frustrated yesterday. Let's talk about it."

Mr. Lowry has learned that it is more important that kids "actually understand" than feeling that his lesson "is good." This is both simple and profound. It is the ability to shift perspective from teacher to learner, from delivering instruction to privileging students' growth and understanding. Being able to make that shift, to be able to call a student at home and say "I saw you were frustrated today, let's talk" is something rare. Too often, we wait until our students fail, even as we witness their struggle, even as we respond to their requests for help. The practice and idea of proactive "checking in" is a big learning.

Other teachers articulated lessons equally profound. Mr. Geller a spoke of attaining a shift in perspective, which happened during a difficult class:

> I was having a really frustrating class and I was sort of talking too much, which probably was the problem. I was at the front of the room and

there was just so much off task behavior. I noticed there was a cluster of kids that were focused pretty well, so I took my easel and walked over to them and was like, "This is where class is going to be happening. If you want to be a part of class you can join." It was clearly the wrong thing to do and I would probably go ballistic if I ever watched a teacher do that. But what it showed me was that my students are clamoring to get the education. One by one they came over and they huddled together and they had their notebooks and they were taking notes and they were doing all of the things that I wanted them to do. It was the first time I realized that they wanted it too, it wasn't just me trying to compel them to want it. That really changed my outlook, believing that what students can get educationally is more important to them than it is to me.

The power of Mr. Geller's realization lies in its subversion of the usual premise that education is something "given" to children. Many of us enter the teaching profession and stay in it sustained by the feeling of doing something good, of helping and giving. It is important to us "what students can get educationally" from the perspective of our actions, our intentions, and our work. What Mr. Geller's story poignantly asks us to remember is that students "want it too," that their education is "more important to them" than it is to us. Here, teaching is positioned as a response to students' "clamoring for education," not giving children something to learn. Just as Mr. Geller learned to see teaching in a different way, expanding the meanings of teaching was part of other teachers' learning too. Mr. Solomon, for example, spoke of having expectations for "everyone involved:"

One thing that I know is that you have to have expectations for everyone involved in that child's education. You have to have expectations of yourself, to know yourself, to know what you can give and what you can't. I think knowing yourself is key, but also expectations of what you are going to learn and what you get out of this experience in the classroom. And letting your students know what they can expect of you as their teacher, but also having expectations for the school in terms of what the school needs to provide to students if they want to see them be successful. And having expectations for your colleagues as well, hopefully being on board with the school's mission. And then having expectations of families in terms of what the family is going to be responsible for.

This is another deep lesson, another indication of the wisdom evident in these teachers' conversations. I don't think I learned the value of having expectations—for myself and for others—at 27 years old, Mr. Solomon's age. I certainly *had* expectations, but I did not think about the purpose of having them. And the least-formulated of my expectations were those about myself: I did not have a clear idea about what I could give and what I wouldn't, what was I going to learn, and what I was going to "get out of" being a teacher. Such self-awareness is not the limit for Mr. Solomon; he also has expectations for his students' families, his colleagues, and the school. His vista is not only of himself in a classroom with students, but of a larger ecology of educational goals, supports, and multiple actors.

In this wider vision of teaching, what teachers learned was not limited to the classroom, the school building, or even education. Perhaps the most significant content of teachers' learning was the personal development they experienced because of teaching. For example, Mr. Pelles thought that teaching was a unique catalyst for social and emotional development. He said: "If you're not a teacher, I don't know what other events in life can cause you to emotionally develop as a communicator and as a leader, as well as a socializer." More specifically, Mr. Pelles connected learning how to have "presence" in the classroom with developing confidence more broadly. He and Mr. Borden discussed this:

> Mr. Pelles: I find it's really challenging to teach people presence. When you made that shift, do you think that is something that infiltrates other spheres of your life?
>
> Mr. Borden: Absolutely. I'm realizing that the way that I'm conducting myself in the classroom, the techniques that I use to interact with kids, it's carrying over to interactions with other people in my life. I'm managing certain aspects of my life differently and it's definitely because of my increased confidence in the classroom, absolutely.
>
> Mr. Pelles: I remember that shift for myself too. I remember slowly building that presence and by the second year I was, "I feel like night and day, and it's not just here. I feel like I can walk into any conversation and get the outcome that I want." I was just amazed. I don't think I

realized how wide of a skill set teaching required and how much you would develop as a person by developing as a teacher. And once you can actually achieve that, then maybe it just naturally spills into the other areas of your life. If I can get these kids to do this, who can't I get to do this? If I don't need to be afraid here, why would I need to be afraid anywhere?

I was surprised that Mr. Pelles felt he could "walk into any conversation and get the outcome" he wants, how once he conquered his fear in the classroom he did not feel the need to be afraid anywhere else. But rather than dismiss his words as a young man's hyperbole, I tried to understand the magnitude of such confidence. Something about developing presence in the classroom *is* amazing. There *is* a strength that comes from the daily performing, the relentless bouncing-back-and-trying-again, the consistent effort to be clear, the constant watchfulness of teaching. There *is* a fearlessness that comes from the everyday work of being responsible for a roomful of adolescents. The "wide skill set teaching requires" is something that can be developed; once developed or "achieved," it can <u>carry over</u>, <u>spill into</u>, or <u>infiltrate</u> other spheres of life. It makes sense that the words these teachers use are indeed full of power, even forceful. I imagine Mr. Borden and Mr. Pelles fascinated with their fresh sense of confidence and potential. I imagine them amazed by their recently acquired awareness, the discovery of "how much you would develop as a person by developing as a teacher."

Listening to Mr. Pelles' and Mr. Borden's exchange made me think of that joke about motherhood: "you can't scare me, I'm a mom." I thought about parenthood as a developmental stage, how through parenthood people develop the skills, abilities, and character that they probably would not have developed otherwise. Is there a parallel between teaching and parenthood, in the sense of both being a developmental experience? Interestingly, several teachers spoke of teaching as *preparing* them for parenthood. For example, Mrs. Royce emphatically said: "I know that my work as an educator has prepared me for motherhood," and told a story about her daughter coming home and saying that she hates

school. Because of her own experience as a teacher, she said she was able to "re-motivate that" and to advocate for her daughter at school so her "light bulb stayed lit." Mrs. Adams, also spoke of the effect teaching had on her parenting:

> I remember when I was concerned about a child and a parent said to me, "Well, imagine if this was your child, would you be recommending the same for your child?" And I value that. I think it made me a better parent as well, as a result.

Intriguingly, this was the first and only time that Mrs. Adams mentioned being a parent in her conversation, making me wonder what was left unsaid. How did these interactions "slightly change" her? How did her world "shift," making her a better parent?

Perhaps the answer to this question could be discerned from other teachers' experiences. Some teachers gained greater self-knowledge because of teaching. Ms. Baker, for example, explained:

> Teaching is an interesting profession because in doing it you are learning so much about yourself. Your students, especially middle and high school students, are the most honest and clear. If you listen, they are going to tell you everything about yourself. So in the act of doing that, I learned a lot about my own strengths and weaknesses, as well as what pants or dresses make me look pregnant. They let you know.

Though she ends her thought on a joke, and though she does not specify what strengths and weaknesses her students have helped her discover, the idea that "you are learning so much about yourself" in "doing" teaching is powerful. Part of the power lies in a paradox: while the work of teaching is others' learning, the unintended benefit is self-knowledge and self-understanding. Ms. Baker continued to say: "Part of what I learned from teaching is just in terms of how to move throughout the world." With this thought, she connects greater self-knowledge with action: learning from what students "tell you about yourself" makes a difference in how you "move throughout the world." Again, I wondered about what was left unexplained. The grandness and scope of the phrase "move throughout the world" reminds

me of Heidegger's concept of *dasein*, meaning being-in-the-world or the inseparable engagement of self with the world. It is as if teaching can change the shape and substance of how one relates to the world, as if *being a teacher* is a different way of being in itself. I heard some strains of this idea when Mr. Nevins spoke of teaching as a life-changing experience:

> I've learned a lot teaching. I learned self-control, I learned patience, I learned how to read people. One of my closest friends served in the military, and I won't compare my experiences to his other than they happened concomitantly. When we were both through, I believe we both came out closer to men than we had been before. That the experiences proved not only difficult, certainly his, but also instructive in a way that things really settled down in the soul, and once you got out you saw that you were not the same person. Certainly I was not the same person who walked into P.S. 62.

The things Mr. Nevins mentions as the content of his learning—self-control, patience, reading people—are relational phenomena, ways of being in the world with others. The military service metaphor evokes the idea of before/after, or some kind of boundary or edge, an experience so strong and monumental that it is impossible to remain "the same person" having lived through it. Likewise, the association of military service and manhood, of "coming out closer to men," emphasizes the developmental impact of teaching on personhood, its "ripening" effect. The somber, serious description of teaching being "instructive in a way that things really settled down in the soul" makes me think of the word *formative*, in its classic meaning of giving shape, form, or existence[3]. Teaching could change the "form" of one's being in the world, make one a different person from the inside out.

Teaching *Is* Learning

> Mr. Simmons: You were in school in kindergarten, elementary school, junior high, high school, college. Then you go back to school to teach. Your whole life has been in schools, just now it's on the other side of the desk. I just want your thoughts about that.

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[3] The word *formative* itself has roots in military experience, related to the word *formation*, or the assembling of the soldiers in a unit into a particular structure of columns, rows, etc.

> Mr. Lowry: I think it's kind of amazing. I really love learning and teaching and every day as a teacher I'm learning and teaching…and I couldn't imagine doing anything else. I could be teaching at a different grade level or in college or working with student teachers, but I couldn't imagine not being in an academic environment where my colleagues are also constantly wanting to learn more and grow more. I can't imagine not being around people who want to know more about everything that they're doing and about how to improve everything around them.

This chapter on learning as an essential experience of teaching ends with this beautiful image of being "a teacher and a learner" and "learning every day as a teacher." In Mr. Lowry's enthusiastically expressed love for both teaching and learning, it is clear that these are two sides of a coin, inseparable. Teaching *is* learning. The teachers in these conversations recognized this and expressed it in various forms. Some teachers, for example, saw the "practice" of teaching as never finished or completed, but always in development. This is what Mrs. Morse said of the student-teachers she taught in her graduate course:

> They want the answer, they want the class to provide the one thing they can do to be successful in a classroom. And my challenge has been to say there is no one thing…or when you find one thing, the next day it will be a different thing. The only advice I can offer is that it is an evolving talent and engagement that you develop as a professional in teaching that will keep you thinking of new things that will work. There are many different pillars that make a good teacher, and in this class we'll work on just maybe one. But you'll devote the rest of your life to developing all of the other components.

I love the phrase "evolving talent and engagement" to describe the work of teaching, how essentially incomplete and imperfect it is. Mrs. Morse's long-term view of teaching as a developing practice portrays teaching as something impossible to do without learning. Other teachers also saw the never-ending learning in teaching and articulated it through the constant desire to keep on improving. Mrs. Tully and Mrs. Wayans spoke of this:

> Mrs. Wayans: Remember you and I were talking about what's-his-name, who says, "There is something we want to work on." I want to work on stories and analogies that would be simple but yet complicated, simple enough so that they can draw the student in. I want to work on that.

> Mrs. Tully: You know what's really funny, even though we've been teaching for a long time I'm still excited by teaching.

In this exchange, learning—or having "something to work on,"—is what makes teaching exciting, what makes it a pursuit of unending, interesting purpose. The teachers who spoke of teaching being "still exciting" were mostly older, with 20, 25, 30, and even more years of teaching experience. What kept the excitement going for them?

For Mrs. English and Mrs. Ferner, their learning provided an "aliveness" as well as deep satisfaction:

> Mrs. Ferner: Every year you get better and better at observing the children, and you help the children more and more and more. It's not a question of becoming stale and exhausted, but knowing more and being able to do more and be a better teacher.

> Mrs. English: Yeah, it's almost like it gets harder, but in a good way.

> Mrs. Ferner: It's what keeps you alive intellectually and in a creative way and it's what makes me feel so good about being a teacher.

The inexhaustible abundance of learning, of "knowing more and being able to do more," makes teaching intellectual work. Despite the routines of school and the cyclical nature of teaching, there is the creativity made possible by learning. Most teachers in these conversations used the language of science to describe how they learned *to* teach, using words like skills, mechanics, training, and technique. But there was another language to describe how teaching *is* learning, how the two together were an aesthetic, spiritual development. Mrs. Adams put it like this:

> I think the reason I didn't paint—and I was an art teacher—all those years that I was in the classroom was because my art was that. I was figuring out *that* art.

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POWER

It's just this undercurrent…I had no idea that's what I would feel when I started teaching. I didn't know enough about what it would be, I hadn't thought about it. I was on a plane scared to death, wondering if kids would listen to me and not thinking about what it meant to tell them what to do.
Jeffrey O'Brien (27, m, W, HS Math, 5yrs)

Having defined love as an essential relationship of teaching, and learning as its fundamental work, I propose power as teaching's ever-fluctuating state of being. In all the spaces that teaching inhabits—the classroom with children, the school with other teachers and administrators, the wider education system, the expanse of the material, social, and cultural world, and within the intimate and infinite space of self—teachers experience power. They speak of classroom management and control, of having authority but not wanting to be authoritarian, of confidence and presence. They speak of helplessness, frustration, broken expectations and defeat. They speak of impact and influence, regard and respect. They speak of community. They speak of battle. They speak of limits. They speak of freedom.

Power is an ever-present condition, both background and core of the experience of teaching, composed by the relations between teacher and others, the world, and self. Though power has many shapes and fluid, permeable borders, there are two major dimensions: being *powerless* and being *powerful*. In this chapter, I first examine the dissonance between imagining the power of teaching and experiencing it, a fundamental disequilibrium. I describe being powerless and powerful in teaching across multiple spaces and relationships. I conclude with considering another possibility for conceptualizing power.

The Power of Teaching: Imagination and Experience

In the previous chapter, I wrote about how teachers learned to teach, both formally and informally, intentionally and implicitly. Many teachers in these conversations recalled

"playing teacher" and "playing school" in their childhood games. As they role-played stereotypical, culturally predetermined teacher actions like lining up children in rows and calling on students and making bulletin boards, they were learning how it was to be a teacher— what it felt like to inhabit those actions and to be that persona. Teachers' learning to teach also happened through more formal and substantive preparation like childcare, summer camp and tutoring work. In these settings, they formed relationships with children and experienced the work of caring for them and shaping their development. And teachers also learned how to teach "from memory," remembering the teachers who influenced them and their own classroom experiences as students. These memories informed their vision of what kind of teacher they wanted to be and their desired relation to their students. And some teachers had an even greater vision: they wanted to "change the world." For example, Mr. Wells recalled working for the Al Gore presidential campaign and how that experience shaped his desire to be a teacher:

> It was necessary to educate people about a democracy. If what happened in 2000 could happen in our country, there was a major need for education. I saw that as a result of bad educational policy over the years. If I was going to change the world, the way I was going to do it was by becoming a teacher.

Another teacher, Ms. Levy, also spoke of the world-changing capacity of teaching. She explained: "I feel there is really nothing else I could do that would have such an impact in terms of changing one person at a time in order to change the world."

I bring up these ways of and reasons for becoming a teacher because they speak to the notion of power, the power teachers imagined and anticipated themselves to have. As children "playing teacher," they imagined—and enacted—the power of a teacher over students and the power to create a classroom environment. As tutors, babysitters, and camp counselors, they felt successful and effective in their work; they felt the power of producing wanted results. As

students, they experienced firsthand their own teachers' power to influence their character

development, life choices, and well-being. And of course, in wanting to change the world by

becoming teachers, they believed in their power to do so. In all these ways, teachers imagine

the power they would have in teaching, relish and value it, and perhaps expect it. Teaching is

imagined to be a space of influence, effect, and impact; the teacher as a subject in full, having

and using power.

But the actual experience of teaching is something different from what it is imagined.

First, teachers realized that being a "real teacher" was not at all what they thought it would be.

In conversation after conversation, teachers spoke of the difference between their imagined,

idealized notions of teaching and reality. Theirs is a litany of shattered expectations:

> Ms. Vindal: I was so excited just to teach. And I didn't really…I didn't
> know what I was getting into.
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> Mr. Burke: I thought I would be able to make subtle remarks and dry
> comments and just kind of…I thought kids would kind of just sit there
> and listen, and if I asked them to do something they would do it.
>
> Ms. Mays: You think you know, but you have no idea until you've been
> in there even for two weeks, a month, six weeks. Totally different. I had
> no idea how difficult it was.
>
> Mr. Lowry: Terrified. I have no idea what I'm getting myself into.
> Overwhelmed, because I thought I knew what teaching was going to be,
> but I'm realizing I have no idea.

The shift from *imagining* teaching to *experiencing* teaching is itself a shift in power. In teaching-

as-imagined, the teacher is in the powerful position of subject and actor; in teaching-as-

experienced, the teacher is now subjected to circumstances and acted upon.

Second, letting go of the firm, clear ideas they had of teaching and entering the

messiness of actual experience produces a state of disequilibrium and uncertainty for teachers.

This disequilibrium is not merely in the new teachers' heads, but is also one of the defining

characteristics of schools. In their seminal study of teachers' metaphors and ways of speaking

about the experience of teaching, Provenzo et al (1989) described school as a "fundamentally ambiguous, pluralistic context…filled with many possibilities, [and] also fraught with problems and difficulties." Another educational researcher, McDonald (1992), described the "continuously shifting" nature of teaching:

> Real teaching happens inside a wild triangle of relations—among teacher, students, subject—and the points of this triangle shift continuously.

Perhaps it is no wonder that in this space of "wild" indeterminacy, teachers feel profoundly unbalanced, like Mr. Drake, an experienced teacher, who said "I don't know what I am doing."

If certainty is some kind of power, people lose both when they start teaching. Even within the routines and rituals of schools, teachers never fully possess a firm footing: they always feel the pendulum swings of reforms and the shifting winds of policy, to say nothing of the intimate tempest of relations between them, their students, and the content they teach. But teaching is a complicated space, and the experience of power within teaching is likewise complex. Teachers construct a precarious balance of having power and wielding it, of lacking power and suffering for it. Having traveled the distance between imagination and experience, the power of teaching—the power *in* teaching—is decreased but not diminished. It ebbs and flows, and changes shape. Mrs. Ferner spoke of this paradox when she explained how she felt each morning as she went to school: "looking forward to what was going to happen even though I dreaded some of what was going to happen." This dread/anticipation perfectly illustrates the multidimensional and ambiguous experience of power in teaching.

Powerless

Dread. This heavy word came up several times, in different teachers' conversations. Dread was felt particularly in the morning, as teachers traveled to school. Perhaps it is in such

liminal spaces and times—the dawn hours when you are no longer home but not yet in the classroom, awake but not yet working, dressed up but not yet performing—that we most strongly feel our existential state. Mr. Wang and Mr. Burke described this:

> Mr. Wang: My first school year was very much, "This isn't working." I couldn't imagine waking up the next morning every day, yet somehow I did…

> Mr. Burke: You get the sickness in your stomach, the pit. Sunday nights you break into the cold sweat at 6:00.

> Mr. Wang: That's downright dread when you're standing on that platform waiting for the first train in the morning at 5:30. You see those other first and second year teachers and everyone has that same sinking feeling in their stomach. It was like: "What's the worst possible, worst case scenario of what could happen?" And a lot of the worst things didn't play out, but then some other things that you don't even think of happened.

Theirs is a visceral description of dread that characterizes the experience of teaching, a dread so strong that Mr. Wang has trouble comprehending how he wakes up to it, morning after morning. It is a dread that begins the night before in the pit of a teacher's stomach, a sweaty sickness, a sinking feeling shared by others in the same position. It is a dread of not knowing "what could happen," while knowing that something *will* happen and that what has happened so far is "not working." This dread speaks to teaching as an experience of profound powerlessness. Of the two dimensions of power—being powerless and being powerful—the lack of power weighed the heaviest in these teachers' conversations. They did not explicitly complain of being powerless; nor did they frequently use the word itself. But in their conversations, the experience of not having power was a palpable theme.

Perhaps teaching is not different from any other manner of being or living in the world, as we all are constrained by our circumstances and limited by our humanity. But it may be that the powerlessness in teaching is also unique: different because of the expectations placed

upon teaching as a profession, different because of the multifaceted relations within teaching, different because teaching is at once small and big, intimate and institutional. Likewise, the places of powerlessness are multiple and concurrent. In these conversations, three distinct themes of powerlessness emerged. The powerlessness of teaching is its low status in society, its constrained conditions in schools and the education system, and its experience of lack of control in the classroom.

Low Status

Teaching has low status in our society. Despite the rhetoric of teachers' crucial importance in student learning, teaching—as an occupation, a job, a career, and yes, as a profession—is largely not well regarded. In listening to these conversations, teaching's low status was articulated in three ways. First, teaching is not enough. Second, it is invisible. And third, it is the object of blame. To begin, the teachers in these conversations articulated the popular discourse of teaching as not enough in various ways. Some used the phrase brilliant people as code for the undesirability of teaching as a career or profession, like Mr. Cohen who said: "There are so many people I know, so brilliant, and they just don't want to teach…who have the capability, who can but just don't want to." Though Mr. Cohen was in his mid-twenties, older teachers also echoed this sentiment. For example, Mrs. Adams, who became a teacher in the early 1970s, remembered her family's reaction to her becoming an elementary school teacher:

> Being a teacher of elementary school was not well regarded. Being a teacher in high school of a specific subject area was acceptable, but it wasn't what was expected for me. Don't need to go into that.

Her curt cut-off of this memory and the stingy "acceptable" that her family granted to a higher-status high school position indicate the degree to which teaching was beneath her social

standing and the expectations of her upbringing. Another teacher, Ms. Fields, who remembered "playing school all the time as a kid" and "making mock bulletins in the den," said that her interest changed later in life: "I think in college I got swept up in the idea that I needed to do something bigger or more than that."

In fact, teaching was not the original career or life goal for many of the teachers in these conversations. Mr. Geller wanted to enter politics, Ms. Linden was interested in international relations, Mrs. Cameron was planning to be a doctor, and Mr. O'Brien intended to become an engineer. Ms. Miller did not like her job at Dow Chemical and applied to Teach for America because she "wanted to go to New York City and didn't have a gig in New York City." Ms. Weiner wanted to be a social worker, Ms. Gill was applying to law schools, and Mrs. Ferner wanted to be an artist. Mrs. Adams was a foreign languages and literature major, planning to work at UNESCO and live in Paris. And Mr. Solomon remembered wanting to do many things, except teaching:

> All through my elementary and secondary school, I wanted to be a brain surgeon, I wanted to be a lawyer, to work in the music industry, to…who knows what else. Everything but being a teacher.

None of the teachers in these conversations explicitly said that teaching was a fallback career or a second choice. They explained how life took them away from their original career plans, often citing experiences with children or schools that made them realize the importance of teaching and what they thought they could accomplish with it, how they could "change the world." But I think it is significant that teaching was not the initial choice, not the originally intended profession or occupation. When these teachers, as young people, imagined themselves to be in the world, teaching was not part of that image, not included in the ideal projections for life. It was just not on the list, so to speak, of initial possibilities—at a time in life when everything seems possible. In one instance, I could hear a teacher come close to

articulating the status of teaching as an undesired profession. It was when Mr. Nevins asked

his wife, Mrs. Morse, who has earned a PhD in education and was now an adjunct professor

at several graduate schools, if she would "ever go back to teaching high school." She replied:

> Yeah, I haven't ruled it out. I think if this…I don't want to say it's a
> back-up…I think I have such respect for the teaching profession, and
> for teachers…I could see myself, at some point…choosing…teaching.

Her words, her pauses, and what she does not say—are telling. There is no desire expressed,

only a tepid "not ruling it out." When she says "I think if this…I don't want to say it's a back-

up," it seems she is talking about her academic career as a professor not working out, in which

case teaching high school would indeed be a "back-up." In emphasizing her "respect for the

teaching profession," she highlights the *lack* of respect for it, how returning to it would be

considered a step down. "Going back" now assumes a negative sense, a diminishment and a

wrong direction. In the pauses around the word "choosing," I hear her conscious seeking of

a word to replace "going back," a word that would indicate power and agency—not

acquiescence and retreat.

I felt a stronger allusion to the lack of respect or regard for teaching in Mr. O'Brien's

story. Here, he tells his colleague Ms. Miller, how he applied to Teach for America (TFA) and

interviewed for a teaching position:

> Mr. O'Brien: TFA does these last ditch effort recruitment strategies and
> I got some cold call email and was like "Hmm," and I did the application.
> It was not something I was taking very seriously. And then last minute
> I could not for the life of me envision sitting in class for another few
> years researching or otherwise, and I moved to New York and started
> teaching in the Bronx, and ironically ended up in a Master's program,
> but very different quality and character of Master's program.
>
> Ms. Miller: Does TFA just place you at a school?
>
> Mr. O'Brien: They do. I am convinced that it was because of that one-
> liner at the bottom of my resume on which I said outdoor enthusiast
> and somehow that matched me by keyword to [the school]. They make
> you interview. I wore my suit and they're like, "Oh you've got to dress

up for this and you're professional and you're going to meet the Principal." I go all the way up there and nobody is there. I'm sweating. It's August. It's New York. I'm in a black suit in the South Bronx. I've never been there before. He's not there for 30, 45 minutes. I finally called the number I had. He's like, "Oh I thought we were meeting in Queens." I dragged myself to Queens to a beer garden where he and [another administrator], god bless them, were watching the World Cup.

Ms. Miller: And that is where your interview was?

Mr. O'Brien: And I interviewed in a black suit in a beer garden. [The principal] is wearing a baseball cap. It was something else. They hired me because I had a laptop and they're like, "Oh, you must do tech."

Behind the twists of this story of becoming a teacher—answering a "cold call email," abandoning graduate school research (specifically, a Master's/PhD program in nanotechnology at Notre Dame), being matched by a keyword to a particular school, having an interview in a beer garden, and getting hired because he could "do tech"—I hear sarcasm and deprecation, a putting down of the idea of wanting to be a teacher and becoming a teacher. The putting down is Mr. O'Brien's own, when he says that he didn't take his TFA application very seriously, or when he describes his last minute decision to become a teacher rather than endure more "sitting in class." But the deprecation of teaching comes from outside sources too: the "last-ditch effort recruitment" of teachers, the automated matching of teacher candidates to schools, and the "very different quality and character" of graduate studies in education. It is hard to feel respect for teaching when it is a position for which "they make you interview" and told to "dress up for this." Being told that "you're professional" is a way of saying that you are not, or that you might not be thought of as one, as a teacher. That the interview is in a beer garden is both punchline and inevitable conclusion: teaching is not so professional after all. In this story of becoming a teacher, Mr. O'Brien is an anti-hero, an aimless adventurer who "ends up" in teaching. The journey into the profession is marked by

a lack of nobility and purpose, a continuous fall from grace. Deep inside the sarcasm and self-deprecation of Mr. O'Brien's story, I hear a yearning for respect.

Another dimension of teaching's low status in the world is its invisibility, its condition of being taken for granted and not truly valued. Paradoxically, the experience of teaching as underappreciated, unacknowledged work exists at the same time as the discourses of teacher heroism and the glory of public service. The teachers in these conversations used words like invisible, thankless, and credit to describe the status of teaching. For example, Ms. Lang (27, f, A, MS) and Mr. Cohen discussed:

> Ms. Lang: I personally think that teachers don't get enough credit.
>
> Mr. Cohen: I would say it's a thankless profession. You don't have parents come up to you and say... I've had some parents come up to me and be like, "I really appreciate all the things you've done for my child." But it is an invisible profession.

Even though he acknowledges parents' appreciation, Mr. Cohen ends up stating that teaching is an invisible profession. And though he first interprets "credit" as thankfulness and appreciation, he then expands the term to include compensation, saying, "I would think teachers aren't given enough credit also in terms of pay. We aren't recognized in that way." This was seconded by other teachers, who connected low pay with "brilliant people" leaving teaching. For example, Ms. Miller said:

> If somebody had asked me the question what can you do to fix education you know what I would have said a couple minutes ago? You throw more money at it. The problem is that brilliant people are leaving because they're not paid well enough or our school buildings are too small or what have you.

Here, teaching's low status is explained as part of a self-perpetuating cycle: because the profession does not have enough resources invested in it, good people are leaving, which prevents investment into teaching because there are not enough good people in it. The value

or worth of teaching is determined by the resources allocated to it; the appreciation of teaching is expressed by investment in it.

However, most teachers in these conversations did not speak of money at all. They spoke of their own investment—the work that goes into teaching—and the lack of acknowledgement and understanding society gives that work. Over and over again, teachers said that their work was not seen and not spoken about; their work was simply unknown by others. For example, Ms. Vindal and Mrs. Smith discussed how "nobody knows" the work:

> Ms. Vindal: I feel like nobody really knows what we go through unless you are a teacher yourself or you know somebody who is a teacher, if you have a spouse or a friend that's a teacher. You just see how much work they're constantly doing.

> Mrs. Smith: Yeah. I don't think people realize. I think a lot of people really respect teachers, but still do not know how much work they do in the school and outside of the school.

Other teachers echoed the idea of "really knowing" what teaching is, and the fact that people do not grasp the full scope, the magnitude of teaching work. Mr. Solomon said, "It's a lot. Teaching is a lot. And I don't know if people fully grasp the scope of all that a teacher has to do in terms of preparing day-to-day." And Ms. Mays, who just started teaching, said:

> I feel like everyone should be a teacher. If everyone were a teacher and had done even a year of what you have done they would think so differently. I was telling you I was at the same school for four years that I'm teaching at now, and within two days I had a totally different perspective on everything.

How can teaching be valued, then, if it is not known or understood? Mr. Lowry expressed some of this dilemma when he talked about his friends who are not teachers: "they don't really understand what teaching is. Their experience is what it was like when they were a student and they think they know." Perhaps this is the true meaning of being taken for granted—the assumption that you and your work does not need attention and regard. This invisibility has an aspect of loneliness, which Mr. Wells expresses poignantly:

> The outside world will not even mention teaching sometimes. I think
> they really don't…no one ever… I feel they just don't know what to say,
> outside, they don't know what we do.

And Ms. Levy echoes: "When I am with other people, teaching might not even come up."

But of course, teaching does come up. It comes up all the time. It is forever the topic of discussion, the center of critique, the focus of research, and the target of policy. It is as if teaching is both there and not there, always in sight and yet not clear, at the core of discussion and the thing not understood, the object of concern and the unknown subject. When teaching does comes up, it often comes up at fault. Teaching has low status in the world not only because it is not enough, not only because it is not truly known and appreciated, but also because it the object of blame. It is a ritual scapegoat for the problems of education. The hyper-visibility of teaching sustains its low status, just like its invisibility.

The blame rests on "bad teachers." A precise accounting of just who these bad teachers are is as hard to get in these teachers' conversations as it is in popular discourses and in the more specialized vocabulary of the education field. But the faults of our education system seem to be the responsibility of public school teachers in general, good or bad. For example, Mr. Cohen remembered a discussion he had in one of his graduate courses, "the whole debate between charter schools versus public schools and how a lot of the fault maybe lies on public school teachers." Mr. Solomon also articulated a perception of public school teachers in negative terms:

> It's interesting, it seems like teachers have been vilified recently in the
> past, or at least public school teachers, of not doing their jobs and
> seemingly not wanting to do their jobs, that's it an easy paycheck…

The easy paycheck image is readily complemented by other tropes, such as summer vacation, that position teachers as people who don't care. Ms. Quinn, for example, describes the staff in her school as exceptional, different from all the other schools where she considered

working: "People are not just here to have their summers off." But even when differentiating between good and bad teachers, it seems hard to liberate the profession as a whole from its stigmatized status. Once the blame has been cast, it has set. An exchange between Mr. Cohen and Ms. Lang illustrates this:

> Ms. Lang: But you do agree in some sense of being vilified, right? I feel like it's really tragic. Not to be unrealistic and blind to some really messed up stuff that's going on out there, but it puts the whole career of teaching in such a negative light. It's one of the most important things that you can do, yet I don't know why it's such a scapegoat for so many people. It pisses me off.
>
> Mr. Cohen: Yeah. I think it's a broad generalization and I don't know how to respond to that. I would say I am a little idealistic and I would like to think that there are some amazing teachers, but I know that there are a lot of teachers that aren't good and through the system they can't be fired. And that is in a sense tragic for the students and also the way the system operates. But I would hope that maybe Obama or whoever is in the administration can maybe put more…light a fire and try to attract some better teachers.

Listening to this conversation, I felt that Mr. Cohen has accepted the characterization of teachers as the problem of education. For Ms. Lang, the tragedy is the vilification, the negative light cast on the teaching profession even as it is "one of the most important things you can do." But while Mr. Cohen says this negative regard is too broad, he also says it is idealistic to think that "there are some amazing teachers." The tragedy, in his eyes, is the impact of bad teaching on students and the ineffectiveness of the education system in eliminating or minimizing this impact. His hope for education is to have better teachers. In this view, distinguishing between the faults of some teachers and teaching itself becomes difficult.

In the position of blame, teaching stands in for the problems, difficulties, and challenges of education. The role of scapegoat is ancient and possibly inherent to human nature. The word's etymology refers to a ritual in which a member of a community was cast out following a natural or social disaster; the designated scapegoat was part of a ceremonial

riddance of misfortune or impurity, restoring social order. In sociology, scapegoating appears in times of distress; group members establish a specific target to blame for the problems everyone experiences and subject that target to various forms of violence. Though lauded as heroes who make "all the difference," teachers are also vilified for not making a difference. In this space of blame and fault, teaching is an experience of powerlessness.

<u>Constrained</u>

The next sphere of powerlessness I would like to consider is the space of schooling—the schools and the larger public education system in which teachers find themselves. In this space, the powerlessness of teaching was experienced not as low status but as constraint. Again, it was very seldom that the teachers in these conversations spoke explicitly of feeling powerless or helpless; rather, they spoke of the conditions, circumstances, and characteristics of an educational system which limited them. The teachers' frequent use of the SYSTEM conceptual metaphor to talk about schooling and education indicates an implicit acknowledgement that they were part of some comprehensive, ordered assemblage of things: structures, rules, and procedures that formed a complex, large whole. Within this system—public K-12 education, particularly the NYC Department of Education—teachers were certainly subjects with agency but they were also in some sense stuck. They were stuck in a system which needed to be "fixed." Because they were part of the system, teachers had to live with, or live by, certain conditions which they did not think were useful, appropriate, or right. Ms. Lang talked about this challenge:

> I will be the first one to say that I definitely think the system has a lot of flaws, a lot of holes that need to be fixed. And I think teaching is so important and I'm amazed by what you do, because you are working in a flawed system.

The teachers called out these flawed conditions—these constraints—in their conversations. I hesitate to use the word <u>complaint</u> to characterize what teachers said because it can imply a whiny, only-talk-no-action kind of affect. But the root meaning of the word is lamentation, which is exactly fitting to express the feeling of powerlessness when we experience conditions we are limited to change, when we are constrained by our environment and held back by our circumstances. The schooling conditions which the teachers in these conversations lamented fell into three major themes: general working conditions, class size, and standardized testing.

The working conditions that constrained teachers were mostly those of bureaucracy. The pressures and the obligations of procedures and documentation are common to many professions besides teaching, so it was not surprising that this came up in the conversations. Some teachers spoke in very general terms, like Mr. Nevins who said he was "tired of the bureaucracy." Others were more specific. For example, Mr. Lowry explained how "the seemingly endless paperwork" impacted how he wanted to spend his time at school:

> I don't like the seemingly endless paperwork. There is so much accountability because we're a public institution, because we have so many kids and so many things going on, and our kids come from such low income families. We have to get proof of that to get our funding. And all the tedious copying and stapling and things like that. I'd rather hang out with students and teachers and just learn and discuss.

Even though he understands the purpose of the paperwork, whether for funding or to prepare for class, Mr. Lowry laments the loss of time to "just learn and discuss." Other teachers did not like the fact that procedural compliance replaced simple communication. This made their job more difficult, as Mrs. Thomas explained with this example:

> Enrollment has to be kept up, which means two year olds are pushed up into the three year old classroom and then your job is to tell the Director, "Excuse me, could you please tell me before the child comes into my classroom that I'm getting a child?" Because sometimes a parent shows up with a child and you're like, "What?" And is that how you introduce a child to the classroom, "What are you doing here?" No, that is not.

Whereas Mrs. Thomas gave an example of a procedure not followed correctly, other teachers

questioned the purpose of some regulations altogether. This was the case with Mr. Solomon,

who spoke with his colleague Ms. Baker about the limits of a teaching effectiveness rubric,

piloted that school year in the NYCDOE for future use in a teacher evaluation system. He

voiced some disdain for this documentation practice: "I feel teachers have done [all this] in

the past, but now somebody smart has come up with a rubric that is saying we have to do all

these things." And beyond critique of policy and procedures, some teachers found the very

basic rules of school to be absurdly repressive. The most vivid example was given by Ms.

Miller, who came to teaching after working in chemical engineering. In her conversation with

her colleague Mr. O'Brien, she talked about the way time is regulated and controlled in schools:

> I don't know if you see it this way or not, but [school] is highly time
> regulated. I mean we literally change based on some bell that rings.
> When you're in the schoolhouse nobody finds that absurd, but the first
> year I worked, my chest would clench every time the bell rang. It was
> like it was supposed to be an indication that we should change or stop
> doing what we were doing. And nobody else found this absurd, and I
> was like, "Ooh." I miss, I really miss unregulated time. I really miss it.

Listening to Ms. Miller describe how her chest would clench every time the bell rang made me

think about my own acceptance of "the bell that rings," my own unquestioning assent to this

structuring of time in school. Maybe because my first job out of college was teaching, I had

little experience of life "outside" of the bell and did not find this time management to be

absurd or heavy-handed. My chest did not clench and I did not miss anything. But I think it

is fair to say that for Ms. Miller, the sound of the bell was the sound of coercion, the sound

that forced her to stop and change what she was doing—no matter if she wanted to or not.

Perhaps we cannot imagine schooling where teachers and students do whatever they want

whenever they want; perhaps even Ms. Miller can't. She adapted to this constraint, submitted

to the regulation—but missed her autonomy.

Of the many conditions in schools that affected their work, many teachers honed in on class size as a significant constraint on their teaching and a detriment to student learning. Mr. O'Brien, for example, explained class size as a cost-saving measure:

> Whoever thought it was a good idea to put 30 kids in a room, especially adolescents, and expect them to learn was insane and possibly criminally insane, and we have been suffering for that. And maybe they were just cheap, right? I think it's really just a money saving measure. 30 to 1 is the most you can expect out of a poor tormented teacher soul who hates everything they have to do because they're all in there at once.

While Mr. O'Brien surfaces the difficulty that large class size presents for student learning (as well as a torment for teaching), other teachers spoke of the effects of class size on their pedagogy and on their capacity to know students. Mr. Cohen explained this:

> I remember going to interviews and asking, "What's the class size?" and Principals are, "It's small, a good 26, 28." And I'm freaking out. I remember walking in and it's like, "Wow, 31 kids in a classroom." And you can't sit in a circle and so everything seems like in a row. And then imagine that times three or four, so you have four periods and that's how many faces, how many students you don't know.

I feel Mr. Cohen's pain, the pain of understanding the value of a seminar-style discussion format with students sitting around a table, only to walk into a classroom where such an arrangement is physically impossible. And I feel the frustration of "how many faces, how many students you don't know," the frustration of feeling responsible for the learning of 150 students at a time, mechanically reading their papers, measuring in minutes and seconds the one-on-one time possible to squeeze in with each one. This is the feeling of powerlessness: being unable to do what one wants. And it is powerlessness as well, perhaps even more profound, when one sees the harm that causes children. Mrs. Thomas eloquently explained:

> There should be 15 to 20 children in a class, period. I don't care. A little bit less for younger children. Once you go above that you're in the army, and it just does not make sense. That is not education. That is crowd control. We are going in the wrong direction. The financial pressure on schools, the outside pressure on schools, is twisting the whole process. If we had smaller classrooms with enough teachers, there would be

> learning going on. It would pay off in the end, because we wouldn't have children falling through the cracks. Everyone would be paid attention to. The concept of No Child Left Behind, that is a good statement, but let's really do it. Let's do it by having a small enough ratio of teachers to children and no child will be left behind, because every teacher will know every child in his or her class. You can't just shovel people into schools.

Mrs. Thomas vaguely names some larger forces—"they," "financial pressure," "outside pressure," "you"—that subvert education into "crowd control." She understands the costs of smaller class size in a context of budget cuts and staff reductions. Yet she still speaks of children "falling through the cracks," reminding the listener of who bears the consequences of these forces and events. The grand, abstract forces of money and policy overpower the personal, individual imperative of "everyone being paid attention to." Mrs. Thomas shows how the literal meaning of "No Child Left Behind" becomes lost in the reality of schools. "Let's really do it," she says, articulating the distance between "a good statement" and making the concept behind it true. Her final image of children being "shoveled into schools" underscores the paucity of humanity accorded to children, their reduction into objects that require crowd control, that can fall through cracks, that can be shoveled. And what power do teachers have, aside from doing their best for the children "shoveled" into their classrooms, aside from pointing out the hypocrisy of a law, aside from witnessing what is wrong?

The No Child Left Behind law, intended to improve student achievement and school performance, spurred an increase in standardized testing in K-12 education. This was by far the greatest and most frequent complaint voiced by the teachers in these conversations. Standardized testing presented a set of constraints to teaching and learning in schools that the teachers felt keenly. First, there were observations of what it was like to "teach to the test." For example, Mr. Cohen remembered "teaching one class solely devoted to [the test] and kids

were miserable." Mr. Wang admitted to misery of his own, namely the way standardized testing inhibited his teaching:

> I teach science where I know there is going to be a big high stakes multiple choice test, and I hate it. I wonder if that's one of the reasons why I haven't fully embraced what I teach as much as I could have.

Other teachers noticed a wider impact. Mrs. Thomas, for example, noted how schools' poor test performance over the years could be a factor in their closing:

> I just heard they're going to close a couple of schools in Brooklyn because they're not doing well. You close a school because it's not doing well, you don't improve the school by putting resources in? That's running in the wrong direction very, very fast, and I don't know how to stop it... It's hit the standards, save the money. It's ridiculous.

The foolishness of "hit the standards, save the money" was echoed by Mr. O'Brien, who talked about schools' preoccupation with test scores:

> There are people who start schools with the goal of reforming education for underprivileged youth and create prisons out of them in order to succeed in these traditional measures, and it's a game of comp stat. It's like police in Baltimore again, if you're a *Wire* watcher. You change the stats, you shoot to a specific statistic and you miss the big picture.

Here, Mr. O'Brien refers to the popular television show *The Wire*, which depicted the Baltimore police department's move to use computer statistics ("comp stat") to set metrics and goals for public safety. The police chiefs started gaming the system—making decisions that would help them make their numbers, decisions that were not necessarily good police work nor good for the community. Similarly, a school that succeeds in "traditional measures" is a school that shows increases in test scores; often, the goal becomes the test score itself, not the student learning it is intended to represent. Education reform then, particularly for "underprivileged youth," becomes a game of statistics, "missing the big picture." Ms. Miller agreed with the view of standardized testing as subverting the purposes of education. Like

the children who get lost in a too-large class, teachers' ideals can get lost in the daily, constant concern with getting children to pass standardized exams:

> I see it as a continuing project of civil rights or equity or better distribution of power within society, and I want to be a part of that project. However, I don't think that many people in the education system see that or articulate it. It might be some assumption behind what they do, but on the day-to-day it's like can my kids pass this science exam. And a lot of that gets lost.

And teachers spoke on a more personal, intimate scale about how standardized testing affected them, their classrooms and their students. For example, Mrs. Thomas remembered her own experience as a student, saying that tests "don't show anything, only whether or not you can grasp test taking materials." Mrs. English also said that tests don't show much, explaining that "it isn't looking at a test score" that is important, but understanding "[students'] real thinking and what's the next step that has to happen for them." And other teachers talked about what standardized testing pushed out. Mr. Lowry and Mr. Simmons, for example, discussed what was lost because of the inordinate focus on standardized exams:

> Mr. Lowry: Most of the students I teach have passed the state exams, so I'm not really bound to anything. I mean what I'm really bound to is preparing kids for college, so that's the one thing that I think about: what topics they don't know and what topics are also important for their life.
>
> Mr. Simmons: Oh to be you. I feel the push and pull much, much stronger, but that's partly because we have kids taking AP exams.
>
> Mr. Lowry: Yeah. I think my fear with all the tests we push them to pass is that some of the joy of just learning and exploring and having these tangential discussions is lost.

Preparing students for college, teaching topics "important for life," and the joy of "just learning and exploring and having tangential discussions" are what Mr. Lowry and Mr. Simmons want to do with their teaching. But they are aware that they are "bound" to testing, as it is an integral part of the school system.

The theme of standardized testing pushing out the learning important for students and the teaching desired by teachers connects with the notion of school as a space—a space that has become smaller, tighter, more constrained. Mrs. English and Mrs. Ferner talked about this, remembering a time when teaching was different. They said:

> Mrs. English: School was much more flexible then, and much less watched, so that we did get to develop rich curriculum without somebody saying "Yes, but what are you doing on Tuesday, you know you are going to be on this math unit on Thursday." And so the learning that was possible was actually much deeper when we first started teaching …there was this very rich community of teachers and learners and families. That was for me a time where I felt like teaching was what I would dream it would be. And that has shifted some, as the Bloomberg administration has put so many constraints on schools that I feel it is really hard to be a good school now. Which is kind of ironic because that intention of making school more accessible and more successful for more kids has somehow resulted in school being less successful and meaningful for a lot of kids.
>
> Mrs. Ferner: Yes, it's because school has become a smaller construct, it has become a set of test-taking skills instead of the expanse of ideas about learning how to be in the world and learning how the world works and learning how you might imagine being in the world, how you might be this or that, or you can do this or that, you can be an artist or a tugboat captain or you can be anything you wanted. And in relationship to other people too, working with other people. That doesn't seem to be the point of school now, to learn who you are, who you are in the community, what the community means and how you can work with other people, and how you can have the satisfaction of achieving something, making something, creating something with your hands…

Listening to this exchange, I felt sad and depleted, and also a little envious. Mrs. Ferner and Mrs. English started teaching in the early 1970s, fully two decades before I did. In my own experience as a student and teacher, I rarely felt school to be an expansive space for "learning how to be in the world and learning how the world works and learning how you might imagine being in the world." This is not to say that such experience was entirely absent, but rather that it was not at all the norm. But the feelings of sadness and depletion came also from a sense of a loss of power, a decline of possibility. The shift of words from <u>flexible</u>, <u>possible</u>, <u>rich</u>,

deep, dream, and expanse to constraints, watched, smaller, set, and skills illustrates the shift

from imagination, potential, and freedom to something else, a "smaller construct." Perhaps

Mrs. Ferner and Mrs. English idealize the past and school was never the way they describe.

And indeed, they worked at the Lower East Side School, known for its progressive ideology,

so perhaps their experience and expectation of school is unique. But what does it mean to

teach children in a space that limits them and limits us? What does it mean to teach children

within an environment where being "anything you wanted" is not very possible, where

"creating something with your hands" has to fight for space with test preparation? What does

it mean to teach children in an atmosphere where the goal is student success and achievement

and saying that "the point of school is to learn who you are" sounds ludicrous and passé?

What power is there in teaching when the space of school has become so small?

This experience of reduction and restriction was expressed in teachers' feelings of

futility. For example, Ms. Weiner said that she had to "keep reminding myself that the work

we are doing is really important." Mr. Cohen and Ms. Lang also voiced a diminished sense of

power, speaking of the limits of their impact on students and the educational system:

> Ms. Lang: Do you feel like you're making an impact in your job?
>
> Mr. Cohen: I think I would be giving too much credit to myself if I'm
> having this drastic momentous impact…It's a tough question how much
> I can…how much impact…That's what I am conflicted about, because
> you can only have an impact on the 20 or 30 students who walk into
> your classroom every period.
>
> Ms. Lang: For the 50 minutes that they're there.
>
> Mr. Cohen: Exactly, and it's not that you're doing macro scale change.
>
> Ms. Lang: Are you less idealistic now than when you started?
>
> Mr. Cohen: I'm a little more honest with myself. I hate to say it, but I
> remember my cooperating teacher taught me these words of wisdom.
> She said, "When you teach you can't light up the entire classroom. You

> can only light a few candles." That might be a little pessimistic, but I think she was being brutally honest.

Listening to Mr. Cohen and Ms. Lang, I was surprised by how quickly they moved from acknowledging the limits of teachers' impact within the educational system—the "20 or 30 students for 50 minutes" and the lack of "macro scale change"—to the even smaller effect of "lighting a few candles." This "pessimism/brutal honesty" seemed unusual for teachers their age, 24 and 27. But other teachers, like Mr. O'Brien, echoed this disappointment:

> I think education is about empowerment and curiosity. You know when you have power. I think our lives are about empowerment, empowering ourselves to get what we want, whether it's our schooling or our jobs, or money. I think the system is actually about disempowerment, right?

His colleague and friend, Ms. Miller sounded painfully sincere in her reply:

> But how do you keep hold of that idealism? That's what I'm starting to lose…I guess I want to know: can I stay within the classroom and keep hold of it or do I have to leave?

Lack of Control

If the space of school has become constrained, what of the classroom? We say, "this is my classroom, or "that is her classroom," signifying the teacher's ownership and possession of that space and responsibility for what happens in it. Possession, ownership, and responsibility usually imply control over that object or space. But the experience of *no control* is ubiquitous for teachers within their classrooms. If powerlessness in society is expressed by teaching's low status, and powerlessness in the education system is manifested by the constraints placed upon teaching, then the experience of being powerless in the classroom is marked by a lack of control. In fact, the most vivid descriptions of being powerless were those from the classroom, the four walls containing the "wild triangle of relations," as McDonald put it, between teacher, students, and subject.

The relationship between teacher and student—like between adult and child—is developmentally, socially, and professionally regarded as an unequal relationship in terms of power. The bigger, older, wiser adult is the one with more of it. It is therefore rather amazing that teachers can experience the complete opposite of this "truth," how teaching un-balances this power dynamic, and how entering the classroom can mean stepping into a space marked by a radical lack of control. The teachers in these conversations experienced lack of control in the classroom in three overarching ways: not having it, losing it, and fighting for it.

Not having control of the classroom environment, both physical and psychic, was expressed through descriptions of chaos and disorder. For example, Ms. Lang commented on her colleagues' appearance, saying, "I see you guys with your hair all frazzled," describing with one powerful image what not having control looks like. Mrs. Adams used a different image to describe the state of disarray in her classroom, saying: "It was complete mayhem and when they came in with my first paycheck, I thought: what are they paying me for?" Both Ms. Lang and Mrs. Adams laughed after they uttered their words, but other teachers recounted their lack of control in their classroom space in more somber, even dejected, tones. For example, Mr. Burke said:

> You can see the kids' stuff is out there, and the desks are all different
> heights, because every kid knows how to take the legs off those things
> so they'll fall when you're giving your lesson. And the chairs…the room
> was just a complete mess.

Mr. Burke continued with this image of a <u>mess</u>, a metaphor for the disorder and unpredictability that are the signs of not having control over one's environment and actions:

> It's just this big clustered mess. And I think that was symbolic of my
> first year experience. It happened. It was a mess. You're coming up with
> lessons on the back of napkins and you're just throwing it out there and
> seeing what sticks, and it's like nothing you ever thought it would be.

I could picture Mr. Burke in the middle of a lesson when a student's desk mysteriously falls apart, the loud crash and the laughter, the disruption. And even though he says he composed his lessons on napkins and just "threw it out there to see what sticks," I picture him writing careful lesson plans and being unable to get through them. His last phrase, "it's like nothing you ever thought it would be" makes clear the chasm between the control of being able to carry out one's plans and the experience of not having control, when anything can happen within the mess of the unexpected.

This idea of not having control in the face of the unexpected has a dual aspect. First is the element of surprise and unpreparedness; second is the sheer sense of not knowing how to handle the situations that arose. One of my favorite stories was told by Mrs. English, who was remembering her first year of teaching:

> It was my first public school teaching and I felt really confident when the kids came in. The beginning of the day was an activity time when kids went to different areas of their own interest, and things were going so well. Kids were playing with each other really nicely and I thought: this is so easy, this is going to be so great and wonderful. And we cleaned up and everything was going…still going very well and smoothly. I got over to the meeting area and we're sitting in a circle and I started reading through the hello chart which was going to tell the structure of the day. And one of the kids tipped forward and he got on all fours and started barking and crawling around the circle [laughs]. And all the kids tipped forward and started following him around the circle and barking. And I thought, oh my god, what do I do now?

Mrs. English tells this story with laughter and affection, and the absurdity of this situation takes on an almost humorous tone. It could be almost fun—or at least interesting—to be in this classroom, where not having control could feel like an adventure: "what do I do now?" But most other teachers' experience of not having control in the classroom sounded much less pleasant. Mr. Lowry, for example, felt his lack of control as fear, saying he was scared "that I can't get the kids to listen to anything I say or appreciate any of the math that I love or do anything at all." For Ms. Weiner, not having control of her classroom made her want to

escape. She said: "I start looking up plane tickets of where I want to go, so I quite literally want to go far away from what I am feeling in the moment."

Not having control was also experienced in the teachers' relationships with particular students. Some teachers, even if they had positive and productive classrooms, felt powerless because of their inability to control certain students' behavior. Mrs. Tully, who had the terribly-behaved student Ralph with her for two years, recalled that she could not "make any kind of dent" or "any kind of inroad." While her story is full of description of *him* being out of control, like throwing Christmas trees and stealing from her pocketbook, it was *her* lack of control over his behavior, *her* inability to make the slightest change in his actions that stayed with her. "Inside I was thinking I was a failure," she said, and that feeling of not being able to control Ralph's behavior stayed with her for nearly a decade, until she saw him again. Likewise, Ms. Levy remembered feeling "at the end of my rope" with her student Maria, where "nothing I am doing is really working." One of the more painful stories of not having control was Mr. Wang's. He recalled:

> I had a girl every single day my first year literally stand up on her desk,
> start ripping off things, throwing things, cursing me out, ran up to the
> front of the room and was shoving me, like, "Mr. Wang, you don't know
> what the fuck you're doing. Get out of here."

This furious, uncontrolled motion and speech—"ripping," "throwing," "running," "shoving," "cursing"—and the image of bodies and objects out of place indicate a significant lack of control of the classroom space and atmosphere, to say nothing of Mr. Wang's relationship with this student. Though I doubt that this happened "every single day" in Mr. Wang's classroom, his recollection of such frequency speaks to the magnitude of the feeling of powerlessness.

But perhaps worse than not having control is losing it. Many teachers spoke of starting with having little control of the circumstances, situations, and students in their classrooms and then, eventually, gaining some measure of influence and ability to shape the space. It was as if they started at zero and built something up. But other teachers had experiences which they described as losing control. In these situations, feeling powerless was magnified because teachers lost control not only of their classrooms and their students, but also of themselves. A vivid example comes from Ms. Weiner and Mr. Grant:

> Ms. Weiner: Last week was an especially difficult week. I just got tons of defiance from students. I actually broke down in my classroom and it was extremely embarrassing. I don't know what comment set me off, but it was just this cumulative feeling of I am doing everything and nothing is working. I just felt so defeated and so frustrated. And disrespected also. So at one point one of my colleagues came into the classroom to get the attendance sheet and as soon as I saw her I just burst into tears. I ran out of the room before any of my kids could see and I ran to the bathroom to splash water on my face, and I was so embarrassed. I was like, "Harriet, what is wrong with you? Get it together, why are eleven year olds making you upset?"

> Mr. Grant: Oh, that's not the right question…you know what it means that you are breaking down, right? You know what that says about you as an educator, or about you as a caring person, right?

> Ms. Weiner: I know that I care a lot about them and that I am wearing it, quite literally, on my sleeve. At one point, I was helping a child and I was looking at his worksheet and a tear dropped onto the sheet, so I was like, "I need to leave." And he saw, and he was like "Are you OK, Ms. W.?"

> Mr. Grant: What made the tear drop? What did he do for it to land on the worksheet?

> Ms. Weiner: No, not him, it was another girl in the class, Mary. She was just terrible. She was being so disrespectful. She was walking around the room imitating me, she was yelling back at me when I told her to sit down. She would say, "Why should I listen to you, you're white"…all kinds of things. Anyway, I went to the bathroom, I collected myself. When I came back, I did not address what had just happened, because I wanted to just keep going.

The governing image for losing control is evoked by the conceptual metaphor CONTAINER, evident in the linguistic metaphors "break down," "burst," "get it together," and "collect." The concept of *holding yourself together* comes from the representation of self as a CONTAINER, within which our emotions, thoughts, experiences, and actions are held. *Letting go*, or *breaking down*, is the literal opening of the container: it is the losing of control. When Ms. Weiner lost control of herself when she "broke down" in her classroom, the loss was both external—crying, running out of the classroom—and internal. "What is wrong with you?" Harriet asks her own self in the mirror, commanding herself to "get it together," that is to "collect" her emotions and actions back into the container of the self.

I too have had the experience of being able to *hold in* stress and pressure until some act of care or kindness— often unintentional and usually very minor—releases the pent up emotion and the container/self spills open. The friendly face of a colleague who came for the attendance sheet probably did just that for Ms. Weiner. While the loss of control is bad enough as it happens, it also comes with the fear of not being able to *get it back*. Once the container has broken or burst, will it come back together? Can it? And if it is possible to momentarily "get it together," like Ms. Weiner who splashed water in her face, "collected herself," and just kept on going, are there repercussions? Ms. Weiner and Mr. Grant discussed the possibility of an irrevocable loss of control:

> Ms. Weiner: And for the rest of that weekend, after class, I was just a mess. I was like, "How am I going to come to class on Monday, they have all seen me break down, now they'll think they have gotten to me, they know where my weak spot is…"

> Mr. Grant: I totally understand what it feels like when you break down. I never broke down, I did have to leave the classroom a few times when I had to, but I do understand that feeling of "Oh my god, I've lost control, I am never going to get it back, oh my god all the kids know I freaked out."

The mess image comes back, signifying an incomplete or insufficient coming back together, a lingering dis-order. And Ms. Weiner's phrase, "they know where my weak spot is" brings to mind a container that has been pieced back together, but has a seam or a scar which could become the spot where the next torrent cannot be contained and lets loose.

Teaching is at once intensely private and completely public. No matter the internal reaction to "disrespect," "defiance," being imitated and told "Why should I listen to you, you're white," the teacher has to show a public front, to maintain a polished professional exterior while the naked self is exposed and overwhelmed. Mr. Grant and Ms. Weiner speak to this additional facet of losing control, which is exposure—"all the kids know I freaked out," "they have all seen me break down"—and the subsequent fear that once the inside has been seen, the outside cannot be reconstructed. The fear of losing one's professionalism—being thought of as crazy, being perceived as doing something inappropriate, being considered to have poor judgment—is the added burden of losing control. Beyond the moment of control's loss in the classroom, beyond the fear of not getting the control back, beyond the anxiety of now having a "weak spot," and beyond the distress of exposure is the additional dread of losing the public, professional veneer necessary for the job. Losing control might be as acute as powerlessness can get.

The third dimension of the experience of lacking control, besides not having it and losing it, was fighting for it. If respect was something to be earned from students, control was something to be wrested from them. The images of struggle, fighting, danger, violence, battle, and resistance were notable in these teachers' conversations. First, the relationship between teacher and children was characterized as a struggle, with the teacher positioned as fighting to gain control. Many teachers, such as Mr. O'Brien, Ms. Weiner, and Ms. Levy described some students in their classrooms as "resistant" or "defiant." One characteristic of this resistance

was noise, "the volume of everything," as Mr. Burke explained. "I didn't think it would be as loud," he said. The noise had to be conquered in some way, or minimized. Mr. O'Brien spoke of this as a fight: "you're fighting with them all the time until they eventually quiet down." Students' resistance was also characterized by a level of antagonism which the teacher had to overcome. For example, Ms. Gill said, "Teaching is a very tough profession, you know? A class can completely tear you down." And Mr. Burke expressed new teachers' struggles in their classrooms as a battle, explaining that "kids look at that as just that's how they need to treat first year teachers to earn their stripes." The military metaphor of teachers having to earn their stripes by enduring difficult student behavior suggests struggle as a routine, standard experience of teaching—a "training," of sorts.

But other teachers did not find the fight for control to be a normal, regular state of being. Their depiction of their classrooms and schools as violent, dangerous places indicated that the fight for control was difficult. Mrs. Adams remembered her classroom as "very dangerous…children were fighting, I got a black eye, it was physically unsafe." Ms. Weiner also described danger and violence, saying "just about every day there is some kind of brawl, where teachers and principals are sprinting down the hallway when we hear something, to break up a fight." One teacher, Ms. Fields, mused about all the fighting that was going on:

> It was so hard. I had massive classroom management problems. And I
> don't know if I remember it this way, how much of it is what stands out
> to me, or this is how it actually was, but it just felt like there were fights
> all the time and kids were constantly… it was just a battle every day to
> try to teach anything.

Ms. Fields reflects on the difference between reality, selective memory, and feeling: were there really "fights all the time," or are the fights highlighted in her memory of how hard it was for her, how "massive" was her struggle to manage her classroom? Whatever way it "actually was," she remembers—and tells—her experience of teaching as "a battle every day." Her

experience was marked by fighting for control, fighting to teach. Other teachers echoed this experience, like Mr. Geller, for example, who described teaching as "fighting the good fight."

The fight for control was expressed in other ways too. Mr. O'Brien used the metaphor of <u>ownership</u> to describe the relationship between students and teachers in a school:

> Students own the school building, in my opinion. I mean that is their place. They have set that culture as much as we have. They control it as much as we do. We may think we do, but we can only do what they let us in that building. They outnumber us. They out-energy us.

Mr. O'Brien seems resigned to the constant fight for control, seeing it as a natural state of being that teachers struggle to "own" the school and can only do what the children "let" them. There were teachers, however, who did not see students' control of the school space as natural or appropriate. In their words, students seemed to be innately violent, people in need of control. This came through in subtle ways, like characterizing children as "rough inner city kids," or pointing out that "they live in a community where there is gang violence and see people who are regularly engaging in violence against others." One teacher spoke of the need to help children learn how to resolve conflicts nonviolently, saying, "That's a big problem…getting along without engaging in physical contact or verbal abuse." Other descriptions of students were more overt, and more harsh. Mr. O'Brien, for example, explained that "kids in the streets" were a problem and that "they fire up a lot more cops when there is no school because there is lots of kids around." Ms. Weiner jokingly called her students "angels" and "gems" directly following this description:

> And it can be anything…any two kids. You think you have them pegged, like who it is going to be, and then the kid who you least expect to be in the middle of a fight is right there, trying to punch someone. They are all getting into it, because it seems like the only option for many of them.

Ms. Weiner's description of her students and of her school paints an image of children who have no "option" besides fighting, submerged in a context of violence, obviously not "angels."

This corresponds with our nation's discourse on poor children of color, one recent example being a New York Times editorial calling unarmed 18-year old Michael Brown "no angel" when describing the police shooting that led to his death in Ferguson, Missouri. Ms. Levy spoke of this discourse:

> Often when I tell people that I teach in a high school in the Bronx, they'll say back to me, "How's that?" in exactly that [hushed, breathy] voice. And I never know how to respond. It is just such a strange question, and I know what they are asking. They are asking about the students, you know, are they crazy, are they bad, are they just going nuts in the classroom, are they all thugs?

Though Ms. Levy described some of her students as "resistant" and "confrontational," and herself as "intimidated" by them, she stood firm against their characterization as "bad, crazy thugs." It made me think of how we handle—mentally, emotionally, and spiritually—the fight for control. Perhaps the *FIGHT* metaphor is dangerous for teachers because it positions children as the enemy. Does feeling powerless make us conjure an enemy out of our students? Or do we already perceive them as an enemy and have to fight for control, for our survival? And by the very nature of war, does this enemy have to be dehumanized and vilified, making our battle just and right? This is the space where language both describes experience and shapes it, where language makes us ask questions of ourselves and our world, where *fighting for control* is simultaneously metaphor, reality, intent, justification, memory and prediction. The lack of control teachers experience—not having it, losing it, and especially fighting for it—marks being powerless an unsettled, ambiguous space.

Powerful

Not just being powerless, but rather the whole experience of power in teaching is ambiguous and unsettled. Along with low status in society, there is also a discourse of importance and impact; while teachers are constrained within the education system, they also

have considerable latitude in their own classrooms; and at the same time as they lack control in the classroom, teachers wield tremendous influence and capacity to provoke learning and change. Not one or the other, but both, teaching is an experience of being powerless *and* powerful. I described the powerlessness of teaching within the locations of society, education system, and classroom. To explore the ways in which teaching is powerful, I consider relationships: the relationship of teachers with their own selves and the relationship of teachers with children. Within these relational spheres, I portray teaching as powerful in three facets: strength, influence, and—again—control.

<u>Strength</u>

Teaching was described as an experience of strength, seen as a way of *being* strong as well as a way to *become* strong. Having power, or being powerful, is therefore a function of strength and capacity. Sometimes, strength comes of necessity. Mrs. Ferner's story is an example of becoming strong because the occasion demands it:

> I remember my first day, and they had just fumigated the school. I don't remember what grade it was, but all of a sudden these half-dead mice started kind of drunkenly, kind of slowly, coming out of the cupboard, the clothes closet. And I am like, "Oh my god, what do I do now? Who's in charge?" And then I realized I am in charge. So I took a deep breath and got the broom and the dustpan and in front of all the kids who were just sitting there horrified screaming their heads off…I got the dustpan and broom and I swept up the mice and I put them in the garbage can. Then I found a tray and put it on top of the garbage can and left it there until lunch time when I could call the custodian to get rid of it.

I think I shuddered when I first heard this story, intuitively feeling the overwhelming disgust and panic of sweeping up half-dead mice. This story is vivid and almost fable-like, a kind of humorous heroic narrative. And yet, the experience of finding strength is something very familiar and very real to those who teach. The strength of will Mrs. Ferner developed in that

moment—"so I took a deep breath"—as well as her realization of her responsibility of "being in charge," are both essential elements that compose the experience of teaching.

Other teachers also spoke of finding within themselves the strength or the capacity they needed, like Ms. Weiner who said, "I have to dig deeper within myself and find my own tools and my own resources that might not come as easily." This "digging deeper" is an experience of power. The struggles and challenges teachers experience are not simply places of failure, incapacity, and weakness, but also the places where we grow and stretch. It is reasonable to assume that for Ms. Baker, who said she had never been bad at anything before she started teaching and that she would stay until she got good at it, the self-transformation from "being bad" to "getting good" was an experience of strength. Ms. Fields also spoke of her initial mistakes and failures as the beginning of capacity and power. She said, "I always knew that as much as it was my fault that it was like that, I knew that it was within my control one-hundred-percent to make it different." The other face of failure was overcoming it, and teachers have the internal strength to make the turn. Perhaps this was what Mrs. Thomas meant in her conversation with Ms. Mays, who just started teaching: "So what do you think for yourself? How do you feel about teaching now? Are you feeling strong?"

For other teachers, strength was experienced in their ability to do what they wanted to and to do more with teaching. Mr. O'Brien, for example, talked about being able to do things his way and how important that was for him. He said:

> I've established myself as nobody-messes-with-me, I just do it and I get results. And I do it my way, and that's what I needed for my soul.

This is exactly the counterpoint to the feeling of constraint that constitutes powerlessness; it is the sense of freedom and amplitude that is "needed for the soul." Mr. Lowry also spoke of feeling like he could do anything, when he said "I feel like I could try anything and it will work to some effect. It might not be the best idea, but I could try it." And Mrs. Ferner and Mrs.

English talked about their ever-increasing capacity, even as the challenges never disappeared, when they described teaching as being able to "help the children more and more and more, and knowing more and being able to do more." Having power in teaching was this sense of strength and abundance, the capacity of the self to find its own ways to overcome challenges.

Of course, teachers do not rely only on themselves and their inner resources. Like all other people, teachers draw strength from others, particularly those who share our experiences. In addition to learning about teaching from their colleagues, the teachers in these conversations also talked about them as sources of strength and support. For example, Ms. Gill spoke of emotional support her colleagues Mr. Wells and Ms. Levy gave her:

> I feel very safe in sharing my ideas and sharing my concerns. This is a very tough profession, you know? A class can completely tear you down or someone's comments, someone's criticisms, can be so painful…and it's so great to be able to go to someone and confide, and not feel judged and not feel like you need to get your stuff together. Someone who can empathize with you and say "Pick yourself up," who can keep you going, just a friendly face.

The strength to "pick yourself up" and to "get your stuff together" was made possible by the presence of colleagues in whom Ms. Gill could confide; with them, she could better survive in the "very tough profession" of teaching. The line between friendship and collegial relations seemed very blurred in several of these teachers' conversations. In fact, there seemed to be a circular kind of relationship: people became friends because they were teachers, and they supported each other's teaching because of their friendship. Ms. Vindal explained how friendships formed because of teaching:

> A lot of the staff members at our school, they're also my friends, so we literally spend weekends together and we go out a lot together. And really, all we talk about for the most part is school.

And Mrs. Wayans and Mrs. Tully explained how their teaching was enhanced because of friendship:

> Mrs. Wayans: We were young and I can remember the times that we enjoyed ourselves outside of school, the times that we enjoyed going out. We have a lot in common, and I remember those days of sitting in the school park, having lunch and talking. I'm still trying to find that picture, Rose, that picture of you and me sitting in that park back when we were really thin and in our 20s.
>
> Mrs. Tully: It's funny, we meet a lot outside of school, evenings. We go out and we talk and it always, always goes back to school, what happened that day…
>
> Mrs. Wayans: We're both educators and most of the time when we're together we don't have to make any excuses, we're always talking about education, always talking about our kids, and no one is getting bored.
>
> Mrs. Tully: And just to have a friend who is in the same field, who does the same thing that I do, and shares a lot of my thoughts. It has inspired me and pushed me, and I've learned. I can't regret this ride I've had being a teacher or this friendship.

This "ride" of friendship and colleagueship in teaching sounds beautiful and fulfilling in Mrs. Wayans and Mrs. Tully's conversation, and shows how fellow teachers gave each other an existential support, contributing to each other's well-being as people and as professionals. Because of the richness of relationship with colleagues, teachers gained a strength they did not have on their own. Ms. Levy articulated this:

> When I first started teaching, I didn't think that I needed that type of friendship with my colleagues, and in fact it was important to me to have a boundary and to have a life that was very full outside of teaching and outside of school. But I am really glad that I have come around and made such good friends because I can see now how much it has brought to my life.

The "boundary" between life "outside of school" and teaching could be as blurred as the line between being friends and being colleagues. Likewise, the strength of self developed through teaching was also evident outside of teaching, beyond the classroom. The personal and character growth caused by teaching, as explored in the previous chapter on learning, could be interpreted holistically as a development of strength. For example, Mr. Nevins' description of teaching and "coming out closer to men," akin to military service, or Mrs.

Royce's assertion that her work in education prepared her for motherhood, both speak to a kind of maturation, or fulfillment of self into its best, most endowed state. Likewise, Mr. Pelles' conviction that the confidence he has gained in his classroom has "carried over" to other aspects of his life could also be interpreted as a strengthening, or an increased capacity to stretch and apply learning from one area of life to another. This sense of ripening and fullness, of expansion, of coming into one's own, is certainly a way of experiencing power.

<u>Inspiration, Influence, Impact</u>

While many teachers spoke of the strengths they experienced and developed through teaching, the greatest expressions of powerfulness came in teachers' talk regarding their relation to children. That teachers recalled how they were inspired by their own teachers when they were in school—such as Ms. Levy's Spanish teacher who "brought herself into the classroom," Mr. Cohen's English teacher who encouraged his "voice," or Ms. Gill's math teacher who taught her to believe in herself—indicates that perhaps they thought themselves to be capable of such inspiration, that they saw themselves being for their students what their own teachers were for them. And in fact, that is what they were, or tried to be: Ms. Levy wanted to be her authentic self with her students, Mr. Cohen encouraged his students' writing with trips to poetry landmarks and with hip hop, and Ms. Gill urged her students to feel ok about making mistakes. While these teachers did not explicitly claim to be powerful influences on their students, their acknowledgement of their own teachers' influence and inspiration was a reverberating echo from their past into their present.

Teachers did acknowledge their impact on students, however. At the very least, teachers talked about seeing children grow in skills and knowledge—the fruit of the labor of teaching. For example, Mr. Burke said:

> You start to see things that you taught them or the things that you brought up in class come back to them. You see that every year, they just know things.

Mrs. English said: "I am actually teaching something because look at all the progress they have made." Seeing this progress, or witnessing how children come to "just know things" was a way to feel that one's work has an effect. Some teachers also recognized the non-academic impact of teaching, its influence on broader personal development, character, and well-being. For example, Mr. Solomon recognized children's "vulnerability as a student and as a learner" and his ability to make his classroom a space where students could "be comfortable to engage with the teacher and other students" in order to learn. Mrs. Adams talked about making "the most vulnerable person feel safe" and creating community with children in her class. And Mrs. Tully told this story:

> We had parent teacher conferences, and a student showed up who I didn't recognize at first, but eventually I remembered who she was. The story that came out of her was this: "Oh, Ms. Tully, you're on Facebook? They put up our class picture." And I said, "Okay, so what happened?" She said, "Well all the kids on Facebook recognized you. Every comment that every kid said was: That was the best teacher we ever had. She was so kind. She didn't yell at us. She made us think." So, I guess that is my success story. Did they become millionaires? I don't know about that, but I think they became good people, productive. And I think that's what we want. We want our students to be productive, kind, considerate people who think of others. And I think if every teacher put that into their classroom this society as a whole would be better.

The result of "she was so kind, she didn't yell at us, she made us think" was children becoming "productive, kind, considerate people" and speaks to the impact Mrs. Tully felt she had. In her view, there is potential for "society as a whole world" to become better because of what teachers "put into their classrooms."

Of course the strongest examples of teachers' transformative relationships with children were those stand-out, emotionally charged stories about particular students. Mrs.

Tully's student Ralph and Ms. Levy's student Maria were both changed by their teachers. Mrs. Tully was explicit about the impact she had, saying:

> Teaching. It made me realize how effective and how much influence and power a teacher can have. Even though you plant a seed and you don't see it flourish or bloom, it's there and it grows.

I loved how her use of the word "effective" subverted its present-day meaning for public school teachers in New York City, where it represents a performance rating. A state-legislated and union-negotiated framework defines teaching's essential components and describes the critical attributes which characterize performance along a scale of *highly effective*, *effective*, *developing*, and *ineffective*. Cumulative performance ratings are calculated from principals' observations of teachers' practice and students' test scores. Any rating below "effective" begins a performance improvement plan and, if necessary, subsequent disciplinary action (UFT, 2014). But the "effective" Mrs. Tully talks about is something very different: it is Ralph, a man now in his twenties, making some critically positive choices in his life and coming back to thank his teacher for always telling him he had that positivity, that goodness, in him. It is "a seed that is there and it grows," uncaptured by any rating and transcending any notions of performance.

Ms. Levy's story about Maria, however, has a less clear-cut ending. Maria eventually came back to school and began to confide in Ms. Levy, making her a card that said "thank you for always supporting me." But Ms. Levy was never quite sure of the change she made, despite a dramatic event and a seemingly lasting turnaround. The lesson she learned was that change takes time and can't be forced:

> Kids go up and down and back and forth and they take two steps backward before they can take one forward. As a teacher you have to be so patient with your students, and never give up on them because you never know when it can happen. But it will eventually happen.

Ms. Levy rejected the *Dangerous Minds* interpretation, where a teacher radically transforms her students' lives. But neither did she deny the impact her actions could have had on Maria. Ms. Levy could not feel powerful in her failed attempts to reach Maria; she certainly did not feel powerful when she chased her. But the impact of her actions on her relationship with Maria, even if undetermined and unknowable, is there. It is an impact both less certain and more important than the "impact" implied in popular discourses about teaching.

That discourse of impact, of teachers having the single greatest effect on students, was not absent in these teachers' conversations. For example, Mrs. Cameron, who recently became a principal, said:

> I really firmly believe that the teacher is the one that has the greatest impact on the students… where the rubber hits the road is teacher and the student. And if it's not happening in the classroom at the level that it needs to be happening then I could be the best principal in the entire world and the students still will not be doing well. So then what role do I play in putting really effective people in the classroom?

I once more was struck by the difference between the *effective teachers make an impact* discourse and the other, more subtle and multiple, meanings of "effective" and "impact" in these teachers' conversations. Teachers' power to inspire, influence, impact, and change their students' lives is at once profound, immeasurable, beautiful…and quantifiable, rated, demanded. Again, the experience of power in teaching is ambiguous and unclear: am I powerful when I demonstrate effective performance and raise my students' test scores? Am I powerful when my student starts confiding in me instead of running away from me or when my student makes good choices later on in life? Teaching lives in both of these spaces, in a world where power is both counted and celebrated. And, the power that is celebrated—the "my teacher changed my life" honoring of teaching—is not always the power that counts, the power that defines working conditions and the parameters of the profession. If power in

teaching is measured by the impact teachers make on children, then teachers' experience of making an impact is as uncertain and equivocal as it is visible, magnificent, and definite.

Management and Control

Inspiring, influencing, and making an impact is one facet of the relation between teachers and children in which teachers experience being powerful. The other is more utilitarian: teachers' management and control of the classroom. This is perhaps the most easily visible and definite power teachers have—the way they restrain, rule, keep in check, and regulate the classroom space and the children for whose learning they are responsible. Perhaps it is more accurate to call this relation between teachers and children as *power over* instead of *powerful*, in the sense that children are the object of control, the classroom is the space that is managed, and the teacher is the subject wielding power over the two. In these teachers' conversations, I traced a pattern of how teachers talked about this dimension of being powerful, or having power-over: they said control was necessary in order to teach, they talked about the ways they managed their classrooms, and they talked about control in terms of force and domination.

Implied in teachers' stories of lacking control—being powerless when children yelled and were defiant and disrespectful, threw and ripped things, unscrewed desk legs, and even adorably barked at circle time—was the idea of classroom management as an essential skill or ability in teaching. For most teachers in these conversations, classroom management was power they needed to have and use in order to teach. For example, Mr. Geller described one particularly frustrating class as one where there was "just so much off task behavior." Ms. Fields' first year of teaching was so hard because she had "massive classroom management problems." And Ms. Baker said:

> I knew I was a bad teacher because there was clearly no teaching happening in my room. It was horrible…if I could get through five minutes of my lesson that was a good day.

Not one teacher described a lesson that did not go well because the children were bored, or because the sequence of instruction didn't flow, or because the activities were not sufficiently scaffolded or differentiated. All this could have been true and in fact the cause of children being "off task" or not getting through more than five minutes of a lesson. But what teachers named as the obstacle to teaching and learning was their own mismanagement of children's behavior. Classroom management and keeping order were necessary for teaching. Mr. Nevins, for example, reached back to memories of his Soviet schooling and thought that "order, especially in rowdy Brooklyn, would be very important." He "knew how to maintain order and made sure that order was maintained." And Mr. Cohen talked about having "tighter" management:

> Obviously I want to improve day to day, month to month, but I think [it's] being much more stern in the classroom and being much more of an authority figure. It's not who I am…I would say I'm a little more laissez faire and maybe because I'm from California I'm much more laid back. So I don't want it to be contrived or forced, but having…running a tighter ship.

Mr. Cohen seems to realize that he has a "laid back" teaching style which could make being "more stern" or an "authority figure" seem unnatural. Still, when talking about improving his teaching, he visualizes "running a tighter ship," where he is presumably the captain.

Classroom management, control, and order not only were requisite for teaching, but perhaps were thought of as essential for good teaching. For example, in response to Ms. Baker's question, "What do you think good teaching looks like?" Mr. Solomon responded:

> Oh wow. It's a hard question, and I think answers vary from teacher to teacher, from administrator to administrator, from district to district. Obviously, you have to have control over the classroom in terms of students listening and following directions, and that being visible. But good teaching to me is outside of that because, sure you can be a good

> controller and have control over that situation, but that still doesn't mean…like you said, you felt like you had five minutes where you had everything silent in class, and still it was only five minutes.

"Good teaching," the big idea that Ms. Baker brings up, is an issue constantly discussed, theorized, researched, and regulated with policy. I can feel Mr. Solomon buying time for his response as he says it's a "hard question" and proposes that the definition varies in different contexts. Whatever is inside Mr. Solomon's head at that moment, the first place words take him is "control over the classroom." Even as good teaching is "outside of that," it begins with "students listening and following directions and that being visible." Moreover, "control over the situation" is described as "everything silent in class," which is how Mr. Solomon interpreted Ms. Baker's getting through five minutes of her lesson. And perhaps, if Ms. Baker was a better "controller," she could have had more than "only five minutes."

So how, then, did teachers control children and exert order in their classrooms? At least for some, control of children's behavior and regulation of the classroom space came from establishing a particular relation with children. Mrs. Thomas, for example, called it "letting them know that you know you're the boss." She explained:

> A very important thing is to show no fear. Be very confident. To me, it's a melancholy fact that students need to be a little bit worried about the consequences of not going along with what the teacher says. So you have to go in with a lot of confidence, like, "I know what I'm talking about. I know all about teaching and you're lucky to be in my class. And if you listen to me…" A lot of teaching is bravado. The hardest thing is classroom control. If you can let them feel that coming to class is going to be interesting, it's going to be worthwhile, and you're going to treat them with respect and it's going to be an all-around wonderful experience. I think it's just a matter of letting them know that you know you're the boss and if they go along with you it's going to be a great year.

It seems to me that part of the confident bravado and "show no fear" attitude that Mrs. Thomas speaks of is building trust with students, so they can feel comfortable in following the teacher, knowing they will be in good hands—respected, doing interesting things, having an

"all-around wonderful experience." But with the trust comes a bit of fear—not so much of punishment, but of the loss of all these wonderful things. That below-the-surface fear is being "a little bit worried about the consequences of not going along with what the teacher says." The control comes from making children realize they are "lucky" to have such a competent "boss" who knows how to treat them right, and that it would be terrible to undermine such excellent conditions by not listening.

Mrs. Thomas' use of the phrase "melancholy fact" is important. There is indeed a kind of sadness, maybe a dispiritedness, when imagining children—especially very young children—worried about anything. That is not how children should be. The melancholy is that while children's well-being depends on an organized, well-run, interesting, respectful environment, it comes with the price of some worry or fear. I felt a similar sense of melancholy when Mr. O'Brien and Ms. Miller talked about children "performing" for them:

> Mr. O'Brien: And when you're [enjoying yourself], they want to perform for you. They like you. I'm even comfortable saying to a student, "Will you do this for me?" Not for this goal of going to college, just do it for me right now.

> Ms. Miller: Just because we share this space right here, right now.

> Mr. O'Brien: Yeah. Will you do it for me?

Here, there flows the slightest, subtlest undercurrent of coercion or manipulation in the phrase "do it for me," the use of relationship—the teacher enjoying himself, the students liking the teacher—to get students to do something the teacher wants. I think Mr. O'Brien feels something of this too because the words "I'm *even* comfortable" betray a discomfort, a knowledge that he is getting children to perform—not because the children want it, not because the children are making a rational future-minded decision (the goal of going to college), but because he asked and they like him. This ability to get children to "perform for

you" is a way of maintaining control in the classroom, the "space right here, right now," where children and teacher coexist.

For other teachers, the mechanisms of control were not based on establishing a particular relation with children, but were systematic behavioral models. Here, the emotional aspects of control were replaced with systems and procedures that could be applied to any group of children and any circumstance. Ms. Weiner, for example, used exactly these words to describe what she did after she broke down and ran out of her classroom, crying. She said, "And then, I don't know, Monday was different because I sort of put in place these different systems and procedures." The hesitance in her voice, the "sort of" and "I don't know," speak to the tenuous control she has regained, and perhaps an incomplete faith in these systems and procedures. Another teacher, Mr. Borden, was much surer of the system he used to manage students' behavior, naming a particular three-step model he learned in his graduate courses:

> Basically the three step model is: one, give clear directions, set expectations; two, narrate, point out students who are doing the right thing; and then three, issue consequences to correct the behavior. Those three steps happen countless times in a day. And when you break it down, that's really all you need. You just need to hone it and be consistent about it.

For Mr. Borden, control of the classroom and managing student behavior is a matter of repetition and consistency, of "honing" the three steps. The "consequences" in this model are very different from the ones Mrs. Thomas talks about; nor is Mr. Borden asking his students to "do something for him." Instead, the setting of clear expectations—along with reward and punishment—will help students regulate their own behavior. Another teacher, Ms. Linden, who conducted professional development workshops for other teachers after school, spoke of a way of thinking about teachers' control of student behavior and learning:

> Something that I've been emphasizing for the last couple of weeks is the framework of student outcomes come from student actions which come from teacher actions. So really all of this is within your locus of control

> and that's the way we need to think about it. And yes, there are other factors and it's not all because of you, but you certainly have a lot of control and a lot more control than I think you recognize.

In the "framework" of teacher actions→student actions→student outcomes, I hear Ms. Linden's response to teachers who might have complained that there are "factors" in their students' lives and experiences that are outside of their control and yet affect the classroom. Ms. Linden counters this with an assertion that teachers have "a lot more control" than they recognize, that students' behavior—their "actions"—are within the teacher's "locus" of power. There is an emphasis on the tight space of the classroom, within which the teacher is able to act as a force despite the "other factors." The <u>locus of control</u> metaphor and the directive "that's the way we need to think about it" are evocative of the *no excuses* discourse of several charter school organizations which stress clearly defined expectations of student achievement and conduct (i.e. Kipp Foundation, 2014).

The conceptualization of power as producing desired student conduct and learning despite difficult circumstances and the question of how much—or how little—influence teachers can have on their students' behavior were not very often brought up in these conversations. Rather, teachers more often talked about power in terms of force. In addition to talking about the necessity of having control in order to teach and the ways they exerted that control, the third thread of talk about control was about the experience of being forceful or dominant. Here, the level of control shifted from management and regulation to something more. Sometimes, conversation about teachers' dominance over students took a humorous turn. For example, Mrs. Thomas told this story about trying to make a child go to the bathroom:

> It was time for the children to go to the bathroom, and I thought, "Oh I'll help this kid." I said, "Come on, let's go to the bathroom." And he ran away from me. I don't know what happened but I started running

> after him. I caught myself in the middle of it, and [my friend and I] laughed about it so hard. He was a willful child. He was going to go when he was ready, but there I was running around like I was going to catch him and he was going to do it.

Mrs. Thomas "caught" herself in the middle of trying to make a child do something he was not ready to do. Though the story is funny, its humor illuminates the impulse to use force, the ease with which we can dominate children and compel them to our will. Even with good intentions, even in situations when the action being forced is benign, a teacher's power can rise up—unless caught or checked—against a "willful child" in a way that is not necessary and potentially harmful.

Another story, also humorous, concerned the power of the legendary "teacher stare" and "teacher voice." Mr. Lowry and Mr. Simmons talked about this:

> Mr. Lowry: The other day I was with friends at a restaurant and someone's friend came by and he was being really annoying. I just stared at him and he was like, "Oh." And after he left, my friends were like, "Ooooh, you are a teacher. You shut down all of his crazy annoying qualities just by the way you interacted with him." And I didn't plan that, but it happened. I know how to stop people from being annoying. It's a quality that I naturally have now.

> Mr. Simmons: I think that it's that teacher voice. It's the teacher voice and the teacher stare. You can just look silently and the other person is waiting with expectation for you to do something and you're not. Then they're forced to take a moment and think, "Why is this person just staring at me?"

> Mr. Lowry: Right. And it scares people, because they're not used to it.

> Mr. Simmons: Or they were used to it when they were in high school or elementary school.

> Mr. Lowry: And you're bringing back nightmares.

When Mr. Lowry "stops" or "shuts down" an annoying stranger just by staring at him in a restaurant, his friends recognize—and acknowledge—his power as a teacher. His friend Mr.

Simmons breaks down the power of the "teacher stare" into its elements: a stern, silent gaze which provokes the student/annoying person to wonder what you will do, followed by consternation and confusion when "nothing" happens, and then the internal questioning and doubt of guessing what the stare is about. Of course, staring and holding eye contact is an ancient form of showing domination and alpha-status. But in the context of teachers and children, it is easy to understand the use of the word "nightmare" and "scared" to describe the submission of children before an adult. This conversation was full of laughter, particularly around the phrases "teacher stare" and "teacher voice," perhaps because being on the end of a teacher's stare is a near-universal childhood memory, or perhaps because it is gratifying to see an "annoying" person shut down. But it is worth considering how children are "annoying" in classrooms—or whether they are just being children—and how they could be "shut down" by a teacher's "natural quality" of dominance and force.

Some teachers in these conversations were aware of their power over children and the harm this could cause them. Mrs. Adams, who remembered telling her third graders her opposition to the Vietnam War, said she was "trying to garner the support and enthusiasm" of students who "adored" her. A conversation with a parent made her realize it was "not fair to tell children how to think" and learn how to "reframe" and "remodulate" her passions in order to "mix with other people's and not dominate them." Another teacher's experience as a child made her realize the power a teacher has to "beat you down." This was Mrs. Wayans memory of wanting her teacher's praise so much that she pretended to read much less fluently than she was able. She and Mrs. Tully said that children "will do anything" to please a teacher. In both of these examples, there is a clear awareness of the magnitude of the power difference between teacher and child, and how power over a child has to be wielded very, very carefully. Even Mr. Nevins, who highly valued order and structure, did not want to "replicate" the

rigidity of a Soviet classroom, but worked to "maintain order" with his own, unique "mixture of Mr. Rogers and Stalin."

Other teachers were aware of the harm caused to children *and* to themselves when their power over children went too far. Mr. O'Brien talked about the "schoolhouse model," in which teachers could "hit kids and smack them and scare them," and though he was clear to say he did not advocate this approach, he said it did "work for learning." He continued:

> I have no problem motivating people using whatever means come naturally, which to me are not authoritarian and to some are, and I think some kids do respond to the authoritarian thing fairly well, not that I like to watch it.

There seemed to be an increasing sense of discomfort with "the authoritarian thing" in his talk, starting with the acknowledgement that he did not "like to watch" children respond to authoritarian measures. The feeling of discomfort and pain heightened when he subsequently said that "it kind of hurts me that I have to push them in a certain direction in the first place," perhaps acknowledging his authoritarian behaviors in the vein of this-hurts-me-more-than-it-hurts-you, or perhaps merely lamenting his role in "pushing kids" through an educational system in which he does not believe. But the following exchange, with his colleague Ms. Miller, brought back the theme of pain:

> Mr. O'Brien: I think you can love kids and you know it's miserable…and do this authoritarian-you're-fighting-with-them-all-the-time kind of thing until they eventually quiet down because they now don't have the voice to oppose, and that's a success.
>
> Ms. Miller: Or they're exhausted.
>
> Mr. O'Brien: Or the kids are exhausted. I go into some schools and my chest clenches because of how I see students treated, and these are model schools.

The pain belongs to the teachers who are authoritarian: they are miserable, they are always involved in a power struggle. The pain belongs as well to the teachers who witness children's

exhaustion, their loss of voice and agency, and their mistreatment. "My chest clenches," says Mr. O'Brien, and makes the pain palpable, articulating the breaking of spirits—both children's and teachers'—when power distorts humanity.

Other Power

Can teachers think of themselves, of children, and of their relationship with children outside the frame of control and impact? Is it possible to imagine teaching without the subject-object relation of teachers and children? A few times in these conversations, teachers rejected their power over children, speaking of wanting their relationships with children and their classrooms to be something else, something different. For example, Ms. Miller talked about an "anti-authoritarian streak" that made her "very reluctant to be a teacher." She and Mr. O'Brien discussed the dynamics of power between teachers and children:

> I thought for sure that I don't want to engage or in any way become an authoritarian to kids, and then I've developed my own way to kind of play both sides of that equation.

She followed that statement by asking Mr. O'Brien to explain why he was leaving teaching:

> Ms. Miller: I'm very disheartened that you're going, and I think one of the reasons you're going is that you might just be tired of telling kids what they should know or what they should do. Can you talk about that?

> Mr. O'Brien: That does mean a lot to me, because that's a big part of who I see myself as a teacher…But in terms of why I'm going it's actually a bit of exhaustion to continually go against certain values that I have, because I must.

It seems that Ms. Miller's and Mr. O'Brien's dilemma was not wanting to be authoritarian, did not want to "tell kids what they should know or what they should do," yet felt the pressure to do so because that is what they understood and experienced teaching to be. Listening to Ms. Miller, in her third year of teaching, and Mr. O'Brien, in his fifth, I felt they have not yet found a way out of this dilemma: they sounded tired, pessimistic, even cynical.

I understood their exhaustion and was feeling their pessimism until I heard the topic of authoritarianism and power discussed by Mrs. Ferner and Mrs. English, and Mrs. Adams. Interestingly, all three were teaching for 25 years or more, all three were in their fifties and sixties. And all three talked about the concept or an ideal of community, rather than the dichotomous teacher-child, or teacher-class relationship. They never used the words classroom management or control. Instead, they spoke of children's agency and their relation to each other. For example, Mrs. English remembered Mrs. Ferner helping her with "practical ideas about teaching," like getting children to go up the stairs "without imposing authority, not in an authoritarian way." While Mrs. English and Mrs. Ferner, too, were concerned with not being authoritarian, the stand-out theme in their talk was that of possibility: that it is possible for children to "do the work they wanted to do" and that teaching was a way to help them do that. Instead of "telling children what they should know and what they should do," teaching could be an act of creating a "productive community."

Mrs. Adams also spoke of community, in terms of children coming to understand that they "matter to the world and to each other" and creating classroom space where the children were no longer literally and metaphorically "shoved around all over the place." In both of these understandings of community, the teacher's role is to help children realize their power, to find it, reclaim it if necessary, and to use it. Power, in this view, is not a dynamic or balance between teacher and children, constantly calibrated and contested, but rather something that belongs to children, something that teachers can protect and cultivate. In a few other conversations, I heard this acknowledgement of children's power as not something to be controlled or managed but as something to recognize and respect. For example, Ms. Baker spoke of welcoming her students as "guests of honor" in the classroom and of a sense of "openness" that could "snowball into something bigger." Ms. Levy spoke of being "humbled"

by who her students are and who they will become in the future. And Mrs. Morse spoke of teachers needing children just as children need teachers. In all these words, there was a possibility of power being something else besides a hierarchical relation.

But if not hierarchical, what could power be? A few teachers in these conversations escaped the powerful/powerless frame and spoke of power in terms of *developing it in children*: not containing or fearing it, not giving or withholding it, but of bringing out and supporting children's power. For example, Mrs. Adams spoke of "letting the whole child" come into the classroom and the importance of children themselves making the decision of "what to leave behind." Mr. Lowry said that the most important goal of his teaching was for his students to "find in themselves all that they can be…to discover that they have the power to be really good at math and science and English…to have the confidence to give it a try." Mr. Drake recognized his students' need and capacity to "figure out a way to respond to the world around them" and changed his teaching accordingly. And Mrs. English remembered the school where she and Mrs. Ferner started working as a place where teachers

> really wanted to help children have a greater sense of themselves in the world…that they could ask questions and that their questions were valid and that they could explore them and that they would learn to do that with their friends in the community of the classroom and in the larger school.

Perhaps the phrase "other power" does not adequately express conceptualizing power in terms of community, possibility, and development. This was rare in these conversations, and rare, I think, in many conversations about teaching. What makes this take on power unique is that it is not focused on the teacher. It is not about the teacher lacking control, feeling constrained, or having low status in society. Nor is it about teachers controlling their classrooms and students' behavior, influencing and inspiring children, or making a difference in the world. Rather, the subject is the child; it is children's agency and power that are being

talked about, *their* being in the world that is the topic of the conversation. The handful of teachers who spoke of children's power in the world put power back in the space of imagination, not contained in the realm of experience. Every one of these teachers was bound by the reality of their experience. Even as Mrs. Adams spoke of letting the whole child come to school, she spoke of how difficult that was because of "incredible constraints placed upon teachers." Even as Mr. Lowry wanted his students to discover everything they could be, he acknowledged that he taught classes in which standardized tests were not required. Even as Mr. Drake recognized his students' need to understand their world and make it better, he still had to "get through" a curriculum. And even as Mrs. Ferner and Mrs. English remembered their school as a place where children's questions were valid, they lamented how school has now become a "much smaller construct."

It is precisely because of these powerful/powerless experiences of teaching that talking about the power of children carried such an unfettered sense of liberation and freedom. Whatever we imagine teaching to be, the actual experience of teaching compels us to relinquish those notions. But we never have to relinquish the infinite, boundless potential embodied in children. Power—in its meaning of possibility, capacity, and energy—forever belongs to children. Teachers' capacity to nurture children's power is forever present. With every new class, with every new face, every September, we can imagine what our teaching can help make possible in the world. Not our power, but children's, replenishes both the imagination and experience of teaching.

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PURPOSE

I don't know if there is another job in the universe I can think of where I know why I get up every day.
I just don't know another job where it feels like that and you know what you're doing all the time.
Lucy Fields (30, f, W, MS Soc. St., 8yrs)

The purpose of teaching lives in teachers: in our memories, our actions, and our wishes. It is the counterweight to that feeling of dread in the morning: alongside the sinking feeling in the pit of the stomach is something else, a vital intention. The purpose of teaching does not stay intended but is also enacted: in every moment in the classroom, in every paper graded, in every question posed, in every relationship with every child, there is an aim, some kind of goal or desired result in mind. Like power, purpose in teaching is an experience in flux; it waxes and wanes, hits obstacles, and evolves. I myself have never felt the certainty Ms. Fields voices, the "I know why I get up every day" sense of purpose, so indomitable and precise. In fact, I remember asking myself, "What am I doing?" all the time. That question of purpose—what are we doing with teaching and why are we doing it—is an existential concern; it touches deeply on what it means to be present in the profession, in society, in the world, in life. Perhaps more than anything else, purpose in teaching fuels its imagination, its fundamental *what could be.* Having defined love as an essential relationship of teaching, learning as its fundamental work, and power as its ever-fluctuating state of being, I consider purpose as teaching's aspiration—alternately fulfilled and thwarted.

In this final chapter, I write about purpose in teaching. I first consider the question *Why teach?* by describing the reasons the teachers in these conversations entered the profession and how they conceptualized their work. Because teachers hold the explicit role of workers/doers/enactors of education in society, I also consider the purposes of education that these teachers talk about, illuminating the question *Education for what?* I conclude with a brief reflection on purpose in teaching as it relates to staying in or leaving the profession.

Why Teach?

In the previous chapter, on power, I wrote about teaching as a profession that is not a "first choice," citing teachers who spoke about their families' low regard for teaching or having different original career dreams or plans. Nevertheless, they found their way into teaching. Sometimes teaching was perceived as an entrée into another, desired, profession. For example, Mrs. Adams, who was a foreign languages and literature major and wanted to work at UNESCO, was advised to get a master's degree in education to better position herself as a candidate. Ms. Weiner, who was a psychology major and wanted to be a social worker, tried classroom teaching to learn how to "get to know kids" and "really build a rapport with them." Other teachers already chose a career, but still found their way to teaching. Mr. Burke, for example, got an education degree to have more career choices:

> I was in sales while I was going to get my Master's in education, and the only reason I did it just to have options. I felt that no matter what I did, if something didn't work out I could do something else.

Another teacher, Mrs. Ferner, looked to teaching as an exit ticket. She actively sought to leave the work conditions in the publishing sector. She remembered:

> I didn't like the way it was sexist in the office, the male reporters would give me their Xeroxing because they didn't know how to use it and if the boss was in a bad mood, he yelled at you…so I thought I'd get a substitute teaching license.

Still other teachers did not have a plan at all, and kind of fell into teaching. For example, Ms. Levy remembered not knowing what to do when she graduated from college and feeling "pretty directionless." She applied to Teach for America and started teaching because she "got in" the program and did not secure another post-graduate option. Another teacher, Ms. Baker, was motivated to have a job that provided health insurance:

> I was a waitress and I lived abroad for a while, and when I came back, my best friend was living in New York City and so I ended up moving in with her because she had an empty room. I saw the ads for the New York City Teaching Fellows on the subway, and I didn't have health insurance, and I thought maybe it was about time that I thought about a career.

Ms. Baker was among other teachers who mentioned advertising as the means by which teaching came to their attention. Mr. Wells recalled that "New York was advertising for teachers and I also wanted to live in a city that was exciting and vibrant and liberal." And Mr. Nevins was drawn into teaching by a combination of having a job he wanted to escape, advertising that caught his attention, and the need to make a living:

> I have been working in an extremely boring job, writing grants for an immigrant foundation. It was so boring that often I would just call up a play of Shakespeare and start memorizing sections of it. I was fired from my job, rightly so, and so I had nothing to do. Then a friend of mine from college sent me one of these links saying, oh you might be interested in the Teaching Fellows Program. In fact, I was very interested. I was also interested in the paychecks that might come from the Teaching Fellows Program, and I applied.

In these examples, it seems that becoming a teacher was not exactly purposeful in the sense of envisioning a goal that teaching would accomplish. Becoming a teacher could be accidental, so to speak, or a matter of seizing an opportunity. Coming into the profession this way doesn't mean that these teachers did not find purpose in teaching or that they did not establish reasons for staying in it. Mrs. Ferner expressed this when she said:

> I kind of backed into teaching but got hooked and decided it was a really good way of life, it was about learning and teaching, it was a way of being inspired and creative every day of your life.

Becoming a Teacher

While Mrs. Ferner "backed into teaching in a backwards way" and "got hooked," other teachers did name explicit purposes for entering the teaching profession. One reason was to

make a difference. With notable emphasis and emotion, some teachers spoke of making a difference in the world by teaching. For example, Ms. Gill remembered switching from a pre-law focus to education in college:

> I remember having a conversation with [my mentor] about pursuing law, and she told me to think very carefully about that. We had already talked about my interest in alternative teaching programs, and I remember thinking that I could have more of an impact with teaching, as opposed to becoming a lawyer.

Another teacher, Mr. Geller, used the same word, "impact," to explain why he would stay in teaching and not pursue his original career goal of becoming a politician. He said, "I wouldn't rule [politics] out, but it feels a little bit less pressing, because I feel like I'm making an impact now." In the words of both Ms. Gill and Mr. Geller, impact in the world—or *on* the world—was possible as a teacher, perhaps even more possible than in other professions. Mr. O'Brien, however, did not speak of impact on the world but rather of having something to show for his life. With his characteristic sarcasm and understatement, he said:

> There is something amazing about having to get up at six every morning and drag my butt out of bed, as much as I hate it, and then before I have even had a chance to take a piss it's three o-clock. And I've done something with my day. Whereas I can see waking up at three and not having done something with my day, and nothing to show for my life.

In his words, I hear an anxiety, maybe fear, of time slipping away without purpose, of life lived without doing "something" and having "nothing to show." In this case, teaching is not only action that is purposeful *for the world* but is also something that makes a difference *for the self* because it gives meaning to being in the world. Ms. Baker said, "I couldn't be doing anything that is more important," articulating the two-sided "importance" of teaching: its purpose for the world/others and its purpose for the self.

What were some other reasons for teaching? Several teachers spoke of teaching a service or contribution, using the conceptual metaphors OWE/PAY and OWE/RETURN. For

example, Ms. Vindal spoke of having good teachers in her own life and wanting to <u>pay</u> for

that. She said: "I always had great teachers growing up. I was really motivated and they really

influenced my life so much. I wanted to pay it forward to future students." Mrs. Cameron

said something similar, using the <u>give back</u> metaphor: "I enjoy sharing the expertise that I have

with others and actually that's been instilled in me by my instructor, always give back what you

have received." Mr. Wells, however, talked about changing his view of teaching as service:

> I think it is really interesting that we each had a thing that we thought
> we wanted to do—like for me it was writing, for you it was theater, for
> you it was law—and then I think at a certain point we thought…I
> thought…that it would be almost selfish to do that, a little self-indulgent.
> And now, I feel that teaching is not so much a service, like something I
> am contributing, but I feel selfish a little bit some days because I can't
> believe they pay me to this.

Though Mr. Wells adjusts his view of teaching to something in which one also richly receives,

the image of teaching as unselfish underscores its purpose as service.

Other teachers expressed the purpose of teaching in terms of something they wanted

to do for children. This purpose took on a variety of dimensions. Ms. Gill, for example,

remembered her undergraduate internship with a law firm and her encounter with a teenage

girl in the juvenile court system:

> I remember thinking, why are we meeting with a fifteen-year old? Why
> is a fifteen-year old already incarcerated, already dealing with the criminal
> system at such a young age? I thought about how these [teenagers] and
> myself came from such different backgrounds, and what's going on in
> their home, what's going on at school…I mean, are they even going to
> school? Are they uninspired? Because for me, growing up, my teachers
> were my mentors, my teachers were a sense of inspiration for me.

Ms. Gill's words emphasize the wide breach between her own background—growing up with

teachers who were her mentors and provided inspiration—and the suffering she witnesses in

other children's lives, the absurdity of a fifteen-year-old incarcerated and in the criminal court

system. The mentorship and inspiration that one can give children as a teacher can perhaps

diminish such disparity in children's well-being. Inspiring and mentoring children, then, is a way to keep them from harm. Mr. Nevins also alluded to this desire to protect children when he talked about his grandmother and her "stories of the classroom." He said:

> My grandmother, with whom I was extremely close, was a teacher in St. Petersburg during the Stalin years, which were not very good years, especially for a Jewish woman. She rose to become the vice-principal of a school, and she saved some children, very bravely, during the siege of Leningrad, the nine hundred day siege and was awarded some sort of medal for it…she always inspired me with her stories of the classroom.

The unspoken desire to "save" children and to protect them—probably alongside the desire to be recognized for this heroism—is a purpose to teaching and perhaps a response to a world that is full of suffering and pain. Living in such a world, where children die of hunger in Russia during the Second World War or are incarcerated in present day United States, requires an existential purpose. This purpose could be found in teaching.

The answer to the question *Why teach*? was frequently autobiographical. The teachers in these conversations reached back into their own life histories to articulate their purpose in teaching. Ms. Linden, for example, recalled her upbringing speaking two languages:

> I really wanted to be in New York and specifically in Washington Heights. I wanted to work with Latino kids and with both languages. I feel like my life is a dual language education system, because my mother raised me speaking only in Spanish and my dad only in English. I've held onto the Dominican side of my identity and it was really important to me. That's why I became a teacher initially, because I wanted other immigrant kids from the Dominican Republic and from other Spanish speaking countries to have a similar experience. I think that's where the passion began. That's why I wanted to begin teaching.

Mr. Solomon, however, grounded his desire to teach in the inadequacies of his own education:

> Thinking about my own education and what I got from my high school and my elementary school and how I was not prepared for college…and what I could do in terms of trying to help students, from seeing a male in the classroom to helping them prepare for college, to being a mentor, just a wide scope of things. All that came to me when I started to really think about becoming a teacher.

What Mr. Solomon wanted to do for children was something he wish he had for himself—

having a mentor, having a male teacher, being prepared for college. He continued:

> It was a good feeling knowing that okay, I made the right choice for my
> life. So that's kind of my journey to education, really from just wanting
> to help students develop critical thinking skills so that they can be active
> citizens in our society and in the world.

What teachers wanted for children was most often expressed in such general terms, like

"critical thinking" and "citizenship," and concerned children's being in the world. In fact,

only three teachers expressed their purpose in teaching specifically in terms of knowledge or

subject matter. There was Mr. Lowry, who was so enthusiastic about the beauty of math and

so intent on his students appreciating it. Mrs. Cameron spoke of wanting to "impart

knowledge on people," and making possible the transformation of "people, who in the

beginning they don't know anything, and then you see them grow and really develop to an

advanced state." And Mr. Cohen talked about teaching as a way of sharing his love of reading:

> Something my parents always reinforced [was] "Just do something that
> you really love," because my mom, she isn't too happy with the job that
> she does. So I love and have always been passionate about reading, and
> I think going to the classroom and trying to instill that passion in kids is
> worthwhile. It is something I'm willing to wake up to every day and not
> really moan and groan about having to go to work.

One teacher, Mr. Grant, made an explicit distinction between these purposes of

teaching: one being motivated to share content knowledge and skills, the other being driven

to improve the condition of children's lives. He said:

> I very much approach education from an academic standpoint…and
> that brings me to another thing I am curious about. We seem to be
> coming to education from slightly different angles. You are very much
> invested in the civil rights aspect of it, right? Education being the civil
> rights struggle of the 21st century…

Though Mr. Grant did not go further into explaining the difference—or connections—

between the "academic" and "civil rights" aspects of education, his use of the popular

discourse of education as <u>the civil rights struggle of the 21st century</u> was heard in other teachers' explanations of their purpose in teaching. Neither Mr. Grant nor other teachers explicitly named race, class, ethnicity, or any other demographic descriptors of the children they were teaching, even as they spoke of "civil rights." Aside from Ms. Levy and Mr. Wells who talked specifically about "kids from the Bronx," Mr. Nevins who described a student from his school who was killed as a "black girl dead in some part of Brooklyn," and Mrs. Adams who spoke of her students as "poor, very poor," the teachers in these conversations mostly used rather vague terms when talking about the working-for-social-equality purpose of teaching. Mr. Geller, for example, used the <u>historically underfunded and under-resourced</u> discourse to describe inequality. He remembered how he joined Teach for America:

> [The TFA recruiter] told me all about the mission, which was to ensure educational equity for kids across the country. I was intrigued by just how in general that's a good goal to shoot for, but then I also thought about my own life experience, moving to Columbia, South Carolina when I was in the sixth grade. I had pretty positive educational experiences when I was living in New Jersey, and then I moved and I encountered opposition from my school guidance team. My parents had to push to have me placed in college readiness rigorous coursework. And in the city there are two school districts. One is very well-funded, lots of resources, where military families are zoned, so that's where I ended up going. Very close to my school was the other district which was historically underfunded and under resourced. And it just made me think a lot about why those things happen and what things we should be doing about it.

Because of his own experience of having to push to be on a "rigorous college-readiness" track, and because he witnessed the disparity between two school districts, Mr. Geller spoke of teaching as something he could "do about" educational inequity. Likewise, Ms. Levy saw working in schools as being able to "prevent" social problems. She said this of teaching:

> I liked the social justice part of it. I strongly believe that everyone should have equal education…and I saw that really nothing—well, I can't say nothing, but not enough—was happening in terms of prevention. Not just intervention, but actually trying to prevent some of these social problems that we have and that we've always had and continue to face.

While her use of the buzzword <u>social justice</u> might be facile, Ms. Levy poignantly points out the dilemma that "social problems" are a constant feature, which "equal education" may or may not resolve. Teaching could be an act of prevention and intervention for children who bear the burden of social problems and inequality in education. Perhaps the greatest sense of certainty about teaching's purpose came from Mrs. Adams, who bluntly named teaching as politics. She said:

> I was brought up in a very political family. It was in the sixties, it was a
> very political time, and I saw teaching as a political activity. There was
> a book called "Teaching as a Subversive Activity" which is something I
> read, and I actually put that altogether and I entered the classroom.

<u>The Work of Teaching</u>

In this book, <u>Teaching as a Subversive Activity</u>, authors Postman and Weingartner write about the work of teaching and the purposes of education. Here is one memorable passage, from the chapter "Making Meaning":

> Teachers have always been somewhat ambivalent about what it is they
> do for a living. An excellent case in point concerns their conceptions of
> the human mind. For example, there is the type of teacher who believes
> he is in the lighting business. We may call him the Lamplighter. When
> he is asked what he is trying to do with his students, his reply is
> something like this: "I want to illuminate their minds, to allow some light
> to penetrate the darkness." Then there is the Gardener. He says, "I want
> to cultivate their minds, to fertilize them, so that the seeds I plant will
> flourish." Then is also the Personnel Manager, who wants nothing more
> than to keep his students' minds busy, to make them efficient and
> industrious. The Muscle Builder wants to strengthen flabby minds, and
> the Bucket Filler wants to fill them up. Although we are sorely tempted,
> it is not our intention to ridicule any of these metaphors of the mind.
> The Lamplighter, the Gardener, and the rest are merely doing what
> anyone must do in order to think about "minding." But in saying this,
> we have not closed the matter. We have opened it.

Postman & Weingartner propose an intriguing, broad question: what is it that teachers "think they do for a living"? What do we think is our work? They suggest that metaphor richly

expresses teachers' thinking and understanding of this question and use the example of "mind" to show how teachers conceptualize their work—lamp-lighting, gardening, managing, strengthening, filling—as it concerns both "minds" and their relation to children. With their example of mind metaphors, Postman & Weingartner indeed "open the matter" of the "business" of teaching, that is, the purpose or intent of teaching as an endeavor. The teachers in these conversations did not explicitly ask each other the questions *What are you doing with teaching? What is your work?* Their answers to these questions were nevertheless present in their talk. Two broad themes emerged: the work of teaching is one, raising children, and two, mediating the connection between school and the world, or school and life.

"Raising children" sounds like the work of parenthood. Though there are many, many differences between teaching children and parenting them, it is nevertheless significant that the teachers in these conversations spoke so much of things non-academic: character, emotions, social development, and ethics. It is like asking parents what they want for their child: most would say they would want them to be happy and healthy, to lead a good life and to be good people. Though parents may have particular dreams for their child, the *raising* is about over-arching habits, dispositions, and ways of being—the setting up of a framework that supports the child's growth and development as a person, no matter where life takes them. Likewise, the teachers in these conversations spoke of teaching in terms of the personal characteristics they wanted to develop and encourage in children.

The first of these was children's growth as learners, that is, the formation of their identity as people who want to learn. This purpose certainly concerned "the mind." For example, Mrs. Thomas spoke of the need to develop "a curious critical mind:"

> What you need to make is a learner. You don't need people to know
> every single fact on earth. You need to create a curious critical mind. So
> if you need a rocket scientist, then you ask for people who think that
> they would be interested and you hustle them up. I mean, for World

War Two, what woman knew how to put a rivet on an airplane? Nobody. They went into the factory and they were taught. We can teach people what they need to know. We don't need to squash them. A lot of times if children are not keeping up they get discouraged, and then they don't think that they can do anything and then they fall away.

Mrs. Thomas connects encouraging children to learn and be curious with the development of their capacity to "think that they can do anything." Instead of "squashing" children or compelling them to "know every single fact on earth," a teacher can watch carefully for signs of discouragement and support children's curiosity and interest. Mrs. Thomas also connects the "need to make a learner" with the larger purpose of creating a society that can be taught what it needs to know. The work of teaching, then, is the building, or "making," of capacity on both the individual and societal levels.

Other teachers stressed curiosity as an essential characteristic to develop in children. Ms. Baker, for example, talked about learning as separate from goals like graduation or college admission, as "learning for learning's sake, an engaged curiosity about the world." And teachers talked about supporting their students' confidence as well as curiosity. For example, Mr. Solomon talked about how important it was to have students "uncover and investigate the answers to the questions they have" and to be "coached" through that process. He hoped that by developing confidence in their own questions and in their ability to answer them, students could "see that they can, and that they are capable of learning, and that they are learners." If the work of teaching is to grow learners, then the outcome of that work was pure potential and possibility. Mr. Lowry called it a "discovery of power," that "students find in themselves all that they can be." And Ms. Gill used the expression "own your greatness" to describe both the process and product of being a learner.

The work of raising children is also the work of developing character. When asked about the impact he wanted to make as a teacher, Mr. Cohen replied, half-jokingly: "Hopefully

when June comes around they'll be like, 'Thank you, Mr. Cohen. My character changed and I'm now more mature.' But who knows." I wondered why Mr. Cohen laughed when he said this: did he feel such character change to be improbable? Indeed, most teachers in these conversations talked about character development as an ongoing, long-term process that took years. It was here that the popular *TEACHING AS GARDENING* metaphor came up. For example, Mrs. Tully's tearful last words in her story about her student Ralph were: "Even though you plant a seed and you don't see it flourish or bloom, it's there and it grows." The seed she planted, over two years, was telling Ralph of his innate goodness, no matter how terrible his behavior. It was much later, when Ralph was a grown man, that Mrs. Tully saw the bloom of that seed in Ralph's decision to make a right turn in his life. Ralph's development—in terms of recognizing and acting on his capacity to "do right"—was the flourishing of Mrs. Tully's teaching. The growth was not of intellect or knowledge, but of character. Likewise, Ms. Levy said of her student Maria: "I believe in her and I want to see this good side of her more…I have seen that seed in her." Here, Ms. Levy is not planting the seed, she just recognizes its already-there existence. Her work as a teacher was her relentless attempt to nurture that seed, to never let it out of sight.

Teachers spoke of children's character development as a lengthy process, one with pitfalls and missteps. Ms. Quinn, for example, told such a story:

> One of the things that I realized when I came here is that yeah, sure, we have students who are seventeen to twenty-one. But a lot of times my twenty-year-old student is the same as a fourteen-year-old when it comes to how they deal with conflict, how they deal with hard situations emotionally, mentally, and maturity-wise. If that's one thing that I can instill in them, if I can help them figure out how to deal with conflicts…You know, we had a student who did not matriculate last fall because he did not want to wait on line at the bursar. He did not have that coping skill of, you know, "Just take a deep breath, I am going to have to wait, there is a lot of people here." He didn't have that coping skill, and he was back with me three weeks ago, re-applying to college. And we had some really good talks. I said to him, "You will stay on line

if it takes you an hour and a half this time," and he said "Oh no, no, I made my mistake, I know, it's over, it's done, I am going now." It is those kind of skills that are almost, for our students, more important than passing a regents.

As important as passing the standardized tests required for graduation is the development of the ability to "deal with hard situations" or "conflicts." Ms. Quinn's wish, "if there is one thing I can instill in them," sounds to me exactly what parents would say: the fervent wish for their child to develop the fortitude, resilience, and good judgment necessary for life. Ms. Quinn's colleague, Mrs. Royce, continued and expanded upon this theme:

> I feel that as a society we have moved toward instant gratification without so much of what's important for long term planning. That's a skill that's missing. I think: did I get that skill in high school? I don't know if it was taught or if anyone gave it to me, but I think that it is a big piece of success. It involves envisioning college [while] at high school. Our students need to envision success, they need to envision exactly what it looks like, to sacrifice something now for the gratification it is going to bring later. I know that that's what eventually happened to that young man. He realized he lost an opportunity from the unwillingness to wait for something. He realized deep down inside that you have to wait, there are some things you have to wait for.

Like Mrs. Thomas who connected individual curiosity with society's need for people capable of learning, so does Mrs. Royce widen the association between personal coping skills and society's descent into instant gratification. But what I appreciate most is her realism about character development: "did I get that skill in high school? Was it taught or did anyone give it to me?" With this, I think she acknowledges the inevitable mystery and heartbreak of the work of raising children—that something can be "taught" or "given" but not necessarily internalized, developed, and owned. Nevertheless, Mrs. Royce defines clearly what teachers should aim to develop in children: the capacity to envision future success, to know "exactly what it looks like" so that they can make the decision to sacrifice in the present. Ms. Quinn and Mrs. Royce watched their student make a mistake—the same way that parents watch their

children make the same mistakes they made, or mistakes that are easily avoidable—and were there to draw out the lesson. That is too the work of teaching.

Finally, the work of raising children in teaching is to cultivate their social consciousness, their awareness of and responsibility for others. This, in addition to growing the capacity for learning and the development of character, was an answer the question *What are you doing with teaching?* Mrs. Tully explained this emphasis on social development:

> We're trying to make our kids be able to communicate with one another and not be abrasive and to get along. In this society you're going to have to learn to get along, and that's something that I find lacking in our curriculum, and so I try to build it in and have kids think about the way that they can be, the way that they can learn to control their own behavior and not to be sort of an id-driven kind of kid. To think not just, "Me, me, me," to think of not just myself but of others. Affect. Being able to collaborate, get along with one another, be considerate.

Mrs. Tully tries to "build in" the learning to think of others into her classroom, to put "affect" into the curriculum. The teaching of social skills to "get along" with others is an explicit component of Mrs. Tully's teaching. For other teachers, this was a less explicit but still foundational aspect of their work. For example, Mr. Pelles spoke about his undergraduate study in religion and how that shaped his teaching:

> What I took away from all that was that there are a wide range of religious interpretations of the almighty powers in the universe, but most of them share some common elements and rules that get at people's need to live together well. I think that any religion essentially has that same intention: to build a kind of a fabric for society. And so going forward from college and becoming a teacher I have operated under the same mindset: that it doesn't necessarily matter what specific set of rules you believe in, but rather that those beliefs lead you to live well with others.

The work of teaching, from Mr. Pelles' words, could be interpreted as itself a kind of "fabric-building," a cultivation of children's understanding of the importance of "living well with others." That guiding principle of "living together well" is broad and constantly negotiated, distorted by the imbalances of power between people. What rules or elements of "living well

together" did teachers say they wanted their students to have, or learn? Mr. Cohen said:

"empathy is the one word that I really want to emphasize, where hopefully kids will embody

that quality." And Mrs. Ferner, who began teaching during the time of the Vietnam War, said

she wanted this for children:

> thinking and trying to figure out instead of just accepting the status
> quo…thinking how can I be in the world in a way that helps people and
> makes people's lives better. Because I think that is what teaching is
> about. It is giving children the tools to be adults who can do that.

The work of teaching, when looked at as the work of raising children, is essentially

about being *in* the world and *for* the world. The concerns of learning, of being able to

withstand adversity, and of living a life that makes other people's lives better are all concerns

with life beyond the classroom. But is it reasonable to expect school, a space that can itself

be very separate from "the real world," to adequately prepare children for life in it? The

teachers in these conversations were well aware of the disconnect between school and life.

There was Mrs. Wayans, who remembered her childhood as a time when there were no

connections between her life and learning in school. There was Mrs. Ferner, who said "school

felt second-hand, like it was about somebody else." Mr. Burke said that even though he and

other teachers worked very hard to "make subjects and storylines and plot lines and things in

our day carry over from one room to the next," that still, when children walked out the school

building, "that's the end of it, and it's almost like a separate world thing." Mr. Wang wondered

what there was besides the textbook and the four walls of the classroom that he could get his

students to see. And Mr. Cohen worried about a student of his who seemed to "not care"

about school:

> There is one kid, Noel, and I am concerned about him. He's so young,
> eleven years old, and he has this attitude like, "I don't care." And it's
> kind of tragic. Maybe it's just a middle school phase and they'll get out
> of it, but I am a little concerned at how focused they are in terms of their
> studies. And if not now, then when? Otherwise…maybe that's the whole

question, like whether we're not doing a good job as teachers, trying to
rekindle that fire.

I confess that when teachers say that children "don't care," my initial reaction is that of
distaste, even anger. Maybe it is teachers who are the ones who "don't care," placing the
blame of what is happening—or not happening—in their classrooms on the children, saying
that the fault of not learning adequately or appropriately lies in the child. But lately, I have
started thinking that while it is more reasonable to find fault with the adult rather than with
the child, maybe there is an altogether better place to start. And I confess too that it wasn't
until my encounter with these teachers' conversations—listening to them repeatedly, analyzing
them, writing about them—that I even thought of there being another possibility, of another
interpretation of the words "this child doesn't care." What could teachers mean when they
say this? Perhaps what they mean is that what is happening in the classroom does not matter
to the child because it is not connected to the child's life in any way that is real. Perhaps they
are speaking of the despair—the child's and maybe their own—when faced with the
unfathomable fissure between the useless-seeming actions undertaken in school and the too-
real experiences of life. And perhaps the words "children don't care" acknowledge this fissure
and this despair, and express the desire that it be different. In this light, Mr. Cohen's question
"If not now, then when?" is itself "tragic" because it speaks to this ever-present, bewildering,
taken-for granted separation of school from life. But Mr. Cohen's words give me hope too.
His metaphor of <u>rekindling the fire</u> made me imagine the connection between school and life
as a flame being tended by teachers. The work of teaching is to keep alive the connection
between school and life, to preserve and grow this fragile fire.

In these conversations, teachers certainly had great examples of connecting the
classroom to the real world in ways that were significant to children. The debate about money
in Mr. Drake's class and the mask-making, playwriting, acting and dancing in Mrs. Ferner's

class were instances of children doing "real world stuff" that was not only interesting to them but also genuine ways of engaging with the world around them and discovering their place in it. It was what Mrs. English called "learning how to do real work, not somebody else's work" in school. It was what Mrs. Adams called "responding to the world," which she made possible in her classroom by focusing her curriculum on "becoming more aware of our surroundings and making choices that would be in the best interests of ourselves and other people." And children themselves brought the "real world" to school, a world that was often marked by pain and complexity. The work of teaching, then, was to not ignore the context of children's lives, but to acknowledge its place in school. Mr. Grant, for example, said:

> When you have a conversation with one of our kids and they are telling you that they are living in a shelter, or that their dad or their cousin is in jail, there is an immediacy to that…your job is to keep them here, keep them invested, get them on to the next grade.

Mr. Grant wants to "keep" children "here, invested," understanding that the "immediacy" of their lives outside of school places a heavy burden of proof on what happens in the classroom to be relevant and useful. Another teacher, Mrs. Royce, talked about this too, using the phrase "addressing the whole child:"

> We know our students come to us older and with the kind of issues that if they are not addressed—childcare, healthcare, housing—then there is no way that student can continue to come to school and be a strong student. So I take that holistic approach with kids. Because if we don't address the whole child, if we don't achieve some success with the health and mindset of that child, there is no way that child will be successful academically.

In Mrs. Royce's words there is an echo of what Mrs. Adams gave as advice to another teacher: "Let the whole child come to school." But while Mrs. Adams was making a point about children's agency in deciding what they want to bring to school and what they want to leave behind, Mrs. Royce seems to speak of circumstances from which children cannot disconnect.

Her "holistic" welcoming of children in school is maintaining the connection between school and life that is necessary for children to be "strong students" and "successful academically."

The teachers in these conversations clearly expressed that connecting school with life and the world was one of the most important things they could do. Mrs. Adams, for example, equated "life" with the search for meaning, and said there was no "point of doing anything without searching for meaning or having meaning behind it…it doesn't make sense to me." Mrs. English's goal was to help children explore and understand their role in the world:

> We really wanted to help children have a greater sense of themselves in the world and our focus was for students to think that they really had agency in the world. They could ask questions and their questions were valid, and they could explore them and learn to do that with their friends in the community of the classroom and in the larger school.

In that description of teaching and learning, the difference between school and life/world is almost imperceptible. A more prosaic example came from Mrs. Royce, who used the light bulb metaphor to explain how education can enhance and illuminate life:

> When I see how long young people wait for the latest phone or the newest pair of sneakers or whatever, I see they have the coping skills. I understand now in education this is connecting learning to real life. It is a matter of turning on that bulb around awareness as to what is going to benefit you. I will always carry the fire of education and will always try to light that bulb, wherever I go.

The work of teaching, education, is "connecting learning to real life," she says, and though she mixes the metaphors of electricity and fire, I am still left with the same image: teachers tending the flame that connects life with learning, the world with school. The flame is inside the child and it is inside the teacher. The flame is fragile but it can be fierce.

Education for What?

Teaching is child-raising. Teaching is keeping the flame of the school-life connection lit. But the answers to the questions *Why teach?* and *What are you doing with teaching?* cannot be

answered solely within the parameters of a teacher-child relation. The practice and experience of public school K-12 teaching, as isolated and isolating as it can be, is never free of the cultural and social contexts of schooling and education. The teachers in these conversations were well aware of these macro-contexts. They spoke of the education system in terms of the constraints and pressures they felt in teaching. And they also talked about the purposes of education and schooling in terms of institutional, political, and cultural structures and systems. As Mr. O'Brien put it, "the education system is much more process oriented…it's got a lot of goals other than just teaching kids." To him, some of these goals were about "keeping children in place," which was echoed by Mrs. Thomas who called education "crowd control."

But to other teachers, education's social purpose was both more benign and grander. For example, Mrs. Ferner recalled her class with Lawrence Cremin where he "put education in a social context." She explained:

> the purpose was to be able to function well in American society. So originally you learned how to read so you could read the bible and participate. But now you need so much more to be able to participate in a democratic society.

Ms. Fields also spoke of education in grand terms, saying that education is "at the heart of" finding solutions to our nation's problems:

> It's so fundamental …just with all the problems in the country right now economically and otherwise, I feel like deep down everybody knows, no matter what you believe about what the answers are, education is somewhere at the heart of it. Whatever you think should happen to get our country on a better track, if you think it's on a wrong track, education is at the heart of it.

Another teacher, Mr. Pelles, gave a specific example of education being "a value" that enabled a society to function. He told this story:

> Once, coming from Montreal on a very long train ride, I sat next to a professor from Concordia College who was a Somalian expatriate. He talked about Islam in Somalian communities becoming a religion of the wealthy. That essentially whoever is the wealthiest, most powerful,

person in the community was the only one who got to say what Islam was for the people that were living there. And because they haven't had a functioning education system for forty years, there wasn't a single person in town who could read the Koran and tell him he was wrong. And so I think about how many places in the world—and this is not just for Islam, for all religions—where people don't necessarily know what the religion is actually speaking to and what was the intent behind it and only know what people have told them or what they find to be true. And it's really easy to convince people to be angry. Anger is an emotion we innately get to very quickly, and so riling somebody up and telling them that this is the reason why and here are your enemies and these are the people you ought to hate is something that we're easily swayed to unless we've been inoculated by the medicine of reason and education. And I mean education in the sense of higher philosophical values, because let's face it, they are getting an education, it just may not be the education that is going to lead them to live together well.

Mr. Pelles told this story in response to his colleague's question about the social studies lesson he taught on religious extremism, and how that might seem like a "high level concept, especially for sixth graders." Though the example is about religion in another country (and though there are plenty of examples—religious or otherwise—in our own backyard), the metaphor of education as <u>inoculation</u> is powerful. It positions education as a preventative force with potency to diminish our "innate anger" and tendency to be "easily swayed." Education is therefore something special, something beyond people's own personal experience—"what they find to be true"—and beyond political power—"what people have told them." Education, to Mr. Pelles, exists as some form of "higher philosophical values" whose function is to help people "live together well." The belief in the power of education, that it somehow enables people to be or to act in ways they could not otherwise, was echoed by other teachers. To Mrs. Royce, for example, education was something to be possessed, something that one receives and experiences, and then *owns*. She said:

I was always strongly encouraged by both of my parents, who were seventh- and eighth-grade educated folks from New Orleans. They instilled in me the desire to become educated because that was considered something no one could ever take from you.

<u>Miseducation</u>

Education, as much as it can be a treasured personal possession or a significant influence for social good, is also the opposite: a forceful mechanism for limiting individual and social capacity. It is literally and figuratively "what people tell us is the reason why." And so, unsurprisingly, the teachers in these conversations questioned the purposes of education and schooling, and critiqued them. Their critiques were broad and deep. Recall Mrs. Thomas, for example, who talked about love, the teacher's "loving heart that sends out a vibration to the whole class so they can do anything that you present to them." Such practice of love was not really possible, she said:

> Now this cannot actually be done in most locations. The way education is going now, even in early childhood, it's so structured, it's so standardized, there is no room for feelings and emotions. It's not even being thought of.

If feelings and emotions were not "being thought of" in schools, neither was meaning. Mr. Drake spoke about the necessity of finding meaning alongside facts and knowledge:

> I am constantly astonished at how education wants to leave out the whole meaning…you know, everyone wants to reduce it to skills or knowledge and leave out the fact that there is actual real meaning to be found.

And Mr. O'Brien talked about the paradox of education as empowerment and the "schooling system" as disempowerment, highlighting the distance between education espoused and education enacted. Another hypocrisy was found in education's function of reducing social inequity. Ms. Miller, who saw teaching as a "continuing project of civil rights or of equity or of better distribution of power within society," said this about education:

> However, I don't think that many people in the education system see that or articulate it. It might be some assumption that's behind what they do, but on the day-to-day it's like can my kids pass this science exam or can my kids graduate from high school, and a lot of that gets lost…A

> lot of days I'm just like, "to hell with this." Even at the best case scenario, what, I teach kids to grow up and be lawyers and doctors and they just become part of the power situation? There is very little justice that is created in that.

In her words, I hear the moral despair of complicity: envisioning education to be a "project of civil rights," witnessing that cause as lost or unarticulated, and sustaining the same "power situation" one wants to dismantle. Teaching—the work by which education *gets done*—can simultaneously be the tool of justice and injustice, both.

Other teachers also talked about "social justice" in education. While some teachers simply used this discourse in their conversations, a few challenged it. Two teachers, Mr. Solomon and Ms. Baker, in particular, had this exchange:

> Mr. Solomon: I think a lot of teachers now, with Teach for America and with Teaching Fellows and all of these new programs to get people in the field of education, teaching, they market this term, "social justice." So I wanted to know your thoughts in terms of teaching for social justice.

> Ms. Baker: Yeah, I think it is interesting the way this term "social justice" gets packaged. I think it gets packaged in a way that is the college-for-all model. So if our school can take on the role of taking kids from the city's historically most under-served communities…that's the school's term, I noticed that our school doesn't use the term "at risk," it uses the term "college-fragile"…to college. And that's within our social structure, the way it is now, without necessarily a critique of the system and how things work. But then there is this other more radical, or critical, model of social justice, which is that it is a total restructuring of the system. Maybe we need to be critical of this college-for-all model.

> Mr. Solomon: In [my undergraduate college], that was very much the latter of what you said about social justice, in terms of being a much more radical definition. And even in [graduate school] it was the same thing in terms of a whole restructure of the education system. So when I got here and people were talking about social justice, I was like, "Oh, maybe they are on to something here," and I was very interested in how the term social justice was being used. So social justice in their mind is college and not really anything outside of that. And there are other schools in New York City that think of social justice in this way, with each school wanting to be a champion of social justice.

In their deconstruction of the term "social justice," these two teachers ask critical questions about the purpose of schooling and education. They mention the prevalence of "new programs to get people in the field of education," echoing the discourse of getting "brilliant people" into the field and the low status of teaching as a profession. "Social justice," then, is a marketing term, not only the purpose/goal of education but also a selling point. Continuing with the marketing metaphor, "social justice" gets <u>packaged</u> into an attractive, easily acceptable, minimally guilt-inducing product: "at-risk" or "fragile" children from "the city's historically most under-served communities" going to college. Mr. Solomon's and Ms. Baker's critique is double-edged: first, "social justice" is something marketed, sold and bought; and second, "social justice" is delimited to college attendance, no longer the "more radical, or critical, model of social justice, a total restructuring of the system." They continued:

> Mr. Solomon: Once they get to college, what happens? And I know there is a lot of talk like we do these things to support students when they get to college, but really, we need to look at what happens at the college.

> Ms. Baker: Or even this idea of just learning for learning's sake, this curiosity that you need. I think you can do really well in college without that, but it's just when you make college your endpoint…

> Mr. Solomon: What's after?

> Ms. Baker: Yeah, what's after that? And also, what are we supposed to get out of this going to college experience? Because I know [a former student] and it has been fascinating to see, he hasn't changed that much…[Our school] is so interested in college matriculation for everyone, like, "Get this kid into college!" But does this child turn in his papers on time? No. Is he writing at the college level? No, he's not. Has he even shown up to class half the time? Is he ready for college? I don't see it that way.

Not only is "social justice" reduced to college attendance, but college attendance in itself is inadequate as a goal of education. It is inadequate as an "endpoint," and it is inadequate because students have not been adequately prepared and have not yet become strong learners.

While the "social justice" goal of "get this kid into college" has been met, another goal of education—to become a learner—remains unachieved.

The teachers in these conversations also talked about the long-lasting effects of an inadequate education. For example, almost as if in response to Mrs. Thomas who spoke of the "need to make a learner, the need to create a curious critical mind," Mrs. Ferner talked about students' inability—an inability learned in school—to solve problems. She explained:

> My son Sasha told me that when he was in calculus his freshman year in college, he could tell the kids who went to progressive schools from the kids who went to traditional schools. The kids who went to progressive schools knew they could solve the problems some way: that if they don't do it this way, they could do it that way, and if that doesn't work, there is some other way to look at it, or they could call up somebody and they could do it together. Whereas the kids who went to more traditional schools, once the algorithm failed them, they didn't know what else to do.

There was also impact beyond college. Mr. Wang spoke of this, talking about the lack of creative thinking that persists through graduate school. He told this story:

> There is a really interesting kind of cognitive test where they gave college graduates a little candle, a box of matches, and some thumbtacks, and the goal is to somehow fix the candle to a wall and light the candle with a match so that none of the wax drips on the floor. They did this with American graduate students and international students. The international students could do it. Everyone fails for the first five minutes of playing around, like this thumbtack is not long enough to get through the candle, "How do we do this?" And the solution is that you need to take all the matches out and use the box as the holder. Everyone gets stuck, and yet our students here can't push through it. And I wonder, is it something that's different about the educational system? But that doesn't make sense to me, because America prides itself in being creative and innovative.

The dissonance between this inability to "push through" with a creative solution and the self-concept of "being creative and innovative" confounds Mr. Wang. It is another example of the contrast between what education *should do*, and what it actually accomplishes. Mrs. Ferner used the metaphor of opening and closing doors to explain this paradox:

> You know, I saw teaching as opening doors for people, and I think so much of school is closing doors. Oh, I am not good at this, so I will study that. Or, I can only go this far because I am not good at that. Instead of it being, oh yeah, this is what this is about, I can do that. Or, if I mess around with the materials long enough, I will be able to figure out an answer to this question.

What Education Should Be

While the teachers in these conversations criticized schooling and education as institutions that subverted or opposed their goals—the "closing of doors" while they worked to open them—they also articulated wide-ranging ideas about what education should be. Their ideas were substantive and specific, and if not radically new, to some degree transgressive. For example, Mrs. Thomas believed that hands-on learning should extend far beyond the early childhood years:

> I think that concepts of early childhood education, constructivism, children learning from experiencing things, should not be limited to young children. Allowing children to build with Legos is tremendous mind building, thought building. They should be building things out of wood. They should be making things out of clay. They should have a full range of hands on activities as well as the paperwork and things like that. And we would have people that were good to do whatever was called for. If god forbid we should have some kind of disaster we're going to need people who can work with nothing. We're assuming that we need everything technological, but who could dig a hole?

The "mind building, thought building" possible with hands-on learning, Mrs. Thomas says, would result in people who "can work with nothing." What Mrs. Thomas is saying is not radical: there is a healthy DIY (do-it-yourself) and maker culture nowadays, pursued by people young and old. What she says is transgressive, however, in the context of K-12 education, where iPads loaded with lessons are given to teachers and standardized testing is the measure of learning. Similarly, Ms. Fields talked about modular learning, the kind that is now not

uncommon in higher education settings but still iconoclastic in a public school system

organized by grade levels:

> I would want to get rid of grade levels and really just have classes. Every single kid would go to every class based on where they are right now and what they need, regardless if you're in fifth grade or eighth grade or wherever you are. The kids who needed the most support would be on some sort of rapid accelerated path to catch them up. I think it would maximize time and resources and allow us to really get every kid truly what they need.

With schooling organized in such a way, education could be a series of doors that keep

opening, with teachers less constrained in structuring the learning their students need.

Other teachers spoke of changing the curriculum. Mr. Simmons, for example, talked

about "moving off curriculum," asking his colleague: "What do you think about the

relationship between the curriculum that we're expected to teach and the curriculum that we

want to teach?" Mr. Lowry replied:

> I feel like math should be one of the most fun subjects in the world. You're playing with numbers and shapes and looking for patterns and making predictions, and it gets so bogged down in these routines and these steps. I feel like so many students love English or History because they get to think and debate and discuss, and I don't see why math isn't the same thing. I think it's just the way it's being taught and the way teachers are pushed in so many directions to teach so many skills and go so far so fast. And it's fine to teach a skill, but then that skill has to be connected to something broader. Now that you know this, look at what you can do and look at all the cool things this leads you to. Don't you want to learn more skills so you can learn more cool applications?

For Mr. Lowry, a useful curriculum needs to be both more conceptual *and* more applied.

Similarly, for Mr. Burke, school instruction must allow for depth of exploration, the ability to

"delve really deeply into one particular area and then you take those skills and those concepts

and you branch out and you apply them to other things." And for Mr. Solomon, the key to

education is for students to "ask questions constantly and have the resources and skills to

answer those questions independently, and the teacher help them uncover and investigate the answers to the questions that they have."

In such ways—"making things," having no grade levels, emphasizing concepts and applications instead of just skills, being able to go into enough depth, and having the freedom to ask and answer one's own questions—these teachers imagined education to be more suitable for learning. These ways of imagining education made me think of how much of education is not about learning at all. Two teachers, Mr. O'Brien and Ms. Miller, discussed this uncomfortable truth:

> Ms. Miller: Do you think there is some sort of fundamental problem with the education system? And I mean the system in general, not the idea of education, but about putting it together in a system. Is there something just fundamentally screwed up about that idea?
>
> Mr. O'Brien: I think people learn backwards. If you wanted to learn computer programming, the old boys at college would say, "Learn data structures. Learn recursion theory. Learn…" You can't do anything with these things. I would say start programming, and learn backwards what you need to get somewhere, because you're empowered to do something with the programming. Or if I stumbled across something really exciting about history, like maybe I'm a conspiracy theorist, and I go backwards and learn all the things that led to this conspiracy and I suddenly have a purpose in my learning and my curiosity is piqued instead of somebody telling me that this is what you need to know. I don't know yet how to fix it. The better the system is at sustaining itself, the more likely that will continue to succeed in its mediocrity…and so all of our efforts to keep it good are missing the piece, I think, of the future.
>
> Ms. Miller: Right. But in the classroom, could you imagine a way to facilitate…I don't even want to say teach…but a way to help students discover their curiosity? Or would you say, "You have to learn by doing"? Do we just tear down the schoolhouse and go, "Okay, go out and live your life and figure out what you want and then work backwards. Then come back to the school and go, okay this is what I need to know"?

Ms. Miller comes to the crux of the matter: is "discovering your curiosity" fundamentally difficult to do in school? Do we have to dismantle and rebuild the schoolhouse in order for learning to happen? I find it telling that Ms. Miller refrains from the word "teach," as if

teaching itself needs to be torn down, as if teaching is inextricable from the doomed schoolhouse. In her words I hear the acrid taste of frustration with the system of public K-12 education. Not only does the system not support "learning backwards," but, as Mr. O'Brien says, it is "missing the future." Within the homeostasis of mediocrity, education can maintain society's status quo without much emphasis on learning.

Teaching: A Place to Stay?

Ms. Miller's reluctance to say the word "teach," and Mrs. Ferner's powerful image of teaching as opening doors and school as closing them, gave me pause. Is there a certain futility to teaching? The search for meaning in a space that privileges skills, the practice of love in an atmosphere that forbids emotion, the quest for social justice in a context that sells it, the pedagogy of question-asking and problem-solving in a task-driven climate—is there not a certain sense of absurdity, of uselessness? In his essay, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Albert Camus writes:

> The gods had condemned Sisyphus to ceaselessly rolling a rock to the top of a mountain, whence the stone would fall back of its own weight. They had thought with some reason that there is no more dreadful punishment than futile and hopeless labor…
>
> Myths are made for the imagination to breathe life into them. As for this myth, one sees merely the whole effort of a body straining to raise the huge stone, to roll it and push it up a slope a hundred times over; one sees the face screwed up, the cheek tight against the stone, the shoulder bracing the clay-covered mass, the foot wedging it, the fresh start with arms outstretched, the wholly human security of two earth-clotted hands. At the very end of his long effort measured by skyless space and time without depth, the purpose is achieved. Then Sisyphus watches the stone rush down in a few moments toward that lower world whence he will have to push it up again toward the summit. He goes back down to the plain.

Is teaching Sisyphean work? I do not bring in Camus' absurd hero as a stand-in for teachers, nor to make the case that teaching is "futile and hopeless labor," even if there is something

absurd in the ways that our education system does not support teaching and learning. Rather, I am interested in the mountain itself, the space of teaching. Unlike Sisyphus, we can choose to stay on the mountain or to leave it. We do not have to go "back down to the plain." And so I want to end this chapter on purpose—the purposes of teaching, the purposes of education—by considering teaching as a dwelling place: a space in which one lives, a space one leaves.

A few teachers in these conversations have already left the space of teaching. Mr. O'Brien, exhausted by "continually going against certain values" and "what it meant to tell kids what to do" left teaching to start his own software company:

> Part of why I'm leaving is to prove wrong a system that beats down innovation. Entrepreneurship excites me. I can affect a lot of people, more people than in a classroom. I'm still excited about some money and getting a little bigger and running things and traveling around the world and wasting jet fuel. I don't know, I'm excited about that.

Teaching, it seems, did not offer Mr. O'Brien the space to "get bigger" or the "excitement to run things." Another teacher, Mr. Nevins, also wanted something other than teaching. He didn't name what he wanted, but it was clear that teaching was no longer *it*. He explained:

> I was tired of it. I was tired of handing out worksheets, I was tired of the bureaucracy, I was tired of…I helped start a school and saw the first class graduate. I built that English program from the foundation to the peaked roof. I made sure that the edifice went up and once it went up, I was ready to go to the next project. I thought, 'I'm done," I did what I needed to do, I don't need to…

The unspoken words, "I don't need to *keep on doing it*," hung in the air between Mr. Nevins and his wife, Mrs. Morse. She too left teaching. Teaching's uncertainty, the possibility of something "wonderful or terrible" happening every day was exciting but also "exhausted" her. She was tired, and also wanted something else:

> I saw my life stretching out in front of me. I really enjoyed the school setting I was in, but I think I also saw…I wanted some other type of challenge.

Other teachers did not yet leave teaching, but were thinking of leaving. Mr. Burke, for example, had dreams he wanted to realize "outside of the classroom:"

> I just finished up my sixth year, and it's starting to occur to me I still have goals outside of the classroom. If I could do anything, I'd be a writer for 30 Rock or one of those pithy TV shows or something using creative talent. But I feel like in order for me to really dig in and help kids reach their dreams I have to let go of mine, and at thirty-one I'm not really willing to do that.

In his wishful "if I could do anything" and in the firmness with which he believes he has to "let go" of his dreams in order to continue teaching, there is a sense of frustration and perhaps a shadow of unhappiness. There is also a sense of teachers' fulfillment and the fulfillment of children's capacity as antithetical. Ms. Miller talked about this:

> I remember a year ago I was trying to nail you down on whether or not you were staying. You were like, "Well what about me? What about my happiness?" And at first I wanted to say, "Bullshit, O'Brien. Your happiness doesn't matter. We are here for the kids." And that is a missionary type ideology that I had a huge critique of and hated, and then I heard myself say it. Because there is something wrong with the idea that not everybody should win, or that some people should sacrifice for other people.

What is "winning" in teaching? Is it the satisfaction of "helping kids reach their dreams," as Mr. Burke says? Does that satisfaction come at the price of giving up one's own dreams or one's happiness? Teaching does not have to be "missionary" work, nor does it have to be conceptualized as "sacrifice for other people," whether those people are the children in the classroom or society at large that relies on the work of schooling. These two young teachers, however, did not seem to find what else teaching could be. For them, something was definitely missing in the space of teaching.

But most teachers in these conversations were staying in the profession. Ms. Fields said that she was in teaching for "the long haul" and Mr. Geller said he was "going to be here for a while." Mr. Grant spoke of "being very happy" making a living being a teacher and Ms. Levy said she "couldn't imagine doing anything else." Ms. Gill spoke of meeting with her own grade-school teacher to talk about teaching, "complaining," but also "talking about how really fun it is." And there were the teachers who taught for a long time, more than twenty-five years, like Mrs. Tully and Mrs. Wayans, who were "still excited by teaching," and Mrs. English, who said she "didn't imagine doing it for that long, but it has stayed that interesting."

But it was when teachers spoke about teaching as a *way of being* that I got the closest to understanding teaching as a space in which to dwell. This was when Mrs. Ferner said that teaching was "a really good way of life," or when Mrs. Adams said, at the end of her conversation, "Teaching is a very wonderful…it's not a job, it is an expression of life." These ways of conceptualizing teaching are not only about the spatial and temporal aspects of dwelling, as in being in some place for some length of time, but something more. Heidegger (1954) speaks of dwelling in terms of belonging:

> In what does the essence of dwelling consist? Let us listen once more to what language says to us. The Old Saxon *wuon*, the Gothic *wunian*, mean to remain, to stay in place. But the Gothic *wunian* says more distinctly how this remaining is experienced. *Wunian* means to be at peace, to be brought to peace, to remain in peace. To dwell, to be set at peace, means to remain at peace within the free sphere that safeguards each thing in its essence.

Purpose in teaching, then, can be not only in fulfilling the goals we have for our children and for education, but in *teaching itself*, in inhabiting a life where we can dwell in peace. And more than peace—if teaching can be rolling Sisyphus' rock up the mountain, so it can be loving that mountain. It can be loving that rock. Camus ended his essay with the following words:

> Happiness and the absurd are two sons of the same earth…The rock is still rolling. Each atom of that stone, each mineral flake of that night-

> filled mountain, in itself forms a world. The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy.

Even when we leave teaching, it can dwell in us. I know it does in me. My yearning to be back in the classroom is a desire to re-live that absurdity. But it is also is a longing for happiness, to be at peace in my being because I belong to my work. I hear this yearning for dwelling in the words of Mr. Nevins, who was "done with" teaching and yet seemed unable to lose it. He said:

> I think it stays with me. If I see kids on the subway doing something stupid, I am sometimes very close to saying "What are you doing? Come on, stop, cut it out, back in your seat, I am calling your house." When I go to sleep and I am anxious, I sometimes have a dream about teaching again. But I also have a fantasy…if you put me in the absolute hardest class in New York City, could I teach? You know, could I teach them a Robert Frost poem, in fifty minutes? I'd like to think that I can.

<p style="text-align:center">******</p>

CONCLUSION: "YES, BUT…"

Raymond Carver's short story "What We Talk About When We Talk About Love" finishes on a note of silence. The two couples who spent the evening drinking and talking have come to an end of their conversation. Carver writes:

> Mel turned his glass over. He spilled it out on the table. "Gin's gone," Mel said. Terri said, "Now what?"
>
> I could hear my heart beating. I could hear everyone's heart. I could hear the human noise we sat there making, not one of us moving, not even when the room went dark.

This portrait of teaching is composed of listening to "the human noise" teachers make when talking about teaching, adding my own noise—my own heartbeat—to theirs. I constructed this portrait attending to its conception, structure, form, and coherence (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). "Out of the torrent of data, the flow of perspectives and perceptions," writes Lawrence-Lightfoot, "the portraitist must identify the overarching story…the vision, the embracing gestalt that will give the narrative focus and meaning…this conception must reflect the weight of empirical evidence, the infusion of emotional meaning, and the aesthetic of narrative development." The conception I articulated in my portrait is that when teachers talk about teaching, we talk about four essential phenomena: love, learning, power, and purpose. These phenomena form the basis of the portrait's structure, its cornerstones. The "girders" of this portrait are the themes that emerged, such as the nature of respect in loving children, the question of motivation in learning, the manifestations of control in power, and the reasons for teaching in purpose. The form of the portrait comes in the empirical, emotional, and aesthetic choices I made to animate the structure. In my selection of "stories, examples, illustrations, illusions, ironies," I tried to give complexity and clarity, subtlety and shape, to this portrait of teaching.

It is this portrait's coherence, resonance and integrity that I want to address in this short conclusion. You, reader, are part of this portrait, part of this story. You are sitting in the room after all has been said, hearing "everyone's heart, the human noise we are making." And you hear the beating of your own heart—your response to this portrait of teaching and your own thoughts, feelings, and experiences of teaching itself. I certainly hope that this portrait held enough narrative coherence, made enough sense, for you to have a response. Lawrence-Lightfoot speaks of a portrait's resonance in terms of "recognition that one feels in reading the narrative," delineating two varieties of response: a *yes, of course* and a *yes, but*. The authenticity of this portrait of teaching—its validity—is the degree to which your reading of it evokes the *yes, of course* response, the degree to which teaching is "recognizable" in it, and the degree to which it resonates with your own experiences and conceptualizations of teaching. And yet, although every portraitist wants her work to resonate, I propose that the *yes, but* response to this portrait of teaching has its place and serves a purpose.

There are many places where you might have disagreed, doubted, or felt you didn't have enough. For example, you might have thought of all the things about teaching that were *not* talked about, such as teachers' relationships with parents, how lonely the labor of teaching can be, teachers' political organizing, or the experience of supervision and evaluation in teaching, to give just a few examples. You might have thought that teaching's essential phenomena—love, learning, power, and purpose—should not be so clearly delineated and much more interrelated. You might have thought this conception of teaching is incomplete. You might have disagreed with my interpretations, like one of my friends, who thought that Mr. Nevins writing about the "ordinariness" of the student who died was *not* an act of love, contrary to the meaning I made of his actions and story. You might have questioned my analysis, for example if pleasure and enjoyment should "count" as love in teaching, as another

one of my friends asked me; her own study and theorizing of love as a relation between human beings made her question what I wrote. You might have found my overall stance too generous, my search for goodness so strong that it eclipsed other perspectives. You might have interpreted something a teacher said or a whole story completely differently.

If any of this was your experience, or if you had other *yes, but* responses, I am satisfied in two regards. Mr. Drake talked about children making sense out of life, finding and making meaning. "So you make space for it," he said of his teaching. Similarly, your *yes, but* response might mean that this portrait left space for you—space for your own interpretation, space to interact with mine. It might also mean that there was enough substance, not just space, for your own meaning-making. Second, in differing from my interpretation—in argument with this portrait—you are thinking about teaching, making sense of its meaning, understanding it more deeply. That is the purpose of this portrait, ultimately. Hahn (1990) wrote:

> When we talk about teaching, what are we really talking about? What do we learn about the subject, about ourselves, from listening to what is said and not said, the words we use and the silences behind the words? What we hear, expressed in an interplay of meanings, are our doubts and our aspirations, the fears that plague us and the hopes that sustain.

In listening to these teachers' voices and to my interpretation of them, you hear "an interplay of meanings" of teaching from which your own is indelible. The meaning you make of teaching is what defines your relation to it, whether you are a teacher yourself, parent of a school-age child, school administrator, teacher educator, researcher, or policymaker. To the teachers' voices that inform our meaning-making of teaching, we owe a response. To paraphrase Carver:

> *You* could hear your heart beating. *You* could hear everyone's heart. *You* could hear the human noise we sat there making, not one of us moving, not even when the room went dark. *Now what*?

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VIII   IMPLICATIONS: LISTENING TO TEACHERS

> *Most teachers, it seems, have learned simply to "shut up and teach."*
> *The atmosphere has been so relentlessly damning and thoughtless about our work these past few years, it's hard to know where to start engaging with the public. The stakes—the voices of those who work with children daily, the building of educators' capacities to advocate for those they teach, the valuing of teaching as a profession—have rarely been higher. But I believe they are the right stakes, and the ones on which not only our educational but also our civic lives will thrive.*
> *(Shieh, 2012)*

I began this thesis by posing the question: when teachers speak of teaching, what do they say? This question is asked in a present-day context where teaching is much talked about and where teachers' talk of teaching is almost always filtered by others' conceptions, preoccupations, and interests. Talk by teachers to teachers about teaching, completely voluntary and unconstrained by topic or agenda, is what the StoryCorps National Teachers Initiative offers in splendid abundance. Listening to these conversations offers an unparalleled opportunity to understand the work of teaching from the perspective of those doing the work and choosing to talk about it. Because teaching is an uncertain craft, I suggested poetics of teaching as a listening lens. Because the experiences of teaching are expressed in prosaic language, I suggested paying attention to conversational dialogue, metaphors and stories.

In a brief literature review, I established the paucity of educational research in which teacher talk is not mediated by the researcher. I then developed a clear conceptualization of teacher voice by reviewing the conventional social science perspectives—voice as political, phenomenological, and relational—and articulating my own. First, I suggested a frame with which to understand teacher voice: considering teachers as the poets of the classroom. This frame positions teacher voice as the source of knowledge and understanding about teaching, and confirms teaching's poetics; teacher voice is where we can "hear, feel, see" the humanity, uncertainty, and unfinalizability of teaching. I then developed a two-part conceptualization of teacher voice: teacher voice as language and as text. As language, teacher voice has form

(metaphors and stories), function (representing and presenting teaching experience), and an essential nature (prosaic). As text, teacher voice is something to be "read" and studied critically.

Having conceptualized teacher voice, I moved on to the challenge of researching it. The SCNTI teacher-to-teacher conversations posed several empirical dilemmas, not the least of which were the lack of methodological precedent and the "chaotic" nature of unfettered human conversation. I proposed a methodological solution as unique as the data, an innovative empirical approach to teacher voice that combined hermeneutics, metaphor analysis, and portraiture. I described the nature of my research inquiry, my data sample, and the multiple analytic steps comprising the method. I concluded the research design chapter with a discussion on validity and interpretation, highlighting the idea of interpretation as a three-way encounter between the voice/text, the interpreter/researcher, and the reader.

I then provided the background necessary for readers to engage with my interpretation of teaching based on teachers' voices: the United States (particularly NYC) public K-12 teaching landscape in the year 2011-2012, descriptions of the teachers whose voices I heard, and a structural account of their conversations. The last 200 pages you read was the answer to the original inquiry—when teachers speak of teaching, what do they say?—in the form of a portrait, a portrait of teaching composed of teachers' voices. I found that when teachers talk about teaching, they talk about four phenomena: love, learning, power, and purpose. I ended the portrait with an invitation to respond to the teachers' talk about teaching, to compose an answer to the question *now what*?

In this last chapter, I speak to the *so what*. I have answered the research question I posed, but there remains the consequence of answering it: articulating the value of listening to and making meaning of teachers' talk about teaching. The *so what* of this research study is my

response to these teachers' voices, in the form of recommendations for educational research on teaching. I begin with the voice of a teacher, Mrs. Thomas:

> A friend of mine who is studying the sociology of education was saying that one of the authors she was reading brought up the concept of discourse, what is the discourse that we're having. We're not having any. We are not talking about education.

I found Mrs. Thomas' statement disconcerting—of course we are talking about education! Isn't that all we do? Rather than discuss the veracity of her statement or make conjectures about her participation in education discourses, I would rather ask the question: what does it mean when a teacher says that we are not talking about education? What does it mean when our discourses about education are non-existent—literally immaterial—to a teacher? What does it mean when conversation has no meaning or value to the people being talked about?

I propose that listening to what teachers say about teaching is an act of adding teacher voice to our education discourses. This voice brings tremendous value, both symbolic and concrete. Teachers may not heed—or even hear—our public, policy, and research conversations about teaching if they are not themselves in the conversation *as speakers*. To bring back Arendt's (1958) words: "the actor, the doer of deeds, is possible only if he is at the same time the speaker of words." In this regard, Mrs. Thomas' words are not only disconcerting but also defiant: there is no conversation about teaching unless teachers are part of it. Listening to what teachers say about teaching acknowledges the imperative of their participation in our education discourses and promotes the possibility of dialogue about teaching between those who do the work and those who regulate it. But listening to teachers talk about teaching does more than add their voice to education discourses, as necessary as that is. Listening to teachers' meanings and conceptualizations of teaching presents a chance to respond to their voice, to respond to the world in which teaching exists. As Ricoeur (1979, p.225-6) said:

> If language does not exist for itself, but in the view of the world that it opens up and uncovers, then the interpretation of language is not distinct from the interpretation of the world…To understand the world and to change it are fundamentally the same thing.

I propose three concrete ways for educational research to respond to teacher voice: 1) seek and confirm the deepest things about teaching; 2) advance a poetics of teaching; and 3) promote a scholarship of voice. In these three ways of responding to teacher voice, education researchers can "open up and uncover" teaching and research on teaching, both.

<u>Confirm the Deepest Things about Teaching</u>

Educational researchers should respond to teacher voice by *seeking and confirming the deepest things about teaching.* Mr. Drake was the teacher who referred to Buber's concept of confirming the deepest things in another as something he "hung on to" when he started teaching, a "thought that mattered." Quaker philosopher Steere (1982) was there when Buber said that, at a Quaker meeting:

> He told us that it was a great thing to transcend barriers and to meet another human being, but that *meeting* another across a barrier was not the greatest thing that one man could do for another. There was still something greater. The greatest thing, he continued, that any man could do for another was to *confirm* the deepest thing he has within him. After this, he sat down as abruptly as he has risen. There was little more to say. And there is little more to say about the greatest thing that a teacher can do for a student. He can believe in him; he can have faith, especially at times when all the conventional indicators point the other way, in the student; and he can confirm the deepest thing the student has in him.

I first used this concept to develop my interpretation of what is love in teaching, arguing that this essential relation—recognizing and confirming the deepest thing in another human being—is how teachers can love their students. Now, I use the idea of confirming the deepest thing in another to characterize the relation between educational research and teaching. Educational researchers must do more, "something greater," than "meet" teaching. If

educational research has something to offer the practice of teaching, the way a teacher has something to offer a student, then perhaps nothing can be greater than these three actions: believing what teachers tell us, having faith in the profession when "conventional indicators point the other way," and asking what are the deepest things about teaching we should recognize, understand, and confirm.

Another teacher, Mrs. Thomas, said something similar in spirit—that children always tell the truth, if we take the time to listen. I take this as a lesson for educational research as well: *what are the "truths" that teachers tell us?* Of course, to even acknowledge that what teachers say are "truths" is the stance that Buber asks us to take, the stance of belief and confirmation. Moreover, to ask what truths teachers tell us is to consider teacher voice as testimony. Oral historian Janesick (2007, p. 118) writes that one prototype of oral history is testimony, whereby the stories told by victims and perpetrators are documented in order to facilitate reconciliation and some measure of social justice. Janesick refers to "four types of truth," a categorization attributed to Desmond Tutu. There is "factual, forensic" truth, "personal narrative" truth, "social, cultural" truth, and "healing, restorative" truth. Seeking and confirming the deepest things about teaching and asking what truths teachers tell us are not just philosophical and epistemological stances for educational researchers. This directly concerns *what* we research: what we choose to study and understand, the questions we choose to pursue. Do our research projects seek the deepest things about teaching to confirm them? Do our research questions consider teacher voice as testimony that is not only factual and personal, but also social, historical, and potentially transformative?

What should educational researchers study and seek to understand about teaching? I can suggest several "deep things" or "truths" to pursue. For example:

1) What does it mean—in the experience of teachers and students, in the organization of schools, and in the making of policy—that teaching is conceptualized as an "inside/outside" space and that teachers "can't talk about teaching" with those who don't teach, that others "do not understand what they go through?" What does it matter to teacher education that teachers say they have to "give up their dreams in order for students to reach theirs," or that teaching is an exhausting "art" that leaves no room for another?

2) What does it mean to think of teaching in terms of existential well-being? What might be the consequences of the wild swinging from misery to fulfillment in the experience of teaching? What does "teaching open doors while school closes them" mean for the people doing the work of teaching, student learning, and the institution of schooling?

3) How do our conceptualizations of teaching as a helping, noble profession contribute to its material inadequacies and professional demise?

4) If we were to go through a Freirean process of alphabetization and conscientization with teachers, what generative words might they produce to express their reality?

The asking of these questions and the attempt to answer them are efforts toward truths, truths that are facts, personal experiences, records of history, and ways to move forward. These questions are just a few examples of what is conventionally called "future directions for research," something that I would like to reframe as a *meaningful response to teacher voice*. When educational researchers listen to teachers talk about teaching, we should respond with further truth-seeking and confirmation. We should respond with searching for the deep.

Advance a Poetics of Teaching

The second response to teacher voice educational researchers can make is to *advance a poetics of teaching*. In addition to its four key elements—a deeply human vision, a holistic

perspective, goodness, and considering teaching as an offering—poetics of teaching frames several issues of importance to educational researchers. The first of these concerns the researcher's own disposition and outlook: the need to have a poetic sensibility in order to "handle responsibly and responsively" (Hansen, 2004, p.137) the work of researching and understanding teaching. Second, poetics of teaching implies that education research be an act of critical appreciation (p. 130):

> a mode of being that merges understanding and respect, with the latter not denoting approval, per se, but the act of taking people and things seriously…fusing a sympathetic regard toward others with a reflective, inquiring disposition.

Third, poetics of teaching says that education research must have hope and heart. Featherstone (1989, p. 378) writes of "a music missing from our discussions of teaching," and that "much educational discourse has been an expression of fear." When education research aims for a human and holistic understanding of teaching, our work makes the statement that humanity and wholeness are not an ideal, but a reality.

Advancing a poetics of teaching means assuming certain ways of being as educational researchers: cultivating poetic sensibility, regarding research as critical appreciation, and having "hope and heart." But more than ways of being, advancing poetics of teaching means advancing a conceptualization of teaching that supports it, rather than diminishes it. Consider how much of this description of teaching (Smith, 2010, v) is true:

> Policy-makers and legislators mistake neo-liberal assumptions for common sense and think of teachers, whether at school, university, or any other level, basically as a labour force: to be trained—if at all—and paid as cheaply as is consonant with securing competitive examination results. Their essential role is to manage their classes, to transmit knowledge and to deliver a pre-determined curriculum in whose content and style they are to have little or no say. If they demur, it is because they are defending their own interests.

A poetics of teaching works against such a conceptualization of teaching. Teaching is more than this—and when it is not (because this description of teaching is not just a concept, but reality), educational researchers must insist that it is. Research can often be an act of reduction: understanding becomes synonymous with categorization, and "what works" assumes ever narrower forms. When educational researchers advance a poetics of teaching, they can expand—instead of constrict—the practices of both research and teaching. If by seeking and confirming truths about teaching educational researchers *deepen* the conversation about education, then by advancing a poetics of teaching they *widen* it.

<u>Promote a Scholarship of Voice</u>

There is one more way educational researchers can respond to teacher voice. In Carver's short story, one of the characters says: "it ought to make us feel ashamed when we talk like we know what we're talking about when we talk above love." I suggest that at times—many times, perhaps—educational researchers talk about teaching like we know what we're talking about. But we don't. Our research endeavors are almost never based on teacher voice, not the "free" teacher-to-teacher talk about teaching that the SCNTI conversations contain. Because we ask the questions and set the agenda, the teacher voice in response to our inquiry is already circumscribed. Indeed, when we use teacher talk to answer our research questions and preoccupations, we implicitly limit the meaning of teacher voice to that which answers our concern—the rest is "not usable." But a hermeneutic approach understands teacher voice to have its own integrity, to be a "meaningful entity" (Nixon, 2008) with or without our research pursuits. I wonder about educational research on teaching that does not more fully ground itself in relatively unconstrained teacher-to-teacher talk about teaching. And I wonder

about the purpose of educational research on teaching if does not seriously consider issues of meaning, being, and "truths that matter" (Featherstone, 1989, p. 376).

As an antidote, educational researchers can *promote scholarship of voice.* This is a fitting response to hearing teacher voice, one that honors it and invites more. I build my understanding of a scholarship of voice on Featherstone's (1989) concepts of voice *in* scholarship and *for* scholarship. Scholarship of voice stands in contrast to "the arbitrary pegs on which much objective scholarship hangs and the false airs of impartiality that tend to mask politics in another form." Rather, it is "a way to speak of important matters in a human voice," "a thoughtful and scholarly way to deal with our commitments," and "the sound of a human voice making sense of other voices" (p. 375). This is what I tried to do in writing this portrait of teaching composed of teachers' voices, taking seriously the meanings of teaching as an essential phenomenon of human life. Portraiture is a scholarship of voice; so is hermeneutics and so can be metaphor analysis. So can be ethnography, participatory action research, in-depth interviewing, and critical discourse analysis. But regardless of method, what matters is that educational research on teaching is not devoid of "storytelling, lively in its speech and capable of dealing with issues of quality and value" (p. 376). As scholarship of voice, educational research on teaching can emulate teaching itself (p. 377):

> Teachers convey broad truths and complex meanings in narrative fashion. All teachers are storytellers in that they are artists of human intentionality, trying to form a learning community around a subject, winning their students over to be themselves tellers of better stories and makers of new meanings. Storytelling, by its nature, is equipped with a certain modesty in that people take stories on their own terms.

If educational research on teaching can become a scholarship of voice, it could be a form of storytelling in which teaching is the subject and teacher voice is the narrator. The SCNTI conversations, as postmodern oral history (Janesick, 2007), are a treasure upon which a

scholarship of voice in educational research on teaching can be built. The capacity to develop a scholarship of voice, based on teacher voice, is right there in front of us.

Listening to teacher voice means responding to it. This is the implication of my study, which attempts to accomplish the recommendations I make for other educational researchers. I attempted to find and confirm the deepest things about teaching. I advanced a poetics of teaching with both the method and findings of my research. And I sincerely wish this study to promote a scholarship of voice, to show that it is possible to "make truth that matters." To have a scholarship of voice means to have solidarity with other educational researchers, to have "a learning community around a subject," a community of scholars who take teaching seriously enough to listen to it. So I end this thesis with an invitation to my audience of educational researchers, but also to others—teachers, administrators, policy-makers, parents, and anyone who cares to understand teaching—to join and continue the project of listening and interpreting, of listening and thinking, of listening and telling. Jackson (1995, p. 156) quotes literary critic and philosopher Hélène Cixous to perfectly express my invitation to listen and respond to teaching:

> Helene Cixous calls it "a coming into language." "You don't need to master. To demonstrate, explain, grasp. And then to lock away in a strongbox. To pocket a part of the riches of the world. But rather to transmit: to make things loved by making them known"

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IX   APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
RESEARCH QUESTION TERMS

What meanings and conceptualizations of teaching are articulated by New York City public school teachers who participated in the StoryCorps National Teachers Initiative oral history project?

> ➢ How do they describe their experience of teaching?
> ➢ What stories do they tell? What metaphors do they use?

Term	Definition
meaning	the sense, significance and import of a word, sentence, symbol, etc…; the purpose underlying or intended by speech or action; the inner or symbolic interpretation, value or message; the sense of an expression, its connotation
conceptualization	the formation of a general notion or idea out of experience, perception, etc.; the construction of an idea of something formed by combining and synthesizing its characteristics and particulars
teaching	being a teacher; doing the work of teaching; the actions, perceptions, feelings, and thoughts that comprise teaching; all that is perceived as, understood by, and remembered about teaching
articulate	to give clarity or distinction to; to utter clearly and distinctly, pronounce with clarity; to make the movements and adjustments of the speech organs necessary to utter a speech sound
NYC public school teachers	individuals employed by the New York City Department of Education as classroom teachers in grades K-12 during the 2011-2012 school year
participated	Teachers learned of the StoryCorps National Teachers Initiative via phone calls, emails, or personal contact with persons from one of the following organizations: American Federation of Teachers, Citizen Schools, College Summit, Coney Island Prep, Gateway to College, John F. Kennedy Magnet School Port Chester, Millennium Art Academy, National Educational Association, Queens High School for Teaching, Liberal Arts & Social Sciences, TeachersCount, Urban Assembly School for Law and Justice, U.S. Department of Education Validus Prep Academy, WNET, Zinn Education Project. Contributing their time and conversation to SCNTI meant scheduling

	a recording session facilitated by a StoryCorps employee, determining with whom they wanted to have this conversation about teaching, having the conversation, receiving a studio-quality CD of the conversation, and signing a release form granting permission for their conversation to be archived at the Library of Congress and for StoryCorps to use in any further derivative material.
StoryCorps National Teachers Initiative	This 18-month Initiative celebrated the work of public school teachers across the country. By recording, sharing, and preserving these stories, we called attention to the invaluable contributions teachers have made to this nation, honored those who have embraced the profession as their calling, encouraged teaching as a career choice, and helped to unify the country behind its teachers.
oral history project	information of historical or sociological importance usually obtained by interviews with persons whose experiences and memories are representative or whose lives have been of special significance; a book, article, recording, or transcription of such information
describe	to tell or depict in written or spoken words; give an account of; to pronounce, as by a designating term or phrase
experience	observing, encountering, or undergoing things as they occur in the course of time; the range of human experience; knowledge or practical wisdom gained from what one has observed, encountered, or undergone; the totality of the cognitions given by perception; all that is perceived, understood, and remembered
story	a recounting of something specific that has happened, beyond description
metaphor	a term or a phrase that refers to something to which it is not literally applicable, suggesting a resemblance or meaning; to use metaphor is to see, describe, or interpret one phenomenon in terms of another

APPENDIX B
SAMPLE DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

ID	RELATION BETWEEN SPEAKERS	PSEUDONYM	AGE	GENDER	RACE OR ETHNICITY	YEARS TEACHING	GRADE LEVEL & SUBJECT	RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION
1_DDA 001081	colleagues	Rob Geller	25	M	B	4th	MS/social studies	C
		Lucy Fields	30	F	W	8th	MS/social studies	J
2_DDA 001156	colleagues	John Borden	25	M	W	2nd	MS/music	s
		David Pelles	26	M	W	3rd	MS/social studies	s
3_DDA 001157	colleagues	Jennifer Vindal	30	F	A	8th	MS	C
		Vera Smith	42	F	B	2nd	MS	C
4_DDA 001159	colleagues	Sandra Cameron	42	F	IA	17th	MS/principal	C
		Lisa Linden	27	F	L	5th	MS/bilingual ed.	C
5_DDA 001160	colleagues	Peter Cohen	24	M	AL	1st	MS/English	s
		Elizabeth Lang	27	F	A	---	MS	B
6_DDC 000964	colleagues	Rita Wayans	55	F	B	25th	HS/info tech	C
		Rose Tully	59	F	B	25th	HS	C
7_LMN 002708	colleagues	Jeffrey O'Brien	27	M	W	5th	HS/math	---
		Jasmine Miller	33	F	W	3rd	HS/art, chemistry	---
8_LMN 002709	colleagues	Jake Burke	30	M	W	6th	HS/English	---
		Bill Wang	26	M	A	4th	HS	---
9_LMN 002878	friends	Rachel Thomas	67	F	W	40+	Daycare	---
		Dena Mays	26	F	W	1st	HS	---

ID	RELATION BETWEEN SPEAKERS	PSEUDONYM	AGE	GENDER	RACE OR ETHNICITY	YEARS TEACHING	GRADE LEVEL & SUBJECT	RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION
10_LMN 002889	friends	Chase Lowry	29	M	W	5th	HS/math	---
		Shaun Simmons	30	M	A	---	HS/math	---
11_LMN 002890	colleagues	Harriet Weiner	22	F	---	1st	MS	J
		Michael Grant	28	M	W	3+	MS	
12_LMN 002891	colleagues	Alicia Baker	32	F	W	5+	HS	---
		Andrew Solomon	27	M	B	---	HS	---
13_LMN 002892	colleagues	Janice Ferner	60	F	---	25+	ES/principal	---
		Larissa English	52	F	---	30+	ES	J
14_LMN 002905	spouses	Adam Nevins	32	M	W	5th	HS/English	J
		Michelle Morse	32	F	W	6+	HS/history	J
15_NYD 00320	colleagues	Zoya Gill	26	F	L	4th	HS	---
		Ariadna Levy	28	F	W	6th	HS	---
		Jerry Wells	33	M	W	10th	HS	s
16_NYD 00322	colleagues	Tiffany Royce	55	F	NAB	25+	HS/principal	C
		Lana Quinn	27	F	W	5+	HS/guidance	C
17_PRD 000104	friends	Joy Adams	64	F	W	35+	ES	J
		Aaron Drake	58	M	W	25+	MS/history	Q

(--) indicates that the information was not available from StoryCorps, nor able to be inferred from the conversation

        Gender: M=male; F=female;

        Race or Ethnicity: W=white; B=Black; A=Asian; L=Latina/o; NA=Native American; IA=Italian American;

        Grade Level & Subject: ES=elementary school; MS=middle school; HS=high school;

        Religious Affiliation: C=Christian; J=Jewish; Q=Quaker; B=Buddhist; s=secular

APPENDIX C
DATA SAMPLE COMPARED TO ALL SCNTI

	NYC Conversations (N=17 conversations; 35 teachers)	All Conversations (N=666 conversations; 1398 teachers)
Conversation Partners	teacher-with-teacher	teacher-with-administrator, aunt, best friend, boyfriend, brother, brother-in-law, buddy, classmate, client, co-worker, cohort member, colleague, colleague, co-teacher, counselor, cousin, current student, dad, daughter, daughter-in-law, employee, father, former teacher, former student, friend, girlfriend, grand-daughter, husband, mentee, mentor, mother, mother of student, niece, parent, parent of student, principal, professor, romantic partner, roommate, sister, sister-in-law, son, sorority sister, spouse, stepson, stepmom, wife, other, unspecified
Female	N= 21 (60%)	N = 905 (65%)
Native American	N= 1 (2 %)	N = 32 (2%)
Asian	N= 4 (11 %)	N = 43 (3%)
Black	N= 5 (15 %)	N = 349 (25%)
Latina/o	N= 3 (10 %)	N = 187 (13%)
White	N= 22 (62%)	N = 706 (51%)
Other	N= 0 (0%)	N = 81 (6%)

APPENDIX D
DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

	ANALYTIC STEP	METHODOLOGICAL DOMAIN			
		Hermeneutics	*Portraiture*	*Metaphor Analysis*	*General Qualitative Research*
1	Record a conversation about teaching with someone close to me (another teacher); listen to the recorded conversation	Distanciation	Relationship; Voice as autobiography		
2	Write memo describing my pre-understandings (including theory and etic themes), projections, and preoccupations	Distanciation	Voice as preoccupation		
3	Listen to all 45 recorded conversations	Silence	Context; Listening for voice		
4	Write "listening notes" for each conversation after hearing each recording again (2nd listening)	Response	Voice as witness		Listening notes
5	Transcribe each conversation	Fixing speech into text			
6	Read each transcript	First reading			

	ANALYTIC STEP	METHODOLOGICAL DOMAIN			
		Hermeneutics	*Portraiture*	*Metaphor Analysis*	*General Qualitative Research*
7	Write initial response to each conversation after reading each transcript	Naïve interpretation	Impressionistic records		
8	Read each transcript for a second time	Second reading			
9	Analyze each transcript for themes (Atlas.ti)	Structural analysis: themes			Pattern coding Integrative memos
10	Analyze each transcript for metaphors	Structural analysis: deep structure (metaphor)	Voice discerning other voices	Identify and interpret metaphors	Integrative memos
11	Identify alternative interpretations and connect with theoretical constructs and etic themes	Fusion of horizons	Deviant voice		Integrative memos
12	Construct emergent themes through synthesis, convergence, and contrast		Emergent themes; Voice as interpretation		Integrative memos
13	Write portrait	Interpreted whole; Appropriation	Aesthetic whole; Voice in dialogue		
14	Share my portrait with NYC public school teachers and others	Return text to the world	Resonance and authenticity		

Detailed Description of Analytic Steps

1) First, I *simulated the SCNTI experience for myself* by asking a close friend (and teacher) to have a conversation with me about teaching; I recorded this conversation and listened to it. In experiencing something similar to the teachers whose conversations I am analyzing, I was consciously developing empathetic regard: "What would I feel like if I were in her shoes?" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 146). By engaging in the same human act that produced the data I am using for my research, I was attempting symmetry, a "sense of respect, acceptance, and appreciation for the actors' contribution to the work" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 153). I was also practicing *distanciation*, the crucial hermeneutic act in which the interpreter identifies the professional and personal pre-understandings (Von Post, 1999) that she brings to the work. By engaging in the act of talking about teaching, I was literally—if not yet critically—bringing these understandings to the surface. Finally, I was beginning to discern my voice as a portraitist, specifically voice as preoccupation and voice as autobiography (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 87).

2) Next, I formally engaged in *distanciation* by writing the projections and preoccupations that I bring to the topic of teaching and teachers talking about their work; the linguistic and cultural resources that I bring to the texts (Moss, 2005); theoretical constructs (such as the uncertainty of teaching, or the existential nature of metaphor) that inform my understanding; and etic themes and metaphors about the experience of teaching from the literature.

3) Third, I simply *listened to all 17 conversations*. Hermeneutic listening begins with silence, an acknowledgement that one is being addressed by the text (Binding & Tapp, 2008). With this act of respect, I also addressed what Frisch (2008, p. 223-224) calls the "Deep Dark Secret of oral history" or the paradox of orality—namely that "nobody spends much time listening to recorded interviews" because of the "core assumption that oral documents are impossible to work with as a dimension of oral history practice." As a result, meaning is lost and "texture rendered inaccessible…the potential of audio documents to support high-impact, vivid, thematic and analytic engagement is largely untapped." By taking the time to "just" listen, I was able to tap into this potential. Moreover, this recorded oral speech is "the setting—physical, geographic, temporal, historical, cultural, aesthetic—within which the action takes place" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 41) and is a precious resource for my interpretation and understanding. Finally, listening allowed me to attend to portraiture's dimension of listening for voice—"seeking it out, trying to capture its texture and cadence, exploring its meaning and transporting its sound and message…being attentive to silence" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 100-101).

4) Fourth, I *wrote listening notes* for each conversation. In hermeneutical analysis, the act of listening to/reading the text creates a connection to it and an obligation to respond (Binding, 2008). Because "there are worlds of meaning that lie beyond words and nobody pretends for a moment that the transcript is in any real sense a better representation than the voice itself" (Frisch, p. 223), it is to this literal embodiment of voice that we owe reflection and response. This is not yet analysis, but more like musings or notations on themes identified, interesting

quotes, what was not said, etc. (Dryden-Peterson, 2013). There is also something of the portraitist's voice as witness that can come out in these notes—being open and receptive to all stimuli, being a newcomer on the edge (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 87).

5) In the fifth analytic step, I *transcribed each conversation*. Paul Ricoeur deeply considered the question of what is a text, the distinction between the spoken and the written word, and the relation of text to speech. His definition, "a text is any discourse fixed by writing" (1981, p. 145), concerns mostly the relation of the message and its medium—the immediate vocal, physiognomic, or gestural expression replaced by inscription (1976). By the act of transcription, I transformed these conversations into something else—written text. This necessary transformation does not come without a price: "the written text is an artifact…the word, concretized or "made flesh," can transcend context and gather through time extended symbolic connotations, can be used and discarded, reused and recycled" (Hodder, 1998, p. 112). I therefore consider transcription both politically and practically. Green, Franquiz & Dixon (1997) theorized transcribing as political because it is a situated act, an interpretive process, and a practice of representation. These issues are not just ideological, but embedded in the choices I made as a transcriber; I used transcript editing guidelines of the oral historians Frisch (1990) and Wilmsen (2001), as well as the transcribing, editing, and processing guidelines of an operational historical organization (Minnesota Historical Society, 2001).

6) Next, I *read each transcript*. In hermeneutic analysis, this initial reading is called the first reading (Haggstrom, 1991; Steeves, 2007; Wiklund, 2010). It is characterized as reading a text from beginning to end, without interruption, in order to acquire a general sense of the text's content in relation to the research question.

7) Seventh, I *wrote an initial interpretive response to each text*. In hermeneutics, this is called *naïve interpretation* (Wiklund, 2002) and in portraiture this is the writing of *impressionistic records* (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 188). The term "naïve" belies the significance of this analytic step. There are five intended outcomes of the first reading followed by a naïve interpretation: (1) spontaneous interpretation; (2) examination of the influence of pre-understandings and projections; (3) relating of the interpretation to the theoretical constructs and etic themes; (4) naming possible alternate interpretations; and (5) generating a list of questions for the text (Wiklund, 2002). In parallel, impressionistic records are "ruminative, thoughtful pieces that identify emerging hypotheses, suggest interpretations, describe shifts in perspective, [and] point to puzzles and dilemmas (methodological, conceptual, ethical) that need attention" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 188).

8) The writing of impressionistic records and naïve interpretations was followed by a *second reading of each transcript*. In hermeneutic analysis, interpretation is considered to be a genuine conversation between the interpreter and the text (Binding, 2008), as the interpreter interacts with the data yet keeps distance from it (Wiklund, 2002). In this second reading, I experienced the polarity of familiarity and strangeness (Vedder, 2002) as I became more acquainted with the texts while getting ready to make them more strange through deeper analysis.

9) The ninth step was to *analyze each transcript for themes through coding.* The second reading of text in hermeneutics is followed by a two-step structural analysis, where the first step is identifying themes in the narrative text. Most often, structural analysis is accomplished by coding and identification of themes (Haggstrom, 1994) where the interpretive effort is characterized by de-contextualizing and re-contextualizing (Wiklund, 2010). This movement between organizing data and finding patterns, on the one hand, and seeking connections between themes and depth, on the other is the "generative tension" between classification and complexity, codes and meaning, control and incoherence (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 192). I used Atlas.ti qualitative software, and augmented pattern coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994) with an ever-vigilant hermeneutic attention to the whole of the texts. I wrote *integrative memos* to clarify and link analytic themes and categories, elaborate ideas, and begin to attempt cohesiveness (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995).

10) This coding for themes was followed by *metaphor analysis.* This is the second step of structural analysis in hermeneutics—looking for deep structures in the text, beyond themes and narrative structure (Sheehan, 1999; Wiklund, 2002). Almost always, deep structure indicates a linguistic turn, a very close look at the words that make the text. This connects to portraiture's modality of voice as one that discerns other voices, when the researcher is "alert to the metaphors actors use to symbolize larger themes, the images they keep returning to, the words and expressions they use most often" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 100). The hermeneutic meaning of metaphor (Vedder, 2002) is that beyond being stylistic or figurative, it represents being and can open up new possibilities for interpretation and understanding. I followed the procedure established by metaphor scholars Cameron & Maslen (2010) to identify metaphors in the text, while retaining the advice of hermeneutic analysts (Sheehan, 1999; Zuniga, 1995) about the importance of context and the broader understanding of metaphorical aspects of language. I interpreted the metaphors in the hermeneutic tradition of inventing meaning that makes sense in the text, articulating that interpretation, and coming back to the whole conversation to test the sense of the interpretation (Sheehan, 1999). I continued writing *integrative memos.*

11) The eleventh step was *seeking alternative explanations* both within the text and by (re)connecting with theoretical constructs and etic themes. In hermeneutic analysis, the interpreter must continually ask questions of the text and seek alternative interpretations, counter-examples, and perspectives (Wiklund, 2002). For Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, this is the deviant voice: the perspectives and data that interpreters "never stop listening *for*, even as we become increasingly focused in our inquiry and certain in our analysis. The deviant voice is useful in drawing important contrasts, divergence…and in encouraging the skeptical counterintuitive stance that the researcher must maintain" (1997, p. 193). To this scrutiny of the transcripts (as well as my listening notes, impressionistic records, and integrative memos), I added a re-consideration of the theoretical constructs and etic themes which I brought to this inquiry. In hermeneutic analysis, the *fusion of horizons* refers to the integration of interpreter and text, the vibrant synthesis of the knowledge the interpreter brings to the text and the knowledge that the text brings to her (Von Post, 1999). I continued writing *integrative memos.*

12) The next step was the *construction of emergent themes*. Here, I used the modes of synthesis and contrast to draw out the emergent themes (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 193) that shaped my portrait. By identifying repetitive refrains and resonant metaphors, I articulated themes about teaching that the teachers expressed in these StoryCorps conversations. Among the convergent themes, I also found dissonant strains (p. 214) that are just as important in interpretation as the patterns that come together. The contrast between what can be synthesized and what remains standing on its own can be powerful for developing new meaning and understanding. This construction of emergent themes is portraiture's explication of voice as interpretation (p. 91). Here, I made meaning from the data through a particular interpretation, providing enough descriptive evidence so that there is space to make alternative meanings. I articulated these emergent themes in *integrative memos*.

13) The thirteenth step was *writing the portrait*. In hermeneutic analysis, the interpreted whole (Haggstrom, 1991) expands understanding, illuminates different ways of thinking, and provokes appropriation of new ways of being in the world (Wiklund, 2002). I wrote my findings—the meaning and experience of teaching articulated by NYC teachers in the StoryCorps conversations—in a holistic, narrative manner (Wiklund, 2010), making sure that my interpretation of these teachers' voices did not leave them out of the text that I produced. I aimed for symmetry, where my voice was in dialogue (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 103) with the conversations I heard, all of us on the pages of the portrait, together making meaning for the reader. As I constructed the aesthetic whole that is the portrait, I attended to the four dimensions articulated in portraiture: the presence of an overarching story; the structure of emergent themes; the intellectual, aesthetic and emotional forms that support this structure; and coherence (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 247).

14) The last step was to *check for resonance and authenticity*. The credibility and coherence of my portrait rests with the responses of three audiences—"the actors who will see themselves reflected in the story, the readers, and the portraitist herself" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 247). Because my research design does not include communication with the 35 teachers who participated in these 17 recorded conversations, I expanded the definition of the first audience (the actors/speakers) to include some NYC public school teachers with whom I have personal and professional contacts. Their reading of my portrait informed me of some degree of resonance—the possible insight, identification, and recognition (p. 260)—and authenticity in my portrait. In this manner, I satisfied the hermeneutic imperative to "return the text to the world," (Wiklund, 2010) by sharing the interpretations and meanings I have constructed and giving others a chance to respond and make their own meaning of these teachers' conversations.

APPENDIX E
METAPHOR IDENTIFICATION & ANALYSIS

Identifying metaphors in the conversation transcripts
1) Format conversation transcript with numbers.
2) Read through transcript, line-by-line, identifying and underlining the metaphors.
   a. Operational definition of linguistic metaphor: linguistic metaphors are words or phrases that can be justified as somehow anomalous or incongruent in the on-going discourse, but that can be made sense of through a transfer of meaning in the context. There is no claim that the speakers of the words intended these words or phrases to be taken metaphorically, nor that the listener/reader will interpret them as metaphor.
   b. Terminology: *Vehicle* is the incongruous words or phrases; *Topic* is the word, idea, or concept being made sense of through transfer of meaning
   c. Explicit metaphor topics may sometimes be present in the discourse, but are rare in spontaneous talk. Usually, the contrasting/incongruous metaphor vehicle words or phrases are picked out in the discourse flow in which topics remain implicit across significant stretches of talk.
3) Repeat procedure for each conversation transcript

Gathering the metaphor data
4) On an Excel sheet, list (in separate columns) the following: line number, transcript title, speaker, intonation unit (the phrase within which the metaphor is contained), and the metaphor.
   Example:

Line	Transcript	Speaker	Intonation Unit	Metaphor
357	09_Thomas&Mays	Mrs. Thomas	we don't know about the invisible	invisible
359	09_Thomas&Mays	Mrs. Thomas	looking at them without words	looking at them
177	09_Thomas&Mays	Mrs. Thomas	twisting the whole process	twisting
195	09_Thomas&Mays	Mrs. Thomas	you can't just shovel people into schools	shovel
186	09_Thomas&Mays	Mrs. Thomas	if we had smaller classrooms	smaller

<u>Analyzing Metaphors</u>

5) After listing all the metaphors in all the transcripts, sort all the metaphors into vehicle groups, words that reflect the basic meaning of the metaphors.
Example:

Line	Transcript	Speaker	Intonation Unit	Metaphor	Vehicle Group
357	09_Thomas&Mays	Mrs. Thomas	we don't know about the invisible	invisible	*SEEING*
359	09_Thomas&Mays	Mrs. Thomas	looking at them without words	looking at them	*SEEING*
177	09_Thomas&Mays	Mrs. Thomas	twisting the whole process	twisting	*PHYSICAL ACTIVITY*
195	09_Thomas&Mays	Mrs. Thomas	you can't just shovel people into schools	shovel	*PHYSICAL ACTIVITY*
186	09_Thomas&Mays	Mrs. Thomas	if we had smaller classrooms	smaller	*SIZE*

6) Then, identify the topic of each metaphor; as per the research question, the five topics are: teaching, teachers, children, schools, and education.
Example:

Line	Transcript	Speaker	Intonation Unit	Topic	Metaphor	Vehicle Group
357	09_Thomas&Mays	Mrs. Thomas	we don't know about the invisible	teaching	invisible	*SEEING*
359	09_Thomas&Mays	Mrs. Thomas	looking at them without words	teaching	looking at them	*SEEING*
177	09_Thomas&Mays	Mrs. Thomas	twisting the whole process	education	twisting	*PHYSICAL ACTIVITY*
195	09_Thomas&Mays	Mrs. Thomas	you can't just shovel people into schools	education	shovel	*PHYSICAL ACTIVITY*
186	09_Thomas&Mays	Mrs. Thomas	if we had smaller classrooms	education	smaller	*SIZE*

7) Sort the list by vehicle groups and then by topic, so that for each vehicle group there are lists of metaphors that refer to teaching, teachers, children, schools, education.
Example:

Line	Transcript	Speaker	Intonation Unit	Topic	Metaphor	Vehicle Group
97	10_Lowry&Simmons	Mr. Simmons	thinking on your feet	teaching	on your feet	*BODY*
153	10_Lowry&Simmons	Mr. Lowry	it was a big eye-opening experience	education	eye-opening	*BODY*
345	12_Baker&Solomon	Mr. Solomon	you have their best interest at heart	education	at heart	*BODY*
74	13_Ferner&English	Mrs. Ferner	I took a deep breath and got a broom	education	deep breath	*BODY*

8) Articulate systematic metaphors by reviewing all the linguistic metaphors that refer to a particular topic within a vehicle group. Systematic metaphors are constructs of the researcher that summarize discourse data and metaphorical ways of expressing ideas. For example, teaching can be characterized as a *BODILY EXPERIENCE.*

9) Gather systematic metaphors for all topics (teaching, teachers, children, schools, education) and then categorize further. Example:

SYSTEMATIC METAPHORS FOR TEACHING		
teaching is like something else	how teaching feels	how teaching is viewed by the "outside" world
A MILITARY ACTION OR EXPERIENCE	*A PLACE OR SPACE TO ENTER*	*IMPORTANT WORK*
ACTING IN A THEATER	*A LOT OF WORK*	*INVISIBLE*
TELLING A STORY	*BEING NERVOUS*	*THERE ARE BIGGER AND BETTER THINGS*
AN ART	*BREAKING DOWN AND LOSING CONTROL*	*AN EASY PAYCHECK*
BEING IN A BATTLE	*FALLING IN LOVE*	*HIGH STAKES, PRESSURE*
LIGHTING A FIRE,CANDLE OR BULB	*PAINFUL*	
PAYING A DEBT	*NEVER ENOUGH TIME*	
PLANTING A SEED	*MAKING MISTAKES*	
LOVE	*KEEPS OPENING UP, NOT CLOSING DOWN*	
SELLING	*A SPIRITUAL ENDEAVOR*	

APPENDIX F
VALIDITY CONCERNS IN METAPHOR ANALYSIS

Component of metaphor analysis	Description of validity concern	Resolution (based on Low, 2008, p.48-65)
Metaphor identification	Unilateral identification of metaphors in the text by the researcher can result in (1) identifying expressions as metaphoric when they are not demarcated by speakers as metaphoric; (2) over-interpretation of metaphoric expressions because of heightened sensitivity to metaphor; (3) under-identification of metaphors in text because of researcher's familiarity with text and context.	The metaphor analysis was shared with researchers familiar with metaphor identification and analysis methods. Where the feedback indicated over- or under-identification (whether in specific cases or in general across texts), I critically re-examined the text and repeated the metaphor identification procedure.
Metaphor representativeness	Claiming representativeness of metaphors in a text is difficult because the boundaries of the domain of the text can't be easily established.	Interpretations were formed based on the prevalence of metaphors in the text, but no claim was made as far as their representativeness in the domains that the speakers inhabit.
Multiple influences on metaphor users	When researching metaphors within one specific group of people, it is difficult to exhaustively establish all the influences on that group's language.	Possible influences on teachers' metaphors, grounded in the themes and stories found in the text, or in the etic themes from relevant literature were noted.
Generalizing from language data to thought or behavior	Generalization from metaphoric expressions to social behavior or conceptual organization needs to be justified, not assumed.	Interpretation focused on the metaphors teachers use, stories they tell, and concepts they explicitly articulate. No generalizations to behavior or thought were made.

APPENDIX G
TEACHER PROFILES

Conversation #1: Rob Geller & Lucy Fields (colleagues)

Mr. Geller is a 25-year old straight Black Christian man in his fourth year of teaching. He was born in Germany and grew up on military bases, attending military base schools. He was interested in a career in politics but became a teacher straight out of college through Teach for America (TFA). He now teaches social studies at a secondary school he helped start. In the future, he sees starting his own school as an administrator or "turning around" a school that is struggling.

Ms. Fields is a 30-year old straight white Jewish woman in her eighth year of teaching. She was born in New Jersey, in a neighborhood that did not have a "diverse population." She always liked school as a child, and even "played school" as a kid. In college, she heard about TFA and entered the program, thinking that after completing the two-year commitment, she would go on to law school. She also teaches social studies in the school she helped found with Mr. Geller. She would like to stay at the school at least to see the first group off to college, six years from now, and wants to help make the school become "one of the top schools in the city."

Conversation #2: John Borden & David Pelles (colleagues)

Mr. Borden is a 25-year old straight white man in his second year of teaching. He was born in Colorado, grew up playing piano and wrote and recorded songs throughout college. Although he did not want to study music formally, he nevertheless considers himself a musician. He teaches music at a middle school and attends graduate school for a master's in education.

Mr. Pelles is a 26-year old straight white man in his third year of teaching, now also interim acting principal at the school where he teaches. He was born in Texas but grew up in upstate New York. He was a religious studies major in college and now teaches social studies. He is leaving this school to open a new school next year.

Conversation #3: Jennifer Vindal & Vera Smith (colleagues)

Jennifer Vindal is a 30-year old straight Asian Christian woman in her eighth year of teaching. She grew up in the suburbs around New York City and says she always wanted to be a teacher. Her father was a teacher in India, but did not tell his children what he did so as to not influence their career choices. She remembers having great teachers growing up, who inspired her. She is a well-liked, popular teacher at the school.

Mrs. Smith is a 42-year old straight Black Christian woman in her second year of teaching. She says she is "42 years young" and has taught karate for over twenty years. In graduate school, she studied conflict resolution and non-violence and believes in the importance of mentoring. She was born in New York.

Conversation #4: Sandra Cameron & Lisa Linden (colleagues)

Mrs. Cameron is a 42-year old straight Irish-American Christian woman in her 17th year of teaching, also a principal in a middle school. She was born in Colorado, and grew up all over the West Coast in a "counterculture type of lifestyle." She applied to TFA and did not expect to receive a placement in New York City. She attended an administrative program when she was a teacher and still teaches one class. Her biggest challenge as a principal, she says, is to coach teachers to be more effective in the classroom.

Ms. Linden is a 27-year old straight Latina Christian female. She was born in Puerto Rico but is of Dominican heritage and grew up in a bilingual household. When she became a teacher, she wanted to work with Spanish-speaking children. She grew up in Arizona and came to the East Coast for college. She also became a teacher through TFA and is now considering becoming an administrator.

Conversation #5: Peter Cohen & Elizabeth Lang (colleagues)

Mr. Cohen is a 24-year old straight Asian/Latino man born in San Francisco. He did his student teaching at two very different placements—one was a "last-chance" high school for students at risk of dropping out, and the other was a very affluent private school. He grew up loving to read and write and therefore decided to teach English in high school. It is his first year of teaching.

Ms. Lang is a 27-year old straight Asian Buddhist woman, born in Los Angeles. She is working in an after-school program and thinks that teachers get blamed for all that is wrong with the education system.

Conversation #6: Rita Wayans & Rose Tully (friends, former colleagues)

Mrs. Wayans is a 55-year old straight Black Christian woman in her 25th year of teaching. She was born in and lived in Brooklyn most of her life. She started teaching in a high school that was trying to "integrate" its staff, and now teaches information technology at this same high school. She remembers playing school as a child, and always wanting to be a teacher. As a student, however, she was "slow," and identifies with students who struggle.

Mrs. Tully is a 59-year old straight Black Christian woman also on her 25th year of teaching. She also wanted to be a teacher since childhood and remembers getting her love of reading from her mother, who read at night after putting the children to bed. She is excited by teaching and thinks it is important to work with students on social and affective skills.

Conversation #7: Jeffrey O'Brien & Jasmine Miller (colleagues)

Mr. O'Brien is a 27-year old bisexual white man, born in Oregon, in his 5th year of teaching. He was an engineering major in college and decided to apply to and enroll in TFA instead of pursuing a graduate degree in nanotechnology. He was a high school math teacher and at the time of the interview has decided to leave teaching to start his own software business.

Ms. Miller is a 33-year old straight white woman, born in Texas. She is in her third year of teaching chemistry and art in high school. She also has an engineering background and has worked at Dow Chemical while at college. She too entered the teaching profession through TFA. She is considering leaving teaching.

Conversation #8: Jake Burke & Bill Wang (colleagues)

Mr. Burke is a 30-year old straight white man, born in Texas and in his 6th year of teaching high school English. He would like to be a writer for a TV show or to otherwise use his creative talents, outside of teaching.

Mr. Wang is a 26-year old straight Asian man, born in China. He is in his fourth year of teaching and came to teaching through TFA. He was placed in his school at the last minute, and it turned out to be "the best match." He talks with high regard of his school's culture, the way everyone knows their strengths and weaknesses.

Conversation #9: Rachel Thomas & Dena Mays (friends)

Mrs. Thomas is a 67-year old straight white woman, born and raised in New York, recently retired from over 40 years of teaching daycare. She has worked as an assistant daycare teacher since right after college. At the time of the interview, she has come back to the daycare setting, working one-on-one with children.

Ms. Mays is a 26-year old straight white woman born in Maryland, in her first year of teaching. She is the daughter of Mrs. Thomas' best friend. She started teaching through a Jewish service corps organization, which placed her at a school where she did after school and enrichment programming. She now works at the school full time
.

Conversation #10: Chase Lowry & Shaun Simmons (friends)

Mr. Lowry is a 29-year old gay white man in his 5th year of teaching high school mathematics. He was born in Oregon and was an undergraduate major in theater before he switched to mathematics; he fell in love with the subject because of his math teacher. He has started and runs a successful debate team at his school.

Mr. Simmons is a 30-year old gay Asian man, born in Illinois. He teaches high school mathematics, to Advanced Placement students at a private independent school.

Conversation #11: Harriet Weiner & Michael Grant (colleagues)

Ms. Weiner is a 22-year old straight white Jewish woman in her 1st year of teaching at middle school. She was raised in a middle class suburban environment in New York and has traveled extensively to different countries in order to "experience other cultures." She was a psychology major but decided on teaching in order to be closer to students' lives and to form closer relationships. She thinks that in the near future she will leave teaching to explore another kind of challenge.

Mr. Grant is a 28-year old straight white man born in New York with more than 3 years of teaching experience. He attended school in suburban New Jersey, where he was part of the punk rock scene. He regards teaching as a way he could be happy in his life and work.

Conversation #12: Alicia Baker & Andrew Solomon (friends, former colleagues)

Ms. Baker is a 32-year old straight white woman with 5 years of teaching experience at the high school level. She was born in Pennsylvania and moved to New York City because she wanted to live there. She entered teaching through the New York City Teaching Fellows (NYCTF) program. At the time of the interview, she has completed a PhD program in anthropology, conducting ethnographic research at schools on the understandings of college readiness and social justice.

Mr. Solomon is a 27-year old straight Black man, born in Missouri. He comes from a family of teachers and principals but resisted becoming a teacher until he discovered that interest in college. He started teaching after completing a Master of Arts in Teaching program at graduate school. He was recently on a radio show talking about teaching.

Conversation #13: Janice Ferner & Larissa English (colleagues)

Mrs. Ferner is a 60-year old straight white woman born in Rhode Island with over 25 years teaching experience. She has recently become the principal of her school, while still teaching. In her family, she has relatives who worked as teachers in Israel, Russia and Cuba and who closely followed John Dewey. After college, she worked in publishing but switched to teaching, first working as a substitute teacher. She started teaching at a school with a progressive philosophy.

Mrs. English is a 52-year old straight white Jewish woman, born in New York. She has 30 years of teaching experience, primarily on the early childhood level. She values a progressive education philosophy and has worked in schools that follow that all her career.

Conversation #14: Adam Nevins & Michelle Morse (spouses, former colleagues)

Mr. Nevins is a 32-year old straight white Jewish man, born in Russia. He entered the teaching profession through NYCTF and has recently left teaching to work as an education reporter at a large daily newspaper. He was the founding English teacher at a high school and saw the first class graduate.

Mrs. Morse is a 32-year old straight white Jewish woman, born in California. She is the wife of Mr. Morse and worked at the same school with him. She taught history and recently completed a PhD in education, now teaching graduate courses in teacher education.

Conversation #15: Zoya Gill, Ariadna Levy & Jerry Wells (colleagues)

Ms. Gill is a 26-year old straight Latina woman, born in Georgia, in her fourth year of teaching high school. She became a teacher through NYCTF, after reconsidering her original career interest in law. She has formed close friendship with her colleagues at school.

Ms. Levy is a 28-year old straight white woman born in Ohio in her 6th year of teaching. She was a women' studies major in college and became a teacher through TFA.

Mr. Wells is a 33-year old gay white man. Born in North Carolina, in his 10th year of teaching. He started his career as a writer, documentarian and political campaigner and developed an interest in teaching after the 2000 elections. He entered the teaching profession through NYCTF, starting to teach at a larger high school that was eventually phased out.

Conversation #16: Tiffany Royce & Lana Quinn (colleagues)

Mrs. Royce is a 55-year old straight Native American/Black, Catholic woman who was born in New York and grew up in Brooklyn and upstate. She is the daughter of middle-school educated parents and her grandmother was enslaved. She has become the principal of the alternative high school where she has worked as a teacher and guidance counselor for 25 years.

Ms. Quinn is a 27-year old straight white Catholic woman with 5 years of experience as a high school guidance counselor. She has previously worked at private and public schools in affluent neighborhoods. Her main focus with her students is college readiness and admissions.

Conversation #17: Joy Adams & Aaron Drake

Mrs. Adams is a 64-year old straight white Jewish woman with over 35 years of teaching experience. She was born in New York and started teaching at the time of the Vietnam War, after completing a graduate program in education. She has become the principal of the school where she taught and has recently retired. In her retirement, she has taken up her early interest in painting.

Mr. Drake is a 58-year old bisexual white Quaker man, born in New Jersey. He has over 25 years of teaching experience, mostly teaching history at middle school. He comes from a Quaker family and himself follows Quaker practices.

APPENDIX H
STORYCORPS INITIATIVES

INITIATIVE	DESCRIPTION
Military Voices Initiative	The Military Voices Initiative records, shares, and preserves the stories of post-9/11 veterans, active-duty service members, and their families. It amplifies their important stories and lets them know that we—as a nation—are listening.
StoryCorps Legacy	The mission of StoryCorps Legacy Initiative is to provide people with life-threatening conditions and their families the opportunity to record, preserve, and share their stories.
StoryCorps Historias	StoryCorps Historias is an initiative to record, preserve, and share the stories of Latinos across the US. In partnership with the Latino Public Radio Consortium, *Latino USA*, the U.S. Latino and Latina World War II Oral History Project, StoryCorps Historias has become one of the largest collections of Latino voices ever gathered.
Griot Initiative	The Griot Initiative is an initiative to ensure that the voices, experiences, and life stories of African Americans will be preserved and presented with dignity. All interviews recorded as part of the Griot Initiative will be archived at the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History & Culture in addition to the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress.
September 11th Initiative	In 2005, StoryCorps created the September 11th Initiative to honor and remember the stories and people affected by the events of September 11, 2001.
Memory Loss Initiative	In 2006, StoryCorps launched the Memory Loss Initiative to support and encourage people with memory loss to share their stories.
Mobile Tour Outreach	StoryCorps partners with numerous community-based organizations on our Mobile Tour. The StoryCorps interview is an opportunity to highlight voices often missed in our society and to ensure their stories are passed on to future generations. We work with our community partners to record and preserve the stories of the various communities they serve.
StoryCorps Alaska	From October 15, 2008, through April 30, 2009, StoryCorps Alaska traveled to Fairbanks, Nome, Barrow, Dillingham, Unalaska, Juneau, and other communities to record and preserve the diverse stories of Alaskans.

APPENDIX I
SCNTI LOCATIONS

LOCATION OF CONVERSATIONS (N = 666)			
Birmingham, AL (16)	Indianapolis, IN (24)	Bronx, NY (11)	Kingwood, TX (1)
Culver City, CA (2)	Fort Riley, KS (15)	Brooklyn, NY (7)	Charlottesville, VA (4)
Los Angeles, CA (6)	New Orleans, LA (4)	Kingston, NY (1)	Farmville, VA (1)
Oakland, CA (11)	Brockton, MA (12)	New York, NY (19)	Hampton, VA (6)
Pacific Palisades, CA (1)	Baltimore, MD (1)	Port Chester, NY (5)	Norfolk, VA (6)
Pasadena, CA (3)	Rockville, MD (6)	Queens, NY (8)	Virginia Beach, VA (5)
Salinas, CA (12)	Detroit, MI (6)	Schenectady, NY (1)	Bothel, WA (1)
San Bernadino, CA (6)	Wixom, MI (5)	Zanesville, OH (14)	Redmond, WA (12)
San Francisco, CA (51)	St. Louis, MO (15)	Portland, OR (18)	Richland, WA (6)
San Jose, CA (11)	West Plains, MO (11)	Philadelphia, PA (11)	Milwaukee, WI (18)
Castle Rock, CO (5)	McComb, MS (10)	Central Falls, RI (6)	unspecified (8)
Estes Park, CO (12)	Missoula, MT (16)	Charleston, SC (1)	
Washington, DC (25)	Medford, NJ (1)	Seabrook, SC (9)	
Orlando, Florida (10)	Albuquerque, NM (11)	St. Helena, SC (1)	
Atlanta, Georgia (44)	Crownpoint, NM (5)	Nashville, TN (12)	
Chicago, IL (89)	Thoreau, NM (6)	Austin, TX (4)	
Lake Bluff, IL (1)	Las Vegas, NV (10)	Dallas, TX (1)	

APPENDIX J
SCNTI PRESS RELEASE

September 19, 2011
STORYCORPS LAUNCHES NEW NATIONAL INITIATIVE HONORING THE WORK OF TEACHERS
Oral history project will record stories celebrating hundreds of public school teachers across the nation during the 2011-2012 school year

September 19, 2011, Washington, D.C.–StoryCorps, the national non-profit oral history project, launched its National Teachers Initiative today. The National Teachers Initiative celebrates the brilliant and courageous work of public school teachers across the country. By recording, sharing, and preserving their stories, we hope to call public attention to the invaluable contributions teachers have made to this nation, celebrate and honor those who have embraced the profession as their calling, encourage teaching as a career choice, and unify the country behind its teachers—helping us all recognize that there is no more important or noble work than that of educating our nation's children.

The National Teachers Initiative is part of "American Graduate: Let's Make It Happen," a public media initiative supported by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting to help local communities across America address the dropout crisis. Many of the conversations recorded as part of the National Teachers Initiative reflect the diverse experiences of educators and students from both rural and urban school districts with high dropout rates.

Interview pairs for the National Teachers Initiative may consist of two teachers interviewing one another, friends discussing the impact an important teacher had on their lives, a student or former student interviewing a memorable teacher, or other relevant pairings. As with all StoryCorps interviews, participants will receive a CD copy of the interview; a second copy will be archived in the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress for future generations. Select National Teachers Initiative interviews will be edited for national broadcast on NPR's *Weekend Edition Sunday* with Audie Cornish throughout the 2011–2012 school year.

Over the past five years, StoryCorps has launched a series of Special Initiatives including: the *September 11th Initiative*, helping families memorialize the stories of lives lost on September 11, 2001, in partnership with the National September 11 Memorial & Museum at the World Trade Center; and the *Griot Initiative*, the largest collection of African American voices ever gathered, in collaboration with the Smithsonian National Museum of African-American History and Culture. The National Teachers Initiative is StoryCorps' first-ever occupation-specific Initiative. The National Teachers Initiative will partner with local education and community organizations and public school districts across the country to record stories, placing special attention on the work of teachers in public school districts striving to increase the number of students who graduate prepared for college and careers. StoryCorps will visit cities throughout the country during

the 2011-2012 school year to record stories honoring at least 625 teachers. These cities include: Brockton, Mass., Philadelphia, PA., New York City, Redmond, WA., Fort Riley, KS., Mobile, AL., Baltimore, MD., McComb, MS., and New Orleans, LA.

"Every day teachers all across the country are igniting curiosity, inspiring passions and opening doors for our children," said U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. "Through the National Teachers Initiative, StoryCorps is doing what more of us need to – shining a spotlight on what ought to be the country's most respected and important profession. "It is a great privilege to be embarking on this effort to shine a light on the remarkable work of public school teachers across the country," said Dave Isay, Founder and President of StoryCorps. "The fact that teachers are some of the most brilliant, courageous, and dedicated people among us has sometimes been lost in the rancorous debates over the past year. As a nation, we should express our gratitude each and every day to those for whom teaching is a calling."

"The Corporation for Public Broadcasting is proud to support the StoryCorps National Teachers Initiative, an important part of public media's commitment to addressing the dropout crisis through the 'American Graduate: Let's Make It Happen' project," said Patricia Harrison, President and CEO of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. "The National Teachers Initiative affirms the important work of public school teachers nationwide and their role inspiring students to stay on the path to a high school diploma." "Teachers are the lifeblood of one of America's most cherished institutions – schools. Yet, their stories of challenges, triumphs and inspiration are largely untold," said Vicki Phillips, Director of College Ready Program, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. "The Gates Foundation is proud to support this project that gives voice to some of the most beloved people who have touched all our lives."

"This is a fantastic opportunity to hear from teachers – the people who are the closest to the kids," said Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers. "Their stories will be a window to the world on today's public education—what's working, what's not, and what we can do better to prepare our children for the 21st-century knowledge economy." Major funding for the National Teachers Initiative is provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, with additional funding from the Joyce Foundation.

Additional materials for press are available at:
http://storycorps.org/about/press-room-news/national-teachers-initiative/

APPENDIX K
SCNTI COMMUNITY PARTNERS

LOCATION	ORGANIZATION
National	American Federation of Teachers, Gateway to College, National Educational Association, U.S. Department of Education, Zinn Education Project
Alabama	Alabama Public Television, George Hall Elementary School
California	American Teacher/Teacher Salary Project, City Arts and Technology High School, Downtown College Preparatory San Jose, International High School San Francisco, Kaiser Elementary School Oakland, KIPP Bay Area, KQED, PBS SoCaL, Sherwood Elementary School Salinas, Teaching for Change @ Zinn Education Project
Colorado	Eagle Rock School, Douglas County Federation of Teachers
District of Columbia	Cesar Chavez Public Charter School for Public Policy, District of Columbia Public Schools, Teaching for Change
Florida	Florida Council of Teachers of English
Georgia	Georgia Parent Teacher Association, Georgia State University Alonzo A. Crim Center for Urban Educational Excellence Atlanta neighborhood Charter School, Grady High School, KIPP Strive Academy, Metro Atlantans for Public Schools, PATH Academy
Illinois	New Leaders for New Schools Chicago, The New Teacher Project Chicago, Teach for America Chicago, EPIC Academy Chicago, North Lawndale College Prep Chicago, Teach Plus Chicago
Indiana	The New Teacher Project Indianapolis, Teach Plus Indianapolis
Kansas	Ware Elementary School
Louisiana	Mary Bethune Elementary School
Maryland	Gateway to College Montgomery College
Massachusetts	Brockton High School
Michigan	Detroit Public Television
Mississippi	Teaching for Change McComb Legacies
Missouri	Community Foundation of the Ozarks, Gateway Institute of Technology, Nine Network of Public Media, Normandy School District St. Louis, Shearwater High School

Montana	Graduation Matters Missoula
New Mexico	Crownpoint Elementary School, Generation Justice, New Mexico PBS, Thoreau Middle School
New York	Citizen Schools, College Summit, Coney Island Prep, John F. Kennedy Magnet School Port Chester, Millennium Art Academy, Queens High School for Teaching, Liberal Arts & Social Sciences, TeachersCount, Urban Assembly School for Law and Justice, Validus Prep Academy, WNET
Ohio	Ohio University Zanesville
Oregon	Oregon Writing Project, Self Enhancement Inc.
Rhode Island	The Learning Community
South Carolina	The System for Student and Teacher Advancement
Tennessee	Nashville Public Television
Virginia	WHRO, Old Dominion University Darden College of Education
Washington	Delta High School Washington State STEM Education Foundation
Wisconsin	New Leaders for New Schools Milwaukee, The New Teacher Project Milwaukee

APPENDIX L
CONVERSATION QUESTIONS

CONVERSATION	QUESTIONS
1	1) Lucy: Why join TFA? 2) Lucy: Would life be easier if you didn't go into teaching and stayed in politics? 3) Lucy: Were your politics because of sticking with party line? 4) Rob: Why stick with teaching after TFA? 5) Rob: What is your favorite thing about our school? 6) Lucy: What is the least favorite thing about our school? 7) Rob: What do you want our school to do we haven't done yet? 8) Rob: What are your professional goals?
2	9) John: How has experience of being raised an atheist and studying religion influenced you as an educator? 10) David: When did you gravitate toward music? 11) David: How do you bring music to a school? 12) David: How is grad school going? 13) David: Does being able to take command in class affect other spheres of your life? 14) David: Can people be good teachers if they didn't develop personally yet?
3	15) Vera: How did you get started in teaching? Did you always want to be one? What made you interested? 16) Vera: Who are the students that stick out in your mind over the years? 17) Jennifer: What makes a great teacher? 18) Vera: Is there anyone who is a mentor to you? 19) Jennifer: What has been the most challenging moment in your career? 20) Vera: What are some funny moments?
4	21) Sandra: How are the school environments you have been in (public, charter, Citizen Schools) different? 22) Sandra: How did your parents meet each other? 23) Lisa: Where did you grow up? 24) Sandra: Why did you move out East? 25) Sandra: Did you pick NYC as a TFA placement?

	26) Lisa: What made you go into administration?
	27) Lisa: What is your favorite subject to teach?
	28) Sandra: How do you feel being out of the classroom?
	29) Lisa: What is challenging about coaching teachers and developing them?
	30) Sandra: How is it working with/supervising people who haven't been in an education program?
	31) Sandra: Are you planning to stay in Citizen Schools as a director?
	32) Lisa: How did you and your husband meet?
	33) Lisa: Is your husband a support to you?
	34) Sandra: Do you have a partner that keeps you grounded?
	35) Lisa: Was your family supportive of you becoming a teacher?
	36) Sandra: Will you go back to Arizona?
5	37) Elizabeth: Favorite and least favorite parts of Citizen Schools?
	38) Elizabeth: was your experience like student teaching?
	39) Elizabeth: Which of the two different student teaching placements do you prefer?
	40) Elizabeth: Do you feel you are making an impact?
	41) Elizabeth: What are your thoughts about teachers getting enough credit?
	42) Elizabeth: What could you do better as a teacher?
	43) Elizabeth: What are your aspirations for teaching in the future?
	44) Elizabeth: Why are you teaching English?
	45) Elizabeth: How do you teach English?
	46) Elizabeth: Tell me about the teachers who influenced you?
	47) Elizabeth: Do you still write?
	48) Elizabeth: How would you describe success as a teacher?
	49) Elizabeth: In retrospect, what do you imagine success as a teacher would be?
	50) Elizabeth: What are your frustrations about being a teacher?
	51) Elizabeth: What are some memorable moments in teaching?
	52) Elizabeth: What concerns do you have for the youth of the future?
	53) Elizabeth: Do you see things kids do that shock you?
	54) Elizabeth: What is the hardest part of being a teacher?
	55) Elizabeth: Are you less idealistic now?
	56) Peter: What are some wise words for the students of America?

6	57) Rita: Can you tell the story of us getting reunited?
	58) Rita: What do we like to talk about?
	59) Rose: How did we get into teaching?
	60) Rita: Was the kid ever suspended?
	61) Rose: What kind of student were you when you were little?
	62) Rose: When did you figure out you were smart?
	63) Rose: So you think early experiences shaped the kind of teacher you are today?
7	64) Jasmine: How did you end up becoming a teacher?
	65) Jasmine: How were you placed in this school?
	66) Jasmine: Are you leaving teaching because you are tired of telling kids what to do?
	67) Jasmine: Do you think there is a fundamental problem with the education system?
	68) Jasmine: How do you teach to facilitate students' curiosity?
	69) Jasmine: How do I keep hold of idealism and stay in classroom, or do I have to leave??
	70) Jasmine: Are you looking forward to unregulated time being out of the classroom?
8	71) Jake: Is there a problem with the NYC education system?
	72) Jake: What has been working so far?
	73) Bill: What do you do that you wish kids could see to have a fuller sense of who you are?
	74) Bill: Are we doing students a disservice with praise and sticker charts?
	75) Bill: How do teachers spark creativity?
	76) Jake: If your first-year teaching failures weren't so painful, would you still reflect and reassess?
	77) Bill: Is the way we teach and assess kids to task oriented?
9	78) Dena: When and why did you decide to become a teacher?
	79) Dena: Can you tell me some favorite daycare stories?
	80) Dena: What is some advice for going into first year teaching?
	81) Dena: Can you teach love or the right emotional tone, and how?
	82) Dena: What is something funny that happened?
	83) Rachel: How do you feel about teaching? Are you feeling strong?
10	84) Shaun: Where do you work?
	85) Shaun: Why was "fun" your response to the prompt "number 2 pencil"?
	86) Shaun: What were you feeling first day of teaching?
	87) Shaun: What was the first day like?

	88) Shaun: Were there moments that weren't planned but were successful?
	89) Shaun: Is being in the moment the major progress you made as a teacher?
	90) Shaun: What was your undergraduate major?
	91) Shaun: Do you see the classroom as a stage?
	92) Shaun: Do you feel like you outside of school and you as a teacher are two different people?
	93) Shaun: What was first day of teaching like this (5th) year?
	94) Shaun: What adjectives would you use to describe yourself as a teacher?
	95) Shaun: Can you give a specific picture of 5 minutes of your classroom?
	96) Shaun: What is the relationship between the curriculum we are expected and want to teach?
	97) Shaun: Why is math not fun for many students?
	98) Shaun: What is your least favorite part of the job?
	99) Shaun: Who are some of your favorite students?
	100)　　Shaun: What do you think about spending your life in school (as a student, then teacher)?
	101)　　Shaun: What do you see yourself as in 10 years?
	102)　　Shaun: What is your silliest teaching moment?
	103)　　Shaun: What else should I have asked you?
	104)　　Shaun: What is your big goal? What is your big hope that you do for your students?
11	105)　　Michael: How come you are planning to move to Harlem?
	106)　　Michael: How did you end up in this school and education?
	107)　　Michael: Why not choose a school environment more familiar/similar to how you grew up?
	108)　　Michael: What do you think about there being a lot of white people teaching children who don't look like them?
	109)　　Michael: Would you prefer students celebrate/worship you because you are white?
	110)　　Harriet: You also taught in a school with a different population?
	111)　　Harriet: Do you miss your students, are you still in touch with them?
	112)　　Harriet: What did the student write in her letter?
	113)　　Harriet: What is your experience as an outsider, coming into class once a week?
	114)　　Michael: How would you describe class last Tuesday?
	115)　　Michael: I am curious about you coming to education from a civil rights standpoint
	116)　　Michael: What are some difficult moments in teaching?
	117)　　Michael: You know that breaking down means you are a caring person, right?
	118)　　Michael: Do you think the student reflected on how she had hurt you?

	119)	Michael: Do you think the kids saw you as a person because you broke down?
	120)	Michael: What were you like in sixth grade?
	121)	Michael: When did you get your first kiss?
	122)	Harriet: What were you like in middle school?
	123)	Harriet: When did you outgrow the punk phase?
	124)	Harriet: Why don't you wear your earrings to school?
	125)	Harriet: When did you get your ears pierced?
	126)	Michael: Where do you want to be in 5 years?
	127)	Harriet: How about you, where do you want to be in 5 years?
12	128)	Andrew: Why did you want to become a teacher?
	129)	Andrew: What does good teaching look like to you?
	130)	Andrew: What did you learn about yourself through becoming a teacher?
	131)	Alicia: How did you become a teacher?
	132)	Alicia: How do you evaluate teachers by student motivation?
	133)	Alicia: How does mentoring impact teaching and student motivation?
	134)	Andrew: Is mentoring and coaching part of being a good teacher?
	135)	Andrew: What does it mean to teach for social justice?
	136)	Andrew: What have you learned about the field, the journey? What do you know for sure?
13	137)	Larissa: When and why did you decide to become a teacher?
	138)	Janice: Can you tell me about your first day?
	139)	Larissa: How did you apply your teaching experience to being a principal?
	140)	Janice: Is teaching different than you thought it would be?
	141)	Janice: Do you have an example about something that motivated your students?
	142)	Larissa: How old were you when you started teaching?
14	143)	Michelle: What was your classroom like when you were teaching?
	144)	Michelle: What does it mean to never break character as a teacher?
	145)	Michelle: Tell me about students who had a particular impact on you?
	146)	Michelle: Can you tell me about Kiana?
	147)	Michelle: Why did you decide to leave teaching?
	148)	Michelle: What do you miss about teaching?
	149)	Michelle: Has your life changed since you left teaching?

	150)	Adam: How did you meet me?
	151)	Adam: Do you know how you had a leg up over the other applicants?
	152)	Adam: Are you aware a close friend was also applying for a position?
	153)	Adam: What did you think of me after the interview, at school?
	154)	Adam: What won me over to you?
	155)	Adam: What did your students say about me?
	156)	Adam: Why did you leave teaching?
	157)	Adam: Can you talk about your dentist's prophecy when you were in middle school?
	158)	Adam: What do you impart to your students about teaching profession?
	159)	Adam: What is your method to get students to sit down?
	160)	Adam: Would you go back to teaching high school?
15	161)	Ariadna: Why and when did you want to become a NYC public school teacher?
	162)	Jerry: What is your story of chasing a student?
	163)	Ariadna: Who is the best teacher you ever had and what did you learn about teaching from them?
	164)	Zoya: Is there a colleague you couldn't do without?
	165)	Ariadna: What would you like the world to know about our students?
16	166)	Tiffany: Why did you choose this school and what do you think motivates these students?
17	167)	Aaron: How did you end up becoming a teacher?
	168)	Aaron: What kept you in teaching?
	169)	Joy: How does being a Quaker play into your work with children?

APPENDIX M
CONVERSATION STORIES

CONVERSATION	STORIES
1	1) Rob: 1st year teaching story about a challenging student who was funny 2) Lucy: 1st year teaching story about rookie mistake of leaving classroom for a minute 3) Rob: story of finding out that a student ended up ok and exhaling 4) Lucy: 2nd year teaching story of having a moment all the kids working 5) Rob: 1st year teaching story of moving to a teach next to a group of students who were listening
2	6) John: biographical story of coming to love music
3	7) Vera: story of student dancing to drumroll who made her laugh
4	8) Sandra: biographical story of meeting her husband
5	9) Peter: two stories of writing poetry: Walt Whitman by the river and using hip hop to get all students participating
6	10) Rose: story of having difficult student for 2 years and him come back as an adult to thank her 11) Rita: biographical story of needing tutoring and feeling not smart 12) Rose: biographical story of seeing her mother read at night 13) Rose: biographical story of pretending to read badly in 1st grade to get teacher's praise
7	14) Jeffrey: story of being interviewed 15) Jeffrey: story of taking kids out of their comfort zone on a trip to Maine
8	16) Jake: story of kid who sets his alarm for 10:30; irrational confidence 17) Jake: story of student who said she will become a stripper 18) Jake: story of going back to 1st year classroom and getting a flashback of the mess 1st year was

	19) Jake: story of finding old notebook of a "learning disabled" kid he wasn't prepared to teach 20) Bill: 1st year teaching story of student cursing, yelling, telling him to get out
9	21) Rachel: story of struggling child who made a beautiful clay creation 22) Rachel: story of grumpy child who spoke in code 23) Rachel: story of child who was writing numbers backwards and deciding to help her 24) Rachel: story of child wearing Superman shirt who said he was Batman and listening to him 25) Rachel: story of running after a child who did not want help going to the bathroom
10	26) Chase: story of shutting down an annoying person by acting like a teacher 27) Chase: story of a great lesson (about zero) 28) Shaun: story of kids waning to "break math" and telling them about Gödel's Theorem 29) Chase: story about developing lecture on history of math 30) Shaun: story of bringing a real mathematician to visit his class 31) Chase: story of student who is his shadow and may become a teacher 32) Chase: 1st year teaching story of wearing costumes to class to convince kids math was not scary and fun
11	33) Michael: story about kid who was selling toys and games outside his foreclosed house 34) Michael: story about receiving a long note from girl in class 35) Harriet: story of breaking down in class because of difficult girl 36) Michael & Harriet: biographical story of first kiss when he was a kid 37) Michael: story about wearing earrings to school and a kid seeing that
12	38) Alicia: story about student in her college class who isn't ready for college
13	39) Larissa: 1st day of teaching story about kids barking during circle time 40) Janice: 1st day of teaching story about picking up mice 41) Janice: story about her son being able to do calculus problems in college 42) Janice: story about making masks and a play because of things parents brought 43) Larissa: story of having Japanese students in class

	44) Janice: story about making pancakes and spelling, writing 45) Janice: story of becoming not afraid of teaching science
14	46) Adam: story of heels clicking on floor 47) Adam: story about Rasberry 48) Adam: story about Kiana's death 49) Adam & Michelle: story of keeping their dating secret at school
15	50) Ariadna: Story of chasing Maria
16	51) Lana: story of student who didn't enroll in college because he couldn't wait in line 52) Lana: story of providing fee-waivers to students 53) Tiffany: biographical story of daughter coming home and saying she hates school
17	54) Aaron: story about students protesting Iraq war 55) Joy: story about being opposed to Vietnam war and telling her class about it 56) Aaron: biographical story of Buber's "confirming the deepest thing in another" & transformative experience looking deeply at student's writing in study group 57) Aaron: story about his students wanting to have debate about money

APPENDIX N
CONVERSATION DISCOURSES

DISCOURSE TOPIC	DISCOURSE CATEGORIES
Teachers	1) Nobody knows what teachers go through 2) A teacher is the most important factor in the classroom 3) Teachers are ineffective, effective, good, great 4) Teachers are respected/disrespected, valued/vilified 5) Teachers want to save the world 6) Teachers are mostly white females 7) Teachers are held to a higher moral standard 8) Once a teacher, always a teacher 9) Teachers love (like) children 10) Teachers are paid enough/not enough 11) Teachers think of becoming leaders or administrators
Teaching	12) Teaching is about having command, control, and confidence 13) Teaching means motivating students to learn 14) Teaching is about making an impact 15) Teaching is hard 16) Teaching is being in relationship with children 17) Teaching is helping children become full people in the world 18) There is skill or technique to teaching 19) Teaching is never boring; every day is different 20) Teaching replaces another talent, passion, or dream 21) Teaching is a battle 22) Teaching is a moral imperative or responsibility 23) Teaching is a service or contribution 24) Teaching is satisfying/unsatisfying 25) Teaching is elating to parents and communities

	26) Teacher education programs do not prepare for teaching 27) Teaching is/is not like the movies
Children	28) "urban" kids from the "inner city" 29) Children from under-resourced and under-served communities 30) Children are a population 31) "these" children 32) Children misbehave in school 33) Children fight in school 34) Children function at different levels 35) Children have positive qualities/characteristics 36) Children don't have the right values or character
Schools	37) Constraints on schools 38) Starting/founding a school
Education	39) Purpose of education 40) Fixing the education system; education reform 41) College readiness 42) Standardized testing 43) Equity, civil rights, social justice 44) Students' first, children's best interests 45) Institutional affiliations 46) Diversity 47) Class size 48) Research, professional knowledge, theory

APPENDIX O
CONVERSATION THEMES

autobiographical--college major
autobiographical--family
autobiographical--feeling not smart as a kid
autobiographical--geographic home
autobiographical--how met spouse
autobiographical--interests, talents
autobiographical--own school/education experience

becoming a teacher--changing original career/life goal
becoming a teacher--didn't know what was getting into
becoming a teacher--didn't think would be one
becoming a teacher--family support
becoming a teacher--grad school
becoming a teacher--having other options
becoming a teacher--how got hired
becoming a teacher--influenced by own great teachers
becoming a teacher--likes/loves kids
becoming a teacher--need personal growth, maturity
becoming a teacher--not intentional or conscious
becoming a teacher--not ready
becoming a teacher--not sure would like teaching
becoming a teacher--perceived by others as a teacher
becoming a teacher--playing teacher as a child
becoming a teacher--prior teaching preparation/experience
becoming a teacher--race, gender
becoming a teacher--teachers in the family
becoming a teacher--to be politically active
becoming a teacher--to change the world
becoming a teacher--to escape some situation

becoming a teacher--to give back/pay forward
becoming a teacher--to impart knowledge and help people grow
becoming a teacher--to inspire young people
becoming a teacher--to serve society
becoming a teacher--to teach a subject one loves
becoming a teacher--to work for civil rights/equity/social justice
becoming a teacher--wanting to be a teacher at a young age
becoming a teacher--wanting to work in a particular location
becoming a teacher--wanting to work with particular population

college prep, readiness, success

critique of education system/schooling

description of community--Bronx

experiencing failure

experiencing success

feelings--afraid, scared
feelings--anger
feelings--annoyance
feelings--being true self
feelings--breaking down
feelings--can't imagine not being a teacher
feelings--challenging
feelings--comfortable
feelings--confidence

feelings--creative, alive
feelings--crying
feelings--curiosity
feelings--defeated
feelings--deflated
feelings--disrespected
feelings--doing important work
feelings--doubt
feelings--dread
feelings--embarrassed
feelings--emotional
feelings--evolving talent/engagement
feelings--excitement
feelings--exhausted
feelings--expecting the worst
feelings--frazzled
feelings--frustrated
feelings--fun
feelings--giving up
feelings--guilt
feelings--happiness
feelings--hope
feelings--inspired
feelings--interesting
feelings--judged, criticized
feelings--life changing
feelings--like a fraud
feelings--loss of idealism
feelings--loving learning
feelings--made right choice
feelings--manhood
feelings--mayhem, mess

feelings--miserable
feelings--nervous
feelings--no regrets
feelings--nobody knows what it's like
feelings--not giving up
feelings--not in control
feelings--not making a big impact
feelings--not taking it personally
feelings--nothing is working
feelings--nothing more important than teaching
feelings--old fashioned
feelings--once a teacher, always a teacher
feelings--optimistic
feelings--overwhelmed
feelings--part of changing education
feelings--patience
feelings--perseverance
feelings--pressure
feelings--proud
feelings--reckless
feelings--regret
feelings--rejected
feelings--relief
feelings--sadness
feelings--satisfaction
feelings--self control
feelings--sense of otherness
feelings--soul, spirit, life
feelings--stunned, shocked
feelings--taking command/control
feelings--tension
feelings--uncomfortable

feelings--want instant results
feelings--want to escape
feelings--weak

first year teaching

founding a school

institutional affiliation--A Better Chance (Lower Merion)
institutional affiliation--Avodah
institutional affiliation--Bank Street
institutional affiliation--Citizen Schools
institutional affiliation--Columbia University Teachers College
institutional affiliation--Debbie Meier/Lower East Side School
institutional affiliation--Montclair State University
institutional affiliation--NYCTF
institutional affiliation--NYU
institutional affiliation--Pace University
institutional affiliation--Pratt University
institutional affiliation--Relay University
institutional affiliation--Rockefeller Institute
institutional affiliation--TFA
institutional affiliation--Tufts University
institutional affiliation--Uncommon Schools

leaving teaching--did what needed to do
leaving teaching--going against own values
leaving teaching--missing being a teacher
leaving teaching--not happy
leaving teaching--not what thought it would be
leaving teaching--remains inside you
leaving teaching--still doing something with education

leaving teaching--thinking about going back
leaving teaching--tired of doing what one doesn't want to do
leaving teaching--to prove the system wrong
leaving teaching--to pursue PhD
leaving teaching--wanting another challenge
leaving teaching--wanting more excitement
leaving teaching--wanting more money
leaving teaching--wanting to be a school leader
leaving teaching--wanting to be more than a teacher
leaving teaching--wanting to do something else

making an impact

negative factor--bureaucracy, clerical responsibilities
negative factor--can't pursue other talents
negative factor--class size
negative factor--difficult
negative factor--exhausting
negative factor--not appreciated enough
negative factor--not enough resources
negative factor--not paid enough
negative factor--regulated time structure
negative factor--stressful
negative factor--too much standardized testing
negative factor--work/life balance

other work/talent/pursuit/life besides teaching

perception of teaching--bad teachers can't be fired
perception of teaching--dangerous in a sexy/hero way
perception of teaching--easy paycheck
perception of teaching--getting blamed

perception of teaching--good teachers can teach any class size
perception of teaching--great people don't want to teach
perception of teaching--great profession
perception of teaching--held to a higher moral standard
perception of teaching--important
perception of teaching--invisible profession
perception of teaching-- attract "better" people into profession
perception of teaching--not well regarded
perception of teaching--respected
perception of teaching--shaped by movies

positive factor--academic environment
positive factor--always learning
positive factor--always something different/new
positive factor--energized by students
positive factor--enjoyment
positive factor--fulfilling
positive factor--good pay
positive factor--health insurance
positive factor--interesting challenge

professional development--learning on the job
professional development--not being prepared
professional development--teacher training, PD, coaching

purpose of education--civil rights/equity/justice
purpose of education--control kids
purpose of education--fundamental/important to country, society
purpose of education--go to college
purpose of education--prevent & intervene social problems
purpose of education--sense of self and others in the world

realizing--can't teach until you are open, love students
realizing--change takes time, can't force it
realizing--have control to change things in classroom
realizing--have to pay close attention/listen to children
realizing--how much influence a teacher can have
realizing--lessons have to be connected to students' lives
realizing--personal development because of teaching
realizing--power to bring a student down
realizing--praise of children has to be sincere
realizing--students' have experiential knowledge
realizing--students want to learn

relationship with colleagues--always talking about teaching
relationship with colleagues--can do own thing, autonomous
relationship with colleagues--collaboration
relationship with colleagues--dating
relationship with colleagues--friendship
relationship with colleagues--learning from them
relationship with colleagues--social time with other teachers
relationship with colleagues--trust, support

relationship with parents/families--acknowledging assets
relationship with parents/families--collaboration
relationship with parents/families--confrontation
relationship with parents/families--contact about behavior
relationship with parents/families--learning from them
relationship with parents/families--naming deficits, pathologies
relationship with parents/families--not reaching out, avoid
relationship with parents/families--parent advocating for child

relationship with students--connecting bc of own experience
relationship with students--conversation with them

relationship with students--counseling

relationship with students--culture, race, class

relationship with students--depends on how teacher feels/acts

relationship with students--different from one's own background

relationship with students--disconnected

relationship with students--favorite student

relationship with students--growing with them

relationship with students--high expectations

relationship with students--honoring them

relationship with students--humbled by them

relationship with students--intimidated by them

relationship with students--keeping professional distance

relationship with students--knowing them

relationship with students--learning from them

relationship with students--letting children be their whole selves

relationship with students--liking/loving/caring about students

relationship with students--mentoring

relationship with students--mutual respect

relationship with students--needing each other

relationship with students--not giving up on them

relationship with students--not reaching them

relationship with students--openness, intimacy

relationship with students--power

relationship with students--protecting the vulnerable

relationship with students--proud of them

relationship with students--remembering particular students

relationship with students--representing them in outside world

relationship with students--respected by students

relationship with students--revealed by them, kept honest

relationship with students--showing that they matter

relationship with students--staying in touch with students

relationship with students--students coming back as adults

relationship with students--trying to improve their behavior

school culture--always working

school culture--collaborative

school culture--homogenous

school culture--laid back, informal

school culture--negative

school culture--supportive

school culture--heterogeneous

standardized testing

staying in teaching

student learning--accessible curriculum

student learning--asking questions & finding answers

student learning--being with self and others in world/life

student learning--beyond or outside textbook/classroom/school

student learning--connected to college or career

student learning--connected to real world/life

student learning--critical thinking skills

student learning--curiosity

student learning--depth vs breadth

student learning--different ways of learning

student learning--engagement

student learning--enjoyment

student learning--extracurricular activities

student learning--hands on, experiential, exploring

student learning--happens outside comfort zone

student learning--having choices

student learning--homework

student learning--imagination, innovation

student learning--interest
student learning--learning from feedback
student learning--making meaning/sense of life
student learning--meaningful curriculum
student learning--motivation
student learning--ok to make mistakes
student learning--overcoming past failure
student learning--reflection
student learning--social skills/cues
student learning--through practice/effort/struggle

students description--always express the truth
students description--apathetic, indifferent
students description--bad academic habits
students description--bad behavior
students description--beautiful smile
students description--build school culture
students description--carry negative stigma
students description--come to class
students description--confrontational
students description--considerate
students description--could become a teacher
students description--crazy
students description--creative
students description--defiant
students description--determined
students description--difficult
students description--disrespectful
students description--diversity
students description--don't feel smart
students description--don't put in hard work/effort
students description--don't trust/believe teacher

students description--don't understand teacher humor
students description--emotional
students description--energy
students description--every kid is different
students description--exceptional
students description--fighting
students description--funny, humor
students description--gang members
students description--getting along, friendly
students description--gifted
students description--good
students description--grateful
students description--grouchy, grumpy
students description--grow/show progress
students description--have potential
students description--have skills/abilities outside academic
students description--inner city, rough
students description--kind
students description--lack empathy
students description--lack skills
students description--leaders
students description--learning disabled
students description--little family support
students description--live in violent communities
students description--loud
students description--nasty
students description--need attention
students description--need police supervision
students description--not as capable as others
students description--not cooperating
students description--not creative
students description--not doing the work

students description--not realistic
students description--not talented
students description--observe, know teachers
students description--ordinary, regular
students description--out of control
students description--own the school building
students description--persevered, survived a lot
students description--poor
students description--problems outside of school
students description--produce great work
students description--resistant
students description--self esteem
students description--sensitive
students description--shocking behavior
students description--smart
students description--special people
students description--stand up for teacher
students description--strong
students description--struggling
students description--sweet
students description--talented
students description--test new teachers
students description--thoughtful
students description--tough
students description--unmotivated
students description--want to learn
students description--want to please teacher
students description--wide range of skill/ability
students description--willful, own mind
students description--wonderful

subject--art

subject--daycare
subject--english
subject--information technology
subject--math
subject--science
subject--social studies/history

teacher evaluation

teaching description--addressing the whole child
teaching description--aesthetic, pleasing class environment
teaching description--authority figure
teaching description--bad teaching
teaching description--being authoritarian
teaching description--being creative
teaching description--being flexible, adjusting, modifying
teaching description--believing intelligence can be developed
teaching description--breaking down in class
teaching description--building classroom community/space
teaching description--cheerfulness and humor
teaching description--classroom management
teaching description--complex series of moves
teaching description--confidence
teaching description--connecting curriculum with students' lives
teaching description--developing creativity
teaching description--developing curiosity
teaching description--developing learners
teaching description--developing social responsibility
teaching description--developing students' character
teaching description--developing students' confidence
teaching description--emotional tone
teaching description--emphasizing positive in students

teaching description--enjoying the job
teaching description--evolving talent, development
teaching description--giving sincere, meaningful praise
teaching description--good teaching
teaching description--handing out worksheets
teaching description--having presence
teaching description--inspiring students
teaching description--instilling love of subject
teaching description--instructional techniques
teaching description--intellectual pursuit
teaching description--just trying things
teaching description--keeping kids in school
teaching description--knowing subject matter
teaching description--knowing yourself
teaching description--learning about children
teaching description--lesson planning
teaching description--love
teaching description--making school a safe and inviting place
teaching description--mechanics
teaching description--motivating students
teaching description--not knowing what to do
teaching description--nurturing students' spirit
teaching description--outside of classroom
teaching description--paying attention/observing/listening
teaching description--personality/style
teaching description--preparing students for college
teaching description--putting on a character or a persona

teaching description--reflecting on practice
teaching description--responsible for student learning
teaching description--some things come only with experience
teaching description--strict
teaching description--structured classroom environment
teaching description--tricking students into learning
teaching description--turning kids off from learning
teaching description--using humor, telling jokes

values/ethics--building community
values/ethics--confirming the deepest thing in another
values/ethics--empathy
values/ethics--fabric of society
values/ethics--inequality is unjust
values/ethics--intellect
values/ethics--love
values/ethics--moral responsibility
values/ethics--not own happiness, but there for the kids
values/ethics--not wanting to cement stereotypes
values/ethics--ok to make mistakes
values/ethics--right thing to do
values/ethics--sense of purpose in the world
values/ethics--talking about what is important
values/ethics--wrong thing to do

what's best for students vs what's best for teachers

APPENDIX P
SAMPLE OF CONVERSATION METAPHORS

SPEAKER	INTONATION UNIT	TOPIC	METAPHOR	VEHICLE GROUP
Rob	a part of the mind	teaching	mind	BODY
Lucy	the guilt is like eating me alive	teaching	eating me alive	BODY
Rob	it's in your hands	teaching	in your hands	BODY
Rob	let out a 2-3 year-long exhale	teaching	exhale	BODY
Lucy	somewhere at the heart of it	education	heart	BODY
Lucy	at the heart of it	education	heart	BODY
David	you just embodied in a building	teaching	embodied	BODY
Sandra	be exhausted and pass out	teachers	pass out	BODY
Sandra	hire for that particular trait	teachers	trait	BODY
Peter	where my heart wants to be	children	heart	BODY
Peter	that's how many faces	children	faces	BODY
Rita	a good time for us to kind of brainstorm	teachers	brainstorm	BODY
Jeffrey	chest clenches because of how I see students being treated	children	chest	BODY
Jake	you break into the cold sweat	teaching	cold sweat	BODY
Jake	everyone has that sinking feeling in their stomach	teaching	stomach	BODY
Rachel	need to create a curious critical mind	education	mind	BODY
Rachel	full range of hands on activities	education	hands on	BODY
Rachel	where in your heart	teaching	in your heart	BODY
Rachel	you have a loving heart	teaching	a loving heart	BODY
Rachel	early childhood education with hands on teaching	teaching	hands on	BODY
Rachel	there should still be hands on	teaching	hands on	BODY
Shaun	thinking on your feet and the flexibility and unpredictability	teaching	on your feet	BODY
Chase	it was a big eye-opening experience	teaching	eye-opening	BODY
Andrew	letting them know you have their best interest at heart	teaching	at heart	BODY
Janice	I took a deep breath and got a broom	teaching	deep breath	BODY

Adam	when the material life is so difficult	children	material life	*BODY*
Ariadna	she had just the biggest heart	children	heart	*BODY*
Ariadna	I was completely choked up	teaching	choked up	*BODY*
Tiffany	my heart bleeds for them	education	heart bleeds	*BODY*
Rob	a recruitment director	teaching	recruitment	*MILITARY*
Rob	I would probably go ballistic	teaching	ballistic	*MILITARY*
David	here are your enemies	education	enemies	*MILITARY*
John	arming them with that knowledge	education	arming	*MILITARY*
John	taking command of a classroom	teaching	command	*MILITARY*
David	feeling like you can take that command	teaching	command	*MILITARY*
David	infiltrates the other spheres of your life	teaching	infiltrates	*MILITARY*
Jennifer	targeted to help our students	schools	targeted	*MILITARY*
Jeffrey	last ditch effort recruitment strategies	education	recruitment	*MILITARY*
Jeffrey	they recruit heavily	education	recruitment	*MILITARY*
Jasmine	the University of Texas is a huge recruitment for TFA	education	recruitment	*MILITARY*
Bill	as a TFA corps member with no school	teaching	corps member	*MILITARY*
Jake	treat first year teachers to earn their stripes	teaching	earn their stripes	*MILITARY*
Rachel	once you go above that you're in the army	education	army	*MILITARY*
Harriet	felt so defeated and frustrated and disrespected	teaching	defeated	*MILITARY*
Lucy	everybody is invested and into it	children	invested	*MONEY*
Rob	historically underfunded and under resourced	education	underfunded	*MONEY*
Rob	federal dollars	education	dollars	*MONEY*
Rob	rich debate	education	rich	*MONEY*
Jennifer	pay it forward to future students	teaching	pay it forward	*MONEY*
Sandra	very invested	schools	invested	*MONEY*
Lisa	it's all about how you sell it	teaching	sell	*MONEY*
Peter	in terms of pay	education	pay	*MONEY*
Peter	maybe the pay	teachers	pay	*MONEY*

Rose	a teacher that's rewarding all the kids	teaching	rewarding	*MONEY*
Jeffrey	the better funded it is	education	funded	*MONEY*
Jeffrey	if it's funded well enough it won't revolt strongly enough	education	funded	*MONEY*
Jeffrey	it's really just a money saving measure	education	money saving	*MONEY*
Jasmine	you throw more money at it	education	more money	*MONEY*
Jasmine	I'm not paid well enough	education	paid well enough	*MONEY*
Jasmine	they're not paid well enough	education	paid well enough	*MONEY*
Jasmine	financial stakes in the way the current system is set up	education	financial stakes	*MONEY*
Jeffrey	instructional time is golden	education	golden	*MONEY*
Jeffrey	a poor tormented teacher soul who hates everything	teacher	poor	*MONEY*
Jasmine	I'm getting paid a very high wage	teaching	wage	*MONEY*
Jake	these poor ninth graders see all in a row	children	poor	*MONEY*
Bill	because we sell ourselves as a teacher	teacher	sell	*MONEY*
Jake	I'm giving them gold today	teaching	gold	*MONEY*
Bill	get the kids to buy in	teaching	buy in	*MONEY*
Jake	I don't think that I sell it as much	teaching	sell	*MONEY*
Jake	trying to sell it to them	teaching	sell	*MONEY*
Rachel	but the pressure, the financial pressure on schools	education	financial	*MONEY*
Rachel	the money should be spent on	education	money	*MONEY*
Rachel	it would pay off in the end	education	pay off	*MONEY*
Rachel	it's hit the standards, save the money	education	save the money	*MONEY*
Rachel	she ran a very thoughtful rich program	schools	rich	*MONEY*
Rachel	at what price to that teacher?	teaching	price	*MONEY*
Chase	kids come from such low income families	education	low income	*MONEY*
Chase	proof of all of that to get our funding	education	funding	*MONEY*
Shaun	let's see if I can capitalize on it	teaching	capitalize	*MONEY*
Shaun	more important because I am capitalizing on their interests	teaching	capitalizing	*MONEY*
Harriet	when I say I am invested in them	children	invested	*MONEY*

Harriet	were so much more invested	children	invested	*MONEY*
Michael	a lot of these reforming underserved districts	education	underserved	*MONEY*
Harriet	fairly depressed city	teaching	depressed	*MONEY*
Harriet	the rewards are greater	teaching	rewards	*MONEY*
Harriet	there was a lower middle class community	teaching	lower middle class	*MONEY*
Michael	actually just straight up middle class	teaching	middle class	*MONEY*
Michael	you are very much invested in the civil rights aspect	teaching	invested	*MONEY*
Michael	keep them invested	teaching	invested	*MONEY*
Harriet	to invest the students more	teaching	invest	*MONEY*
Michael	but I also really need health insurance	teaching	health insurance	*MONEY*
Michael	make a living being a teacher	teaching	make a living	*MONEY*
Alicia	the city's historically most underserved communities	education	underserved	*MONEY*
Alicia	I didn't have health insurance	teaching	health insurance	*MONEY*
Andrew	it's an easy paycheck	teaching	easy paycheck	*MONEY*
Larissa	look at the rich ways in which they are thinking	children	rich	*MONEY*
Larissa	you reward them	teaching	reward them	*MONEY*
Michelle	for someone of middle class or upper middle class family	children	middle class	*MONEY*
Michelle	for someone of middle class or upper middle class family	children	upper middle class	*MONEY*
Adam	they wouldn't have bought it	teaching	bought	*MONEY*
Adam	they bought my act and they sat quietly through it	teaching	bought	*MONEY*
Adam	you can still put on an act and they'll buy it	teaching	buy it	*MONEY*
Adam	I was also interested in the paychecks	teaching	paychecks	*MONEY*
Michelle	respect that you earned from the students	teaching	earned	*MONEY*
Jerry	they need to be invested in and publicized and celebrated	children	invested	*MONEY*
Jerry	a thirty-thousand dollar private school	schools	thirty-thousand dollar	*MONEY*
Jerry	because I can't believe they pay me for this	teaching	they pay me for this	*MONEY*
Jerry	yeah, wow, I earned my money	teaching	earned my money	*MONEY*
Jerry	I can't believe they pay me for it	teaching	they pay me for it	*MONEY*

Ariadna	every day is also really rewarding	teaching	rewarding	*MONEY*
Lana	once they have enough credits to be a senior	children	credits	*MONEY*
Tiffany	coming from a high poverty area	education	high poverty	*MONEY*
Tiffany	they are not earning enough credits to be on track	education	earning	*MONEY*
Tiffany	they are not earning enough credits to be on track	education	credits	*MONEY*
Tiffany	the student has earned no credit in high school	education	earned	*MONEY*
Tiffany	the student has earned no credit in high school	education	credits	*MONEY*
Tiffany	this seventeen-year old with no credit	education	credits	*MONEY*
Joy	when they came in with my first paycheck	teaching	paycheck	*MONEY*
Joy	what are they paying me for?	teaching	paying	*MONEY*
Rose	did they become a millionaire	children	millionaire	*MONEY*
Lisa	have done in this scenario	teaching	scenario	*THEATER/ACTING*
Lisa	like when you are watching a play	teaching	watching a play	*THEATER/ACTING*
Lisa	when you are watching	teaching	watching	*THEATER/ACTING*
Sandra	those kinds of scenarios	teaching	scenarios	*THEATER/ACTING*
Sandra	I always played teacher with my siblings	teaching	played	*THEATER/ACTING*
Elizabeth	the drama and everything else	education	drama	*THEATER/ACTING*
Elizabeth	there's drama	education	drama	*THEATER/ACTING*
Peter	tragic for the students	education	tragic	*THEATER/ACTING*
Jeffrey	they want to perform for you	children	perform	*THEATER/ACTING*
Jasmine	even at the best case scenario	education	scenario	*THEATER/ACTING*
Rachel	confidence, even if it's pretend	teaching	pretend	*THEATER/ACTING*
Rachel	it's an acting job	teaching	acting	*THEATER/ACTING*
Shaun	do you see the classroom as a stage?	teaching	stage	*THEATER/ACTING*
Chase	every day I write, direct, and star in my own production	teaching	write	*THEATER/ACTING*
Chase	every day I write, direct, and star in my own production	teaching	direct	*THEATER/ACTING*
Chase	every day I write, direct, and star in my own production	teaching	star in	*THEATER/ACTING*
Chase	every day I write, direct, and star in my own production	teaching	production	*THEATER/ACTING*

Chase	there is a climax to it	teaching	climax	*THEATER/ACTING*
Chase	and it's flashy and it's big, it's climactic	teaching	climactic	*THEATER/ACTING*
Chase	stop being the star	teaching	the star	*THEATER/ACTING*
Chase	just be the director	teaching	the director	*THEATER/ACTING*
Chase	I have to write a play that the students are going to direct	teaching	write a play	*THEATER/ACTING*
Chase	I have to write a play that the students are going to direct	teaching	direct	*THEATER/ACTING*
Shaun	I still see myself as an actor	teaching	actor	*THEATER/ACTING*
Shaun	you have the production	teaching	production	*THEATER/ACTING*
Shaun	you're not at the front of the stage	teaching	front of the stage	*THEATER/ACTING*
Shaun	the audience can be a more active participant	teaching	audience	*THEATER/ACTING*
Shaun	the audience can be a more active participant	teaching	participant	*THEATER/ACTING*
Shaun	in this larger story or play	teaching	play	*THEATER/ACTING*
Shaun	the transition to become the behind-the-scenes director	teaching	behind-the-scenes	*THEATER/ACTING*
Shaun	the transition to become the behind-the-scenes director	teaching	director	*THEATER/ACTING*
Alicia	all that really is measuring is performance	education	performance	*THEATER/ACTING*
Andrew	you're measuring how well students perform	education	perform	*THEATER/ACTING*
Andrew	how to act in the classroom and social situations	teaching	act	*THEATER/ACTING*
Andrew	having some role in education	teaching	role	*THEATER/ACTING*
Larissa	became part of the repertoire of the class	education	repertoire	*THEATER/ACTING*
Larissa	rather than this very superficial act	teaching	act	*THEATER/ACTING*
Adam	my appraisal of her character	children	character	*THEATER/ACTING*
Michelle	you never broke character	teaching	character	*THEATER/ACTING*
Adam	my character was the crusty curmudgeonly authoritarian	teaching	character	*THEATER/ACTING*
Adam	important not to break character	teaching	character	*THEATER/ACTING*
Adam	let the kids know that it was a character	teaching	character	*THEATER/ACTING*
Adam	there is a lot of acting	teaching	acting	*THEATER/ACTING*
Adam	they bought my act and they sat quietly through it	teaching	act	*THEATER/ACTING*
Adam	they bought my act and they sat quietly through it	teaching	sat quietly	*THEATER/ACTING*

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Michelle	the sound of the heels on the floor was very important	teaching	sound of the heels	*THEATER/ACTING*
Adam	having a certain character	teaching	character	*THEATER/ACTING*
Adam	you can still put on an act and they'll buy it	teaching	put on an act	*THEATER/ACTING*
Michelle	admired your teaching persona	teaching	persona	*THEATER/ACTING*
Ariadna	they bring such different characters and characteristics	children	characters	*THEATER/ACTING*
Joy	it's like being an actress or an actor	teaching	actress	*THEATER/ACTING*
Joy	it's like being an actress or an actor	teaching	actor	*THEATER/ACTING*

APPENDIX Q
FORMAT CONVENTIONS

In the portrait, the following formatting conventions (Cameron & Maslen, 2010; Provenzo et al, 1989) are used:

1) I use the convention of (age, gender, race/ethnicity, grade level and subject, years teaching) to identify the teachers in the text. For example, Aaron Drake (58, m, W, MS history, 25yrs) indicates that the teacher, Aaron Drake, is 58 years old, male, identified as white, teaches history in middle school, and taught for 25 years at the time of the StoryCorps recording. After the first quote, I refer to teachers by their last name. A complete list of the participants is provided in Appendix B and their profiles in Appendix G.

2) Words/phrases from the conversations are written inside "quotation marks," or, if long enough, blocked off in the body of the text.

3) *Italics* are used for emphasis or to introduce important terms.

4) Linguistic metaphors (metaphorically used words or phrases in the conversations) are underlined when discussed in the text. Linguistic metaphors appear in spoken speech. Examples:
    I am invested in the kids
    I am giving them gold today
    let's see if I can capitalize on it

5) *SYSTEMATIC METAPHORS* (metaphors which generalize a pattern of linguistic metaphors across data) are written in *SMALL ITALICS CAPITALS* (size 10 font). Systematic metaphors are created by the metaphor analyst to describe a pattern or theme of the linguistic metaphors present in speech. Example: a set of linguistic metaphors (referenced above) related to money or wealth was used with direct reference to the topic of teaching. Some possible conceptual metaphors could be:
    TEACHING IS GIVING/RECEIVING SOMETHING VALUABLE
    TEACHING IS A TRANSACTION

6) CONCEPTUAL METAPHORS (metaphors that express the link between two domains that has been exhibited in numerous data sources over time) are written in SMALL CAPITALS (size 10 font). Conceptual metaphors are drawn from previously demonstrated overarching frames or cognitive models that inform and influence discourse. Example: Some conceptual metaphors could be:
    KNOWLEDGE IS MONEY
    IMPORTANT IS WEALTHY/RICH

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