

**TENSIONS WITHIN TEACHING: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY
OF AN AMERICAN TEACHER**

By

BRIANNE MARIE TUURA

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

DOCTORATE OF EDUCATION

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
College of Education

December 2012

To the Faculty of Washington State University:

The members of the Committee appointed to examine the dissertation of
BRIANNE MARIE TUURA find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

Michele Acker-Hocevar, Ph.D., Chair

Richard Sawyer, Ed.D.

Eric Johnson, Ph.D.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to thank the members of my committee for pushing me beyond my comfort zone, allowing me to grow both academically and cognitively. I would especially like to offer thanks to my committee chair, Dr. Michele Acker-Hocevar, who tirelessly read through many different versions of my dissertation before I became comfortable enough in my own voice to share what I had learned. Without her help and confidence in my actions, I would never have completed my dissertation, especially using this methodology.

I would also like to thank my family for standing by my side throughout this often frustrating process of growth. Thank you to my two boys who have grown up knowing only of Mom's constant struggle to achieve a Doctorate. They have given up a great deal in the way of fun, family projects, and vacations in their early years to allow me to work on this paper. My hope is that my new perspective will have a definitive effect on their education and lives. My first thoughts have always been about achieving the best for my boys.

Lastly, my thanks must go to my wonderful husband. I know in my heart that his actions throughout my education make him just as worthy of having his name on the diploma. I will never forget the sacrifices that he made in order to allow me to achieve my life's dream. I hope to be able to repay his love in the future and help him to pursue his dreams.

TENSIONS WITHIN TEACHING: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY
OF AN AMERICAN TEACHER

Abstract

by Brianne Marie Tuura, Ed.D.
Washington State University
December 2012

Chair: Michele Acker-Hocevar

This dissertation examines the personal transformation of an American teacher as she becomes aware of the social, political, and economic tensions that exist within the American school system and the effects that these tensions have on her ability to teach. As the researcher becomes more familiar with the power structures surrounding her, the reader is invited to observe the researcher's personal, cognitive, and emotional transformation. The exploration is executed through an evocative autoethnographic lens, providing a qualitative narrative of the personal paradigm shift.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
LIST OF FIGURES.....	ix
PROLOGUE.....	1
An Explanation.....	1
Introduction.....	1
My Reasoning.....	2
Understanding Autoethnography.....	3
Purpose.....	5
Paradigm Matrix.....	6
Methodology.....	7
Data Collection.....	7
The Journal.....	8
Data Analysis.....	10
Organization.....	10
CHAPTER	
1. SEPTEMBER.....	12
Introduction.....	12
Perceived Differences.....	13
New Direction.....	18
One Box and One Visitor.....	20

A Day in My Life.....	20
2. OCTOBER.....	24
Kozol’s Children.....	25
My Own Children.....	28
Morning Routines.....	30
Preparing for Students.....	32
What’s That Smell?	32
3. NOVEMBER.....	37
Curtains to Hide Behind.....	37
Test Vomit.....	43
4. JANUARY.....	46
My Place in the District.....	46
Social Studies Curriculum Guide Committee.....	49
Thinking Back.....	50
Phone Call for Advice.....	51
Language Control.....	53
Upset From District.....	56
Mirrored Image.....	58
5. MARCH.....	61
Spring Nears.....	61
Middle of the Night.....	63
What the Data Shows.....	64
Glass Ceilings.....	66

Cursive Writing.....	67
No Control/Despair.....	68
Returning From the Nightmare.....	68
6. APRIL.....	70
Sinking in.....	70
Don't Want Others to Know.....	71
Cancer Nurse.....	72
Hayden and Alexander's Education.....	73
Ready to Check-Out.....	73
7. JUNE.....	75
The Last Time.....	75
Leaving for How Long?	76
EPILOGUE.....	78
Not the End.....	78
Intentions.....	78
Changing Positions.....	79
First Position.....	79
Second Position.....	81
Third Position.....	82
Fourth Position.....	82
Fifth Position.....	83
Patterns in Voice/Decision-Making.....	83
Next Steps.....	84

American Education System Re-Envisioned.....	84
Personal Reflections.....	85
REFERENCES.....	86
APPENDICES	
A. FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF.....	92
B. COMPARABLE EVOCATIVE AUTOETHNOGRAPHIES.....	93

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Four Paradigms for the Analysis of Social Theory.....	6
---	---

Dedication

To my family, who have remained by my side throughout the entire process of coping with reality. My eternal thanks to each of you for always being my Haystack Rock, never affected by the ever-churning ocean tides.

Prologue

An Explanation

‘So you just write about your life?’ Valerie says casually. ‘That doesn’t sound too difficult.’

I turn around, stare at her for a moment as though I’ll get a sign as to whether I should promote autoethnography to Valerie. When no sign is forthcoming, I say, ‘Oh, it’s amazingly difficult. It’s certainly not something that most people can do well. Most social scientists don’t write well enough to carry it off. Or they’re not sufficiently introspective about their feelings or motives or the contradictions they experience. Ironically, many aren’t observant enough of the world around them. The self-questioning autoethnography demands are [sic] extremely difficult. So is confronting things about yourself that are less than flattering. Believe me, honest autoethnographic exploration generates a lot of fears and self-doubts—and emotional pain. Just when you think you can’t stand the pain anymore, well that’s when the real work has begun. Then there’s the vulnerability of revealing yourself, not being able to take back what you’ve written or having any control over how readers interpret it. It’s hard not to feel your life is being critiqued as well as your work. It can be humiliating. And the ethical issues,’ I warn, ‘just wait until you’re writing about family members and loved ones who are part of your story’ (Ellis, 2004, pp. xvii–xviii).

Introduction

This text is an evocative autoethnography, which means that it is not the doctoral paper that most people envision when they think of a dissertation. That is not to say that endless hours

of reading, research, and in-depth data collection was not done for this piece. On the contrary, the research was filled with moments in which only Foucault or Derrida could lighten the path through the entangled data. At other moments, I wanted to simply fall back on my early pragmatic paradigm without becoming emotionally raw from reading and researching. The difference between this dissertation and many other forms of qualitative research is simply the format and the focus (see Appendix B). Ellis (2004) describes the structure and writing of an evocative autoethnography as being lost in “the woods without a compass” (p. 120). An unavoidable tension exists between the free-flowing, emotionally-driven evocative autoethnography and the time-honored, highly-structured dissertation.

Evocative autoethnography has no universally-accepted format or methodology. Autoethnographies are simply to be written in a format that best suits the researcher’s needs. The research can be presented in a number of formats, including, but not limited to, “short stories, poetry, fiction, novels, photographic essays, personal essays, journals, fragmented and layered writing, and social science prose” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 739).

For the purpose of this study, I begin the piece with a more traditional qualitative stance by explaining the methodology in which I based my work in this prologue as well as the data collection methods used. This chapter is followed by the overarching narrative. A literature review is not included within the piece; instead, the literature was embedded within the narrative to support and provide validity for the research. However, because stories are the driving force in evocative autoethnography, much of the accompanying literature is never mentioned.

My Reasoning

I have chosen narrative storytelling to present a view into my culture because this format is the most familiar method for humans to understand life’s epiphanies as a race (Ellis, 1997).

Telling an emotional narrative with meaningful “truths” and experiences is more important than stating all of the historical facts in autoethnography (Ellis, 1997). This story is incomplete and highly fragmented due to my own interpretations and personal constructs, but it is my understanding of the culture around me, which only I can put into words (Jones, 2005; Kelly, 2003). This story is not like any other; it is my story, told through my eyes alone. As Ellis (1997) states, in autoethnography, sometimes I am front and center in the story, while at other times, I am at the periphery of the story.

Understanding Autoethnography

Autoethnography is a method for describing and analyzing “(*graphy*) personal experiences (*auto*) in order to understand cultural experience (*ethno*)” (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011). It is a qualitative method that describes a culture and a researcher’s interactions within her/his natural setting or culture. Muncey (2005) argues that autoethnographies are a celebration of personal stories that shape our understanding of a cultural experience of a group through subjective interpretations of an individual. In contrast to Muncey (2005), Chang (2008) argues that “autoethnography is not about focusing on self alone, but about searching for understanding of others (culture/society) through self” (pp. 48–49). Thus, the challenge for me as the autoethnographer is to connect my interpretations to a broader narrative that adds credibility to the interpretations being made and that fuses these interpretations to underlying positions of power and social control (Pfohl & Gordon, 1986).

Ellis and Bochner (2000) define autoethnography as “autobiographies that self-consciously explore the interplay of the introspective, personally engaged self with cultural descriptions mediated through language, history, and ethnographic explanation” (p. 742). The method treats the subject matter as a politically and “socially-conscious” topic (Adams &

Holman Jones, 2008). Autoethnographic topics tend to be about subjects that are private or publicly stigmatized at the present time, such as sexual orientations, death, race, and crime. They tend to, but do not always, explore “shadowy realms of communication and identity” (Goodall, 2004, p. 188). This study follows that line of inquiry by delving into a topic that challenges societal norms and values not often discussed outside of the cultural group (teachers within a building) and underlying social justice issues.

I selected the topic because it is often discussed privately among teachers in classrooms, but rarely shared with stakeholders in the administration or outside of the school building. The topic is regarded as a sensitive topic that has the potential to affect job status and public approval, both of which are held in high esteem among teachers. The lived experiences of a teacher can add a great deal of depth and detail to the qualitative research regarding how teachers experience daily life in the classroom and how it unfolds in the field of educational politics and reforms today.

Autoethnographies have drawn controversy in the research field. Debates center around the methodology’s usefulness and its lack of objectivity. Ellis and Bochner (2000) assert that autoethnographies should be subjective in nature because they are deeply personal and focus on our metacognition and emotional states, which can never be truly validated or shown to be reliable. Perhaps the controversy can be associated with the broader perspective and definition that researchers have given the method of ethnography. While most scientists and researchers envision the researcher entering a field far from home in a safari outfit, autoethnographers tend to study the culture around themselves, attempting to include the climate and patterns seen in everyday life in the historical record (Wolcott, 2008). Autoethnographers consider the “normal” to be special and worthy of study. This attitude mystifies some in the research field, who regard

research only as the science of learning from the unknown and unimaginable. Often, what is unknown or unexamined is within the everyday realm of our personal experiences and our connections to larger social narratives are unexplained. This critical scholarship requires me, as the researcher, to look at the “ordinary” and to deconstruct the agendas hidden below the surface that exert power and influence over those within the culture, including myself.

Typically in research, the researcher does her or his best to maintain a separation between her-or-himself and the sample population. However, in autoethnography, the researcher is the population. As the researcher develops the narrative account from the collected data, the reader begins to gain access to an inner world that cannot be seen or deconstructed from an outside vantage point. Autoethnographies are a “research method that utilizes the researchers’ autobiographical data to analyze and interpret their cultural assumptions” (Chang, 2008, p. 9). The researcher and the research are highly interlinked. Autoethnographers describe in detail and analyze a group within a common, understood culture, such as a classroom, making interpretations about the patterns that the insider sees, hears, and experiences. Postmodernists also examine and interpret patterns not seen or heard within experiences, such as silence, pauses, and language control. The researcher can provide those outside of the culture with a detailed account with which to understand the examined culture. “To portray culture requires the fieldworker to hear, to see, and, most important for our purposes, to write of what was presumably witnessed and understood during a stay in the field. Culture is not itself visible, but is made visible only through its representation” (Van Maanen, 1988, p. 3).

Purpose

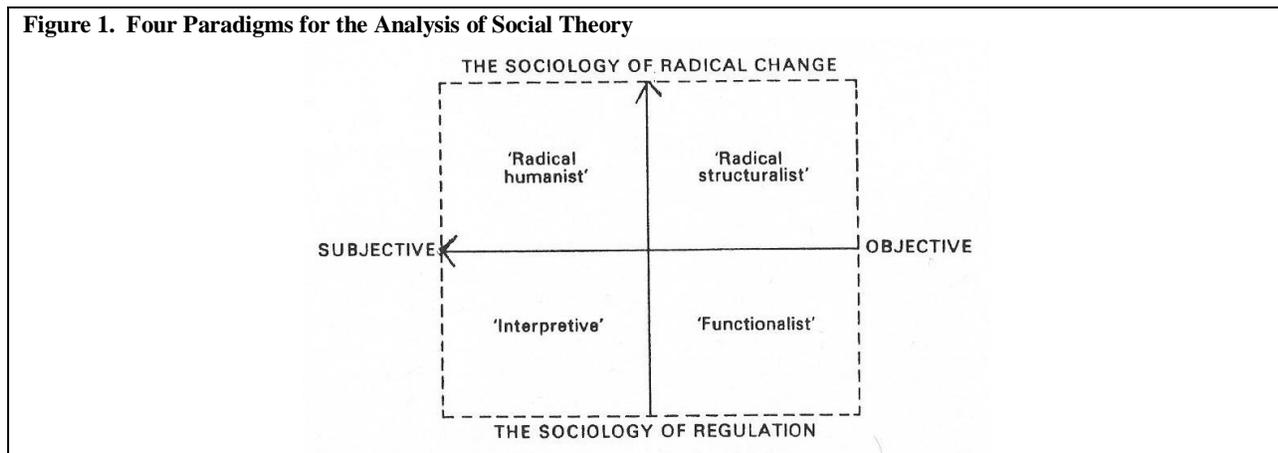
The purpose of this narrative is to enable the reader to act as a silent witness in my personal transformation as I explore invisible social and political tensions within daily practices

and events in my classroom. As I became aware of the tensions that exist, I grew in my awareness of how invisible forces translated into practices within my classroom that both enabled and disabled my ability to succeed. As I became more attentive to the power structures around me, I began to focus on my personal, cognitive, and emotional transformations, along with the effects of these transformations on my personal life. Thus, through my voice, I paint a picture of a teacher and the inner power structures of a school rarely seen by outsiders.

The study itself sought required me to dig deeper into the role that I had created and to transform that role by moving through paradigms of what are accepted “truths.” By examining myself through this critical autobiographical lens, each new perspective allowed me to grow and to shift back and forth among the four paradigms presented by Burrell and Morgan (1979) (see Figure 1).

Paradigm Matrix

The four paradigms are shown in Figure 1 (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 22).



In this diagram, the upward movement changes as one moves from a belief of regulation to radical change. One’s particular placement on this diagram determines one’s actions within situations. Moving from right to left within the diagram indicates a change from an objective view of truth to a subjective viewpoint. A person fluctuates among all of these paradigms during

different moments in her/his life. However, a person can only be in one paradigm within any given moment of her/his life. This study focuses on behaviors and truths within the lower two paradigms—the lower right paradigm, known as the functionalist paradigm, and the lower left paradigm, known as the interpretative paradigm.

I placed myself within the functionalist paradigm at the beginning of this research, which is where most people are placed within the professional bureaucracies of school organization (Bolman & Deal, 2010). In this paradigm, each problem has a solution. People in this paradigm tend to be reactionary. As problems occur, they seek solutions in order to return to the status quo. Functionalists view truths as objective in nature, believing that there is one and only one truth that we all share and understand. Functionalists also strive to maintain the status quo due to the unwavering belief that there is one truth (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Thus, policies and practices tend to be ubiquitous—one size fits all.

Throughout the journey of this study, I watched myself move from the controlled world of functionalism to a more interpretive paradigm, in which “truths” became more subjective and negotiated, as I learned to value my truths as just as important as others. Interpretivists desire to understand the inner workings of the world in which they live, without necessarily changing what is being done. However, arguably this may lead to questioning all of the decisions being made, without vocalizing these questions. Before I can become vocal, I need to move into a space in which I claim my voice.

Methodology

Data Collection

“Hayano (1979) used ‘autoethnography’ as a way to refer to a study of the ethnographer’s ‘own people’” (Chang, 2008, p. 47). Autoethnography is a form of ethnography in which the

researcher is the primary participant. The autoethnographer's subjective experiences (her/his stories) become the primary data source rather than the beliefs and interactions of others in the culture. The research often entails looking at a culture through the eyes of the researcher.

Data for the research was thus acquired by observing one's self (in this case, me) and reflecting upon those observations. Rodriguez and Ryave (2002) state that reflections of self are a useful tool for autoethnographers because they open the reader up to "covert, elusive, and/or personal experiences like cognitive processes, emotions, motives, concealed actions, omitted actions, and socially restricted activities" (p. 3). Observations of self allow the researcher to record her/his cognitive thoughts and behaviors within a specific context relative to the research topic. In autoethnography, "the data collection is less focused on time in the field or on the extent of data and more on the active collaboration between the researcher" and the culture during the study (Creswell, 2008, p. 489). I used a reflexive journal on a daily basis in order to record cognitive thoughts, memories, and observations from the day's interactions.

The Journal

I set aside time during the last 45 minutes of each day in which to write in my reflexive journal about the day's events. This time was set aside in order to allow myself to write while the day's occurrences were still fresh in my mind. I also wanted to be able to write in a setting that allowed me to look over any resources that I might find useful, including my plan book and calendar for the month.

The journal entries were written in two distinct sections on a daily basis. The first section was a running dialog and reflection about the day's events and the factors that affected my teaching. I included narratives about how my teaching differed in certain situations and narratives about occurrences within the room that were a direct result of these differences. The

goal was to write these narratives with as much “thick description” as possible, retaining smaller details in order to recognize patterns as more entries were kept.

The second section of the journal was a daily interpretation of what I had observed, heard, had not heard, and read. In this section, I was to point out emerging patterns. Interpretations were used later to help with the coding of the data. Weekly summaries, which included a recap of the reflections and interpretations over the course of the week, were also made each Saturday.

The journal entries should not be seen as simply a documentation of a personal story. The work becomes reflexive by comparing the narrative to the culture itself when “authors focus on a group or culture and use their own experiences in the culture reflexively to bend back on themselves and look more deeply at interactions between self and other” (Ellis, 2004, p. 37).

Along with the daily reflexive journal, I also made use of gathered documents and archival data. Staff meeting agendas, Professional Learning Community agendas and minutes, staff memos, and staff e-mails were among the documents that I gathered in the data collection process. Examples of archival data include district demographics, state demographic data, national studies, federal data concerning the educational system and policies, previous staff meeting agendas, previous Professional Learning Community agendas and minutes, e-mails saved onto the computer system from the beginning of the school year, and reflections collected from September through June.

Data collection began at the start of the school year, with a journal of moments that had stood out in my teaching and with conversations in which I had taken part. This data was considered within the archival data for the study. I conducted more purposeful data collection upon notification from my committee chair to begin my research.

Data Analysis

The analysis of data for autoethnographies begins with an emotional journey for the researcher while recalling events of the past. The researcher focuses in on the most memorable moments and events within the data collection period. The recall of this emotional data is done by writing down the details and events (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Unlike other qualitative methods, autoethnographies focus less on finding themes and more on making a change within the environment. The change noted in this study was the researcher's paradigm transformation. Following the lead of Art Bochner, the research was layered between the stories. However, the emotional details of the story were the focus. "I want the theorizing to happen in the story," rather than entirely outside of the storyline (Ellis, 2004, p. 199).

Focusing on the elements of the story that had meaning to me and others within the culture, rather than on research conducted by outsiders, allowed me to present issues that I felt were important to the culture. In other words, every autoethnographer would present different research from the same scenario. This procedure does not suggest that the method lacks reliability and validity, as some may point out; instead, it implies that autoethnographies are entirely subjective. "Validity is interpretive and dependent on context and the understandings we bring to the observation" (Ellis, 2004, p. 123). Our personal constructs determine the importance of instances within an event (Kelly, 2003). From our personal constructs, we determine how valid the stories are.

Organization

The text is organized into a series of stories that I feel demonstrate my transformation from a functionalist to an interpretivist. The stories are not necessarily presented in chronological order; instead, they are given in an order that makes sense to me as the researcher.

I used Kubler-Ross's five stages of grief model (Kubler-Ross, 1969) to organize the stories in a sequential manner that made sense to me. The Kubler-Ross model encompasses the original sequence of stages that a person experiences when coping with grief or life-altering experiences. The five stages, in order, are: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance (Kubler-Ross, 1969; see Appendix A). Individuals can move freely between stages, sometimes in different orders, or not at all. I felt that using the stages of grief as an outline would help express the angst that I experienced as I became aware of the system around me and of my own grieving process, as I questioned myself. The stages are never clearly identified in the piece in order to allow the reader to determine her/his own beliefs about my current placement within the stages. The reader is thus allowed to conceptualize the problems in a way that makes sense to her/him, without being told where I placed myself. The reader is encouraged to interact with the paper by determining the various stages of grief that I was experiencing for her- or himself.

After completing the paper, I went back and added in my current thoughts concerning where I was at certain times throughout the year. The new comments are given in italics in order to differentiate them from the original story.

Chapter One

September

“What I told you was true...from a certain point of view.”

~Obi Wan Kenobi, Star Wars Episode VI: Return of the Jedi (Lucas & Marquand, 1983)

Introduction

Rrrrrrrripppp went the clear packaging tape as I placed it over the top of a white file box to hold down the lid. “That’s the first box packed up,” I said to my husband, Jim. “Only 30 more, and I’ll be ready for summer vacation.” I chuckled as he rolled his eyes.

Jim handed me another empty file box all folded up, so that I could put away more stuff. On his Friday off, Jim drove up to my work in order to help me pack up. The students had left at 12:30 p.m., since it was an early release day, so that the teachers could prepare their classrooms for the summer. During the summer months at Garibaldi Elementary School, the janitors clean all of the classrooms in order to prepare for the next school year. I grabbed the box and headed behind my desk. I could almost hide behind the desk, as it was piled high with papers from the 2011–2012 school year. I began at the top of the smallest pile because it was the quickest to put away and seemed more productive.

I grabbed a stack of artwork that the students had worked on during the first few weeks in September. September is one of my favorite times of the year. The kids and I are always so excited about the promise of a new year, filled with new surprises and academic journeys. Teachers are always chipper and refreshed from their summer breaks.

September also means the celebration of apples and the apple crop in the area, which serves as a boost to the local economy and our students’ households. The artwork happened to be from a lesson about the local crops. The students had done a wonderful job of drawing these

beautiful pictures of apples. It was not an easy project for the 20 brand-new first graders, but they had a wonderful art teacher who takes pride in teaching students the correct way to draw a picture. Scribbled circles were never accepted. I have had the privilege of carpooling with Joan, our art specialist, over the past four years and have come to respect her love of art and childhood fine motor development.

One day back in March, on a car trip home, we were having a discussion about the difficulties of teaching at Garibaldi and the differences between our school and others throughout the area.

Perceived Differences

“I can’t seem to explain myself to these ladies in my church choir,” Joan wailed in frustration. “They all teach in affluent districts in the state. They just don’t get what it’s like to teach in Garibaldi.” Joan’s words were a strong mixture of anger and sadness.

I nodded my head vigorously to suggest my understanding and equal frustration. That was not the first time that Joan and I have had this kind of conversation during our long, daily commutes through the mostly barren desert. I was beginning to feel that it wouldn't be our last either. I twisted my body on the grey seat in order to face her as she drove wearily down the highway at sunset. I saw the frustration in her face and in her tightened grip on the black steering wheel.

“What do you think makes it so different?” I asked. I was eager to know her thoughts, but I also wanted to keep the small talk alive over the doldrums of the rumbling tires on the trucker-worn road. I, too, understood what Joan meant. I have had similar conversations throughout the past few years with other teachers, family, and graduate students about Garibaldi being different.

“That's what I'm having difficulty putting into words,” Joan said, as she fumbled with the air controls. She appeared to fidget with the knob, turning up the air-conditioning in the car as if to give her hands something to do as her mind raced. I couldn't seem to put the differences into words either.

The cabin of the car began to cool with the rhythmic cycles of the fan. As a shiver passed over me, I sought the appropriate words for our conversation. In my mind, I imagined a nuclear physicist from America trying to explain his daily routines to a nuclear physicist from Ukraine. Although their jobs are similar, the locations, tools, laws, cultures, and situations are highly unique. At times, a shared understanding would exist due to shared theories; however, at other times, one party would have difficulty understanding the other because of strong differences in basic mechanics. To outsiders, it might seem as though teaching at one school versus another should be easily explained, but such is not the case. School buildings are like nuclear reservations; they share purposes, but differ in many ways.

Drumming her fingers, Joan grew impatient with my private thoughts.

“The trouble I have with the ladies at church is that they keep coming back to the fact that our students are Hispanic. They seem to think this is a problem. Do you think it's a problem?” she asked nervously, a deep anger surfacing.

How does a person answer such a question? Should I mention Said's (1978) *Orientalism*, in which Said suggests that it is impossible for one to understand another, or “the Other” because we can never share backgrounds, culture, and history? The text seemed to fit this situation perfectly. On the one hand, I could see the other teachers' point. However, I could not think of any viable situations to suggest that this myth had any truth to it.

“It's funny that you mention that,” I said with a nervous chuckle. “I was having the same conversation with my dissertation chair a few months ago.” I mentally attempted to evaluate just how much I wanted to share. Although we had a long car ride ahead, my response could have been even longer. The entire conversation felt so simple; yet, in reality, it was highly complex.

Joan looked startled by my anxious laugh and response. Her eyes opened wide as she stared at me from the driver seat. As I watched her expression, I questioned whether I wanted to say more about my dissertation or just allow her to continue to dominate that conversation. Joan had always been a strong supporter of my dissertation work in the past. I had found her to be a good friend off of which to bounce heavy research-based ideas. Like me, Joan has had a history of working at Garibaldi Elementary as well as having been involved in research at the graduate level. Joan's work as a specialist enabled her to come in contact with all 575 students at the elementary school. This position has given her a strong view of the students and the culture around the school. As her colleague, I also understood her frustration and its source, especially when attempting to explain herself to teachers from other districts, or even to teachers from other buildings in our own district. The students we worked with were rural, 98% Latina/Latino, high poverty, and English Language Learners. However, these categories truly do not define the students with whom we worked. Our kids were more than just census categories. The census categories are socially constructed anyways (Townsend, 2007). I prefer Omi and Winant's (1986) definition of such categories as “an unstable and ‘decentered’ complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political struggle” (p. 68).

Garibaldi Elementary students have a rich history in their community. When you walk into Garibaldi Elementary, you feel as though you were walking into a highly isolated village somewhere else in the world. It is not the language that you hear; it is not the color of the skin

that you see; it is not the price tag of the clothes that the kids wear; it is something more, something mysterious and difficult to explain to an outsider. It is a community unto itself. The students from Garibaldi have a lifelong pride in the school.

“Well...what did your advisor say?” Joan inquired, startling me from my thoughts.

“Oh, right, right. We had the same conversation, her and me.” I stammered, trying to collect my thoughts in order to get my story straight. “Do you remember when I told you about my dissertation proposal? If you remember, I told my committee that I would be looking at how poverty and race affected how I teach.”

Joan nodded her head to the music and to me at the same time, as if to suggest to get to the point.

“Yeah, you said you are going to do something, an autobiography or something, about your classroom.”

“An autoethnography, that's right,” I confirmed. “An autoethnography is an evocative narrative that provides a researcher's story. It is often told in a narrative format that is filled with details. The method is often selected because it gives the reader an insider's perspective of a particular culture, like our school, in this case” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Ellis, 2004; Geertz, 1994; Muncey, 2010; Ronai, 1992).

“Will your research be reliable?” Joan hesitantly questioned. I was aware that she was trying to gain more insight into my project without trying to seem judgmental. She knew the last thing that I wanted to do was to defend my method again. It had become a battle of sorts with others because of the method's flexibility.

“Sure, that's what's great about autoethnography. The reader decides the reliability and validity of the paper by how much they can connect with the story and the researcher's feelings

[(Ellis, 2004)]. Since autoethnographies are deeply personal narratives about our metacognition and emotional states, they can never be truly validated or be shown to be reliable in any scientific manner [(Ellis & Bochner, 2000)]. I am not trying to find a universal truth. Instead, I am providing a snapshot of a moment within a setting to be analyzed by you and my other readers from different perspectives, one being from my own insider's perspective.”

Joan looked confused. “So what's changed?” she asked.

“I said I was going to collect data on how the poverty and language differences of my students were affecting my teaching in the classroom.”

“I remember you saying something about that,” Joan confirmed.

“Turns out, the data showed that the differences between me and my students were not of great value. Sure I have stories of how my heart melted when I heard a child received nothing but a coloring book for Christmas, but these stories and the data I collected did not prove the point I was out to prove. I was becoming desperate to find something that just wasn't there. I think I was just too eager to look for something that everyone else assumes that I should find. The original research wasn't even my idea. I don't remember my idea, but it was worse. As soon as race, poverty, and language were set on the table, I just assumed that I could take them and run like everyone wanted. I should have given the idea a little more thought.”

“I'm not surprised you haven't found anything. Those are the exact same factors that the teachers in my choir assume are the problem. Outsiders always seem to jump to that conclusion.” Joan's comment stung. What was never said in the car that day was that I had jumped on the popular bandwagon of blaming my students for issues within my own classroom. I felt horrible inside. I should have known better. To be honest, I just hadn't thought much about it before I began collecting stories. Poverty, language, and race were characteristics that I

had no control over and could not change; thus, they did not receive much of my time. I always had plans in the classroom to prevent money, race, or language from interfering with my teaching. During the first month in Garibaldi, a few problems occurred, but after a short while, I had a routine for dealing with difficulties involving language hurdles, money, and race differences.

I shook off my frustration with myself for not realizing my mistake earlier. After regaining my composure, I turned back to the conversation with Joan, who had waited patiently for me to consider her words.

New Direction

“Wait, does that mean you're going to have to start all over again? Does that mean all your research was for nothing?” Joan seemed shocked, almost angry in a way. I could understand her frustration. When I first mentioned to my husband that my data was useless in proving that race and socioeconomics were a factor in my teaching, he was also disturbed. I remember him begging me to look deeper at the data, to pull out any little piece that I could. Luckily, from the conversation with him, I was already prepared to respond to Joan's fears.

“No, I'm just fine, don't worry,” I quickly tried to calm her. “All is not lost. A large portion of the paper was intended to look at my personal growth as a teacher. I want to show that I have changed from an individual who follows orders without thought into a person who questions everything and who seeks a deeper understanding of the decisions made around me.”

“Well, you've sure done that. I've noticed you speaking up more during staff meetings. I'm always worried that you are going to upset our admin. team by asking so many questions. But, I kinda like that you are, otherwise we would never find out some things.” Joan smiles.

“Thanks. I’m glad you noticed. I sort of like the difference. Anyways, I had planned to use the data that I collected on poverty and language issues to show that I have grown through my awareness of the issues they cause. Instead, I am going to use different data and stories to show that growth. I know that I have changed and that others have noticed. Now, I just need to look over the data to see where it happened and why. I’m really learning a lot about myself and the school system. I’d rather not say much more yet.” The conversation continued, as the road led us away from the setting sun in the west. We never came up with a definitive answer to tell her choir partners.

As you can see, I am in the functionalist paradigm (Burrell & Morgan, 1979) at the beginning of the school year. I was given a flawed suggestion for a dissertation idea, and I took it, knowing that it wasn’t reality. I wasn’t in a position to be open and honest about the doubts that I had.

I am still amazed that we did not see the issue with blaming the students for difficulties that arise in the classroom. As teachers, we need to place the blame elsewhere at times, but it should not be directed at our students. Even though I was aware of the volumes of research criticizing teachers for such actions, I still found myself doing just that. It is easier now to look to the system for flaws, but being socialized into the education system as teachers, we are rarely privy to what is being done beyond our classroom walls. Such comments remind me of Freire’s (1970) works, detailing how an individual who is no longer being oppressed, such as a teacher, becomes the oppressor. It is a sad, endless cycle.

Not only were we blaming these children for the missteps in our day, we were allowing outsiders to suggest that race had something to do with it. Not once did Joan or I state that we had ever stood up to these other teachers, to remind them that race was never the issue. To do

so would not have benefitted either of us. That is the reality of the situation. "Understanding racism as a system of advantage that structurally benefits Whites and disadvantages people of color on the basis of group membership threatens not only beliefs about society but also beliefs about one's own life accomplishments" (Tatum, 1997, p. 103).

One Box and One Visitor

Returning from the memory of that car ride, I took one more look at the wonderful apples that the students had drawn as I set the stack of student work in the box. I finished filling the box until I could barely fit the flimsy lid on top. Handing it off to Jim, I was happy to have another box packed up and to be one step closer to summer. In the back of my mind, I was ready for the school year to be over, but would this be my last time packing up boxes at Garibaldi? Could this possibly be my last year of teaching, or were these just end-of-the year jitters and the anticipation of next year's students? I was unsure at this point, and I wanted to stop and collect my thoughts.

"Come on, Brienne. We don't have all day to pack up," Jim said impatiently. "Hayden and Alexander are at daycare, waiting for us to get home and pick them up."

"Sorry," I said. "Where's the next box?" I tried to distract myself by packing up some more material. I continued grabbing papers from the next pile over and placed them somewhat carefully into the bottom of another file box. All of a sudden, my classroom door opened, and in came one of my recent first-grade graduates. She had returned for one more hug while her mother picked up some paperwork from the office. Looking at the smiling student, my thoughts turned back to September when this student was not very happy and needed to talk.

A Day in My Life

An hour after the day had started, the class was diligently working on learning to read using the short e sound. One of my quieter students asked to speak with me in private. I had

taken her to my desk to find out what she wanted to share with me. Was it that her front tooth had finally fallen out? The class had been watching it for two weeks. Did her beloved cat finally die? He had been so sick lately, and her mind had been only on him. In fact, it was neither of these. She informed me that another student in the class had said that he had a gun in his backpack. The incident took place during music time on Monday, two days prior. Dread gripped my body. A similar situation had occurred recently in a neighboring city. While the gun was never used, the school employees were disciplined for not following the protocol precisely as planned. My mind raced through what I thought needed to be done, while I tried to remain calm in front of the class. I called the student in question over to speak with me. He was a very quiet student, who had done well in class thus far and rarely caused any issues. He was well liked by his peers and the staff alike. The student was upfront and honest about the gun. When I asked if it was still in his backpack, he initially broke down in tears. I wanted to comfort the child, forgetting completely about the emergency at hand. He seemed so fragile at that moment. It took me a second to regain my composure and to focus on the task at hand.

I handed the student a tissue to dry his eyes and tried to reassure him that everything was all right. I wanted him to know that I was not mad and that I was happy that he was able to be honest with me. The tears stopped flowing for a second when he realized why I had become upset. The tears were not due to being caught. To my surprise, his reaction was because this was the first day of the school year that he had forgotten the gun at home. He was sure that his mother, not me, would be so upset with him. At first, I was relieved to hear that he did not have a gun with him, but then to my horror, I realized that he had kept one in his backpack for 30 of the last 31 days of school.

The principal was quickly called in to deal with the matter at hand. I walked the student and his backpack to the class door, reassuring him all the while that everything was okay. By the time the principal appeared, he seemed content to visit the office for the first time.

Hours later, I was informed of the meeting with the child and his parent. To the administrator's and to my dismay, the child's mother was appalled that he had forgotten the gun. She sent it to school with him for safety purposes. While the administration spoke with the child and his parent, I continued teaching reading in my classroom, but my thoughts were elsewhere. I felt terrible that the little girl, who had been sheltered from the violence and gang issues in the surrounding community, had been exposed to these at school, where she should have felt the safest.

As the girl pulled away from her one last hug, I was brought back to my classroom and the task left at hand. I needed to get this room packed up.

"Goodbye, Mrs. Tuura," she said. "Have a great summer. See ya next year!" Would she see me next year? That had become the question at hand.

Who was I fooling to think that I could truly shield the children from outside dangers? Did they even need to be shielded? This was their community. This was all many of them knew. While I may have feared these surroundings, many of the children did not. I wonder if teachers in the neighborhood where I live have worries about the community outside of their classroom doors. It is not uncommon, as humans, to fear what we do not know. Tatum (1997) would argue that I have begun to enter the disintegration stage. In this stage, "White individuals begin to see how much their lives and the lives of people with color have been affected by racism in our society. The societal inequities they now notice directly contradict the idea of an American

meritocracy, a concept that has typically been an integral part of their belief system” (Tatum, 1997, p. 98).

Chapter Two

October

“Every day, we are engaged in a miracle which we don’t even recognize: a blue sky, white clouds, green leaves, the black, curious eyes of a child—our own two eyes.”

~Thich Nhat Hanh (Tagore, 2005, p. 120)

Reaching for another stack of papers on my desk, I noticed that I was starting to make significant progress on cleaning my classroom for the summer. Jim was hard at work in the middle of the room, stacking the blue chairs and the large tables so that the janitors could shampoo the carpets with minimal obstructions. I picked up a few more papers that the students had given to me, and I thought about the reasons that I became a teacher.

Throughout a teacher’s career, she/he can be asked more than a thousand times why she/he became a teacher (Ayers, 1993). There are more reasonable answers for why one should not than there are for why one should. In my own case, I had two distinct reasons. Neither dealt with expected pay.

The first reason was the desire to emulate my mother. I was always intrigued by how she could enjoy working with students who clearly caused other teachers in the building a great deal of irritation. These students would come to her room and desire to learn. They loved her for the time that she was willing to dedicate to them. My mother’s strong dedication and compassion was well known around town. I remember that simply going to the grocery store was like being with a rock star. Everyone knew her name and wanted to stop to say “hello.” From these exhaustively long shopping trips, I gained insight into the respect that our community had for her hard work. I was always fully aware of the fact that my mother was making a difference at her job. Who wouldn’t want that? Two studies in the late 1980s and early 1990s found that 58

percent of young adults becoming teachers were influenced by the humanness of the teachers around them and of family members who were teachers (Csikszentmihalyi & McCormack, 1986; Harris, 1990). “It is the human dimension that gives all teachers...their power as professional influencers” (Zehm & Kottler, 1993, p. 2).

My second reason for becoming a teacher was my constant desire to learn. In my eyes, teaching has always been about being at the forefront of information. I was eager for a career that allowed me to continue to learn about vast topics of interest, whether about dinosaurs, oceanic creatures, or historical figures. I dreamed of passing on my love for learning and asking my future students questions. My view of teaching was similar to Dewey’s (1908), namely that teachers should be driven by their personal “intelligences and ideas” (p. 16). With this dream in mind, I decided to embark upon a teaching career path.

I love being a teacher. I love everything about it. Every day, I have the ability to change a child’s life. Did I instill my love of learning and the desire to learn into my students this year? With the students’ completed paperwork in my hands, I felt that my reasons for becoming a teacher had been fulfilled for the year. But did I really succeed? Was all the work that I had accomplished this year really worth it, or will the outside environment hold the students back from possibly reaching their full potential?

Kozol’s Children

As I continued to set materials into the empty boxes, I thought about the children who had graced my rural classroom over the past six years. In the middle of one of the stacks of papers, I came across *Savage Inequalities* (Kozol, 1991), one of the books I used for research at the beginning of my data collection. Seeing this book, I was reminded of the children that Kozol described from East St. Louis. The children described in the text lived in an area that I would

generally describe as squalor. The description Kozol relays to his readers conjured up memories of video footage from third-world nations. I was shocked to realize the connection between Kozol's realities and one of the most prosperous nations in the world. The children were described as walking around in human sewage that had been piped down the hill from the more elite area of town. The children were highly lacking in basic skills typically taught in US classrooms. People had become complacent with the idea that crime was a way of life. Federal loopholes were used to maintain the impoverished area, preventing major corporations who moved in from making a difference. As I reread the description presented by Kozol, I was brimming with anger and the desire to make a difference.

Is this what others think of when I talked about working in Garibaldi? Are the teachers from Joan's choir picturing our students in this extreme poverty? What differentiates one form of poverty from another? Jensen (2009) theorizes that there are six forms of poverty. He would distinguish Kozol's children from those at Garibaldi by suggesting that one is urban poverty, while the other is rural poverty. Could they not be the same in some ways? Is there a deeper connection between the children and families of East St. Louis and Garibaldi Elementary? Have Joan and I, along with our colleagues, been naïve about Garibaldi or just too accepting of the poverty in the area?

Yes, crime is more prevalent in Garibaldi than in neighboring urban areas. A few of my students have lived in homes that lack running water and sewage. These issues are more real than most Americans wish to admit. However, these circumstances were not representative of the Garibaldi with which I was more familiar. When the students entered the halls of our school, we became a family that was not affected by money, gangs, or language. My students knew that

they differed from me in many ways, but I always promoted these differences as indicators of how they were special and interesting.

Most mornings, the halls were filled with conversations about the successes that students have achieved. The students interacted with me, sharing their dreams in conversations with me. The cruel world was left banging on the back door of the school, desperate, but unable to enter.

My frustration with the similarities between East St. Louis and Garibaldi stemmed from the government allowing some of the outside world to be let into the classroom, something they have done by means of their rules and policies. Rules, I believe, were intended to ensure that these children never forget what awaits them in the world outside. The rules bind them to the starting blocks in the 50-meter dash called life. Even those who escape the starting blocks find a heavy weight attached to their ankles, slowing their progress.

As an elementary teacher, it is easy to be sheltered about these weights and chains. Children are not as in tune with the realities outside the door. Every child believes in her/his ability to be a pop star or a princess if she/he so desires. In first grade, nothing seems beyond the children's reach. Even we teachers find ourselves slipping into this blissful thought process. If we hope and pray enough, everything will be okay. If not, the high school teachers can deal with the fallout from the realization that not everything in life is fair.

My mind continued to race around this subject as I placed the book onto one of the bookshelves behind my desk. Although the weight of the book had been removed from my hand, the weight of the situation continued to make itself felt as I considered my purpose in becoming a teacher. I took a slow step backwards and flopped down onto my plush office chair. I bounced a couple of times, as the air in the chair piston compressed and then released. Deciding to take a mental break, I called Jim over to sit down and share a drink of Diet Coke.

My Own Children

As the Diet Coke cooled the back of my throat, I relived my recent ponderings with Jim. We talked, and my mind wandered back and forth between the students who once filled the now-empty blue chairs around the room and my own two children at home. Over the course of the year, as I spent more time collecting data and researching events around me, I found myself unable to sleep at night. As the house lay quiet, with the rhythmic slow breaths of my youngest son amplified through the baby monitor by our bedside, I found myself contemplating how my sons fit into the educational scheme that I was studying.

One night stood out among the rest. I was lying in bed trying to imagine my own children's place in this world. Over the course of the earlier evening, I had been speaking with my oldest son about what he wanted to do for a career when he gets older. His career desires changed regularly. Two days ago, he and I spent the afternoon discussing becoming a cartographer of the Congo River. Other conversations had been about becoming a marine biologist who saves endangered shark species or a paleontologist who finds new dinosaur skeletons. Thanks to the satellite television system, Hayden had been exposed to many interesting careers around the world that children from lower economic stature may never know about. That thought gave me a false sense of happiness that I was providing my children with opportunities that would surely help them succeed in life.

The positive thoughts did not last long that evening. After tucking each boy into bed and crawling into my own bed, my thoughts began to change. The motherly worries about providing enough crept in. This time, I had self-doubts about providing a good enough education for my students at school. Was I providing these children with everything that I could to enable them to succeed? Could I be doing any more? Would they have the opportunity to enjoy as adventurous

of careers as Hayden dreamed of? All of these careers required financial backing even just for basic training. Have my own surroundings placed my children in a position to be able to achieve everything that they desire, or were we living in a pocket of the city that would only witness mediocre results?

Do my students' parents have these same restless nights? Do they know the difference between what their children are getting at Garibaldi versus a school located in a more moderate socioeconomic area?

I continued to toss and turn for the next two hours. Although the air temperature was held at a steady, comfortable 72 degrees Fahrenheit, I grew colder and hotter as my mood and thoughts changed. My worries evolved into nightmares over the course of the night, leaving me tired and agitated in the morning. Even with the bad dreams, I never felt like I not wanting to go to work. The thrill of beginning my day in the classroom and seeing my other "family" motivated me to get up and get ready.

As my morning routine unfolded, I convinced myself that my life's work was to make sure my students received the best education that they could from me. I could not control what happened outside of my classroom, but I could control what happened within its four walls. I held fast to this belief throughout the day, reminding myself that they only get 182 days with me, so I had to make the most of them.

As I finished putting the last of the papers from my large oak desk into the white file box, I began to feel a sense of accomplishment. This was one of the largest tasks of cleaning up my classroom for the summer. After a couple of hours, I had packed seven boxes full of papers and could see the entire desktop for the first time since the school year had begun. I looked around the room for where to go next. I noticed Jim sitting in another one of the office chairs taking a

break from moving all of the furniture around in the room. The classroom no longer looked like a place of learning; it looked like a desolate hospital room, sterile and ready for the next big emergency. There were a few things left here and there that needed to be put away, but there was still a lot of work left.

I decided to focus on the writing utensils and art supplies that Jim had gathered up from each table and left in a pile on the back counter. The first thing that caught my eye as I approached the large pile of supplies was the large colorful bottles of tempera paint. I wondered where these bottles of paint had come from because we rarely did any art projects in the classroom. Our curriculum was so focused on reading and math that we did not have time to focus on other subjects throughout the day. After a few moments of thinking about the paint, I remembered that Joan, the art teacher, had dropped them off earlier in the week because she said that she would not be using them next year and that she thought I might have a better use for the bottles. As I picked up the green bottle of paint, I recalled a day in late October when a fellow colleague entered my room and inquired about a peculiar smell.

Morning Routines

My steps were light and swift as I hustled around the school prior to students being allowed to enter that morning. It was a quarter after eight on a breezy, late fall morning. The school was brightly lit with a rainbow of colors from students' artwork on the walls. Student work was posted outside every classroom to demonstrate to any visiting state official what was being taught within the square rooms. On that morning, I would be starting my first lesson on a long vowel sound. Students would have to pay close attention because the lesson would only be taught once in the school year. It was quick, with little student interaction. The lessons were planned to the minute by a committee that monitors our faithfulness to the program. At

Garibaldi, we used the phrase “faithful to the core.” Deviations were not allowed, even those that increased learning. Learning was planned thanks to the national “Reading First” grant. The focus of Reading First was on teaching all students to read well by third grade to enable them to be better prepared for other areas of study (United States Department of Education, 2002, p. 1). Reading First has been characterized as an “inoculation approach” to fixing reading (McPartland, as cited in McCabe, 2003, p. 227). Our school used the Open Court reading curriculum. It was chosen from a very short list of required curricula because it was “research-based” according to rules set up by the Bush Administration. The focus of Reading First was on emphasizing phonemic awareness strategies in Kindergarten through third grade without comprehension strategies. In other words, the first few years of reading were focused solely on decoding, rather than meaning making (Allington, 1983). Not only did this act return reading instruction to a back-to-basics focus of drill and kill, it also specified how teachers were to teach reading (Apple, 2006).

Teachers within the building had long known that the program was not appropriate for our students. The speed of the materials and the lack of review was beyond the frustration level of most of our students. The materials moved too rapidly and allowed for very little interaction from students. In teaching, we call this method of instruction, “drill and kill” or rote memorization. For example, the teacher says a short phrase, and the students respond chorally with an answer or by repeating the initial phrase. Once students fell behind, it was rare for them to ever be able to catch up. If a student missed a day due to illness, she/he could not make it up in order to stay on pace with the program. New lessons were taught every day with no time for review. Another issue with the program was that teachers were required to create some of their own materials to use with the lesson plans, including copying workbook pages. With the high

cost of consumable products for the classroom, teachers were asked to photocopy classroom sets of workbook pages that were an integral part of the learning in Open Court. Doing so required extra preparation of teachers, beyond the normal activities to get the day started.

Preparing for Students

After waiting twenty minutes for an open copy machine, I had finally finished preparing my copies for the week. I bounce stepped my way back to my personal classroom, the only room in which I maintained a sense of control, even if it later turned out to be a false sense of control.

I wanted to know that all of my schooling mattered. I wanted to know that I was part of the team. I was slowly gaining an understanding of why so many teachers had left the profession in recent years. “Teachers across the map complain that the joy is being drained from teaching, as their work is reduced to passing out worksheets and drilling children as if they were in dog obedience school” (Wood, 2004, p. 39). I tried not to dwell on such thoughts for long because they could bog a teacher down as she/he waded through a day that was often full of procedural routines that stymied learning.

I had fifteen minutes left to gain my sugary composure and to begin my lessons for the day. Any last-minute tasks had to be completed immediately, including finishing a pile of paperwork that consistently reminded me of Mt. Everest and a barrage of phone calls that I had to answer.

What’s That Smell?

I hung up the phone from speaking with a parent who was concerned about visual issues with her son, when Mrs. Potter stuck her nose in the room. Mrs. Potter was a fourth grade teacher at Garibaldi. She also headed the school PTA, along with many other tasks often

unnoticed by outsiders. Her family had had a connection to Garibaldi for over 50 years. Mrs. Potter's sister-in-law also taught in the building.

"Is that paint I smell?" she barked loudly with her all-too-familiar giggle. "Are you going to do some painting in here?" Her nose twitched, reminding me of Elizabeth Montgomery acting as Samantha Stephens in the 1960s television sitcom *Bewitched* (Ackerman, 1964).

"Nope. It's not me," I quickly responded without thinking. "Now that you mention it, I did smell a paint smell this morning. I wonder who's painting. You might try the developmental preschool classroom across the hall." I motioned with my head towards the adjacent room. I felt as though my words were spilling from my nervous mouth like an out-of-control waterfall.

I wondered why she was really here. Who cares about the smell of paint? She probably did not walk all the way across the school to ask about paint. I wondered what she needed me to volunteer for now.

Mrs. Potter moved back inside the doorframe, startling me out of my thoughts. She once again looked at me.

"Well, we better figure out how to get this smell out of the hallway before an administrator smells it. We wouldn't want them to think that this is a first-grade hallway or anything," she joked. I found my face souring by the second. Sadly, she was right. The way the sun shone through the end hallway doors, casting a glowing light on the papered walls, and the smell of paint reminded me of childhood days at my elementary school, in which students engaged in many different ways of learning. In fact, I rarely knew that I was learning; it was just too much fun.

The smell of paint in the school hallways brought about an urgent sense of fear rather than a broad smile. Being unfaithful to the core was a punishable offense in our building. Three

years ago, we had a new batch of four Kindergarten teachers. All four were straight out of college; each had a Master's degree. They were versed in the newest research concerning teaching, which did not align with Open Court. The teachers defied school policies and taught what they felt was best. That group of Kindergarteners was the most prepared group that we had seen in many years. They scored higher on their regularly scheduled exams than years past or present. However, those four teachers did not have their contracts renewed. They were dismissed for being defiant and for not being "faithful to the core." When teachers began to think of straying from the set curriculum in order to help their students, we were reminded at meetings of the consequences that we would face. I needed to keep my job, so it was never an option for me.

Thinking about the joyous feeling that the paint gave me versus the onslaught of fear from administrators, I knew instantly that my oldest son, Hayden, would not be attending Kindergarten here next year. My mind pondered many questions about the strictness of our curriculum.

Was it any different at other schools? Did higher socioeconomic schools have time to still paint and let children enjoy learning? Should I home-school Hayden so that he could still enjoy his childhood? Every mother's worst fear is knowing that she isn't giving her best to her children. Would I be sending my boys into the lion's den by putting them into public schools?

The current version of Kindergarten, or elementary school, is no longer what Dewey would want to picture. Tests drive every decision, whether that is ethical or not. For example, "on September 19, 2003, five-year-old Kindergarteners took their last school time nap in Gadsden, Alabama. Nap time, the district's administrators had decided, would be eliminated to make more time for test preparation" (Woods, 2004, p. 42).

I questioned in my mind whether my nervousness and anger about changes in schooling simply stemmed from a lack of sleep. However, I could not shake off the fear that I had for my own children and the students in my own classroom. Was I giving them the tools that they needed to be successful or just enough to be able to hold down a basic job? I did not come up with any answers, just more questions. The more questions that I had, the more that my head began to ache.

Was my head really hurting from all of the questions, or had I been standing around the paint bottles too long? I had been standing there the whole time with the same bottle of green paint in my hand that I had picked up five minutes ago. I placed the bottle into the box and began moving the rest of the bottles off of the countertop and into the box. There was not a lot of paint left in each of the bottles, but I could possibly use them in the future. Two more handfuls of paint containers, and the countertop was no longer an art supply storage area.

I called over to Jim, “this box is ready for a lid and to be put away in the coat closet.” He headed toward the pile of boxes by the door and grabbed a lid and the clear packaging tape. I watched as he carefully placed the lid on the box and stretched the tape over the top so as not to let the lid collapse under the weight of other boxes that would be stacked on top. Another task was completed, and I glanced around the room for the next area to tackle. The classroom looked very empty except for the large stack of furniture in the middle. I turned to the large path beside the walls and realized that a large chore awaited me ahead. The janitors had requested that the teachers remove all of the posters and bulletin boards from the walls so that they could wash down the walls. Over the course of the school year, dust particles had built up on the walls, and they would need a good cleaning before the next band of first graders entered the room. I knew that removing the bulletin boards was going to be a challenge because of the number of staples

holding the paper to the wall. The only thing that would make this task any easier was the secret weapon I kept hidden in my sanctuary of the classroom.

Reading through the paint story, I find myself shaken by my actions. I am most disturbed by the cult-like mentality that reared its head when the paint was first detected. When Mrs. Potter entered the room smelling paint, a normal individual should have denied using it and continued with her/his morning routine. However, I found myself afraid and began questioning colleagues in nearby rooms. These were my close friends, but I seemed to be instantly willing to turn on them. To say the behaviors are reminiscent of a cult seem radical, but they do follow the research available on cult behavior. Salande & Perkins (2011) argue that “the power of social influence on conformity, as well as the power of an authority figure to induce compliance, have both been made abundantly clear and certainly play an integral role in cult integration” (p. 383). Research also exists that suggests that the purpose of many of the cult members’ activities is to impose tremendous social pressures to cause the members to comply and conform to the group (Hassan, 1988; Langone, 1996; Zimbardo, 1997). Through the socialization of teachers, are we not preparing them for a cult-like existence—one in which we look out for ourselves over others, even when we know that no one has done anything wrong?

Chapter Three

November

“By power, anxieties are created.”

~Malcolm X (Haley, 1964, p. 424)

I grabbed the chrome-finished staple remover from the top drawer of my desk and gently closed the drawer. As I looked around the room for a place to begin pulling down the bulletin boards from the walls, I was reminded of everything that my students had accomplished over the year. Towards the back of the classroom, I gazed at the bulletin board with the giant frog in the middle, standing in front of a star. Around the edge of the bulletin board was a colorful border with lots of white stars upon it. This area was where I posted student work that I thought was outstanding. It was nice to see how much my students had grown academically over the course of their entire first year at Garibaldi.

My eyes continued to scan the room for a place to start. As I continued moving my gaze toward the southwest corner of the room, I stopped to look at the window and the door leading into the hallway. Looking at the large oak door surrounded by the beige painted metal frame, I saw the Velcro strips left over from a project that had been done at the beginning of the year. There were strips above the top of the small window next to the door as well as on the frame of the window that was integrated into the door. My mood soured as I remembered back to the night when I began to question how much control I had in the classroom. The memories flooded into my brain as though it had just happened yesterday.

Curtains to Hide Behind

I plopped down onto our dark brown sofa with the black cordless telephone ringing in my hand.

“Hello?” I said blandly into the mouthpiece, expecting a telemarketer who was interrupting my quiet thinking time.

"Hi! How are you doing, Brianne?" my mother chirped.

"Oh, hi, Mom. I'm doing okay," I said reluctantly. I tried to pull my voice upward, as I neared the end of my sentence, hoping that she hadn't caught my depressed tone. My mood seemed to match the cold November winds outside. The skies had darkened into a golden-orange color as sunset approached. The winds had picked up, causing dry leaves from the sycamores to blow about the yard, producing a rustling sound.

“You don't sound very happy. What's going on?” my mother demanded with a harsh yet loving tone. In all my years, I have never been able to fool my mom. She knew exactly how I was feeling by the tone of my voice, whether I attempted to hide it or not. I knew that this time was no different, but I was not sure whether I wanted to go into an explanation of what I was thinking. Deciding it was best to just tell her, I opened up.

“It's just my data, Mom. I'm starting to see things as I'm going back over my notes. It scares me what I'm thinking, and I hope I'm wrong," I stammered with reluctance.

“What do you mean?” my mom asked, puzzled.

“It's this autoethnography. I was supposed to show how poverty and language control my teaching. My committee is expecting this.”

“Yeah, that's what you said before. You also said you weren't finding evidence of it. What are you finding now?” she quizzed me without skipping a beat. My mother could always tell when I was trying to covertly change the subject. Though I was trying to hide in a discussion about the difficulties of writing an autoethnography, she knew better.

“So what's in this data?” she asked again with impatience.

I tightened my grip on the mug of hot chocolate, which was searing its heat into my right hand. Trying to regain my composure and find my voice, I noticed my breath becoming more rapid, as a deep aggression and discontent welled in my throat. I listened to the rustling of leaves outside to regain my internal sense of control before I began to explain what I had noticed.

“Mom, did you ever think that it wasn’t just the government holding you back in the classroom? Did you ever think that your control was being taken away by...those around you?”

The line went silent. My mother was always quick to answer, so her pause sent chills running up and down my body.

“Sure, at times...I wasn’t always able to do what I wanted. That comes with any job. I guess I don’t see what you’re saying. Can you give me an example?” my mother said in an attempt to rationalize the situation.

“Like the policing of the classrooms through hallway windows,” I blurted, knowing instantly that this was a hot-button topic in our household. Now that I had already opened the door, I decided to push ahead with my example.

“Remember those curtains I made in August?”

“The green ones?” she questioned.

“Yes, the green ones. As a way of bringing teachers throughout the district together, several teachers had volunteered to make curtains for our doors and window panels for our classrooms. Each teacher was required to purchase two yards of material and matching ribbon to tie the curtains back. Hayden and I had to go to a bunch of fabric stores in August to find the perfect fabric to have turned into curtains. Just for you, we chose a bright green fabric with a yellow ribbon for the high school. Two days later, the most adorable curtains arrived in the mailroom for my classroom.”

“Then what happened?” my mother asked.

“Nothing. I attached them to the windows using Velcro strips. The curtain over the door was gathered in the middle and tied with a great, big yellow bow. The curtains brightened the entire room. You should have seen it. I made sure the curtains were straight and double-checked that anyone could still easily see inside the room. The neighboring rooms had red, pink, and light blue curtains. The entire school looked so crisp and new. I couldn’t wait until our students came in the next morning to see the rooms.” My voice bubbled with happiness as I recalled that day to my mother. I remembered feeling like the building was actually starting to look like the type of traditional school that I was so used to. Throughout the building, nearly everyone had felt happier that day.

“I can’t wait to stop by and see them. But I don’t understand why this is a bad thing?”

“We had to take the curtains down in our building. We got an e-mail saying that they were a fire hazard. The fire department wouldn’t be able to see into the rooms during an emergency. Do you believe that? The other buildings didn’t have to take theirs down. In fact, our district newsletter praised the teachers for doing something across district!” I felt my words spilling from my quivering lips with an ever-racing speed. Anger was building up inside of me towards my own administrators. Not knowing who to blame, I had vented my anger in their direction.

“What did the other teachers say about this?” my mom asked angrily.

“I asked a few teachers. They thought it was because we couldn’t be monitored as easily with the curtains up. It’s ridiculous. They could see in. What are they afraid we are going to do, sit around and not teach?” I yelled out, before calming my voice. I felt my body shaking with

anger. The idea of being policed had caused a good deal of tension in our household and was something that people from other schools could not understand.

Observations did not occur twice a year. They were done several times a week in my building. A few times, I had more than one administrator enter my classroom on the same day or even at the same time. Our math and reading coaches made regular rounds down the hallways during certain times of the day in order to monitor our teaching. It was hard for teachers outside of my building to comprehend. It was a way of life in our building.

“Are they watching everyone in the building this much?” my mom asked.

“Yes,” I answered easily. “It sure makes it feel like they don’t trust us. I find it to be a big distraction most of the time. I guess they just want to make sure that no one is teaching something that isn’t written out in our pacing guides.”

I started laughing to myself; only it wasn’t just to me.

“What? What?! What is so funny?” my mom pleaded.

“The other day, our math coach came in to take notes on my math lesson. Unfortunately, he got caught speaking with someone too long in the hallway beforehand. By the time he came into my room, it was the last three minutes of math. I was having the students clean up their manipulative and prepare for reading intervention. He is required to do his observations just as much as I am required to have him in the classroom. So he asks me if I could back up fifteen minutes in the lesson and teach again.”

“Are you kidding me?” my mom laughed.

This was the ridiculous state of our building. Even someone outside of teaching could see the fault in this story, yet it was not as unusual of a request as one might think. Although, no

one was around, I shook my head. Are the administrators in our building really to blame? If so, this would not have happened.

“Mom, sometimes, I think I am just a trained monkey. Even though I have been to college for forever, anyone could walk in and do my job.”

My response reminded me of an article written by Young (2010), in which she argued that one of the unplanned consequences of No Child Left Behind was that quality curriculum was being pushed out so that all students were learning the same thing, the same way, at the same time. Sure enough, that was the exact picture that I was imagining when thinking about my teaching and my district.

“That’s sad. You can’t think that way,” my mother stated. “Not everything can go as planned. When something goes astray, that is when a trained professional can step up and regain the group. A trained monkey wouldn’t know what to do. Remember that.”

“Thanks, Mom. I’ll talk to you again later.”

“Only if you cheer up,” she demands.

“I will,” I promised before clicking the end button on the handset.

As I read about my anger and questions, I notice that I have begun to enter the interpretive paradigm (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). I followed the directions to take the curtains down, but I questioned why I had to. I even took notice of who was affected by the new policy and who was not. My actions did not cause ripples in the water at work, but they are indicative of a subtle cognitive change occurring within me. No longer will I stand idly by without questioning my surroundings and the policies being made.

Test Vomit

In some ways, I knew that my mother was right. However, a few examples popped up in my mind to disprove her point. A few weeks prior, I had a student throw up on her state benchmark exam. My students had taken the test three times to make sure that they were making adequate progress toward state standards. The test was given in the same manner as other state exams. Halfway through the test, she vomited on her test booklet. I never found out if her reaction was due to a medical reason, food poisoning, or stress. Regardless of the reason, it was deeply embarrassing for her. Nothing could have prepared me for that moment. The shock was evident on my face along with her classmates. You would think that this was the kind of incident that my mother was talking about. However, our test administrator guide had a plan in place should this occur.

Some people might ask themselves, why would they need such a plan? It is needed more than one might think. The pressure from these exams on students and teachers caused a good deal of issues within the classroom.

I quickly cleaned up the student and sent her to the office to go home, then scooped her vomit-covered test into the provided Ziploc bag to be sent to the capital along with the completed tests from the class. Her exam would be graded like everyone else's. Vomit or no vomit, you could not get out of this test.

I began to squirm on my plush couch, thinking about the poor soul whose job it was to grade the vomit-covered exams. At least I don't have that job!

My thoughts drifted back to the conversation with my mom. How much control did I have? I thought that I at least controlled what was going on around me, but the data would suggest otherwise. If I could not control the education that I was providing and was having to

stand behind it in the classroom, what can I control? Who was deciding who got the best education? I had thought that I was. How could I be proud of my work, when it wasn't even my work?

I finally pried my mind away from those Velcro strips stuck above the window. It was amazing how well those adhesive strips held to the cold metal. I continued looking around the room for where to start disassembling bulletin boards. I decided the southeast corner was the easiest place to begin since I would not need any assistance to reach the top. A lot of papers and borders had been stapled up in that corner. The students and I had used this area the most by over the past year. Some of the light blue paper had been pulled away from the wall, but I had done my best to maintain the board as a blank sheet on which learning could continually take place.

The solar system border that surrounded the blue paper was pretty tattered and beat up from the students putting their feet up against the wall and moving them up and down. One by one, I began pulling out the staples that held up the small borders. I stacked the 18-inch pieces in a pile on the countertop close by and deposited the extracted staples into the trashcan sitting nearby. Finally, I was about to pull down the blue background paper when the janitor walked in. He came over and asked what I was doing.

“I am taking down the bulletin boards,” I said sadly, “just as the email instructed us to do.”

“You only have to pull them down if you want the walls cleaned,” he said. “Otherwise you can leave them up for next year.”

By this point, I had already pulled everything on this bulletin board down. I might as well take the final piece down and put it back together in August when I would start preparing

for the next school year. I ripped the paper off the wall and crumpled it up into a large ball to throw into the trash. The ball was a little bit bigger than the trash can, so I simply set it on top. I pulled the leftover staples out of the wall along with the few bits of blue paper that had remained underneath the staples. They all made their way into the trash, and I returned the staple remover onto my desk. My walls were clean enough to make it through another year; leaving them as they were also meant that I had less work to do before Jim and I could head home.

Once again, there is a communication break-down in the building. If we worked as a team, this would be less likely to happen. It is immensely frustrating at times. I want to do everything that is expected of me, but I also want to be kept notified of policies so that I don't waste time that could have been spent doing another task. At the time, I questioned the janitor. Was he able to override the principal's email, or should I still do everything on the checklist so that I could check out for the summer? I don't know whom to believe and whom to trust within the system. With so few members at the top of the administrative pyramid, it is nearly impossible to find an individual in a position with the authority to make the decision. Yet here is the person who will be washing the very walls that I am wondering about. I should be able to trust his word. He should know best. But I don't trust him. I no longer trust anybody.

Chapter Four

January

“A little ignorance is a dangerous thing—apologies to Alexander Pope.”

~ (Wainer, 2011, p. 110)

My Place in the District

I decided to take a break from cleaning and check my school district email account. During the last few days of school, multiple messages had been sent out, informing staff of the proper procedures for cleaning out the classroom and checking out with the school administration. As I scanned through my inbox, I saw that there had been no new messages about the clean-up. I had received a district-wide email from the superintendent’s secretary, thanking all teachers, administrators, and other staff for all of the hard work that had been done and the dedication to make it a successful year. I closed the message and clicked the box on the left to send it to the deleted folder.

I appreciate the kindness of the email and the time that she took to prepare it. However, with a district-wide listserv, I don’t understand why our superintendent couldn’t have taken the time to write the note himself so that it would seem more sincere.

While I was checking my inbox, I decided to scroll through my collection of saved emails from the past year. I skimmed through the list and a couple of correspondences stood out. One of the most dated messages was one from the vice principal. He thanked me for stepping up to speak out at a staff meeting and acting out a skit to explain the point that he had wanted to make. Some other emails I read were from fellow colleagues, asking about some of the rules we were supposed to follow and why we were following them. In the past, these types of

communications had been directed toward another member of the first grade team. I felt that my position in the school might be switching from that of a follower to that of a leader.

I have never considered myself a member of the leadership team within Garibaldi Elementary. Leadership roles are rarely offered to certified teaching staff members. When an opportunity arises, such as to present material at a staff meeting or during a professional development day, individuals are hand selected from the staff by our administrative team in private. Not only do we scarcely ever have opportunities to volunteer, we are rarely informed of the opportunities themselves when they do exist. In the past, I had done my part when asked, but the roles were always short assignments.

At the beginning of my transformative journey, as I was in the functionalist paradigm (Burrell & Morgan, 1979), I accepted this without question as the way things were done in education. I often longed for a leadership role to prove my worth to fellow staff members, but was rarely offered or informed of such positions. I would be the first to admit that I felt a tinge of jealousy when leadership assignments were assigned to my colleagues at times. However, I must also admit that I never made an effort to confront the administration in my building about my unfulfilled desires for leadership roles. Like other teachers within the building, I felt the desire to lead within the classroom with the hope that my efforts would be noticed and rewarded with an opportunity to lead my peers.

I saw these opportunities, less about a gain in power over my colleagues and more about professional recognition for my hard efforts, which were rarely noticed outside of my classroom walls by my peers or administrators. I viewed the leadership roles as a way of increasing my professional knowledge and learning base. Those who are fortunate to have a leadership role know more about changes being made district- and state-wide and the reasoning behind the

often frustrating decisions. As a member of the staff, I desired a chance to make my voice heard within district committees for the betterment of the rest of the district employees. I was in a naïve state of mind. I simply wanted to make a positive difference for both the district staff and our students. I was eager to show that my decision to forgo a job in another sector that would pay better wages was worth it because I could make a difference that was worth fighting for.

I longed to take back control, whatever control that might be. I had hit a point in my career in which I needed to know that I was making a difference with the decisions that I was making. I had suddenly become the character of Hermione Granger in the Harry Potter series (Rowling, 1997). My hand was always up in the air ready to volunteer for any additional assignment in order to regain a sense of control. Already heavily stressed, my grade level teammates noticed my sudden urge to do more. They expressed concern with how overworked I appeared, yet how eager I was to take on more responsibilities.

I had become more daring as an individual. I wanted to cause small ripples in the building and district. With a few teachers, this behavior resulted in a certain tension because it was out of character for both me and the image of a teacher. However, I could no longer remain silent and nearly robotic on the sidelines.

I kept scanning my saved mail folder, and I crossed a handful of messages relating to the new committee of which I had become a part. Many of the emails were from other first grade teachers throughout the district, sharing their input on the current curriculum. After reading through these messages again, I thought back to the opportunity I had been given back in January. A committee of teachers was assembled to write a new social studies curriculum guide for the entire school district. I would represent the twenty-eight first grade teachers.

Social Studies Curriculum Guide Committee

Remembering the meeting sent chills to my rigid body. The meeting could not have been on a more dismal, wintry day. A large storm front from the Arctic had converged with a southern wind storm over the Pacific and the state of Washington. The storm brought a mixture of wintry weather and a cold blast of chilly temperatures. With the daytime weather in the low fifties and upper forties, the state was not prepared to deal with Mother Nature's blast. The southern winds had brought rain the evening before. The moisture on the roadways quickly turned into ice with the freezing Arctic blast. On top of the ice sheet covering all of the major roadways, a mixture of snow and freezing rain was covering the ground. By morning, the roadways had become a treacherous mess. With a larger storm front on the way, most schools within the state were hesitant to delay or cancel school yet. I envisioned parents around the region with their ears tuned to the radio, looking for any reason not to attempt the icy roads.

Normally, on a day like this, I am fearful of driving to work. A stretch of highway can be deceptively slick for cars and semi-trucks alike. Having found myself sliding sideways on this stretch multiple times, I always feared wintry weather mornings. This morning was different. I was able to jump out of bed without fear, filled, instead, with hope—hope that I could finally put my frustrations behind me by making a real difference for our district. I was excited to get to the meeting and to get my hands dirty with the massive work at hand.

I dropped my two sons off at their daycare centers, slipping and sliding along the way. I was thankful that my husband had woken us earlier than usual for the daily drive. As I began my 45-mile commute, I had to continually remind myself that they were safer at school and that I had big plans for the day, or at least, that I hoped I would. With the commute taking twice as long that morning, I had a chance to consider what I wanted to see accomplished for the sake of

my grade level and the students within our district. Between thoughts about the curriculum, the man on the radio announced highway closures just behind me, creeping ever closer to my position. The list of accidents had grown too extensive to mention them all on the radio, so they had cut the list to only those that had closed major traffic routes. My mind kept returning to my own family. I was thankful that they were all at their designated spots safely.

Many individuals would have turned off the highway and taken the day off. In such situations, we would not be required to use sick leave. Instead, I found myself desperately trying to remain ahead of the closures so that I could make the meeting, knowing full well that I might not be able to make it home that night.

Due to the icy conditions and multiple accidents that I had to drive past, I got to the district office just before the beginning of the meeting. I never had the chance to converse with my fellow representatives from the different grade levels about their impressions of the committee. I was curious to know how much their administrators had informed them. What were their colleagues saying?

Thinking Back

After the first day of the curriculum guide meetings, my mind was busy thinking about all of the odd occurrences that had taken place throughout the day. I was so concerned with the previous eight hours that I was oblivious to the compact snow and ice that was affecting the other drivers around me. Luckily, I made it home safely that night, along with my two boys and my husband. The next morning, I was still so upset about the previous day's events that I decided to call my father. He was very business smart and would possibly have an answer for the many questions that were running through my head.

Phone Call for Advice

“Why do you seem so angry, Brianne? I thought you wanted to be on this committee,” my father asked with reservation.

“I think it was all a ploy, Dad, to convince others in the district that teachers have a voice in their classrooms and how things are done. I doubt they seriously wanted my help at all. They wasted my time; I guess that’s what is upsetting me the most.” I blew the air from my chest, making a *humpf* sound, as I laid back in the black, leather office chair. The whole idea made me sick to my stomach. It was equivalent to the point in a person’s life when she/he realizes that she/he has fallen for something. You’re as disgusted and sick to your stomach as you are disgusted by the individuals making you feel this way.

“What did the other teachers at this meeting say and think?” my dad asks. His sentences were brief and to the point, as he tried to understand the conversation from a non-confrontational viewpoint. His patience annoyed me because I could no longer keep my composure about the situation. My frustration bubbled up from within as I described the environment and atmosphere of the meeting.

“You want to know what was strange, Dad? I should have noticed something was wrong, right then.” I found myself yelling. I realized that I needed to pull myself together if I wanted this conversation to continue. “As I looked around the group, I noticed something a little strange. The five other teachers present were all beginning teachers. They had, at most, two years of experience, with this being their second year. In fact, one of the representatives had just completed her student teaching. At the time, I first thought, wow, this is a great opportunity. The district was really starting to spread rare leadership roles around to everyone within the district. I should have questioned why these other teachers were selected. Our building allowed

volunteers, but the other buildings had hand-picked their representatives. I can't wait to see our fourth grade team when I tell them a student-teacher is going to tell them how, when, and what to teach next year. They are going to go ballistic."

My dad jumped in with a few questions of his own about the committee. "Would these teachers have the needed experience with the curriculum currently in place to make vital decisions for their grade level? What did the other teachers think of the committee that was formed? With all of the new teachers at the table, where was your place among this team?"

"I think those are the questions that needed to be asked," I answered with solemn acknowledgement. "I don't think anyone was asking or cared. Not much was said about who was there. The real discussion began when we individually presented what teachers across the district were doing in their classroom. They wanted us to make a poster laying out what our grade level was covering in all of the different buildings."

"Sounds easy enough if everyone is prepared," my dad spouted out, as if growing bored with the conversation.

"That's the problem, Dad. No one else knew what other teachers were doing because they had not spoken to their grade levels. In fact, the grade levels in the other buildings had not been informed that we would be representing them. I had sent out emails to the other first grade teachers, but the other teachers had been asked not to speak with their grade levels until we came up with an agreed-upon statement."

"So, this was a secret meeting?" my father questioned. "It's never a good idea to hide things from the rest of the company. What was in this secret statement?"

"That's what I was having trouble with. Suddenly, I began to see myself picking apart everything that they were telling me. Why did we need to have an agreed-upon statement? The

invitation to be on the committee should have been a great honor. I'm beginning to think that I have been set up as a front to push the latest propaganda for the district."

"What do you mean by propaganda?" my father quizzed me.

"The district is telling the staff that decisions are teacher-made. Unfortunately, the idea isn't going over as smoothly as they thought. No one believes them. We know who is really driving this boat. Teachers don't have a say about anything. We are told what to teach and how to teach it, and then they have the nerve to hold us responsible when their ill-conceived plans don't work," I rambled, irritation oozing from my mouth. The fiery talk came in blasts from my mind. I was thoroughly disgusted and unhappy.

Language Control

"I can see why that upsets you a little. What's the big deal though? You are foolish if you don't think that's how corporations do business. They want those on the bottom to feel that they are contributing. Your district is no different. They just want your buy-in. Is that what's really upsetting you?" my father asked with concern.

"They tried to censor me, Dad. That's what I'm upset about. I just can't believe it."

"What are you talking about? When?" Now I knew that I had his full attention.

"Our administrator for the committee was my building principal. Talk about already feeling muzzled. I didn't want to say too much because, unlike the other teachers, she gets to decide if I should keep my job."

"Stop! Stop! I thought you said you were censored. That's just smartly keeping your mouth shut," my dad interrupted.

"No! My principal did start censoring my conversation. As I would contribute things to the conversation, I would use certain words or phrases and she would quickly stop me and tell

me that a term I was using had a negative connotation in our district. Pretty soon I just shut up. I thought that she was being deceptive with the district in the terms she was using. I just wanted to clarify what she was saying so that other teachers would not misunderstand. She presented the curriculum as if our district were on the cutting edge. I don't know who she thought she was fooling. We all know what is current and what we have to teach. The only ones who might be fooled by such lies are other districts. I really felt like I was hitting one of those hot topics with her and that I should just let it drop. It was in my best interest not to get into a power struggle with her over wording."

"Did she say anything about it to you later?" my father asked with concern.

"No. I never heard another word about it. It just made me mad. I got the feeling that the other teachers at the table didn't see what was going on or just didn't care. That was equally frustrating."

"What do your colleagues think about your district's word choices?" he asked.

"A few teachers in my building have come to me to talk about similar issues in the past. Together, we felt district administrators were purposefully using certain terms incorrectly. They are lying to the teachers, but what's so interesting about the whole situation is that the teachers know that they're being lied to, yet they never vocalize that they are upset. It's as if there were this shared common understanding that the administrators say things that are not necessarily true and as teachers, a good portion of us know they are not true, but we have our hands tied about what can and cannot be done about it. I honestly think that the rest of the teachers are simply unaware. In fact, one of my grade-level team members knew things weren't always what they seemed, but she didn't want to know the truth. She thought it would just upset her too much." I felt my anger at the situation diminishing. Some things never change. Businesses operate in a

similar manner, as my father had told me; the education system is no different. Education really is a business, even if we don't like to think of it that way.

“Can you give me an example? I'm not following you completely,” asked my father.

“Sure. During the meeting, we were presented with nearly finished curriculum guides. They asked us to cut and paste the wording into a new document that we so-called ‘created.’ The administrators in the room kept repeating how important it was for us to remember to go back and share with our buildings how the curriculum guide creations were a teacher-led-process. We needed to convince our buildings that we had done all of the work. That's bologna! I didn't create any of it or help lead anything. It was already done. They needed a secretary to retype it into a different formatted page. None of the decision making was done by the teachers in the room. Our opinions were not taken into consideration. One teacher even questioned the correctness of something in her document. She was told to leave it as presented. I had to put my name on this guide, as if I had written it. But I didn't write a single word!”

“Did any of you say anything?” my father asked with frustration in his voice. He was now starting to see the source of my anger.

“Yeah, it didn't help though. When we voiced our concerns, we were shut down very quickly and told that things were being done a certain way. We needed to trust them because their reasoning was too lengthy to explain right now. We just needed to trust their decisions. I felt really angry about it because it truly felt like a waste of time, but I knew my place, so I kept my mouth shut and typed.”

“Was it like this in the other districts in which you worked?” my father asked.

“At times,” I said while nodding to myself, “which reminds me of something I heard while I was typing. One of the state consultants and an administrator were talking in the room

while we typed. She was excited about the work that we were doing and the direction in which our district was headed because most districts in the state saw their teachers starting to revolt against all of the pressure and the direction in which their districts were heading. Can you believe this part, Dad? Her words were, ‘our teachers must know what’s good for them.’”

My father had grown quiet at the other end of the line, which was never a good sign. I knew that he was trying to choose his words carefully, so as to not upset me.

“Maybe you should look for a new job over the summer. It doesn’t sound like they need someone with as much education as you have.”

His words hurt. They stung inside and on every inch of my body. My mind knew the stinging was because he was right. They didn’t want or need me. Maybe that was why I was allowed to be on this committee. It gave the district more credibility. I had played perfectly into their hands. Once again, I felt like I had been fooled in more ways than one.

Although I was hurt by the suggestion of leaving, being able to voice my concern to my father made me feel better. At least someone was listening. My father’s words calmed me enough to face my fellow staff members the next Monday. I was not happy about the situation, but I could at least keep my anger under control and invisible to the remaining staff.

Upset From District

The following Monday morning, I was met at my classroom by several teachers from other grade levels. The staff was angered by their representation at the meeting. The secret was out among the other teachers in the district. One grade level stood out in particular because their anger seemed justified. They were angry that the individuals selected were not necessarily those with the most expertise. For instance, a fifth-grade teacher was quite upset that he was not selected to be on the team even though he had been nationally trained in social studies and was a

recognized figure within the district and state for social studies itself. He was not asked to be on or informed of the team; however, his student teacher from the previous year had been. My hesitation to say more about the individuals on the curriculum guide team did not help the situation. I felt it was in my best interest not to mention my own doubts about the representatives and their lack of knowledge concerning the curriculum. I simply hoped that the morning bell would ring so that I could start my day and avoid any more conversations on this topic. I, too, was angry, but I was not in a position to help. I understood their frustration. I felt it as well. I was thankful that the first grade did not have any complaints. I could not imagine the frustration and hurt that the other representatives must have been feeling on this morning.

With all of the questions and anger in the hallway, I never once pulled out the prepared statement that the district gave us to tell our colleagues. I felt it would have been an insult to read them this response, which was filled with obvious lies and deceit. I kept the prepared response in my pocket in case my principal asked about it but kept it out of sight of my colleagues.

As the day went by, much slower than normal, I looked around the room, taking in everything around me. I knew what was troubling me in the back of my mind. I just wasn't ready to face it. The committee meeting had made the idea official, justifying what I truly was beginning to see all around me. I need to be in control of something during the day to make sure that my work meant something. However, this felt like the puppeteer was cutting my last string. As I landed with a thud on the puppet stage, I was unable to move a single appendage on my own. I could cry for help to those around me. I could escape the reality that I had no control. I controlled nothing. I simply followed orders and performed stunts predesigned by those above me. Even when I had a great idea, I could not control what happened next. The strings were not

apparent in years past or even at the beginning of the year. As I pondered all that I had fought for, I realized who I really was. I had been socialized in the same manner as all of the teachers around me. Those who had resisted the training had been prevented from entering the system or were ostracized by the educational society. I lacked control of my own actions and was no longer sure where I fit in with the entire scope of things. A feeling of hopelessness swept over my mind and body, making me very tired and weak. I could feel the depression from the year seeping into my body and pushing out the hope and bright dreams that I had once had. I was beginning to see beyond the schoolhouse walls. My mind was fighting it. Part of me wanted to know what was going on, part of me wished that everything would simply return to normal, whatever normal may be.

Mirrored Image

My classroom around me was an exact portrayal of how I had felt that one winter day. Everything had been rearranged according to how the administrators wanted it. Why could the classroom not stay the same over the summer so that I could return to it with more ideas of how to make it better? All of my emotions and my materials were boxed up and could not be released. The tape on the boxes was as tight as the metaphorical tape held over my mouth by the administration. My voice had been silenced.

“Brienne...Brienne,” Jim hollered at me. “Is there something else that needs to be done so that we can go home?”

Finding my voice again, I responded harshly, “Yeah. Put away the projector, DVD player, and the ELMO.”

“Whoa, why are you snapping at me?”

“I’m sorry,” I responded apologetically. “I was thinking back to the days during and after the social studies curriculum guide meeting.”

“Alright, I just thought I had done something wrong,” Jim replied.

“No, you didn’t do anything. I’m still frustrated about those couple of days and how I couldn’t say a thing to help contribute. For once I thought I was going to be able to make a difference, but I was thwarted by those stupid administrators.”

“Well, where do you want me to put this stuff?” he asked, motioning to the electronic equipment before him.

“Put it in the locking cabinet,” I answered. I felt bad about snapping at Jim, but the whole situation irked me to no end. In order to get my mind off of the social studies committee, I decided to get up from the computer and my emails. I strolled about the room, searching for small things left to put away. I removed the old bed sheets from the large tub and placed them over the top of the big rolling cabinets, while Jim carefully untangled the mess of cables beneath the projector. I set the tub on the desk to save it for later.

The anger I feel about the social studies meeting has still ceased to subside, even months later. This event was a turning point in my transformation, as I began to realize that we all have our own truths (Kelly, 2003). I wanted to be able to return to my naïve state, but at the same time, I wanted to change the system around me. A general sense of confusion enveloped my mind and body. I was hurt and angry at the same time. I began to question everything that I knew and everyone around me. When I saw ‘green,’ was everyone else seeing the same color, or was this all a conspiracy theory that I was conjuring up in my head?

Upon rereading this story, my mind returns to the words of Joel Spring (2008) as he describes the initial reason for adding administration to schools. Administrators were added to

keep female teachers in line because society viewed young females as unable to make proper decisions for themselves (Spring, 2008). Sounds like little has changed since 1848!

Chapter Five

March

“The less you know, the more you believe.”

~ (U2, 1997, track 6)

I continued to wipe my classroom down of all the memories from the past year. It has been a roller coaster ride both physically and emotionally. With each item that I put away, I was reminded of events that had occurred and the drastic impact that they have had on my life. As I looked around the room, I felt that I had done a good job of cleaning, but doing so had stirred my emotions and sent me into turmoil.

My wandering gaze finally settled on the large whiteboard at the front of the room. It was covered with random marks that had been missed from previous cleanings while I was teaching the students. There were also some simple mathematical equations left over from the last days of math. I slowly rose up from my chair in the center of the room. With each painfully slow step toward the board, I looked at all of the magnets that I had created in order to brighten the mood of the room. The magnets were all little painted wooden objects with sticky back magnets on the back. At the store, I had found a flag, a bunny rabbit, flowers, a frog, a tiger, a train, and an Easter egg. All of the items made me think back to the spring, when my whole world had changed and my dissertation work had headed in a new direction.

Spring Nears

The depression was not fleeting as the months dragged on. I watched my class growing in height and ability while I moved in slow motion. Family members and close friends began to question my attitude towards life and in the classroom. What was going on? I couldn't find the words to express my thoughts and feelings. How could I explain what I was seeing to others? I

could not even explain it to myself. The difficulty came from the fact that I was questioning exactly what I was seeing in the data and stories that I had collected.

Nothing made sense. The despair was becoming like the world on my shoulders. I suddenly knew how Atlas felt, in the classic Greek mythology, as he was forced to become the celestial axis around which the heavens revolved (Hardie, 1983). The weight of the world was taking its toll, both mentally and physically.

As I thought back over the course of the school year alone, I knew that my teaching was not at its best. I was dragging in the classroom during lessons that usually fill me with immense energy. I wasn't spending late nights pondering how to help my students succeed on their state assessments. Instead, I was content with the work that they could complete. To a familiar ear, this attitude sounded nothing like the teaching that I was known for.

To make matters worse, the close-knit relationships that I had with my students were just not there this year. I had kept all students an arm's length away, not wanting to be drawn in too close in teacher-student relationships. I was caring, but cold at the same time—almost more determined to fulfill my teaching obligations than to know the students behind the warm eyes that looked back at me.

I arrived at school on time and never stayed a minute late. In years past, I often came in early and always left late, with heavy bags of work to complete at home in both arms.

Looking back, I know that I cheated these students in more ways than one. I wasn't teaching them in the fashion that was best for their abilities due to constraints from above, and I wasn't giving them my best, or even a piece of my heart.

To speak of teacher-student relationships seems pointless, unless you are speaking of the primary grades (Kindergarten, first, and second). In the primary grades, a close relationship is

highly important, as teachers need to build trust with their students and a parental relationship to be successful. Such relationships are expected in primary elementary classrooms, according to American traditions (Spring, 2008). This lack may have gone unnoticed by my current students, but it was heartbreaking for me as the teacher.

As my mind drifted back to the present, I began to grab the magnets from the board and piled them into a large plastic tote on my desk. I had decided to put all of the items that I would need to start the next school year into one large bin. I released the stack of magnets and they fell into the tub. My heart sank, as I felt like those magnets were my students. I had not set them up for success next year. Instead, I had simply dropped them in, hoping that next year, they might be able to pick up where they had left off.

A sense of anger built up inside of me. I had entered the field of teaching in order to make a difference, and all because of this dissertation, I had failed. I turned back to the whiteboard and remembered that I still had to finish cleaning up before they would release me for the summer. Approaching the board, I picked up an eraser and started wiping away all the random marks from the past. I started in the upper left corner of the large board and moved incredibly slowly, trying to make sure that I erased every mark. My speed quickened as I thought back to a specific night when my dissertation made sense, and my reason for teaching had been completely destroyed.

Middle of the Night

As the daffodils, tulips, and crocuses began to emerge from the frozen ground in small green shoots of new life, my restless days turned into restless nights filled with nightmares, tossing, and turning. My mind had become numb from the immense pain, yet my body seemed to be in a fight to the death. My muscles ached from the stress building within my system. I

could sleep no longer than a few hours each night. My mind was continually searching for an explanation, one that I feared I could not handle.

The answer finally emerged late one evening. Once again, I found myself unable to sleep. With the house quiet and only the sound of one of our dogs gently snoring in her sleep, I paged through the endless stream of notes and responses in my ethnographic field journal. The stages of grief seemed to leap from the pages just as Kubler-Ross (1969) had theorized. As the glaze settled over my exhausted eyes, a pattern unfolded in my notes—a pattern that I had not noticed before. Or was it? Was it really a pattern that I just did not want to admit to before?

What the Data Shows

My mind was racing as everything suddenly seemed clear. I tripped over the corner of our ornate, cherry-wood, queen bed as I ran to switch on the lights. My husband sat straight up in the bed with a start, his weary eyes looking at me with shock.

“I’ve got it,” I shouted as he shushed me. I ignored his hushing noises, knowing our boys could wake at any minute. I madly erased the whiteboards on our new bedroom walls. They had become the art decoration for our newly remodeled bedroom, allowing me to continue my work into the late hours. My hands shook as I grabbed a black marker and began writing out my thought process.

“You finally went crazy,” my husband chided. “Do you want me to get some yarn for you to string about the ceiling with a few index cards?” Normally, I would laugh at his joke about my sanity. It was a common joke in our household recently, as he tried to relate my dissertation work to the work of John Nash. That night was different. Something was there that I had not seen before or did not want to see before.

The data I was looking at was too small. I wasn't looking at the bigger picture. It was not the main idea of a book, but rather the theme of an entire library. I had to look beyond what was visible; I had to look at the theories that our country was based on and the traditions that drive our daily actions. This idea was one not often written down due to the size of its gigantic footprint and hidden meanings.

The education system is a system, not unlike a factory model. It has a job that overarches everything else done in the factory. To work in the factory, you must have complete faith in the system. In education, we have this complete faith. The education system has rarely changed over the past two hundred years (Spring, 2008). Any change is slow to occur and often for reasons other than what is best for students. More important than looking at change, one must look at the purpose of education.

My dissertation really became about coming to terms with the realization that I was part of the system and that socialization had blinded me from seeing the system around me. Through social pressure and routines, those blinded within the system attack those who stray from the system. The system was put into place in order to maintain the status quo (democracy) and prevent outsiders (non-whites, Garibaldi students) from swimming upstream (improved socioeconomic status).

In an attempt to rationalize what I was saying, my brain recalled a study that I had read a year earlier. At the time, it had little value to me. However, I was able to understand the study from a different perspective, an open-minded perspective. In Gay's (2007) article, he found that the federal policy titled No Child Left Behind was not helping to close the education gap. Instead, the policy was "preserving the advantages of some groups over others, and sorting out those who mainstream society historically has deemed the 'intellectually fittest' from the socially

undeserving, rather than about providing genuine high-quality, egalitarian education for all students” (Gay, 2007, p. 282).

Glass Ceilings

In business, we reference something known as the glass ceiling. It is the point in a person’s career at which they cannot grow or move upward in the company anymore. They are at the top of their ability level, educational level, gender level, or socioeconomic level. In the business sector, glass ceilings are common and rarely fought. They don’t tend to bring on an emotional feeling, except for the few times a glass ceiling concerning gender makes the news. To say that a glass ceiling exists in the classroom is different though.

Everything is supposed to be equal in the classroom. Every child has the right to all of the information available. Or do they? What if you found out this was a lie that society has told everyone? What if you discovered that laws and decisions were not always made with all children in mind? It eats away at you. This idea was what the data was suggesting. My research had led me here. At this point in my research, I had read over a thousand research articles and 270 books. This idea was present throughout. I just wasn’t ready to see it. I had been socialized like the rest of the American society. Would politicians lie to us? (Well, sometimes!) Would the founding fathers have created a system that favors some over others? In a regular conversation, I could answer these questions easily, probably with a laugh. “Of course,” would be my answer. However, with the conversation about education, it was a much bigger and nastier pill to swallow—one that you knew deep down was true, but that you just did not want to know.

Cursive Writing

A recent example from the social studies curriculum guide meeting stood out in my mind. As we were working in the room, the administrators were talking about the new college entrance exam for the 2012 school year. It would require students to hand copy a paragraph in cursive and the test would be checked for penmanship.

During the meeting, one administrator asked another, “why check penmanship when everyone uses computers? Are they just trying to hold on to archaic ideas?”

My immediate thought was, “Who does this prevent from entering college?” This would be a new reason for students from lower socioeconomic schools to be turned away. We would no longer have time to teach cursive with all of the requirements from the state and federal government. Cursive was not even a standard for the state anymore. I was sure that schools in wealthier neighborhoods would still teach cursive, however. I checked with Hayden’s school. As expected, he would be getting regular lessons on cursive penmanship throughout his time there.

The idea of using a penmanship test to filter college entrance exams was so simple, yet there was a darker meaning behind it. I doubted that much had been written about the consequences of this action and thought it unlikely that many people would put much thought into it. Just to test my thoughts, I mentioned them to the administrators in the room. The smiles melted off their faces so quickly you would have thought we had landed on the sun. Their facial reactions were all I needed to see to know that I was onto something. Federal regulations dictated what I taught, without any room for anything extra. Now the same federal policies were going to separate those attending college from those who could not by using material not mandated by their own policies.

No Control/Despair

Inside, I was leaping for joy because I had finally found the key to my data. On the other hand, the longer I pondered the idea, the more I felt the darkness enveloping my body. My husband remained awake with me throughout, quizzing me on what I had found. He was familiar with my work and we had held multiple conversations about ideas I had concerning the data. This, however, was more than he wanted to know. I could feel my blanket of darkness swallowing him up, too. The conversation lasted long into the night, but the mood was tense at times, and almost bleak. Our conversation kept returning to our own two children. One would be entering school in the fall. What would he be facing? Should we reconsider the school we had selected? We were in doubt about all of our decisions. The data went beyond just a teacher discovering that her life's work was all part of system. It now involved a mother, who desperately wanted a classroom that could break free from its historic chains for her own two children.

More than knowing about the system and its purpose, and more than knowing the effect it would have on my children, I realized that I had absolutely no control in education. This was something I just could not accept. What was my purpose now? How was I going to react in the morning as those faces looked towards me, ready for anything I had in store? Could I continue to lie to their parents with a smile, telling them I was going to do everything I could? Where did I fit in the larger picture?

Returning From the Nightmare

I stood with my body leaning against the cold, firm whiteboard. I just needed a moment to take everything in and realize that the nightmare was over. I waited for my breathing to slow and return to a normal rate. Even the memories were painful. The same feelings of helplessness

from that night surrounded me so quickly simply from thinking back on it. I found myself out of breath and contemplating my place on the sociological paradigm (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). I had definitely found my place in the interpretive paradigm, in which I questioned the nature of my reality as distinct from the realities of those around me. I wanted everything to stop and go back to the way things were in September. Time would keep on ticking regardless of whether I was ready to accept all of the facts or not. Would I stay in this weird world where nothing seemed to be right or would I return to the wonderland where everything was all roses and everyone succeeded? Of course someday I would have to make this decision, but at this point I needed to finish cleaning my classroom. I looked up at the clock and realized that Jim had to leave to pick up Hayden and Alexander before we were charged for them staying late.

“Jim, it’s time for you to go pick up the boys,” I said. “I’ll finish up around here. I need to do a final check of the room and I’m sure I can get a ride from Joan.”

Moments later, I called down to Joan’s room to see if she had room in her car for me to make one last journey home for the school year. She told me that she was very close to finishing and she would be ready to go soon. I responded with about the same time frame, so she agreed to take me back to our usual carpool spot. Hearing that, Jim grabbed his hat and sunglasses and headed out the door leading to the bus lanes where he had parked. I watched his taillights as he sped away and I returned to my desk to check my computer one last time. I never brought up the nightmare with him before he left. I knew it would only disturb him. I took a moment to regain my composure and looked back at the room and the work around me.

Chapter Six

April

“If the misery of our poor be caused not by the laws of nature, but by our institutions, great is our sin.”

~ Charles Darwin, Voyage of the Beagle (Darwin, 2000)

Sinking In

Sitting down in my chair, I felt as though the world was spinning backwards. I spun a few times in the chair just to see what it felt like to be spinning opposite the world, but it just made me sick to my stomach. Maybe if I just left my classroom, I would feel better. I returned to my email inbox, where I had saved the checklist for checking out of school for the summer. Scrolling through the page, I finally found the message I needed and opened it up. I printed off the attachment so I could have a hard copy to check off with one of my favorite “clicky” pens.

I began scanning the list from top to bottom and checked off everything that had been completed. The teacher’s desk had been cleared off so that the janitors could move it around and shampoo the carpets beneath it. All of the furniture had been stacked in the middle of the room, thanks to Jim. I had packed all but a couple of boxes into the cupboards so that the floors could be vacuumed and the counters could be thoroughly scrubbed down. I had done a decent job cleaning off the whiteboard so it could be prepped for next year. I did not feel that the walls would need to be cleaned, so I had not removed any of my bulletin boards (except for the one that really did need to be redone).

All that was left on the checklist was to bring my principal down to the room to give me the all clear to leave. I had been dreading this all day. She was one of the last people I wanted to talk to. Although I had a great deal of respect for her and the work she had done, I was scared of

what she might ask, whether it was about my boys, my job, or my dissertation. In fact, I really did not want to talk to any of the staff members for the same reason. I was worried that the sight of the room might open a conversation I was not ready to have. This feeling had been gnawing at me for a few months. I remembered that there were many trips to and from work during which I felt very uneasy. On one of those car trips, Joan had become very concerned with my lack of conversation.

Don't Want Others to Know

“What’s on your mind?” Joan inquired warily as we made our daily 51-minute commute to work. I shook my head to signal “nothing,” unsure of whether or not I wanted to delve into something so grim and negative that early in the morning. On the other hand, it could have been my own personal fear of hearing confirmation about what I was beginning to see clearly around me.

“Are you sure you don’t want to talk about it? You’ve become so quiet in recent weeks. Have I offended you?” Joan fished for an answer to either ease her curiosity or relieve the stress she must have been feeling. For the last five years, we had spoken daily about our classrooms and students. We had shared ideas and strategies. We had discussed high moments of success following drawn-out battles and moments of sadness, where only a colleague could provide the appropriate consolation.

In the preceding weeks, our conversations had become more one-sided. I had found myself and my thoughts retreating inwardly, not out of embarrassment or secrecy, but to an uncomfortable place I had found myself in recent times. I found many morning car trips included short conversations, as if we were only newly acquainted, much to the chagrin of my friend. My attention had faded, and I no longer laughed joyously about silly stories of our

children, instead looking out the windows as the outside world rushed by in a 70-mile-per-hour blur. The sagebrush and rolling hills grasped my attention, only because they were not references to school. I was tired of thinking about my topic and tired of knowing. I simply did not want to share what I was working on anymore with anyone; I just did not want others to know.

I knew internally that my discontent with talking was due to the powerful change my teaching had taken this year as a result of knowing more about the “system.” I did not want to do that to any other teachers. I could fend off conversations with Joan about my dissertation for a time, but I knew I could not fend her off forever. People were constantly stopping by my classroom to ask how things were going. The other teachers were eager to hear what I had learned so that they could use the research in their own classes.

Maybe that was what I should take from this time spent analyzing my classroom; that no matter how restricted we might become as teachers, we would always want to learn more to help our students. To avoid such conversations, I had become anti-social around the school. Rarely, did I stand around chatting with colleagues about my life versus theirs. I had ceased to pop in on friends that needed a bit of cheer after a long day.

I wonder what my colleagues think of my absence around the building. I wonder if they are offended. When will I be able to face them again without causing my insides to churn relentlessly?

Cancer Nurse

I feel like a nurse working at a cancer center. Day in and day out, I have to keep a smile plastered on my face, even with death and despair all around me. I feel I know more than those I am helping, but I can't bear to reveal what I've learned. How do those nurses find the will to go

to work every day surrounded with such heartache? I have become severely depressed. I don't know what to think anymore. I am finally to a point where I no longer blame the students or the administration. Instead, my anger is aimed at a system that is archaic in nature. It is built to hurt others. As a society, we are so comfortable with the American school system that we have become complacent about the irreparable damages it causes to society.

Hayden and Alexander's Education

As I looked back over the hundreds of stories I had collected from my classroom and interactions with staff, I wondered if I would ever see a day where I was more like the teacher I had been before this project. It was the time of year when I would register Hayden for Kindergarten. I struggled emotionally with the idea of putting him in a public school setting. Although I had never worried about him academically, now I worried about what he would be exposed to and what he would miss based on the socioeconomic realities of the area we lived in. I wanted Hayden to have a teacher that would stand up to the "system," to be the best teacher he had ever had. I wanted a classroom that was full of inquiry, rather than assessments meant to separate the students as the years went by. Most importantly, I wanted a teacher that did not know that *all* students could not succeed. To put it another way, after working endless hours and through every holiday and birthday, I wanted my work to fade away into the darkness of a filing cabinet until the world was ready to change and make education something for everyone. I wanted teachers to believe they were making a difference that only they could make. I wanted to be numb and naïve again.

Ready to Check-Out

Again complying with the system, I called down to the main office to have the principal head to my room and sign off that I had cleaned up to her satisfaction. I hung up the receiver and

looked around the room at what was left. It was as though the Grinch had “left nothing but hooks and some wire” (Seuss, 1957). All of the cheerful things that had been put up throughout the year were gone. The classroom felt empty, as did my heart. I was all alone in this big, empty classroom, just waiting—waiting for the final verdict.

Finally, the principal entered through the hallway door. She spoke not a word as she looked around. I went over to her and told her that I had one last box to put away and then Joan and I would be heading home.

“Looks good,” she said. Bringing the clipboard up to her chest, she thumbed through the pages to find my name. Finally she found it and dragged her pen across the page to put a checkmark in the column that indicated I was ready to leave for the summer. She lowered the clipboard and headed to the door she had entered through.

“Have a nice summer,” I said cordially, hoping that she wouldn’t notice my somber mood.

“You too,” she responded with a smile.

The door shut behind her and I was left all alone, again.

Chapter Seven

June

*Few are my years, and yet I feel
The world was ne'er designed for me:
Ah! Why do dark'ning shades conceal
The hour when man must cease to be?
A visionary scene of bliss:
Truth!—wherefore did thy hated beam
Awake me to a world like this?*

--Lord Byron (Lithgow, 2007, p. 41).

The Last Time

My hands began to tremble as I taped down the last edge of the cardboard box in front of me. I wasn't sure of the direction I was heading in or of what I was doing. It was almost as if my actions were outside of the domain of my thoughts. A dark and deep sadness enveloped my entire body as I slowly grasped the cardboard box and lifted it onto a shelf in the cupboard where it would be locked away for an indeterminate amount of time. I knew that at any moment Joan would be at my door waiting for our final trip home of the school year. I was searching through my head for how to explain the state of my classroom. It was obvious to anyone who might enter that my plans to rejoin the rest of the staff next year were highly doubtful. I just was not in a place where I could explain my rationale to her regarding that matter. I was not even in a place to explain it to myself. As I laid the tape down over the cabinet doors, ensuring they stayed locked over the summer, I thought back to what had started me on this journey and what had really driven me into this state of despair and questioning.

Many fellow graduate students had shared how their dissertations had wreaked havoc with their marriages. Quite a few had found themselves in the middle of divorce before their final dissertation was complete. For me, my marriage had remained intact, but my paper had ruined my life. Everything I had known and loved was in question. I could no longer separate what I knew from reality. What was real and what was socially created? I had ultimately failed my students this year, and myself. This was something I simply could not live with. I had walked into my research with a family of four. We owned a beautiful home. My husband and I both had good paying jobs doing what we loved. Our boys were in the best schools. Life was as close to the American dream as I could ever have imagined it. But now the dream was pulling apart at the seams. Like a jigsaw puzzle being pushed over the edge of a table, the overall picture losing its appeal and identity as the pieces fall.

Leaving For How Long?

With the last cupboard taped shut, I exited my classroom for the last time this school year and possibly forever. Luckily, Joan was not waiting for me at the door. I did not want to explain my predicament. I turned off the lights one switch at a time so as to make my departure dramatic. I stuck the key into the lock and turned it so that nobody could get in for the summer. The next three months would be spent at home with my boys, making the ultimate decision of my career. Would I be returning to Garibaldi in the fall? Could I ever return to teaching now that things had changed so drastically in my head and in my heart?

I wouldn't be asking for help with this question. My husband Jim and I had not shared my doubts and deliberations. No one else knew. This was something that only I could answer. Even my closest colleagues had been kept in the dark about my plans. I wanted time to decide

what I could and could not live with, and hopefully have answers for them when they questioned my decision.

As I walked down the first grade hallway of Garibaldi, I looked over the remnants of student work on the walls, the staples left exposed in places, and the bags of garbage sitting outside the classroom doors waiting for the janitors to pick up. The school was in a shambles, like my heart. However, for the school, all would be new again in the fall for the new school year; my heart was another question.

I kept my pace slow and steady as I rounded the corner into the main foyer. Teachers were smiling and laughing, congratulating each other on another great year. I held my smile as I walked down the dismal, gray hall, attempting to conceal my true sorrow. Joan was waiting for me by the front office, where she was talking with one of our secretaries about the many classes she would be taking over the summer. Her smile was wide and exuberant. We had made it through another year! I smiled back at her as convincingly as I could.

I joined her in front of the office and the two of us shuffled, our arms overloaded, out of the front doors of Garibaldi into the late afternoon sun.

Epilogue

Not the End

“I am not what is called a civilized man, Professor. I have done with society for reasons that seem good to me. Therefore, I do not obey its laws.”

~Captain Nemo, 20,000 Leagues Under The Sea (Walt Disney Productions & Fleischer, 1954)

Intentions

One would look to the epilogue to find closure and a happy ending. That is not the case for this study. I, too, want this tale to end happily, but the emotions are still very raw and painful as I look back on the decisions I made. My intent was to fill the paper with the truth around me, no matter how difficult it was. “This truth is incontrovertible. Panic may resent it, ignorance may deride it, malice may distort it, but there it is” (Churchill, 1916, p. 1578). The paper could not be written in any other way because this was not a dissertation; this was my life. The narrative should not be viewed as the transformation of a disgruntled teacher, but rather as a present reality for me as I made sense of my experiences. From this narrative, educators, administrators, and policymakers should enter into conversation about the direction the American education system, where it has been, and what purpose it should really serve.

Although I am aware of what happened after chapter seven, I did not reveal my final decision. I chose to leave the narrative unfinished to allow the reader to determine my fate. However uncomfortable state the story ends I believe it will resonate longer, encouraging some to seek out systematic change. “If you look for truth, you may find comfort in the end; if you look for comfort you will not get either comfort or truth only soft soap and wishful thinking to begin, and in the end, despair” (Lewis, 1952, p. 32).

Changing Positions

As I read back over the narratives, I found my life separated into five distinct stages of growth. The growth signaled my slow and deliberate movement from Burrell and Morgan's (1976) functionalist paradigm into a more interpretive paradigm to make sense of my experiences. As stated in the prologue, an individual can move freely between paradigms, both forwards and backwards. The purpose of this dissertation was to document my personal growth as a teacher as I moved between the lower two quadrants. However, as you may have noticed, movement from left to right and right to left continued throughout the journey. At times, I noticed movement upward into the upper left quadrant known as radical humanism, where one acts on their questioning of authority (Burrell & Morgan, 1976).

I present my final thoughts below after I analyzed my journey once again. Although I did not restate the climatic apex when my thinking permanently shifted paradigms, each narrative in the dissertation contributed towards this change. If a narrative did not convey a cognitive change or was not as instrumental in my personal growth, it was not included in the final dissertation. I see my personal growth as an ongoing process that was highly influenced by self-reflections during data analysis, writing of the paper, and in reflecting on my changing voice. Although my hope is for you to draw your own conclusions, I have put my final thoughts in this chapter to reflect my current thinking. In conclusion, I hope to empower the reader to determine the one narrative most influential to them and to become an integral part in the overall ending by allowing the reader to help set about making systematic change in their educational setting.

First Position

In the beginning, I was attached to the stereotype of the American teacher. I loved what teaching stood for and I was inspired by the learning that surrounded me. I was clearly in the

functionalist paradigm. I did what was asked of me without question since I respected authority and held the contention that authority always knew best. Britzman (1991) characterized society's image of a good teacher as being selfless, "self-sacrificing, kind, overworked, underpaid, and holding an unlimited reservoir of patience" (p. 5). Trousdale (1994) found media characterized teachers as being highly submissive and socialized into a culture that rewards those in the profession who are considerate and caring. I held fast to trying to emulate such behaviors personally and professionally. Weber and Mitchell (1996) argued that teachers "fight to retain almost any image of themselves that can be labeled 'teacher'" (p. 310).

This time in my life was reminiscent of the initial innocence of many fairy tale and fabled characters. Through my eyes, everything was right in the universe. I attempted to provide society an image of the moral and obedient teacher I felt was highly required. Without the detailed and deconstructive examination of the narratives being documented daily, I may have never left this paradigm. This is not ignorance or intelligence, but an internal acceptance of my behavior due to my socialization up to that point—a socialization that I had not questioned.

However, as I continued to push ahead to better myself and the education I was providing myself and my students, I came across a fact that had been staring me down throughout my career but had not been visible to me. Due to the socialization of my position within society, this small, invisible fact had gone unnoticed. Once aware of the information about how unaware I had been of acceptance of others knowing what is best and not questioning decisions, I began to question every decision made around me; nothing seemed as it should. Rules and laws of my culture were not logical as they once seemed to be. I started to feel as if I had fallen down the rabbit hole from Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865). I eventually came to a precipice where I had to ask myself one, simple question: where once I was considered a good

teacher, could it be plausible that I am actually on the other side-- a teacher who now is non-compliant?

Second Position

As I moved down the path of self-introspection, I began to question the goodness around me. I sensed the communication breakdown between the hierarchical levels in the district. Looking to make a difference, I pushed to become more involved within the system, which I felt could still be changed for the better. Not seeing the bigger picture, I assumed the change needed to happen at the ground level. Reading over the dissertation from my current view, I saw the school being run similar to Foucault's (1977) military camps in his *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. The military camps were ruled through vision and hierarchical observations. Everything was dictated with so much detail; it was easy to see those who deviated from the program. "The camp is the diagram of a power that acts by means of general visibility" (Foucault, 1977, p. 170). The camp shares many qualities with the building I taught in. One must always be conscious that one was being judged at every second. Knowing I could do little to change the observations, I moved ahead with joining district-wide committees to change what was being taught within the classrooms. Unfortunately, I was not able to fully understand the system around me and that change would not be achieved through collaboration and professional dialogue.

Now, I question why educators need so much training and coursework if trust in their intelligence and autonomy to make basic decisions in their classrooms is lacking. When do administrators, who often arose from being educators themselves, lose sight of what teachers have been fighting to control—the ability to teach what they have spent hours training to do in a

fashion they deem appropriate for their students? Where does the communication breakdown occur? Why eliminate teacher voice from decision making?

Third Position

As I gained access to a different level of the system by joining a district-wide committee, I found myself questioning the actions of those around me. I became highly disillusioned with the system and ultimately began to notice that the American education system was a failed model. My irritation with others began to stem from my desire to move away from the system with haste, yet still have the deep longing to hold onto my early adoration of teaching and learning. The complexity of the situation was overwhelming and frustrating, which remains to this day. Like many who question their place in a complex system, I stand to lose as much as I could possibly gain. My decisions would impact others as equally as they would impact me. Knowing right from wrong could not be the only factor in deciding my fate. The areas I saw in grey held heavily on my mind. Who would I need to look out for and keep in my best interest, my students or my biological kids?

Fourth Position

Taking a closer look at my actions and of those around me, I began to notice the tension between what I had been trained to do versus the government regulations in place to prevent such actions. My voice within the system was noticeably lost amongst the masses of unheard educators. I saw myself being victimized by the system I had grown to love in years past. Nothing was as it seemed. I felt used and betrayed. My anger stemmed from the countless trainings and classes required to perform a job that needed little to no educational background. I saw myself not needing the education that I was so desperately pushing on my students. The rose-colored glasses I viewed the world with had now become dingy and grey. A depression

swept over my thinking when examining the documented narratives. I could no longer point my finger at an individual to blame for the hardships within the classroom. The struggle was with something all encompassing, but large enough that it was not visible.

Fifth Position

From the darkness of this phase, I gained a voice as I transformed from an honest, silent, button-pushing factory worker, to a questioning and driven voice of change within my classroom and building. The last phase can be seen as a recreation of me. It is still a work in progress, but it is one that grows stronger every day. As I continue to grow louder in the educational scene, I am ever reminiscent of where I have come from and the reasons I am here. “Never forget in your learned ignorance what you sacrifice on the road, in crossing the road” (Derrida, as cited in Kamuf, 1991, p. 223).

Patterns in Voice/Decision-Making

At the beginning of this dissertation, I did not really possess a strong voice in the system. I did what I was told and never questioned why or what outcome was expected. As I continued through the journey of my reflexive journal, my voice began to grow. I felt that with more involvement, my voice might have an influence. The further into the system I reached, the more I realized my voice was being repressed. This pushed me to talk louder and speak out more often. Finally, when I realized that there was nothing I could do to control what I was teaching, I became silent. I refused to share the information I had learned with anybody. As I began writing the final dissertation, I began to find my voice once again. I still do not want many of my colleagues and friends to know the truth I had uncovered, but I feel more open to discussing the topic with others.

Next Steps

An appropriate next step would be for another teacher to take on creating a narrative of her/his journey as they unravel the system around themselves and the personal growth and consequences they face. The narrative would best be presented as a duoethnography, with an administrator providing the second voice for events. “In duoethnography, two or more researchers work in tandem to dialogically critique and question the meanings they give to social issues and epistemological constructs” (Sawyer & Norris, 2013). By having both a teacher and administrator deconstruct the same phenomenon, the reader would be able to see a clearer picture of the communication breakdown between hierarchical levels and the way information plays an important role in how we view the roles we take. As more individuals become aware of the systematic chains entangling educators, the more likely change could occur sometime in the future to enable the education system to be for *all* children to learn.

American Education System Re-Envisioned

For the American education system to move forward in an effective and efficient manner, four distinct changes will need to be made. First and foremost, teachers will need to gain a voice in the education they are providing to their students. This voice must dominate over that of the policymakers who lack an educational background. It needs to be a voice that is respected by others in the profession, administrators of all levels, and government agencies. Secondly, all voices in education must come together to design a new purpose for the education system that is fair and just for all children in America. The purpose must change from maintaining the status quo to allowing every child the chance to improve their socioeconomic status. Third, the same voices must establish clearly defined roles for the actors in the new system to allow new teachers entering education to understand their place as change agents. Lastly, all actions taken by

educators must become visible to the American public. It is the public's job to hold educators accountable and to monitor the actions of everyone involved, including political factions attempting to reform or modify policies. Those affected most by policies should have the greatest say.

Personal Reflections

Although autoethnographies are not generalizable, I long for others in the field of education and educational policy to read my life as a warning of what may come as more educational policies are enforced to maintain the status quo of the American society. Although the work can be criticized for being dramatic, what cannot be argued is the presentation of my life, including the mistakes, stumbles, successes, and failures. I am not perfect. I just desire to be listened to.

“...there is hope for the future. When the world is ready for a new and better life, all this will someday come to pass, in God's good time.”

~Captain Nemo, 20,000 Leagues Under The Sea (Walt Disney Productions & Fleischer, 1954)

References

- Ackerman, H. (Executive Producer). (1964). *Bewitched* (television series). New York: American Broadcasting Company.
- Adams, T. E., & Holman Jones, S. (2008). Autoethnography is queer. In N. K. Denzin, Y. S. Lincoln, & L. T. Smith (Eds.), *Handbook of critical and indigenous methodologies* (pp. 373–390). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Allington, R. L. (1983). The reading instruction provided for readers of differing abilities. *Elementary School Journal*, 83(5), 548–559.
- Apple, M. W. (2006). What can we learn from Texas about No Child Left Behind? *Educational Policy*, 20(3), 551–560. doi: 10.1177/0895904805284113
- Ayers, W. (1993). *To teach: The journey of a teacher*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Bolman, L., & Deal, T. E. (Eds.). (2010). *Reframing the path to school leadership: A guide for teachers and principals* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Britzman, D. P. (1991). *Practice makes practice: A critical study of learning to teach*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Burrell, G., & Morgan, G. (1979). *Sociological paradigms and organizational analysis: Elements of the sociology of corporate life*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann. Carroll, L. (1865). *Alice's adventures in Wonderland*. London: Macmillan and Co.
- Chang, H. (2008). *Autoethnography as method*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.
- Churchill, W. (1916, May). Royal assent. *House of Commons*, 82(Deb 17), cc1572-cc1618.
- Creswell, J. W. (2008). *Educational research: Planning, conducting and evaluating quantitative research* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson.

- Csikszentmihalyi, M., & McCormack, J. (1986). The influence of teachers. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 67(6), 415–419. doi: 10.2307/20387675
- Darwin, C. (2000). *The voyage of the Beagle*. New York: Prometheus Books.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp.1–32). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Dewey, J. (1908). The practical character of reality. In J. McDermot (Ed.), *The philosophy of John Dewey*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Ellis, C. (2004). *The ethnographic I: A methodological novel about autoethnography*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Ellis, C. (1997). Evocative autoethnography: Writing emotionally about our lives. In W. Tierney & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Representation and the text: Re-framing the narrative voice* (pp.116–139). Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Ellis, C., Adams, T. E., & Bochner, A. P. (2010). Autoethnography: An overview [40 paragraphs]. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 12(1), Article 10. Retrieved from <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fgs1101108>
- Ellis, C., & Bochner, A. P. (2000). Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity: Researcher as subject. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 733–768). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum.
- Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison* (A. Sheridan, Trans.). New York: Random House.

- Gay, G. (2007). The rhetoric and reality of NCLB. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 10(3), 279–293. doi: 10.1080/13613320701503256
- Geertz, C. (1994). Thick description: Toward an interpretive theory of culture. In M. Martic & L. C. McIntyre (Eds.), *Readings in the philosophy of social science* (pp. 213–231). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Goodall, Jr., H. L. (2004). Narrative ethnography as applied communication research. *Journal of Applied Communications Research*, 32(3), 185–194. doi: 10.1080/0090988042000240130
- Haley, A. (1964). *The autobiography of Malcolm X*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Hardie, P. R. (1983). Atlas & Axis. *The Classical Quarterly*, 33(1), 220–228.
- Harris, L. (1990). 2001: The world our students will enter. *Independent School*, 49(1), 37.
- Hassan, S. (1988). *Combating cult mind control*. Rochester, NY: Park Street Press.
- Jensen, E. (2009). *Teaching with poverty in mind: What being poor does to kids' brains and what schools can do about it*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Jones, S. (2005). Autoethnography: Making the personal political. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The sage handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 783–791). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Kamuf, P. (Ed.). (1991). *A Derrida reader: Between the blinds*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Kelly, G. (2003). A brief introduction to personal construct theory. In F. Fransella (Ed.), *International handbook of personal construct psychology* (pp. 3–20). London: Academic Press.
- Kozol, J. (1991). *Savage inequalities: Children in America's schools*. New York: Harper Perennial.

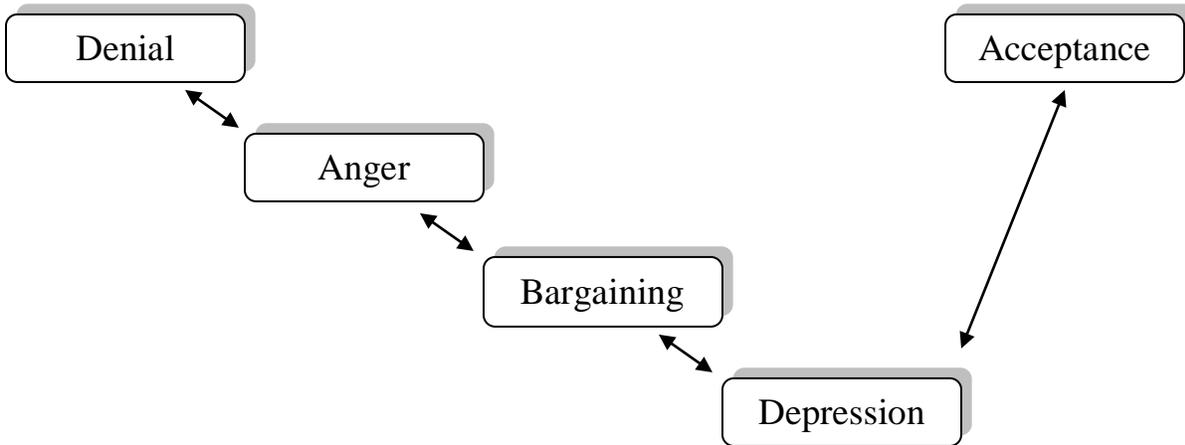
- Kubler-Ross, E. (1969). *On death and dying*. New York: Routledge.
- Langone, M. D. (1996). Clinical update in cults. *Psychiatric Times*, 13(7), 1–3.
- Lewis, C.S. (1952). *Mere Christianity*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Lithgow, J. (Ed.). (2007). *The poets' corner: The one-and-only poetry book for the whole family*.
New York: Grand Central Publishing.
- Lucas, G. (Producer), & Marquand, R. (Director). (1983). *Star wars episode vi: Return of the Jedi* [Motion picture]. United States: Twentieth Century Fox.
- McCabe, J. (2003). *The wasted years: American youth, race, and the literacy gap*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow.
- Muncey, T. (2010). *Creating Autoethnographies*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Muncey, T. (2005). Doing Autoethnography. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 4(1).
Retrieved July 27, 2011 from http://www.ualberta.ca/~iiqm/backissues/4_1/html/muncey.htm
- Omi, M., & Winant, H. (1986). *Racial formation in the United States*. New York: Routledge.
- Pfohl, S., & Gordon, A. (1986). Criminological displacements: A sociological deconstruction. *Social Problems*, 33(6), S94–S113. doi: 10.2307/800676
- Ronai, C. R. (1992). The reflexive self through narrative: A night in the life of an erotic dancer/researcher. In C. Ellis & M. G. Flaherty (Eds.), *Investigating subjectivity: Research on lived experience*, (pp.102–124). London: Sage Publications.
- Rodriguez, N., & Ryave, A. (2002). *Systematic self-observation*. Thousand Oak, CA: Sage.
- Rowling, J. K. (1997). *Harry Potter and the sorcerer's stone*. New York: Scholastic.
- Said, E. W. (1978). *Orientalism*. New York: Random House.

- Salande, J. D., & Perkins, D. R. (2011). An object relations approach to cult membership. *American Journal of Psychotherapy*, 65(4), 381–391.
- Sawyer, R.D., & Norris, J. (2013). *Duoethnography: Understanding qualitative research*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Seuss, D. (1957). *How the Grinch stole Christmas!* New York: Random House.
- Spring, J. (2008). *The American school: From the Puritans to No Child Left Behind* (7th ed.). Boston, MA: McGraw Hill.
- Tagore, T. (2005). *Seasons of thanks: Graces and blessing for every home*. New York: Stewart, Tabori, & Chang.
- Tatum, B. D. (1997). “*Why are all the black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?*”: *And other conversations about race*. New York: Perseus Books Group.
- Townsley, E. (2007). The social construction of social facts: Using census to examine race as a scientific and moral category. *Teaching Sociology*, 35(3), 223–238. doi: 10.1177/0092055X0703500302
- Trousdale, A. M. (1994). Teacher as gatekeeper: Schoolteachers in picture books for young children. In P. B. Joseph & G. E. Burnaford, (Eds.), *Images of schoolteachers in twentieth-century America: Paragons, polarities, complexities* (pp. 195-214). New York: St. Martin’s Press.
- U2. (1997). Last night on earth. On *POP* [CD]. European Union: Island Records.
- US Department of Education. (2002). *Reading First guidance*. Washington, DC: US Department of Education.
- Van Maanen, J. (1988). *Tales of the field: On writing ethnography*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

- Wainer, H. (2011). *Uneducated guesses: Using evidence to uncover misguided education policies*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Walt Disney Productions (Producer), & Fleischer, R. (Director). (1954). *Walt Disney presents: 20,000 leagues under the sea*. [Motion picture]. United States: Walt Disney Productions.
- Weber, S., & Mitchell, C. (1996). Drawing ourselves into teaching: Studying the images that shape and distort teacher education. *Teaching & Teacher Education, 12*(3), 303-313.
- Wolcott, H. F. (2008). *Ethnography: A way of seeing* (2nd ed.). New York: Alta Mira.
- Wood, G. (2004). A view from the field: NCLB's effects on classrooms and schools. In D. Meier & G. Wood (Eds.), *Many children left behind: How the No Child Left Behind Act is damaging our children and our schools* (pp. 33–50). Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Young, E. (2010). Challenges to conceptualizing and actualizing culturally relevant pedagogy: How viable is the theory in classroom practice? *Journal of Teacher Education, 61*(3), 248–260.
- Zehm, S. J., & Kottler, J. A. (1993). *On becoming a teacher: The human dimension*. Newbury Park, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.
- Zimbardo, P. (1997). What messages are behind cults? *American Psychological Association Monitor, 5*, 14.

APPENDIX A

Five Stages of Grief



The Five Stages of Grief

This is a simplified representation of the five stages of grief based on the works of Elisabeth Kubler-Ross.

Kubler-Ross, E. (1969). *On death and dying*. New York: Routledge.

APPENDIX B

Comparable Evocative Autoethnographies

The following is a list of evocative autoethnographic texts that may be useful for analyzing and becoming more familiar with the method. Selections were chosen on their relevance to the formatting I used within the dissertation.

Ellis, C. (1995). *Final negotiations: A story of love, loss, and chronic illness*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Ellis, C. reform or modify, & Bochner, A. (1992). Telling and performing personal stories: The constraints of choice in abortion. In C. Ellis & M. G. Flaherty (Eds.), *Investigating subjectivity: Research on lived experience*, (pp. 102–124). London: Sage Publications.

Muncey, T. (1998). Tale of a teenage mother. *The Guardian*, 23(3), 17.

Prewitt, T. R. (2010). *More than pretty faces and mini skirts: An autoethnographic story of female sport hostess experience* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from http://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_graddiss/740

Ronai, C. R. (1992). The reflexive self through narrative: A night in the life of an erotic dancer/researcher. In C. Ellis & M. G. Flaherty (Eds.), *Investigating subjectivity: Research on lived experience*, (pp. 102–124). London: Sage Publications.