

Poor but not Deficient: The Storied Lives of Working-class English Teachers

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Heidi Jo Jones

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Dr. Cynthia Lewis, Adviser

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Dedication

For Therese Scheckel, Theresa Behnke and Ruth Forsythe, my social class brokers

Abstract

Guided by my own experiences as an English teacher from a working-class background, I sought what Vagle & Jones (2012) term “a social, autobiographic, and pedagogical project” (p. 318), to understand, through autobiographical stories, how middle school and high school working-class English teachers from rural, suburban and urban contexts came to be teachers of English. In addition, I was interested in how their home lives and social class background influenced their career choice and how the participants describe their upward mobility and class passing in terms of their personal and professional lives.

This qualitative study uses a Vygotskian (1978) sociocultural framework focusing on the mediation of tools, or artifacts, as avenue for meaning-making, as well as Holland et al (2001) as an anchor for theorizing the shifting negotiations of identity and social class as figured worlds. An interview study with embedded comparative case studies, the data were analyzed using narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and critical event narrative analysis (Webster & Mertova, 2007) to mine the stories of the participants.

Findings show that although all participants experienced similar trajectories, or a series of critical and like events (Webster & Mertova, 2007) to the middle class profession of teaching, two participants’ trajectories enacted spaces of resistance within these common elements. One participant self-authored her own path to teaching after several well-timed interventions by school-related adults, whom I call social class brokers, a meme of Brandt’s (1988) literacy sponsors. In addition, another participant used the cultural artifact of books—which she had previous viewed as a form of

recreation—to leverage her entry into the teaching profession. The study also explains how the participants called on their sedimented identities (Rowell & Pahl, 2007) to inform their day-to-day interactions with students.

These findings reveal a need for social class-sensitive pedagogy (Jones & Vagle, 2013) and a better understanding of the ways in which social class vacillates and implicitly permeates virtually all classroom interactions. Specifically, this study has implications for teacher educators who are interested in ways to provide space for teacher candidates to have deeper and richer examinations of their own classed experiences in order to create the same type of space for the teacher candidates' future K-12 students.

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where I'm from...

I'm from marching in the Frank Lloyd Wright Days parade

from the sound of Big Wheels

slapping the gravel, cracking plastic

I am from fragrant lilacs that permeate

Breathing in

on the tree swing that slides

←B A C K

And

F O R T H→

I am from blue-collars and car lovers

Auto technicians, grocery store clerks

T Y P E – S E T T E R S

Farmers →tractor seat makers →cheese makers,

Chucking 20 pound blocks every three seconds

Mozzarella for frozen pizzas, no thank you

I am from “please grab my pocketbook from the davenport, dear.

I'm going to be late for my permanent”

and “Just because its prom night doesn't mean it has to be PROM NIGHT”

I am from Artie and Clara, Merl and Diane,

from parents who wanted more for me;

and Here I go...

Introduction

Research Problem

We sat on a blanket on a cloudy August day.

There were four of us.

We had things in common: we were white women, English teachers, in our 30s.

We also grew up working-class.

I knew the participants through my work with schools in the area. Two of them, Stephanie and Julie, knew me and each other from a previous summer institute at a local National Writing Project site. The third, Lisa, was new to both of them; she had just gotten married the weekend before, so the freshness of her new relationship status still waned in the fall air. We munched on snacks while Julie chased her young daughter through the trees. The school year was approaching; we could tell by the dip in temperature and the hint of red in the trees.

After initial introductions and a brief overview of Lisa's wedding weekend, I asked the participants to write a six word memoir of what it was like to grow up working-class. They wrote the following:

| | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| "Less education...outside looking in" | Stephanie |
| "They wore brand name, I wore knock-offs" | Lisa |
| "Moved six times, never felt grounded" | Julie (Focus Group, 8/16/2012) |

As seen in the vignettes above, each participant spoke of their experience as an outsider: Stephanie as less educated than her peers, Lisa as unable to buy expensive clothes, and Julie as always changing schools. Each of these miniature memoirs describe the experience of not fitting in, of being the Other in a society that still denies that class differences exist. Of most interest to me are the shared experiences of these teachers who grew up with the tensions of living working-class lives in a society that values the middle class.

The U.S. opportunity gap—of often written and understood in greater Discourse as the achievement gap, hence the assumption that those students at the bottom are deficient and need remediation—is often discussed in terms of race, or the black/white gap. However, Reardon (2011) recently discovered that the income opportunity gap is now twice that of the black/white gap. The social class opportunity gap is not discussed because it directly conflicts with the proposed liberal humanist view of schooling: to use education as an avenue for upward mobility that will result in access, power and money, and most importantly, complete personal contentment and fulfillment.

Denying the existence of social class in America is not a new phenomenon. It has been happening for decades due mostly to the fact that Americans cling to the ideology of the American Dream: that no matter a person's background, if she works hard, she will succeed and transcend her early unfortunate circumstances. As Bettie (2003) argues,

One's social class is shaped by the economic and cultural resources found at home, that is parents' socioeconomic status...beyond this, the tenacious ideology of 'the family (found in popular, political, and social science discourse) shapes

assumptions of what a middle-class or working-class family looks like, when in reality the fluidity of economic and cultural capital within any given family often makes its 'class' hard to name. (p. 193)

This idea of bootstrapping was refashioned after the election of President Barack Obama, as parents of black youth began to imagine their sons and daughters as equally as capable of fulfilling their American Dreams. In viewing poverty as an unfortunate circumstance, people are able to continue to blame the victim and not the oppressive institutional system that is working to prevent upward mobility. Because liberal humanists view upward mobility, also known as class-climbing or bootstrapping, as a goal for those born into disadvantaged situations, the existence of social class hierarchies are created and perpetuated both implicitly and explicitly.

Why is class virtually invisible in the US? According to hooks (2007), "race and gender can be used as screens to deflect attention away from the harsh realities that class politics exposes" (p. 7). Class is often conflated with other constructs, specifically race, and Bettie (2003) writes that

...Categories like race and gender, which appear to be essentially there, fixed and natural, readily take the place of class in causal reasoning, rather than being understood as mediated by or inextricably intertwined with class and one another. Thus, common sense discourses on race and gender can work to preclude class visibility. (p. 195)

I am not suggesting that race is not a co-factor in student achievement and the opportunity gap; however, I am suggesting that a better, deeper understanding of the way

class works to paralyze those who are disadvantaged, and to bolster those who are advantaged will provide educators with a realistic picture of how working-class students are often ignored in curriculum and pedagogy, and how educators can use their own connections and disconnections with working-class students' experiences both in and out of school, to transform their views from a deficiency model to a more inclusive model that recognizes and affirms all backgrounds, all work, and all aspirations (Jones & Vagle, 2013).

Within school contexts, working-class and poor students rarely see themselves in the curriculum, pedagogy or classroom discourse, which is shaped by liberal humanist notions of middle-class upward mobility and bootstrapping. Vagle and Jones (2012) state that working-class and poor students often have lower test scores than their middle class/upper class peers, a result of the middle-class nature of schooling within a larger society that often denies the existence of social class. Because of these lower test scores, working-class and poor students are often “positioned precariously” (Vagle & Jones, 2012) in schools, particularly when viewed as being deficient. In addition to the view that these students need remediation

...working-class and poor students are living their school lives in the dangerous waters of middle-classes institutions, constantly negotiating the precarious nature of a context where they do not *fit*, where they must work to *belong*, where they experience the push and pull of wanting to please a teacher and peers and not always knowing how to do so or if doing so would be betraying someone—or something—else in their lives. (Vagle & Jones, 2012, p. 319-320)

I experienced this very negotiation process as a working-class student and as I began my precarious journey to college and into the middle class profession. In order to better understand my own experiences in relation to individuals who were both similar and different than me, I sought out on what Vagle & Jones (2012) term “a social, autobiographic, and pedagogical project” (p. 318), to discover through autobiographical stories and social interactions in focus groups, my own interpretation of what these stories and experiences mean. In other words, I sought to understand how the participants were positioned precariously and the way they negotiated for agency, for success and for a sense of belonging, while being positioned.

Purpose

It is true that some people are able to gain access to a higher class through education and experience, although this access is sometimes limited by the constructions of race, class and gender, but this transformation does not come without struggle or pain. Much of what this dissertation speaks to are the storied lives of teachers who came from working-class backgrounds, and through tracing this trajectory, I have found that, despite their current successful middle class lives, they still ruminate about how their past lives have informed their present lives. If being human means that we are an embodied web of complex stories, these participants’ stories represent this complexity, as they come to symbolize that even though there is much happiness in border crossing, there is also pain and suffering along the way. This pain can be heard in their stories of the death of a sibling, the death of a parent and grandparent, and of becoming distant from a mother and father who had a significant hand in shaping who they have become. This pain

sometimes re-emerges during their interview in the form of anger and tears or in the masking forms of laughter and sarcasm. Despite this palpable pain, the participants humbly speak about their parents and their siblings as people who shaped their early identities and people who they someday hope to reconnect with in some way.

Researcher Positionality

As a first generation college student, I have spent most of my time since earning my B.S. in teaching in 2003 justifying to my parents why I need and want further education. Growing up in a small town of 5,000 people in southwestern Wisconsin, it was just assumed that my brother and I would go to college. My parents had hope that we could improve our lives and move up from our working-class backgrounds. My father had been employed at a cheese factory for nearly twenty years by the time I graduated, and my mother quit her job as a typesetter to work in a seat factory soon after. I can remember my parents scrambling around when my older brother needed to apply for financial aid in the mid-90s, and I distinctly remember my brother needing to transfer after this first year because he/they had somehow missed an important deadline for his first choice school.

My parents were very upfront with us about how tuition would be paid: my brother and I were responsible for it. We took out extensive loans and each worked up to three jobs at a time while attending college full-time. We also returned to our hometown during the summers and worked in factories to make more money. I worked in a Harley Davidson factory and as a laboratory tech at the cheese factory; my brother worked overnight clean-up at the cheese factory. We would often hear my parents make

comments like “Now you know what REAL hard work is like,” and “Aren’t you glad you got your education so you only have to do this for a few weeks at a time?” Being an academic from a working-class family has been difficult. I am the black sheep of my family, and the more degrees I earn the greater the distance between me and my parents. Once I started college, I felt like I was destined to find a place in academia, and by the time I had finished my undergraduate degree, I had gained access to a world my parents would never understand.

I am not alone in this struggle. Many students of working-class backgrounds deal with contrasting relationships between their families and academics; it often feels like we have to abandon our backgrounds in order to be accepted into academia. Luckily, it only feels this way, as it is the sociocultural background itself that frames our journey into academia. They are two distinct identities, but each discourse community is also present within the other one. Dews and Law (1995) write in *This Fine Place So Far From Home* that there is often a:

cruel duality of the working-class student in higher education...in my trajectory from working-class family of origin to the threshold of middle-class professional status, I have suffered a loss my present context doesn’t even recognize as a loss; my education *has* destroyed something even while it has been re-creating me in its own image. (1)

Like Dews and Law (1995), I feel guilt for “choosing a path that has made me virtually unrecognizable to my kin” (1-2). As a 23 year-old college graduate, this gulf didn’t seem so big. But as I decided to leave my teaching job and pursue an MA and PhD, I realized

that my parents did not understand the purpose or reasoning behind the choice. My mother said, “Why do you need another degree? You can teach the rest of your life. And, you won’t have more debt.” My father said, “Why can’t you just take night classes or something and continue working? How are you going to pay for school? If you do decide to go, you’re going to need to take as many classes as possible at a time and work a few part-time jobs.” I knew in my heart that I wanted to pursue graduate education, but I also knew that it would be a long and difficult road in justifying it to my parents.

Because this study focuses on my memberships in the figured worlds of social class and teaching, the study is literally an extension of myself. Many of the questions I asked the participants are questions I have asked myself for the past decade. What was interesting about my participants was that I knew each of them personally before this study. A few were my college classmates, one was a mentor for me in my early career, and the others were colleagues and friends I met in the summer of 2010 during a National Writing Project Summer Institute. I was very careful to build a rapport with my participants (whom I had known anywhere from 2-15 years), so that the participants felt comfortable telling me their life stories. My rapport with the participants also led to some tangential discussions related to our past experiences together or recent experiences in our lives that we had not yet discussed in our personal relationships outside the interview. For example, I had not seen Abbie or Jasmine for nearly a year when I met them at Abbie’s house for the interview. We spent time before the official interview catching up, but there were also points in the interview where we all felt so comfortable talking that we discussed aspects of our college lives or present lives at random.

Knowing my participants ahead of time, in personal spaces, provided an extreme level of comfort for me and for the participants during the interviews and focus groups.

In the next chapter, I present the theoretical framework of sociocultural theory as a way of viewing identity and social class as constructs created by external structures and factors. Once theoretical assumptions are presented, I review and critique relevant recent literature on teacher identity, working-class autobiographies and ethnographies, as well as literature on home literacy practices to demonstrate the need for the current study.

Interchapter

...And this is where I've been...

A College Student in Minnesota

A Worker in a Harley Davidson Factory

A Busser of Tables

A Student Teacher (MN)

A Non-tenure Teacher in Baltimore

A Saturday School Teacher in Baltimore

A Tenured Teacher in Baltimore

A Worker in A Cheese Factory

An MA Student

A PhD Candidate

Assumptions about my Upward Mobility

I'm a bootstrapper

I renounce my beginnings

It was a seamless transition, full of happiness

I am content in my middle class world

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the reader with an overview of how identity and social class are being theorized, as well as provide a review of recent literature on the issues of social class and the ways it affects teacher identity. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section is devoted to conceptualizing social class and identity as sociocultural constructs by summarizing theoretical underpinnings and citing both foundational and recent theoretical work. In this section, I argue that the best approach to analyzing teacher identity within this qualitative study is through theorizing social class as a figured world and mobility as being accomplished through the mediation of tools, or cultural artifacts. The second section is the literature review, which is comprised of the following sections: working-class home literacy, teacher identity, gender and social class in teacher identity, ethnographies of social class and class narratives in the academy. I address the topic of working class home literacy with the inclusion of a handful of seminal book-length works that describe the ways that language and discourse differ in working-class homes. The final section of the literature review provides a general section on teacher identity to show the dearth of studies, and I then address the subtopics of gender and social class.

Conceptualizing Teacher Identity and Social Class as Sociocultural Constructs

Identity. In order to demonstrate how teacher identity is a sociocultural construct, a brief overview of sociocultural theory's conceptualization of identity is needed to orient the reader to its foundations. Much of the work related to the sociocultural view of identity can be traced back to Vygotsky. According to McVee (2004), Vygotsky's

sociocultural theory "...highlights the role of cultural mediation in human development...that all learning is socially mediated and must be viewed within its social, historical, and cultural contexts" (p. 883). Essentially, the sociocultural lens acknowledges that there is more at work than simply psychological and/or biological development. In *Mind and Society*, Vygotsky (1978) writes that "the most significant moment in the course of intellectual development, which gives birth to the purely human forms of practical and abstract intelligence, occurs when speech and practical activity, two previously completely independent lines of development, converge (p. 24). Holland et al., (2001) suggest that "socially constructed selves...are subject to positioning by whatever powerful discourses they happen to encounter ..." (p. 27).

Teacher Identity. Since the 1990s, educational researchers have been striving to clarify the theoretical underpinnings of teacher identity, to better understand how it is being conceptualized in the field and critiqued (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2002; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009), as well as innovative ways to theorize and conceptualize teacher identity. (Day, Kington, Stobart and Sammons, 2006; Weber & Mitchell, 1996; Hoadley & Ensor, 2009; Clarke, 2009; Coldron & Smith, 1999). Coldron & Smith (1999) theorize that the politics of education and the continual pressure to conform to tradition (pedagogy, curriculum) in teacher education has the potential to stymie teacher identity because these spaces, or active locations, in which teachers tend to have agency are dwindling. Because teacher identity is found within classroom practice, so the ways in which a teacher's colleagues interact with her, the feedback she receives from the principal and how she presents herself to parents all affect and impact her teacher

identity. Coldron and Smith (1999) argue that teachers fall into one or more teaching traditions (craft, moral, artistic and scientific) to criticize the idea of best practices. Instead, they claim that valuing the teachers and their traditions will provide a space for the teachers themselves to engage in professional development and to know that there is more than just one way to teach well.

In their overview article on recent issues in teacher identity literature, Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) argue that researchers are not always clear on defining the term, the place of the self within identity and other issues related to identity, such as discourse, gender, agency and emotion. Their purpose is to show the various ways researchers have conceptualized identity, as well as to inform the reader that the best time to pursue identity studies is in pre-service teacher programs, when the concept can be introduced and its dynamic nature can be studied. Beijaard et alia's (2004) overview piece is similar, as it provides the reader with a basic understanding of recent research on teacher's professional identities. By identifying three themes, studies on teachers' professionally identity formation, studies in which the teachers' identities were presented in the form of narratives and studies that focused on identifying characteristics of teacher identity, Beijaard, et al (2004) discovered that the empirical research lacked a connection between the teachers' practical knowledge and their professional identities. This gap in the research, the fact that empirical work lacks a focus on the relationship between personal practical knowledge and teacher identity, is addressed in this dissertation study, as I focus on the ways in which the culture or figured world of growing up working class, and the practical knowledge gained within this context, affects the teachers' identities.

Consequently, Day et alia's (2006) article has two purposes: to provide an overview of research on teacher identity using a sociocultural approach and to connect that research to an ethnographic study of 300 teachers in 100 schools. The study results find that "identities are neither intrinsically stable nor intrinsically fragmented, as earlier literature suggests. Rather, teacher identities may be more, or less, stable and more or less fragmented at different times and in different ways according to a number of life, career and situational factors" (Day et al, 2006, p. 601). In addition, the researchers determined that the contextual impacts on identity, whether it stabilizes or destabilizes identity, does not affect teacher performance. Therefore, a greater understanding of the dynamic nature of identity and how it is shaped, constructed and reified by sociocultural contexts will provide teacher educators with more information on how to construct identity studies and analyses in teacher education programs.

Social Class and Teacher Identity as a Figured World. A focus on social class is a gargantuan undertaking, one that is overwhelming because the social construction itself is hard to pin down and define. What is most important though is to understand the ways in which these teachers from working-class backgrounds lived and managed their lives as former students in public schools and as teachers within the same types of school systems. Because systematic organization is perpetuated, if not magnified, in public schooling, analyzing the ways in which this perpetuation has been studied is essential to understanding my participants, because they have chosen to devote their lives to the institution of schooling. If, as Michael Apple (1995) writes, schools,

as a state apparatus...perform important roles in assisting in the creation of the

conditions necessary for capital accumulation (they sort, select, and certify a hierarchically organized student body) and legitimation (they maintain an inaccurate meritocratic ideology, and therefore, legitimate the ideological forms necessary for the recreation of inequality) (p. 13),

it is important to interrogate this analysis by asking questions related to perpetuation of meritocratic ideology to my participants. Essentially, I am interested in the participants' processes for surviving in an apparatus that is built to ignore them. Before one can begin to ask these types of higher-level thinking questions though, the reader must be able to understand how class is being conceptualized for the purpose of this study.

Social class is a contested term with a complex notion, and it is often entangled with other contested terms, such as race, gender and ethnicity. hooks (2000) states that class is set apart from other categories because "the neat binaries of categories of white and black or male and female are not there when it comes to class" (p. 6). hooks (2006) proclaims:

Class is much more than Marx's definition of relationship to the means of production. Class involves your behavior, your basic assumptions, how you are taught to behave, what you expect from others and yourself, your concept of a future, how you understand problems and solve them and how you think, feel, act. (p. 103)

In conceptualizing class, I adopt a Weberian theorization that Giddens (1975) builds on, in which class, according to Giddens (1975), is understood as "a mediate relation between the economic, as a mode of structuration, a set of constitutive relays linking

economic identities with social identities” (p. 105). Within this structure, class coexists among many other constructs, yet it is an individual artifact in itself. Dimock and Gilmore (1994) write that class can be understood as:

a relationally derived construct rather than a self-executing entity, the operations of class necessarily involve an entire spectrum of interdependent terms, whose mutuality defining character is progressively obscured as social identities become ‘real’—become solid, integral, and perhaps even acquirable—to the point where they appear entirely objective and self-evident. (p. 3)

Essentially, social class is defined in relation to other constructs, and in the study at hand, the older the participants get and the more classed experiences they have, the more they identify with a particular social class, as it is eventually seen as an objective reality.

Many Americans believe that we live in a classless society. The notion of the expanding middle class has been perpetuated to the point that most people believe that a majority of the US is middle class or upper middle class. The concept of the American Dream is deeply-rooted in the American spirit, but it is essentially mythical. Fine and Burns (2003) write:

The belief that ‘if you work hard, you’ll succeed’ persists, relatively unproblematized, pumped out across educational contexts and prevails in our national consciousness...this belief obscures the inequities documented above, camouflages structural group-level barriers, and points a damning finger at individuals who seem to be personally responsible when they don’t succeed. (p. 844)

In order to theorize the intersections of social class and teacher identity, I draw on the theories of Holland et al (2001) in that an individual cannot and should not be separated from their subject position and their context. For Holland et al (2001) an individual is already-always a subject. The act of being recruited means that a person embodies a construct or an ideology. I am simultaneously being recruited by whiteness, gender, social class and politics, among other things. Recruitment, then, is an embodied recognition of subjectivity, a subconscious “owning” of constructs to which a person belongs. For example, the participants in this study all consider themselves English teachers; they embody what they believe it means to be an English teacher and reify this embodiment through their daily actions.

The combination of these embodied recruitments result in norms, expectations and discourses. Holland et alia’s (1998) construct of figured worlds allows individuals to have agency to act while also being acted upon by social others:

Figured worlds take shape within and grant shape to the coproduction of activities, discourses, performances and artifacts. A figured world is peopled by the figures, characters and types who carry out its tasks and who have styles of acting within, distinguishable perspectives on, and orientation toward it. (p. 5)

In other words, a figured world is constructed through historical activity and through the agency of its recruited members. One person has membership in several figured worlds that interact with each other through actions, agency and participation. Figured worlds are not open to all; power is at work in recruitment practices which results in a hierarchy of figured worlds. The participants in this study have a trajectory that provides an

entrance into the middle class figured world, but this recruitment and entrance does not come easy and requires them to straddle both the working-class figured world and the middle class figured world.

Review of the Literature

Working-Class Home Literacy Events. Scholars have conducted research related to the ways working-class kids develop literacy skills at home (Lareau, 2003; Hicks, 2002; Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989; Heath, 1985), and how those skill sets differ from kids who are of different social class and racial backgrounds. Much of this research results from the societal conception that working-class and poor students do not have the same level of literacy skills as those of their middle class peers. Luckily, the research described below shatters that assumption and instead offers up examples of how working-class kids construct literacy learning in unique, class-based ways and how these students learn to navigate the middle class institution and determine ways to gain access. What follows is a brief overview of these scholars' contributions to the field of literacy as a way to frame how the participants in the current study use their home literacy practices as artifacts that mediate their memberships in the figured world of teaching.

Shirley Brice Heath's eminent work, *Ways with Words* (1983), chronicles the lives of two neighboring towns, Trackton, comprised of white working class families, and Roadville, a community of African-American families. What Heath (1983) discovers is that these communities practice different discourses of literacies at home. In an article using some of the same data, Heath (1982) includes another community of comparison, comprised of mainstream middle class kids called Maintown. Heath (1982) frames her

study by claiming that “children learn certain customs, beliefs, and skills in early enculturation experiences with written materials: the bedtime story is a major literacy event which helps set patterns of behavior that recur repeatedly through the life of mainstream children and adults” (p. 51).

The Maintown participants consisted of teacher-mothers who self-identified as being in a typical middle class family, and the children of these participants were expected to follow rules within home literacy events:

children give attention to books and information derived from books;
children...acknowledge questions about books; children respond to conversational allusions to the context of books and they act as question-answerers who have a knowledge of books; children use their knowledge of what books do to legitimate their departures from ‘truth’; preschool children accept book and book-related activities as entertainment; preschoolers announce their own factual and fictive narratives; children listen and wait as an audience. (Heath, 1982, p. 52-53)

What Heath (1983) found is that these “mainstream school-oriented children...learn not only how to take meaning from books, but also how to talk about it” (p. 56).

Heath (1983) then refers to her research with Trackton and Roadville to contrast the literacy events of these communities with each other and with Maintown. Roadville parents approach literacy events as opportunities to practice and coach their kids in order to instill in children the proper use of words and understanding of the meaning of the written word” (p. 60). The main differences between the middle class practices of Maintown and the working-class practices of Roadville are that Roadville parents do not

see opportunities for literacy events outside of book reading, nor do they draw attention to the ways they are using literacy in their everyday interactions. In addition, when Roadville children are asked questions: "What would you have done if you had been Billy?", Roadville children frequently say, "I don't know" or shrug their shoulders" Heath, 1982, (p. 63). The main difference between the middle class kids of Maintown and the working-class kids of Roadville is that Roadville kids' initial successes in reading, being good students, following orders and adhering to school norms of participating in lessons begin to fall away rapidly about the time they enter fourth grade. As the importance and frequency of question and reading habits with which they are familiar decline in the higher grades, they have no way of keeping up or of seeking help in learning what it is they do not even know they don't know (p. 64).

These findings, that working-class kids' literacy events as young kids are rather different than those of middle class kids, demonstrate that the culture of social class heavily impacts literate experiences. In addition, the fact that working-class kids can "get by" in the early grades but begin to struggle as the intensity of questions and critical thinking increases as they get older reifies the fact that working-class homes do have valuable literacy practices, but that these practices are often very different than the practices valued in middle class homes and in the middle class space of schooling. It is important to note that these findings are often critiqued as not being fluid enough in that the categories are not fluid and prevent agency for border crossing (Lewis & Del Valle, 2008).

Deborah Hicks (2002) claims that "White working-class children often experience

painful cultural dissonance in middle-class classrooms, and that teachers and researchers need to strive for critical practices that address the varying diversities they might encounter—those involving relations of ethnicity, race, gender, and class” (p. 4). Based on her own experience growing-up working class, Hicks (2002) studies two working-class children’s experiences with language and school and the ways the students’ reading experiences influence their identities. In addition, Hicks’ (2002) work shows examples of how the students react when they realize their working-class literacy practices are not accepted within the middle class institution of schooling and the ways the students go about gaining access. What is of most interest in this work is the idea that student identities are heavily affected by their reading practices and future research should work to connect literacy practices to identity.

Annette Lareau (2003) chronicles the lives of twelve families raising third graders in her ethnography, *Unequal childhoods: Class, race and family life*. Findings reveal that “class position influences critical aspects of family life: time use, language use and kin ties...There are signs that middle-class children benefit, in ways that are invisible to them and to their parents, from the degree of similarity between the cultural repertoires in the home and those standards adopted by institutions” (Lareau, 2003, p. 236-237). Lareau (2003) also found that social class played a large role in the daily lives of children in relation to their routines. While the middle class parents scheduled their children’s lives, “reasoned with them...hovered over them...did not hesitate to intervene on the children’s behalf...and made a deliberate and sustained effort to stimulate children’s development and to cultivate their cognitive and social skills” (p. 238), working-class and poor parents

“viewed children’s development as unfolding spontaneously, as long as they were provided with comfort, food, shelter and other basic support” (p. 237). These findings are similar to those of Heath (1983) in that the literacy events and practices of middle class families and working-class families are strikingly different, and therefore, the children of these families are prepared quite differently for school and the real world.

Ethnographies of Class. Ethnographies of class have chronicled the lives of students from working-class backgrounds to illuminate their daily, and often times, lifetime struggles that are a result of social stratification. Margaret Finders’ (1997) ethnography of the lived experiences of girls in junior high chronicles the dichotomous lives of the “Social Queens” and the “Tough Cookies.” These distinctions are a direct reflection of social class, as the queens represent the middle class girls who are interested in the social aspects of schooling, and the tough cookies are the girls from poor and working-class backgrounds who are interested in school and are avid readers. Student reactions to schooling can be explained as either acceptance/compliance or resistance (Finders 1997; Willis 1981). Much of what Finders (1997) writes about is relatable to me because, as a student, I was accepting of the social structures’ oppression, which is likely why I became a teacher. This focus on the social class of students and the ways in which social class impacts learning, social groups and literacy learning is important work, but a more nuanced understanding of what happens to these girls later in life and the ways that their social class, schooling and literacy learning impacted their career choice, etc. would be valuable.

Another ethnography of class, Paul Willis’s (1981) *Learning to labour: How*

working class kids get working class jobs, chronicles the lives of the lads, working-class boys who want nothing more than to have a “laff” in school. Willis (1981) characterizes this “laffing” as a form of resistance, or opposition, to doing school. In fact, he found similarities between the lads’ oppositional behavior and that of working-class culture: “... counter-school culture has many profound similarities with the culture its members are mostly destined for—shop floor culture” (Willis, 1981, p. 52). Because these boys knew that there was no point in doing school because the social hierarchies, values and representations within the structure did not value their own, they were just preparing themselves to take over for their fathers in the factories. It was through reading Willis’ text on social class and education that I truly began to understand the working-class as not simply a class, but as a culture. He views culture as “... not simply as a set of transferred internal structures (as in the usual notion of socialization) nor as the passive result of the action of dominant ideology downwards (as in certain kinds of Marxism), but at least in part as the product of collective human praxis” (Willis, 1981, p. 4). Like Finders (1997), Willis (1981) provides a rich, ethnographic account of the lives of students.

Julie Bettie’s (2003) *Women without class: Girls, race and identity* chronicles the lives of White and Mexican-American girls in California. What was of most interest to her was the ways in which class was at play in relationship to the constructs of race, gender, sexuality and ethnicity. Bettie (2003) found that at times, class is ignored, and what is really a class-based issue is assumed to be a result of race, ethnicity or gender. The study does well to focus on working-class women, as historically, working-class

often brings to mind white men. I find many similarities between Bettie's (2003) work and that of Willis (1981) in that the trajectories of the participants are assumed at an early age and much of what occurs in the study reflection navigation through the middle class spaces of schooling.

Class Narratives in the Academy. As a genre, narratives within the academy aim to autobiographically tell the story of how a teacher/scholar came to become a successful academic/teacher. These writers movingly tell their stories of hybrid identities, of conflicting allegiances to their work and to their families from their youth to present-day adulthood. The tension related to bordering crossing increases with age and with the acceptance to university. Much can be gleaned from these stories that can assist scholars and pedagogues in better understanding how to fulfill the needs of working-class students. A few common themes, such as home literacy versus school literacy and the need to construct hybrid and/or dichotomous identities, can be found in a handful of respected teacher narratives. Through these narratives, these academics are acting as what Gramsci (1971) would call organic intellectuals, or as those who give their voices to support others who are oppressed within the same social class. Although these teacher narratives provide a rich description of author's/subjects' transformation throughout time, they focus mostly on experiences that led to a position in academia/higher education. While these works are valuable in that these authors struggle in the same ways my participants likely struggle, the differences between secondary school and higher education are striking.

Starting in the early 1980s, academics from working-class backgrounds began to

examine their trajectories from their working-class roots to the halls of academia with the publication of their narratives in books like Dews and Law's (1995) *This fine place so far from home*, Shepard, McMillan and Tates' (1998) *Coming to class: Social class and the pedagogy of teachers* and Van Galen and Dempsey's (2009) *Trajectories: The social mobility of education scholars from poor and working class backgrounds*. In addition to these edited books, Mike Rose (2005), Richard Rodriguez (1982) and Victor Villanueva (1993) wrote book-length narratives to share their own journeys from working-class and/or immigrant backgrounds. While Rose (2005) probes his working-class roots in California it is Rodriguez (1982) and Villanueva (1993) who constantly fight to be recognized as legitimate academics due to discrimination based on their minority status. Much of the common content of these stories details humble beginnings, struggles, assistance from others and the often-complicated and contradicting sense of place within academia.

Arguably the most famous narrative of the academy is that of Mike Rose (2005). His autobiographical *Lives on the boundary: A moving account of the struggles and achievements of America's educationally underprepared* chronicles his life as a working-class white male in a South Los Angeles, through his college years at UCLA, his years teaching and tutoring postsecondary students and adults, to the present, where he is a Professor of Education at UCLA. Much of what Rose (2005) writes about in the text has foundations in the fact that "American meritocracy is validated and sustained by the deep-rooted belief in equal opportunity" (p. 128). Rose (2005) clings to this ideology from his own experiences as both a student and teacher, and he writes:

We live, in America, with so many platitudes about motivations and self-reliance and individualism—and myths spun from them, like those of Horatio Alger—that we find it hard to accept the fact that they are serious nonsense. To live your early life on the streets of South L.A.—or Homewood or Spanish Harlem or Chicago’s South Side or anyone of hundreds of other depressed communities—and to journey up through the top levels of the American educational system will call for support and guidance from many, many points along the way. (p. 47)

Through his narrative, Rose (2005) struggles to cling to his working-class roots while simultaneously succeeding in a middle class environment. He agonizes over moving away from his mother and his home, but he realizes that his long-distance drive into the area of his college is difficult in relation to time but also in relation to him establishing his place within the middle class world. What is most interesting about his narrative, though, is his focus on his experiences with other people who can be described as educationally underprepared: immigrants, veterans and other working-class kids. Autobiographies are important, as they provide space for the author to voice their life story, to tell the reader what happened from his point of view. Rose’s (2005) book provides the foundation for this dissertation study, as it seeks to understand how one’s beginnings in a low-income, working-class background affects the choices one makes in life. In a sense, this dissertation study seeks to find out how teachers from a similar background to Rose “learned to labor” in public schools. Rose (2005) writes mostly about graduate school and teaching adults, and it is also important to look at the ways that adults interact with students from similar or different backgrounds.

Richard Rodriguez's (1982) *Hunger for memory: The education of Richard*

Rodriguez (1981) is the tale of his struggle to "overcome" his Mexican-American past in order to succeed in American academia. Perhaps the most controversial teacher narrative, Rodriguez (1982) is often criticized because, although he took advantage of the system in order to reach his full potential, he condemns those who utilize bilingual education and Affirmative Action in order to succeed. For Rodriguez (1982), full-on assimilation is the only way to succeed in America. In fact, Rodriguez(1982) writes, "Only when I was able to think of myself as an American, no longer an alien in gringo society, could I seek the rights and opportunities necessary for full public individuality" (p. 27). This example shows that Rodriguez finds it difficult to manage dual-identities, and he is relieved when he succumbs to assimilation and no longer has to deal with issues of border crossing and hybrid identities. He actually claims that his story "discloses ... an essential myth of childhood – inevitable pain. If I rehearse here the changes in my private life after my Americanization, it is finally to emphasize public gain" (Rodriguez, 1982, p. 27). While many see this narrative as controversial, Rodriguez is firm in his beliefs and his use of his own story to support his claims. His decision to assimilate was not without pain, but he sees assimilating as a greater gain in the long run. Much can be gleaned from Rodriguez's (1982) autobiography related to social class and assimilation, especially considering that some view class-passing as a form of assimilation. More work related to the ways participants feel the need to assimilate or class-pass needs to be conducted in order to reveal the ways people maneuver through America's liberal humanist system.

Victor Villanueva Jr.'s (1993) *Bootstraps: From an American academic of color*

tells the story of his struggle to make sense of his Puerto Rican background in the big city of New York. Part autobiographical, part theoretical, the narrative details his experiences all the way through landing his first academic job while still technically living in poverty. He was often viewed as the “token” Puerto Rican scholar within universities and departments, but he did not do as Rodriguez did and fully assimilate. He created a hybrid identity that still allowed him to be himself in both his home life and school life. Villanueva’s (1993) narrative had a great effect on me. What was most interesting to me was his theorizing of rhetoric, his chosen academic field, as it weaves through his own narrative. His inclusions of Gramscian theory and Freire’s critical pedagogy allowed me to finally connect theorists that I’ve been reading for years. Villanueva (1993) also took time to write about his reactions to Rodriguez’s (1982) narrative: what bothered him most was “the melancholy, the ideological resignation, the way he seemed not to see that biculturalism is as imposed as assimilation” (p. 39). It is clear through reading his narrative that Villanueva (1993) has taken time to think about his experiences but also to theorize them in order to try to explain its meaning to the reader. This narrative has acted as model for the current study, as it acknowledges the theoretical foundations at work within the upward mobility narrative.

Teacher Identity. Teacher identity emerged as a field of study nearly two decades ago. Before the term “teacher identity” was coined, researchers focused on terms like teacher beliefs, teacher selves and teacher lives (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2002). Studies on teacher identity range from ethnographic studies (Pajak & Blasé, 1984; Day, Kington, Stobart & Sammons; Pearce & Morrison, 2011), studies employing mixed

methods (Sammons, Day, Kington, Gu, Stobart & Smees, 2007) and case study research (Soreide, 2006; McVee, 2004; Burn, 2000; Jones, 2006; Spencer, 1984; Sammons et al., 2007), as well as articles that seek to clarify the conceptualization of teacher identity (Day et al, 2006; Weber & Mitchell, 1996; Hoadley & Ensor, 2009; Clarke, 2009; Coldron & Smith, 1999; Beijaard, et al, 2002; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Below is a synthesis of teacher identity studies that focus on the gender and social class of teachers.

The Role of Gender. Many studies under review have all female participants (Spencer, 1984; Cavanaugh, 2005; Jones, 2006; Alsup, 2006; Williams, 2006; Pearce & Morrison, 2011). This is not surprising considering 89% of the teaching force in the public schools in the United States is comprised of white women (Case & Hemmings, 2005). While some studies simply state that they are studying pre-service teachers with no indication of the number of females and males (McVee, 2004; Soreide, 2006, Van Galen, 2011), no studies under review specifically highlight the ways in which male pre-service or practicing teachers develop teacher identities. Since seven out of eight of the participants in this study are women, it is important to understand the ways in which the participants' home lives, particularly their working-class mothers at home, and in some cases, a female teacher at school, influenced their own identities. Walkerdine argues (1989) working-class girls are socialized by regulating mothers on a daily basis, and these regulating mothers constantly remind the daughters of the American Dream ideology, the daughters and mothers “construct narratives to account for their poverty, they thereby also construct dreams, dreams of escape and dreams of possession” (Walkerdine, 1987, p. 20). Many of the studies related to gender in teacher identity take place in the classroom,

as studies of pedagogy or practice (Jones, 2006; Alsup, 2006, Williams, 2006; Pearce & Morrison, 2011), but there is not in-depth research on the ways that teacher's see themselves as a result of their social class up-bringing.

Spencer (1984) uses a socio-historical approach to identify the relationship between teachers' home and school lives. The eight participants were asked questions related to socioeconomic status, marital status and roles taken on at home. What is implied in this work is that all teachers are heterosexual, and that the topic of marriage is inherently written about as if it were between a male and female. Much of the work discusses female teachers taking on a traditional role at home and discussing their need to clean their homes, cook meals and care for the children. The context of this study, the early 1980s, is important because it reveals that it was undertaken when the feminist movement was just beginning to take shape. Despite these explicitly traditionalist views of women the study does reveal that female teachers who are single are more likely to become more involved in school activities. Spencer's (1984) study focuses on traditional roles of women (and men) in the early 1980s, so a more in-depth, modern look at the ways in which female (and male) teachers discuss the ways in which their professional lives have been influenced by their personal lives is needed.

Cavanaugh (2005) also writes in the socio-historical approach in her piece on female-teacher gender and sexuality during the 20th century in Canada. What marks Cavanaugh's (2005) work from Spencer's (1984) is her explicit highlighting of the ways in which society's views of "female teacher masculinity and homosexuality, and the 'masculinizing' influence of the spinster teacher...moved to the forefront" (p. 247). This

historical account discusses the ways in which female teachers in the early 20th century were expected to be single and chaste and that many teachers often faced marriage bans in order to allow society to maintain this status. While much of what the account does is discuss the stereotypes of single and married teachers during this time period, it does highlight the ways in which female teachers navigated through these eruptions. What is revealed in terms of teacher sexuality is still considered somewhat taboo in education and within American society at-large in the 21st century. Like Spencer's (1984) work, the time period for this study is not applicable now, and teaching in the United States is different than teaching in Canada. A better understanding of the ways in which teachers (female and male) are navigating through social class eruptions in the 21st century will provide teacher educators with a better picture of what can be done to prepare teacher candidates for the evolving classroom population.

The Role of Class. In the field of education, class is exceedingly conflated with race. The portrayal of race and class as one entity further exacerbates the misunderstandings of the ways in which both race and class affect the educational opportunities of students and of those who aim to be future educators. Teaching is considered a middle-class profession, and many teachers who come from working-class backgrounds often find that there is cognitive and sociocultural dissonance when they begin to work within a Discourse that is different from what they have always known. Most work on the social class of teachers has been through autobiographical or biographical/narrative accounts of teachers who come from working class backgrounds (Maguire, 2005; Jones, 2006; Burn, 2001), or studies that aim to better understand the

role of class in the formation of teacher identities in pre-service and practicing teachers (Spencer, 1984; Hoadley & Ensor, 2009; Van Galen, 2010).

The focus on class typically takes into account both the personal and professional lives of teacher in order to learn how their identities are a result of their past experiences. Spencer's (1984) case study of female teachers devotes an entire section to the social class background of teachers and how this affects their perspectives on life (p. 287). The findings reveal that those teachers from working-class backgrounds often felt as if they had to "live down one's origins," and that teachers from working-class backgrounds also found it was easier to build relationships with students from the same social class backgrounds (Spencer, 1984, p. 288). However, one interesting finding in her study was that some teachers were "most strict toward those similar to one's own social class origins because of self-denial to those origins" (Spencer, 1984, p. 288). In one particular case, a teacher believes that students' behavior was a result of their parents' inability to raise them correctly, and she referred to the use of AAVE in her classroom as 'poor-boy talk'" (Spencer, 1984, p. 288). Teachers' backgrounds also affected other aspects of their lives, such as college choice, career choice and choice of "spouse." Of the 28 women sampled, several said they had few career choices no matter their social class. In this case, the differences in social classes of teachers becomes, as Spencer (1984) suggests, "...more blurred" (p. 189). Because Spenser's (1984) study is quite dated, a more nuanced, updated study that reflects the societal changes, especially the women's movement, is needed to better understand the teaching force, the lives of teachers and the ways that teacher educators can help prepare teacher candidates for the 21st century.

While Spencer's (1984) study depicts teachers who were educated in the 1960s and 1970s and highlights important similarities between 40 female teachers, the same in-depth work can be done when a researcher looks at one case of a teacher's experience of class-crossing. Burn (2001), Maguire (2005) and Jones (2006) write about one female teacher who is either struggling with her own working-class background or struggling to use curriculum to interrogate her own identities. Maguire (2005) describes the experiences of one secondary English teacher who, despite her class-crossing into the middle-class, insists that she is still, and will forever be, working-class. This subject positioning often affects her relationships with students, parents and staff, and Maguire (2005) discusses the ways that the hidden curriculum of schools can work to mute or invalidate teachers from working-class backgrounds. Similarly, Burn (2001) chronicles the battle of one working class teacher in an inner-city primary school who constantly feels excluded due to her social class background. Emphasis is placed on the systematic struggles of the UK schooling system and the ways in which it encourages teachers to enjoy middle class luxuries while simultaneously disavowing their working-class backgrounds. As with Maguire's work, Burn (2001) highlights the ways that systems, specifically schools, perpetuate middle class values. While looking at one specific case is helpful, more work needs to be done in terms of the trajectories of teachers from working-class backgrounds. A larger sample will allow for a more generalizable conclusion on the implications of class-crossing teachers.

Teachers who face alienation because of social class often hope to dismantle its perpetuation by teaching their students about tolerance and acceptance. Jones (2006)

opens her article with an autobiographical piece about how she never realized she was poor, or working-class, until she was in 4th grade; her arrival at her teacher's mansion for a dance lesson caused her to cross "the threshold into my emerging consciousness of social class" (p. 293). Jones (2006) trusted that the inclusion of adult literature in her MA literacy course would help her students learn about critical perspectives. She hoped that the short stories of Dorothy Allison would provide a talking point for her students who came from middle or upper class families. She chose Allison's work because of the ways she is able to help her reader understand circumstances that "class oppression and domination may be something that must be lived to understand such fear, uncertainty, hopes and terrors—but perhaps these stories could help students move closer to knowing" (p. 295). The focal student, Brooke, first speaks up in class when she reveals that she thought the family in Allison's *Trash* was black. This comment in itself speaks to the ways that "the conflation of race and class is more typical than we might expect, as the words 'poor' and 'poverty' conjure images of blackness..." (p. 298). By situating her students as adult readers instead of teachers reading with a children's perspective, Jones (2006) aims to disrupt any previous assumptions about the confluences of race and class, and to assist her privileged students in understanding the systems at work within the society. Jones' (2006) study opens the door for a greater focus on the ways that teacher identity affects student learning, and more research is needed on the ways that teacher identity affects the ways teachers build relationships with (different types of) students and the ways that teacher identity and teacher background helps and/or hinders in dealing with the realities of 21st century classrooms.

While there is scholarship that focuses on individual teacher's experience related to social class, there are also studies that aim to discover the ways that teacher's social class backgrounds affect their identity formation (Van Galen, 2011) and their pedagogical practices (Hoadley and Ensor, 2010). Van Galen (2011) discusses a course she created for her White, working-class teacher education students called "Education and the American Dream." The purpose of the article is to demonstrate the ways her students "have methodically—if not consciously—constructed new social identities through school to enable their social mobility" (Van Galen, 2011, p. 254). In order to engage her students, Van Galen (2011) supplements traditional reading with texts outside of academia, including creative writing by authors whose "roots are deep within the poor or working class" (p. 258). By the end of the semester, the pre-service teachers feel comfortable enough to write a first-hand account of something that happened to them related to class. In other words, they each write a narrative about an experience that made them feel classed. What happened to these pre-service teachers in the field? How did this experience of claiming a time when they felt classed affect their teacher identity and their pedagogy? This work needs to be extended to practicing teachers to determine how teacher identity, as well as teacher education courses on race, class and other constructs, affect teachers' personal and professional lives.

The teachers in Hoadley and Ensor's (2010) study hoped to understand the ways that teachers' social class background affect their dispositions and their pedagogies. The researchers use case study methodology in order to focus on eight teachers and 80 students in four different schools over a one-year time period in 2003. The sample was

considered purposeful “in order to represent two ends of a social class continuum: lower working class and upper middle class” (Hoadley & Ensor, 2010, p.878). The findings reveal a distinct difference in teachers from different social classes. For example, the teachers from the working-class backgrounds were not as concerned about specific structuralized learning segments, such as phonics, whereas middle-class teachers were very concerned with the ways their lessons were constructed and ways their students responded to concepts. The working-class teachers were more laid back and some even suggested that the students learn by playing games. The middle-class teachers, however, were focused mostly on the psychological development of the children by requiring them to use higher-order thinking. These findings reveal:

The privileging of horizontal modalities in working-class schools has something to do with teachers’ professional socialization and their constructions of knowledge and learning, something to do with what students from working-class communities bring to school, and something to do with shared community and school life of teachers. (Hoadley & Ensor, 2010, p. 885)

Hoadley and Ensor’s (2010) study framework influenced the framework of the current study in that I was interested in the ways that social class affected teacher identity. While they looked at disposition and pedagogy, I wanted to hear the teachers’ stories about how they came to have this identity, more of a contextual history than a snapshot of what pedagogy looks like on a given day. What is needed, then, is a deeper understanding of how the teachers in Hoadley and Ensor’s (2010) study came to be teachers and HOW that process affects their personal and professional lives.

Chapter Three: Research Methods

Using a qualitative approach framed by sociocultural theory, I used narrative inquiry and critical event narrative analysis as tools for data analysis in order to answer the following research questions:

1. How did the participants come to be teachers of English?
2. How did the participants' social class and home life affect and influence their school-related (student and teacher) identities?
3. How do they define their upward mobility and class passing in terms of their personal and professional identities?

Methodology

Comparative Case Studies. A case study is “an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (Merriam, 2009, p. 7). Yin (2009) defines a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 18). The bounded system, or bounded unit, is defined as “a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries” (Merriam, 2009, p. 40). What differentiates a case study from other qualitative methodologies is the fact that “the unit of analysis, *not* the topic of investigation, characterizes a case study” (Merriam, 2009, p. 40). In order to determine the boundedness of a topic, the researcher should figure out if

there is a limit on the number of participants or the amount of observations. If the researcher discovers that “there is no end, actually or theoretically, to the number of people who could be interviewed or to observations that could be conducted, then the phenomenon is not bounded enough to qualify as a case” (Merriam, 2009, p. 41).

Because case studies focus on the unit of analysis and not the focus of the study, other types of qualitative studies can be combined with case studies; for example, ethnographic case studies occur when “the culture of a particular social group is studied in depth” (Merriam, 2009, p. 42). There are no particular methods that are claimed by case studies, researchers use several methods while conducting a case study. As Yin (2009) writes, “case study is a design particularly suited to situations in which it is impossible to separate the phenomenon’s variables from their context” (p. 43). Various types of case studies exist, but what is most appropriate for my dissertation study is that of the comparative case study, which involves “collecting and analyzing data from several cases” (Merriam, 2009, p. 49). These individual cases “share a common characteristic or condition [and] the cases in the collection are somehow categorically bound together” (Merriam, 2009, 49).

Narrative Inquiry. Narrative inquiry emerged as a theoretical framework, methodology and method within qualitative research, the social sciences, and more specifically, within the field of education, during what is often referred to as the “narrative turn” in the 1980s. The history of narratives within the academy can be traced back to Bruner, Geertz, and several literary critics, such as Frye, Booth and Bakhtin. These theorists and researchers began to focus on the rich description provided by oral

histories and narratives, and they themselves soon became known as storytellers in their respective fields. Because “narrative” is often understood differently in various fields of study, defining narrative inquiry is often difficult. However, “what narrative researchers hold in common is the study of stories or narratives or descriptions of a series of events” (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 4). The term “inquiry” refers to the choices the researcher makes when collecting and analyzing the data, and narrative refers to the stories that are told, which typically have a setting, plot, context and theme. Schaafsma and Vinz (2011) claim that to narrate “suggests shaping through strategies such as repetition, intensity, linkable, magnification, tensions and/or interruptions” (p. 3). Although researchers may employ narratives in different ways, those who use narrative inquiry use the story as both a method and phenomena (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). For Schaafsma and Vinz (2011), there are several distinct results in using narrative.

Narrative:

- 1) Makes visible the puzzles of mind—framings, evidences, stances, theories, and questions—in the researcher’s composing of the text.
- 2) Challenges its own questions, answers, possibilities, and theories.
- 3) Grapples with issues of responsibility, power, relations, and ethics as it evidences the importance of learning with others.
- 4) Works to redefine the products or outcomes of research. (p. 8)

Essentially, the form and function of narratives allows the storyteller to hear his/her own stories, to strategically formulate the way it is told and to simultaneously make and remake connections between these stories and formulations.

Within the field of education, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) are seen as the founders of narrative inquiry. In fact, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) have documented how narrative inquiry “emerged as the most compelling and appropriate way to study human interaction” (as quoted in Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 6). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) refer to the stories told by participants as “field stories,” and they suggest that the inquirer “in this ambiguous, shifting, participant observation role is meeting difference; allowing difference to challenge assumptions, values and beliefs; improvising and adapting to the difference; and thereby learning as the narrative anthropologist” (p. 9). Therefore, I am aware of the complexities of my as inquirer and participant in the study.

A narrative framework has been chosen because the semi-structured and open interviews provided space for participants to tell stories that have likely never been told (out loud) or have never been realized. I am interested in an analysis of language and discourse and am in search of the complex and unregulated data that accompanies such a venture. In addition, I care about the participants’ lives and hope that by my conducting the study, the participants can begin to explore their own identity constructions in new and complex ways.

Recruitment of Participants. Participants were recruited using criterion sampling. The criteria for participation was written as follows, addressing potential participants: currently teach secondary English, identify as having come from a working-class background, and are interested in sharing your stories related to how your working-class background affects your experiences at home and school, as well as how it has

shaped your identity as a teacher. Based on these criteria, I contacted personal friends and colleagues that she thought might be interested in participating. These contacts were made via phone and email. In addition, the researcher gained IRB approval to send a recruitment email using a National Writing Project Summer Institute email list-serve. After sending this email out in Summer 2012, I received several replies and inquiries about the study. Because the recruitment form required that the participants' self-identity as working-class, I received quite a few replies that told a brief summary of their life and then they posed the question, "Do I qualify?" A reply was sent reminding them that it was important for them to think about what that term meant and if they felt like their background matched that conceptualization. I also received emails from teachers who were not English teachers, so I politely thanked them for their interest but said I was mostly interested in the discipline of English. At the time, I came away from the recruitment with nine total participants.

After careful consideration and contemplation, I have chosen to use the data and life stories of eight participants. These participants told engaging stories about their home lives and their school lives and the ways they intersected throughout the years. The other participant was not as engaged in the interview process, and her own examinations of her class background and teacher identities did not represent the deep, reflective nature of the other eight participants. The participant's answers were rather short, and she admitted that she felt uncomfortable discussing elements of her life with me. Therefore, after a brief phone discussion with her, she did not attend a focus group meeting. The eight participants in this study all teach in a Midwestern state in rural, urban or suburban

contexts. What follows is a brief character description of each participant:

Lisa is quite gregarious and friendly. She was 38 years old at the time of the study, and she had just gotten married the previous weekend. She grew up in an urban area and was one of seven children. She has medium-length curly brownish-blond hair, and she wears a lot of costume jewelry that she got from her grandmother. She is funny and sarcastic, which is evidenced in the way she tells the stories of growing up in a family who, at one point, all ended up working in her uncle's sheet metal factory. She did not major in education for her bachelor's degree, and she worked in the business world until she had a "come to Jesus moment" and decided to return to college to earn her teaching degree and M.Ed. She is a national award-winning English teacher who teaches in the suburbs.

Autumn is a single mother of five children, and, at the time of the study, was a grandmother of 1.5 children. She was 39 years old at the time of data collection, and she recently returned to an urban junior high classroom after spending a few years as a curriculum specialist for the district. She earned a M.Ed. in Gifted and Talented Education after teaching for a handful of years. She is a leader in her school, and she is currently earning her reading license. She is also active in her local National Writing Project Site, and she has attended several meetings across the nation related to curriculum. About seven years ago, Jonathon Kozol came to observe her teach.

Julie and I met two years ago during a summer institute for a National Writing Project site. She works in an urban school district, and, after many years at the middle school level, she recently transferred to a high school in the same district. She married her high school sweetheart, and she has two daughters. She grew up in rural, urban and suburban contexts and moved six times before settling in the suburbs. She earned her B.S. in English teaching from a state university and has been teaching for ten years. She admits she feels pressure from her colleagues to return to school to earn another degree.

Stephanie and I met during the NWP summer institute. We were in a writing group that met every day, so we developed a friendship based on our writing. She grew up in Northern Minnesota in a rural area with buffalo as her neighbors. Stephanie graduated from a large land-grant institution and earned her licensure and M.Ed. She is married and mother to a one year old boy. She has always taught in the suburbs, and most recently she began to teach college writing at a for-profit college in the area.

Susan and I met at the NWP summer institute in 2010, and she was in my book group. She is the oldest participant, aged 57 at the time of the study. She grew up in a rural area in Northern Minnesota, travelled abroad in college and married her college sweetheart. She is licensed in German and English and has taught both throughout her long career. She has two adult children and lives with her musician husband. Her teaching assignment changed this school year (2012-2013), as she was chosen to teach AVID and to teach freshman English.

Jasmine and I were college roommates. She grew up about 30 minutes from me on a farm and was the youngest of three girls. She graduated the semester after me and completed her student teaching in San Antonio, Texas. She taught there for a year, and then she returned to the Midwest and taught in a suburban area for five years before taking a job in the town where she has settled with her husband, **David**, and their daughter. Jasmine is the most energetic person I have ever met. She was 31 years old at the time of data collection, and she is currently a reading specialist in a small rural school district. She recently earned her reading license and M.Ed. in Literacy Education from a metropolitan university. She spent a lot of time driving on weeknights and weekends after work to earn the degree.

Abbie has taught speech and 10th grade English for 8 years at a suburban district. She is married and has two young daughters and a step-daughter in college. She has been friends with me and **Jasmine** since college, and she was in the same cohort of English Ed majors as **Jasmine**. She is also a creative writer and has recently published two of her novels online. She is very sweet and a good listener. She feels the pull to return to school to earn a M.Ed. or MA but is now concentrating on raising her kids and teaching.

David is **Jasmine's** husband. They grew up in neighboring towns and began to date when David was finishing his teaching degree and Jasmine returned to the Midwest from Texas. David decided he wanted to be a teacher his senior year of college. He earned a

BA in History, and then he attended another university to earn his teaching license and M.Ed. He also earned an English licensure online through another university. He currently teaches English and Social Studies to a group of sixty kids in a rural junior high school. He also teaches Driver's Ed.

Data Collection

Interviews. Interviews were the predominant form of data collection. These interviews were a hybrid form of the conversational approach, semi-structure/open-ended approach and interview guide approach, which allowed the participants to elaborate when they felt the need. As explained by Patton (2002), "The conversational interview offers maximum flexibility to pursue information in whatever direction appears to be appropriate, depending on what emerges from observing a particular setting or from talking with one or more individuals in that setting" (p. 342). I created an interview guide "to ensure that the same basic lines of inquiry are pursued with each person" (Patton, 2002, p. 343). Each participant was asked where and when would be most convenient to conduct the interview. The interviews took place in the participants' homes, in a library, and in coffee shops. Each interview was audio recorded and transcribed.

Focus Groups. I conducted two focus groups, and each one had three participants (not including me). One was in the metro area and consisted of Lisa and Julie, urban teachers and Stephanie, a suburban teacher. The other focus group took place in the shared home of David and Jasmine, and it also included Abbie. The inclusion of focus

groups allowed the participants to have collegiality around a similar background, to voice their opinions and to empower each other to continue to think about their backgrounds and their identities. As Patton (2002) writes, the object of a focus group is "...to get high-quality data in a social context where people can consider their views in the context of the views of others" (p. 386). What was most interesting about the focus groups was that the teachers were creating a larger narrative together, and while telling these stories, they were also creating a critical event together. Another benefit of using focus groups is that they allowed for triangulation—the data collected was checked against the interview data—and provided a large amount of data in a short amount of time. It is important to note that the focus groups took place in August 2012, so the teachers were on summer break (although Lisa was teaching summer school).

Six Word Memoirs. During the metro area focus group, I asked Lisa, Julie and Stephanie to write Six Word Memoirs about growing up working-class and what it means to be a teacher. Since all of them had at one time participated in a Summer Institute at a National Writing Project site, they were all familiar with this type of creative storytelling. It provides a brief snapshot into a person's life. Although it consists of only six words, or in Stephanie's case, five words because she could not come up with six, the depth of these descriptions and the similarities between all four (I participated) memoirs was significant.

Qualitative Data Analysis

When I sat down to analyze my data, I was initially overwhelmed with the task. I had interviewed nine teachers for one to two hours each, and conducted two focus groups

that lasted nearly two hours each. The stories told to me were rich and complicated, and I felt a sense of intimidation and responsibility. I had to do justice to their words. I knew that the goal of my dissertation was to provide a space for teacher voices to be heard, so I let the data lead me to the themes that emerged as I read through the stories.

What was clear rather early on was that each of the participants had a similar life trajectory; they all recalled literacy experiences at home as young children, they all were able to successfully navigate the middle class institution of school and do well, they all discussed the unfamiliar experience of applying for and attending college, and finally, they all discussed their lives as teachers and the ways in which their profession has changed their relationships with the people in their lives. In order to explore their stories more fully, I used narrative inquiry as my initial methodology, and I eventually determined that two participants' stories were rich enough to consider each of them a bounded unit for comparative case studies.

One form of narrative analysis that was useful in my process was critical event narrative analysis. Webster and Mertova (2007) describe the purpose of a focus on critical events:

As we recall experiences we unfold the story of those experiences. The story, in turn, is associated with a memorable event. That event has carried with it a development of new understanding as a consequence of the particular experience. Perhaps, importantly, it has stood the test of time and retained a place in living memory, where many other details have faded not to ever be recalled. (p. 73)

Within the framework of critical event analysis, a hierarchy of event types exists: critical

events, like events and other events. The critical event is unique and illustrates an important part of the participant's life/memory. The like event is at the same sequence of the critical event and it "further illustrates and confirms and repeats the experience of the critical event" (p. 79). The other event is an additional event that takes places at the same time as the critical and like event. While some researchers suggest critical events have a particular structure, I agree with Webster and Mertova (2007) that following this structure has the potential to inhibit the full life of the story and the impact that story has/had on the storyteller.

After I read through each of my data transcripts, I began what Merriam (2009) terms category construction. I realized quite early on that the participants' stories were all told in chronological order, with an emphasis on their early childhood memories and their K-12 schooling experiences before any mention of their college years or their careers as English teachers. Once I had determined these several categories, I began to sort categories into several potential categories or themes. These themes changed and became more nuanced as I proceeded in this process. The next step was to assign the data into these specific categories. The first theme I focused on was similar trajectories between the participants, so I began finding evidence of each of the stages, or critical events, in each participant's interviews and in the focus groups.

After this category assignment, I began to "name" the stages, or critical events, within the common trajectory, and I began to notice certain trajectories as more dissimilar than similar. I took note of these dissimilarities, and I eventually decided to devote one chapter to each of the two participants, Autumn and Lisa, in order to demonstrate the

ways in which their personal journeys symbolize a trajectory that cannot be essentialized. In addition, I came to feel as though my chapter on common trajectories was doing just that, essentializing my participants' journey in a way that made me feel uncomfortable. As a result, I decided to use the trajectory themes as a framing of the data chapters in order to introduce and explain the reasons why I decided to focus on other themes.

Once I determined that I wanted to focus on two cases, I created what Yin (2008) calls a case study database, or a place where I kept all materials: email correspondence, six word memoirs, audio files, transcriptions and field notes. Each of the two case studies is presented as a single case in its respective data chapter, and then a cross-case analysis leading to generalizations about the two cases follows. The purpose of the cross-case analysis is to analyze how the cases different trajectories resulted in different formulations of the world of work and their membership in the same figured world of teaching.

Transcription Choices

The data was transcribed by a professional transcriptionist, and I listened to the audio recordings and made corrections based on what I deemed errors or misinterpretations of words and phrases on her part. Because the study focuses on narrative storytelling, it is important that I create a sense of narrative within the data presented; therefore, I have decided to present the data in the form of narrative to demonstrate the speakers and my and other participants' responses. Within the narratives, I have included the speaker in brackets in order to ensure that the reader is able to follow along. Because the participants sometimes voice other's responses within

their stories, brackets seemed to provide context for the speaker. In addition, I have left the language—utterances, repetition, slang—to mirror exactly what was said in the audio recordings in order to demonstrate the ways that language itself acts as a mediator in the participants' dual membership in both a working class and middle class figured world.

Chapter Four: Defining Class and Similarities and Differences

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of similarities and differences across participants. The first section provides the reader with an overview of how the participants struggled to define class and working-class and how they viewed themselves as belonging to this construct. Following that section, I provide an outline of the similarities and differences of the participants' trajectories. After including specific examples of the ways that some participants experience similar critical events, I discuss the participants with different experiences/trajectories and inform the reader where that analysis happens in the data chapters. Finally, this chapter comes to a close when I defend my rationale for deciding to focus on the spaces of resistance, or the ways in which some participants did not "fit" into a tightly-woven, stream-lined trajectory, for the data chapters.

Collectively Defining Working-Class Culture

As we sat on our blankets under the fall sun, Stephanie, Lisa, Julie and I began our conversation by collectively trying to "define" working-class. This was not a small task. What began as an attempt to define a term quickly turned to mining personal experiences to figure out what the social construction means. Julie responded first by saying,

This question really made me think harder than I—when I first looked at it I was like, 'Well, I know what that means' and I was like, 'Wait a minute. You know what exactly is blue collar? Do you have to have a labor job? Like does you have to—or does it have to do with income level? (Focus Group, 8/16/2012)

In this instance, Julie is responding by posing questions to the rest of us. Lisa spoke up next and had a more personal response directly related to her husband:

This is a funny question because my husband and I get into a fight about this, because he says that we're middle class and I say that we're not. He's like 'we've always been middle class,' and I'm like, "No you haven't been. Your parents got their farm foreclosed on, they lost their store and you've lived in 21 towns, lived in a motel for a while. (Focus Group, 8/16/2012)

Here, Lisa supports her argument that her husband grew up working-class based on conceptions of income (foreclosure, losing a store) and the fact that he never really had a place to call home. The assumption here is that since he moved a lot as a child, his parents must not have been settled, nor did they have a long-term career in one place and were therefore working-class.

Julie grew up similar to Lisa's husband, going to five different elementary schools. Her family had to move because her dad worked in construction and he needed to live where there was work. When describing her understanding of the term working-class, Julie says, "I think my life definitely qualified. My dad was in construction and my mom did whatever job she could find in a small town that we lived" (Interview, 8/24/2012). Lisa also added, "Well, it's about taking care of your things too, like yeah I asked my mom the difference between being like poor and being trash. And I was like, "So, are we that," and she was like, "No we take—we clean up after ourselves." Because I asked the participants to join the study if they "self-identified" as working-class, it was important to hear their ideas of what it means to come from such a background. They were mining

their personal experiences for the definition and looking at social class markers like income, jobs and stability in order to determine their class, which is a direct result of the slipperiness of the term and the fact that scholarship does not consistently define it.

The participants described their working-class relatives as hard workers, people who believe, as Autumn's grandfather did, that "a job worth doing is a job worth doing well" (Interview, 8/1/2012). These "worthwhile" jobs were found in sheet metal factories, cafeterias, construction zones and in fields. As Wilson (2002) says, in their world, hard work is "defined as involving sweat, body aches, tangible results, a clear beginning point and a clear end point, and the idea that a certain amount of work is equal to a certain amount of money" (p. 27). When these workers returned home to their families, they returned to a place of significance, the working-class home. In order to frame the experience of growing up working-class as a cultural experience within a figured world, I share the commonalities within the participants' stories during pivotal moments, or critical events, in their process to becoming teachers. It is important to note that throughout the chapters, I refer to the participants entering the middle class figured world of teaching. To the participants, the teaching profession is middle class, but to outsiders, or to those who are from the upper middle class, teaching is seen as a lower-class job. In order to support this difference in view, I share Julie's comment:

If I want something and I—I know that I can afford it and so I consider myself middle class, because if I really want something and it's not without—it's not out of reason, you know I'm saying that I'm going to go spend all the money in the world, but if it's within reason I'll get it because—and I know that my parents

couldn't have done that. My parents really wanted something it didn't really matter.

They had to wait.' (Interview, 8/24/2012)

Common Themes and Salient Differences

After listening to and reading through the data, common themes emerged into what I call similar trajectories. Because all of the participants ended up as English teachers, specific critical events stood out to me as shaping this career outcome, specifically the ways in which literacy was mentioned, handled, and sometimes embodied in their households, the participants' performance and view of school and their entrance into the middle class profession of teaching. In addition, most of the participants credit specific teachers or classes for inspiring them to become teachers.

What follows is a brief outline of the commonalities within each theme along with a concise explanation of the ways in which specific participants do not fit into these themes. Instead of writing a longer, more detailed data chapter on the similarities between participants, the next two data chapters focus on two of the salient differences as a way to demonstrate that these participants' experiences cannot and should not be essentialized. Therefore, a longer, more in-depth understanding of the differences in Autumn's social class brokers and Lisa's self-authorship to teaching work to demonstrate that there is no one streamlined trajectory to teaching. In addition, the last data chapter looks at the participants' teaching lives and the ways in which they call on meaningful cultural artifacts to mediate their sedimented teaching identities.

Home Literacy/Engagement in School. All eight participants talked about the literacy practices at their homes, which included individual reading, acknowledging and

remembering their parents reading, and reading at bedtime. The ways in which home literacy practices influenced teacher identities, as well as participants' engagement in school, are explored in both Chapters 5 and 6 through the eyes of Autumn and Lisa; their experiences at this early stage in life were not different than the other participants, but the ways in which they called on these experiences in the form of artifacts and then used those artifacts to bolster their identities is rather unique. Below are examples of common home literacy practices shared by Stephanie and Susan:

Stephanie:

One of the earliest memories is reading with my mom before bedtime, umm and it seemed like everyone was always reading something. My dad always had books that he shared with his brothers, actually. He would read their books and then they'd trade back and forth, and so it wasn't uncommon to go downstairs in the basement and see my dad sitting in his chair and reading. And looking back I'm not so sure that I would hand a middle schooler a V.C. Andrews book, but she didn't stop me when I was interested.

(Interview, 8/12/2012)

Susan:

My mom would read us the classics. I remember her reading *Treasure Island* when I was about in first grade and she'd read a chapter a day and it was so wonderful. She was a big proponent of education for us. (Interview, 8/11/2012)

Interventions by Important Adult Figures. In addition to home literacies and the ways their parents impacted their literacy practices, the participants described teachers, counselors, administrators and other school-related adults who played important roles in their lives. Each participant had what I have termed, a social class broker or a school-related adult who mediated their awareness and entrance into the middle class world of college (See Chapter 5 for an expanded explanation of this term). I have devoted an entire chapter to Autumn's social class brokers (Chapter 5) because she had so many, and all of them showed up in her life at critical times and helped her get through a painful experience. The other participants spoke quite highly of one or two key figures in their lives that mentored them and helped them understand the choices they had for their futures. Below are examples:

Susan:

And umm, no it was fifth grade. My—one of my teachers, I had taken a test and I had gotten a “D” on it and one of my teachers had said, 'I expected better from you,' and I thought, 'Really,' because I never really even considered that. And then I thought, 'Well, maybe I better try a little bit more,' and so I did and by the time I got through sixth grade I was getting all “A’s” and got all “A’s” through the rest of my years in school.

(Interview, 8/11/2012)

Jasmine:

Yeah, and I think the fun part now and Facebook's helped this too is just staying

connected with them, like I remember in college, always reading up with Mrs. Luke, that favorite teacher for Christmas and having coffee or lunch every year and that was so cool, like we're friends with our teachers and now I'm telling her stories, what we're doing and it's just so nice. You know, how many students now are on Facebook that are like, 'Oh, you helped me so much,' or 'Can you write me a letter of recommendation,' or 'Let's get together for lunch. I want to meet your daughter,' and it's like who does that with their dentist or dry cleaner? (Focus Group, 8/10/2012)

David:

Professor Kuhl. Nice name, and she lived up to it. She had a cool class. She—I always—she expected you to work hard up front and read a lot of different things, uhh, old historical documents and it was, uhh, a class—I guess I had a couple with her, but hers—her studies were always around Civil War. And I always enjoyed that. But I just thought, 'How cool is this?' We're expected to do this up front, we read and then she'd come in and she got to—she'd just, 'Let's talk, let's talk about it,' and then anyone that had any questions she'd, umm, give us her—her knowledge based on it and then she always wanted to hear our opinions or our takes on it and she actually did care, you could tell and was genuine about it and would listen instead of just saying, 'No, I don't follow that,' or 'That's not right.' So, different takes, different perspectives. I liked that. It was—same thing, what a cool job that you can just come in here and you're educating younger people that are hoping to do the same thing as you did. (Focus Group, 8/10/2012)

Entering a Middle Class Profession. No matter the context in which they were

teaching, each participant discussed struggles related to the politics of education, relationships with students and parents, the ways in which they were not prepared for specific expectations of the career, as well as specific feedback they have received from their colleagues. I have devoted Chapter 7 to an analysis of how the participants' backgrounds affect their relationships with students, and while these interactions are unique to the participant, or sometimes to the teaching context, all of the participants struggle with straddling their working-class and middle class identities. Below, Julie and Lisa discuss the ways in which their ideas of a successful interview and a successful classroom culture were challenged by colleagues. An excerpt from David's focus group interview represents the idea that he struggled with classroom management and relating to students and that, as he says, students generally disrespect teachers, an idea that was shared by Jasmine, Abbie, Stephanie and Susan.

Julie: (On interviewing for her first job)

'So, I did one [interview]. I'm so dumb and so like young, and he was like, 'What are your weaknesses' and I don't know if anybody coached me on interviews. I said classroom management. After the interview he was like, 'Let me give you this tip that-- you really can't say that classroom management is your weakness because that is what teaching is' (Interview, 8/24/2012)

Lisa: (Discussing her colleague's reaction to her classroom)

So at first my classroom was loud. They were like 'Her classroom's really loud,' and I

was like 'That's because people are learning stuff.' I come from a family of nine people, so like my level of tolerance for noisy stuff is really different from people...We liked yelled at each other and participated and there was a lot going on. So, it was a long curve for me. (Interview, 7/16/2012)

David: (What he struggled with as a new teacher):

Yeah, and then and then, but the first thing I remember struggling with and I still don't care for today is the level of disrespect that I think kids have today compared to when we were even in school. That if we tell them something today our hands are tied a lot of the times, like they're, 'What are you going to—' They don't take it seriously. And they're going to go home, if you get after them, they're going to tell their parents and then the parents are going to complain to the principal or whoever it may be that, 'So-and-so can't talk to my kid like that.' (Focus Group, 8/10/2012)

The other similarity that is addressed in Chapter 7 is the ways in which the participants call on their cultural artifacts to mediate their relationships with students. While this is only one of many manifestations of social class mobility I saw in the data, I thought it was important to write about the participants as teachers because many of the other chapters are about how the participants, specifically Autumn and Lisa, came to be teachers of English.

Orientation and Rationale for Data Chapters

When I first read through my data, my first inclination was to tell the participants' story in chronological order: they all had unique home literacy practices and excelled in school, they also had important school-related adults in their lives to stage an intervention at a critical moment in their lives, and they then went through the arduous college application process, did well in college and student teaching and then entered the middle class profession of teaching. I worked with this organizational heuristic for months before I realized that I was essentializing their stories. If I were to write this study in a chronological, theme-based way, it would essentially become a how-to manual entitled *How Working Class Kids enter the Middle Class*.

At first I did not second-guess my inclination to discuss the life trajectories of these working-class teachers. Social class is an often-ignored construct and trying to explain the process of merging into a higher social class seemed to be something I should try to generalize. It was when reading Audrey Appelsies' (2006) dissertation, where she writes, "...I chose to avoid creating an organizing system or a way of comparing the teachers to each other. I did so because I was on the lookout for 'spaces of resistance' to commonly held beliefs...I did not want my research to map discourses of whiteness as somehow deterministic..." (p. 131). Like Appelsies (2006), I did not want to suggest that all teachers from working-class backgrounds had the same experiences or view their profession and their past and present social class in the same way. I, too, am looking for ways that these participants are speaking and acting in "spaces of resistance" to expectations society has for them based on the constructs of whiteness, gender and social

class. In addition, highlighting the particularities of each participant will assist the reader in seeing these spaces of resistance. My inclination to write chronologically, as a biographer, is not a new phenomenon. In fact, it may be the way that humans are wired. We seek sense and meaning. We often categorize and compartmentalize in order to show that there is logic behind our work. As Bourdieu (2000) writes:

Autobiographical narrative is always at least partially motivated by a concern to give meaning, to rationalize, to show the inherent logic, both for the past and for the future, to make consistent and constant, through the creation of intelligible relationships...And the more the interviewees have an interest, varying in relation to their social position and trajectory, in the biographical enterprise, the more do they have an interest in coherence and necessity. (p. 298)

I, inherently, asked questions in what could be called chronological order. I asked about their younger years, junior high and high school and so on. There were some participants that talked for over an hour about their life, and for the most part, these stories were told in chronological order. Autumn was the most exuberant and seemed to be the most comfortable discussing her lived experiences; during the interview, she used her hands for expression, she laughed at points and cried at a few others. At one point, she began discussing the birth of her daughter and then said, “Hold on, let me back up and explain what happened in my family before then” (Interview, 8/2/2012), in order to contextualize the birth of her daughter and the reasons why she reacted to the birth in a certain way. Autumn also wanted to tell her story in a way that was logical; she also had an “inclination toward making oneself the ideologist of one’s own life, through the selection

of a few significant events with a view to elucidating an overall purpose, and through the creation of causal or final links between them which will make them coherent,” (Bourdieu, p. 298) but this inclination was then “reinforced by the biographer who is naturally inclined, especially through his formation as a professional interpreter, to accept this artificial creating of meaning” (p. 298). What I discovered throughout this process was that this seemingly “typical” chronology acted as a mere outline for a much more in-depth analysis of specific critical life events in the participants’ lives.

The following data chapters are the result of a zooming in on specific common critical life events from the chronology. Instead of writing one chapter that essentializes the participants’ experiences (and my own) to a list of critical events, I chose to magnify particular elements of the trajectory in order to examine the instances in which the participants’ stories and lives did not “fit” within the themes that were constructed by the other participants.

The first data chapter focuses on Autumn’s trajectory and the fact that it was highly influenced by social class brokers, school-related adults who mediate and mentor her into the middle class figured world. The second data chapter is an analysis of the ways in which Lisa’s trajectory to teaching was rather different than the other participants; more specifically, Lisa earned her teaching license after working as a factory worker, a bartender, an accountant and an administrative assistant for nearly a decade. While she did have what could be considered a social class broker in college, most of her life path was a result of her own self-authorship, or the ways in which she utilized the artifacts of literacy, school and what it means to “work” to blaze her own trail to the career of

teaching. The last data chapter honors the teachers' lives and how they call on their cultural artifacts to mediate their relationships with students.

Chapter Five: Constructing Figured Worlds: Autumn's Social Class Brokers

A job worth doing is a job worth doing well. Because that was my grandpa's thing, if you're going to do it, don't do it half-assed.--Autumn

It was fascinating to hear the stories of how adults, particularly those in the helping profession, such as teachers, coaches and doctors, staged seemingly impromptu interventions that changed the participants' life trajectories. These interventions took place as early as elementary school, when a few teachers told the participants they expected more from them. The interventions that occurred later in life, during high school, seemed to be monumental for the participants. These school-related adults may have thought they were just doing their jobs, but their decision to intervene in the participants' lives shaped who they are today. What these stories show is that these adults awakened a new sense of self in the participants. The adults were people outside of their family who believed in them but also knew that entry into the middle class had the potential to be painful and complicated. They spoke of the potential they saw and the ways in which the participants could succeed through education, while being simultaneously aware of the discomfort associated with separating from one's roots and the benefits of gaining social/cultural capital. These interventions acted as initiations into a different figured world: the middle class.

Many of my participants' journeys to teaching sounded the same. This chronology includes home literacy practices, liking/disliking school, a school-related adult intervention, an arduous college application process and entering the profession of

teaching, which, to them, was situated in the middle class because it was a profession, and they were professionals. They had gained access to different types of capital, and their conceptualization of what it means to “work” as a teacher was drastically different to what it meant to “work” in their working-class backgrounds. Instead of focusing on these commonalities among most participants, I was drawn to those who did not necessarily fit into this type of stream-lined trajectory.

While all eight participants identified a critical event where a school-related adult empowered them, the events experienced by Autumn seemed to impact her life in real, material ways. However, this focus on Autumn does not necessarily mean that the other participants’ critical events did not have great impact on them; I chose to devote time to Autumn’s story because of the significant role school-related adults played throughout her K-12 schooling and beyond. Her story demonstrates that her personal determination, along with several well-timed interventions that she accepted during her difficult journey, is what fueled her trajectory. She had more roadblocks than the other participants, starting with having a child at the age of 17. Her story is an anomaly in that she was a single parent as a teenager, but in other ways it is a realistic picture of the ways in which people struggle to realize their possibilities and their dreams. Our interview was nearly two hours, and she embodied a range of emotions from joy to fear to sorrow. She laughed, she cried, she raised her voice and she sat back with a smile on her face. What stood out the most to me in her story was that she remembered these school-related adults who helped her, their names, their positions, the ways they treated her, how her interactions with them felt, and how the interactions impacted her life.

Theorizing Social Class Brokers

To further understand the school-related adults as interventionists in Autumn's life, I wanted to create a term that demonstrates their role in the participant's life. My first inclination was to think of these interventionists as social class sponsors, a meme based off Brandt's (1998) conceptualization of literacy sponsors. Brandt (1988) sees literary sponsors as people who are:

Powerful figures who bankroll events or smooth the way for initiatives. Usually richer, more knowledgeable, and more entrenched than the sponsored, sponsors nevertheless enter a reciprocal relationship with those they underwrite. They lend their resources or credibility to the sponsored but also stand to gain benefits from their success, whether by direct repayment or, indirectly, by credit of association.

(p. 167)

Sponsors are often the people that Delpit (1988) champions; they are within the culture of power, they inform people of the codes needed to succeed within the culture of power and they help prepare people for their entrance into the culture of power. Brandt (1988) writes that sponsors, "deliver the ideological freight that must be borne for access to what they have" (p. 20). The culture of power constrains people as well. Growing up in a working class household, I was always aware that I was not part of the culture of power, but I figured this out on my own and do not remember ever being explicitly told about my place in the world. Delpit (1988) encourages teachers to be explicit when talking about codes and rules of the culture of power in order to succeed in a capitalistic society: "If you are not already a participant in the culture of power, being told explicitly the rules

of that culture makes acquiring power easier” (283). Making students aware of the inequities of the world and informing them about their own position within this hierarchy is, according to Delpit (1988), a teacher’s obligation. Instead of ignoring social stratification, teachers should empower their students by discussing and analyzing the hierarchies explicitly. Social class brokers act as mediators for working-class students in that they provide access, and more importantly, a mentor at a transition point in their lives.

Because these adults will not necessarily gain benefits from their students’ success, they would not technically be considered sponsors. Instead, I consider these adults to be social class brokers, people who are intermediaries between the figured worlds of the working class and the middle class. Brandt (1998) writes that teachers do not have the capacity to be sponsors, because teachers

...neither rich nor powerful enough to sponsor literacy on our own terms...we serve instead as conflicted brokers between literacy’s buyers and sellers. At our most worthy, perhaps, we show the sellers how to beware and try to make sure these exchanges will be a little fairer, maybe, potentially, a little more mutually rewarding. (p. 183)

Describing these interventions in a way that shows that the experience cannot necessarily be streamlined and tidy reflects the awareness that social class mobility is messy and at times, painful. In extending this idea of social class brokers as a messy construct in which the broker and the receiver are possibly both conflicted with their roles and the possible outcomes, an analysis of the ways the participant describes this experience will

provide an in-depth view and analysis of the role the social class broker and the participant have in this interaction.

Mrs. Dobbins

Autumn remembers her teacher, Mrs. Dobbins, enact what could be considered a year-long intervention related to Autumn being different than other kids in her class. She had always been in regular tracked classes, but during her middle school years, teachers, specifically Mrs. Dobbins, began to notice her gifts and explicitly talked to her about what she could do with those gifts. Autumn remembers:

In eighth grade when I wasn't put in the accelerated track—or seventh grade actually, when I first moved into middle school. I remember Mrs. Dobbins—we had this—I was in this regular classroom. It was the first time I was seeing inequity in education. I'll never forget it, like I knew I didn't belong in the class. My parents didn't know how classes worked. They didn't know advanced from regular. They never came to conferences. My friend's parents went to conferences, I think, because my parents had to work and I had younger brothers and sisters. (Interview, 8/1/2012)

Because her parents did not know how tracking worked, and because her parents were busy working various jobs and were not able to come to conferences, Autumn remained in regular classes. What is most interesting, though, is that Mrs. Dobbins was aware of this and enacted a relationship with Autumn that taught her more about the social constructions of society than she likely would have learned in an honors course. Here is

Autumn's story of one memorable interaction with Mrs. Dobbins:

I remember we had this summary thing or whatever to do and I just did it and gave it to her. And she [Mrs. Dobbins] said, 'You'll do this again,' and I said, 'Excuse me,' you know, 'This is what you asked for,' and she [Mrs. Dobbins] said, 'This is what I asked everyone else for. To those whom much is given, much is expected.' And she said, 'If you haven't read the Bible, you need to child, because one thing that you need to know is that God gives certain gifts to certain people and I'm not about to let you waste them. It took you about five minutes and it's going to take the rest of these kids the rest of the day, probably until tomorrow. This isn't good enough. You will do your best.' (Interview, 8/1/2012)

Autumn, after earning her M.Ed. in Gifted and Talented Education, now believes she was a gifted kid at a young age. In this exchange, Mrs. Dobbins represents a social class broker because she knows that Autumn is very smart, and she tells her that even though she is not in the honor's class, she is expected to work to her ability. In thinking back to those early days with this teacher, Autumn reveals that she learned a lot from Mrs.

Dobbins:

A whole bunch of lessons about, you know, and even talking to me then about like, 'Do you see the difference? You'll see the difference when you move into your other class. What do you notice?' Bringing up ideas about race and about class: [Mrs. Dobbins said] 'Mostly kids in here don't have as much money. Do you see that? You are going to make a difference with that,' and I remember her planting that seed then like, 'That's going to matter. Pay attention' I was in seventh grade

for God's sake. (Interview, 8/1/2012)

Mrs. Dobbin's saw potential in Autumn that surpassed her time in middle school. She knew that Autumn saw these differences among kids and that she would work to try to end them. By explicitly speaking about difference and the ways in which the constructs of social class and race influence student achievement, parent involvement and middle class valued-success, Mrs. Dobbins was intervening as a social class broker. She explicitly tells Autumn that she will one day work to eliminate these differences, knowing fully well that people who have power to change things are often those who are part of the privileged figured world of the middle class.

The Social Studies Teacher

Having made it through middle school in the regular track, Autumn moved into the accelerated track in high school. She loved the challenge and her teachers. What she learned though was that the kids in these tracks were different than her: most of them had more money. This difference in economics became very clear her sophomore year when her class planned a trip to Washington DC.

There was a trip to Washington DC, and she [her teacher] said,

'You will go on this trip.' I didn't have enough money. I hadn't sold enough candy bars by the time I—the trip was coming up my sophomore year. I mean, I had been selling candy bars from the moment I started in high school. She's [The teacher's] like, 'Well, people just need this. Whatever the hundreds of dollars were. I'm like, I—there's nowhere I can get that money.' Umm, and uhh, I didn't have anybody to

ask, you know. Everybody—all the adults in my family worked and they—I mean, there was no extra money. They didn't have \$100 or \$200 or any hundreds of dollars. That was ridiculous. Umm, and she paid for me to go to Close-up when I was a sophomore and she [the teacher] said, 'You'll sell candy bars until you pay me back, 'and I did all the way through my senior year, sell candy bars to pay that woman back for sending me to Washington D.C. and giving me this amazing experience in government. (Interview, 8/1/2012)

In this instance, the teacher knew the trip to Washington DC would be a valuable experience for Autumn, so she provided the funds for her to go. Because Autumn was working-class and knew the value of a dollar, she knew what how hard it would be to sell candy to pay her back. She essentially sold candy her entire high school career, but she does not remember complaining about it. However, the fact that the teacher initially assumed that Autumn had someone in her life who could give her a few hundred dollars toward the trip demonstrates the precedent of middle class values. By presuming that Autumn's family has that kind of money lying around, the teacher is assuming a middle class normality for Autumn. To counter this assumption, the teacher provides the funds for the trip but also requires her to pay her back. This action of paying back reinforces a middle class notion of hard work eventually paying off in something worthwhile. Sometimes this worthwhile result can be seen in the form of the American Dream, and in this case it was seen as a trip to the nation's capital, a place Autumn had not even travelled near at this point in her life, to advance herself educationally. This recruitment to attend the conference was the teacher's way of initiating Autumn into the middle class

figured world of education and travel.

Autumn's Language Skills

Autumn's grandfather died when she was a sophomore in high school. She went to school and softball practice because she did not know what else to do. She was avoiding the situation, and it was not until her softball coach asked her what was wrong that she allowed herself to release her tears. Perhaps the main reason she was avoiding the situation was because her family looked to her as a resource for communicating the news of his death to other friends and relatives. Autumn says:

When my grandpa died, a couple of things had happened. Because I was the best spoken grandchild, people kind of gathered at my parent's house but what happened was, she's one of four children. All of their phone books had been given to me. It was my job to call every single person in every single phone book to tell them that my grandfather had died. It took forever it felt like and umm, even now it's like, not being able to cry about it, because I had to make all these phone calls and listen to other people cry and react, because my grandpa was pretty amazing.

(Interview, 8/1/2012)

Autumn's family valued her intelligence and her ability to communicate. The fact that a 15 year-old was given the charge to call people to inform them of her grandfather's death demonstrates the family's desire to have someone communicate the news in a specific way. They did not take her age or her maturity into consideration. She was considered well-spoken so that meant that she was named the person to talk to family and friends

about the tragic event. During this portion of the interview, Autumn became emotional and when she says, "Even now it's like, not being able to cry about it" (Interview, 8/1/2012), she was shedding tears. She was re-experiencing calling others and needing to disconnect with her emotions in order to communicate information. The pain she must have experienced while listening to others react and cry must have been difficult; her acknowledgement that her family's construction of her being the best qualified person to speak to others resulted in her inability to properly mourn her grandfather highlights an important critical event in her life: her family acknowledged that she was somehow different than the rest of them. By this point in her life, at age 15, she was already beginning to construct multiple figured worlds that were complex and complicated. She was at a crossroads, and in this scenario, her family acknowledges her difference and asks her to enact her language of power for the sake of her grandfather and his friends.

The English Teacher

Autumn tells a very moving story about how an adult intervened at a critical time; she was a junior in high school and seven months pregnant and was keeping the pregnancy a secret. Due to all of the stress surrounding her situation, she started to fall behind in her classes:

We had this big research paper due. I didn't turn it in. I did never not turn anything in. I was struggling. My English teacher who umm, was this guy who was also a baseball coach and whatever [said], 'I want to talk to you.' I was like, 'Oh, shoot,' you know? After class [I said], 'what?' 'So, I stayed for a second and I—I didn't

want to look at him and he said, 'I don't know what the hell's wrong with you. I don't know what's going on and I don't frankly want to know.' He goes, 'But this isn't like you, so there's something wrong. Here's my home address. You will have that paper in my mailbox before Monday morning.' And I was like, 'Oh my gosh.' I always credit that moment with a couple of things like one of the reasons that I'm a teacher is because there are so many kids who, given that moment wouldn't be able to take that next step, whatever that is, and all they need is somebody to show up and umm, and in that moment that's what he did. [He said] 'I expect you to do this no matter what.' And there was no warm fuzzy like, 'How are you doing? What's going on? Let's talk.' It was like, nope, this is where the expectation is, and you will meet it because I said so. And I was too stupid to know that I had a different choice. I was like, 'Oh my God. I'm going to have to figure out how to get a ride there and I'm going to have to do this paper.' And umm, I did. And absolutely that saved my life" (Interview, 8/1/2012)

The complexity of this situation and story demonstrates the fragility of humans and the ways that choices can hugely impact a person's life. The first step in this critical event was that the teacher noticed a change in Autumn, specifically related to her school work. The entire critical event began by this teacher then taking action and deciding to speak to Autumn after class. Using Bakhtin's conceptualization that two interpretations can exist at once and that multiple interpretations can and do exist related to this interaction, an analysis of the language used in his exchange with Autumn is even more complex. When picturing this situation, one may see an older privileged adult male essentially

commanding a younger, vulnerable female to do something. Some may read this as a negative extension of power dynamics within the classroom; additionally, the male teacher is in a middle class space that privileges patriarchy. Because Autumn acknowledges that she did not realize she had another option demonstrates her willingness to obey someone who has power and agency over her and that she took up the “just do it” tone of the statement because it aligned to her working class background. Another analysis directly relates to her memory, twenty years later, of this intervention literally saving her life and that the power dynamics in this situation do not/did not bother her. What she remembers is the impact of this teacher’s intervention.

Power dynamics aside, she values this critical event in her construction of her identity and her recruitment into a figured world. He helped her realize that she did want and need to graduate high school; her pregnancy had caused her to become depressed and overwhelmed, and she had lost sight of her priorities. She knew that her baby would soon be her priority, but at this time she was also trying to decide if she wanted full custody of the child. With so much going on, she fell behind. The teacher took notice and his intervention reminded her that she wanted to graduate, to provide for her future child and to eventually attend college to give her child a good life.

The stress of her secret pregnancy was getting to Autumn by this point, her seventh month. She didn’t submit a paper, which was completely out of character for her, and her initial reaction to the teacher’s attempt to intervene points to annoyance or unwillingness to accept the consequences of her actions. Her response of “what” and the fact that she “didn’t want to look at him” demonstrates her attempt to disconnect from her actions and

to simultaneously disconnect with her male teacher and his responsibility to ensure success in his course.

The male teacher's inclination to also distance himself from Autumn by saying, "I don't know what the hell's wrong with you. I don't know what's going on and I don't frankly want to know, but this isn't like you, so there's something wrong. Here's my home address. You will have that paper in my mailbox before Monday morning" (Interview, 8/1/2012), simultaneously displays his (distanced) care for her and his high expectation. Within this response is also an indication that the teacher sees great potential in Autumn. He could have said the paper could be turned in the next Monday, but he expected her to take ownership for her failure to turn the paper in. At this time in her life, Autumn did not have a car or a license. She realizes that he has just set a very high expectation, but she admits that she "... was too stupid to know that I had a different choice. I was like, "Oh my God. I'm going to have to figure out how to get a ride there and I'm going to have to do this paper." (Interview, 8/1/2012) The fact that she did not realize she had another option than to do the paper and take it to the teacher's house, is a direct result of her working-class values. She was taught to obey elders and those in power. In addition, her parents knew nothing about her failure to submit the paper and the fact that she then had to write it over the weekend and drop it off at the teacher's house afterward.

Despite the obvious power dynamics, Autumn credits this teacher with inspiring her to be a teacher and with saving her life. This interpretation is not literal, but likely means he woke her up to the fact that her behavior could have resulted in her not earning a high

school diploma, which would have made her life and her ability to raise her unborn child much more difficult. While this teacher likely does not know that he had this great of an impact on her life, the fact that he stepped in and had a high expectation for her and told her the expectation without affect demonstrates his desire for her to reach her full potential. As a result, Autumn wrote the paper, got a ride to his house and turned it in by Monday morning. The teacher's intervention came at a critical moment in her life, it saved her life, and it also gave her perspective on what teachers can do and will do for their students.

The Doctor and The Spirit of Her Grandfather (as a Like Event)

Around the same time as her English teacher intervened, Autumn got very sick with blood clots that could have killed her. In her own words, "she should be dead now" (Interview, 8/1/2012) because of the seriousness of the situation. The blood clots were a result of her pregnancy, but since no one knew she was pregnant, other than the baby's father, she had to deal with all of these intertwined issues herself. Her first inclination was to keep the pregnancy a secret. She admits she was:

Really starting to have a hard time with it. Just me, myself and I, you know. We were having lots of conversations and umm, because I was sure my parents would kill me and they probably would've if she wasn't so far in there by the time they found out. Umm, you know, big Catholic family. I was going to be dead for sure and not have anywhere to live. And I didn't make enough money to worry about that or to fix that, so, umm. And I should also say my parents were always like,

'You can do whatever you want to do. You should do something you love.' All that kind of stuff, until after I got pregnant. And then it was like, "Well, that's your fault. Now you need a job, you need to take care of your stuff" (Interview, 8/1/2012)

Secrecy outweighed disappointing her parents. Autumn thought her "parents would kill her" if she told them about the pregnancy. What is most striking, though, is that her parents told her that she could do whatever she wanted and to make sure she loved doing it. She did not tell her parents because she knew that doing "whatever she wanted" was no longer an option. She had a child to care for, and that might have meant that she would never get to do something she loved. At seven months pregnant, she realized that sooner or later people would find out: either by her telling them or by the baby being born. The impetus for going to the doctor was that she was having pain in her legs. By going to the doctor it was likely they would find out about the pregnancy, and she'd then have to admit to the fact that she was pregnant. In her retelling of the story, she creates a very vivid picture of her interactions with the doctor:

I was in Peds and he's running his hands through his lack of hair. He was not my regular doctor. He'd done all of these things and I—I just remember him saying—he was like muttering out loud to himself and he's like, 'They look like deep fatal thrombosis but the—you know that—you're—you're only sixteen years old and the only way you could do that, I mean, is if you're over 40 or if you're—' and all of sudden he stopped and he looked at me. He said, 'Oh my God, are you pregnant?' And nobody had ever asked me. Remember I had tried to tell them a million

different allegorical stories that never quite came out right. And I just nodded and cried. And he said, 'How pregnant?' And I said, 'Very.' I cried harder and he got a nurse in there and he said, 'I'm going to need to check.' And I remember him checking, he goes—like his eyes, his like face. He goes, 'There's a whole baby in there,' and I just nodded. He said, 'We have to send you upstairs to O.B. You have—we're going to tell your parents that you have—This is what we're going to say. You're going to have to figure this out but right now this is what we're going to do. You've got a rare infection, and we think it's gone to your leg and we think it has something to do with your female system and you're going to go upstairs they're going to check you out and you're going to make a plan up there. They—they've got people who can help you.' (Interview, 8/1/2012)

The doctor is a broker in this situation because he is mediating Autumn's figured world as young adult and soon-to-be parent. While he is quite surprised that she is pregnant, seven months along and has kept this a secret, he still works as a broker by giving her some time to "make a plan" to tell her parents. The fact that "nobody had ever asked" Autumn if she was pregnant ended at that moment. All she could do was cry because she had been keeping it a secret for so long. In this instance, the doctor could have simply called the parents and told them the scenario, especially considering Autumn was a minor. Instead, he chose to give her the agency to decide how and when she would tell them. This provided time for her to finally admit she was pregnant and figure out a way to tell her parents. Despite all of these issues swirling in her head, she was near death because of the thrombosis in her veins.

This interaction acted as an impetus for her to tell her parents, and it also made her consider whether or not she wanted to keep the baby, give custody to the father or give it up for adoption. Both her family and the father's family pressured them to marry. She also initially agreed to let the father have custody during the week and she would have the baby on the weekends. She admits she agreed to this arrangement because she wanted to "finish my high school year and do all the stuff I planned to do, because I was still pretty clueless. And work my little job and not really have to do anything different. And umm, I knew it was wrong but that's what I thought I should do" (Interview, 8/1/2012). She also learned about the issues surrounding adoption: "In Minnesota if a mother chooses to put her child up for adoption but the father says, 'No,' then the mother has two choices: give the custody to the father or raise the child herself" (Interview, 8/1/2012). She was all set to give custody to the father because she wanted to finish high school, but another critical event occurred while she was in the hospital:

My grandfather came to see me. Now, my grandfather was dead as you know, two years prior so, the fact that he came and sat on my bed and we had a little 'come to Jesus.' He [the grandfather] said, uhh, 'What are you doing,' you know? And uhh, he said, 'I didn't let your mother throw you to the dogs and there's no way you're going to throw this baby to the dogs. That's not how I raised you. That's not what you're going to do.' And he was right and when I fell asleep after his spirit left. I, umm, had this nightmare about my daughter's father; his mom. So my daughter's grandmother coming to pick the baby up and me not getting to see her and me chasing her. So the rest of the dream is me chasing her through the city, trying to

see my daughter and I can't. She [her daughter's grandmother] just kept saying, 'Well, you said we could take her. You said you weren't ready' And when I woke up she was still there in her bassinette and I was crying. And I just called and said, 'No, she's coming home with me.' I wasn't sure if I'd have a home to go to but... (Interview, 8/1/2012)

Her grandfather came to her as a spirit and told her she was making the wrong decision. As a critical event, this shaped her future as a mother and now current grandmother. Her dream symbolizes the worst case scenario of what might have happened if she decided to give the father custody. From the moment she woke up from that dream, she knew she was going to keep her child. She later admits that she "knew that was the right decision all along," but in that critical moment after giving birth and realizing the magnitude of the responsibility, she needed an important adult to intervene, and it came in the spiritual form of her grandfather. Autumn saw this interaction as a critical moment because it reminded her of her working-class values, to take care of your own. In addition, this event caused Autumn to realize that she was willing to take on this responsibility and that despite the change in messages from her parents, she was going to find a way to take care of her child and fulfill her dreams.

Public Assistance and Scholarships as Social Class Brokers

Autumn lived at home at first. She went to school during the day, nannied for a family until 10pm (and brought her daughter with her), and then worked at Arby's on the weekends. She did her homework when she got home at 10:30 pm on weeknights. She

applied to college for a program in international business, and she received a full scholarship; however, she knew that she could not go to school full-time, pay for daycare and work full-time. She soon learned about a program that could help her get to college and pay for childcare:

I wanted to go to college. At the time there was a program, if you were—if you were on public assistance, there was a program to help you get off of public assistance and they paid for daycare and they helped you with your books and all that stuff. But you had to be on public assistance. I was working, so I'd inquired and tried to figure that out and they're [public assistance worker] like, 'Oh, you got to get on assistance,' and—or 'You have to be on assistance. It's for people who need help.' I'm like, 'But I need help. I'm working. I can't work and do this,' and I was a smart kid, you know. So, a couple of things happened. One, first of all I got into some subsidized housing. She and I were going to move regardless. Umm, and I managed to get a job working as the caretaker so I could reduce my rent and pay for that. Two, if the only thing available at the time that I could find to help me, that I had to be on public assistance. I told Arbys, "Good luck," and I got on public assistance so that I could get into the program that helps you get off of public assistance, because I wanted to go to college. (Interview, 8/1/2012)

This scenario demonstrates Autumn's willingness to do what was best for her daughter and to continue her dream of going to college. Her remark, "I was a smart kid" could be read as her attempt to say that she tried to figure out a way to work, go to college and find daycare, but she then realized that she needed to quit a job in order to become enrolled in

a program. The term “work” is valued in working-class households, and the idea of quitting a job that you earned and worked hard at seems nearly impossible. It was clear that quitting her job was a difficult decision, but she explains that she quit the job and got on public assistance “so that I could get into the program that helps you get off of public assistance because I wanted to go to college” (Interview, 8/1/2012). Autumn’s determination is evident in this scenario. She was willing to do whatever it took to get to college and provide for herself and her child.

She got a scholarship to college, and they bought her a computer. She was able to buy a car from the money she earned from her side job. The program also had a required course called “How to Study.” She enrolled in that course, but she also asked if she could take Statistics at the same time. She was persistent and constantly challenged herself. After earning the credits for Statistics, she enrolled in a teacher education program that next fall. She went full-time because, as she says, “I needed to. It was—it was, uhh, I didn’t have the luxury to dink around. I was using other people’s money. I was going to have to pay it back and uhh, I—I needed to get to working...” (Interview, 8/1/2012). Although Autumn was on scholarship, she did not take that for granted. She considered it “other people’s money,” and she did not want to abuse the privilege she was given by receiving the scholarship. Her working-class figured world was enacted here as she discusses the value money plays in her life. She never had much, and the fact that someone gave her some was not taken lightly. She had classes to take and a degree to earn. She wanted to do it well but also efficiently.

The scholarship program was essentially a critical event in her life. The sponsors

of the scholarship can be seen as social class brokers who recruited Autumn into the figured world of higher education. The public assistance program can also be seen as a critical event in that she would have been unable to secure housing, transportation or college tuition without it. Although she sacrificed a job to become part of the public assistance program, the structure of the program allowed her to shape her own destiny and to construct her own figured world. She earned a B.S. in English Education and began her teaching career. She is now a tenured teacher in an urban district, the mother of four children and a grandmother of two. What keeps her in the classroom? Her motto: If children know you love them, they will learn from you.

Discussion

Autumn's case stands on its own because it gives voices to those whose trajectory is overly difficult and not stream-lined. When thinking about how Autumn's social class and home life affected her school-related identities, it is clear that she valued the interventions by important adults, specifically the ways in which Mrs. Dobbin's opened her eyes to inequality in education. She stayed in a lower-tracked class for an entire year, but during that time she was studying the world around her. She saw how some students had more than others and how this materiality affected student achievement and engagement. Throughout her struggles, she remembered that her parents often told her that she could be anything she wanted to be, but this motto became complicated once she found out she was pregnant. It was the intervention by her English teacher during her pregnancy that recharged Autumn's hopes of a future despite her pregnancy; it was the

figure of her grandfather in the hospital that reinforced her knowledge that she was to raise her daughter alone while still working to achieve her dream of becoming a teacher. Her case does well to show how she used the interactions and interventions from social class brokers as impetus to continue along. Her journey was not ideal, as it was full of pain, unexpected responsibility in the form of her daughter and the fact that she had to sometimes take a step back in order to move forward. Once she had found a few stable jobs and was feeling quite prepared to pursue college, she realized that she would have to quit the jobs and apply for public assistance in order to get the financing she needed for school. She was not above taking this step back; she saw it as another broker, another way that she could accept help to continue to progress. It is clear in this story that Autumn is agentic throughout her journey, but what her story also demonstrates is the importance that others play in our lives. She is who she is today because of her drive and because she allowed others to help her get there.

Chapter Six: How Lisa Uses the Artifacts of Books, Education and Work to Mediate

Self-Authorship

Someday when we grow up, we're going to start a school and we're going to have a revolution. You know, like we're going to teach people like the shit that they're doing is wrong. –Lisa

Based on their memories of their childhoods in traditional homes, where the fathers worked long shifts and their mothers tended to the children and the household, the participants are able to recount the ways in which their parents' values of literacy, education and the idea of "work" were infused in their daily lives. Because schooling is a middle class normalized institution, working-class students may not come to school with the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed. This lack of skill does not mean these students are not smart; it means that they have not necessarily had access to the social/cultural capital opportunities as their middle class peers. Middle class parents have greater access to early learning in the form of expensive pre-schools/4Ks that are specifically designed to assist students will learning the skills needed to succeed in public schooling. What is often misunderstood, though, is that working-class students are not deprived of literacy practices in their homes. Participants discuss the importance of literacy in their homes in the form of their parents reading to them before bed, going to the library to self-select their own books/videos, and vividly remembering their own parents and siblings enacting literacy practices.

The purpose of this chapter is to show how one participant, Lisa, was able to use the cultural artifacts of literacy (books, magazines, and bedtime stories), school and work to transform how these objects mediate her positioning in her new figured world of

teaching. A focus on Lisa does not mean that she was the only participant who self-authored her own trajectory. Instead, it allows a more in-depth analysis of how each of these categories intersect to impact her values and her personal enactment in her new figured world of teaching. While Lisa remembers specific points in her life in which she had social class brokers, particularly in high school, the realities of life overtook these opportunities and she ended up having a trajectory that was rather different from the other eight participants. The participants did self-author their trajectories as well, but they also had mentors, or social class brokers, who gave them advice and spoke of the realities and difficulties or class border crossing.

Lisa's case offers an opportunity to look at an individual who would be considered a non-traditional college student, someone who worked in the "real world" before she earned her undergraduate degree, and came to the profession of teaching after having worked other jobs for nearly a decade. To illustrate Lisa's self-authorship, I will focus on Holland et alia's (2001) conceptualization of self-authoring to frame her experience in order to explore how the construction of figured worlds by brokers and by self-authoring offer drastically different processes, and perhaps, drastically different formulations, values and understandings of the underpinnings of a middle class figured world.

Before I begin to discuss Lisa's process, I would like to define what I mean when I say that Lisa takes up artifacts that mediate her own self-authorship. Within the sociocultural world, a person's social position is determined by alliances of constructs and memberships in figured worlds. In order to be recruited into a figured world, one has to have a common characteristic of that figured world, and once they are recruited, they

have gained an alliance with other members of that figured world. As Holland et al. (2001) write, “Clearly one’s social position—defined by gender, race, class, and any other division that is structurally significant—potentially affects one’s perspective on cultural institutions and the ardor of one’s subscription to the values and interpretations that are promoted in rituals and other socially produced cultural forms” (p. 25). Lisa began her life viewing literacy and schooling as ways of being in the world. She read books that interested her and viewed it as entertainment.

However, as she got older, she began to see that she could leverage her own subject position and agency by using these artifacts to create membership opportunities in a new figured world. Cultural artifacts are based on Vygotsky’s (1978) theorization of tools, as he was “the first to attempt to relate it to concrete psychological questions. In this effort he creatively elaborated on Engel’s concept of human labor and tool use as the means by which man changes nature and, in so doing, transforms himself” (p. 6). The theorization of tools as mediational is a central component to Holland et alia’s (2001) theorization of self-authoring, and to Vygotsky (1978), artifacts are “tools of liberation from environmental stimuli” (p. 63). There is a point in one’s life where one becomes aware of the use of “artifacts to affect [one] self” (p. 63) and to position oneself in the world. For Lisa, the cultural artifacts of literacy, school and work “eventually become unnecessary, and [their] function be [came] ‘internalized’” (p. 37). By focusing on this one case, the reader can see that the artifacts eventually mean something more, something different to Lisa, and the artifacts “result from the process of meaning-making, which starts when a person “assembles Discourses...negotiate[s] them, transform[s] them, and

materialize[s] them into a text/artifact” (Rowse & Paul, 2007, p. 392).

In Lisa’s case, she took up the artifact of literacy, in the form of books, expanded her notion of what it meant to her and eventually used it as a tool to gain entry to college, to earn a teaching degree and to become an English teacher. She took up literacy and used it to her advantage, as an artifact that could assist her in becoming who she thought she wanted to become. In addition, she takes up the artifacts of schooling and her conception of work in the same ways. It is important to note, however, there are limits to self-authoring, that with agency always comes boundaries and limits, limitations as a result of the context, the openings available to the author and the author’s realization of possibilities. Lisa is enacting her own position within these boundaries, within these already existing figured worlds that allow her entry. What follows is an analysis of her process of self-authoring, which shows her continued return to work in a factory as she found new ways to be mediated by her artifact(s) to enact her own teaching so she could impact others.

Home Literacy Practices

Lisa was one of seven kids, and her father worked full-time at a sheet metal factory. In the summer months, when there was no school and the humidity was high, her mother would take her and her siblings to the library. Lisa remembers these trips fondly for both the opportunity to discover books and her own reading preferences and the opportunity to learn the expectations of being in a middle class space. Lisa says,

I think that growing up, one of the things that I did to entertain myself—we were

poor, like right? So, my mom would be like, 'Okay, seven kids. We're all getting into the station wagon and we're going to the library,' and that way there was like other people controlling how loud we were. So, we were quiet and my mom would go and read by herself and we would have to find other stuff to read. So, I spent a lot of time at the library, being quiet and choosing books and looking through different books, umm, and that was how I entertained myself a lot. My mom—we were a very literate family. (Interview, 7/16/2012)

In this scenario, Lisa demonstrates that the trip to the library was an opportunity for her and her siblings to read, but it also guaranteed time for her mother to read. At this point in her life, Lisa learned that books were housed somewhere else, in a middle class space. She never owned books or records or movies, but a trip to the library allowed her to explore her likes and dislikes, her desire to learn. Later in the interview, she recalls that her mother "...was always reading and always doing like crossword puzzles and things that involved paper. She was really smart and fast at things, but just didn't ever have job besides like washing people's diapers..." (Interview, 7/16/2012), so a trip to the library would ensure that her children were quiet and that she could have time for herself, to enact her hobby of reading. Her mother knew that the expectations of the space, that the patrons would be quiet, would allow her some quiet time away from her children; she took this alone time as an opportunity to enact her literacy practices. Her mother was enacting a literacy model for her own children.

Coinciding with the desire to read, the trip to the library also symbolizes an opportunity for Lisa and her siblings to understand the expectations of a middle class

space. Because “there were other people controlling how loud” they were, Lisa and her siblings were simultaneously learning that different contexts require different types of behavior. As Lisa describes, “she spent a lot of time at the library, being quiet and reading books...” (Interview, 7/16/2012), which demonstrates that she remembers the library as a space that first required her to be quiet, and second, allowed her space and time to read. She also explains that she views this quiet reading time as an opportunity to entertain herself. She says, “everybody read and if you weren’t a reader, then you found some other thing to do like, my brothers were in boy scouts or something. So, most of us were readers, just by ...my mom bringing us somewhere where we had to be quiet (Interview, 7/16/2012).” Because Lisa comes from a large family, her household was likely often filled with the voices of seven kids and two parents. Lisa turned to reading as a way to use her time when it was quiet. It is clear that reading was a result of finding something to do in the quiet, but it also became much more to Lisa as she got older.

Reading as entertainment began to increase for Lisa as she got older, and she often found ways to read content that was well beyond her years. She discovered what she terms, “books with secrets” in the Catholic school library, and Lisa sneaked them and read them at night:

I recall getting in trouble for reading when I was supposed to be asleep. Umm, yeah, so all through school I really—I always read. And so like in—I started to realize from the library that books also held secrets that I didn’t get to find out about, like, *Are you There God? It’s Me Margaret* or like *The Flowers in the Attic*. And I went to Catholic school, so like being in the Catholic school library and

finding a book like that, I was like, 'Holy shit. Umm, what's going on?' like I was like, 'I'm reading your dirty about this priest who's having sex with a young girl,' and like *Roots* and *Gone with the Wind*. (Interview, 7/16/2012)

In this instance, Lisa was reading books to learn about life outside of her Catholic upbringing. She was reading books about adolescent puberty and dysfunctional families at night instead of sleeping. These book choices are different than the books she discusses reading at the public library with her siblings. For some reason, she felt that she was not supposed to be reading these books, that they were full of secrets that needed to be kept from her because none of these texts, or even topics, were likely talked about in her Catholic education, or likely in her household. Lisa says she felt most comfortable talking about these topics with her older sister, whom she saw as a mentor and role model. Of her sister, Lisa says:

She was the person I looked up to the most, because when she was about—you know, old enough to drive, like 16, I was like six and she would take me like to see Santa or to the mall and buy me like a snow cone and I was like, 'You're the coolest person I ever met in my life. I love hanging out with you.' And she would like—she took photography classes, so she would like dress me up and like—let me—like pose me and let me look all princessy and take pictures and I just loved her. So, I still do. I love that girl. (Interview, 7/16/2012)

Since her sister was ten years older, she left home to attend college at age 18, so Lisa did not really have someone to talk to about personal issues. As her curiosity continued, she also found a copy of *The Thornbirds* in her mother's room when she was in seventh grade

and her reaction was, “Wait a minute” because it was drastically different than her own experiences, life and figured world. She used books as a way to learn about a world that outside of her Catholic upbringing. The idea that books held secrets acted as an impetus for her to continue to read. She perused the shelves of the library and of her home to find texts that looked different than what she normally read. She was drawn to texts that were written for a more adult audience, and the idea that these more mature books had “secrets” demonstrates Lisa’s desire to discover ideas and worlds beyond her working class figured world.

Lisa eventually learned that she needed to use “books,” or literacy, as a way to self-author herself in school, college and her future career as a teacher. In her early years, books were used as a hobby, as a way to entertain herself because her family was poor. She says, “...I read a bunch of really complicated books when I was young just because we were there and there wasn’t—like they couldn’t take us anywhere. We didn’t go on trips, so the way I got to escape was through reading, and therefore because I liked it and I was good at it, eventually it became my job.” (Interview, 7/16/2012). Here, Lisa is acknowledging the influence that books had on her life, to the point where she valued this artifact mediation of her identity so much that she chose a career that allowed her to make the artifact central in her life. As a youngster, she read because there was nothing else to do. Her parents could not take them on vacations or to museums, so she used the act of reading as a way to “escape” her working class figured world and explore other possibilities. It was school, the next major cultural institution/artifact, that made her realize that she could use books to mediate her entrance into the figured world of

teaching English.

School/Education

When Lisa was five, she woke up in her working-class figured world, got on a bus, and entered the middle class institution of schooling. Because the institution of schooling is shaped by middle class values, this oftentimes results in working-class students being “positioned precariously in schools” (Vagle & Jones, 2010). For Lisa, school was a place where she could succeed and stand out. At home, she was competing for attention from her mother who was busy with six other kids and from her father who would work a shift at the factory and then return home to “putter” outside. Even though most of her siblings were older than her, she still felt like the middle of the pack at home. She was one of seven, the second-youngest girl, and the older kids got more attention because they were involved in extra-curricular activities. School was a space that allowed her to be separated from her siblings and from her working-class figured world; it was a place that allowed her to use its artifacts as her own form of extracurricular activity. She says,

Like when you’re the youngest of seven kids, every sister’s like ten years older than me and then a brother and then another brother and then a sister and then another sister and there’s like a six year gap and then me and then I have a little sister. So, like getting a lot of attention at school, like getting—whether it was positive or negative, because I got in trouble. Like I might’ve been like, ‘I’m the student council president,’ but I also got suspended. (Interview, 7/16/2012)

Lisa used the institution of school as a cultural artifact to attract attention because she

spent her early years as the youngest child in the shadow of her five older siblings, and then her younger sister was born. She admits that most of the attention she garnered at school was a result of her academic performance but some was also a result of her getting into trouble. She did well in the middle class figured world of school because she liked the meritocratic nature embedded within the institution; the better you do in school, the more positive attention you get from teachers and others in power, the more likely you are to “succeed in life.” Based on these stories, it does not seem like Lisa was trying to gain access to the middle class figured world but rather she was good at navigating through it and was using her abilities to carry her through her K-12 schooling. She became aware of the meritocratic nature of schooling, and she liked the feeling of being rewarded for partaking in the middle class expectations. In this case, she was class-passing, or doing what was expected of her in a middle class space.

Of her time in grade school, Lisa recalls:

I think I graduated, you know from grade school, certainly like—with like every award that I could possibly get. So, like the award for literature, the award for English, the math award, the presidential fitness award—Like all of the awards that I could get...I’m like, ‘Yes, I love awards. I would like to be rewarded.’ (Interview, 7/16/2012)

For Lisa, doing well in school meant being recognized and rewarded. She viewed rewards as personal artifacts. She worked hard and used her knowledge and skills to be competitive with other students. She liked the feeling of winning, of being noticed.

When I asked her why she was so competitive, why she liked being rewarded she said:

Well, I know why. You know, I'm really competitive and I love winning and love being faster than other people and getting done first. Like that was a big deal for me, like I'd have to like look around and make sure that I was like faster than the other people. I wanted to be done. Like I finished my spelling book the first week of school and my teacher was pissed, because I didn't have anything else to do now. I'm like, 'I'm done. I took it home and I did it. Now, what?' You know, I was really curious but at the same time, I got a lot of attention at school. (Interview, 7/16/2012)

Lisa tried hard to finish first. She never discusses what she learned, if it was difficult or what challenged her. To her, school was a space that rewarded those who were the best, and to her the best meant those who were able to fulfill the requirements the fastest. Her curiosity also drove her to do well, and knowing that returning home also meant returning to a space that was overcrowded and where she might be overlooked, she spent her time at home working ahead in order to get even more attention in school. Because her school was a private, Catholic elementary school, it had a variety of students. Lisa liked competition, so she was likely competing against middle class kids, or kids similar to her who were class-passing to be praised in the middle class space of schooling.

Attending and "doing" school allowed Lisa to take up her literacy practices and values in a different way. She was using the artifacts of literacy embedded within the institution of school to mediate her interactions and self-author her own trajectory. By enacting her own agency, through the personal mediation of the cultural artifacts of literacy and schooling, Lisa sees an opportunity to take up these objects in her own way,

to position herself into a different figured world simply by using these tools as a way to leverage her knowledge, her school performance and the level of attention she receives as a result. As a working-class kid in a middle class institution, Lisa was at risk for being tracked into a working-class social position. Instead, she took up the cultural artifacts of literacy and school to produce a new subject position, and, eventually, into a middle class figured world.

Lisa wanted attention at school because she could then return home and share the good news with her parents. As stated earlier, Lisa's mother was very involved in her early love of literacy and reading, but her father was not directly involved in her literacy experiences because he worked long hours away from home. Her impetus for doing well was to gain rewards, but she also mentions wanting to please her parents:

So, yeah a lot of—like I could come home and I'd be like, 'I got this,' and my parents would be like, 'Yes,' but then on the converse side, you know on the other side like, if I didn't do well, they were like, 'What's going on?' So, like I always felt like I had to be awesome, like super smart. (Interview, 7/16/2012)

In this statement, it is clear that Lisa's parents valued education. They may not have been explicit about this value, although the various opportunities for literacy development at a young age could be viewed this way, but when Lisa did not do well her parents reacted and questioned the reasoning behind it. In order to avoid this questioning, or this doubt of her ability, from her parents, Lisa felt like she had to be "super smart" and earn every award to her parents did not worry about her.

When Lisa was earning her B.S., she had an influential teacher who could be seen

as somewhat of a role model for Lisa later in her life. She liked the teacher's presence, but she did not necessarily have a mentor-mentee relationship with her. It was during this class that Lisa realized that she wanted to be a teacher. This reality would not come true until after another stint in the factory, and other jobs, but she remembers one particular day in this woman's class. She recalls,

Like I took Italian in college and the Italian teacher would explain things to people and they would be like, 'I don't know,' and then I'd be like, 'It's like this,' and then they would get it. And she was like, 'You should have this job.' So, we were talking about future tense verbs and she dressed up as like a fortune teller in college—I liked her a lot. So, she wore like a big headdress and had a crystal ball and she would tell you your future and during my like, using future tense verbs, like I would ask like, 'Will I,' and she would say, 'Here's what you will.' So, we like had a conversation. It was really fun. Umm, and she was like, 'I'm serious about that you should be a teacher. I think that you would be really good at it,' and I was like, 'Hmm, I would be good at it. I'm really organized. I have all these secretarial skills and then I have like this other skill set of being like—I can stand up in front of people and get their attention, sing and do the song and dance and whatever.'

(Interview, 7/16/2012)

Although Lisa knew that she loved to read and she was good at school, it was not until this moment that she put these ideas and loves together to realize that she could leverage these artifacts into a career in teaching. She liked this particular teacher because she was engaging and funny, and when the teacher offered up that Lisa should be a teacher as

well, she took that comment seriously. She felt comfortable helping her classmates learn by explaining concepts and terms in a different way. This particular teacher also acted as a model for how she saw herself in the same role. She realized that she could get students' attention and she also had other qualities, like being organized, that would help her in the job.

Conceptualization of Work

Lisa grew up learning that her mom stayed home to care for the kids, and her dad worked at a sheet metal factory. In fact, since her uncle owned the factory, a majority of her extended family, and eventually Lisa herself, worked there. To her, work meant physical labor: getting dirty, doing repetitive work and then coming home to continue to work around the house. I asked Lisa to define working-class for me, and she said, "People who do manual or hard labor, have one-income, live paycheck to paycheck, and/or can't afford to help their kids out of they choose to go to college" (Interview, 7/16/2012). The importance of Lisa's definition rings true in her process of working after she graduates high school. She took up what it meant to work by watching her parents closely and by learning about the ways that her parents and her home life were different than those of her friends.

Work was never-ending. Her mother "worked" by raising seven kids. Lisa says, "The only job my mother ever had was a professional diaper changer" (Interview, 7/16/2012) as an explanation for seeing this role as a form of work in itself. Her extended family defined and constructed what work means for Lisa, and she continued to

value this construction after high school. She left college because her father had just died, it was not challenging and because it was not diverse enough for her. Of her short experience at college, Lisa says:

Umm, a girl from my high school ended up rooming with me, which I didn't want to do, I wanted to meet new people and move out on my own. And my dad had just died the year before, so I don't think like I was emotionally mature enough to be in college with a girl I knew. I wasn't making friends and I wasn't really learning anything new and they weren't like any black people and I was like, 'This place is like a country school in the middle of a really interesting metropolis and all of these people are really,'—to me it seemed like the group of people that I kept meeting were really like racist small-minded sort of, I don't know. Like the people I knew from high school, which was a Catholic school but in the city were more versatile, interesting and dynamic. So, I left and I went to Bartending School. (Interview, 7/16/2012)

After learning how to bartend, Lisa extended her college job at the bookstore into a new role as an accountant, and eventually worked in a skyscraper downtown as an administrative assistant. It was in her role as an administrative assistant that Lisa began to take up a different definition and construction of what it means to "work." She finds a way to author a new definition of work that includes and expands that notion of another figured world.

The family sheet metal factory was a space that Lisa returned to through her life as she changed jobs and went back to school. She worked there in times of transition and as

a side job when she needed to pay for college:

I worked there for a long time, like when I didn't go to school and after I got done with school. So I didn't have a job like outside of my family, really. I mean, I was like a waitress and I worked at bookstore as an accountant... And then I worked—a little while ago, I worked downtown at a graphic design company. And it was right around then when I was like, 'I should do something else. This sucks.' (Interview, 7/16/2012)

After bartending and working at the sheet metal factory full-time, she returned to college to earn a degree in English. While earning her English degree, she still worked nights and weekends at the factory and some hours at the bookstore. She kept returning to the factory because the value of real, hard work was instilled in her at a young age. She recalls, "I liked just sitting there and putting stuff together. It was mindless, but it was good money" (Interview, 7/16/2012). This statement demonstrates a shift in the way she began to view work. At first, she worked at the factory because that was what the rest of her immediate and extended family did, but eventually, she realized that she found it mindless, that she wanted to do some type of work that would allow her to use more of her mind. So, even though she continued to return to the factory throughout her 20s, she began to see it as a temporary option, as a way to make money before transitioning to something else. She began to take up work as something quite different than her earlier definition.

She worked at the university bookstore part-time while attending college, and then after graduation she worked at the sheet metal factory and at the bookstore. She

eventually moved on to a job downtown. Of this job experience, she writes,

And then I went from the bookstore to the graphic designing company and I was their like jack of all trades, like administrative assistant, even though like other people that had my degree were copywriters and kind of like designers and kind of proofreaders positions. Umm, and then I started thinking, 'I'm smarter than all of the people and I'm getting paid less,' because I paid them. / Part of my job was to pay them. I'm like, 'They're making like \$80,000 and I'm making like \$30,000 and I'm so—I can do a better job than that. This is so bullshit' Like working—and the people that were my bosses, I was like, 'These people all want to be kids.'

(Interview, 7/16/2012)

Lisa describes her initiation into the middle class figured world as awkward and difficult. She was aware that she was positioned lower than many of her colleagues even though she had the same degree. Although she liked being the “jack of all trades” at first, she eventually began to realize that she could take up the artifact of work in a new way to position herself to work in a better environment with people who appreciated her talents. She was working under people who she did not respect, and this acted as an impetus for her to reevaluate her view of work and determine ways she could leverage her artifacts to create new career opportunities. She remembers one particular meeting that was the driving force for her returning to school:

I would be like sitting at my desk and we would have a meeting and I was part of the administrative team, so I distinctly recall a lot of marketing business plans, things that we talked about and one of them was that we were solar system. The

solar system business plan and one of—the lady who was in charge of making stuff up, I guess. That was her like job. She got paid like \$100,000 to like read a book that someone else wrote and then draw it on the white board. Umm, so like all of our—we were like a freelance business. So, we had different people out at all these different creative departments around the area. So, the solar system plan was like, 'Best Buy is the sun in the solar system and then we have like Kate who is working there. She would be like a planet,' and then there were the other planets around and then, '[Lisa] you would be like a comet, because you just come through on occasion and like, you know, bill them.' And I was like, 'Is this for real, because this sounds like a joke, like that you would watch on television? Is anybody feeling the funniness of this?' And they—they were like, 'You're negative,' and I was like, 'This is dumb. For real.' (Interview, 7/16/2012)

What stands out in this story is the idea that Lisa wanted her job to have purpose, to mean something. She did not find meetings worthwhile because they did not involve actual “work,” like physical labor or even critical thinking. She saw her time and talents being wasted in meetings, and when she spoke up about her feelings, she was told that she was negative. The idea that speaking her opinion would garner a personal attack solidified her views of these types of interactions as not real work. She desired to work with people who were “grown-ups” or people who took up work that she saw as valuable. In this moment, Lisa comes face to face with her definition and value or what it means to work: she had used her artifacts to enact her position in a middle class figured world, only to discover that her desires did not match up with reality. As a result of this meeting, Lisa

decided to go back to school:

Lisa: So, then I decided at that job to go back to school to be a teacher and my boss told me that I was going to “waste my talents.” And I was like, “The talent I have to answer your phone,” because/

Heidi: /Do you know why he or she said that about teachers?

Lisa: No, no. He was, umm, a spoon fed cake-eating white boy. Exactly what we [Lisa and me, Heidi] would call him. His parents paid for him to go to St. Thomas and he had his Master’s from St. Thomas and they gave him the business.
(Interview, 7/16/2012)

Lisa describes her frustration with her boss who believes that becoming a teacher is a waste of her talents. She views his reaction as a result of his background as a “spoon fed cake-eating white boy” who does not value the work of teachers. There is a sense of resentment in this story, as Lisa describes his background and the fact that he likely reacted this way because of his own background and values, but also because she was choosing to leave what he considered a better job. There is a connection here to the idea of a family business, as Lisa’s family business was a sheet metal factory and her boss’s family business was in the professional world. These businesses do very different things and have very different types of people working for them. In addition, Lisa is also enacting a relationship with me by saying “we” would call her boss that term. Here, she

is positioning herself as someone who values “real” hard work, work that is difficult and challenging and does not have anything to do with status. In this interchange, Lisa’s process of self-authoring into the middle class shifts once again, as she learns that she cannot internalize the artifact of work in this administrative assistant position and space.

She further distances herself from her boss’s conceptualization of “work” when she describes an interaction in a meeting with another company, where she believes he was racist:

Lisa: He said out loud, ‘Well, I didn’t feel comfortable with all these artists standing in line waiting for jobs with like Mexicans that couldn’t even speak English.’ And I was like, ‘Holy shit, you just said that in front of Medtronic. That is so unbelievably racist,’ and so it was embarrassing for me to work for them when I was like, ‘What’s the difference if you like use an Exacto knife and cut shit out and glue it to something or if you clean somebody’s bathroom? What’s the difference?’ I would really—and so I could work for him. He just—I hated his ass.

Heidi: Did you say that to him out loud?

Lisa: Not during that meeting but I was like, ‘That was shockingly embarrassing that you said in front of those people. Like I have no idea what they’re going to go home and tell their families when you said something like that out loud and you want them to do business with you.’ And he was like, ‘Well, I don’t think it’s a big deal. I mean that, like these are artists,’ and I was like, ‘How

do you know that the person standing in line waiting for a job isn't also an artist?

You know, who just is like, 'Oh shit, I don't have a job.' (Interview, 7/16/2012)

In this story, Lisa is enacting her own value of work and defending people she believes work just as hard as other people. It is clear that she and her boss have drastically different definitions of "artist," which are based on their different understandings of what it means to work. Even though Lisa has taken up the artifact of work to project herself into a middle class figured world, she still embodies the working-class value of work and defends people she does not even know. This interaction with her boss further solidifies her desire to re-evaluate how she is taking up work and the type of environment she needs to take up her true realization of work.

After another stint at the sheet metal factory, Lisa returned to school for her teaching license and M.Ed. She continued to work at the factory part-time while earning her license. When asked why she chose teaching, she said, "You know, I think it's just because the one place where I was really successful was school. Well, not the one place. I'm really good at everything. No, it was school and I liked literature and I understood the rules of it and I knew how to make it work" (Interview, 7/16/2012). It was at this point, during her licensure program, that Lisa began to feel comfortable in taking up the work of teaching. She states that becoming a teacher made sense: she liked to read, she was good at school, and, as stated earlier, she could do the sing and dance of teaching. As a career, teaching enables Lisa to enact and embody the cultural artifacts of literacy and schooling and the values of work. Lisa's process of self-authoring was not a smooth trajectory, but

instead it represents the ways in which people take up artifacts to position themselves in order to determine their place. Lisa was constantly telling herself who she was via her cultural artifacts, and it was not until she became a teacher that she was able to enact her subject position because her artifacts were fully internalized.

Now that Lisa's artifacts are fully materialized, she does feel a sense of loss to her roots, and her relationships with her relatives now are sometimes complicated. She has a shifting relationship with her uncle who owns the sheet metal factory, and of that relationship she says:

My uncle Lyle who owns the sheet metal factory like tells them [her family] that I like went away and got infused with these evil ideas—that I actually learned in Catholic school with all the rest of them. You know like sharing and caring. I'm like, 'What happened to sharing and caring?' (Focus Group, 8/16/2012)

Much of the unease that Lisa now experiences with her family is related to politics, that they now view her as a liberal who was brainwashed in college. Because some of her relatives see her as having a drastic, if not bad, ideology about the way the world works, she often struggles to communicate with them and grapples with what to do in these situations. What is interesting about her comment above is that she claims her viewpoints were shaped more deeply in Catholic school, where all but one of her siblings attended school and where a majority of her extended family attended school as well. Her interactions with her family members demonstrate that her college education and her mobility into the middle class has manifested itself in difference.

Chapter Seven: Sedimented Artifacts Mediating Teaching Lives

These people who can't read and write, they just need some help, and so that was a part of my reasoning too. Get to know your own language and help people have power —
Susan

A text, whether written on paper, or on the soul (Plato), or on the world (Freire), is a loaded weapon. The person, the educator, who hands over the gun hands over the bullets (the perspective) and must own up to the consequences. There is no way of not having an opinion, an ideology, and a strong one, as did Plato, as does Freire. Literacy education is not for the timid.—James Gee

Much of what this study has done so far is focus on the participants' lives before they entered the classroom; therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to examine the daily lives of teachers: their struggles, their fears, their joys and their hopes for the future. Because each of the participants discussed his/her own experiences as working-class students in a school system that honors and rewards middle class normality and values, a closer look at the ways that the participants, who have entered into the middle class figured world of teaching, interact with their students provides an opening to analyze how the participants continue to straddle their working-class and middle class identities. To delve more deeply into the participants' relationships with students and how it is a result of their own constructed identities and memberships in various figured worlds, I draw on what Rowsell & Pahl (2007) call "a link to literacy and everyday life" (p. 391), or the ways in which the artifacts that result from sedimentation, or the dynamic nature of identity as it is impacted by shifts of sociocultural contexts and experiences, mediate participant experiences. Rowsell and Pahl's (2007) research focuses on "text making as a process involving the sedimentation of identities into text, which then can be seen as an

artifact that reflects, through its materiality, the previous identities of the meaning-maker” (p. 388). The metaphor of sedimentation of identities is useful, as it reflects,

The way in which the process can be slow, as sand becomes more rock-like and multifarious, as different grains of sand become assembled into a rock. The term indicates that sedimentation is a process, and it can be observed taking place within a variety of modes and across sites and domains. (Rowse & Pahl, 2007, p. 392)

In this chapter, several participants discuss the ways in which they use their cultural artifacts of teaching—classroom management/design, strategies for engagement in English/Language Arts, building relationships with students—as mediational means in their professional lives. A focus on the ways the artifacts themselves are mediating the sedimented identities of the participants allows for “... a heuristic device to identify a triadic relationship in an artifact—where it is made, by whom and through what set of practices” (Rowse & Pahl, 2007, p. 401) Specifically, what follows is an analysis of the ways the participants utilize their sedimented identities created and mediated by artifacts during their younger years in their working-class figured world to frame the way they approach the artifacts mediating their identities in their career.

Building Relationships with Students

One of the ideas I wondered about when interviewing the participants was whether or not their social class background influenced how they built relationships with students, and/or whether they were more cognizant of the students with similar backgrounds. In the next section, Lisa and Jasmine discuss experiences where they have called upon their

own backgrounds, or sedimented identities, to make decisions related to their relationships and interactions with students.

Lisa was teaching summer school at her suburban high school during data collection, so she talked a lot about the ways her summer school students were different than the students she has during the school year; more specifically, Lisa elaborates on how she talks to the summer school kids differently, like she was talked to as a kid. In this example, Lisa is leaning on her sedimented identities about language use in given contexts with certain audiences, and her language use then acts as a cultural artifact mediating her response to various students:

Lisa: The kids that I work with are super nice. They do everything I say, you know, the way that they liked to be talked to is different from the way that I was talked to and it's different—like my summer school kids and my regular school kids are vastly different. And it's actually more fun to teach summer school because I can say what I want and they don't get offended...it might hurt their feelings but they act like it doesn't, because they're summer school kids. But I can be like, 'No,' instead of, 'We don't' run in the hallway, do we Becky, which is really—you're saying, Don't run.' So, where I come from, we'd be like 'Don't run or I'll beat you' or 'You do that again and it's going to be the last time you breathe.' You know like that kind of talking? Ad so like, I took some seed classes and I was like, 'I think I might've been raised by black people'

Heidi: It's a class thing. Yeah.

Lisa: Because all the things that was like, ‘Here’s black people, and here’s white people’ and I was like, ‘I do not relate to any of the white people stuff,’ even though my family is totally white people. Look at them, they’re white people. (Interview, 7/16/2012).

Lisa's story is complicated. First, she acknowledges that she likes her “regular school kids” because they do everything she says; she can relax a bit knowing that they will listen to her. However, she also admits she likes teaching her summer school kids more than her regular kids because she can be more of herself: she can say what she wants and she won’t have to worry about offending them. Lisa finds camaraderie in her summer school kids. They remind her of herself, and she can rely on her sedimented identities of her working-class background around the summer school students. The “regular school kids,” as Lisa tells it, are mostly rich white kids who live in mansions, so in her interactions with those students, she is aware that she has to change her tone and her syntax to the form of a question. Her example of “Don’t run or I’ll beat you” shows the contrast in communication styles between her own family and likely some of her summer school kids. Lisa uses this story, of the ways in which she needs to shift her language based on which figured world she’s calling on, to show her “differential currency” within her situational identities during the regular school year and during summer school.

Lisa also speaks to the idea that her language use in her working-class home is similar to what research says about how black families communicate. In our exchange, I

immediately say “It’s a class thing. Yeah.” to invoke that I relate to her, that I understand that she is saying it’s not just a racial difference in language use, it is also a social class difference. Lisa’s response, “I do not relate to any of the white people stuff” indicates that she sees a disconnect in the research, and that she is aware in her situational identity as a teacher in the suburbs, with mostly middle to upper class students, that she needs to adjust her language use for her audience. Because she feels most comfortable using more direct language, she feels more comfortable teaching students who respond to that type of instruction; hence, she likes working with her summer school kids more than her regular school kids.

Jasmine has worked in urban, suburban and rural contexts, but in all of these contexts she has found that she likes working with what she calls “struggling students”. When referencing her “ninth grade English class,” she is talking about her students in the suburbs, and when referencing San Antonio, she is obviously talking about urban students. At the end of this excerpt, when she speaks about helping struggling readers, she is talking about the reading licensure she just earned the previous year, as well as the M.Ed. in Literacy Education she recently earned. When talking about how her background affects the types of students she likes working with, Jasmine says:

I always like the struggling students. I always liked my ninth grade English class, because I got all the Special Ed. students, because I was really flexible and I was warm and friendly and—and I worked well with those struggling students. And I liked seeing them grow. I think, because in San Antonio those urban kids were so happy when they got—when they got proud at school, because they didn’t get to

get proud at home. And so I liked those struggling students, so I wanted to do that with struggling readers, because literacy and reading is such a huge epidemic and— You know, that’s my whole platform—that everyone needs literacy, even though I don’t love reading, I was—I never had problems with it. And so I was like, ‘Why can’t you read?’ And so then once I started seeing that problem, I wanted to help those kids. (Focus Group, 8/7/2012)

Jasmine has liked to work with struggling students in all three contexts, and one of the reasons is because she knows that school is an important place for these students. When she says “those urban kids were so happy when they go proud at school because they didn’t get to get proud at home” indicates that she sees the importance of her role in the students’ lives. This comment is drastically different than the way Jasmine portrays her own home life as a kid, but then again, she was never what she considers a struggling student.

Coming to Terms with Student Realities

Jasmine was like many new teachers her first year: she was idealistic and thought the students would love English and love to read and do the corresponding assignments. Here, she recalls a story of how she anticipated her students being engaged in a novel, but in the end, she had to come to terms with the realities of their lives. In addition, because this story was told during the focus group, Abbie, David and I (Heidi) all chimed in because we have experienced similar issues. Jasmine tells the following story:

Jasmine: I remember showing up being like, ‘Oh hey, we’re going to read and write and you’re going to love it and everyone’s going to love this—*The Giver* and we’re going to get so into *The Giver* and—

Abbie: I still remember that.

Jasmine: / Everyone’s going to read 20 pages a night,’ and they were like—

Heidi: / We don’t read.

David: / We don’t read.

Jasmine: / ‘We don’t do our homework. So, what are you going to do about it? We don’t do our homework, because mom’s working three jobs and dad’s in jail and I’ve got four full brothers and sisters to take care of,’ you know? So, I was like that was the first time I had to wake up to that kind of reality that my students— because my friends and I were like, ‘Well, we go home and we play and then mom makes dinner at 5:00 P.M. and we watch the ‘Cosby Show’ and go to bed. What do you mean you don’t do your homework?’ So, it was hard, I think, realizing, ‘Okay, what do I do, because they’re not doing their homework. How do I give them time to do their homework, because I know they have way more stressful lives at home than I did?’ (Focus Group, 8/10/2012)

This story demonstrates that all the participants in the focus group have had similar experiences, to the point at which Heidi, David and Jasmine all say, “We don’t read/do our homework” at the exact same time. It is through this response by her students, which is echoed by Heidi and David, that Jasmine realizes that her students’ home lives are drastically different than her own. While Jasmine would consider herself working-class, she talks about a seemingly typical scheduled night in which her mom would cook dinner, she would watch some television and then go to bed. Jasmine entered the classroom with the assumption that all of her students could complete homework at home, that there would be nothing to stand in the students’ way. What she soon realized was that her students’ lives were much more complicated than hers, that they faced issues that Jasmine, in what she considered a working-class normality, had never experienced or even knew about.

In this instance, Jasmine enters the classroom with her own sedimented identity of what it means to read, do homework and be engaged in literacy activities. The novel is the cultural artifact mediating her sedimented identity, an identity she assumes her young students have also constructed in relation to literacy. What she soon discovers, though, is that her students sedimented identities of literacy and reading are drastically different than her own, and by acknowledging this difference and adjusting her curriculum planning and pedagogy, Jasmine is also continuing to allow her sedimented identity to shift, change and remain dynamic.

Lisa tells a story about how her suburban students may not be as aware of their neighborhood as she was as an urban kid. Because life in the city is often more cramped,

with smaller yards, less parking and more traffic, Lisa remembers her neighbors on her entire city block. When she asks her students to describe their neighborhood, she realizes that their living context and experiences are very different. Lisa says:

You know the part in *To Kill a Mockingbird* where like everybody knows the neighbors on the whole street and she describes the whole street? So when I was teaching that book, I would draw my city block, and I'd be like, 'Here's who lived here. This lady died and her cats ate her. This kid had like a porn shack in his backyard he used to play *Little House on the Prairie* in and go around the block. And they [the students] were like, 'Where did you live?' and I'm like, 'I lived in the city' And I'm like, 'So you draw your neighborhood.' They have no idea. They like may have a name like, 'Big Tire Car Guy,' or they don't actually know the real people's names. It's really interesting. They just—everybody's so like—they don't communicate (Interview, 7/16/2012)

In this story, Lisa is experiencing a different reality of neighborhood than what is represented in her sedimented identity of what it means to grow up in a city. When approaching this assignment, she figured her students would have an easy time naming those who live near and around them, but she soon discovers that suburban living is drastically different in that houses are farther apart and people keep more to themselves. What Lisa learns is what she deems as a lack of communication and community. In this instance, Lisa learns that her background is very different than her students and that they find it rather odd that she would know and remember such details from her neighborhood of her youth.

Lisa tells another story about her discussions with summer school kids and how she talks to them differently than her regular school kids. She and all of her siblings except one went to private high school; her parents decided to send one of her brothers to public school. From Lisa's interview, it seems that they thought Bobby was different, that he should be tracked to a public school because he would not attend college.

Granted, Lisa does not know the whole story, but she does know that while her and the rest of her siblings left Catholic school in 8th grade and then attended a private high school, Bobby attended the public high school in the neighborhood. When asked how he felt about that decision, Lisa says, "Well, Bobby assumes it's because he's dumb and he's not. Bobby can do things that none of the rest of us can do. But it's because they knew that having him like keep going to like religion class and reading class—it would be better for him to have like a skill" (Interview, 7/16/2012). When asked how her brother is doing now, Lisa explains that he is quite successful, that he earned a degree at a technical college and he has a large house. This background information about Bobby is important because Lisa is using her knowledge and views of college and her brother's different educational experiences and accomplishments as artifacts to mediate her approach to discussing college with her summer school kids. What she says below can be seen as controversial, but again, Lisa is drawing on her own experiences and the fact that in her family, her parents saw something different in Bobby and that difference resulted in him going to public school and to technical college. Lisa says:

So, yeah there was some perception and the kids that go to my school, I mean some of them go to Yale and Oxford and then there's other kids that like, that can't go

anywhere. I talked to them about it today, because I teach summer school and I was like, 'Dude, you guys all want to go to college and you shouldn't go, some of you. You shouldn't go.' And they [the students] were like, 'You just ruined my dreams.' And I was like, 'I'm totally serious. You don't like school. You can't read. You can't sit still for five minutes and you think you're going to go to college? What do you think college is if not like learning how to have a skill? Like why don't you like go to a different school and get a skill faster for less money and move on with your life? You hate school. You hate it so much you flunked and that's why we're hanging out together right now. College. Where you going to go?' And that's I think, the sad part about what colleges do to people. I mean, they're just making money off people. Like some of those kids that I teach will not make it. (Interview, 7/16/2012)

This is a complicated story that can be interpreted many ways. One aspect that is interesting is that Lisa comes from a working-class background and attended college and is currently benefitting from the advanced education by maintaining a steady job, but despite these experiences, she is grappling with the idea that some of her students may not end up like her. She is speaking to her summer school students, who she says have similar working-class backgrounds, but is offering a point of view that contrasts with her own personal experience. In this story, Lisa is questioning the purpose of college and whether or not her summer school students would benefit from attending. In addition, she also recalls her brother, Bobby, who was tracked to trade school and is now successful. She is essentially using him as an example of the fact that some people might

not do well in college, that some people may find skill-based jobs that interest them. Another interpretation is that Lisa sees herself in these working-class students, and remembers her own struggles in her process of becoming a teacher, so she wants to caution her students about their own future processes. The idea that not everyone should go to college is quite controversial, and the context of this conversation, summer school, demonstrates that Lisa feels comfortable with these students, that she would likely not have the same kind of conversation with her “regular school kids.” With many districts adopting mottos like “Every child, college ready,” Lisa is challenging the idea that every kid should be prepared for college. She is essentially viewing non-college bound as an artifact that is mediating her position on the issue, and she is enacting her sedimented identity of a college graduate to describe that what she experienced is not for everyone.

Sedimented Identities of Literacy

The participants chose to be English teachers for various reasons, mostly because they liked it, they were good at it and they found value in the discipline. As teachers, they face students who have completely different views of literacy learning, views that include disliking English and disliking/refusing to read. When I asked the participants to talk about why they chose English and why they think the discipline is important, I got a variety of answers. No response was personal as Susan’s, as she tells the story of discovering that her father could not read. Her dad left school in sixth grade. He lived in a rural area and emphasis was placed on work, not schooling. When I asked Susan why he left school, she says:

Well, his parents didn't value education. I remember that he said that umm, also he had to ride a horse to school and it was a seven mile trip each way and eventually he and his brother decided, 'You know what, it's just not worth it' because it took almost two hours from the time they left their house to get to school and another two hours to get back and it just didn't seem to them to be really worth it.

(Interview, 7/12/2012)

Because it took so long to get to school, Susan's father and his brother left school and began to work full-time. This choice was okay with their parents because the boys were bringing in income for the family. They worked odd jobs depending on the season:

Well, they would just do—at the time, Heidi it was so different from what our world is like, but you just get a job wherever you could and worked for as long as you can. So, they used to go work picking potatoes in the fields in North Dakota when it was potato harvesting time or they'd go wherever there would be a job.

(Interview, 7/12/2012)

The boys worked full-time at seasonal jobs beginning as young teenagers, and the choice to leave school made sense because they could make money and they were not waiting hours getting to school and back. Her father decided to leave school as a child, but this decision would haunt him his whole life, as he was illiterate. Susan tells the following story about how finding out about her father's illiteracy was an impetus for her to become an English teacher:

Well, I've always been good in English, and I remember in high school, I was in one of my classes where the teacher would consistently say positive things to me,

you know give me the positive reinforcement about, 'This is really good and you're a really good English student, blah, blah, blah.' Plus the fact that my dad, when we were little, he'd want us to read him the ads, the want ads from the paper and I actually didn't know he was illiterate until one day, I said, 'Dad why don't you just read it yourself,' and he got really mad at me and then my mom told me, 'You know, he can't read or write.' So, that was kind of—kind of a shocker for me and I felt like, 'Well, you know what? These people who can't read and write, they just need some help,' and so that was a part of my reasoning too. Get to know your own language and help people have power, because if he—he had had more knowledge, if he'd been able to do that his life would've been different. (Interview, 7/31/2012)

Susan's story shows that her dad's illiteracy was a cultural artifact that now frames how she teaches literacy. She was good at English as a young child, but once she learned that her father was illiterate, she had another impetus for becoming a teacher. She recalls reading her father the want ads from the paper as a literacy experience, and that this experience allowed her to help her father. She liked the idea of helping people learn to read and write, that she could help them have agency and to have choices in life. She utilizes her conceptualization of the cultural artifact of illiteracy as she teaches her students, as she is constantly reminded that the discipline she teaches is powerful and gives people agency.

Lisa uses her sedimented identity of literacy learning when she tries to engage her students in reading. Below, she talks about the idea that some parents want their children to read Shakespeare because it is canonical, that it's a cultural artifact in itself, but that

she sees through this idea of some literature being more worthy than others:

I also think it's funny that like we've all studied Shakespeare okay and we know what's in Shakespeare, like the nurse in *Romeo and Juliet*. You're like, 'She's a dirty ass old lady, 'You know. She says like some of the nastiest things ever. Like if she's old enough to bleed, she's old enough to breed, basically, right? She says things like that but then parents are like, 'I don't understand why you're not teaching things like Shakespeare. You know high level blah, blah, blah,' and you're like, 'Have you actually read Shakespeare, because it's kind of gross.' (Focus Group, 8/16/2012)

In this story, Lisa is challenging the idea that students need to read "good," canonical literature, as if it is better than other choices. Specifically, she is challenging the idea that Shakespeare should be taught over other texts, that anything he has written is representative of high culture. In this story, Lisa is challenged by parents who believe that real literature is that of high culture, and her reaction demonstrates her embodied tension of her working class roots, her chosen career and the expectations this career places on her. She is calling on her sedimented of identity as a reader in this response, as she sarcastically describes the crudeness of Shakespeare's story. She does not buy into the fact that all canonical literature is good, that it is respectable, and she is also pointing out that many people have assumptions that because Shakespeare is canonical, it is decent, moral literature. In addition, she is also calling out those who have not read Shakespeare, and she is using the cultural artifact of reading, of being well-read to mediate this response. To Lisa, it's more important that students read a text they can

relate to than if they read something canonical. She read anything she could find as a kid and she does not buy into the idea that canonical literature should be given precedent.

When asked, “Why English?” Autumn had a quite long response. She was good at it as a kid, she thinks the discipline offers the opportunity to discuss ways to be responsible with information, particularly in the form of social media, and the stories allow her to have discussions about life. Autumn says:

You know, they hang out all their business on the internet, but they’re still afraid to be vulnerable to you in person. Umm, and somebody has to teach them how to be responsible with that information. It’s always been drinking out of a fire hose. I mean, you know since like 1925. ...and so English because you can talk about anything... Because umm, reading lends itself to asking big questions about life and teaching people how to be curious about those things and it doesn’t matter what you’re reading. It could be classic but it doesn’t have to be. It should be for part of the time only because how do you know where you’re going if you don’t know where you’ve been, you know? But I don’t think any of it’s an either/or. And I was actually good at it. It was easy. (Interview 8/1/2012)

Autumn’s reasons are varied, but in the end, she sees English as a way to get students to think about their world and worlds of the past. She believes literature can provide a view of history that can give the reader a glimpse of the reasons why present day problems exist. When she says, “...how do you know where you’re going if you don’t know where you’ve been” is an example of the cultural artifact of reading mediating her opinion of the purpose of her job. In saying that literature can provide opportunities to ask big

questions about life, Autumn is simultaneously advocating for students to be curious of the ways that literature can be a reflection of their own lives.

Discussion

The concept of sedimented identities works well in this analysis because of the metaphor; I see these teachers' identities as actual sedimented rock in a stream, rock that loses parts as the water runs over it but simultaneously gains sediments. Their identities are dynamic, constantly in flux, and their stories show that they call on their past experiences to inform their present interactions in their profession. They use their cultural artifacts related to schooling and literacy, as well as their social class background to mediate their interactions with students. Because teaching is such a dynamic process, the idea that the teachers' identities are constantly in flux, that they are constantly forced to reify their identities in their moment-to-moment interactions with students is a fitting form of analysis.

What is important to note is that these teachers are interacting with students who are similar and different than them. Lisa, Abbie and Susan are all in suburban environments, even though Lisa grew up in an urban area and Abbie and Susan grew up in rural contexts. They find ways to connect with students through their cultural artifacts, but in the example of Lisa, they also find disconnections, and she has found that she needs to find ways to communicate the disconnections. She does so by calling on her cultural artifacts to mediate her discussions, to determine which type of language to use in different contexts, and to figure out ways to engage her students in literacy learning.

What is evident in this chapter is that all of the participants' stories tell of a grappling with their own sedimented identities to connect to students, to engage them, to build relationships with them and to help them gain skills they will need for the future. These stories demonstrate that teacher identity is a combination of personal and professional experiences, that it is comprised of a complex sedimented identity that is constantly changing. These teachers enjoy the dynamic nature of teaching, and they continue to teach because they are open to the changing-nature of the profession and the ways in which their sociocultural contexts constantly reify their identities through their cultural artifacts.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

“The making of me as a bourgeois individual was painful, a struggle not to put a foot wrong...So they tell you that you can pull yourself up by your bootstraps and then, when you’ve done it (got the job, become clever, got the ‘things you wanted’, ‘married the prince’, they tell you it’s all bad...”—Valerie Walkerdine, *Schoolgirl Fictions*

The first idea that comes to mind in writing this conclusion is that teachers’ stories are complicated and powerful. In such a short amount of time, usually one to two hours, these teachers told remarkable stories of growing up working-class, learning how to love and value literacy at home, experiences in K-12 school and college, and the day to day struggles they have as secondary English teachers. By participating in this study, and more specifically by telling their stories to me in individual interviews and to colleagues in the focus groups, the teachers were able to add another critical event to their teaching lives. To a few participants, their participation in this study awoke a sense of identity they had never really thought much about. For example, Julie says:

Every time I talk to somebody about this and they say, ‘Oh what meeting do you have,’ or when I came last week and they—I told them about the study, they’re like, ‘That’s interesting, what are you going to say,’ and I’m like, ‘Well, you know it’s interesting, because this has actually made me think a lot more than I probably have ever really thought about being—how I grew up and what that means for—what kind of—the changeover to consider myself middle class now and the life that I see for my kids too. Like do I assume that my kids are going to college? Do I even want them to if they don’t want to, I don’t know?’ (Interview, 8/24/2012)

This particular comment exemplifies the ways that the participants are grappling with the

constructions of social class and the manifestations of their own social class mobility.

The participants came to be teachers of English by various processes. Seven out of eight participants went to college within the first year of high school graduation, while Lisa took a different route and came to teaching later in life. The similarities between all of the participants are that they valued their home literacy practices, and they all liked school, albeit for various reasons. Lisa liked being rewarded, Autumn was a curious kid, and Jasmine enjoyed working with her classmates. As they grew older and took on more responsibility, constructed greater knowledge and faced greater challenges, the artifacts of literacy (books) and schooling took on new meanings for them. They found new ways to use the artifact of books to mediate their identities, and to get paid for it! They constantly draw on their past school experiences, their social class brokers and their sedimented teacher identities to reify their identities and their pedagogical practices.

Limitations

Gender. Seven out of eight of my participants are females, so a closer analysis of the ways in which gender plays a role in social class mobility would have been another beneficial area of study, although because my interest was social class, I privileged it over other constructs. Because the conceptualization of working-class still carries with it the historical baggage of a mostly white male enterprise, a look at women, and even the ways in which their mothers have influenced their gender roles (c.f. Steedman, Urwin & Walkerdine, 1986; Bettie, 2003) could have provided an even deeper analysis of the concept of social class.

Race/Whiteness. Due to the depth of scholarship on whiteness studies and the

ways that it often intersects with social class, an analysis of these conceptualizations was also not taken up in this study. All eight participants identify as white, but the interview questions were mostly about social class and the discipline of English. Whiteness was mentioned a few times, but mostly in passing, and in general, the idea and conceptualization of being White was often ignored in the interviews and focus groups. I want to acknowledge that whiteness was essentially ignored by the participants, which has given me impetus to further analyze this absence. The participants did speak of ethnicity and race when speaking about those who did not identify as White, but an explicit analysis of their own Whiteness, as it intersects with social class manifestations was nearly absent. I chose to foreground social class in this study, but further examination of the intersections of whiteness and social class is imperative. Specifically, I am interested in parsing out Lisa's comment about the ways that her family's working-class language mirrors the language used by black families, as it refers to the idea that class and race are often collapsed into one concept, that of race. A deeper analysis of this comment, as well as other ways Lisa and others talk and do not talk about race and class would provide a better understanding of their identities and their conceptualizations of how race as an absent sign intersects with social class.

More on Teacher Lives. Once the participants' cultural artifacts were fully materialized they spoke of the disconnections and strained relationships they had with family members and friends. In addition, greater exploration of the tensions the participants' experienced within the middle class institution of schooling and how they intersect with the tensions they experience in their family/community lives would one

direction for future study. These manifestations come in the form of disagreements about politics, ways to raise children and how to spend money. A study that focuses on a greater understanding of how their class passing has affected working-class teacher sense of self, their sense of home and their sense of their roots is an area for future research, and could be an extension of this study data.

Returning to the Research Questions

This study attempted to answer questions related to teacher identity, more specifically the purpose of this study was to better understand how English teachers from working-class backgrounds come to be English teachers, and how their experiences along the way have shaped their teacher identities. What follows is a brief explanation of how the three data chapters answer the three research questions:

RQ1: How did the participants come to be teachers of English?

As demonstrated in Chapter 4, many of the participants had similar trajectories, while a few participants' lives were rather different. All of the participants spoke of their love of learning, particularly at school, where they succeeded, earned awards and excelled at English, and they all had some form of social class broker who intervened in their lives at a time when they needed an adult, not a family member, who could assist them in their attempts to understand the complicated notion of upward mobility. They told lengthy stories of how they got their first job, their nerve-wracking interviews and their first days as teachers. They also spoke about current interests, returning to school to earn an additional license or degree and the difficult decision of leaving one school for another. The sub-questions that follow provide an even deeper analysis of how these

participants became English teachers.

RQ2: How did the participants' social class and home life affect and influenced their school-related (student and teacher) identities?

Much of the interview data is couched in the participants' home lives and the ways that their parents and siblings helped construct their personal identities. They discussed active literacy practices in their homes, from going to the library, to reading alone to their parents reading to them before bed. The participants' school lives were described as a time when they knew they were different, mostly due to material reasons, such as toys and clothing. All described themselves as good students, but some, particularly Lisa, described herself as an over-achiever. Autumn's story was emphasized to call attention to the fact that upward mobility is not easy, that it is complicated and difficult. She eventually self-authored her own identity, but along the way, from second grade to college, she valued interventions by adults, specifically her teachers, as critical events that gave her inspiration to carry on. An analysis of Lisa's identity, as she used her cultural artifacts of books and schooling to mediate her trajectory, demonstrates the way she was able to leverage a form of entertainment (books) and a way of being in the world (a good student) to create opportunities for her to gain entry into new figured worlds. The last data chapter uses the idea of sedimented identities to show how the participants' lives as teacher are constantly being shaped by both the present and the past. In their daily interactions with students, the teachers refer to the own conceptualizations of what it means to "be a good student" and what they view as engaging in order to determine how they present themselves as teachers. What is learned in the last data chapter is that

the participants are constantly working to understand how to engage their students so they will succeed, and throughout this process of understanding, they are constantly calling on their own identities as reference.

RQ3: How do they describe their upward mobility and class passing in terms of their personal and professional identities?

The participants' stories speak for themselves in that they do not come right out and say, "This has been painful," but their stories—the topics of struggling, death of family members, losing connections to parents and siblings due to their upward mobility—speak of this sense of pain. In addition, they do refer to the term class passing, but the participants do speak of times when they wanted to fit in, when they wanted to be the best student, to be the first to answer the teacher's question. What has been difficult to show in this study are the emotions that each participant had when telling his/her story. Many interviews brought out smiles, as the participants were fondly remembering their childhoods that were full of love despite the lack of money. Participants laughed as they recalled interactions with siblings or, in Lisa's case, how her family drove a rusty station wagon lovingly referred to as Blue Lace. There were moments of great sadness as well. Julie spoke of her younger sibling's accidental fall that resulted in death. Autumn cried as she recounted how she found out about her grandfather's death. And, at times, participants spoke with a touch of frustration about the disconnection they now have with family and friends due to their class crossing. The stories and the corresponding emotions demonstrate that moving to a higher social class does not mean a person is fully content, that they are happier or that they feel a sense of relief. Instead, the stories

demonstrate a sense of struggle, a grappling to understand oneself in a new world, a world that excludes many of those who assisted in the trajectory.

What My Work Can Do

It was important to me that the teachers' voices were at the center of the study. I like to think that this study, these interviews and focus groups, have enacted another critical event in the participants' lives. To me, the participants represent Gramsci's (1988) concept of organic intellectuals, or those "involved in a dialectical and rhetorical enterprise: reliance on personal experiences and the experiences of the groups from which they came in order to attract other groups, including traditional intellectuals" (Villanueva, 1992, p. 129). By telling me (and the world) their stories of joy, pain and fulfillment, they are transformed into what Gramsci (1988) considers new intellectuals. These are people who take their stories to other groups, to attract attention and to engage in a societal reform "in the rhetorical enterprise of a counter hegemony" (Villanueva, 1993, p. 132). In addition, I see this work as a form of praxis because "[critical consciousness] is given a voice, and a decision is made to do something about the contradiction between the individual and society's working against individual freedom..." (Villanueva, 1992, p. 54)

Implications

Pre-Service Teacher Education. The study reveals that there is a need for a better understanding of class difference, and this understanding should be addressed in depth in pre-service teacher education programs. Understanding class difference is imperative, as research shows that the middle class institution of schooling rewards students from

middle class backgrounds who come to school with the cultural and social capital to succeed in the institution. Pre-service teachers need to understand the way class works in America, that we live in a meritocracy and that not all work and knowledge is valued in our society. An adoption of a self-study with a critical bent would provide teacher candidates with an opportunity to recall personal experiences and the ways in which the contexts shaped their reactions and their identities. In addition, teacher educators cannot assume that pre-service teachers already know how to perform middle class identities, or that middle class teachers understand the working-class "figured world." The consequences of these assumptions will result in reifying middle class values. As an extension of the self-study, teacher education programs should also include coursework and practical experiences that provide candidates with an opportunity to interrogate their own and others classed, raced and gendered experiences.

Class Sensitivity Pedagogy in K-12 Classrooms. Teachers can make adjustments to their curriculum to ensure that working-class students see themselves in it. Research attempts to introduce this focus on social class (Vagle & Jones, 2012) as a result of Reardon's (2012) study about the social class achievement gap being twice that of the black/white achievement gap show that work on social class is beginning to take shape. Since 2010, Jones and Vagle have been working on The **Classroom** Project, which works to enact a class-sensitive pedagogy that focuses on "thought and action grounded in the goal of eliminating classism and class-bias of all kinds, ensuring full access to dignified education and meaningful educational opportunities for working-class and poor children and youth of all races and ethnicities" (2013, p. 4). It is important to note is that this

work does not set out to villainize those in higher classes; instead, the project hopes that participants will learn more about the way class works in society and to determine ways to ensure that all students are respected no matter their social class background. This pedagogy has been introduced to teachers in Georgia, and it is also in its early stages in Minnesota. Professional development opportunities provide opportunities for teachers to embrace and embody the pedagogy in explicit ways.

Closing

I want to return to the teacher stories, and look at Stephanie's reaction to participating in this study. When I asked her to tell me about her experience telling me her stories, Stephanie said: "I would say it's rewarding to be able to look at and say, 'Yeah, this is who I am. This is where I'm from.' These are things that we want our students to feel confident about. We want them to have a positive self-identity" (Interview, 8/3/2012). Like Stephanie, I yearn for the day that ALL students can have a positive self-identity, particularly working-class students who are aware that the institution of schooling does not value their cultural capital. I want them to be able to say, "This is who I am! This is where I'm from" without a sense of ridicule or worry that they will be judged. Everyone wants to feel a sense of belonging, and for working-class kids, I remain hopeful that this day is not far off.

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