The Storied Lives of New Teachers: Sociocultural Enactments of Professional Identities
During New Teacher Induction

A Dissertation
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
BY

Lee Charles Fisher

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Cynthia Lewis, Advisor

May, 2019

Dedication

To the teachers who joined me on this journey, this work is dedicated to you and the hard, miraculous work you do every day. It gives me hope to know you're out there.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction

When I began imagining what this dissertation might be, the idea I most wished to share is that stories matter. I do not think that stories are the primary way people engage in the world. Nor would I say that everything is a story. But I do believe that stories have weight; they ground us. They are significant.

I use the word significant purposefully here. In Chapter Two of this dissertation I write about sociocultural theories around signification, or signs. In Chapter Three, I write about my thinking around analytic coding as a way to *point out*, part of the etymological definition of signify. Stories are significant because they *signify* and *point out* what we think about something. They construct an understanding of the world in the same way that lighting designers communicate to a theatre audience where to look on stage and what to feel about the events taking place there.

Stories are fictive constructions, though I would not assume this to be synonymous with dishonesty or misrepresentation. This is because I grew up with two brothers, both of who I am sure have a different version of our childhood than I would tell. There were countless times we would be faced with recounting how something happened, a hole in the wall for example, and for the life of us, we could not tell the same story. While my parents were left wondering who was at fault for the damage, the simple truth was likely found in all of the stories because stories do not simply recount actions. They recount experiences. They shine a light on what is important to the storyteller and, as such, represent perspectives and values just as much as they do blind spots.

It was through directing theatre as a high school teacher that I came to a deeper understanding of storytelling, or what Clandinin and Connelly (2000) would call thinking

narratively. The most concrete way this understanding took place was in the rehearsal of the narratives contained in the scripts themselves. I would assign small groups of actors different components of a scene and ask them to interpret it two to three different ways through movement and vocal performance. After a while, they would come back and present their work to the rest of the group. These rough mini performances functioned as hypotheses that we collectively analyzed as we balanced what the script literally said and what we wanted it to say. Our interpretations and the performances of those interpretations continually evolved, each new iteration building off of what had previously been done and incorporating new insight and experience.

Less concrete were the stories told through the things teachers, administration, students, and I said and did that impacted how I saw myself and how I was seen as a new teacher. These were the stories I lived out, those I heard, and those I wished for. Though I didn't have the language for it at that time, theatre provided a metaphor for a way of navigating myriad beliefs, commitments, and expectations that get placed on teachers' personal and professional selves. Myriad social scripts circulate with expectations that teachers not only follow but amalgamate them into a cohesive whole and live them out in order to belong—to this group, that department, or to the profession as a whole. This amalgamation is done through a rehearsal process in which new teachers attempt different possibilities and assess their effectiveness at conveying both what is expected and what they personally desire. And decisions are made about what to cut and what to keep, always in a process of revision during private rehearsals and public performances.

So I began this dissertation wanting to show that stories matter, in particular the stories of new teachers. Now that the study has finished and I am in the process of

reflecting on my time with fifteen teachers who I have had the pleasure of knowing as they embarked on becoming professional teachers, I find that, while I still believe stories are important, I want to say that listening is too.

One of the primary methods I used with teachers in this study is story circles. In it, individuals sit in a circle and share stories one by one around a central theme or question. This is a difficult task, however simple it sounds. How often do we find ourselves in conversation *waiting* for another person to stop talking so we can say something? Or thinking about what we want to say while someone else is speaking? John O'Neal (2011) addresses this when he describes the law of listening.

> In storytelling, listening is always more important than talking. If you're thinking about your story while someone else is telling theirs, you won't hear what they say. If you trust the circle, when it comes your turn to tell, a story will be there. Sometimes you may be tempted to think of it as magic. (p. 2)

The ability to trust ourselves enough to truly and simply listen is difficult. Yet as a new teacher, having someone who wanted to listen to me was difficult to imagine. So many people had wisdom to impart, wisdom that I wanted. I struggled as a new teacher and sought out solutions to problems I did not know how to think about let alone answer. Because of this, I tried on different teaching identities as if I was buying a new pair of shoes. I searched for a teaching style that looked like it would make me successful, typically by looking at successful teachers. I would try on their methods, walking around in them for a few weeks to see if they fit, which they never did, and then search for something new. I cannot remember anyone asking me what it felt like to be a new teacher, only what I thought about this great strategy or that great teacher.

3

Storytelling is a process of making sense of our experiences in the world. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) note:

> For Dewey, experience is both personal and social. Both the personal and the social are always present. People are individuals and need to be understood as such, but they cannot be understood only as individuals. They are always in relation, always in a social context. (p. 2)

Or as Bakhtin (1983) writes, "What is realized in the novel is the process of coming to know one's own language as it is perceived in someone else's language, coming to know one's own belief system in someone else's system" (p. 365). Thus, storytelling is never a removed process but one that is always embedded within a social 'us' that the narrator finds themselves in. For the teachers who participated in this study, the social us was the relationship we had with each other, somewhat defined by the licensure program where we met as instructor and students, and somewhat defined by the way our relationship had grown or not after they finished the program. For the teachers who participated in the story circles, the social 'us' was defined together as they sought to signify who they were as teachers, graduates of the same licensure program, and as whole people with full lives outside of teaching and our work together.

What became clear in each workshop was the impact listening had on these teachers—having others simply listen to them and having the opportunity to listen to others who were working to communicate something about themselves and their work. At one point, a teacher nervously mentioned before the story circle started at the first workshop she attended that she did not know if she had a story to tell. "Don't worry," one of the other teachers who had been at the first workshop knowingly said. "You will." As

O'Neal (2011) suggests, in the listening is where magic happens. It is where you will find your own story.

So I invite you to listen to the stories I share in this dissertation. They are stories about teachers: the fifteen teachers that spoke with me about the stories they heard growing up and in their licensure program that shaped how they understood what it meant to be a teacher, and the nine teachers who met with me for six workshops over the course of two wintry months. They are also stories about schools and the way new teachers experience them as they find their place within the education profession. And they are stories about the research project I undertook with these teachers to explore teacher identity and the stories I believe are integral to the process new teachers engage in as they create, maintain, and try to understand their identities within particular physical and social spaces.

Background and Context

Teacher induction, or the process of bringing a new teacher into the professional fold, has been explored in a variety of ways including clinical residencies (Darling-Hammond, Wilhoit, & Pittenger, 2014), teacher dispositions (MnEDS Research Group. 2016), and mentorship programs (Lee, 2018; Sowell, Marsha, 2017; Sparks, Tsemenhu, Green, Truby, Brockmeier, & Noble, 2017). Beyond training new teachers in various skills or stances, research has explored the social and cultural components of new teacher induction. Britzman (2003) writes about competing influences that different experiences have on a new teacher when they are faced with the task of taking on the professional identity of a teacher in a particular school community. Yet much empirical work focuses on what should be done to teacher candidates in their licensure program or what is done

to new teachers from a structural level once they have started working in a school. Rarely are new teachers asked about their current experiences in a way that opens up spaces for complexity the ways that stories do.

Stories are cultural artifacts that teachers use to construct professional identities. Schaefer, Downey, and Clandinin (2014) write that teachers use stories to create a professional knowledge landscape "composed of relationships among people, places, and things, and with both moral and intellectual qualities" (p. 13). This study not only explores the stories that new teachers use to make sense of their experiences within and outside of school but also the social construction of values and the ways that culture is picked up in and produced by these stories. This study informs our understanding of the sociocultural world of teaching and the dialogic moves that new teachers make as they work to understand who they are and want to be as teachers within local and broader discourses about what it means to be a teacher.

Problem Statement

Secondary literacy teachers hold immense power and possibility as they work with students to critically analyze past and current narratives as well as author and enact new narratives. Such pedagogy is determined by how teachers understand their own identities, identities that greatly influence pedagogy, curriculum, and relationships within educational institutions. Yet teacher stories, particularly those told to and by new teachers, are rarely considered as a site of praxis as these important identities take shape. Instead, teacher induction practices often focus on mentorship programs and administrative support for new teachers. These signal the importance of developing a professional community within schools, yet this acknowledges teaching primarily as a

skill, ignoring the ideological and philosophical commitments that often accompany new teachers. When past experiences and the knowledge they constructed contradict the goals of and experiences in a new professional community (Britzman, 2003), new teachers can experience cognitive dissonance that pushes them to take up new identities, practices, and values associated with them or reject the community that research has shown is integral to sustaining and growing within a teaching career (Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, Bransford, Berliner, Cochran-Smith, McDonald, & Zeichner, 2005). Consideration of the sociocultural moves new teachers make within the stories they tell and hear recognizes new landscapes for induction support that creates opportunities for agentic identity construction and positions new teachers to more effectively engage in professional communities with colleagues and students.

Statement of Purpose

In this dissertation, I explore and theorize the stories of new teachers as they work to incorporate their learning from a social justice–oriented licensure program within a wide range of urban and suburban schools, the identities they construct in the process, and the moments of improvisation (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998) within broader systems of power during the induction process (licensure program, student teaching, and first three years of employment). The purpose of this study is to develop an understanding of the sociocultural moves that new teachers make as they work to craft a teacher identity that attends to their personal motivations and commitments within the broader professional community. The theoretical assumptions and methodological affordances of Narrative Inquiry and Ethnodrama echo the epistemological beliefs I have formed through my experience as a high school teacher and theatre director. Because I

see identities as social constructions that exist within socio-historically situated discourses (Bakhtin as cited in Morris, 1994) in which power circulates within narrative structures that offer particular roles, plotlines, and relationships, I seek to braid together Narrative Inquiry, Sociocultural Theory, and Theatre of the Oppressed practices in order to enter into a multi-dimensional, embodied analytic space "that accounts for these larger systems of power as they shape and are shaped by individuals in particular cultural contexts" (Lewis et al., 2007, p. 9). This recognizes that identities are constantly in a state of construction and revision, evidenced in embodied narrative expressions (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 79). In this way, narratives are not merely objects that get told. They are "a process in which we as thinkers do not so much work on narrative . . . [but allow] narrative to work on us" (Morris, 2001).

Assumptions

Based on my experience as a teacher and teacher educator I bring five assumptions to this project. First is that the stories new teachers tell about their experiences are valuable in personal and professional ways. New teacher stories are important for them personally because teaching is an incredibly personal act. Most of the teachers I know and have worked with begin or continue teaching because of a personal commitment to some component of the profession. This may be a desire to serve the public, work with children, or because they see the job itself as something special. Teaching, or some part of it, is personally satisfying for many teachers. If teachers' professional work is tied to personal commitments that they enact in all areas of their life, the work of a teacher can be experienced as something that happens both during and outside of the work day. Contract hours exist more on paper than they do in practice for

many teachers who bring administrative as well as emotional work home at night and over the weekend.

New teacher stories are professionally important because they provide a fresh look into a culture and community that is often defined by tradition. New teachers act as ethnographers in some ways, incredibly aware of the many nuances of the profession due to their studies but new to the inner workings of the particular community where they begin to work as a teacher. The stories of new teachers reflect and refract teaching culture for anyone willing to pay attention and assume these teachers have something to teach them instead of the other way around.

The second assumption I bring to this work is that a strong sense of who one is becomes integral for new teachers as they face multiple challenges in their work. Without a firm grasp of one's identity, however fluid or in flux it may be, teachers can struggle to respond to the great number of practical and ideological demands made of them through the expectations of other individual teachers, the wider school culture, and their own commitments.

Third, theatre activities create a generative space to hypothesize possibilities in ways that do not exist in other spaces. I came to this assumption after trying for many years to recreate the generative energy youth expressed during our theatre rehearsals in the classrooms where I taught. While there are a number of influencing factors that contribute to this phenomenon, an important one is the way people approach the activity of theatre as if it were a game that somehow opens them up to doing things they might not normally do. It opens them up to imagining things they might not normally imagine.

Fourth, community is important to feeling valued. When a person feels like someone is on their side, struggles are easier to weather, and questions are easier to ask. Lastly, new teachers need community, particularly community outside of where they teach. The political nuances of a professional space can be difficult to navigate, particularly as a newcomer attempts to prove they belong. Having a community outside of work where a person is able to process their experiences with others who are in similar professional positions yet vastly different cultural spaces can allow new teacher physical and psychological distance from which to view their experiences.

Description of Chapters

When I first asked Dr. Kuftinec to join my committee, she responded by asking who I was writing for. After a moment of consideration, I said the teachers that would join me on the project. I wanted it to be useful to them. Because of that, Chapters Two and Three are meant to demonstrate the planning that went into this study in order to make it something useful for these teachers. Chapters Four and Five are what I offer to them as thanks for their participation. And Chapters Six and Seven function reflexively, offering a space to think through how the project went and how I can continue to work with and serve teachers as a researcher.

In Chapter Two, I review foundational literature for this study in the fields of Narrative Inquiry, Sociocultural Theory, and Teacher Identity and discuss how this study draws on this existing research. I discuss ways that Sociocultural Theory has been used to think about stories and storytelling, emphasizing conceptions of dialogism, voice, and the ways in which identity is constructed through language. Next, I segue into a review of four sociocultural concepts as they relate to stories and explain why these particular

concepts (tool, sign, communities of practice, and figured worlds) are helpful for the goals of this study. I conclude with a brief review of Critical Sociocultural Theory in order to point to the ways that power and agency coalesce in the act of identity construction.

In Chapter Three, I explain my methods. I begin by laying out the parameters of the study as situated within Narrative Inquiry and drawing on story circles and Theatre of the Oppressed. I describe the basics of story circles and my goals for the study. I then discuss the different data sources I used, the teachers I worked with, and the process of moving from one-on-one interviews to storytelling workshops. Each of the workshops is briefly detailed. I then explain the analysis process, using ethnodrama as both an analytical method and tool for displaying the results. This iterative process is explored in order to paint the epistemological foundation on which this method of Arts Based Research stands on. This chapter ends with a discussion of dilemmas that presented during the project and how I made sense of them.

Chapters Four through Seven present different layers of analytical unpacking in which I present teacher stories, analyze them using key concepts from Sociocultural Theory, and review the storytelling workshops in light of what I hoped to accomplish along with what happened. Chapter Four begins by introducing considerations for reading an ethnodrama. I then present the ethnodrama, an analytic artifact of how I came to think about the teachers' stories across workshops, developing themes and exploring the different ways these themes were evidenced in the teachers' stories. By moving in and out of storytelling and the discussions that followed the storytelling, I aim to invite the reader into a fictive recreation of my time with the teachers, highlighting the ideas that I

found most interesting while making space for the teachers' words to exist within the research report.

Chapter Five utilizes the same organizational structure as Chapter Four, leading the reader through a detailed explanation of my thought process and intention in constructing the ethnodrama. Here I articulate the sociocultural moves that I see teachers using in their storytelling and their navigation of how those stories get taken up by those in their community, reflecting back intended and unintended identities to which the teachers respond in a number of ways.

Chapter Six looks at the teachers' stories across all moments in the ethnodrama. I do this to address my research questions directly, more broadly describing the stories that the teachers encountered and how they responded to those stories. Specifically, I outline how the teachers took up, ignored, and rejected stories in ways that allowed them to construct and maintain a desired professional identity. Additionally, I explore the ways race functioned across the stories and how the teachers' racialized identities influenced the sociocultural moves they had available to them in their navigation of the cultural world of teaching.

Chapter Seven analyzes the workshops themselves, asking whether they lived up to the possibilities I hoped for. I identify the struggles some teachers had with the Theatre activities alongside the ways those activities supported other teachers in unexpected ways. Similarly, I explore the experience teachers had with the story circles and the ways teachers engaged with them in both supportive and, sometimes, monologic ways that created an isolating experience for some teachers.

In Chapter Seven I review my research questions, providing a discussion of what the current study offers for answers and implications for further study.

Conclusion

As a researcher, I found myself sliding into my former role as an educator throughout this project. I formatted the workshop agendas like the lesson plans I used to write. I privately decided that all of the stories I would share would come from my first three years of teaching. In fact, I felt more like an educator in that space than I had for many years, perhaps because I was around teachers and talking about things teachers talk about more than I had been for a while.

SETH: But, there's this tension-

MAE: It's important for teachers to reflect on our collective struggle. But I don't think that anyone else deserves the right to place a struggle upon teachers if you're not in that position.

The fact is that I am not a K–12 teacher anymore. While the teachers welcomed me into that group as a teacher, they also acknowledged my researcher status throughout the process. This mix of teacher/researcher identity is woven throughout this dissertation. Some sections lean more towards one direction or the other while others are more of a synthesis. As such, the analysis I share is done as someone who the teachers identified as both a teacher and a researcher.

It is my hope that this dissertation captures a complex, contradictory, multifaceted story of what it means to be a teacher. I also hope to capture the story of this project, though the organization of the chapters do not necessarily align chronologically with the thinking or activities I/we did. This hope rests on an understanding of the temptation to

have a story represent everything there is to know about a situation. Amelia acknowledges this when she says, "The challenge of telling these stories is, sometimes, it feels like it's supposed to represent everything, but it's just one moment" (Workshop Six, 12/8/2018). It is also informed by one of the critiques Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) outlines regarding the way colonizers tell history, specifically the histories of others, and the assumption of, "the possibility and the desirability of being able to include absolutely all known knowledge into a coherent whole" (p. 30).

As I argue throughout this work, stories communicate social realities, perspectives, and ideologies. As the teachers pointedly remarked at our last meeting, stories cannot convey everything, but sharing them is powerful. The stories I share here, I do so in an effort to make sense of the project I undertook with the help of fifteen secondary teachers. The story is not complete, as it never could be. But I try to evoke the work and the thinking that happened in the workshops together and the broader research project I embarked on.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Introduction

I came to theory because I was hurting...I came to theory desperate, wanting to

comprehend—to grasp what was happening around and within me. (hooks, 1994, p. 59)

As a teacher, I longed for time and space to discuss pressing issues that hung on my heart long after the final bell had rung and I had gone home. There simply wasn't time. Between planning lessons, grading, communicating with guardians, and the many institutional responsibilities that pepper teachers' daily schedule, meeting regularly with a group of other educators felt impossible. The impossibility I felt is not the same as the hurt hooks describes, yet her words spoke to me during a time of great professional turmoil of the possibility for theory and research to be a place where these conversations might occur. A place to ask questions. To listen. To engage. And above all, literature could be a place where concerns, and the emotions they held, could be taken seriously.

hooks highlights specific relational positionings between an individual and theoretical or empirical literature. First, such positions require a purposeful step adjacent to a current mode of operation that disembodies a particular practice from its purpose, or what Schwab (as cited in Clandinin and Connelly, 1995, p. 9) refers to as a rhetoric of conclusions. Such a rhetoric echoes hollow because the process of inquiry that framed its importance has been removed. Second, these positions suggest that a reciprocal relationship with theoretical and empirical literature can offer a community for those striving to understand their circumstances and experiences. Harris (2006) and Bloomberg and Volpe (2015) describe this community as an ongoing conversation an individual wishes to enter. A person needs to listen to what is being said, taking stock of the primary

arguments, what they agree with and what they wish to debate, before sharing their own thoughts. To fully be a part of that community is to honor those contributions that assist in our thinking.

What follows is the literature that has been helpful to "grasp what [is] happening around and within me" (hooks, 1994, p. 59) as I work to build my own understandings. I begin by reviewing narrative as a foundational theoretical and methodological entrance into this work before describing empirical studies that use sociocultural theory to understand narrative storytelling. I then move to literature that focuses on teacher identity, a field of study that can appear both burgeoning and sparse depending on how it is defined or approached. Next, I review conceptions of story and outline its definitions for this study. Finally, I articulate components of Sociocultural Theory and Narrative Inquiry that provide the theoretical framing for my work.

Narrative

Labov and Waletzky (1967/1997) define narrative through a sociolinguistic frame as an oral rendering of experience. Narratives work both referentially and evaluatively. As a reference, experiences are grounded in particular contexts with events occurring sequentially as they initially happened. As an evaluation, narratives provide a justification for their telling, commenting on their relevance within a broader conversation (Sacks, 1992). For Labov and Waletzky, narratives followed a strict chronological structure. For example:

     (a) I went to the store

     (b) where I bought food

     (c) before making dinner

(d) to eat with my partner

Adding a coda such as 'That's what I did today' includes the evaluative component and brings the listener out of the storied world into the storytelling event. To tell these events out of temporal order, for example, 'I made dinner to eat with my partner with food I bought from the store' (c, d, b, a), would classify the same information as something other than a narrative.

Narrative research has broadened what counts as story over the subsequent decades to include life histories (Bloom & Munro, 1995; Casey, 2013), life stories (Barone, 2001), postmodern narratives (Coulter, 1999); autoethnography (Behar, 1996; Ellis & Bochner, 2003), ethnodrama (Denzin, 2015; Saldana, 2005; Vanover, 2017), and critical storytelling (hooks, 1994; Kozol, 1991) among others. From this diversity, Chase (2011) defines narrative research as "a distinct form of discourse...meaning making through the shaping or ordering of experience, a way of understanding one's own or other's actions, of organizing events and objects into a meaningful whole, of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events over time" (p. 421). She notes specific moves away from narrating past events to experience, suggesting a key shift from Labov and Waletzky's (1967) model that focuses on time. Inclusion of images and performance push the definition past oral and written traditions. And the study of institutional narratives (Baker & Steuernagel, as cited in Chase, 2011) suggests that narratives are constructed at multiple levels, not just by an individual.

Narrative Inquiry is an expansive field that Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) define as "the study of stories or narratives or descriptions of a series of events....[R]esearchers usually embrace the assumption that the story is one if not the fundamental unit that

accounts for human experience" (p.3). Chase (2011) describes the limitations of such a broad definition of story as rendering the concept of narrative meaningless and marginalizing non-narrative ways of meaning making. If Narrative Inquiry is the study of stories, what counts as a story?

Bamberg and Georgakopoulou (2008) write that narratives "are focused upon not as tools for reflecting on (chunks of) lives but as constructive means that are functional in the creation of characters in space and time" (p.2). While I struggle to go so far as to say that stories are not tools that aid reflection, defining stories as a tool of construction that articulates who people are in particular contexts at particular times helps to draw some parameters. This suggests that stories are at least partly defined by *what they do*. Stories are not general discourse or how people talk about a given subject. Stories are tools that construct who people are (characters) in particular contexts (settings) that do particular things (plots) in order to achieve goals (objectives) or address problems (conflicts).

Clear examples of this are when someone describes past experiences or future happenings like what happened at a basketball game or the plan for an upcoming trip. More nuanced are the ways interaction and phenomena work as stories. Wortham (2001) addresses the commonly held belief that people use narratives to help them construct an attractive sense of self. This often occurs in the depiction of individuals overcoming oppressive forces to reclaim their agency. By repeating these stories that cast them as having control in their life, the storyteller constructs a sense of self that mirrors this, often resulting in an understanding of themselves as a person with agency. Subsequent behavior mirrors these beliefs. Wortham builds on this concept by considering the interactional positioning that happens between the speaker and the story as well as the speaker and the

audience, noting that "autobiographical narrators act like particular types of people while they tell their stories, and they relate to their audiences in characteristic ways as they tell those stories" (p. xi).

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) caution against simplistic approaches that define stories as if they were objects to hold and trade. For them, narrative work attempts to figure out that which we take for granted. Specific stories may aid the work, but narrative inquirers must look to the narrative expressions in the day-to-day happenings related to their questions. Stories are not just told. They are lived. Clandinin and Connelly draw on Dewey's conceptualization of experience to draw connections between the individual and the sociocultural context in which the individual resides. Story occurs in a three-dimensional landscape of interaction (personal and social), continuity (past, present, and future), and situation (place).

Bamberg and Georgakopoulou (2008) work to include what they term small stories in the narrative landscape. They do this to attend to the prevalence of representational identity construction through the telling of past events and the missed opportunities available in "the social actions/functions that narratives perform in the lives of people; in how people actually use stories in every-day, mundane situations in order to create (and perpetuate) a sense of who they are" (p. 379). This new narrative turn calls into question generally accepted ways of defining which stories are tellable or useful in the process of identity analysis. Small stories earn their name from their briefness and their momentary existence, both owing to the common practice of overlooking such rich interpretive opportunities. Such a small scale should not shroud the influence these moments have on individuals. These everyday moments contain the spaces in which we

do the majority of our identity work leading to habitus. Small stories take the form of "discourse engagements that engender specific social moments and integrally connect with what gets done on particular occasions and in particular settings" (p. 383).

So, what is a story? For the purposes of this project, I define stories as constructed accounts of personal experience that map particular characteristics onto identities of individuals and groups while iteratively defining who they are within the cultural world of the story (the storied experience) and the community in which it is told (where the storytelling event occurs). This iterative nature plays out in the ways that stories construct and are constructed by individuals and groups. These characteristics directly implicate individuals and/or groups in particular plot lines while closing off others and suggest particular goals and conflicts while closing off others. As in all socio-culturally constructed utterances that teem with past and present ideologies, the identities, goals, and conflicts within storied lives occur in and are shaped by the systems of power and hierarchy to which we are always responding.

Sociocultural Understandings of Narrative

Sociocultural positioning

Understanding narrative storytelling as a tool to tease out the sociocultural positioning of individuals and the lives they lead allows researchers to see narratives as "dynamic cultural artifacts, which [individuals] appropriate and deploy in processes of identification and positioning" (Nasir & Shah, 2011, p. 24). Through a reflexive relationship with a context and the people and stories that exist within it, individuals simultaneously position themselves within and are positioned by cultural narratives. While this supports an agentic view of identity construction, individuals can be limited to

particular roles available through the specific and contextual narratives present and the positioning done by broader discourses and the people who act within them (e.g. race, sex, age, profession). In their study about the narratives that African American males use to make sense of competing identity positioning done in a mathematics classroom, Nasir and Shah (2011) assert that, "[o]f the subject positions that are made available, it is not simply a menu of options; students are often recruited into particular positions and then forced to reconcile. In this way, activity around these artifacts is not neutral, but rather an exercise in power and positioning" (p. 41). This helps to show the identity-making project as contextual, pointing researchers not only to the choices of those whom they study but the resources and the systems from which they come as well.

Li (2010) similarly notes that individuals' thinking does not spring forth newly created "but [is] derived from the process of social interaction in a given sociocultural and institutional context" (p. 132). To decontextualize narrative storytelling from its positioning within linguistic and social systems of hierarchical power is to take away a landscape's middle and background while still expecting to experience a three-dimensional rendering. Hill, Solomon, Dornan, and Stalmeijer (2015) acknowledge as much in their study on the narratives of women surgeons and their discursive struggles as they work to position themselves within the figured world (Holland, Skinner, Lachicotte Jr., & Cain, 1998) of surgery. Dominated by narratives of masculinity, the women dealt with what some felt were irreconcilable differences in the discourses around surgery and motherhood, sometimes reimagining what it meant to be a good surgeon, sometimes downplaying feminine attributes, and sometimes engaging in new world making. The stories existed squarely within situated discourses that, if absent, would render an

21

oversimplified, two-dimensional account of the identity work occurring in these narratives.

Narrative positioning occurs in storytelling as well in storied lives. In their work with teachers, Clandinin and Connelly (1995) describe a narrative understanding of teacher knowledge that moves beyond individual stories of individual events. Writing of teachers, the authors note "their way of being in the classroom is storied: As teachers they are characters in their own stories of teaching, which they author" (p. 12). The narrative knowledge Clandinin and Connelly explore positions the teachers within a broader discourse against a more theoretical knowledge in which abstract ideas are rhetorically debated apart from the individuals and contexts in which they might eventually play out. Narrative knowledge in which teachers live out plots they author, navigate conflicts that are immediate and embodied, and wrestle with challenging questions that they must respond to places teacher identities, bodies, and agency within micro- and macro-level socio-historical contexts.

Dialogism

Narrative inquiry without other theoretical frameworks like sociocultural theory often depicts stories as constructed by the individual (Barone, 2000; Saldaña & Walcott, 2001). Though narrative research recognizes the landscapes within which people make meaning (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Barone, 2001), stories can often be presented and analyzed in a way that presents the storyteller as the sole author or mediating influence (Barone, 2000; Beaton, 2014; Ben-Peretz, 1995; Case, 2012). However, Bakhtin (as cited in Morris, 1994) asserts that language is never monologic but "is by nature dialogic, and monologue is merely the conventional compositional form of its expression…" (pp. 98-

22

99). Utterances teem with the socio-historical remnants of past uses and always anticipate a future response from an audience, real or imagined. Language is constantly forming and informed by its past, present, and future context. Wortham (2001) acknowledges this when he addresses the commonly held belief that people use narratives to help them construct an attractive sense of self. He builds on this concept by considering the interactional positioning that happens between the speaker and the story as well as the speaker and the audience. The language used calls on culturally desirable linguistic artifacts to construct a past, present, and future narrative for the speaker that works with a given context populated by others and their shared cultural assumptions.

Such desirable, or preferred, identities further underscore the dialogic interactions that occur in narratives. Zembylas (2018) defines preferred identities as those identities valued and encouraged through various regimes and discourses such as those that require teachers to perform in ways that can be measured through standardized testing or, to model particular national identities via patriotic gestures like the Pledge of Allegiance or, perhaps more nuanced, a commitment to rationalist (Ellsworth, 1989) or humanist (Kliebard, 2004) curriculum. Zembylas (2018) writes:

> Directing teachers towards preferred identities, in order to be considered 'efficient', 'professional', and 'successful', raises a number of fundamental questions that are rarely addressed explicitly or systematically in theorizations of teacher professional identity: How can teachers act ethically and politically, when they are positioned within particular (e.g. neo-liberal or nationalized) regimes and discourses that demand from them to perform certain 'preferred' identities?...How can teachers question the ethical and political conditions under which they tell

narratives of themselves as teachers?...These questions highlight the ethical and

political ways in which teacher identities are produced, resisted and (re)inscribed

through particular discourses, pedagogical practices and education policies… (p.

79)

The discourses within which teachers author themselves through stories and storied lives

utilize ideological language that offers particular identities weighted with socio-historical

preferences. These preferences, or preferred identities, politicize identities which

individuals speak back to through affirmation, revision, or rejection.

At stake here is an understanding of how interactional positioning contributes to

the constitutive power of narrative enactment. Along with other researchers (Bamberg &

Georgakopoulou, 2008; Defina, 2011; Hill et al., 2015; Talmy, 2011; Wortham,

Mortimer, Lee, Allard, and White, 2011), Wortham's (2001) use of sociocultural theory

acknowledges the mutually constitutive relations of language and positioning that occur

in narrative storytelling, particularly through interviews. Storytellers do not merely recite

lines but engage with their audience, responding to what they say and how they react.

Thus, the audience participates in the construction of a story.

Identity and language

Language figures prominently in the work of Vygotsky and Bakhtin. For

Vygotsky (1978), learning is social and thus mediated through language. Learning

appears twice: first in social interactions between the individual and members of society

be it practiced or observed, and second in the individual as a person internalizes that

information as part of their identity. Children use language to describe their world.

Eventually, speech shifts to narrating current activity and, then planning activity. Such a

24

move signals a shift from appealing to others to the ability to appeal to oneself. "Language thus takes on an *intrapersonal function* in addition to its *interpersonal use*. When children develop a method of behavior for guiding themselves...they succeed in applying a social attitude to themselves" (p. 27, emphasis in the original). The iterative process that occurs in the internalization of speech (p. 58) illuminates the mediating function of language as people build relationships between themselves and others and the process of becoming aware of these connections.

Bakhtin (as cited in Morris, 1994) asserts that language echoes with the meanings of both past and future use, so that, in one's own use, there are many voices. Further, moves such as ventriloquism and double voicing help a narrator position herself in relation to others within and beyond the story. Through improvisation and repetition, the use of these voices in narration constructs an understanding of the self that is both personal and situated in the other. This double self illustrates the relationship with which one exists in concert with and possibly dependence on the other, for Bakhtin argues that one does not exist independently but only in relation to an other.

Using this work, Hill et al. (2015) note that individuals construct identity through language imbued with cultural ideologies and discourses. Coffey and Street (2008) relatedly describe identity work as an affordance of sociocultural perspectives on narrative storytelling. They note that, as the use of life histories in myriad fields of research continues to expand, studies increasingly aim to "understand how identities are shaped by symbolic values embedded within social contexts across time" (p. 453). Employing sociocultural theories to investigate the discursive identities constructed

through language provides a more nuanced portrayal of how discourses actively shape and are shaped by the individual.

In response to the necessity for tools that examine such connections, Golden (2017) draws on figured worlds (Holland et al., 1998) to analyze the presence of blame discourses within the narratives of a 20-year-old as he constructs an understanding of himself in pursuit of a High School Equivalency Diploma. These provide analytic avenues to identify deficit discourses within narratives of grit meant to assert that victims of systemic racial and economic inequality can overcome such obstacles through self-control and discipline (Golden, 2017, p. 348). Using figured worlds as an analytical framework, Golden notes that one's understanding of a particular situation depends on the structures of meaning they draw on.

Dornan, Pearson, Carson, Helmich, and Bundy (2015) similarly focus on language within figured worlds to parse out the ways that signs and symbols mediate identity and experience. They note "it is by 'authoring' our responses (choosing one response rather than another) that we create ourselves as individuals" (p. 175). Discourse and identity are thus tightly linked through narrative storytelling. For Dornan et al., this allows for sociocultural perspectives through critical discourse analysis to articulate how individuals create identities in response to the myriad voiced discourses encountered in their learning. Their use of figured worlds allows them to identify the power inherent in the available discourses within figured worlds, particularly as they are voiced by authorities within the world.

Voice

While the metaphor of voice often accompanies writing pedagogy (writing as voice), connections can be drawn to storytelling and narrative research that aims to direct attention to and raise up the stories of groups whose perspectives are relegated to lower positions of influence. This is particularly true when conceptualizing how stories construct identities. As identities are authored, the metaphor of voice and its physical connotations (e.g. Anzaldúa, 1987, pp. 53–54) evokes questions about the immediacy of language and its impact on individuals: what is present and available? What is erased or disallowed? And who or what flexes the power to make such determinations? Thus, voice becomes a valuable consideration when investigating storytelling as a form of identity construction.

Lensmire (2000) critiques the concept of voice as individual expression and participation. In response, he proposes voice as a project in which individuals choose ways to appropriate a language that has been used and thus infused with others' values and ideologies while considering the desires and opinions of various audiences who may encounter the individual's voice. As such, language is the medium through which voice communicates and contributes to the (re)construction of ideology, or, as Giroux (1988) writes,

> ...language is intimately related to the dynamics of authorship and voice. It is within and through language that individuals in particular historical contexts shape values into particular forms and practices. As part of the production of meaning, language represents a central force in the struggle for voice. (p. 59)

Thus Lensmire's (2000) conception of voice pays close attention to a Freirean pedagogy of literacy in which an analysis of the politics and power that works through language is part and parcel of a voice as project.

Kamler (2001) instead argues for a metaphor of story instead of voice. She suggests, "[m]etaphorically, story allows a more textual orientation than voice, a closer attention to what is written (rather than she who has written)—to the actual text—and contexts in which it is produced" (p. 45). Snaza and Lensmire (2006) outline this orientation as attending to representation (the text represents a thing but is not the thing itself), labor (the text is constricted by expectations of production), and analysis (the text requires a critical reading of language use) (p. 8). Similar to the moves involved in Collective Memory Work (Haug, 1987) and Collective Biography (Davies & Gannon, 2006), Kamler suggests an analytical distancing in order to consider the text without considering the author's identity.

However, Snaza and Lensmire's (2006) articulation of the voice metaphor as a moment of production challenges the narrative researcher to look beyond written text, or even the transcribed interview, to a more fully embodied narrative storytelling event. While a metaphor of story aptly signals the reflective work that occurs authorship, it pins down the narrative act in a way that negates the social interaction that occurs in real time as language is chosen, used, interpreted, assessed, and used again with meaning that is ever-evolving. Storytelling is, after all, performative. If Snaza and Lensmire's assertion that our bodies and thoughts "are one and the same and….always exceed what we can know of them" (p. 16), then narrative researchers must look beyond literary conceptions

of storytelling to the embodied and vocal expressions that situate individuals within a physical society as much as a linguistic one.

Teacher Identity

Britzman's *Practice Makes Practice* (2003) became a text that I returned to repeatedly over the course of the three years I taught methods courses in a licensure program for preservice teachers. It first showed up in curriculum I was given to teach and mixed among the other required texts I needed to read within a matter of weeks relatively unnoticed. As is the case with inherited curriculum, I followed it relatively closely as I got a feel for the rhythm of the course. The materials I inherited continued to reference the text week after week, so I read it again. And again. Four years later, I count this book chapter as a writing friend: a text that hangs out in my thoughts when I sit down to do some serious thinking and writing.

Britzman's concept of competing chronologies (p. 55) was the first time in memory I felt invited to consider a professional identity shaped by experience and in possible conflict with any number of identity positions suggested by such entities as the colleagues I worked with, the administration I answered to, the parents I talked with at conferences and over email, the curriculum I was given, the students that populated my room five periods a day, and the hopes I had for myself. Britzman's review of Dewey's meditation on continuity aptly describes the identity work involved in navigating the moments where past experience rubs up against the ideological expectations of new situations. "Continuity, as a criterion for experience, refers to the connectedness we feel towards our social practice and activities, and whether we see ourselves as authors of, rather than as authored by, our experience" (p. 34). She continues further on, "the

difference between mere circumstance and lived experience is our capacity to bestow experience with meanings, be reflective, and take action" (p. 34).

Within Britzman's work is a consideration of an identity and self, the relationship between the self and external experiences, reflection and the ability for an individual to narrate the self's future actions, and the ability for that individual to claim agency within a particular context. These are the makings of storying one's identity, or what Bakhtin describes as authoring oneself as both the object and subject, the character and author.

Such a distinction leads me to question the way identity, particularly teacher identity, appears in empirical research: as an object to which things are done or a subject which does things—which *authors*. What follows is a review of the literature on teacher identity. It is by no means exhaustive. Many studies could be tangentially connected to teacher identity such as those that explore culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2014; González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005), critical pedagogy (Freire, 1972; hooks, 1994; Grande, 2004), and critical whiteness studies in education (Leonardo, 2002; Matias & Mackey, 2016; Jupp & Lensmire, 2016). Instead, I focus specifically on publications that use identity in the title or subject terms. From there, I utilize references from that work that I felt related to my research or responded to questions I had while reading. I partially borrow the themes used by Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) in their broad review of teacher identity literature while adding additional themes that I believe deserve closer attention.

Identity and Self

Numerous studies affirm the dynamic (changing) and shifting (unpredictable) nature of teacher identity (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop,

2004; Brown & Heck, 2018; Olsen, 2011). Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) argue that within identities are numerous sub-identities that "must be balanced to avoid conflict across them" (p. 177). Conversely, Gee (2001) lays out four ways to view identity—nature-identity, institution-identity, discourse identity, and affinity identity—that function independently of one another but can affirm identities constructed through other forces and reinforce one another (see Figure 1). For example, a child medically diagnosed with ADHD (nature-identity) whose teacher describes them as distracted and hyperactive (discourse-identity) has an identity as someone with ADHD reinforced through multiple constitutive forces. These identities do not require competition, even if, for example, the student does not have a medical diagnosis as someone with ADHD. Instead, the multiple forces create a nuanced identity in which different fields of discourse provide particular perspectives that, exactly because of their different fields of discourse, can coexist without competition.
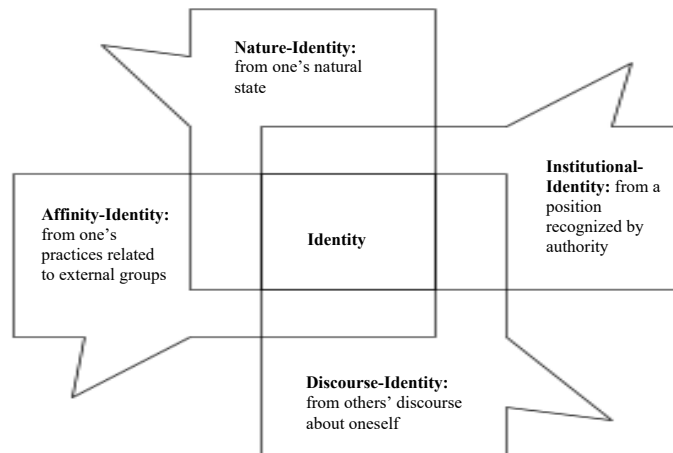
Figure 1: Gee's (2001) four conceptions of identity

Lauriala and Kukkonen (2005) conceptualize identity formed from three components of self: Actual self, Ought self, and Ideal self (see Figure 2). The Actual self

is the current, dominant identity. The Ought self represents the idealized goal by an outside community or institution. And the Ideal self is the goal set by the individual. Identity moves in and out from this as both a product and process of engagement. If these are seen as always present instead of distinct, identity might be seen as existing at the nexus of each of these components. These are not meant to signal that identity is a balance between each component. Instead, identity occurs in the navigation among each
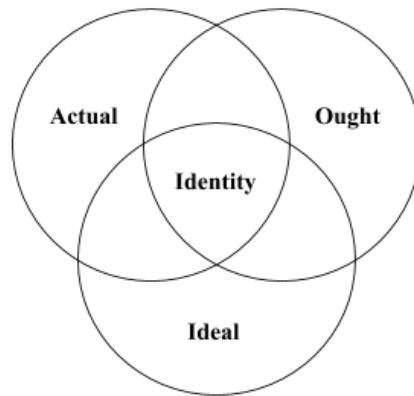
Figure 2: Lauriala and Kukkonen's (2005)
conception of identity

relevant component.

An important distinction here is the way in which the self is conceptualized. For Lauriala and Kukkonen, identity and self are two descriptors for the same concept. They write,

Self, then, might be thought of as the meaning *maker* and identity as the meaning *made*, even as the self and identity evolve and transform over time...*self will subsume identity(ies) and will be understood as an evolving yet coherent being, that consciously and unconsciously constructs and is constructed, reconstructs and is reconstructed, in interaction with the cultural contexts, institutions, and*

people which self lives, learns, and functions. (as cited in Beauchamp & Thomas,

2009, p. 179, emphasis in original)

Though self and identity are coupled as descriptors of the same concept, self is imagined

as something more central within an individual that makes meaning of external, social

forces while identity is the expression of that meaning. Though the self will incorporate

the meaning it makes, that meaning is always in reference to something already within an

individual.

This conception of "self" seems to suggest a central or core being, which is

difficult to square within a sociocultural framework. A core self that helps an individual

navigate context, discourse, desires, and embodiment attempts to recognize the ways in

which individuals interact with (shape and are shaped by) those components yet rests on

an innate orientation that arrives with the body at the moment of birth. It is possible to

consider two locations of self that incorporates sociocultural identity formation: first, a

central core self in early years that eventually solidifies and functions as an anchor the

individual can rely on as it works on a second external self, or identity, that evolves

throughout one's life. Yet we still must contend with the sociocultural construction of this

first self, which seems to contradict the purpose of seeing the self as an untouchable core

that guides an individual. I am thus inclined to acknowledge yet set aside the idea of a

self separate from identity for this study, leaning, instead, on Butler's (1990) contention

that identity does not exist before its expression: "...identity is performatively constituted

by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (p. 33).

Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop (2004) describe identity as ongoing and involving

cyclical iterations of analysis and enactment. To account for the multiple, possibly

contradictory expressions of identity that individuals may perform in various contexts, they conceive of identity as made up of sub-identities that achieve various degrees of harmony and dissonance. While harmony between these sub-identities may be a psychological goal for an individual, dissonance does not necessarily suggest failure as much as a site of negotiation, what Britzman (2003) might call competing chronologies.

Brown & Heck (2018) similarly promote the recognition that individuals hold multiple identities that shift in and out of prominence based on the people they are around and the contexts they are in. In this way, "identity is conceptualized...as a community-forming process where teachers, other adults and students express and communicate ideas according to a shared set of principles and practices" (p. 51). This process relates slightly to Holland, Skinner, Lachicotte, and Cain's (1998) concept of improvisation in that it occurs in the tension between members of a community and the cultural principles and practices available for action. The decisions individuals make, or the moments of transformation and creativity, are informed by the socio-historical situation while holding the possibility to change both the individual and the community.

Zembylas (2018) utilizes Judith Butler's work on identity to argue for an ethical and political frame for conceptualizing teacher identity. He interprets Butler by articulating that power relationships construct and control identity expression which can, in turn, work against those very forces. Agency thus comes from engaging with the forces an individual wishes to critique. For Zembylas, these power relations are the professional and social expectations of 'preferred' identities. Preferred identities are identities valued and encouraged through various regimes and discourses such as those that require teachers to perform in ways that can be measured or to model particular national

identities. Through adherence to these regimes, teachers become recognized as efficient, professional, and successful by individuals and, since individuals navigate identity performance through language, by discourse.

Rethinking teacher identity through ethical and political considerations in this way critiques the claim for coherent identities. This is due to the dependence of identities on relationships between the identities of other individuals and discourse, both of which are fluid and outside of any one person's control. The unknowability of an other and the social ownership of discourse, both of which must be known to fully know ourselves, limits the possibility of a coherent self. Instead, by recognizing ourselves as not fully knowable, we are more likely to recognize others as not fully knowable, restricting the usefulness of identity categories and opening up opportunities for activist identities that critique regimes of power and ethics that do violence to us and others.

Professional and Personal

Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop (2004) define teacher professional identity as a combination of both social influences and professional commitments related to the profession. Social influences include how broader discourse communities (e.g. district-level policy, professional organizations, family, or media depictions) conceive of what it means to be a teacher and what those depictions construct as possible characterizations of teachers including what they know and do. Professional commitments encompass the beliefs about education that individual teachers have based on their life experiences both in and out of education. Thus, the concept of a *professional* identity is one that involves both a person (with personal yet socially influenced ideological commitments) and context (a community of practice, though not nearly as homogenous as that may seem on

the surface). Narratively speaking, then, professional conflict occurs when the personal is at odds with the social (discourse or context).

Sachs (2005) defines a professional identity as a combination of widely held beliefs about general identity—that it is dynamic and informed by experience—and a "framework for teachers to construct their own ideas of 'how to be', 'how to act' and 'how to understand' their work and their place in society" (p. 15). The difference between Sachs (2005) and Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop (2004) is the difference between a subject and object. While Sachs's concept of professional identity does things, Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop's concept of professional identity has things done to it. In other words, a professional identity that operates as an object suggests that the teacher molds more or less to the traits, beliefs, and actions of a particular profession or group within that profession, much like Lave and Wenger's (1991) communities of practice. An individual may have agency to move around, or in and out of, a particular community, but their role, how they are recognized by others, and the behaviors within a community are largely restricted to recognizable and socially accepted identities determined by that group. To be a teacher in this way is to do the things that other teachers do. Improvisation is tolerated insomuch as it does not conflict with the socially accepted definition of who teachers are and what teachers do. For example, individual teachers might have the latitude to choose books for their students as long as those books fall within what is deemed acceptable, such as within a particular lexile range, content that deals with topics broadly defined as social justice–related, or the American canon.

A professional identity that operates as a subject suggests that it makes sense of the professional context. This framework is not a neutral tool. It changes as it encounters

new experiences. But is also speaks back to those experiences by suggesting particular interpretations of them in service of an individual teacher's values and beliefs. A professional identity is less who a person *is* as a professional but how a person *interprets* their experiences within a profession. It is influenced by an individual's personal identity, but is separate from it. Day, Kington, Stobart, and Sammons (2006) note the inherent interweaving of personal and professional identities because of the deeply personal component of the teaching act. As such, the personal must be considered when investigating any sort of professional identity. Yet, the identity-as-subject concept suggests that the two are separate.

Context

Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop (2004) note that much of the literature they reviewed on teacher identity research depends on cognitive work done by participants through written or verbal data about their teaching. While this plays out in much of the research that has been published since then (e.g. Brown & Heck, 2018; Hsieh, 2016; O'Connor, 2008; Thomas & Beauchamp, 2007), Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop's (2004) advice to utilize field observation and life-story data has provided nuanced insight into how teacher identities are lived out and informed by experiences outside of the classroom and school (Brown & Heck, 2018; Calabrese-Barton, Kang, Tan, O'Neill, Bautista-Guerra, & Brecklin, 2013; Kumpulainen & Rajala, 2017; Zembylas, Charalambous, & Charalambous, 2012).

Brown and Heck's (2018) study that explores the constructed identities of various stakeholders in an alternative school context provides an apt example. Against a backdrop of school and classroom observations, two teachers and an administrator

37

participated in one-on-one interviews. Data were analyzed utilizing Burke's (as cited in Brown & Heck, 2018) dramatic pentad, which consequently has many parallels to Saldaña's (2015) dramaturgical coding. These analyses were then used to construct findings related to the individual identities each participant constructed in reference to the school's core commitments and negotiated through interactions with other people (teachers, students, admin, etc.) and the stories they told about their experiences.

There are clear implications from Brown and Heck's analyses regarding the ways in which school community values make available particular scripts from which stakeholders must choose. And while the enactment of those scripts may vary from one person to the next, the values anchor individuals to a sense of a whole community. Implied here is the struggle an individual may have if they refuse or fail to take up those values in community-approved ways if at all. While there is an assumed state of agency in these choices, the study suggests considerations of power and institutional ideology should be explored further, particularly for new teachers and others who are negotiating their place within the profession as well as the school community.

Narrative Identity

Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) describe stories as a vehicle through which identities are expressed. Identity thus takes its form, at least partly, in the stories and their telling that teachers use to make sense of experience. These acts and the artifacts they create function as prime outward expressions and products of identity that allow individuals to mark where they are in relationship to other considerations such as socially expected or preferred identities, personally idealized identities, discourse identities, or affinity identities. Through the stories that teachers tell of their experiences, identity

ultimately becomes tied both to practical knowledge that teachers hold and share through those experiences and to the stories told of those experiences as a way of sense-making in order for teachers to understand themselves (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004).

However, power hierarchies, particularly those that new teachers find themselves on the receiving end of, can push teachers to live storied lives that do harm to both the individual and the broader profession. Awareness of such situations can offer alternatives, though. Butler (2005) writes, "if, in the name of ethics, we (violently) require that another do a certain violence to herself, and do it in front of us by offering a narrative account or issuing a confession, then conversely, if we permit, sustain, and accommodate the interruption, a certain practice of non-violence may follow" (p. 64). If this is the case, the narrative interruptions through revision, rejection, and editorializing that teachers do during and in response to storytelling provide generative entrance points into considerations of where power flows within the discourse of teacher identity, both within professional settings and in their personal lives as they represent teachers writ large to friends, family, and strangers, as well as the emotional and political implications of such positions.

Sfard and Prusak (2005) extend the connection between stories and identity. For them, stories don't merely shape identity but are identities. This move makes literal the writing metaphors of revising, authoring, and storying an identity. Instead of seeing stories as a vehicle through which to study and mark the contours of identity, they argue that identity is "collections of stories about persons or, more specifically...narratives about individuals that are reifying, endorsable, and significant" (p. 16). While I would argue that identity is made up of many things, the stories that individuals tell to comment

and reflect on their experiences position them in particular ways that suggest or restrict certain plotlines or possible avenues of action. In this way, language and the act of storytelling have direct connections to identity that deserve close attention.

Reflection

Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop (2004) conceptualize teacher identity as something that moves through a series of quadrants marked by the intersection between axes of public/private and individual/collective engagement. The process begins with collective/public knowledge in the form of research. It moves to the unique composition of private/collective knowledge that occurs in specific professional settings where collective/public knowledge is lived out. Self reflection, or private/individual knowledge helps the individual make sense of the second quadrant and what that means personally for someone before moving to the public/individual quadrant in which an individual shares their knowledge, often through restorying their experiences. However, the authors note that this is not a linear process and often involves moving back and forth between quadrants depending on the situations in which the teacher finds themself.

Olsen (2011) reminds us that this reflection does merely address the current situation but "always links to the past since each of us remains in part bound by our historical condition(s) while we are reconstructing ourselves within any present experience" (p. 263). Drawing on Heidegger, Olsen argues that the past, present, and future simultaneously exist and are accounted for in reflection, much like Bakhtin's utterance. One is always building on and informed by what has come before, addressing the current situation, and anticipating a response or future interaction. Just as communities of practice don't exist outside macro systems of power, the reflection

process that precedes and encompasses storytelling does not occur in a vacuum. As such, individuals are always responding to past, present, and future circumstances that concern local and global discourses.

Agency

Lewis and Moje (in Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007) define agency as the "strategic making and remaking of selves, identities, activities, relationships, cultural tools and resources, and histories, as embedded within relations of power" (p. 18). A review of the literature on teacher identity affirms agency as a key component of identity development. As Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop (2004) explain, "it can be argued that professional identity is not something teachers have, but something they use in order to make sense of themselves as teachers" (p. 123). In Vygotskian terms, then, professional identity can function as a sign a person uses to symbolically understand and, to some degree, master themself within a sociohistorical community. Agency functions in the degree to which an individual takes ownership of the dynamic process of identity construction and the impact it has on themself.

Sfard & Prusak (2005) note that taking control of one's identity can have a compounding effect on the degree to which a person asserts their agency, sharing their perspective and possibly changing their context. However, such moves come with a social cost, particularly for new teachers (Day, Kington, Stobart & Sammons, 2006). This reminds us that agency, just like the individuals who wish to exert it, exists within social systems governed by values that may allow for that agency of individuals so long as it conforms to community expectations. Day, Kington, Stobart, and Sammons (2006) suggest that agency can be expressed internally as well to the degree that individuals are

able to live with contradictions within their identities. Agency in this way suggests an ability to accept and move in the midst of constitutive contextual forces in a way that benefits them while understanding the distinction between the self and the situation.

These considerations of agency and identity through storytelling and its subsequent embodiment through action as individuals assess and evaluate the identities they have momentarily sketched should be accounted for in research on teacher identity (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Parkison (2008) suggests that teachers must choose either to submit to the social roles available to them in current professional discourses and contexts, reifying the alienating experience of traditional schooling, or to act within those discourses, engaging in a process of self-actualization and ethical activism. While the options may not be that simplistic or dire, how agency is claimed and the impacts it has on teacher identity within broader systems of power point researchers to a more critical consideration of teacher identity that extends implications beyond the individual teacher.

Theoretical Framework

Stories as Signs

Stories function as mediating practices that help teachers make sense of themselves within socio-historically situated experiences. Foundational to understanding different levels of mediated practice is the concepts of sign. Vygotsky (1978) and Bakhtin (as cited in Morris, 1994) both explore the socio-historical implications of signs. Both Vygotsky and Bakhtin conceptualize sign as something that carries symbolic significance with it. For Vygotsky, that significance acknowledges one's interpersonal relationship with another in which a mediating tool is mobilized not for influence on an external object but as a means for establishing relationships. Vygotsky (1978) describes this as a

process that begins with interpersonal relationships but ultimately results in intrapersonal relationships (p. 58) towards a goal of mastering the self. Bakhtin (as cited in Morris, 1994, p. 50) instead stays focused on the external by asserting that signs construct and carry with them ideological worlds. While Vygotsky's sign points inward to an understanding of the self in relationship with others, Bakhtin's sign points outward (as cited in Morris, 1994, p. 51).

Story as a Vygotskian sign then functions as an object through which a person may come to understand themself in relation to others. The story puts the individual in relationship with another while aiding the individual in the process of mastering themself. In contrast, a Bakhtinian sign recasts story not as an internal relationship between the self and others in a process of mastering oneself. Rather, it is a shift into ideology. The meaning of a Bakhtinian sign rests in the ideology held by those who have used it before and those who will respond to it in the future. A sign's ideological meaning resides in its past use, current context, and future interpretation. In this way, people construct ideologies, but unlike the Vygotskian sign that turns inward and aids the individual in understanding the self in relation to other, the Bakhtinian sign exists externally representing a lens through which to understand the world (as cited in Morris, 1994, p. 211). People tell stories, giving voice to ideologies which, in turn, contribute to a collective, socially constructed frame through which to view the individual and the world.

Communities of Practice

Stories as signs demonstrates how narrative storytelling occurs between people or, just as importantly, within the individual as a way of understanding themselves and their place within a community and its ideologies. It follows, then, that a consideration of how

communities engage in narrative storytelling as a way of instruction and inclusion is needed. Lave and Wenger's (1991) articulation of legitimate peripheral participation considers such work under the term communities of practice. These communities of practice are "a set of relations among persons, activity, and world over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice...Thus, participation in the cultural practice in which any knowledge exists is an epistemological principle of learning" (p. 98). In other words, learning occurs as a situated practice with sociocultural relations located in time and space and with knowledge that tangentially or broadly connects to other communities. The rules of learning related to knowledge are dependent on participation with this lived-in world. Knowledge connotes information one has *about* participation in a community of practice whereas learning represents understanding *from* participation in a community of practice. Narrative storytelling as a practice within a community of practice constitutes participation and, thus, learning.

Lave and Wenger (1991) view learning as a process they call legitimate peripheral participation (p. 29). For them, learning does not simply occur within a situated practice. Instead, learning functions as an integral component of engaged practice (p. 35). Thus, narrative storytelling as a space for learning within a community of practice presupposes an engaged practice, albeit on the periphery. It may be helpful to draw the boundaries of this learning space called the community of practice in order to understand where and how narrative storytelling functions.

Each of the three components of legitimate peripheral participation work in tandem as a collection of suggestive concepts and not, as Lave and Wenger push against, a series of continuums on which to place an individual. Legitimacy points to one's

44

belonging in a community instead of the degree to which one is seen as in accordance with rules. Peripheral signals the multiple and varied fields of participation within a community of practice. Though any one way of participating may not be central in a community, an individual that has learned more than another may be more or less embedded within the community of practice. Lave and Wenger identify these as old-timers and newcomers (p. 56), though learning occurs in a much more complex relationship than a simple dyad as all members of a community are at different levels of sustained practice within their learning. While Lave and Wenger outline this theoretical component as a triadic relationship between old-timers whose mentees have enough knowledge to be relative old-timers to a new set of newcomers, this suggests a series of relationships with much more complexity through which people in relation support, learn from, and teach each other. Finally, participation returns to the assertion that learning happens through engagement with the community. Legitimate peripheral participation theorizes a learning space in which all participants belong, though some engage in broader and more nuanced practices as a result of their long-term learning. These experienced participants mentor new members as they move from novice to experienced. The experienced old-timers continue to learn through their continued participation.

Here communities of practice add to the understanding of narrative storytelling that Vygotskian tools and signs provide. Vygotsky describes the transition from tool to sign as the moment an individual shifts from an external orientation to an internal orientation. Vygotsky describes learning as a process of internalization: the gathering and incorporation of knowledge in a process of mastering and understanding the self. Denotative and cultural interpretations of Vygotsky's internalization focus heavily on "an

individual acquisition of the cultural given" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 48). Communities of practice instead turn our attention to internalization within the structure of a social world. It moves beyond structures of teaching towards "the changing relations between newcomers and old-timers in the context of a changing shared practice" (p. 49). This adds to the study of narrative storytelling by considering structures outside of the individual as constructive and influential.

Tustig (2005) and Barton and Hamilton (2005) develop the role of language and power in communities of practice as a constitutive force. Tustig (2005) points out "while Wenger is careful to make clear he is not just talking about language when talking about meaning, language is clearly central to much of the experience of negotiation of meaning we encounter in communities of practice" (p. 40). She goes on to show how a senior employee at an insurance claims office use language to accomplish tasks like starting meetings and communicating new rules that position that particular employee hierarchically to the rest of the group. This is not an example of the old-timer/newcomer relationship, but one of power.

Barton and Hamilton (2005) further address the need to further theorize power in communities of practice. "These do not transfer so well to interconnected but dispersed networks – more loosely framed fields of social action – and they are weak on issues of power and conflict where groups do not share common goals and interests" (p. 25). As people move fluidly from one community to the next, communities with blurred boundaries and overlapping relations, the very task of understanding what is happening becomes a site of contestation. Agreed-upon meaning is accomplished through reification, or "producing objects that congeal this experience into 'thingness'" (Wenger

as cited by Barton & Hamilton, 2005, p. 26). Naming the negotiation of such products that define what counts as part of the shared endeavor and common repertoire of resources of a community of practice, and the consideration that these negotiations happen because of the multitude of domains that exist concurrently with a community of practice, more acutely recognizes the role of power and language within them.

Figured Worlds

The possibility of systems that evoke ideals through a story suggests an opportunity for narrative storytelling to function as a cultural artifact (Holland, Skinner, Lachicotte Jr., & Cain, 1998, p. 61). This, in turn, can operate as an entry point to, a representation of, or a performance of figured worlds. These worlds, as Holland et al. describe, are where, for example, inexpensive poker chips carry immense value and signal one's membership and commitment to the community of Alcoholics Anonymous. Or it might simply be the world that people inhabit on the street in their neighborhoods where group membership is leveraged as cultural capital. It is an "'as-if' world" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 52) that "is peopled by the figures, characters, and types who carry out its tasks and who also have styles of interacting within, distinguishable perspectives on, and orientations towards it" (p. 51). In other words, figured worlds describe communities of individuals who operate within a shared set of norms and values unique to their group that shape the perspectives and actions of those within the community.

Narrative storytelling has the ability to construct and represent such figured worlds. Through the analysis of characters, action, and inferred values, one can abstract what Gee (1990) calls a "capital D" Discourse that governs particular figured worlds, similar to the instructive nature of stories within communities of practice. Stories, and the

47

way the teller uses vocal cues such as volume and pitch to comment on the characters and actions within the stories (c.f. Bakhtin's concept of voicing and ventriloquation as cited in Morris, 1994 and Wortham, 2001), provide windows into figured worlds for outsiders who may or may not recognize or participate within them. These stories represent a system of beliefs that orient those who participate in specific ways to the subjects of their stories as well as to each other. This circulates as instruction for people which may invite or turn away individuals from those figured worlds.

Finally, stories as artifacts offer an investigation of the ways stories allow tellers to pivot into the figured worlds of which they speak and the agency enacted through these tellings. Key to this work is the possibility to understand narrative storytelling as a space in which people construct and receive instruction regarding their identities. Holland et al. (1998) suggest just that:

> [a]s we use artifacts to affect others, we become, at some point in our growing up, aware of and capable of using artifacts to affect ourselves. We achieve self-control, albeit of a very limited sort, by the mediation of our thoughts and feelings through artifacts. We learn how to control ourselves from the outside, so to speak (Vygotsky, 1978); we learn how to position ourselves for ourselves. (p. 64)

Different from Lave and Wenger's (1991) communities of practice, which focuses on the induction of newcomers by expert members, figured worlds resemble a field bound by values but open to improvisation. Analogous to this comparison is the difference between goal-oriented video games and open-world video games. In the first, the player works to move from easy levels to more complex situations, learning from a measured increase in challenge and use of more and more tools. In the second, the player exists within the

48

bounded rules of the figured world but has the freedom to roam wherever she desires, engaging in any number of tasks that may or may not be difficult. The goal of the player is merely to respond and engage in the world by participating in specific activities that are valued. Individuals who participate within figured worlds may improvise new possibilities as long as they fit within the values and norms of the figured world. It is the possibility for improvisation that makes the concept of figured worlds so fruitful for the exploration of identity construction through the use of narrative storytelling.

Critical Sociocultural Theory

In his forward to *Reframing Sociocultural Research on Literacy: Identity, Agency, and Power* (Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007), Brian Street highlights the historic absence of broader political and ideological perspectives in sociocultural literacy research. Critical sociocultural theory leans into this critique by exploring the influence of the macro aspects of social structures, specifically taking up language on identity, agency, and power. Language, after all, is not neutral, but bears the weight of what Bakhtin describes as heteroglossia (as cited in Morris, 1994). "Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life" (p. 293). Thus, each new utterance carries with it connotations of and connections to the ways its language has been used before. This places it within a sociohistorical web in which the vibrations of broader systems of power and ideology reverberate through local performances of identity and agency. These, in turn, ripple outward, connecting immediate and broader literacy practices together through a dialectical process of construction. Critical sociocultural theory aims to understand these relationships with a focus on serving traditionally marginalized groups who are underserved by literacy practices that ignore macro-level influences. It

points to the constitutive power of language and the ways in which power, identity, and agency get mobilized or restricted through it.

Applied to narrative storytelling, these critical considerations suggest that the story nor its telling are neutral but are imbued with "ready-made formulations of social meaning and relations of power" (Enciso, in Lewis et al., 2007, p. 52). Bakhtin's ventriloquism (as cited in Morris, 1994) underscores that this language is indeed not neutral but is used strategically as if it were a conceptual bricolage (Rolling, 2013), noting the effectiveness of past utterances and the improvisation of joining those utterances with other ones to make a new and unique statement. This bricolage-like story is not a unitary thing. It is made up of a curated language and the echoes of history within that language. The language equally constitutes the individual as the individual constitutes meaning in the language and, ultimately in the entire story. And yet, for all its possibility, the limitations of available language restricts stories and their telling (Enciso in Lewis et al., 2007, p. 53). In order to fully consider narrative storytelling through sociocultural theory, it is integral to acknowledge the ways in which language operates to situate storytellers and their audience in particular ways. Thus, Moje and Lewis's (in Lewis et al., 2007) focus on power that is "produced and enacted in and through discourses" (p. 17), identity that is fluid and performative (p. 20), and agency that is engaged as strategic moves to make and remake the self "within relations of power" (p. 18) must be acknowledged as a powerful force within narrative storytelling.

Lewis et al. (2007) note that it is important to understand that "performances of social identity are cloaked in the fabric of power and ideology and economics" (p. 8). Thus, when we talk about narrative storytelling as a sign for ideology or an agentic move

50

to construct particular identities around particular people in particular spaces, it is important to note how power, ideology, and economics operate. These narrative performances and the artifacts associated with them place individuals within a broader social politic, and it is there within the mutually constitutive macro/micro relationship that teachers must improvise. Thus, their identities are wrapped up in the economics tied to the expectations of teacher performativity.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

It was a beautiful day when two young fish found themselves swimming next to another fish they did not know. The two friends were fairly hip and self-assured, and they were on their way to an important appointment. The stranger looked older, a bit scruffy, and his presence was such a surprise that the other two fell completely silent, unsure of what was happening. The three of them swam a little way before the stranger looked at the other two and said, "Water's nice today." They smiled weakly and nodded as the stranger veered off leaving the two on their own again. Unsure of what had just happened, they swam along in silence for a while. Finally, one of them turned to the other and asked, "What the heck is water?"

I originally heard this story told as a joke by a student in the in-between space after school and before a theatre rehearsal started. His version included a punchy use of an expletive I have chosen to revise for something a bit softer in the final sentence. The shock of it caused me to laugh out loud and helped it to stay at the fore of my memory these six years since.

At a writing conference, the consultant asked if I had heard David Foster Wallace's (2005) commencement speech at Kenyon College. He begins the talk with this story. Knowing my former student's voracious appetite for literature, and now recalling how he talked about reading *Infinite Jest* over spring break one year, I am confident the commencement speech was his original source. For me, though, this story was simply a funny joke from an insightful person that eventually helped me to conceptualize why

stories are so powerful. It was an everyday conversation that, through recognition of another person and a little investigation, eventually warranted a citation.

And that is what Narrative Inquiry offered to me as a graduate student looking for a methodology that witnessed the everyday-ness of how identities and communities get built. Narrative Inquiry explores the constitutive power of stories in their many forms. Researchers have used it for many purposes/outcomes. For example, Bamberg and Georgakopoulou (2008) and Wortham (2001) use narratives to understand identity construction and social positioning by telling stories that create relationships between teller(s) and their audience. Clandinin and Connelly (1995) look at the stories told by teachers as well as those constructed by documents (e.g. memos, emails, meeting agendas, etc.) and discourse within schools to conceptualize the landscapes of professional knowledge where teachers work. Barone (2001) collects stories from multiple members of a community to explore contradictory tellings of collective experience. And Lather and Smithies (1997) use their voices as researchers to bear witness to powerful yet unheard experiences of women dealing with HIV/AIDS. The narrative turn, particularly departing from Labov's (1972) deductive model, offers vocabulary and methodologies to assess the world around us and acknowledge the dialogically constitutive relationship between it and those who live in it. In other words, it allows us to see the water.

These examples offer a reciprocal relationship between my affinity towards storytelling and the broader academic field I am entering as a doctoral student. For one, these citations offer a series of examples and affirmations for the use of stories in research. Each suggests methodological possibilities or mentor texts for me to think about

how I can engage stories in meaningful ways that are also recognized as epistemologically acceptable within academia. They suggest to me that my interests and ways of engaging in the world can count as research.

This chapter outlines the Narrative Inquiry methods I employed for the project. I begin by outlining which methods I chose and why. I then briefly situate my research questions within key concepts from my review of sociocultural theory from Chapter 2. Next, I describe the teachers who participated in this project with me and the two phases of data collection I undertook with them. I then review my analysis process before ending with a review of dilemmas I faced during the project. What takes shape here is not the plan I began with but a documentation of the steps I took as I moved through the inquiry process. To read it as a detailed blueprint for replication would miss the improvisational nature of this qualitative research project. The story of my process is shared here in the spirit of transparency and reflection. It is a process of looking back at how I arrived at the analysis and conclusions that I share in the subsequent chapters.

What Methods and Why

Narrative Inquiry as a method provides a means to explore the constitutive impact of stories on the identities we create in particular spaces and at particular times. Stories and identities function as artifacts (Holland et. al, 1998) and as a mediating process for ideology as it is passed enacted, reinforced, revised, or contested. By acknowledging storytelling as a representation of interpretation that is also always in a process of interpretation, Narrative Inquiry allows the weaving together of collaborative and possibly contradicting realities.

In this narrative research, I take up considerations from critical sociocultural theory in order to highlight the ways social interactions and expectations work on individuals, identities fluidly move and become between multiple public contexts and personal desires, and power circulates both historically and currently within ideologies and language (Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007).

Story circles (Cohen-Cruz, 2010; O'Neal, 2011) engage with this recognition by positioning the researcher as a collaborative member that participates in the production of stories to investigate. They begin with the circle, a democratic shape where all participants sit in on equal ground with each other and the person leading the event. Space and time are held collectively as a group as they work to listen deeply to the experiences of others and multiply perspective. Participants share brief personal stories prompted by a common question. For this project, we explored experiences that led to insights around our work as teachers: tales of success, missteps, and ruptures.

Story circles, more than interviews, create space for the ways that people tell stories in response to others and the ideas that they hear in others' stories. They build on each other and come out of a personal connection to the ideas or emotions the listener experiences as someone else shares their own story. Stories do not stand on their own. They are relational, connecting the teller to their own thinking and interpretations as well as to the stories of others and the individuals who tell them. Story circles suggest that stories do not contain discrete knowledge in and of themselves but in the interpretive overlap as the content of one story fades and the other crescendos. They suggest that collective understanding occurs not in attending to a single note or melody but the harmonies and dissonances that occur as different patterns overlap.

As I learned through experiencing them,[1] each story circle begins by asking participants to share the story of an experience that gave them insight into the focus for the gathering. The leader has a story ready to share if needed. Anyone can pass knowing that the opportunity will come back to them once everyone else has shared. People should work towards keeping their stories around three minutes long, a time that the group will hold together—there is no timer that stops a person before they are done. The stories are based on experience or observation instead of consisting of editorial comments. Everyone attempts to practice the law of listening in which they listen to the story being told in the moment instead of preparing their own story while others are sharing. People are encouraged to trust that a story will be there. To the worry that some participants might have about doing the story circle correctly, the leader affirms that there are no supposed right answers—all stories have value. Each story is ended by a collective breath before the next person begins.

After everyone has shared a story, people talk *across* stories instead of about any one in particular. This helps to avoid analyzing a particular experience or individual. Instead, it pushes the participants to look at a topic from multiple perspectives to understand it in its complexities.

Relatedly, I was drawn to the practices of Theatre of the Oppressed (Boal, 2002) as it highlights the revision opportunities within embodied narrative authorship. The critical and arts-based epistemologies these perspectives supply help to supplement

---

[1] O'Neal has not published much in the way of documenting story circles as they are something to be experienced. Experience is how I learned about story circles and later read through a brief article in which O'Neal offered loose parameters for the practice. What I lay out here is a combination of the published guidelines and how I have participated in and led story circles.

Narrative Inquiry in nuanced ways that expand the scope of considerations while focusing on key issues related to my social justice commitments. The improvisational method of these theatre games, as well as the framing of them as games, provides opportunities for participants to explore critical issues while taking stances towards them (Caldas, 2017). Doing so makes literal the more theoretical concept of authoring and revising identities and provides a way for people to hypothesize the different possibilities for how identities can be expressed. Further, Theatre of the Oppressed offers an alternative approach to the primarily verbal storytelling that most narrative research employs. Stories are spoken, but they are also lived, enacted through actions and other physical representations of who people are. Actions also provide additional ways of understanding identity, including nuances in and contradictions between who a person says they are and what that looks like in practice. Such a practice "make[s] visible the invisibility" of the social influences that inform who people are within their communities (Shelton & McDermott, 2010, p. 125).

Using Theatre of the Oppressed games pushed me as a researcher to move beyond literary understandings of story based primarily in verbal discourse and seek understanding in the ways the identities took shape in activity. Absent ethnographic observation of teachers in their classrooms and schools, Theatre of the Oppressed opens up ways to explore the embodiment and lived-out expressions of teachers' identities. At the same time, it can foreground the constructed nature of these actions for the teachers and provide a methodological vocabulary with which to engage in analysis and play.

Research Questions

In this dissertation, I explore the stories new teachers tell as they work to incorporate their learning from a social justice oriented licensure program within a wide range of urban and suburban schools. I theorize how they construct identities in this process of induction into the teaching profession and the moments of improvisation (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998) within broader systems of power during that process. The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of the sociocultural moves that new teachers make as they work to craft a teacher identity that attends to their personal motivations and commitments within the broader professional community. The theoretical assumptions and methodological affordances of Narrative Inquiry and Ethnodrama echo the epistemological beliefs I have formed through my experience as a high school teacher and theatre director. Because identities are social constructions that exist within socio-historically situated discourses (Bakhtin as cited in Morris, 1994) in which power circulates within narrative structures that offer particular roles, plotlines, and relationships, I seek to braid together Narrative Inquiry, Sociocultural Theory, and Theatre of the Oppressed practices in order to enter into a multi-dimensional analytic space "that accounts for these larger systems of power as they shape and are shaped by individuals in particular cultural contexts" (Lewis et al., 2007, p. 9). In this way, narratives are not merely objects that get told. They are "a process in which we as thinkers do not so much work on narrative . . . [but allow] narrative to work on us" (Morris, 2001).

There were two primary research questions for this study, each with two subquestions. The first focuses on the inquiry into new teachers' stories. The second attends to the research process of story circles and theatre practices.

1) What stories about education do new teachers encounter during their licensure program and first years of teaching (the induction period)?

   a) In what ways do those stories work on the identities of new teachers?

   b) How do new teachers engage with (take up, resist, or ignore) the stories of teaching and teacher identities as they construct, revise, maintain, and/or smooth their identities as teachers?

2) Do storytelling research methodologies generate spaces of critical inquiry into teacher identity construction?

   a) What happens when framing experience through narrative structures as a way of investigating teacher identity development?

   b) What happens when framing experience through embodiment as a way of investigating teacher identity development?

Data Sources and Participants

Participating Teachers

As a director in a high school theatre program, casting a play was often one of the most exhilarating and difficult tasks. The group of actors join the rest of the team to work together in a creative process that lasts a handful of months. How everyone works together greatly impacts the experience. It requires individuals who bring ideas to the table and a collaborative disposition; individuals who are just as willing to ask questions and listen to others' answers as they are to share their own ideas; individuals who can be critical and affirming.

The teachers who worked with me on this project[2] come from three different cohorts of a secondary English education initial licensure M.Ed. program at a large, Midwest university. Many, though not all, of the preservice teachers come from an undergraduate feeder program in the same department. The licensure program draws primarily white candidates and works with schools in the surrounding area that draw from economically and racially diverse populations. Critical literacy is emphasized by content-specific instructors to focus on how language, culture, and power intersect in schools, curriculum, pedagogy, and teacher identity. It is one of many licensure programs around the metro area available.

I worked as an instructor in the initial licensure program at the same time each of these teachers earned their degree. As such, I had read and assessed coursework in some way from all of them, some of them for multiple classes. I was also the supervisor for almost half of them as they student taught. This allowed me to have a relationship with all the teachers, having seen the beginnings of their teaching career and knowing a bit of how they engaged with others in a group. I knew them all to be good listeners who had strong opinions and wrestled with questions about their beliefs and practices.

I chose the three cohorts as a reflection of my working definition of the teacher induction period. Teacher induction is often defined as a teacher's first year and perhaps their licensure program. I extended this time to include years two and three as this would place teachers at the tenure threshold if they had remained in the same school.[3] Including

---

[2] I have kept descriptions of the teachers aggregated due to their requests for anonymity. Their names, along with the names of students, schools, and colleagues are pseudonyms.

[3] Notably, a smooth path between the first year as a teacher to tenured status is not a given. Opportunity, school politics, and budget shortfalls can prolong the three-year span that most, but not all, teachers take to achieve that professional safety net. Five of the fifteen teachers had been at more than one building. One of

these additional two years is meant to acknowledge the ongoing social and professional induction experiences new teachers navigate, and the length of time the title New Teacher stays with an individual.[4]

After identifying the cohorts and individuals I already had a strong working relationship with, I considered a variety of demographic information for a diversity of perspectives. Of the fifteen initial participants, eight taught at middle schools and seven taught at high schools. These schools were spread around the metro area and first-ring suburbs. Even within their particular districts, schools reflected homogeneity and diversity in a variety of ways. Six schools could be described as located in upper-income areas, seven in middle-income neighborhoods, and two in lower-income areas.[5] The schools range in racial diversity. Two teachers came from a school with over 90% white students, one teacher came from a school with over 75% African American students, while another teacher came from a school with a much more even split between African American, Latinx, and white students. The other eleven teachers came from schools with their own unique range of racial diversity.

---

them had done this by choice, taking a year-long position at their old high school that offered substantial mentoring before moving to a long-term position in a different district. One lost their job to district-wide cuts. A third moved to a different district because of what a colleague at their first job and veteran of the school building called an unprecedented and ridiculous workload including teaching a remedial math class (as an ELA teacher) without training or support. And two of the teachers were fired because, as they explained it in the one-on-one interviews, they explicitly addressed race in their curriculum and at professional development meetings. They were given other reasons for the official record.

[4] I learned from our time in the workshops that the idea of a New Teacher for these teachers had less to do with the number of years they had worked in the profession and more to do with knowledge of how the school system worked. Newness and credibility as a professional certainly seemed correlated for them during their first year. Beyond that, a teacher's ability to fit in with the social culture of the school or department played a larger role.

[5] I use the terms upper-, middle-, and lower-income as they are the terms used by the Pew Research Center (2016). I recognize these terms, as well as many others, can carry social connotations, particularly for people who make less money than others.

The racial and gender identity of the teachers themselves was also a consideration. I did not seek to replicate national statistics (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018) and the licensure program based on an average of the three years of cohorts I drew from. I was not interested in creating statistical comparisons in order to assert claims of generalization to broader teacher populations. Instead, these statistics were a component of my thinking in order to create a representational approximation that recognizes the sociocultural realities of the professional landscape that impact the communities the teachers work in and the community that we ultimately created. Table 1 lays out percentages of racial and gender representation within the United States teacher workforce, the licensure program over the three years from which the teachers were enrolled, the one-on-one interviews I conducted, and the workshops.

	National	Licensure Program	Interviews	Workshops
Gender: Male	23.4%	30.5%	40%	11.1%
Gender: Female	76.6%	69.5%	60%	88.9%
Race: White	80.1%	86.4%	73.3%	66.7%
Race: Black	6.7%	1.7%	6.7%	11.1%
Race: Asian	2.3%	5.1%	13.3%	22.2%
Race: Two or More	1.4%	3.4%	6.7%	0%

Table 1: Participant demographics

I did not try to replicate the statistics for two main reasons. First, I was more interested in participants who I thought would best be able to answer my research question based on demonstrated critical reflection during their licensure program and the one-on-one interviews than I was in statistical fidelity. Second, and relatedly, sticking so

closely to statistical replication would suggest an attempt to make generalizations across the teaching profession or, at the very least, across new teachers. As Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) note about qualitative research in general, I was more interested in interpretation than prediction—deepening understanding over attempting to control (p. 3).

Phase One

The initial round of data collection consisted of interviews with fifteen teachers from the last three years of Initial Teaching Licensure in English Education cohorts. See Appendix A for the semi-structured interview guide. Interviews lasted between 45 and 90 minutes. We met in a location each teacher chose, either at coffee shops or at someone's home. Four of the fifteen teachers asked for or offered follow-up interviews which resulted in a total of nineteen interviews.

Each interview was followed with field note journaling on my initial observations and impressions regarding the research questions and the possibility for participation in subsequent story circles. It was here that I began to develop a list of possible themes to explore in the subsequent workshops. It was also where I began to get a sense of the limitations of the questions I had drafted for the interviews. Questions asking directly for stories that the teachers told about who they were and what teaching were often answered with clarifying questions or tentative responses followed by some version of 'I don't know if I'm answering your question.' Because of this, I began to move further away from the detailed questions I had crafted and the follow-up questions meant to get at very specific components of teaching as I had read about in the literature and experienced in my own work as a classroom teacher. Questions asking for the participants to share the stories about teachers they heard as kids evolved to questions like 'What do you

remember about your teachers in elementary, middle, or high school?' Questions asking about the narratives that described who teachers are changed into 'If you were to close your eyes, what does a stereotypical teacher look like? How do they run their classroom? How are you similar to or different from them?'

The change that generated the most engagement from the teachers was a shift away from asking questions about the effect of narratives from particular communities like their licensure program or schools. It was difficult for the teachers to pin down concrete narratives that were specific to one community or another. It was also challenging for many of the teachers to conceptualize stories that constructed particular identity expectations. In the place of these questions, I began to ask teachers about memorable experiences from their careers and schooling and why they were memorable. These were the questions that prompted Valerie to share about her struggle to remember things that she did with her son during her first year teaching and connect that to the stories she heard about family members who were highly respected teachers but absent parents. These were the questions that prompted Mae to share about writing poems with her students about a nasty smell that permeated their classroom one day or Alexia to share about what it was like to depend on her assistant principal, a person of color, to stand up for her against racist critiques from white parents while her white colleagues said nothing until in private conversation with Alexia.

Each interview was transcribed with an online transcription service which I then reviewed for accuracy. This provided me an opportunity to review the content of the interviews, learning more than I had when I was in the moment and focused on facilitating conversation. I wrote analytic memos about areas of overlap among stories as

well as instances of unique perspectives that provided alternative or more nuanced experiences. For example, the idea of time spent doing the work of, or *being*, a teacher came up in interviews with Valerie, Talia, Darya, and Libby. The differences between what their licensure program had emphasized as important and what they found in their respective schools and departments permeated the interviews of Seth, Rebekah, and Amelia. Additionally, I began to take note of how the teachers described themselves when conceptualizing their own teacher identity. For example, teachers of color and teachers whose parents are immigrants or are immigrants themselves all mentioned race, however briefly, when describing themselves as teachers. White teachers whose families had lived in the United States for many generations did not mention race. Similarly, for one teacher whose father was a working-class railroad employee, class was prominent in many of their stories about how they worked as a teacher.

The 25-plus hours of interview data excited me. From it, I had drafted a list of topics I wished to talk more about with the teachers: race, relationships, time, how they viewed their licensure program now that they were teachers, and how they viewed the profession itself. In addition to considering race, years of teaching, grade level taught, and gender of the teachers when deciding who to ask to participate in the workshops, I initially planned to consider what courses they taught at their jobs (e.g. content-focused courses such as journalism or writing or ability tracking such as honors, Advanced Placement, 'regular', or 'remedial'). Instead, I asked myself who I felt had more to say. I use the word 'felt' intentionally here. I did not ask the teachers if they had more to say on the topics that came up in our interviews. These were inquiry hunches. In reflective memos, I attempted to identify what it was that suggested this but never came up with a

common consideration across all teachers. What did continue to come up as a consideration was how the teachers would interact in a group.

O'Brien (Alverman, O'Brien, and Dillon, 1996) writes about hunches as genuine theory that "free[s] me from using theoretical frameworks in [a] perfunctory way" (p. 115). Hunches are "personal angles on more formal substantive theories" (p. 115). The personal angles come from experiential knowledge is a way to "enter a space in which we can take ourselves seriously" (Haug, 1987, p. 36). Following these hunches was a way in which I worked to take the knowledge I developed as a teacher and educational theatre director seriously. These hunches were a response to the question of who I felt most strongly would be a helpful collaborator towards answering my research questions. These were the teachers who found it easy to connect stories to their teaching selves. They were also able to point to difficult questions these stories raised, questions they were still trying to answer in the way they lived and worked as teachers. Having initially identified a few teachers that stood out, I then continued to add people to that list considering what perspectives might not yet be present. Knowing some teachers might turn down the invitation and that not all teachers might be able to make it to every workshop, I extended eleven invitations from the initial group of fifteen. Nine of them accepted, and I began to set up the second phase.

Phase Two

Trying to find a time when nine full-time teachers could meet was difficult. Because of this, I chose a time when most of the teachers could make a commitment of four out of six sessions. Attendance ranged from four teachers to eight plus me at each of the six workshops. Unforeseen circumstances like funerals, snow storms, and illness

66

prohibited some of the teachers from coming at least four times, but I decided to keep the invitation open. The teachers were either deeply interested in participating or had already come and been a part of the community, so my original concern of disrupting the collaborative atmosphere was never an issue.

We met at a photography studio for each session except for the first because of a concert that was happening in the parking lot directly outside the large window of the space. So I held the first session at my house. Here we began rituals that became part of what made these sessions feel personal. I had prepared food for the participants, something that was often a topic of conversation at some point during each workshop, particularly the end as some of the teachers divided up cookies to take home to their kids. We also spent 15–45 minutes talking at the start of each session based on the mood of the group. Some days we were able to jump in to the work rather quickly, while other weeks had been particularly trying for some teachers and it felt important to spend time checking in.

Each session ran roughly three hours with audio and video recording. The outline of each session included a session opener in which we read I-statements (see Appendix B for an example of one) that I and one or two of the participants had prepped. We then moved to either a story circle or a series of activities based on Theatre of the Oppressed (Boal, 1993) activities. At the end of each session, I asked the teachers about topics that had come up for them during the current workshop they might like to explore at the next workshop. Based on these suggestions, I decided on the theme we would base our work on.

The themes for each of the sessions were

1. Relationships with students

2. What it means to care

3. Power and systems

4. Why we became teachers

5. Race

A version of some of these themes appeared on a preliminary list I developed based on common topics the teachers brought up in their individual interviews. The first theme specifically was specifically mentioned in some way by each of the teachers who agreed to participate in Phase Two. I worded it in a way that left it open to a range of responses so that the teachers were not encouraged by the prompt to share particular types of stories. The directions I used to qualify each prompt[6] also did some of this work, but I was wary about making the teachers think I was looking for any particular type of response.

At the end of the first session, I asked the four teachers present what topics came up for them during the stories and subsequent conversation that they were interested in exploring. I asked this out of a desire to make these workshops focused on the stories and issues the teachers found themselves drawn to. A handful of suggestions were made including militarization and love. Because I did not want the teachers to have the opportunity to prepare a story but, instead, chose one based on the story circle, I told them I would take these under consideration as I crafted the prompt for the next session. I

---

[6] Share a story about an experience that revealed an insight to you about [insert theme]: this could be a story of success, misstep, or rupture.

crafted the theme "What it means to care" based on the suggestion of Love while, again, trying to keep the prompt as open to interpretation as possible.

At the second workshop, we followed a similar process of the teachers suggesting topics. I also shared that, based on the individual interviews, I felt that the topic of Systems would be generative. Also, because of the ways that race was addressed in the individual interviews and how it was coming up in the work so far, I wanted to prioritize that conversation. The teachers voiced interest in the idea of Systems and talked about issues of power related to that, so that became they next theme.

The work around "Power and systems" was particularly dire. The mood in the space was one of defeat, and a number of teachers came to that session emotionally exhausted from both their work and personal lives. No one had suggestions for the next workshop, I presumed because it was difficult to imagine experiencing something similar. I suggested a pointedly hopeful prompt about why they became teachers, and the teachers agreed. I also brought up race as a topic I would like us to explore, so the teachers decided on the order, first "Why they became teachers" and then "Race."

Using "Race" as a theme is not to suggest that race was not always present in the stories and discussion we had throughout the workshops. On the contrary, I insisted on this topic because race continued to come up regularly, most explicitly in the stories of the teachers of color. This aligned with what happened in the individual interviews. The choice to name race as a theme was to move it from the periphery to the focus of conversation. The goal was to invite the teachers who were already mentioning race as notable in descriptions to acknowledge it as central in their stories. I also wished to push the teachers who had yet to name race—theirs or the races of other characters in their

69

stories—to do so and consider it in a way that impacted the construction of the story. In this way, using race as a theme for the final workshop was done as a way to acknowledge its constitutive presence in all of the stories and the daily work of teachers.

Data Analysis

My analytical procedures included iterative coding cycles in NVivo, writing an ethnodrama based on the stories teachers shared, and writing as a process of inquiry. These three processes were all informed by the theoretical lenses and epistemological assumptions that I brought to the project. These stances shaped what I saw as valuable and worthy of exploring. What follows is a look at each of these steps on their own terms though much of the work happened while going back and forth between the different approaches.

Coding

Several of my committee members advised me during the proposal meeting to be wary of the language I use in this study. An initial draft of some of my research questions asked about the *effect* of different methods, and this, they helpfully pointed out, could steer me towards a more quantitative approach that did not align with the research commitments they saw in my work. Language matters, and the language I used to build the foundation of my work in this project could result in shifting where I went with it. The idea of coding became another word I struggled with as I began to approach analysis.

Coding felt more quantitative than qualitative in nature to me when I first learned about it in a qualitative coding class. The condensing of data (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014, p. 14) seemed to divorce data from its context. Even the word data felt

oddly scientific[7], sterile. Further, just because I create a code and assign it as a

representation of some bit of information seemed self-serving. Who was I to call

something significant?

Post-qualitative research (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013; St. Pierre, 2015) engages

with a critique of qualitative methods like coding, member-checking, and triangulation,

describing it as neo-positivist. Coding is seen in this light as a way to clean up the

analysis process, making it presentable and orderly. It is a magic wand that turns the

messiness of, in the case of this project, storytelling and all of the influencing factors that

combine to create an experience of that story into a countable, presumably meaningful

idea that can be represented in a memo or written report (such as a dissertation) as an

extract of capital-t Truth. Yet faced with over eight hours of storytelling to think through

along with pages of analytic memos written before and after the workshops and

presumably more memos to be written during the analysis process, I became

overwhelmed with keeping all of the information in mind. The workshops with all of the

stories told during them, my personal experience of those times, and my interpretation of

others' experiences along with the theories I wished to think with certainly felt messy. I

struggled with how to make sense of the messiness so I could find a way into the analysis

while still honoring it.

---

[7] I wish to note here that I do not mean to suggest descriptors such as scientific, quantitative, or others of
their ilk connote something bad. These need not be pejorative words. They do, however, imply
epistemological values that, for me, assume that a degree of neutrality is possible and that neutrality is
good, as if "non-fiction" meant that human interpretation was not mixed up in analysis. I simply mean to
point out that I enter into research both assuming that human interpretation is a part of the work of a
researcher and that this is not a limitation of a project.

In conversation with Dr. Kuftinec, I asked her thoughts on coding. Was it too scientific I wondered? She offered a different conception of the term. Instead of a simplification of complex data or magically deeming some bit of information as objectively significant, endowing it with more power than components of the study under consideration, I might instead think of codes as a way to draw my attention to something (Kuftinec, personal communication, November 6, 2018). In this way, I as the researcher took ownership of assigning significance, highlighting coding as an interpretive act that acknowledged the presence of the researcher as they worked to make sense of the research materials. I eventually began to see the accumulating resources (e.g. storytelling recordings, transcripts, personal communication with the teachers) as items populating a stage. When I wished to draw my attention to something, I would need to light it. In order to notice different combinations of materials, I would need to use a different color. If there were ten material items (or data) on the stage, I might light (or code) items one through five with yellow. Even-numbered items could be lit with blue, odd-numbered items with red, and items one, four, seven, and eight with green. In this way, I could raise up the material I wished to think about in relief to everything else. Ambient light would certainly spill, partially illuminating other surrounding material, just as my memories of different statements could not fully divorce them from the rest of the story they came from or the emotions I felt during its telling. It would allow me to think about the different connections across so many materials that had become a part of this project. This is what coding became for me.

Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) define codes as

labels that assign symbolic meaning to the descriptive of inferential information

compiled during a study. Codes usually are attached to data 'chunks' of various

size and can take the form of a straightforward, descriptive label or a more

evocative and complex one (e.g. a metaphor). (pp. 71-72)

Saldaña (2016) adds to this by explaining that codes designate "a summative, salient,

essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual

data" (p. 4). Just as I was advised to carefully consider the language I used to craft my

inquiry, I needed to carefully consider the language, or light, I used to illuminate the

research materials with my thinking. This was how I came to coding, using the NVivo

program to create a lighting design for my data in order to draw my attention to different

combinations of ideas. From the moment I began this project, I began to interpret the

experience, telling my own stories of what happened, coding some things as meaningful

and others as less so. Just like the narratives we told during the workshops, coding was

not meant to diminish the complexities of the experiences or materials collected during

the project. What codes offer is a way to understand the empirical materials through my

interpretive lens as someone who experienced the moment and who brings a specific set

of theoretical assumptions to this work. My experience of the original interaction should

be viewed as a benefit rather than limitation of this research in that it allowed me to put

the coded interactions into relationship with other materials, moments, memories, and

ideas from the project.

Ethnodrama

Ethnodrama (Denzin, 2015; Mienczakowski, 2003; Saldaña, 2005) specifically

refers to the production of a theatrical script that utilizes theatre techniques to

communicate research data. While ethnodramas, or performance scripts, may result in performances (Smith, 1993; Taylor, Namey, Johnson, & Guest, 2017; Vanover & Saldaña 2005), ethnodrama refers more specifically to a genre of writing than a theatrical event. This is evident in the publications of ethnodramas that have been written (script texts) though not produced as performance events (Brown, 2017; Callier, 2011; Denzin, 2015; Kelly Pryor, 2016).

Ethnotheatre denotes the performance of research data. Ethnotheatre utilizes ethnodramas (scripts constructed from research data) for a fully realized theatrical experience that includes various degrees of theatrical techniques. Included in this might be examples of readers theater (the casting of parts and reading aloud of scripts with little other theatrical elements), verbatim theater (the performance of a script made up of only verbatim text from interview transcripts), or inquiry theater (a research methodology that includes audience feedback after the performance of an ethnodrama script as part of the analytic process through further thematic analysis and rewriting the script for subsequent performances). While readers theatre, verbatim theatre, and inquiry theatre may be considered in the work of ethnotheatre, the key distinction is between ethnodrama (a theatrical script developed from research data) and ethnotheatre (the performance of a theatrical script developed from research data).

The distinction between these terms is helpful in naming particular types of production (i.e. written text or performance event). However, the process of creating the ethnodrama that makes up the majority of Chapter 4 draws on both of these practices. What appears in this document is clearly a written text that uses conventions of writing such as formatting, titles, and descriptions of movement. I also wrote it while

remembering what it felt like in the moments when the teachers told their stories and shared their thinking. I can hear Talia's pacing when she says that she is becoming less apologetic in her work and the sense of contradiction when Darya reflects on the stories she told over the course of our workshops as not representative of how she saw herself as a teacher. I remember the punctuated rhythm or the elongated vowels when the teachers cursed and the quietness when Seth earnestly asked the other teachers how they dealt with the trauma they hear about. And I imagined this document as a written representation of a performance, the way a musician might write sheet music knowing that the marks on the page were not the thing they had created–only a way of attempting to represent an experience that can exist only in moments of sensory expression.

  Characterizing Ethnodrama. Ethnodrama is an arts-based research methodology born out of narrative storytelling and ethnography. Its material goal is the production of a performance script that dramatizes salient narrative constructions culled from interviews, field notes, journal entries, and print or media artifacts (Saldaña, 2005, p. 2). Its epistemological orientation, grounded in ethno*theatre* or the performance event of ethnodramas, argues for the recognition of knowledge as constructed, contextual, and representational. First, knowledge is not fixed but constructed by means of social-historical mediation through cultural artifacts imbued with ideological meaning. These artifacts do not possess ideologies outright but mediate ideologies as cultural signs that traffic in emotional economies (Ahmed, 2004). In other words, emotions don't exist as entities in and of themselves but in the active interpretation of signs that put people in relation to one another. Further, ideologies do not exist before the sign that signals them but are constructed through that signal. Just as Butler (1990) asserts that "there is no

being behind doing...the deed is everything...there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender" (p. 25), Bakhtin (as cited in Morris, 1994) notes "without signs, there is no ideology" (p. 50). Knowledge is thus constructed from ideologies active in the mobilization and interpretation of cultural artifacts.

Second, because knowledge is constructed in these ways, context matters. Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner Jr., and Cain (1998) describe figured worlds as socially and culturally constructed communities made up of multiple "realm[s] of interpretation in which particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others" (p. 52). Thus, knowledge is constructed, not in isolation, but in particular contexts that call upon increasingly diverse narrative discourses, ideologies, and artifacts. This is evident in Holland et al.'s example of new members of Alcoholics Anonymous as they learn what it means to be a member of that community through mediational artifacts like inexpensive poker chips that carry significant value by those who recognize them as both markers of sobriety and as a commitment to the community. New members additionally learn contextually appropriate ways of telling stories as they listen to senior members and tell their own stories, aspects of which get affirmed or ignored based on their legitimacy as framed by group norms. Knowledge of an individual's identity as a recovering alcoholic gets contextualized by the practices and values of that particular community.

Additionally, the language that constructs knowledge is socio-historically situated and echoes with the connotations and invocations of past use. Thus, language goes through contextual and centralizing processes. "Every utterance participates in the 'unitary language' (in its centripetal forces and tendencies) and at the same time partakes

of social and historical heteroglossia (the centrifugal , stratifying forces)" (Bakhtin as cited in Morris, p. 75). If language itself is a sign, amidst all the other signs utilized to construct knowledge, than language and the knowledge it constructs are contextual.

Third, ethnodrama and theatre in general engage in a process of representation, the use of signs to construct an experience for an audience. In regard to ethnodrama, or the performance script, writer's craft as a form of representation must be considered. Kumashiro (2002, pp. 19-20) outlines three main critiques of writer's craft techniques that either hide or simply don't acknowledge the representational work that goes into the inclusion of direct quotes, an important component of verbatim theatre. First, the interviewer and context mediate interviewees' statements (see Talmy, 2003; Wortham, Mortimer, Lee, Allard, & White, 2011). Second, interpretations are partial and limited. Third, a reader's identity and history mediates how they take in information. Kumashiro (2002) asserts that researchers must acknowledge the representational construction when using participant voices as a component of data. For Kumashiro, the use of poetry instead of prose offers a path towards that acknowledgement. "[W]hile both forms of representation are constructions, poetry, more than prose, makes explicit through its unconventionality, many ways in which the story is constructed" (p. 21). Ethnodrama, with the script as a form of analysis, and ethnotheatre, with its use of technical theatre as well as the performance event which puts audience in a room with performers, similarly makes plain the representational work that exists in participants' stories and the subtle yet powerful impact of analysis on how those stories are shared.

The delineation of these three considerations should not be taken to mean that they are themselves discrete components of ethnodrama that one can separate from the

other. While it helps to lay them out as such in order to name assumptions found in ethnodrama, their application requires a more unified consideration. Constructed knowledge works on both a theoretical level regarding the ways in which language works and is worked upon as well as on a more practical level as a script gets constructed with multiple voices, all ideologically imbued and mediationally understood. The context from which portions of narratives are taken as well as the location the passages are placed within the script itself, juxtaposed in dialogic relations with other narratives, all influence the knowledge (conclusions as well as questions) generated from ethnodrama work.

Ethnodrama, and its resulting use in ethnotheatre, utilize narrative and theatrical techniques to communicate ethnographic research in ways that attend to different goals of traditional research reports. It highlights the constructed, contextual, and representational nature of knowledge while fulfilling dialogic and anti-oppressive goals of ethnodrama through performance events. Through this work, ethnodrama aims for an audience experience, for a culmination more than a cessation (Dewey, 1934). Unlike the research text whose abstract and conclusions can be skimmed by a reader for a general sense of ideas proposed, "*an* experience [occurs] when the material experienced has run its course to fulfillment. Then and then only is it integrated within and demarcated in the general stream of experience from other experience" (p. 35, emphasis in the original). Or, in the words of Vygotsky (1978), "the external sign becomes transformed into an internal sign as a means of remembering and understanding oneself in relation to others" (p. 45). Thus, ethnodrama works to make research felt in the lived experiences of its participants and audience.

Writing as inquiry

78

When I tried to explain the difference between analysis and synthesis to tenth grade students in my high school English classes, I used frogs and puzzles as analogies. Analysis asked that a person take something apart in order to understand it, like dissecting a frog. Synthesis required the construction of constituent parts into a whole, like a jigsaw puzzle. Ethnodrama engages in coding practices like most qualitative research in its analysis process while script construction takes on the task of synthesizing the results for representation. Script construction uniquely offers opportunities for further analysis during this synthesis. Vanover (2016) explains that this form of writing shifts the focus from thematic considerations to more aesthetic concerns as the researcher "search[es] the transcripts for the most beautiful, most powerful, and most telling moments" (p. 241). The researcher/writer attends to the emotive and aesthetic weight of a lived moment. These are the moments that evoke strong images, when the researcher can see what is read. This pushes the ethnodrama writer to think critically beyond what data literally says to what it symbolically shows. It invites the researcher to think beyond words to their expression through tone, pace, and gesture, perhaps opening up contradictory or affirming messages in what is seen and heard.

Saldaña's (2003) description of plot and storyline also positions representation to continue analytic processes when writing an ethnodrama. In doing so, he highlights the interpretive moves that accompany representation, or what Lather and Smithies (1997) term the performance of writing. To build a text one way is to construct a specific imaginary for both the writer and the characters within the writing. It dictates who can talk, when, and for how long. It offers and restricts opportunities for dialogue in which two characters with unique perspectives can talk with one another, and monologue in

79

which characters speak to the audience as if they were alone. This in turn offers and restricts possibilities for how the data might be synthesized as ethnodrama writers and performers work to create a unified representation of research findings. The construction of composite characters (Sangha, Slade, Mirchandani, Maitra, & Shan, 2012; Taylor, Namey, Johnson, & Guest, 2017) similarly offers analytic opportunities as writers consider language and representation. This is similar to the coding process in which initial codes get incorporated into larger themes that draw synthesized connections between unique yet related data points. These broader themes become the composite representation of multiple participants and the related components of their narratives.

The Analytical Process

   Transcription and Coding. I transcribed all interviews and workshops using an online service that I then reviewed for word-perfect accuracy. I then coded the transcripts based on both verbal (words and silences) and nonverbal (actions such as leaning or eye contact) activity. These codes were often words or phrases directly stated by someone in the recording. For example, the following passage was coded with the phrase "Feedback":

> *they come in and they say I'm doing great things, but they don't give me the feedback that I need and I feel like there are some things I can work on, but I don't have that support because this is the first year they're really having this position and they don't know what to do with me either.*

   Once these codes were entered into a bank of codes, I used them to code other passages that didn't have the original phrase. For example, the following passage was also coded "Feedback":

by the way, Talia, you're a high flyer. And I'm like, what do you mean? And she said, well, last year you had like a really large amount of referrals. And she like gives me this list, which had my name on it and a bunch of other teachers' names and the referrals they had.

Other codes, such as "Crisis Point," began as my interpretive understanding of what was being communicated in a passage such as the following:

I feel like this whole, like two years of my life of me trying to build a career is basically a shit show. And like I just don't know. The structure to me is like failing.

After an initial round of coding, I returned to key passages and did another round of coding using all of the codes I had created since some of the codes had not been a part of my consideration at the beginning of the process.

Organizing. There were a total of 177 unique codes after looking over all the data sources. I organized them into primary codes and secondary codes. For example, one category combined the codes Conflict, Crisis Point, Frustration, Fuck, Lose My Shit, and What I Had to Do under the primary code Untenable Threshold. The resulting ten primary codes became the different moments (or scenes) for the ethnodrama. Those ten primary codes were Emotional Labor, Power, Untenable Threshold, Identity, Personal Relationships, School Culture, The Job, Worthy, Professional, and Retention and Burnout.

Creating the ethnodrama. The process of creating this ethnodrama was cyclical and iterative. To suggest it was linear would be misleading. However, for the sake of

laying out the process, the following is an explanation of the different steps I took though not in any particular order.

1. I took verbatim passages from the transcripts and organized them into a dialogue. For example, the stories that Alexia and Talia share at the beginning of "The Job" were told during our second and third workshop respectively. Rebekah's response to these stories comes from our fourth workshop, and Alexia's next line comes from the second workshop.

2. Passages were lightly edited for clarity (based on the new context) and concision. For example, this was Talia's original statement:

   And I think that also translates to me as a teacher and as I grow as a teacher, I'm shifting away from both, mostly with my colleagues more than with my students, but with my students to needing to please and being more unapologetic and authentic.

   And this is what appears in the ethnodrama:

   As I grow as a teacher, I'm shifting away from needing to please my colleagues and being more unapologetic. More authentic.

3. Sometimes I could not find a verbatim passage from the transcripts that worked, so I wrote an original line based on the transcript. These are identified with footnotes and an explanation of how, and sometimes why, I crafted them.

4. The original ten primary codes that were organized as the titled moments in the ethnodrama were condensed to four. This was due to the overlap inherent when a single passage is coded for multiple things. As the moments began to take shape, they took on other primary codes in different ways that would have made another

moment designated for some of the primary codes feel redundant. Also, the ethnodrama would have been too long to be useful had all ten moments stayed. So I slowly revised down to four moments. This then required that I return to some moments and work in additional consideration of some of the primary codes more explicitly as well as avoiding other passages that were coded with themes that were explored more overtly in other moments. Crossover still occurs, but I believe that creates a nice sense of cohesion to the whole piece.

5. With one exception, I decided to leave my own contributions from the workshops out of the ethnodrama to foreground the stories and thinking of currently practicing new teachers. Where helpful, my contributions are included in the chapter following this that analyzes what I believe the ethnodrama to show.

6. Each moment is loosely structured like a story circle session in which stories were shared with a collective breath after each one. Then synthesizing conversation occurred addressing the themes that the stories raised.

7. I attempted to have as many of the nine teachers present in each moment as possible with relatively similar amounts of lines. The main restriction related to this goal, because of my commitment to using verbatim passages, was the amount of workshops individuals were at and the number of times they spoke.

Dilemmas

Outsider Status

At some point, I stopped being a secondary English teacher. Arguably it was when I left my teaching position at a high school to attend graduate school full time. But I still felt like a classroom teacher. Just because I wasn't in a secondary classroom that year

didn't mean I had left behind my identity as a teacher. It was something I spent five years learning about in undergrad and nine years doing as a profession. And I was teaching methods courses in a graduate licensure program. So I, for a time, was a classroom teacher going to graduate school.

Somewhere along the way, how I talked about things changed. I started saying things my teacher friends would roll their eyes at. My parents would start to refer to these things as "grad school talk." These were not (totally) derogatory comments. But they signaled my affiliation had changed—something I felt more and more prominently when I entered the classroom of a cooperating teacher as a university supervisor for student teachers. During those four years, I shifted from a teacher currently working at a university to simply someone from a university, someone without current knowledge of what it is to be a teacher. I became someone whose contributions are noted only partially.

It is this outsider status I came into this study with. This status meant that I was guest to the conversations I was asking the teachers to have. I joined the conversations, sharing my own stories and offering my own analysis, but it was as a participant-observer, not a participant. This outsider status was reinforced by my role as an instructor and supervisor in the licensure program where all of the teachers had earned their teaching license. I had assessed (sat next to in council) and evaluated (assigned worth to) their work as teachers. While my relationship with some of the teachers had evolved into something more like colleagues or, for a few, friends, the echoes of this hierarchical role afforded to me by my position at the university could not be ignored. Indeed, it was referenced on a number of occasions by some of the teachers, albeit jokingly. This status

was not so much an elephant in the room to be dealt with as it was a part of our story that framed the current work: notable but not definitive.

Participant Researcher

As I noted, I had my foot in two different worlds during this project. One as a researcher working on a dissertation study with objectives that would serve my goals, and one as a participant in a study with methodologies meant to disrupt traditional relationships between a study's author and the participants. I remember talking with Dr. Tim Lensmire about the methodologies, asking what it meant to do collective work for a dissertation. And his response was clear. The study can be done with the teachers. The dissertation is a solo venture. This was a helpful distinction as I planned the study. Living it out was something a bit harder.

There were several points during initial interviews and the workshops where I felt myself slide from one stance to another, typically starting in a place of collectivity, then noting that I had a question or wanted to move the work in a particular direction that was guided more by my research questions than by what I thought would be useful or meaningful to the teachers. In the workshops, I usually felt called to name these moves outright, saying something that qualified it as governed by The Study, a force that existed outside of the space but still dictated my choices as a leader at some points.

One example of this was the use of literary genres to rewrite stories the teachers had shared. As a researcher, I wanted to see what happened when the teachers explicitly called on genre forms that I felt were often in the background of the stories that I heard and told as a teacher in the secondary classroom and as an instructor in a licensure program. I had planned on doing this activity on the last workshop before the group

interview, which ended up being the same day we were exploring race directly as a theme. There was also a notable amount of snow that had been coming down steadily since that morning, making everyone at the workshop a little anxious to start the trip home before the sun set. Still, I introduced the activity, noting that it was a way for me to look at what happens with the overt use of genres.

I could sense hesitation from the teachers, so I asked if it was something they were even interested in doing because of the content of their stories or the weather. One of the teachers specifically said they would prefer to draw the session to a close but did not want to jeopardize my work. Once the ice was broken, they unanimously agreed that doing the activity was not of personal significance though they understood the idea behind it. We adjourned, something I suggested pretty quickly after they had shared their opinions, wary of letting the study's and my personal interests supersede the group.

For the Record

I called Amelia one afternoon just as her school day was ending. The semester was finishing and she was heading home. I called because I wanted to ask her if I could write about her experience of feeling misrepresented and confused about how she saw herself at her school. The workshop when this happened felt incredibly supportive, so the dissonant experiences felt important to explore, particularly as I thought through how the methods I had chosen had played out. But I was not sure whether Amelia's texts and our subsequent email exchange about her experience were available for consideration. Was it on the record, or off?

Amelia said that it was okay for me to write about the situation. She had calculated that possibility when deciding whether or not to share the original story in the

story circle. I'm not sure if she also calculated that when she texted me, but there were a fair number of other times when teachers mentioned that what they were about to say was off limits for writing.

One of the reasons I chose to invite teachers from the licensure cohorts when I had worked as an instructor was because there would be a relationship already developed. The questions I wanted to ask teachers were personal. I wanted the teachers to be comfortable with the work and hoped that our history would make it easier for them to engage, particularly with people they didn't know and while being recorded. And I think this did help. It also meant that a number of the teachers were not sure where the study ended and our previous relationship began, and the relationship that continued on concurrently with the study would keep doing so after it ended.

Amelia's story is one of the few moments I wondered what I received permission to include in this document. Many other stories and questions were off limits. This presented a difficult challenge since the teachers, some of whom I considered friends and all of whom I considered colleagues in the education profession, were whole people—as complex as people always are—but the confidentiality they rightfully asked for made it feel as if the people represented in this document were somehow less complicated than they are—as though only part of them is available in this document. Of course, there is no way I could convey all of any individual in my writing, not only because of the limitations of text to communicate all of the complexities and experiences of an individual, but because everyone continues to grow and change. However there have been many moments in the analysis and writing processes that felt partial. This is one of

the components of working with people I know, a dilemma I would gladly repeat, but a dilemma, nonetheless.

Conclusion

I strove to create and engage with a community of teachers working to understand themselves within the teaching profession. My primary role was as a facilitator but also included colleague, friend, storyteller, former teacher, and researcher. The range of these roles was clearest to me on two occasions. The first was Mae and Seth's separate recognition of the community we were beginning to form at the first workshop. Mae suggested that the interests of the group were possibly a product of "Lee. Of who Lee knows. I mean, he was the one that invited us all here" (Mae, Workshop 1, 10/20/2018). Seth texted me later that night thanking me for the planning I had done. "Thank you for this really amazing space you've created. I feel somewhat like we're rebels inside an empire" (Seth, Personal Communication, 10/20/2018). At our final meeting, Mae and Seth again commented separately on the fact that I made food for every meeting. They both commented on the value of having a table in the center of our story circle with homemade food, how it made them feel at home and signaled to them that I cared about them as people. These moments are the ones that make me see the methods described here as something more than the steps I took to enact a research plan. They were methods of creating relationships. There were flaws, moments when I thought perhaps too much or not enough about something, and a host of options I could have chosen along with the few paths I did. It is my hope that I attend to both the research questions and the people who worked with me to answer them.

Chapter 4: Analysis Part 1: An Ethnodrama about Teachers' Stories

Introduction

As is laid out in Chapter Three, the ethnodrama that makes up the bulk of this chapter is both a method and representation of analysis. In other words, the ethnodrama is as much a document I used to think through and examine the research data as it is a finished artifact meant to display conclusions I reached. It is both the act and result of research. It is process and product. I used the process of constructing the text to explore the data across multiple workshop sessions and the themes of those sessions as well as across the eight months between the first one-on-one interview and the final workshop.

Bakhtin (as cited in Morris, 1994) describes the ways in which words carry their previous uses, the contexts in which they were used, and the ideology expressed through them as they get reconfigured into new utterances. This ethnodrama is a product of the analysis that I did when reviewing transcripts and audio and video recordings of my work with the teachers. The ethnodrama functions as a process of analysis as the reader engages with it and the utterances signal unique understandings to them. The reader imbues the ethnodrama text with meaning as they read because it presents an open-ended analysis of data—a complete analysis in its own right but presented in a way that invites further analysis to be mapped onto it.

One way the text offers new avenues for analysis is in the ways the utterances/data literally respond to themselves as the teachers share their stories and reflections, constructing a new conversation not immediately present in the interviews and workshops. This conversation offers a curated, detailed exploration of particular issues the teachers named in the telling of stories that mattered to them and their work in

the teaching profession. The dialogue was structured to point the audience to particular issues teachers named for themselves. Such a claim is possible because of the use of In Vivo codes (Saldaña 2015). These are verbatim words or phrases taken directly from what the teachers said during the workshops. For example, I used the In Vivo code Feedback for Alexia's statement, "they say I'm doing great things, but they don't give me the feedback that I need." I then used In Vivo codes to point to other moments in which the words, tone, or emotional experience of a moment matched the original code. For example, I also coded this statement by Talia about an interaction with her principal as Feedback: "...by the way, Talia, you're a high flyer. And I'm like, what do you mean? And she said, well, last year you had like a really large amount of referrals." Crafting a text in which these passages rise up in relief from the other thirty-five-plus hours of work stands as part of my representation of analysis of the stories we told during the workshops and the discussions that followed.

As you read, there are two considerations to keep in mind. First, this is a text that asks for a different reading approach than one might traditionally use for a research text. Someone reading a traditional research text can assume that the text will do the majority of work for the reader. The text will present all relevant information and lay out a specific argument for what the research material means. The reader is called to a certain degree of engagement, perhaps asking what the texts offer or what conclusions or approaches might be critiqued or extended, yet this still assumes a finished argument is already made and clearly presented. This is a text meant to be performed, either in reality with performers and an audience gathering together in a physical space at a particular time, or in the reader's imagination. The way I have written this ethnodrama asks that the reader take an

interpretive leap through visualization and other imaginative moves. I do this as a commitment to represent the *lived experiences* of the teachers with whom I worked.

I do this by writing the ethnodrama like a text with a primary purpose to be performed instead of a text with a primary purpose to be read. A text to be performaned (e.g. Kaufman & Tectonic Theater Project, 2001; Saldaña, 2005; Saldaña, & Wolcott, 2001; Smith, 1993) is typically a longer piece of writing with more fully developed, complex characters and storylines. It also focuses on the information needed to create a live performance of the text such as set descriptions and a list of characters. Additionally, it leaves room for interpretation, and depends on that interpretation for meaning-making. For example, the phrase "I love you" can be *performed* (for an audience or in a reader's imagination) in a number of ways, each carrying a different interpretation. Emphasizing "I" does something different than emphasizing either of the other two words. Emotional subtext such as anger, romance, or sarcasm further informs the meaning. Writing this ethnodrama as a performance text asks the reader to engage in this interpretation as a performer would.

Writing ethnodrama for a journal publication would look different. An ethnodrama published in an academic journal (e.g. Denzin, 2015; Pifer, 1999; Sangha, Slade, Mirchandani, Maitra, & Shan, 2012) would be shorter, sometimes with more headings. It would likely include a theoretical framework for the piece and detail some analysis and implications of the script. The journal publication would assume that the written text conveys the majority if not all of its meaning because that is all that would be available to the audience. An ethnodrama written to be performed asks the audience (or reader) to construct their own meaning and map it onto the text.

I wrote this text imagining it as a performance for or with the teacher participants. This genre is subject to time, space, bodies, and many other components that exist differently between a literary and performance experience. This dissertation does lay out a theoretical framework and offer my own interpretation of the ethnodrama in other chapters. By purposefully placing the ethnodrama in its own chapter instead of weaving parts of it in as examples of my own interpretation or completely leaving it out as a private document meant only for my consideration is a way to include the performance/interpretive experience within the dissertation and share it with readers. As such, it will benefit the *reader* of this ethnodrama to do so with an active imagination that pictures a performance space, the bodies of performers and audience members, and the pacing and sound of words spoken out loud.

Second, the statements made throughout the ethnodrama attend primarily to the main theme of the section/moment where it is stated. Because many of these statements pertain to a variety of themes, they connect to other sections throughout the ethnodrama. For example, I use the passage "If it's one size fits all...I don't know if I want to come back each year" in a section titled "The Job" made up of statements coded with terms defining the scope and impacts of the work of teachers. However, I also coded that statement with codes that would fit into the "Untenable Threshold" section that explores moments of crises in which teachers must make a decision in order to move forward. As a reader, I encourage you to make your own connections between individual statements as well as whole sections as there are many.

Voice

My goal in presenting this ethnodrama as a chapter that stands on its own is to make space for the voices of the teachers that participated in this project. This goal uses the concept of voice as a metaphor for teachers' thinking, the audible sound of teachers when they talk, and their physical presence. I do this by using slightly edited verbatim quotes. Yet the use of direct quotes is not free of interpretation.

Kumashiro (2002, pp. 19-20) outlines three main critiques of writer's craft techniques that either hide or fail to acknowledge the representational work that goes into the inclusion of direct quotes. First, I and the context of the interviews and workshops mediate participants' statements (see Talmy, 2003; Wortham, Mortimer, Lee, Allard, & White, 2011). Second, interpretations are partial and limited. Third, a reader's identity and history mediates how they take in information.

Kumashiro (2002) asserts that researchers must acknowledge the representational construction when using participant voices as a component of data. For Kumashiro, the use of poetry instead of prose offers a path towards that acknowledgement. "[W]hile both forms of representation are constructions, poetry, more than prose, makes explicit through its unconventionality, many ways in which the story is constructed" (p. 21). An ethnodrama that uses verbatim quotes, like the one that makes up the majority of this chapter, cannot be considered an unmediated expression of the characters. Beyond the mediated nature of the interviews and workshops as well as the transcripts I used to represent them and the positions from which the video recorders viewed the workshops, I interpreted what was said through coding, deciding which codes to feature, editing the passages, and constructing the dialogue. As a product of my analysis, my voice is laced throughout every passage and the interactions between them.

Conclusion

The teachers' reflections during our final workshop provided what I see as disclaimers regarding the content of their stories and parameters for engaging with them. As such, I include them in the prologue and epilogue to frame the stories and their discussion in order to complicate what the teachers described as common but simplified assumptions about them and their work. The stories shared here are real and complex experiences that individuals have or continue to live through. They are not abstract hypotheticals. But, as many of them attest, they are not the whole story. I encourage you to read this in a way that allows you to remember that these are lived experiences of real people who do difficult work.

<div align="center">

Don't Stop: An Ethnodrama of Teacher Stories

</div>

Cast List[8]

Alexia

Amelia

Darya

Libby

Mae

Rebekah

Seth

Talia

Valerie

---

[8] Descriptions of the cast are not included for anonymity.

[Nine chairs face an audience in a line across the performance space. The teachers are seated and chatting with each other before the performance begins. When it's time, they all stand and start.]

PROLOGUE

DARYA: On Friday I was sitting on top of my desk watching my third hour class write and I just felt like...I have the best job in the world. And I feel like the stories I've told haven't made that clear.

AMELIA: But it really is the truth.

TALIA: As I grow as a teacher, I'm shifting away from needing to please my colleagues towards being more unapologetic. More authentic.

SETH: And for me, just having someone acknowledge that I'm trying and it doesn't always work. It's really nice to have that.

MAE: What my stories say about me, or how I speak about teaching, is that it's fun, which I truly believe. It brings me a lot of joy. I just love kids.

ALEXIA: There's something about getting to know students for more than just six weeks.

DARYA: I don't necessarily love the kids. Or my subject. I don't think I'm changing people or necessarily impacting them at all. But it's a very unique and special thing to be in a room with so many people every day and interact with them.

ALEXIA: Being in the classroom and creating units that I feel passionate about.

LIBBY: The teacher that I've realized I am is someone who just has very high expectations of what teaching should be or what I want it to look like for me.

DARYA: And like, even though it's an inauthentic space, just to be able to do this job often feels like a privilege.

VALERIE: Because I need kids to know they have potential beyond what anyone will ever care to tell them that they have potential in. How could I sit behind a desk when I know I could be out there telling kids that they can?

REBEKAH: I don't know what my stories say about me or who I am as a teacher. I don't really care. But when it comes to the kids, I am always wanting to push them and truly believe they can get better, and they are going to get better. Whether it's an A or a C, or D. Any improvement.

DARYA: I just feel very lucky to be trusted in that way. And that's something I don't think I've made clear in the stories I've shared.

AMELIA: There's a defensiveness to a story.

MAE: Most of the people in my life understand my work as a teacher through stories. My life is a series of interesting stories in middle school and usually they're pretty funny.

SETH: But, there's this tension-

AMELIA: Exactly.

SETH: There's this tension with friends and family.

AMELIA: Yes. Exactly.

MAE: I remember the way people would react to the stories I was telling my first

            year. Most of my stories were about the traumas students were

            experiencing, about how that was traumatizing for me in certain ways.

AMELIA: But there's so much more than you can ever capture in the one story

            beyond the event itself.

SETH: My co-teacher has been teaching for 20 years, and he doesn't talk about

            his teaching with his family because they only hear the negative. So he

            made a decision not to share with those people.

AMELIA: People can be very unsupportive of teaching, so I don't talk to them about

            it. Or I only talk about the best moments because I want to sell people that

            I'm not this poor victim. Like there are those moments, but there's so much

            more than that.

MAE: I remember having a very specific shift in the way I told stories about

            what I did and where I worked and what my students were like. I've

            shifted towards saying I have resilient students, I have hilarious

            coworkers, I have outrageous children who say crazy things. That's

            become the way I talk about what I do now and the cool things my kids

            do, the smart things that they do and the fun things I do.

AMELIA: The challenge of telling these stories is, sometimes, it feels like it's

            supposed to represent everything, but they're just one moment.

SETH: So there's this tension when making decisions about which stories I want

            to tell.

MAE: It's important for teachers to reflect on our collective struggle. But I don't think that anyone else deserves the right to place a struggle upon teachers if you're not in that position.

AMELIA: I would not share these stories with an audience of non-teachers. It just never would occur to me to share them.

LIBBY: Even in education, I can feel misunderstood or judged.

DARYA: It's nice to have rules around listening and not talking to specific stories.

ALEXIA: It's something that my family and I do quite often. We share our stories, but we don't really comment, even after everyone has shared.

AMELIA: It's an innate thing, to project onto someone else's story or organize information based on your own experiences. That's what makes this hard. So I don't mind if you listen, but the story is mine.

SETH: It's been really valuable for me. To learn to be a better listener.

ALEXIA: To care means to believe in people.

LIBBY: I want to be recognized for the intellectual pursuit of our profession and what we bring and what we're trying to do.

MAE: We work in an oppressive system, often with oppressed peoples, and we work in a broken system. Teaching is a powerful form of activism and I'm very proud to do that work.

VALERIE: It really is the best job.

REBEKAH: Everything just sort of makes sense in a school.

ALEXIA: The students are great. I really like the students.

TALIA: I feel so blessed.

DARYA: It's just sometimes the stories don't make that clear.

[All sit. They collectively breathe in and out and listen to the storytellers.]

THE JOB

ALEXIA: During my first year of teaching, I learned that "to care" has a lot of

meanings. In one particular instance, I had the opportunity of meeting a

student named Teezy. He blended in easily with the kids—loud and

talkative, outspoken, but highly susceptible to any sort of distractions.

Teezy didn't have the best eighth grade year. He lost his baby brother, his

dad was incarcerated and he had lived with his grandma during that year,

missing out on much of the last moments with his brother and father. My

colleagues and I did what we could to form a relationship with him so that

he could feel comfortable in school. He wasn't the best student but we

knew that he could succeed.

TALIA: I went in to my second year teaching really positive about things. I joined

my school's PBIS team. It's sort of about incentivizing students to behave

positively, so like school bucks, events, different things like that. It asks

what kind of values are we putting out and how can we be consistent

across the board and also support teachers. A few teachers work with

admin. And it's basically volunteer work. Every week: a ton, a ton of

work. But it feels really good because I feel like I'm making a difference

in the places where I really do see gaps. So it's work that I'm happy to do.

ALEXIA: I did what I could to show him that I cared. I never gave up on him

attending class or reading required texts. I'd check in with him during his

study hall. Simply be there as a constant presence for his ELA class. I didn't want to give up on him or lower my expectations for him. Even though he was going through a lot during that first year as a high school student. I wanted him to know that there were people outside of his family who cared for him as well.

TALIA: We have two forms of referrals. You can send a kid to the office, and that's a referral. But we also have this paper reflection where the teacher manages it in the classroom. The kid writes down what happened and they reflect. So the principal considers that a referral as well. But that's not how she portrayed it.

ALEXIA: When he got suspended, over and over, I knew what was going to happen. With each suspension he grew angrier and angrier and I, in turn, was angry with the system. It was as though he was set for failure but I didn't want that to happen. I talked to him any moment I saw him; I welcomed him into the classroom, gave him assignments he missed and told him that he could succeed. I got maybe half of the assignments back, but I did get every book back and he said he read half of it!

TALIA: Last year our principal came to the staff and she said, "we've been tracking the referral data and we had, like, a million referrals." We call trouble students high flyers cause they're on the radar so much. And we had too many of them. And she was just really, really upset. And I could tell that it was a reflection of the fact that she had to take the heat for how many referrals they had.

ALEXIA: He was sent to the ALC and the ALC teacher asked me for lessons that he could do. My colleagues told me that students sent to an ALC were a lost cause—give them a packet you find online and don't attempt anything else; don't bother putting your all into it because they will most likely do nothing. I didn't believe that, though. Teezy and I had built enough of a relationship where I knew he wanted to succeed but he didn't know how.

TALIA: So one night I am working—it's about eight o'clock—putting together a PD for the next day because I've revamped the in-classroom referrals. I Dunno. It's a little better. It's a little less consequence, a little more reflection. And so far it's been really positive. Anyway, we're all there late, and after running everything by her, she was like, yeah, that looks great. By the way, Talia, you're a high flyer. And I'm like, what do you mean? And she said, well, last year you had like a really large amount of referrals. And she gives me this list, which had my name on it and a bunch of other teachers' names.

ALEXIA: I sent assignment and reading after assignment and reading to Teezy, at the ALC. I graded his work and gave him feedback. He would email me from time to time to tell me "this is the best book ever" or "I had fun with this assignment" or "Did you like my short story? How was it? I worked really hard on it." He didn't write the greatest and I had to give him parameters, redo a couple assignments, and so on, but he did his best with the work I sent him.

TALIA: As a new teacher, they told me to "give a student a referral if you have a

problem. That referral is data and we track things like equity through

that." So I followed the system. I followed the rules. But now, she's like,

yeah, that's not okay. Not acceptable. And I was like, I'm so sorry. I didn't

know I was a problem. I'll work on it. I thought I had a great year last

year. That I made strides. I dunno. I had been so excited to be presenting

on the work I had done in PBIS, and now I'm like, I'm not even qualified

to talk tomorrow.

ALEXIA: In the end, he failed every other class except ELA. I'm not sure where I'm

going with this but I did learn, from my time meeting Teezy, that 'to care'

means to always believe in them, give them support and to never give up

on them. I can simply hope that the students I have encountered and will

continue to meet will see that I care about each and every one of them and

that I want to see them succeed because I believe in them.

TALIA: So now I'm just not going to follow the system, you know? I don't need it.

Like I figured out my own classroom management technique. I'm a good

teacher. I pull the kid one-on-one when I need to, but I don't involve the

office at all. I close my door. And it sucks because I'm part of the team

that promotes PBIS. And we really look at the data from it to discuss the

equity portion of it because that's a huge push in our school: culturally

responsive teaching. But I also am not tenured so I will just fly under the

radar. Close my classroom door. That's where I'm at.

[All collectively breathe in and out.]

REBEKAH: One of the things that I think causes the most friction around being a

            teacher is how we look at students and how specifically we're looking at

            our really challenging and struggling students.

ALEXIA: There were so many experiences that I had in which it showed that

            supporting people and never giving up on them enabled people to succeed.

            It didn't always work like that, but I still don't want to give up or care any

            less.

AMELIA: One of my students this year who is open enrolled is really defiant but so

            bright and has so much potential. But he has developed a persona as a

            disruptor. So this particular student will put me in situations where I feel

            like we have to duke it out in front of the class, which is so uncomfortable.

            And the learning environment isn't conducive for anyone. At the same

            time, I care so deeply about this student. So he ended up doing something

            really bad outside of my classroom, so the principal told his mom he needs

            to go to the district he's supposed to be in. Now I'm in this complicated

            situation where I'm trying to advocate for him to stay because I feel like

            we're just taking the easy way out by just like removing him. So I'm

            confused about what is the right thing for us to be doing.

REBEKAH: School just becomes this complicated place where these battles are hashed

            out.

VALERIE: But when it's the adults in the building that are adding to the problems, it

            almost makes it unbearable. And I think, you know, we can forgive

            students for so many things, but when adults have so many blind spots or

just don't want to deal with something or feel like they've got too much on their plate already, I dunno, it's like almost saying something about the profession in general.

AMELIA: And at a certain point, you feel ownership of the problems too. You feel like these are my problems. If students, if our system just flipped you off and told you to fuck off, like I need to get my ass in there and I need to show up and I need to teach what I believe and I need to hold students to high expectations. And I love that part of my job.

VALERIE: But if it's one size fits all and 'this is what we do' and 'this is how we do it', I don't know if I want to come back each year.

LIBBY: I mean, like, I love hearing, when I asked Rebekah, like, so how's it going? And she's like basically it sucks. And I was like, yes, that makes me feel so good. Because I totally get that. And like Darya saying, sometimes I want to walk out in the middle of the day. And I for sure have no answers to give, but I just really appreciated hearing the struggles.

REBEKAH: It's just hard.

LIBBY: It's so hard.

MAE: Yeah, man. It's hard.

REBEKAH: The job is fucking hard.

MAE: I keep having to tell myself this is just a job. It's a job. But it's not just a job. It's a lot of children and it's a lot of people's lives.

DARYA: Also, more structurally, it can feel like I'm an invisible peon just trying to figure out how to navigate a system so I can get this weird thing called tenure that I don't even fully understand.

AMELIA: My principal often asks non-tenured teachers on their tenure year to sign a contract to take an additional year of probation, which our union says is legal.

VALERIE: Sometimes I think about teacher retention and burnout and my school is not doing anything to keep me at all. I was in such a unique situation at my first school and I feel like I was naive to so many things in the public discourse at most schools. I had a Puerto Rican administrator who was a victim of racism pretty much every single day and could relate to me on a level that most administrators cannot. Now I have an administrator who tells me to bring equity in the classroom, do all these things, and change the lessons while not understanding the amount of time it takes.

DARYA: It makes me think what are- what do- we just give so much. Of so many different things and parts of ourselves.

VALERIE: My grandmother was one of the most amazing teachers. The community just absolutely loved her. But she was a bad mom. And so I'd always hear from my mother how she was just never there because she was teaching.

SETH: When I first started teaching, I had a mentor teacher who's a 20-year veteran. And she would grade at home at night and all weekend. So I was trying to do the same thing and keep up with her. But I always watch a movie with my kids on the weekend. So it was towards the end of the first

trimester of my first year. Saturday night or Sunday night. I was grading

and my kids were sitting watching a movie and they go, "You never watch

movies with us anymore." I was like, fuck this. I closed my Chromebook,

just went over and sat with them. And I just decided: I'm not ever going to

grade at home again. But in my mind I still had the expectation I was

going to be grading like the teacher who was my mentor, and how I

thought all teachers should be grading.

AMELIA: It's as if there's a competition.

TALIA: Like being put on a high flyers list comparing how many referrals you

            send compared to other teachers.[9]

LIBBY: Or some kind of bizarre natural selection to decide who gets to teach an

            AP course. And when a new teacher mentions that they would want to

            take over for another teacher while they're gone on extended leave, it gets

            treated with hostility. Like, who do you think you are?

REBEKAH: There is one student I have who is just off the walls right now. There's a

            million things going on in his personal life that are causing it. But at this

            meeting, two of his teachers were saying, "well he's not really a behavior

            issue in my class. I just isolate him from all the other kids. He's not

            producing any work but he's not a behavior issue." Then me and the math

            teacher start talking about how he's bouncing off the walls, and it's not

---

[9] I wrote this sentence based on the content of Talia's story at the start of this section. It is used here to tie the concept of competition back to Talia's story where it is present though not explicit in the way she told it. The concept of competition also comes up in Libby's story of teacher feedback in the Untenable Threshold section.

hyperbole here, bouncing off the walls like parkour, like laying on tables. But we're the only ones who have any work samples from him, limited mind you, but we're the only teachers in which he has produced anything. And when it was time for somebody to show up for a meeting, my team pointed to me because they don't see any problems with him. I'm the one who's having issues.

VALERIE: I was in a previous building that had a culture that bred caring, the systems bred caring. Like it just wasn't normal if you didn't lose your shit once in a while. And I really cared. And it was the best part of my day. And so I think, as teachers, we are in the profession we chose. Like we know what we signed up for. But it can be such a thankless position, right?

[All collectively breathe in and out.]

NAVIGATING RELATIONSHIPS & PROFESSIONAL CARING

MAE: Care is a really important thing for me as a teacher. Um, I teach with a lot of love, and care and love are really closely related. So I have a student whose name is Sullivan. I call him Tiny. We're very close and we're really... I just love him. I just love this little guy. He's in ninth grade now, but he came to visit me on Halloween. It was so nice. But, um, I think about how much I care for him and how much I cared for him when he was at school, and a group of his friends as well. And it was a really interesting, um, intense relationship when you have such a caring relationship for some students and not others.

REBEKAH: Listening to Mae makes me think of the role I play at my school and within my team of teachers. I'm on a team with some really challenging people and I become the mom on our team. And anytime a child is having anything related to emotions, my three male colleagues bring them to me or they come to me, and... One time we had a student who was on the spectrum and was generally fine, but would have serious breakdowns like sobbing and banging his head into the wall. He had lost his science folder and that was the trigger of the meltdown. And he's hitting his head against the wall. He's freaking out, he's crying and the science teacher comes up to me and he just goes, "Can you deal with that?" And the student wasn't even in my class.

MAE: I feel like the most understanding people around caring relationships are kids, because like so many people have mentioned, they know how to care for one another in specific situations. A lot of our kids come from situations of precarious care and love and yet they know how to give it and they know how to receive it. But adults have a hard time with students and the specific students that maybe you care for and other people don't or who we all have a right to care for and who we all have a right to love as teachers.

REBEKAH: So at work I'm a softie. I am like the most loving, which is not something any of my friends would describe me as outside of school. I'm very affectionate with the kids. I'm optimistic. And there was a kid who I had known was *[deep exhale]* struggling. Attendance was really poor. He did

108

not want to come to school. He just wanted to be homeschooled. He just

wanted to be at home. And he was very mature. His favorite meal to cook

was salmon and sautéed sugar snap peas. That was his favorite thing to

cook! His mom had some substance abuse issues, so oftentimes he had to

be the grownup at home. And I had heard that he'd been really struggling

with the transition to eighth grade and he hadn't been coming to school

recently.

MAE: So I came up across a lot of tension with the care I provided for

specifically Sullivan throughout his time at school. Especially when he

was no longer in seventh grade in my class. He moved on to eighth grade

and we stayed very close and I was still his number one ally at school even

though he wasn't in one of my classes that year.

REBEKAH: So I saw him one morning and I had had him the year before, you know,

whatever. I always have a soft spot for certain kids. And I saw him and I

said, "Cleo! I'm so happy to see you today." And I'm like, "You're going

to hate me but come here," and I made him give me a hug.

MAE: One of the ways I care for Sullivan is by feeding him because food is love.

Arizona ice tea and Dill Pickle Lays are his two favorite snacks. And so

every now and again we had little pickles and tea parties. One day he was

in my class when I was teaching a particularly challenging class that took

a lot of attention. Like, I care for all of you, but oh God, this is really hard.

And Sullivan was in my space getting his backpack that was under the

desk. And I was like, "What are you doing?" And he's like, "I'm getting

my backpack." And I was like, "I'm trying to do something." He was like, "Chill out Miss Humphrey." And I was like, "Why don't you just keep your shit in your own locker so that I can teach my class?" And I said that to him. A 13-year-old boy. He was just like "Whatever. You need a break." And he left.

REBEKAH: So I had my arm around him and we were kind of talking and I was like, "Hey, are you going to class?" And he said yeah. "But you don't have any of your stuff." And he was telling me, "I forgot my locker combination. I'm going to ask Mr. Meyer for my combo." And one of my colleagues *[exhales]*, he's somebody that just gets right in a kid's face. So my colleague comes up and just goes, *[with a gruff, angry voice]* "Where's your binder? And Cleo was like, *[in a calm, even voice]* "I forgot my locker combo." My colleague's like, "Well then you got to go to so and so to get your combination." And I said, *[slightly raised - connoting 'back off']* "He's doing that. We're just saying hi." And he was like, "That's the difference between me and you. You love 'em first."

MAE: Sullivan left and I had this—a moral crisis. I didn't find him until the next day and I was just like "Tiny, I'm sorry. I love you. I didn't mean to freak out at you." I had two full size bags of dill pickle chips and a six pack of Arizona ice tea. I was so ready to apologize and be sorry. And Sullivan walked in with a bag of barbecue chips and an Arizona ice tea for me because he knew my preferred flavors and, and it was just such a beautiful moment. Kids are people with caring feelings, and like he knew that I care

110

for him and I can apologize to him, but he also has a caring relationship towards me.

REBEKAH: You know, who cares if I love them first? And then like we talk about like, *[in a less gruff voice]* 'Why don't you have any of your stuff? The bell's going to ring in three minutes. How are you going to get to class on time with your supplies?' I got observed once. And a bunch of kids were coming into my class late and I would just say good morning, opened the door and say, "Hey. Good morning. Go to your seat. We'll be done in a minute, and you can jump in." And I was a little disheartened that the person who was observing me was like, "I love that you positively greet your students even when they're late." And I was kind of thinking like, well, what else am I going to do? They're here. It's 9:30 in the morning. I've already had a cup of coffee. Life's great. Um, and she's like, well, most teachers ask them why they're late, where's their pass, and are pissed about it.

MAE: And so I think it's just so great when kids show care back to the teachers who care for them. And that I think our schools are spaces for learning so many different things. I really do believe that. And like I have a truly loving and caring relationship with a 14-year-old black boy who grew up on the north side and he comes to visit me and we talk all the time. Care can cross a lot of lines.

REBEKAH: And it's just, it's been funny to me a little bit that like, that is who I am at school.

[All collectively breathe in and out.]

SETH: This year I had a student who really stood out to me right away. It seemed like he wasn't very interested in school. Like he didn't care if he was there or not. So I made it a goal to make him care about school by annoying him every day. Walking from one class to another class, I'd walk beside him and say *[quickly without time to answer each question]*, "How's it going? What'd you have for breakfast this morning for class? Do you want me to walk you to a lunch like I did yesterday?" And every day he'd say, *[calm and slightly detached]* "No, no, no, no, Mr. Ryan. You don't need to do that." But then occasionally I'll pull him aside and ask, *[honestly and openly]* "Am I really annoying you?" He's like, *[simply]* "No." I'm like, "Should I stop?" And he said, "No. Don't stop."

ALEXIA: You do what you can do to show them that you care.

AMELIA: But it's like, how do we quantify that care and decide who gets more because I know the rest of my students aren't getting as much as I'm giving to the one kid every single day.

VALERIE: I think we're all kind of in this as new teachers. I came in with an open heart and I got wounded a lot and now how do I adjust so that this doesn't happen in the same way again?

DARYA: I dunno. The limits of my caring are being realized.

VALERIE: The idea of caring is so sensitive because if it's not reciprocal you can feel burned a lot.

LIBBY: But I definitely feel sympathy for children. I see my kids' faces in their faces and I feel a desire to save them. Which I then, of course, have to interrogate that desire and what that's all about and where that comes from.

REBEKAH: There is this part of me when I know that my kids don't have regular access to being able to bathe or to eat... I just feel like, if I could just give you a sense of stability... And then reminding myself how probably wrong that is.

VALERIE: I'm really focused on the structure of it all. And because that's the driving force, and if no one can be successful in their positions, it kind of feels daunting. To be in your third year teaching and already be thinking it'll take this much money to fix this problem. It'll take this much money to fix that problem. My caring can only extend so far to help it.

AMELIA: So much care, so much time, so much love. And then I feel like, why am I doing that? It almost feels like, yeah, I can't figure out why I keep putting myself in that situation almost.

DARYA: Beyond students, I don't think half of that admin knew who I was for the first two years. I know they didn't. And that's good on the one hand because you feel sort of freedom in that. But then on the other hand, you just have no idea where you stand at all.

ALEXIA: My admin come in and say I'm doing great things, but they don't give me the feedback that I need. I feel like there are things I can work on, but I don't have that support because it's the first year for my position and they

don't know what to do with me. They're giving me free range, but they're not really advising me in anything. And that's a big struggle that I'm having.

DARYA: For me it's just been a lot of realizing that I need to just shut my ego off because it probably has nothing to do with me.

LIBBY: Yeah. I feel like I weirdly relate to some of my administrator's flaws. I don't want to make excuses for him. I just feel like I literally can't keep up with what I'm being asked to do as a teacher. And so I sort of give him a pass, even though I also am like, it's November and I haven't had my first tenure observation and I have a feeling whenever it happens, it's going to be half-ass.

DARYA: Or with students, I'm just going to go home and tomorrow I'll talk to them, but I'm not going to let it cut into serving who I am and my purposes in life. Because I care so much about my students but my job isn't to save them.

LIBBY: Or fix them. That can be a really toxic thing.

SETH: Right. I had a student blow up last Friday and it just weighed on me so heavily, mentally, all weekend that I couldn't get away from it. Some days my spouse thinks I'm the most annoying grumpy person in the world because I won't stop thinking about this 12-year-old who stomped out of my class.

VALERIE: When we juggle spaces of different types of caring all the time and how not to take things home with us, I've noticed that it's also really unhealthy,

with the people who love me. And so I'm trying to find time to take care of myself. I still haven't found it. And I feel guilty, actually constantly, if I am taking time for myself because there's always something I should be doing instead.

TALIA: When I do have a really great work/life balance, I feel like I'm failing as a teacher because there's always something to do. The to-do list never ends. It's like, well last year I was here until nine and now it's six. So like I feel bad about leaving. Usually I work every Sunday, like all day grading and like getting ready for the week and, if I don't work all day Sunday, it's stressful for me to go in on Monday. Because I feel like I haven't done my job. Even though I'd be fine. It's more mental than anything else.

VALERIE: It just never stops. And what I have noticed is that there are actual human beings in my home that need me, right. And so it's kind of like, I don't know how to be a good mom and a good teacher. I don't know how to be everything to everybody. I have to rest in the fact that it's not possible.

AMELIA: But I also feel this, like, if not me then who, because I love these kids. Like I love these kids and I see how I can use my power or my whatever way of manipulating the system to stand up for what I believe in.

REBEKAH: It seems to me there's this constant question of who should be in school and what should be in school. Like we talk about loving students and how that's almost feels like a thing you can't say. But most of my morning is students coming around. I get hugs. They sign their name on something in my room in erasable whiteboard marker and leave. But for some teachers,

that type of affection shouldn't be in school. I shouldn't let kids come into *my* room and disrupt *my* environment. And even with our students: what students get to be in the classroom? What do parents need to do in order to enter the building? Who gets kicked out of class most often? So many of our students receiving special education services get chucked out of classrooms because what they need or how they are doesn't fit in with what their teacher tolerates or can handle or their idea of what a classroom should be.

SETH: There's multiple pressures.

MAE: Yeah.

SETH: From our colleagues or admin or different people.

MAE: And from our own school experiences. The push and pull of those structures...I mean it comes up for everybody in some way: What we want to be versus what we're told should happen.

AMELIA: It would be so nice to hear stories from my colleagues. Because I feel like we don't have opportunities to do that in school. The only times we have to do that is at a happy hour, but it's more, like, let's talk about funny things because the real stories that are happening are so heavy. It would just be good to hear stories about the personal connections my colleagues are making with students because sometimes I feel like that's not happening even though I'm sure they are. I would just benefit and learn so much from hearing about it.

MAE: Because of the union and because of how the teacher profession works,

            and because compensation is so important, our team meetings are now

            optional. Value is placed on logistics and PD instead of team building and

            community. And the people who show up to team meetings are the ones

            that want community.

REBEKAH: That makes me think of a week where everything was going really bad. I

            mean it was to the point that I was just telling the kids like, I'm just

            irritated and it's not even you guys, I just can't shake this. So I'm sorry that

            I'm just kind of short all the time. I had talked with a colleague after and

            was like, "So what you're telling me is don't take it personally when

            things go poorly because there's 8 million other reasons that it could be

            happening. And when something goes right, take all the credit because

            you're amazing." And I mean she was like this very professional woman

            who I deeply respected and she's like, "Yeah, that's kind of what you have

            to do."

VALERIE: Sometimes the system doesn't allow for caring, so I don't know if I care.

            Or sometimes I worry that I don't care enough.

MAE: It's just a hard career.

[All collectively breathe in and out.]

THE INTERNAL STRUGGLE OF EMOTIONAL LABOR

SETH: One of the things that I was completely unprepared for at my school is the

            level of trauma students bring with them. It's just ridiculously high. And I

            was astonished at the number of students who share about the murders in

their family. It just happens suddenly, and it pops up during class and stuff like that, but I just, I'm not, I'm always...I don't know. I'm just so surprised.

AMELIA: Last year I had a student who was extremely disruptive and very disrespectful to me and I expressed to my administrator that the student was really disruptive, disrespectful, um, kind of messing with the space. On top of that, everything in Teacher Ed told me, yes, the parents are on your side. They're going to come in, they're going to whip them into shape. They're going to say, wow, you're trying so hard. He's being a jerk. So I invited his Auntie to come in and said she would come observe his behaviors. Clearly, as soon as his Auntie walked in the room, he was a perfect child. But the rest of the class was just as chaotic as it usually was.

SETH: There's this one that I'm still processing. It happened on Tuesday this past week with one of the students who seems to be doing really well in class. She's been at the back of the room, like just chilling, getting her work done and like super chatty. Earlier, I mispronounced her name. I said Daisy. And she's like, "It's DayCEE." She's Mexican and she, she's like, *[three syncopated claps with the next three words]* "Get it right." And I was like, "Cool."

AMELIA: As his Auntie left, I was trying to make a connection. "Thank you so much for coming. Please let me know how I can support your nephew." And she was like, "Just so you know, I'm the hiring manager for Metropolitan Public School teachers and I've learned a lot of things about your

classroom by being here." And I was like, "Oh, okay. Um, well please email me or I'll call you." Then after school, my principal came in and asked for a private meeting. And it was basically like, "This person came into my office after visiting your classroom and she told me about what's going on in your room." She had this whole page of notes with my name written at the top. And then just note after note after note after note about everything that I did wrong and how I had no classroom management.

SETH: After writing the journal entry for the day, we were talking and she goes, "Yeah, my uncle was murdered this year in Mexico. He was shot in the back of the head and somebody scooped out his brains. My dad and my uncle found him." And I was just like...it's like I don't- I've had very little training in how to deal with this and I've read as much literature as, like, people can give me, but like I'm just blown away at the amount of violence in some of these seventh graders' lives and like I'm still, yeah, I'm just like, I don't know.

AMELIA: My principal used this as an opportunity to say that I was just a new teacher. "You know, when I was a first year teacher, once I wrote my name on the board, I didn't know what to do next." And I was like, I've been doing three preps on an A/B schedule for five months at this point. I've been doing a little bit more than writing my name, but okay, if that's where you think I'm at, fine. And then she gave me this rant about culture and how maybe I didn't understand that different races have different cultures and if a student is screaming and disrupting your space, that might

119

just be their culture. And she tried to give me a backwards lesson about equity: a white administrator telling me, a teacher of color, that I didn't know that race played a role in the classroom. I was just dumbfounded.

SETH: That's one thing I just, I can't get over that. And I'm glad that the students feel comfortable and safe enough in our school and have people to share this with because it wasn't just me she shared it with. She's been working with the counselors and I think she's overcoming some of that trauma. But at the same time... it's really overwhelming at times. The school psychologist is right next to my room, so sometimes I just walk out and go sit in her room for two or three minutes and then go back to class while students were working. I just, yeah, it's hard.

AMELIA: Ever since then, it's like, 'Okay. Yes. I'm so wrong. So sorry.' And never again will I express that something is not going right in my room. And so ever since, it's been a closed door.

SETH: And I don't want to bring that home, so I don't talk about it with my wife or my- obviously not my children or even my family. So I take it home and just internalize it. But, at the same time, the students are entrusting me, and- I don't...know- I'm conflicted about who and when I should be sharing these things with.

AMELIA: My principal's motto is "choose optimism". She made us buttons that say "choose optimism" and we're supposed to wear them or display them all the time. And so I've chosen optimism in front of my administrator because that is what gets me into a system so I can play the game. You

have to fend for yourself and fight for what you believe in, but don't bring

anyone who's supposed to support you in the door because now you have

identified yourself as culturally incompetent.

[All collectively breathe in and out.]

LIBBY: I feel like I can't believe in these situations.

AMELIA: It's so much care, so much time, so much love. And then sometimes I feel

like, why am I doing this?

VALERIE: It's not healthy at all.

ALEXIA: It makes me feel a sort of defeat.

SETH: *[brief laugh of recognition]*

ALEXIA: And I'm wondering what we can do.

SETH: As a male teacher, I don't get to be me because there's this expectation

that I have to be more strict. I need to be strict. At least that's the

expectations I put on myself and other people put on me.

VALERIE: My source of caring is very connected to the systems and the culture I'm

in and how I navigate that. Like where our schools are going and the

direction they're going in. If I have admin that are either too scared of or

overwhelmed by parents or students...if they're feeling that way, then how

the hell am I supposed to feel supported in my job?

MAE: We had a new principal come in two years ago. And when the district was

down to the last two candidates, the other one was actually former

military. The year before this had been a very difficult year. We had four

gun threats, multiple weapons came to school, extreme violence in our

building. It was a very difficult year. And so, many people were like 'Go

with the military guy. We need this. We need him.' We ended up going

with the current principal who is extremely restorative and big picture, and

love and care. And it's a really hard form of leadership. It's just really

hard to figure out what we want to be and what we think should happen.

SETH: The multiple pressures-

MAE: -Yeah-

SETH: -from our colleagues, from admin-

MAE: -Or from our own school experiences.

SETH: Yeah, yeah.

REBEKAH: There's this rift in our school right now. Both of our principals have

distinct mindsets on how to improve student outcomes. One of our

administrators is pretty traditional and uses punitive measures with

students. Then we have another administrator who's a lit bit more holistic.

Step one is how to make school a place where students have a positive

experience. And there's tension in the building. A lot of the behavior staff

mock one of the principals. We'll be in a meeting and they'll say *[in a*

sarcastic voice] "But we have to love the babies." The 'these kids' idea

really comes into play.

AMELIA: And that, for me, is such a big part of it too. Once you learn the system of

a school—and I think every school and every place has its something—

you can learn how to navigate it. Every single school will have kids that

need somebody to show up and champion them.

SETH: Everything just comes back to caring.

AMELIA: Right. Like I feel really strongly about doing the work and kicking ass.

             But the system is really fucked up too.

SETH: Yeah. There are situations where I'm really concerned, and I talk to other

             teachers or admin and they don't help or they make things more

             complicated.[10] I get super angry and just decide to give up my power.

TALIA: It can be hard to process it all.

VALERIE: And then there's crazy, crazy, crazy stuff that people of color have to deal

             with. Like having to deal with my colleagues saying the N-word. Crazy,

             crazy stuff. And I just always want to make sure that I have a better half

             for the people who need, need me every single day. My students but also

             my kids.[11]

MAE: For me, that sparks, like, I have genuine love for my students. And I think

             that that's really important and powerful to say. That we have genuine love

             for kids, individual kids. And I remember having a reputation in my cohort

             from grad school for being a softy. And there was a demo lesson I gave

             and the feedback from my cohort was about how I needed to get to a place

---

[10] I wrote this sentence to communicate a sentiment expressed indirectly by a longer story Seth told about colleagues encouraging him to fail a student. Another teacher and an admin were featured prominently in this story as was the concept of concern. The phrase "make things more complicated" refers to a series of interactions, advice that felt counterintuitive to Seth, and the resulting emotions are represented in the verbatim sentence directly after this sentence.

[11] I wrote this sentence to transition the conversation back to kids, primarily students but also one's own children, and the labor of loving them. I based the sentence on Valerie's statements about why she became a teacher and the work she does as a mom at home, furthering Seth's comments in his story at the beginning of this section about how the emotional labor at school is separate from but related to the emotional labor at home.

123

	where I'm going to be able to control a class. And I just remember feeling really conflicted because I truly believe that it's important to bring love into the classroom.
SETH:	It seems like we're all kind of embattled in our schools in some way or another. We're either fighting emotional battles or administrative battles or psychological battles of some sort.
AMELIA:	There's this tension in teacher identity and the performative aspects of teaching.
SETH:	You sit in your classroom every day, you just think it's you. So it's really interesting to talk to everyone and understand that everyone else is always going through their own battles in some different way. I don't think that's something we really ever talk about.
LIBBY:	I feel like schools are a place where all of this coalesces and becomes a crisis point.
REBEKAH:	I did not sleep for a week straight because I was stressed about stuff at school.
SETH:	A friend of mine was advised that, as soon as he stopped caring, things would be easier for him, and that was one of the secrets to longevity in teaching. Just stop caring.[12]

---

[12] This passage comes from a story I told in one of our group sessions. I didn't include myself in the ethnodrama because I wanted it to foreground the stories of currently practicing teachers. However, I felt this passage became more and more relevant to this section (without a comparable alternative spoken by another participant) as I constructed the ethnodrama and analyzed the data. I asked Seth if he would be okay speaking my words as if he was reporting on a friend, and he agreed. Pronouns are changed to fit this context, but the rest is verbatim from the transcript.

DARYA: Yeah.

SETH: But then I think of my student.[13] The one who seemed like he didn't care.

            And I asked him about what I was doing. He said don't stop.

DARYA: I care so much about my students. I do immensely. But my job isn't to

            save them.

VALERIE: It just never stops. I try to find time to take care of myself but I constantly

            feel guilty because there's always something to do. So for me...I'm still...I

            don't have the answer.

[All collectively breathe in and out.]

UNTENABLE THRESHOLD

DARYA: Last year I had a class of 11th graders that made me want to quit. Like

            walk out the door, quit, done, middle of the semester. And I tried

            everything from the book. Everything we've all learned and I just couldn't

            make progress. It was mostly boys in the class, which is typical for

            English 11 at the school I teach at because of AP tracking and all of that.

            But I don't know... Part of me feels like it didn't matter how much I cared

            or how hard I tried. It just wouldn't turn around. And that was a moment

            where I really felt like, yep. You do need to care less because you've done

            all you know how to do and it's not really changing anything. So keep

            trying, but maybe let go a bit.

---

[13] I wrote this sentence so that this story of Seth's could be referred back to in this moment. Coming to the decision to use this example again is what led to the title of the ethnodrama as a whole.

LIBBY: I feel like I have a weirdly oblivious conception of power in my building

and I don't know if it's like willfully oblivious, but I feel like I do whatever

I want in my room. It's not to be a renegade teacher or anything like that.

It's just to create curriculum that I feel like has a better chance of engaging

students. And again, not trying to be some hero teacher. I just want to

make this time useful for all of us.

DARYA: The nail in the coffin for that class was when one of those students sent

me porn in his essay. It was a nightmare. I was mortified. He had acted

strangely towards other teachers and he was always trying to be a player

towards me and it was just super uncomfortable. And my defense against

that had just been to ignore it. And then boom, I open his essay and there's

porn.

LIBBY: So right now I'm doing Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*, and I feel like when

I brought it up with my department, it was received with skepticism. And

that was okay, but I also feel like I was not going to be strong enough in

my areas of expertise to teach some of the other things that were being

taught in world lit. And if you asked, 'What does your administrator think

about that?' No idea. Like what does your supervisor think? No idea.

What does my AP think? No idea. What do your department chairs think

about it? No idea. I don't think any of those people know I'm doing it. I'm

happy to talk about it. Like it's not a secret.

DARYA: I took the paper to the female principal cause there was no way I was

talking to one of the guy principals about this. I didn't want to talk about it

with anybody. It was so embarrassing. She was totally like, "Nope. He did this on purpose. Obviously there's no other way for this to get in here. He had to know it was there," blah blah blah. So she gets the athletic director who is also female, and then the tech dude to just make sure it wasn't an accident. They're all in the office, including me. My computer is open and the student gets called up during class. And he is nervous cause he sees all of us in there. The principal asks "Gus, why do you think we're in here right now?" He's like, "I know I turned it in late. Like I don't know." And I didn't say one word the whole time. I couldn't even look at him or talk cause it was just so embarrassing.

LIBBY: I think many people are afraid of feedback. If you say something to an individual teacher, about what they are teaching, or how, or what have you, people think you are attacking them, like as a person. In terms of power, it feels like people think you're attacking somebody if you say something to an individual teacher. I have found in my experiences with other teachers that working conversations either devolve and I walk away feeling really uncomfortable cause someone's mad at me or I get an email later that's like, 'I felt really attacked.' This is understandable, but it seems to privilege comfort and security over opportunities for learning and growth. Silence is a way, IMHO, of maintaining power; it's like holding your cards instead of playing them. You risk nothing and preserve almost everything.

DARYA: And nothing happened to him. He- nothing happened to him. He faced no

          punishment. And the principal told all this other staff that it happened. I

          was walking down the hallway later and she and another principal and the

          male guidance counselor were standing in a circle laughing about it. And

          the guidance counselor looked at me and was like, "It's all your fault

          Darya." And I was like, fuck you. I don't care anymore. If this is how

          these things are going to unfold, how am I supposed to care about the

          student or anything because someone can trample all over you, mortify

          you, treat you that way and nothing happens. It just makes me think of,

          there's times where I've really felt like I can't care because it would hurt

          me.

LIBBY: So those are the power dynamics that I have struggled with. Just like

          wanting to have a more collaborative spirit. You're not saying I don't trust

          you to do your job or I don't like you. If we respect each other, we should

          be able to talk about ideas. But I feel like that's just not something that

          really happens. I guess that's just the power dynamics among teachers.

[All collectively breathe in and out.]

MAE: Just dealing with sexual harassment at work is very difficult. And it

          happens and I just can't, I just don't know if I can do it. Like my eyes are

          welling up even referring to your story.

DARYA: Part of me feels like, at those times, it doesn't matter how much I care or

          how hard I try or how much blood, sweat and tears I put into it. It just

          won't turn around.

VALERIE: I was in a building where the culture bred caring, the systems bred caring. You were supposed to be a caring teacher and if you didn't lose your shit once in a while, it just wasn't normal. And I cared. I really cared. And it was like the best part of my career and my day. Now I'm at a new school, and when I go to my colleagues about a student making hateful comments in class and say I have two DACA students and three refugees in the same class and this fucking kid is making it unsafe for them, what are you going to do about it, and it's crickets, I feel like I care too much and it weighs on me.

AMELIA: I feel this really weird tension about playing a system that I think is messed up or using my privilege in this system to fight back and I can't figure out what is right for me or what true resistance is in that situation. These situations are so shitty, and it makes me protective. But being stoic while telling these stories kind of normalizes it. Like I have totally normalized some really terrible things that I think, if I heard them from somebody else, I would be like, what the fuck? But now I'm like, no. Like it's like it's okay. I didn't get yelled at so it's okay.

DARYA: I just don't know. To me, the structure is failing.

SETH: It's like...I like don't have any fucking idea what people want me to do.

AMELIA: And when I express concern or frustration, I'm often met with, well that doesn't happen to me. So then it feels like it's because of me, but there are so many things beyond that.

LIBBY: Sometimes when I teach, I feel like I'm sort of trying to find a way to right the ship.

REBEKAH: Right, cause adults' problems are the kids' problems. And so issues I was having with adults about taking on too much work and giving too much of myself in ways that didn't really matter, I was doing it with the kids and I was fried because the job is fucking hard. I mean like there were times on my prep I would just crawl under my desk and hide in my shared office and my colleagues were just like, we get it.

VALERIE: So there's this kind of power dynamic of like this is what we do. One size fits all. But then we don't have any room or space to understand that. And, like, I have different needs, I have different problems, I have different things that I'm dealing with as an oppressed person working in a system of oppression. I haven't figured it out. But I have acknowledged that these are problems and that they are something that I need to figure it out. And if not, I will leave the profession. I have to.

ALEXIA: Admin will push the idea that I'm the one who will raise the reading test scores and reading assessment scores at the middle school. Just me[14]. And it feels like a lot. They'll treat me like a teacher during observations, but they don't give me the same prep as a teacher. Teachers get a PLC plus one prep period. I teach almost every single period. I teach during lunchtime. And I had an advisory in the high school.

---

[14] I added this sentence to clarify that Alexia was the only person being tasked this explicitly.

DARYA: I guess I typically feel pretty invisible in my school. Um. It takes

something to happen for the administration at the school I'm at to know

you.

AMELIA: My principal really likes me. But it's also difficult because a lot of people

at my school who I trusted and valued have said to me things like, "Well

you'll be fine because you're not white." And I really like the teachers I

work with, but it's always like a slap in the face because I feel like I'm

working my ass off. Like, I'm not a perfect teacher, but I think the reason

I'm on her good side is because I'm doing a good ass job. But then they'll

say something like, "Well, it's just because you're checking the box," and

it's always just like, *[exhales]*.

VALERIE: But then not having my back when a parent calls and says, why are we

reading so many authors of color? Like what happened to the canon. Just

leaving me out there.

REBEKAH: I feel like a lot of us have alluded to self-care but didn't directly talk about

it. Um, and that to me has been the hardest skill I've had to acquire. And

I've noticed that it sets the example for your students of what you will

tolerate, like how you will allow yourself to be treated. And it also starts to

send them the message of how they should be treated. Like you don't have

to open your door if somebody is banging on it like they're going to hurt

you.

LIBBY: Yeah, I would agree with that. I have to be conscious of when I'm really

dwelling on something. I think it's totally normal to dwell. It's completely

natural. I just can't fix a problem by thinking about it, though. And it tends to be a really toxic thing for me.

TALIA: Some of these things that happen can make me feel like I don't know how to teach. They can throw you in so many ways.

SETH: A Sp. Ed. teacher that I teach with said, *[nasally with judgement]* "You have too much fluff in your class." And I'm like, *[deep inhale through teeth]* all right. I'm going to go hang out with some other teachers tomorrow and talk about my problems, and hopefully come to some better arrangement.

ALEXIA: I struggle with colleagues because they talk about race but I don't see them putting it in the curriculum. I try but it doesn't always go well. A group of my students of color were creating stories together, and they wanted to create people of color because they said they don't see enough of it represented. And then my two white students yelled "racist" to the students of color. And then the students of color just yelled back that those two were being racist. "You're the white ones. We just want a story where we can see ourselves." That just became a shouting match yelling 'racism' or 'racist' back to each other. I talked to the students of color first, and it was fine. They totally understand what I was saying. But when I spoke to the white students I was just, like, trying to give them a cushion I guess. I don't think I handled it really well because I was trying to be careful how I talked to them. I guess I was protecting them because that's how I was

raised. You're always careful around white people with how you phrase things about race, ethnicity, culture.

MAE: I teach a significant number of students of color, and it's just like, where's the learning happening and where is it not? I work really hard and I'm very actively aware of trying to make my classroom a space where things like that don't happen most days. But it's like this is... I dunno. It's like, where do you... how do you... I don't know.

SETH: I just want to thank you both for saying those things because, just having someone acknowledge that we're working and it doesn't always work: it's really nice to hear that.

[All collectively breathe in and out.]

EPILOGUE | WORTHY

VALERIE: A teacher came to my room after school and said something about one of my students leaving my class early, and when she said something to the student, she said something about how she's returning a book. So that teacher comes to me and is like, "Well, if they look on the cameras and they see where the kids are coming from, I just don't want that to be a problem for you." And I was like *[raises her arms and smiles to signal 'oh well']*. "If they feel like I'm not fit to teach this job cause I had a couple of students leave the classroom early, not a lot that I can do about that. Right now, what I was doing was I was talking to a few kids about why they chose not to participate in a discussion. And for me that felt more important than barricading the door like you want me to. So thank you for

133

your input, but I don't know." And she's like, "Well, I just want to support you. I'm just here because I want to support you." I'm like, "Great. Thanks. Bye." And we're not on speaking terms right now because nothing in that conversation was supportive of me because she alluded to the fact that I could get in trouble or possibly even fired because I'm not tenured and I'm letting kids leave early, and it was so awful on so many levels. But the thing is, I am very scared of administration because we're not safe, right? We are on the chopping block, you know? Not literally, but kind of. Right? At the end of every year. It's hard.

DARYA: I'm just thinking about the question of, like, what do teachers deserve? What are we worthy of? Cause everybody had a really difficult story and like situations. It's just making me think what are- what do- we just give so much. Of so many different things and parts of yourself. So what do we, what do we deserve?

LIBBY: When you ask what's the first word that comes to mind about teachers? I said healers. And I know that sounds super dramatic, but, anyone who is a teacher knows how often you're just parenting.

VALERIE: Is there ever a moment we can put ourselves first?

REBEKAH: Not like going to the nail shop once a week, but like I am going to take all the plates off the coffee table and put them in the dishwasher and have clean dishes and I'm going to have groceries, right. And I'm going to take my day off and go to the doctor.

SETH: But what do you do when you're so overwhelmed in your situation?

REBEKAH: When I thought about being a teacher, something that's always been

              important to me is that school is a place where kids can feel happy and

              joyful and good about themselves. Because when I think about why I

              wanted to be a teacher, that is what school was for me.

AMELIA: So much of what I do now is wanting to help the me that I was in seventh

              grade, and now I'm a seventh grade teacher. I want to help me in a weird

              way. Like, I can't help that me anymore, but I can help somebody else.

VALERIE: I think about how I've been a positive impact on people.

MAE: Teaching is so much fun, which I truly believe. And it brings me a lot of

              joy. I just love kids.

TALIA: Shifting away from needing to please colleagues and students.

DARYA: Remembering that this is a very special career choice. Even though most

              of the time it's shit.

AMELIA: And I think that it's fighting back that stereotype about teachers struggling

              so much. Our stories are so powerful and it took me so long to figure out

              that my story was powerful.

ALEXIA: Everyone needs a chance to talk. I appreciate hearing everybody's voices.

              And listening.

TALIA: But I don't know if the content of my stories is the big takeaway. Just

              hearing other people's stories-

AMELIA: We don't have time to do that with colleagues in school. The only time it

              really happens is at happy hour, but it's more, like, funny things because

              everybody needs that comic relief because the real stories that are

happening are so heavy. But it's so beneficial to hear the connections that my colleagues are making.

MAE: It's important for teachers to reflect on our collective struggle. But I don't think that anyone else deserves the right to place a struggle upon teachers if you're not in that position.

AMELIA: The challenge of telling these stories is, sometimes, it feels like it's supposed to represent everything, but it's just one moment.

SETH: It's been really valuable for me. To learn to be a better listener.

ALEXIA: To believe in people.[15]

MAE: Teaching is a powerful form of activism and I'm very proud to do that work.

ALEXIA: The students are great. I really like the students.

TALIA: I feel so blessed.

DARYA: I have the best job in the world. And I feel like the stories I've told haven't made that clear. Even though it's an inauthentic space, just to be able to be with students every day, um, it means a lot to me. It feels, at times, very profound.

[All collectively breathe in and out.]

THE END

---

[15] I wrote this line based on Alexia's description of care and how she described what it meant to believe in her student Teezy.

Chapter 5: Analysis Part 2: What I Mean Is…

Introduction

The narratives we shape out of the materials of our lived lives must somehow take

account of our original landscapes if we are to be truly present to ourselves and to

partake in an authentic relationship...it is on that primordial ground that we recognize

each other, that ground on which we are in direct touch with things and not separated

from them by the conceptual lenses of constructs and theories. (Greene, 1995, p. 75)

We have helped make the world in which we find ourselves…[W]e are complicit in the

world we study. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 61)

My goal in exploring the stories new teachers use to understand their experiences was to theorize the ways stories work as a location for identity construction. Sociocultural theory offers a series of lenses to theorize and ask questions of both the stories and the experience of sharing stories. What might the story signify? How do teachers position themselves and others in the act of telling? Who has a voice in these stories, and what is silenced? What practices and ideologies are being taught? And, taken collectively, what is the world these teachers inhabit in their individual schools and broader professional landscape?

Story circles invite all participants in as researchers working to understand broader themes and issues across the stories shared. This meant that during the workshops, I shared stories along with the new teachers. It's been four years since I left the secondary classroom and another nine before that since the bell rang on my first day of teaching. But the stories I told of my experiences flowed easily. They were definitive, solidified by years of telling and revision. I knew who the characters were and how I

related to them. I found myself connecting to the stories told by the teachers while also feeling at arm's length. My stories had happened over a decade earlier. Many of the stories the teachers shared took place the previous year, week, or even day.

During our last workshop, Rebekah reflected, "I wonder what it's like for Lee to like sit and listen to so many of us talk about how hard of a time we're having. ...but I guess it like raised this question for me of like, what is being a teacher right now?" (Workshop 6, 12/8/18). Regardless of the structure of the story circles, Rebekah acknowledges my outsider status grounded in my history as a classroom teacher. My understanding of these stories is filtered not only through the considerations of sociocultural theory but through my experience as a classroom teacher who ultimately left the secondary classroom.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) point to the constitutive power that researchers have in constructing the worlds they study. Mae said as much in our first workshop. "I don't know if [the things we're talking about] have to do with...Lee, like who he knows. He's the one who picked us to participate. Or maybe who applies to [our licensure program]. But we all sort of agree that these things are important" (Workshop 1, 10/20/18). The world of new teachers "figured" by the stories told during this project is certainly curated through the interests and relationships I have with these teachers and the licensure program where I met them. Beyond that, my own experiences archived through the stories I continue to tell about them construct what Greene (1995) refers to as an original landscape. These are the stories that make up the broader narrative I tell about teaching and what it means to be a teacher. They note the struggle I went through to understand who I was as a teacher, the competing discourses that vied for my

subscription, and the importance I see in developing community in order to sustain oneself as a teacher. Using these stories to name my "original landscape" allows me to more fully recognize the others as teachers and be "in direct touch with things and not separated from them by the conceptual lenses of constructs and theories" (p. 75).

I seek to use sociocultural theories to understand the experiences of these new teachers and the ways in which stories operate as a location for identity construction as they make sense of who they are and want to be as teachers. What I found was that in the midst of analyzing the data and explaining what I had attempted to capture/create in the ethnodrama, grounding my thinking in my own experiences as a new teacher and how I *felt* when working with these teachers during the story circles and Theatre of the Oppressed activities provided more clarity and recognition.

What follows is an analysis of the different moments in the ethnodrama with the assistance of four key concepts from sociocultural theory: Vygotskian signs, Bakhtinian signs, Communities of Practice, and Figured Worlds (as defined in Chapter Three). These concepts were the tools I took with me as I worked to open up the stories the teachers told about their experiences during the workshops. Rather than using these concepts to draw definitive meanings that close off the fluid, contextual, and interpretive nature of identities, I used the concepts to articulate—identifying small, interconnected and related parts that move, forming and signaling unique gestures—resonant moments that I believe helpful to open up individual and collective stories. In this analysis, Figured Worlds frames the experience of these teachers, highlighting the cultural distinctions that define what it means to be a teacher and the ways in which new teachers are recruited into particular ideologies that constitute professional identities. Communities of Practice is

deployed to explore the "how" of teaching and the cultural modeling of these practices. And the application of Vygotskian and Bakhtinian signs helps to theorize the ways in which ideology is communicated in the service of understanding the self within the cultural spaces.

Many concepts from sociocultural theory could have been used in this analysis. These four bring specific offerings that I saw as particularly helpful for this project. Figured worlds featured heavily in the literature that explored the intersections of storytelling and identity. Additionally, considerations of improvisation and cultural navigation align well with narrative construction and revisions. Communities of practice addresses the way many preservice teachers (and professional development seminars) imagine the work of teaching, specifically a series of discrete skills and a compilation of resources used to accomplish a common task. The Vygotskian concept of tools proved less useful in preliminary writing about teachers' use of storytelling to construct professional identities because these stories were always understood as mediators of cultural ideologies. Further, thinking about stories as tools that impact the external world pushed my analysis toward measuring impact and change, something more quantitative than I was interested in. However, Vygotskian signs offered a way to think about how the recognition of various stories placed teachers within a broader cultural community and helped them to understand themselves. Bakhtinian signs help provide additional consideration of cultural ideology and the ways in which teachers and their stories placed them within a broader socio-historical community.

The results in these chapters are one possible interpretation of what the ethnodrama can illuminate about the experiences of new teachers and the work that their

stories and the act of storytelling do to shape their understanding of themselves as teachers. These come from my own experiences of the workshops. I invite the reader to think of their own original landscape or primordial ground from which they have come to know the field of education and, perhaps, their experience as a K–12 classroom teacher and return to the different sections of the ethnodrama. What do you recognize in these teachers and their stories? Though this is a document that represents my current thinking about these themes, it is my hope that the ethnodrama offers more than a single reading. The stories are complex. Putting them into conversation with each other and my own thinking and theoretical framing adds additional layers of consideration. It is the re-vision, in our own tellings as well as readings, that offers new perspectives and the opportunity to see something we hadn't seen before.

This chapter is organized to mirror the ethnodrama in Chapter 4. I organize it in this way, instead of by theme, to provide a more detailed explication of both the empirical materials (stories) and the writerly moves I made in construction of the ethnodrama. There are undoubtedly connections across the different sections of the ethnodrama. I address one of those, race, at the very end of this chapter. Organizing this chapter primarily around the same organization of the ethnodrama allows me to explain the analysis done in the construction of the ethnodrama, describing what I saw as notable and important, while also furthering the analysis in connection to sociocultural concepts in explicit ways. While I recognize the ethnodrama as my own creation, following its organization pushes me to stay focused on the concerns of the teachers themselves rather than purely my interests because of the attention and primacy I gave to their statements in my organization (as described in Chapter 3).

The Prologue

I have the best job in the world. And I feel like the stories I've told haven't made that

clear. (Darya, Workshop 6)

The challenge of telling these stories is, sometimes, it feels like it's supposed to represent

everything, but they're just one moment. (Amelia, Workshop 6)

Paradoxes appeared in a number of ways through this study. Darya, who shared a devastating story of sexual harassment, betrayal of a female administrator, and public blame—however jokingly it was meant—for an event she had no control over, earnestly insisted on the privilege and joy she feels as a teacher. Many of the sessions included intense wellings of emotion. Some people cried. Some people couldn't find words to express some of their disbelief or frustration. Yet many teacher-participants (subsequently referred to as the teachers) noted the pleasure they experienced coming to the workshops. And the stories shared, the stories meant to offer a sketch of the professional identities the teachers were developing, functioned as exemplars of the first years of the teachers' teaching careers and, at the same time, failed to exemplify the teachers' experiences.

Of course this analysis is not done with the stories as a pure unit of research material. Stories are always partial, contextual, and mediated. The prologue, as well as the rest of the ethnodrama, is a story in its own right—the story I have constructed to tell about the teachers' identities within their profession. I wrote it in an exploration of the ideas that resonated with me. And while the teachers have shared with me that the ethnodrama successfully attends to many of the ideas and concerns we explored in the

workshops, this is not a definitive story. In telling any story, there is also a multitude of other storied versions that are not told.

In this section, I explore the commonalities and differences of the teachers within the figured world of the workshops as they are represented in the Prologue. I do this to highlight the choices I made for representing my analysis of the teachers while attempting to avoid narrative smoothing (Barone, 2001; Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) that might otherwise erase the individual experiences of teachers within the collective identity of the group. I then utilize Vygotskian signs and an exploration of language use in communities of practice to analyze how the teachers' comments attempt to assert authoritative control of teacher identity construction for themselves and in personal communities of practice outside of their professional spaces. I end by laying out the teachers' arguments against being figured as victims, both as individuals and as a profession.

Community and Difference

I chose to use the prologue to communicate a sense of community shared among the teachers. I do this by highlighting commonalities. This is not to say that differences did not exist. For example, Mae shared in no uncertain terms that she was not nearly as interested in working with fellow teachers in reflective practices like these workshops as she was in spending time with students, working and learning with them. Alternatively, Seth and Rebekah deeply valued reflective work with teachers. Valerie felt a calling to become a teacher despite the warnings of her family that it would require sacrificing her family, while Darya shared,

I just don't think teaching for me is like, I've never felt like this was a calling. Um, and I don't necessarily feel like this is something I was meant to do or—I do love my students, but I don't know if that's necessarily like what keeps me going either. (Workshop 6, 12/8/18)

Yet the teachers all talked about something that *did* keep them going. For Darya, it was a recognition of the meaningful bond created by a group of people gathering together in a room to work together. For Alexia, it was the opportunity for long-term relationships developed over weeks of working together on important topics that affirm the realities of race and culture. For Libby, it was her love of literature and writing, and the strong bonds she made with students who typically struggle in traditional school settings.

And almost uniformly, the teachers described or agreed with the considerations identified in the prologue: Don't decide what their struggle is and just listen; these stories are not for an outsider. These are stories for trusted members of their immediate professional community, which almost exclusively requires that one be a currently practicing K–12 teacher. These considerations served as a reflective frame for them and me during our final workshop as they looked back on their experiences and the stories they shared during story circles and theatre games.

This chapter will outline my analysis of these stories shared by the teachers. At the same time, the qualifying statements insisted on by Darya, Amelia, Mae, and Seth echo throughout all of my thinking about the stories shared and the time spent together: This is not everything. This cannot and does not represent the teachers in full.

Signaling the Self

During our final workshop, I asked the teachers if our work with stories had provided any insight into how they see themselves as teachers. Darya spoke first, sharing the thoughts that begin and end the ethnodrama. "I have the best job in the world. And I feel like the stories I've told haven't made that clear" (Workshop 6, 12/8/2018). Imagining the cultural world her stories constructed, Darya acknowledges my outsider identity to the experiences of teachers who have entered the profession in the past three years. She also imagines an outsider identity for anyone who encounters this work in any of its possible forms. During the same workshop, Amelia similarly shared that, while she chose every story she shared knowing that they could be shared in some way with an unknown audience, "I would not have shared some of my stories and an audience of non-teachers. It just would never have occurred to me to share that."

The teachers are clear in the qualifiers that make up the majority of the ethnodrama prologue. They are not victims regardless of how bad an audience may think their experiences are. Talia is learning to be more unapologetic and authentic. Libby has high expectations for herself; teaching is not a task one can just show up and accomplish. Alexia experiences a level of fulfillment in long-term relationships and thoughtfully developed, culturally relevant, racially aware curriculum.

These qualifiers evidence the teachers' awareness of how their stories might be acknowledged by an other and place them into a particular relationship with that other. This relationship, determined by an other based on their own cultural understanding of the stories, potentially casts the teachers as victims. Such a role implies limited power and a need to be saved. It cuts off the teachers' agency in a way that feels false and insulting. As such, the teachers strategically tell positive stories to outsiders, different

from the stories they would share with fellow teachers, in order to reject being seen as victims and construct identities they wish to have.

As Tusting (2005) notes, the teachers use language in clear ways to assert and claim their agency within communities of practice outside of their profession. As such, the systems of power they address are not structural as much as they are ideological. Darya speaks to an imagined audience that many of the teachers have experienced in their friends and families—people who are not in the teaching profession. She claims authority in defining teaching as "the best job in the world [even though] I feel like the stories I've told haven't made that clear." Through a reification process, Darya tries to orient the imagined audience of outsiders as well as the teachers in our workshop and me to the failure of her stories to accurately solidify who she is as a teacher. This acknowledges and pushes for a reimagining of a "shared repertoire" (Wenger, 1998, p. 21) that includes discourses and stories about the teacher as a victim within a problematic system or of disruptive and disrespectful students.

Curating stories for particular audiences and attempting to redefine what they reify highlights a process of preemptive Vygotskian signaling. The teachers know from past experience how outsiders will understand their stories as signs: evidence of the failing education system grand narrative (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; Strauss, 2018) This socially constructed victim identity feels false to these teachers, so, in an agentic move meant to construct a socially recognizable identity that matches their own interpretation of their experiences, they tell stories they know will signal their preferred identity. Or they won't tell stories at all.

I Am Not a Victim

Urrieta (2007) writes that "[i]dentity is also very much about how people come to understand themselves, how they come to 'figure' who they are, through the 'worlds' that they participate in and how they relate to others within and outside these worlds" (p. 107). When asked to reflect on the stories they shared, many of the teachers preemptively rejected a victimized identity that they anticipated partially based on the ways family and friends had responded to their unfiltered stories of teaching. These insider/outsider relationships suggest an unknowability of the "blessing" (Talia, Workshop 6, 12/8/18) and the "intellectual pursuit" (Libby, Workshop 6, 12/8/18) of the teaching profession for those who are not teachers.

Even if one were to combine all the stories shared by the teachers throughout our workshops and the individual interviews, they would be "meaningless" (Darya, Workshop 6, 12/8/18) if used to figure the entire world of teaching. I believe there are two reasons for this. First, the teachers felt the story circle process was such a unique experience that they shared stories they didn't typically talk about because of the stories' emotional weight or the unwanted judgement they'd receive from colleagues. Second, any individual story or even a collection of stories can't represent the full, embodied, emotional, socio-historically situated experience of teaching in any one context nor across contexts.

None of the teachers shied away from addressing how hard their work is. This fact was explicitly named several times by many of the teachers. Yet they refused to be figured as victims by outsiders and insiders alike. Instead, many of them saw their work as activists "work[ing] in an oppressive system, often with oppressed peoples" (Mae, Workshop 6, 12/8/18). They engage with the profession in agentic ways, strategically

147

curating stories for particular audiences in order to position themselves in relation to other insiders and outsiders as powerful actors within a system of oppression.

The Job

Placing this moment as the first in the ethnodrama helps to set the parameters for what the teachers saw encompassed in being a teacher. I expected many of the ideas that I noted in the interview and workshop data. Issues surrounding tenure, administration, classroom management, grading, and navigation came up often in the stories shared. The prevalence of these aligns with dispositional framings (MnEDS Research Group, 2016) offered in the teachers' licensure program and part of the professional vocabulary with which they learned about their future work.

Unexpected themes, particularly those phrased using verbatim wording from the transcripts, included Thankless, Time, Closed Door, and System. Though not a verbatim code, Exhaustion and Ideology also came up throughout the workshops and interviews in ways that were different from considerations of emotion and beliefs. They clearly denote overlap with those topics I expected yet functioned more prominently in ways that marked the scope and nature of the teaching profession, connoting a pervasive sense of power and hierarchy that placed them in relationships of domination (above or below others) that framed the general sense of service with which many of them, though not all, entered the profession.

I use figured worlds to explain the private and public ways teachers place themselves within the cultural phenomenon of teaching in conceptual and material ways. I draw on communities of practice to point to the procedural approaches the teachers took in their work and the critiques some colleagues had to the resources these new teachers

brought to the shared repertoire of the teaching task. I then explore how student referrals and participation in school-sanctioned discipline procedures function as Vygotskian signs for two teachers as they make sense of who they wish to be and how they wish to be recognized by their administration. I then utilize figured worlds to describe the ways new teachers are recruited and expected to donate time and energy to education work as a way of demonstrating care and commitment to the profession, and the use of stories as cultural artifacts to pivot into critiques of the ideologies that drive larger systems and structures which require teachers to enact them in ways that run counter to their own ideological commitments. I end by detailing the ways stories about caring and the struggle these stories created and documented functioned as Bakhtinian signs, offering moments of reflection for teachers in which they wrestled with what it meant to care about their students and work.

The Work We Do

Alexia and Talia's opening narratives explore in- and out-of-classroom experiences that Clandinin and Connelly (1995) describe as private and public professional spaces. Teachers utilize private spaces to engage in a more personal, more experimental figuring of who they wish to be or who they think they are as teachers. It functions as a physical and mental space to process the messages they receive from collective/public knowledge via educational research and the collective/private knowledge unique to their specific professional contexts where collective/public knowledge is lived out in interpersonal interactions, policy mandates, and local discourse communities (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004).

The private nature of the in-classroom work offers an important reprieve for new teachers from community practices that either run counter to their own professional commitments, as is the case with Alexia, or put their membership within the community at risk, as is the case with Talia. Both of these teachers provide examples of stories used by expert members of their professional community to communicate what teachers do (communities of practice) and who teachers are (figured worlds). By juxtaposing these narratives, we are able to see the impact that where these encounters get processed—publicly or privately— has on Alexia and Talia and the opportunities the teachers have for improvisation.

Alexia's colleagues tell her in no uncertain terms that students who get placed in the Alternative Learning Center (ALC) are not worth their effort. This story has several narrative implications. First, it places the onus of being placed in an ALC on individual students which Alexia's story discredits by acknowledging the in- and out-of-school social and systemic influences that contribute to Teezy's removal from a mainstream setting. The breakup of his immediate family is paired directly with a tough eighth grade year, contributing to a negative school experience that would understandably make his ninth grade year an immediate struggle. Additionally, students who struggle academically or with consistent attendance often get cast within the school system as problematic and personally deficient (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Shalaby, 2017; Yasso, 2005). Thus Teezy's personal struggles outside of school likely contributed to a perceived identity within school as an issue to deal with. Aware of these factors, Alexia actively works to build a positive relationship with Teezy, creating a counterstory to the student-versus-teacher narrative.

Alexia builds on her relationship with Teezy to frame the work she does with him once he gets placed in the ALC. She names her opposition to the school system that fails to understand Teezy in the way that she does. Alexia acts out this opposition in specific practices that she frames as out of sync with how school policies and colleagues would typically respond to Teezy's situation.

It was as though he was set for failure but I didn't want that to happen. I talked to him any moment I saw him; I welcomed him into the classroom, gave him assignments he missed and told him that he could succeed. I got maybe half of the assignments back, but I did get every book back and he said he read half of it! (Workshop 2, 11/3/18)

Alexia's success with Teezy in large part depended on the private, in-class location of her processing of expected community practices and her relatively private improvisations within the figured world of teacher responsibilities regarding students framed as personally lacking and therefore undeserving of teacher attention and effort.

Unlike Alexia's private improvisations that allowed her to engage in practices that align with a figured identity she came to understand and value through her personal values and those promoted in her licensure program, Talia's public moment of a corrective reprimand called her community membership into question. Such a confrontation similarly resulted in an improvisation but, unlike Alexia's strategic moves, physically cut off Talia from others.

Talia utilizes student referrals as a Vygotskian sign. While they function in the immediate action to respond to behavior issues, she also understands them as a tool to audit school equity. Talia understands using student referrals in this way to be recognized

151

by an other (e.g. her administrator or others on the PBIS team) as committed to social justice and collective accountability as well as participating in the common practices of her school. "As a new teacher, they told me to 'give a student a referral if you have a problem. That referral is data and we track things like equity through that.' So I followed the system. I followed the rules" (Workshop 3, 11/10/18).

Talia's administrator contradicts the cultural meaning of the student referral sign twice. First, she angrily speaks to the whole PBIS team about the problematic nature of too many behavior referrals. Second, she uses the term "high flyer," a marker used by faculty and staff to identify students who are known because of their bad behavior, in reference to Talia's performance as a teacher. To be sure, excessive use of disciplinary moves, particularly in response to students of color, is a well-documented issue that must be addressed (c.f. Pollock, 2004; Shalaby, 2017, Watkins, 2001). However, Talia had been told that behavior referrals signaled *good* teaching because it meant that she was participating in a system meant to support equity. She acknowledged the ways in which this was different from her student teaching experience.

> So I followed the system, you know what I mean? And I followed the rules that I was taught to follow. Um, and because during my student teaching, I was at Arts High School and no one was allowed to be sent out, I never, I hardly ever sent out kids. It was a lot of in-classroom managed things. But I did submit the data [at my new school]. I could have not submitted the data, but I did because that's what I was told to do and I was on this team. (Workshop 3, 11/10/18)

Talia's principal changed the cultural significance of a behavior referral from a collective commitment to equity and part of what it means to be a good teacher to a sign

152

of failure and a liability for both Talia and herself. Such a shift changed the relationship between Talia and her principal, a change Amelia also noted in her story about inviting a student's aunt to observe a class.

> Ever since then, it's like, 'Okay. Yes. I'm so wrong. So sorry.' And never again will I express that something is not going right in my room. And so ever since, it's been a closed door...You have to fend for yourself and fight for what you believe in, but don't bring anyone who's supposed to support you in the door because now you have identified yourself as culturally incompetent. (Workshop 3, 11/10/18)

Talia too learns to keep her door closed, a move that puts her at odds with her position on the PBIS team. She still believes the work of PBIS serves equity goals along with the thinking sheet she has developed to replace the more consequence-centered in-class referral. But she also has learned that using referrals puts her own membership status at risk. The change in what the student referral signifies changes both Talia's relationship with her principal and her understanding of herself. She returns to the practices she learned during student teaching at a school that used equity as a guiding tenent of its policies—a move she understood as what a good teacher would do—which in turn places her at odds with one of the key tools her current school uses to understand equity in their community—presumably something one would do if they were against equity, which Talia is not.

Talia's public chastising complicates her understanding of the job of teaching and pushes her to retreat away from connections at her current school and engage in practices she learned elsewhere, again distancing her from her immediate community. Alexia similarly pushed against the way colleagues figured the identities of students placed in

153

the ALC and the relationships between teachers and students those figured identities engendered. Because Alexia was able to navigate in private the incongruity between her own figuring of the teaching profession and that of her colleagues, she was able to stay better connected to her current community.

The Value of Work

Talia's story introduces a shared norm expressed in multiple ways throughout the data: the value of work. It appears in her story when she describes her time on the PBIS team as a volunteer. Amelia similarly explains that teachers can take on ownership of systemic, institutional problems at a school, inspiring them to dig in and work hard to solve them beyond their classroom duties. And Valerie recalls intense frustration as a basic expectation of a fully committed teacher. During our interview, Talia described what this value looks like in her practice.

> I love what I do, but I definitely don't get paid for it. And I've been thinking a lot about, like, teaching as this altruistic thing, like you're not supposed to want to get time-carded, you're not supposed to want to get compensated because you're helping people. Right? But it *is* valuable and it *is* important and I *do have* student loans and like I need to be able to have a living for how much I put into it.
>
> (Interview, 8/13/18)

The work of the teacher is expected to be valued intrinsically by the teacher, justifying and rationalizing low salaries and expectations of volunteer work. Notably, Seth responds to these stories by framing them as a loss of power. He tells a story in which "I took some power back" (Workshop 3, 11/10/18) and refused to continue grading at home on the

weekend even though he "still had the expectation I was going to be grading like the teacher who was my mentor and like how I thought all teachers should be grading."

Seth's refusal to grade all night and every weekend does not necessarily put him at odds with the value of work. He strives to improve his practice, for example often attending professional development offerings around his community, talking with educational researchers about their work, and regularly reaching out to authors and teachers through social media to bring in new ideas and work. Yet Seth's original conception of the work of teaching included getting paid for his work. He worked as a writing tutor while an undergraduate, an English instructor in South Korea after graduating, and eventually as a private tutor in Seoul before returning to the United States to earn a Masters in Education and obtain a teaching license. Reflecting on our theatre work, Seth said:

> I come to the states and there's not that much money in this profession and it's really discouraging me...That's why I was like, I was framing my diploma on my wall earlier because it's like that diploma should equal more money somewhere along the line. And so it's, I dunno, for me it's, it's, it's something I love, but it's also just like, this is how I've made money for 15 years...And um, honestly, I wouldn't be able to continue teaching if my wife wasn't making a lot more money than me. (Workshop 4, 11/17/18)

Seth's orientation to teaching did not involve the altruism Talia referenced when comparing her profession to her friends' business careers even though Seth has emotional satisfaction and intellectual interest in his work. Seth did not come from a family of educators like Valerie or Alexia. It was not a calling, a term denoting a higher purpose

and, by extension, justifying lower wages. Education is a profession in which he expects to be paid for the deeply challenging (and rewarding) work he does.

Ideological Critiques

Central to the stories that Alexia and Talia tell is the pivot into a conceptual world beyond or undefined by the immediate surroundings of the studio where we met for our workshops. This is a world where teachers are in conflict with broader institutional structural ideologies that cast teachers as subject to systems meant to monitor and control youth. For Alexia, the ideological structure depicted students placed in ALCs as delinquent because of their own moral failings instead of struggling within a complex system of social struggle. For Talia, the ideological structure consisted of self-defense against evaluations used by those in power to discipline subordinates and determine their liability to an individual or the institution. For both, successful navigation of these structural ideologies required a rejection of interpersonal relationships in order to support either themselves (as in Talia's story) or students (as in Alexia's story).

Alexia and Talia critique these ideologies in two locations that evidence distinct community membership. First, they critique the ideologies at their schools. Alexia does this by rejecting the advice given to her by other colleagues and continuing to work with Teezy while he is at the ALC. Talia critiques the structural ideology by refusing to continue the cycle of enacting disciplinary power over subordinates (her students) and choosing to deal with any behavior issues on her own outside of the policies that govern behavior response and monitoring. Both Alexia and Talia perform these critiques without fanfare or overt protest, signaling the dependency their professional selves have on the perception of unity by those in power, be it administration or senior colleagues.

The second location of their refusal is the workshop space where we held story circle sessions. Here, Alexia and Talia were gathered with members from their teacher education cohort as well as those from other recent cohorts. Their stories pivoted them into a figured world that critiqued traditional top-down power structures which disenfranchised teachers and students, particularly teachers and students of color.

Alexia also used storytelling in our one-on-one interview to critique systems of power in a way that figured them as antithetical to the educational profession and the work of teachers. Alexia specifically recounted the ways in which racism expressed through student misbehavior, prejudice of parents, and critique as well as silence from colleagues functioned to disqualify her as a capable teacher.

> There was just a lot of negative feedback from the white boys and the white teachers, especially the female white teachers. They would say that they don't experience the same behavior in their classrooms and so it's probably due to my teaching style and I said maybe, but I also think it's got to do with my race...especially after meeting [a student's] parents...They wouldn't look at me. And when we were talking in the classroom, they would always point everything back to me. If their son was behaving a certain way, it's because of me. It's because I'm a new teacher. It's because I'm small and things like that...But I felt really sad when my colleagues didn't even talk about the experiences they've had with him because he's not the perfect kid. They've had some head butts with him, but they didn't share that. They said no, he's great in my class. (Interview, 6/22/18)

Alexia's story drew exclamations of disbelief from me, a former methods instructor from her licensure program, as she shared more and more details about the struggles she faced during her first year teaching. My expressions, like the head nods of Alexia's peers in our story circle as we heard about Teezy and the disbelief when Valerie told of a colleague using the n-word in everyday conversation evidence a recognition that schools are places of oppression (Kliebard, 2004; Kumashiro, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2006) and that these teachers work in opposition to that oppression.

These teachers thus operate in two distinct figured worlds with different orientations to the people within those worlds. First, to be a teacher in their current schools is to work within a system of oppression that both asks them to subjugate those with less power than them while being subjugated by those with more power. This power flows through ideals of whiteness that value control, authority, and white racial hierarchy (Feagin, 2013; Thandeka, 1999). Second, to be a good teacher in their cohort community is to witness and strive against oppressive forces that disenfranchise various populations. The job of teaching for these teachers, then, is not concerned primarily with curricular instruction, though that certainly connects to their primary task. The job of teaching is to navigate differing cultural values held by competing figured worlds. This is accomplished through strategic improvisations within the accepted practices of the dominant figured world while serving the values they hold as primary to their understanding of themselves and, by extension, their professional identities.

This is by no means a solely performative venture. Alexia is not performing a theoretical, so-called good teacher merely to benefit herself when she tells the story of a white student and his parents using Alexia's race to justify his poor behavior. Nor is she

158

performing a so-called good teacher identity for her own good when she tells of her atypical commitment to Teezy. She is simply recounting a series of events from her first years of teaching in a way that helps her make sense of these experiences and her role in them. Responses to these experiences from other new teachers from her licensure program demonstrate a sense of solidarity with Alexia and the ideals present in her telling of the stories. Indeed, it is the stories in these cases that provide the pivot into a figured world and the reactions that constitute a performative solidarity with Alexia, and Talia, and the community values and norms their tellings invoke. Additionally, these performances are not necessarily fictions meant to gain access or acceptance through disingenuous actions. They are performances only inasmuch as they illustrate an individual's membership in the system of beliefs governing the way in which an experience is framed and communicated in the stories.

Caring, and Other Battles

Much of the comments responding to Talia's and Alexia's stories address the act of caring for others. Amelia expresses confusion when she finds herself defending a student who has generally made her work as a teacher difficult. Valerie implies that a one-size-fits-all approach denotes a lack of care that, when expected through school-wide policy or common departmental practices, would push her out of the profession. And Mae orients the job around individuals and the lives they lead, asserting that not caring has impacts far beyond the individual teacher. Each of these concerns points to various internal and external battles that the teachers find as part and parcel to their work. To be a teacher is to wrestle with the act of caring.

The Bakhtinian sign as an ideological object carries with it meaning imbued by cultural construction. As such, it reflects back ideals and beliefs mobilized by individuals within a broad community and imprinted on the object, in this case, stories of caring. These small stories (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008) provide a mirror in which an individual or community might see itself both in theory and in practice. A story's ideology uses the words and actions of its characters in ways similar to Bakhtin's concept of ventriloquation. This occurs when the "narrator adopts a social position in the storytelling event" (Wortham, 2001, p. 68) by juxtaposing themself with other positions voiced through various perspectives introduced throughout the narrated event.

Seth's story provides an apt example. He shares:

When I first started teaching, I had a mentor teacher who's a 20-year veteran. And she would grade at home at night and all weekend. So I was trying to do the same thing and keep up with her. But I always watch a movie with my kids on the weekend. So it was towards the end of the first trimester of my first year. Saturday night or Sunday night. I was grading and my kids were sitting watching a movie and they go, "You never watch movies with us anymore." I was like, fuck this. I closed my Chromebook, just went over and sat with them. And I just decided: I'm not ever going to grade at home again. But in my mind I still had the expectation I was going to be grading like the teacher who was my mentor, and how I thought all teachers should be grading. (Workshop 3, 11/10/18)

As a Bakhtinian sign, this story offers a way to understand a broader social body, that of teachers, and its constitutive effect on the individual. Seth positions himself in relation to his mentor, a teacher of 20 years. In terms of a community of practice, Seth is a novice

160

who learns from the periphery by observing and modeling what experts within the community do. Grading in the evenings and over the weekend signifies caring and what it means to be a good teacher.

Seth adopts the social position of good teacher as modeled by his mentor until it conflicts with his identity as a father. Seth combines a voiced expletive with the description of a closing laptop, both sensory punctuation marks that emphasize his rejection of the ideology signaled by the good teacher narrative modeled by his mentor, as he joins his children and reflects "I'm not ever going to grade at home again." As such, Seth provides a window into his own ideological stance as well as the stance of his mentor who stands as a representative for a broader teaching profession.

Yet Seth's battle does not end in this moment. He reflects on his understanding that good teachers, teachers who care, grade at night and over the weekend continued even after he decided to only grade at school. This placed Seth in a cognitively dissonant state in which he understood himself as a good teacher who refused to do what good teachers did. This story and its telling reflected back a common ideology that good teachers care and caring teachers give up family time in order to more fully do the job of teaching. Seth's final comment, that all good teachers should emulate his mentor, implicates the other teachers present in the story circle, complicating the group's definition of a caring teacher.

Many teachers struggled as a component of their caring. Libby wanted to teach classes that she felt particularly qualified to teach and in which she had received positive feedback from students, but she was questioned by her mentor colleagues for upsetting an unspoken hierarchy that disqualified her from teaching those classes or even asking to

teach them. Valerie repeatedly pointed to a need for administrators and colleagues to care about teachers in concrete ways that honor teachers' individuality and collective responsibility to address their role in the broader community, caring about broader dispositional stances that impact the ways in which people engage with one another. And many teachers mentioned in this moment and others throughout the ethnodrama the subtle but persistent way that obtaining tenure, a relatively abstract accomplishment that primarily represents whether or not they get to continue doing a job they care about, elicits confusion and fear. The teachers must care about tenure if they wish to stay in their jobs, yet how does one care for something that is largely unclear and enacted most often as a form of evaluative gaze meant to weed out more than to support?

In the figured world of teaching, the job entails navigating administrative and collegial narratives that contradict instructional and relational practices these teachers felt more ideologically committed to. Teaching includes private in-class and public out-of-class spaces that impact the ways in which such navigation can occur. How teachers act in these spaces evidences ideological stances that position them in agreement or critique of institutional ideologies. And the actions teachers took constructed identities in which they attempted to see themselves as good within their own ontological beliefs as well as the socio-historical landscape of the teaching profession.

Navigating Relationships and Professional Caring

The stories that were told by the participating teachers included two groups of personal, professional relationships: those with students and those with adults. Adult

relationships could further be divided into colleagues and administration[16]; notably administration rarely were seen as colleagues primarily because of the degree to which the teachers had agency to respond differently to colleagues than administration for example Rebekah was able to push back on a colleague criticizing her and a student as they connected in the hallway before class whereas Talia (in The Job) and Amelia (in Emotional Labor) responded to administrative critiques with apologies and resolutions to never utilize them as resources.

Urrieta (2007) writes that identity is "about how people come to understand themselves, how they come to 'figure' who they are, through the 'worlds' that they participate in and how they relate to others within and outside these worlds" (p. 107). It follows then that teacher identity can be partially outlined by the relationships teachers participate in, relationships that are governed by the rules of the figured world of education and the teaching profession.

Based on the analysis that helped construct the ethnodrama as a whole and was possible through examination of this section of the ethnodrama, three important considerations for teachers can be asked as they think through their professional identities in terms of personal, professional relationships. First, what are the ways in which teachers invest in their relationships with students and what do those actions signify about a teacher? Second, what do new teachers want from their relationships with colleagues, what gets in the way of those relationships, and how does that impact a teacher's

---

[16] The teachers mentioned parents or guardians sparingly and usually in relation to colleagues (e.g. Alexia's story of colleagues siding with parents) or administration (e.g. Amelia's story of a visiting Aunt).

professional identity? Third, what are the discourses about administration that teachers encounter and engage in as they navigate their interactions with administrators?

Love and Activism

Mae begins this section of the ethnodrama by clearly expressing the love she has for one of her students. In the first workshop, this story came in response to one that I told in which I expressed a sense of disorientation when realizing that the education system and profession to which I feel deeply committed also caused a great deal of pain through racism and systemic prejudice experienced by a student I cared about deeply. Mae and I both reflected that saying we cared deeply for these students felt strangely radical yet central to how we interacted with them. To love students was to take a powerful stance within a system that figured students and teachers as opponents (Freire, 1993; Toshalis, 2015).

Mae's rejection of oppositional relationships catches her off guard in her story at the beginning of this section. Her combative exclamation chastising Tiny functions as a Bakhtinian sign, echoing with ideologies that position students as objects that teachers must deal with through discipline and emotional barriers that separate the concepts of personal and professional, not with a comma (personal, professional) that creates a sequence of adjectives that build on each other like in the title of this section, but with a slash (personal/professional) that signifies an either/or option. Relationships between teachers and students may be personal or professional, but not both. The prevalence of white ideology that pervades the profession and practice of education (Delpit, 2006; Watkins, 2001) dictates that professionalism, not the personal, should define relationships. The presence of these words and the ideology present in them shock Mae

164

as she reflects, "And I said that to him. A 13-year-old boy" (Workshop 2, 10/3/18). However, it does not surprise Tiny.

Similar to the way Mae and Tiny's relationship helped them navigate a difficult situation, the student in Rebekah's story presumably avoids a degree of hassle because of the way Rebekah was able to leverage their relationship to deflect disciplinary power asserted by her colleague. Seth also develops a relationship with one of his students to counteract a student's sense of disinterest and subsequent isolation. Stories of positive relationships were repeatedly used to figure a world in which these teachers found success even when the educational system created problems for them and their students.

Mae invokes such a backdrop at the beginning of the ethnodrama when she says, "[w]e work in an oppressive system, often with oppressed peoples, and we work in a broken system. Teaching is a powerful form of activism and I'm very proud to do that work" (Workshop 6, 12/8/18). While it may be tempting to argue that Mae's comment does not qualify as a story, it names specific characters ("we," or teachers, and the students they work with), a setting (an oppressive and broken system), and a plot (activism) with implied conflicts (working against the oppressive, broken system that frames the work "we" do). This narrative reflects the stances of key mentors Mae worked with during her licensure program, particularly her cooperating teacher. Through the lens of legitimate peripheral participation, Mae's story of what it means for her to be a teacher suggests an alignment between her own practices and those of the experts she observed. Telling the story not only indexes Mae as aware of this ideological stance but also counts as participation within that community and a sign of her learning about the teaching community.

This narrative of activism through care is not universal. Rebekah tells a story of radical love for students, caring about them deeply despite an identity outside of school she describes as emotionless and robotic. While Rebekah shares about a colleague who shrugs off a student with emotional needs, she does so incorporating laughter when describing her colleague and a tone that communicates frustration and disapproval, similar emotions it seems like her colleague expresses towards Rebekah even as he depends on Rebekah to deal with a student he does not wish to be there.

Rebekah's story functions as a rejection of the identity her colleagues suggest she takes up through comments such as "That's the difference between me and you. You love 'em first" (Workshop 3, 11/10/18). Instead, the story takes up the values expressed in our workshops. During the first workshop, Rebekah observes both Mae and me telling stories in which we express love for specific students, and she comments on the power yet seemingly taboo nature of claiming love for students. She then takes up the same language and explains how teaching is the one area of her life where she would consider herself a tender person. And it is that identity that puts Rebekah in opposition against a select group of co-teachers. Loving students first suggests weakness to Rebekah's colleagues while aligning her with the teachers who went through the same licensure program as her and are present at the workshops.

These characterizations of how and who a teacher should be have direct implications for both Mae and Rebekah in the way they act in their work. Rebekah greets students and asks about their home life. Mae brings food for her students and forms relationships that extend far beyond the school year. The activism that Mae names as a driving force for her work in the classroom is not defined by the curriculum she teaches,

though I suspect such a position would inherently drive some of the content in the classroom. It is defined by the way Rebekah and Mae treat students, particularly students who struggle within the system of oppression that Mae names. This is the same position Libby references when talking about her role as a school mom to many youth. It is the same stance Alexia takes when deciding not to write off her student when he gets sent to the ALC like many of her colleagues suggest she should do. And it is the same stance that Seth takes when he commits to getting a disinterested student to develop a relationship with him so that he engages with school. The stories so many of the teacher participants told communicate a clear lesson they learned somewhere along the way: students are the focus of education. To ignore them is to ignore a teacher's responsibility.

Struggle and Pain

Personal, professional relationships signify more than activism. They offer a way for these teachers to measure success within the ideological frame of their licensure program that affirms the importance of getting to know students and forming relationships as the foundation that supports meaningful learning (Delpit, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Toshalis, 2015). But they can be a double-edged sword for some of the teachers. True relationships in which both individuals are open with each other require vulnerability which creates opportunities for emotional hurt. Valerie acknowledges as much when she says "I think we're all kind of in this as new teachers. I came in with an open heart and I got wounded a lot and now how do I adjust so that this doesn't happen in the same way again?" (Workshop 2, 11/10/18). If developing personal relationships with students is part of the practice of education, Valerie asks how they can be teachers without doing harm to themselves.

Darya tells a brief story as a Vygotskian sign by noting that she is finding limits to her ability to care, presumably a prerequisite to forming relationships. It is this narrative, evoked throughout Darya's stories in the story circles and theatre activities, that she uses during our last workshop to describe herself as limited.

> I guess I'm thinking of a couple of things that gave me insight...the non-hopeful side of it is that I really realized in one of our conversations, like, I think I have very strong limitations in my ability to care for students all the time. And that's recent. Like that has just occurred in the last, maybe like last school year as well, but I just know I don't, I don't put my heart out there like I used to, and I don't know if that's good or bad, but, um, just like listening to other people's stories about caring and all these great interactions they have, I just feel like, yeah, I, I don't put myself out there as that person anymore. (Workshop 6, 12/8/18)

Within the cultural world of the teachers participating in the story circles and the broader educational research community that informed and constituted Darya's licensure program curriculum, teachers and other professionals understand developing personal relationships with students as part of the work of a teacher. Yet, in order to construct an identity that can sustain a career in a profession that Darya asserts is profound, unique, and special, she has adopted a practice of protecting her heart that seems at odds with other teachers with whom she identifies. Valerie acknowledges this tension by noting the importance of a reciprocal relationship. Further, Valerie critiques the narrative of the ability of personal relationships to counter systemic oppression among other institutional ailments when she says,

168

I'm really focused on the structure of it all. And because that's the driving force, and if no one can be successful in their positions, it kind of feels daunting. To be in your third year teaching and already be thinking it'll take this much money to fix this problem. It'll take this much money to fix that problem. My caring can only extend so far to help it. (Workshop 3, 11/10/18)

The concept of personal, professional relationships creates cognitive and emotional struggle for these new teachers. They understand and believe relationships to be a central practice of teaching, have seen mentors model it, and have read research that affirms it. Stories they hear and tell of personal, professional relationships with students echo with the ideologies of past utterances and implicate them within an ongoing narrative of what it means to be a good teacher. And the teachers have stories they tell that also support this belief. But they also have painful stories that contradict it, causing confusion. When Amelia asks why she continues to put herself in positions where students not only fail to reciprocate a personal relationship but actively cause pain (Workshop 2, 11/3/18), the answer seems to be 'because this is what good teachers do'. A possible follow up question asks, is "this" engaging in personal relationships or putting oneself in harm's way? And can a teacher do the former without the latter?

The Role of Administration

In the middle of the discussion about personal, professional relationships in the ethnodrama, Darya, Alexia, and Libby have a brief exchange about administration. The role of administration gets explored in all sections of the ethnodrama as the teachers mentioned them in every workshop we had. In "The Job," Talia struggles to understand contradicting messages from her principal about what a behavior referral is and what it

169

signifies. In "Emotional Labor," Amelia is pitied and reprimanded by her principal in the same exchange in ways that belie a racist prejudice and lack of awareness of the difficult schedule Amelia has. In "Untenable Threshold," Darya confides in a female Assistant Principal to help her address sexual harassment from a student. The Assistant Principal ends up unable to hold the student accountable for an unspecified reason and betrays Darya by joking about the incident with a male guidance counselor. And Valerie shares a story in which a senior teacher invokes the disembodied, watchful gaze of administration as a threat in order to get Valerie to control her (black) students' bodies. These and many other stories evidence the ever-present relationship new teachers have with administration.

These stories communicate powerful messages about where administrators work within a community of practice in the particular schools where these new teachers work. The two-dimensional depiction offered by legitimate peripheral participation suggests a plane on which new teachers work at the periphery as they observe and participate in the practices appropriate for their role within the school community. Administrators work more centrally in the community as they define broader community values and formative policies that govern the day-to-day activities of teachers. This invites the consideration of power into the conceptualization of the community, though largely absent from Lave and Wenger's (1994) theorization of communities of practice.

The ways in which administration is described in these stories—observing through a variety of means, modeling behavior as well as pushing teachers towards particular practices—suggests a more three-dimensional model of a community of practice. In this model, novice teachers still work at the periphery while expert teachers

shape the practice from more central positions. Administration extends up from the center of the community and spans out over the top like an umbrella, observing and containing the community. Administrative power is "produced and enacted in and through discourses" (Lewis et al., 2007, p. 17), such as when Holliday's colleague warns Valerie that she could get fired if administration sees the way she runs her class or when Alexia's administrators claim the authority to evaluate her work by saying she is doing well but refusing to provide the support she requests.

Not all teachers find themselves in this social environment, nor do all schools construct such a community. Seth shared that his colleagues often get together to share stories and support one another (Workshop 1, 10/20/18). Valerie described her first year teaching where she worked before moving to her current school:

> And I think about the kind of, the system of, of how, um, my old school kind of received me and it was, they gave me one prep, they gave me an experienced co-teacher, um, and gradually kind of asked me to take on more as I got my feet wet.

These relationships were built through repeated interpersonal check-ins and through the support of institutional systems. As such, relationships with other individuals, be they peers or administrators, have the power to isolate teachers or bring them into the social fold. And the stories of these relationships reinforce these relationships of empowerment and reciprocal support or defensiveness.

The stories the teachers themselves tell also produce administrative power. For example, Libby recognizes her own struggles to keep up with everything she is asked, so she gives the administrator assigned as her tenure supervisor "a pass" because he likely has more than he can accomplish on his plate as well. Yet there are no stories of

171

evaluations of administrators while many of the teachers shared stories in which they feared administration would arbitrarily decide to not hire them back. Most of the stories the teachers told about administrators depicted them in evaluative roles, critiquing the work, and thus the identity, of new teachers. Even while administrators attempted to evaluate teachers while coming off as supportive, the stories often depicted teachers in a state of loss (e.g. Alexia), hurt (e.g. Amelia), betrayal (e.g. Darya), or fear (e.g. Valerie).

New teachers had no choice but to have a professional relationship with their administrators. Administrators often attempted to open up these relationships to something more personal. This required vulnerability from the teachers but not the administrators. The stories these teachers told, minus one that Valerie told of her first school, construct a world in which administrators are either absent or untrustworthy. This world casts teachers in opposition to administrators, suggesting that, while administration rarely provides positive experiences or mentorship, they have a powerful impact on how teachers understand and situate themselves within the teaching profession.

The Internal Struggle of Emotional Labor

Trust, anger, sacrifice, and many other ideas come up in the stories that make up this moment. But more than any of them, the two key components that we see in Seth and Amelia's stories as well as the following discussion are the experiences of being unprepared and overwhelmed. Literal violence in school and in students' lives along with emotional violence through overt and unchecked racism and institutional structures that leave new teachers feeling alone and unsupported create an emotional burden that these new teachers carried with them as they navigated the more surface-level demands of

curriculum and instruction. The result is a question of when to dig in, when to give up, and how to process the emotional battles along the way.

I describe Seth and Amelia's stories as Bakhtinian signs that communicate cultural expectations for how to be a teacher. I then explore storytelling as an improvisational move within the figured world of teaching by analyzing Amelia's story through interactional positioning and what happens when Amelia's attempt, and her desired identity, is misread by others. I end by describing the difficulty of shifting between various communities of practice such as work and home life in order to explain the ways internal emotional work of teachers impacts their home lives.

Disruption and Distress

The disruptive student and the distressed student both carry emotional weight for teachers, as Seth and Amelia's stories demonstrate. As Bakhtinian signs, both stories carry ideological frames for how to be a teacher. For the disruptive student, these stories evoke images of hardened teachers with militaristic classroom management strategies (much like the preferences of Rebekah's colleagues when choosing between a principal with a military background and one whose primary strategy was to love students). White savior narratives such as *Dangerous Minds* (Bruckheimer, Simpson, & Smith, 1995) or *Freedom Writers* (DeVito, Shamberg, Sher, & LaGravenese, 2007) imagine a teacher journeying to a lowly community to heroically change students' lives or, at the very least, survive the morally bankrupt students who withhold respect that teachers rightfully deserve by virtue of being a teacher. Stories of the distressed student evoke a different type of pity, one that imagines an emotionally or psychologically broken child, distressed from events outside of their control.

173

Seth and Amelia's stories signify much of the expected ideologies that other similar stories do. Seth recounts a stoic child who appears much like any other student. She works on her assignments and chats with her friends, calling Seth to task when he mispronounces her name. When Seth learns about her murdered uncle and the gruesome conditions under which he was found, the student is heroicized. She casually shares the information as if it has little power over her. Yet this same piece of information dumbfounds Seth.

> And I was just like...it's like I don't- I've had very little training in how to deal with this and I've read as much literature as, like, people can give me, but like I'm just blown away at the amount of violence in some of these seventh graders' lives and like I'm still, yeah, I'm just like, I don't know. (Workshop 1, 10/20/18)

Seth is cognitively at a loss despite consuming any available literature on the topic and describes himself as figuratively blown away, like a flag in the wind, shaped by the constitutive power of the distress.

Amelia describes her student in chaotic terms that explode the physical and psychological order of her classroom. Aligned with this depiction, Amelia explains her logical approach to responding to her student: address the issue in class on her own, look for support and utilize the power structure at school by reaching out to an administrator for help, and invite home support, which, she has been assured through her licensure courses, will solve the problem.

> On top of that, everything in Teacher Ed told me, yes, the parents are on your side. They're going to come in, they're going to whip them into shape. They're going to say, wow, you're trying so hard. He's being a jerk. So I invited his Auntie

174

to come in and she said she would come observe his behaviors. (Workshop 3, 11/10/18)

Both stories and the numerous others they mirror suggest an understanding that students who are anything but compliant represent a psychological burden to teachers. While this might seem relatively pessimistic on the surface, such a burden does not necessarily need to be cast in a negative light. Caring about students was depicted as a standard component of a teacher's job. Adolescence often includes disruption and personal struggle. Teachers help students process these in a variety of ways. However, Seth and Amelia's stories also show the emotional labor involved when teachers themselves get disrupted and distressed.

Such emotions are not unique to just Seth and Amelia. Alexia admits to feeling defeated by similar experiences, unsure of how to address them. Valerie connects the feeling of defeat to systemic problems where administrative leaders who are unable or unwilling to address the root causes of problems leave her feeling unsupported. And Mae acknowledges the challenge of choosing to use love and care as an administrative approach because of what this requires of a person even when it is clear that these methods offer the most sustaining practices for educators who work with students who struggle in any number of ways.

More so than the emotional labor Amelia's story gives witness to, it speaks to the divide between administrators and teachers. In telling this story to a group of new teachers, Amelia calls on broader narratives in which administrators signify power that is out of touch with the daily work of teachers and, in this case, the racialized experiences of teachers of color. The white administrator's attempt to explain culture, conflating it

with race and assigning behavior generally recognized as disruptive to black boys, constructs her as ineffective and ignorant. Amelia stands as a narrative counterpoint, creating a teacher identity that is knowledgeable and attuned to the nuances of a given situation. Amelia arrives at the story's conclusion with a decision that matches the ideology of a new teacher unable to continually weather the disruptions of a problematic and unsupportive administrator: announcing her decision that the only way to deal with an issue is on her own with her classroom door literally and figuratively closed.

In contrast, Seth's distress leaves him lost. There is no easy fix for a traumatized student or the teacher they share their experiences with. Seth moves from room to room throughout the day and back and forth from school to home, carrying the weight of his concern with nowhere to process his own experience. While disruptive behavior can be addressed, the trauma that disrupts is outside of the teacher's wheelhouse. It is counselors who can help students more than any teacher. No matter how much a teacher reads, a youth's psychology is out of bounds. The teacher's stoicism is recognized by Valerie as unhealthy, and by Talia as difficult to process.

Through these stories, teachers are constructed as emotionally burdened by systemic failures which can be personified, in Amelia's case, by her principal, and by their students' trauma. The stories recognize teachers as leaders in the classroom whose identities are shaped by stances they are expected to take in response to their students, be it disciplinarian or confidante.

Power/Agency Within Storytelling

Holland et al. (1998) describe figured worlds as contexts of possibility and agency. Such possibility rests on the improvisational imagination an individual has for

strategic moves to make and remake the self "within relations of power" (Moje & Lewis, 2007, p. 18). One site of possibility is the storytelling act itself. In it, power may be enacted through particular discourses as teachers utilize language laden with ideological meaning and anticipate the ways in which their stories will be taken up and interpreted. Such was the case with Amelia's story about a student's aunt visiting her class which resulted in Amelia's distrust and dwindling respect for her principal.

Amelia shared that she chose this story specifically for the occasion (Personal Communication, 1/18/19). The events had happened almost a year earlier. Amelia had processed the experience on a variety of occasions both personally and in conversation with others. I had heard the story before though it was new to all the other teacher participants at the particular session Amelia had shared it. And she had chosen it as a way of communicating her reclamation of power. However, this was not how it was received.

Amelia reflected on her experience in a personal email to me. Two months later, she suggested I reference this email as I thought through these experiences. In the email, she wondered if she had condoned abusive behavior and if staying at the school compromised her self-respect. Amelia also asked:

> I have reflected on that story many times, I have cried about it many times, but I no longer feel emotionally bound to that story...[H]ave I misrepresented my story; the story was from the past but I felt like everyone's responses positioned me as a helpless victim; I do not feel helpless, I actually feel really good about the work that I am doing at my school this year. (Personal Communication, 11/11/18)

Amelia's storytelling frames the event as one in which her principal and the student's aunt asserted power over her, invoked by their administrative status in their respective

177

schools, which provides them the prerogative to observe and comment in authoritative ways with little opportunity for the teacher to participate in the exchange. These comments are framed explicitly by the principal as supportive. Yet Amelia experiences them as evaluative and an informal moment of discipline. Her credibility as a teacher has been called into question.

From this experience, Amelia has learned that administration and guardians cannot be trusted. This prompts Amelia to question components of her teacher education training and statements presumably by her principal that suggest otherwise. Amelia moves forward by drawing on the available resources that she has: new understandings of her relationship with administration and guardians and tools of privacy. She will no longer call on guardians or administration for support. Thus all problems will be taken care of by Amelia in the classroom. This move reflects a series of strategic moves to construct a particular teacher identity within relations of power, one of a competent and effective teacher.

A culturalist (Holland et al., 1998) view of Amelia's improvisation suggests that she understands herself as a good teacher, something affirmed by alignment with the values of her licensure program and successful completion of student teaching with a demanding cooperating teacher. This is affirmed by Valerie after Amelia tells her story.

> [W]hat I am trying to say is there are places out there that really want you because you are a great teacher. I saw it, I'm like gonna cry. [Cries] You are such a good teacher. Like I saw Amelia with [her cooperating teacher] every single day and her cooperating teacher is a nutcracker. Like, she expects so much out of her

student teachers and, like, Amelia not only met her expectations but, like, rose to

the occasion every single day. (Workshop 3, 11/10/18)

Valerie speaks directly to Amelia before shifting her comments to the other teachers at

the workshop, telling a brief story about Amelia student teaching in the school where

Valerie taught and authoring Amelia's identity of a good teacher in the space of our

workshops. Amelia's choice to "not bring anyone who's supposed to support you in the

door" (Workshop 3, 11/10/18) honors this cultural given based on her original landscape

of teaching formed in her own schooling experiences and the values of her licensure

program and utilizes the tools available to her within her specific context and in response

to relationships of power.

Amelia shared this story as a response to a prompt about gaining insight into

systems of power. Her marginalization as a person of color and the disciplinary power the

student's aunt and Amelia's principal exercised felt relevant. Amelia also referenced her

conversation with Seth during the theatre activities when they described power in their

schools. Two stories previous to hers, Seth had started by stating he wanted to tell a story

of reclaiming power. And that is the identity Amelia felt she had depicted. She and I had

previously talked about this story and other experiences from her first year teaching, and

Amelia had chosen to return to the same school for her second year teaching having

learned how it functioned as a system, excited to use that knowledge to her benefit. She

aimed to support her students even more and try to improve the school from within. This

was a story about *her* power.

Utilizing Wortham's (2001) models of interactional positioning, Figure 3 displays

Amelia's expectation of how her storytelling would position her. The storied event (her

179

interactions with the principal and aunt) depicts her subjugated position to the authority the principal and aunt that cast Amelia as a bad teacher. The storytelling event (Amelia's
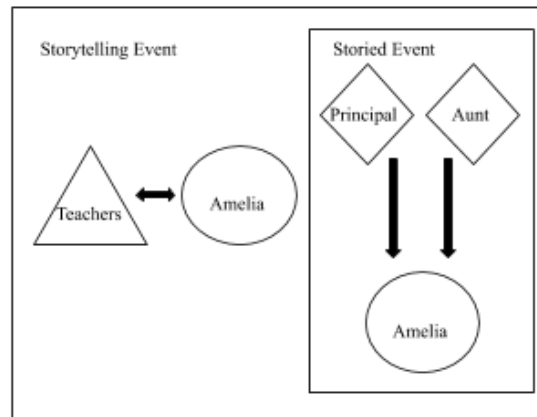

Figure 3: Model of intended interactional positioning through Amelia's story

narration of the past event in our workshop to her fellow teachers, all of whom went through the same licensure program) shows Amelia on the same level with the other teacher participants representing her as an equal with a firm grasp of her situation and the agency to take care of herself.

Figure 4 represents Amelia's experience after hearing people's responses to her story. "Whether it opened up things from the past that had hurt me and reminded me of them or whether it was because I felt misrepresented or positioned as a victim which makes me feel viewed as weak, I felt really exposed by the conversation" (Personal Communication, 11/11/18). While the storied event stays the same, Amelia felt the comments of teacher participants casting her as a victim condoning abusive behavior and self-sabotaging by returning to the school. Amelia recognized that the comments came from a place of care, but they constructed a narrative about Amelia that caused her to doubt her understanding of who she was as a teacher and her experiences after the storied event, particularly since the new school year had begun.

The interactional positioning that occurs in this moment of storytelling suggests that authorship of identity occurs in both the telling and the interpretation of a story. Amelia shared a story she had crafted over many retellings to herself and others. Amelia intended the story to evidence untenable power relations expressed through structures of
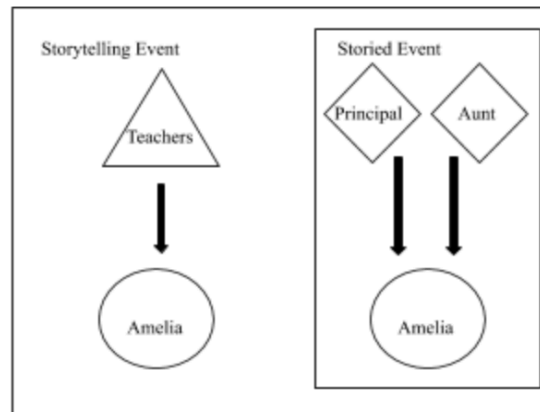

Figure 4: Model of experienced interactional positioning through Amelia's story

surveillance and discipline. The storytelling event was meant to represent the culmination of a great deal of intrapersonal work Amelia had done to understand herself, her place within her school, and the structures that construct power relations there. Telling the story was intended to be a moment of empowerment and camaraderie with the other teacher participants who had similarly shared stories of struggle

The other teacher participants interpreted Amelia's story as something different than their own stories. They were deeply moved by Amelia's story, concerned for her well-being and committed to supporting her. This was a markedly different response, one in which Amelia was encouraged to find a different job though she might be stuck there because of how difficult it is to find a new teaching position. This response cast Amelia as a victim. Amelia responded to this feedback during the workshop, attempting to build the common ground between her story and others that she felt was self-evident:

I love these kids and I see how I can use my power or my whatever way of

manipulating the system to...get tenured and then like kick ass and like stand up

for what I believe in...So yes, I do always feel like I need to leave, but then I

always feel like I need to stay. And that's, I'm sure, a tension any of you relate to.

Yet she still left that exchange doubting herself, suggesting that identities are constructed

not only by the individual but through the interpretations of others within the figured

world.

Home

Seth and Valerie often talked about their kids as we started and ended the

workshops, as did Libby. Their identities as parents came up in a variety of stories about

teaching. With professional identities as an extension of personal identity, moments when

teaching gets in the way of parenting become issues. This blurring of demarcation lines

between what these teachers do as professionals and what they do in their personal lives

illustrates what Barton and Hamilton (2005) describe as acting in multiple contexts, not

just a professional workplace. Just as figured worlds overlap, so too can communities of

practice. Such an overlap suggests that shifting from the practices and goals of one

community to another is not a simple process.

Seth shows this in his struggle to leave the emotional labor as well as grading out

of the home and at school. Libby describes an experience when she is with her children

and realizes that she has been thinking about the actions of a bully colleague instead of

focusing on the present moment (Workshop 2, 11/3/18). Valerie too expresses the

struggle of balancing parenthood and teaching. She describes what she heard from her

mother:

My grandmother was a teacher in a very small town, at a Catholic school and everybody loved her. She was the community person that everybody came to and people loved and all of these things. But her own kids felt a little neglected. Like they didn't get the love or attention just cause she was like everybody's mom.

Valerie echoes a similar situation in her own professional and family life, offering a critique on the situation as a teacher herself.

I look back at my son and I can't remember what we did together [during my licensure program and first year teaching]. Like I can't remember other than the summer. Yeah. Like bad. Like I was a bad mom for real...I went in my second year, looked my co teacher straight in the eye and I said my goal this year is to be a good mom because I've not been for two years...I literally would spend hours on the weekends at the coffee shop, um, I would stay at school until 7:00 at night and my kids go to bed at eight. Like it was hard, hard, hard, hard. (Workshop 3, 11/10/18)

For Valerie, Libby, and Seth, the teacher identity is one that has the possibility to encroach on their roles as parents. One way teachers, especially new teachers, demonstrate commitment to their job is through protracted work hours at school and at home making personal time a luxury of a balanced life. In this way, they figure good teachers without balanced lives. They commit the majority of their time to the work of teaching, whether that is towards traditional responsibilities such as lesson planning or parent communication or committee work that, even when compensated, is so minimal the effort still feels like volunteered time.

It is tempting to point to Valerie and Seth's parent identities and where they might overlap with a teacher identity as integral to their struggles. Libby too describes moments when the emotional labor of teaching sneaks into the time she spends with her kids. Yet many of the other teachers who participated in the workshops also shared this struggle, even without children of their own. Darya tells a brief story of resolving to take time for herself, even during the summer. Valerie echoes the desire to find time, not just for her family, but for herself. Rebekah tells of her struggle to stop giving too much of herself in ways that don't matter, signaling that there are moments when it makes sense to extend herself, but only on special occasions. These lines in the sand that the teachers either drew or searched for underscores the emphasis teacher identity puts on valuing hard, continuous work and the tensions that creates for teachers' personal identities.

Untenable Threshold

I begin this section by recounting the challenging experiences these teachers faced and continue to face in their jobs in order to point out the problematic practice of isolation and silence that these teachers had learned to participate in. I then suggest that the focus of new-teacher induction on a set of skills reduces teaching to merely a community of practice that does not prepare new teachers to navigate the figured world of teaching. Valuing the stories that new teachers tell, especially of their struggles, as Bakhtinian signs that potentially reify cultural ideologies that create isolation and silence provides opportunities to respond to the figured world these stories create and author different endings that support all teachers.

Stories to Leave By

Clandinin, Downey, and Huber (2009) describe stories to live by as "the nexus of teachers' personal practical knowledge and the landscapes, [in and out of schools], past and present, on which teachers live and work" (p. 141). In other words, they are the stories that teachers bring with them to the teaching profession, craft as they learn through practice what it means to be a teacher, and use to imagine their future that drive them forward in their work. It is Mae's articulation of teaching as a social justice act, Valerie's narrative of helping students believe in themselves, or Alexia's desire to create meaningful curriculum for students as a classroom teacher. Stories to live by are how teachers imagine being teachers based on their past experience and practical knowledge within the socio-historical context of the profession as they understand it.

Stories to leave by (Schaefer, Downey, & Clandinin, 2014) are the stories teachers tell that facilitate their exit from the profession. There are two types of stories to leave by: cover stories that express socially acceptable narratives that often avoid naming the actual reason a teacher leaves the profession, and the "deeper, silenced, riskier, and more complex stories" that reveal ruptures in the stories to live by.

Individual stories to live and leave by flesh out the many yet generally dire data on teacher attrition (Byrd-Blake, Afolayan, Hunt, Fabunmi, Pryor, & Leander, 2010; Dunn, 2018; Santoro, 2011). Teacher attrition is not the focus of this study. I do not intend to make any arguments about how to keep teachers in the profession or point to general issues within education in order to address this important issue. Stories to live and leave by serve to frame a difficult moment many of the new teachers described variations of in their stories: the untenable threshold. These were brief moments such as Valerie's white co-workers using the n-word in casual conversation or Amelia's

colleagues defining her worth as a teacher around her racial identity that "checked the box" instead of her skills in the classroom. And these were prolonged experiences such as the sexual harassment Darya experienced from a student, the lack of support from administration, and the public teasing by a male counselor about the situation at her expense. Or it could be the general culture of defensiveness that prohibits meaningful feedback and collaboration from colleagues that Libby describes.

These are unsustainable moments that interrupt stories to live by. They are threshold moments, moments of transition from who one was or what one did to something else, that require decision and movement. And yet, these are situations that, impossible as they may seem, have the potential to fester for long periods of time as an individual decides what to do. They can be moments of clarity or impossibility. And decisions are made, even if it is to simply stand on the threshold, in limbo, as the consequences of the untenable threshold unfold and construct new stories to live by.

Darya was sexually harassed by a male student with a track record of "act[ing] strangely towards other teachers." He included pornography in an essay he wrote for her class. The female administrator who Darya went to for help did not give any consequences to the student. This same administrator betrayed Darya's confidence by joking about the situation with a male counselor who teased Darya publicly about it, blaming her for the interaction. As a result, Darya wanted to quit.

Libby sought a professional community that collaborated openly and provided feedback. Instead, she got chastised passively for keeping her classroom door open, something she was taught to do in her licensure program. Colleagues acted defensively when Libby tried to think critically about their practices, hers included, in order to

improve. She gave up, at least for the meantime, stating "I guess that's just the power dynamics among teachers" (Workshop 3, 11/10/18).

Valerie went to her colleagues for assistance when a student repeatedly made hateful comments in class, creating an unsafe environment for other students, particularly students of underrepresented or oppressed communities, and her colleagues refused to do anything. "I feel like I care too much" Valerie reflected, "and it weighs on me" (Workshop 5, 12/1/18).

Seth described several instances in which his ability to sustain a healthy home life has been impeded by what he sees as givens of the job of a teacher: processing the trauma of his students, fielding emotional insults from students, and balancing his desire to spend time with his kids while feeling pressured to work at night and over the weekend. Valerie also described the toll of emotional labor and professional expectations:

> But if it's one size fits all and 'this is what we do' and 'this is how we do it', I don't know if I want to come back each year.

And later:

> It just never stops. And what I have noticed is that there are actual human beings in my home that need me, right. And so it's kind of like, I don't know how to be a good mom and a good teacher. I don't know how to be everything to everybody. I have to rest in the fact that it's not possible.

And later still:

> I have different needs, I have different problems, I have different things that I'm dealing with as an oppressed person working in a system of oppression. I haven't figured it out. But I have acknowledged that these are problems and that they are

187

something that I need to figure it out. And if not, I will leave the profession. I have to.

There are other, smaller stories included in the ethnodrama that weighed on the teachers in similar ways. Not included in the ethnodrama are stories of constant and extreme violence at a school, being ostracized and bullied by colleagues so extensively that a teacher could barely sleep from the anxiety, signing up for more and more volunteer positions at school because the teacher felt guilty about having free time more than one night a week, getting pushback from department members because they and students were uncomfortable when the new teacher acknowledged race in conversations about literature, and having colleagues draw a line in the sand, saying it is us or them, when a new teacher keeps her promise to a group of students to not spread information about a traumatic situation that happened on a field trip after it had been dealt with. These are the stories told in interviews and workshops that drew gasps and tears, gestures of solidarity and silent moments of reflection. These are stories to leave by.

Amelia states in the prologue, "I would not share these stories with an audience of non-teachers. It just never would occur to me to share them" (Workshop 6, 12/8/18). Stories like the ones recounted here affect teachers deeply, yet many of these teachers acknowledge that those stories are rarely processed within a community of practice in their specific teaching contexts. And these teachers also would certainly not share these stories with many of their friends or family for fear of being misunderstood. Outside of opportunities like these story circles where the teachers can share their stories of struggle, they are largely on their own. Such a loneliness creates one aspect of a double silence that contributes to the untenable threshold.

The other silence at work here is the one within teacher education and other communities that participate in teacher induction. This silence largely ignores such stories to the detriment of new teachers and the broader education profession. As a figured world, teacher education and other induction conduits utilize literature, first-hand accounts, and practicum experiences that attend to components of teaching such as culturally relevant pedagogy, assessment practices, subject-specific curriculum development, and Professional Learning Communities. To be sure, these are all important components of what it means to teach. But these focus on teaching as a community of practice—a group of novices and experts doing a task. It reduces teaching to a set of skills that a new teacher can become more knowledgeable about and better at. As a figured world, however, teaching is more than a series of practices. It is a community of individuals who operate within a shared set of norms and values unique to their group that shape the perspectives and actions of those within the community.

Finding ways to address stories of leaving like the ones described here would be difficult for two reasons. First, these are highly individual stories that occur in very particular settings with context-specific forces at work. Responding to any one of these situations on their own would be difficult absent a context and would feel overly reductive. I experienced something akin to this sense of reduction as I wrote and thought about these stories. I often began with just one of the examples, turning it over to look at it from any angle that would help me understand it. This approach failed over several attempts. However, listing them together as they appear here provides an opportunity to synthesize broader conclusions than any one or two stories could do. Taken together, they

paint an alarming image of the possible experiences of new teachers and the difficulty they have navigating them.

Second, the process of figuring a world for new inductees understandably focuses on aspects of the world that its members are proud of and see as a constitutive practice of belief central to what they do. White supremacy, emotional labor, and a difficult balance between home and work are not advertised nor generally wanted. Yet they are still present. And it is this double silence about the untenable thresholds that allows them to persist, for they cannot be dealt with if they are not spoken.

Epilogue | Worthy

In this final section, I connect communities of practice and figured worlds to articulate how the mutual engagement in the shared task of teaching draws on a repertoire of shared resources that ask teachers to mobilize ideologies with which they disagree. These shared resources may be classroom management procedures, deference towards opaque traditions that dictate which teachers get access to particular courses or grade levels, or broader narratives that position teachers against students. I then describe how Seth's request for advice, or access to a shared repertoire, contextualizes the struggle for authority over one's professional identity and worth as part of the shared work of teachers. Finally, I end by returning to Darya's reflection on teaching as a privileged job that takes place in an inauthentic space, arguing that this assessment of the profession and her evaluation of the task of teaching points to the way people (such as teachers and students), spaces (such as classrooms), and actions (such as teaching and learning) are always imbued with socio-historical significance. This significance provides opportunities for the people that populate the figured world of teaching and school to

pivot into particular traditional and oppressive practices or something else—something

profound, however challenging the cultural world is to navigate.

People and Practices as Ideological Pivots

Darya responds to Valerie's story that begins this section by asking, "...what do

teachers deserve? What are we worthy of?" (Workshop 6, 12/8/18). This question elicited

several vocal recognitions of relevance from the teachers. *Yes!* They seemed to say.

Exactly! Thematically for the ethnodrama, this question works on two levels. First, Darya

is responding to the two dispositional stances that Valerie illustrates in her story.

> And I was like *[raises her arms and smiles to signal 'oh well']*. "If they feel like
>
> I'm not fit to teach this job cause I had a couple of students leave the classroom
>
> early, not a lot that I can do about that. Right now, what I was doing was I was
>
> talking to a few kids about why they chose not to participate in a discussion. And
>
> for me that felt more important than barricading the door like you want me to.
>
> (Workshop 5, 12/1/18)

Valerie more or less signals to her colleague, an individual with seniority in her

department and who leverages that authority to critique Valerie, that she had larger

concerns than worrying about what an abstract "they" wish to assume about her based on

the current situation. Valerie signals with her embodied rebuff of the criticism that she is

worth more than such pettiness. 'I deserve to be trusted and taken seriously,' she seems to

say. Just like learning is more important than controlling students' bodies, there are

bigger issues that are more important for Valerie.

Valerie suggests that her worth lies not in reinforcing status quo ideology that

subjugates students' minds and bodies, a status quo that her colleague seems intent to

recreate in their professional relationship. By communicating to Valerie that she is not doing what teachers at that school do or thinking how teachers at that school think, the senior teacher attempts to reify her authority by engaging in the same type of power dynamic that Valerie's student brushed off in the hallway. Valerie did the same while many of us laughed at the gesture she performed in her telling, affirming her reading of the situation.

Yet Valerie quickly checks our collective excitement about her push against the ideologies her colleague represented. "But the thing is, I am very scared of administration because we're not safe, right? We are on the chopping block, you know? Not literally, but kind of. Right? At the end of every year. It's hard" (Workshop 5, 12/1/18). While Valerie's colleague is unsuccessful in checking her rejection of a status quo in the practice of what it means to be a teacher, particularly in this specific school, Valerie's own fear does just that. Even more striking, Valerie's comments suggest a fear of some type of violence. "We are on the chopping block, you know? Not literally, but kind of."

I do not mean to suggest that Valerie risks physical assault if she continues to push back. However, the practices teachers engage in, the ones learned through peripheral participation in the goal of being recognized as legitimate, have direct connections to the ideologies that constitute teachers' identities. Valerie's colleague confronts her about the student who left class early to return a book. The colleague's admonition of Valerie's practice as a teacher "hails" (Althusser, 1971) her as an ideological subject of the school system that values control and subordination. Valerie's identity is thus interpellated within ideologies of hierarchical control (officially under the disembodied watchful gaze of administration and unofficially under the colleague's

192

seniority). While Valerie is able to reject the individual teacher, Valerie's comments acknowledge she is unable to reject the ideology of control within which her identity as a teacher is constituted. This is the connection between communities of practice and figured worlds. Communities of practice articulates the things 'we do' to be a part of an 'us' or community. Figured worlds extends this to theorize how ideologies get lived out in ways that constitute what one does and how one thinks.

Take, for example, the woman who climbed up the house (Holland, Lachicotte Jr., Skinner, & Cain, 1998, pp. 9-12). The community where Skinner had been conducting interviews was made up of different castes. Those of a lower caste were considered dirty. Because most of the homes had hearths on the first floor where the doors to the building were, people of a lower caste typically stayed away from the houses where those of an upper caste lived. When Skinner, considered to be upper caste, invited a woman in her fifties of a lower caste to come up to the second-story balcony of the house for an interview, the woman climbed the exterior wall so as to avoid Skinner's kitchen. Regardless of Skinner's invitation to enter the house through the front door, the woman's participation in the figured world of that community placed her in a lower caste and figured her "untouchable" (p. 9) or a pollution risk. This ideological position and identity as a pollutant spurred the woman to scale a wall rather than enter a house as she was invited to do.

Valerie, and all of these teachers, have an idea of who they are and wish to be as teachers. Darya's question about what a teacher deserves asks to what degree teachers should get to determine who they are as teachers. If teachers "give so much," should they not be able to define their professional identity on their terms? Rebekah's qualification of

what it means to put oneself first (clean dishes, groceries, and the ability to go to the doctor) emphasizes how foundational this authority is to an individual.

Seth asks what others do when they are overwhelmed with the experiences that seem to go hand in hand with the job for many of these teachers, notably how people claim the authority to define themselves. And without hesitation, many of the teachers have coping strategies. And it is Mae who grounds the responses in terms of an individual's disposition and the authority they do have.

> Teaching is so much fun, which I truly believe. And it brings me a lot of joy. I just love kids...It's important for teachers to reflect on our collective struggle. But I don't think that anyone else deserves the right to place a struggle upon teachers if you're not in that position. (Workshop 6, 12/8/18)

It is from this reminder that, in terms of what teachers deserve, Darya's opening statement gets recontextualized and pointed towards the teachers.

> I have the best job in the world. And I feel like the stories I've told haven't made that clear. Even though it's an inauthentic space, just to be able to be with students every day, um, it means a lot to me. It feels, at times, very profound. (Workshop 6, 12/8/18)

Darya's statement does not critique the struggles the teachers have shared in the ethnodrama and through the data collection process for this project. In fact, Darya emphasizes them. Describing the school spaces that serve as the setting for the stories they shared—classrooms, department offices, administrative offices, hallways— as inauthentic, Darya acknowledges the contradictions of romantic narratives of teaching and learning in a system that seems so oppressive, or at least uninterested. Students,

teachers, nor curriculum enter into the classroom unaffected by the social environment and discourses that ceaselessly work to constitute them all, as they do in return. Despite the social forces that work to disrupt the work of learning, being in the classroom with students feels significant to Darya. The frustrations may very well contribute to the feeling of significance. It is less the doing of teaching than the being of a teacher that makes the job profound. This whole-hearted, radical experience is what makes the stakes for professional identity so high.

Conclusion

The stories that teachers told effectively communicated stances towards and within the complex figured world of education and practicing teachers. In these stances, teachers took up, revised, or rejected cultural narratives that implicated them in broader cultural narratives and ideologies based on how they saw themselves as teachers. The right to define themselves in agentic ways permeated these stories. The teachers acknowledged the way they saw power working through institutional structures against them. The stories themselves functioned as both an agentic move to address these struggles and a site of struggle as teachers attempted to signal themselves to others through the stories. In the next chapter, I return to my research questions to address broader analysis about the stories teachers told and the sociocultural moves they made in telling them.

Chapter 6: Analysis Part 3: Figured Worlds and Storytelling

Introduction

The individual moments within the ethnodrama in Chapter Four provide an opportunity to zoom in on specific areas of concern for the teachers: a complicated definition of what the job entails, navigating relationships, internal emotional labor, extreme situations that push teachers to a breaking point, and questioning what their worth is as a teacher. Beyond these situation-specific considerations, there were issues that extended across all stories. In this chapter, I take these up, starting with the ways stories are used broadly as part of the induction process for new teachers. I then describe more broadly the types of stories teachers tell, how those stories work on the identities of teachers, and how the teachers work with those stories. I end with a consideration of how race functions in both the stories and the sociocultural moves done in their telling.

Figured Worlds and Storytelling

Storytelling and listening are separate actions that are deeply entwined. By attending to the stories new teachers told with concepts from sociocultural theory, I attempt to highlight the ways stories instruct and codify the identities of new teachers as they work to make sense of who they are within broader and local professional communities. These sociocultural concepts, particularly figured worlds and communities of practice, provided helpful approaches to discuss the ways stories operated amongst communities of teachers at a conceptual level. While the work of listening to the stories of teachers, particularly those entering into the profession, must be a continuous commitment by multiple stakeholders including mentor teachers, administration, and educational researchers, and must be done in ways that honor the question, "How does

this impact me in concrete ways and what I will do when I show up to school?", using concepts from sociocultural theory provides practical ways of understanding the practice of storytelling as an induction process as well as the symbolic meaning and very real impacts of the stories told.

As an induction process, storytelling is both performative and agentic. It is performative in the way the storyteller is able to demonstrate their knowledge of what is important to the figured world they are in. Storytelling is as much a process of selecting what events, actions, and perspectives to *in*clude as it is a process of what to *ex*clude. Storytellers are the script-writer who decides which people get to speak and which stay silent. They are the cinematographer who decides what is seen and what is ignored. Already established members of a particular figured world tell stories that model how to construct a particular identity that aligns to the ideological values within that specific cultural community, performing authority. New inductees attempt to follow those models, performing belonging.

Storytelling is agentic in the way the storyteller can draw on the cultural artifacts and signifiers as they attempt to remix possible ways of being within the figured world. These improvisations draw on available resources (e.g. signifying the teacher-self as committed through hard work instead of taking needed or earned breaks) to push back against other aspects of a figured world (e.g. senior teachers who invoke an authoritative gaze to threaten a new teacher into falling in line with a pedagogy of control and obedience). This is the move Valerie makes in response to her colleague who renegotiated power and authority in their interaction. And it is the move Mae makes when she invokes her focus on and love for students when she critiques the traditional

professional trajectory of teachers moving to leadership positions outside of the classroom.

Such storytelling moves have symbolic and practical implications for teachers in the induction process. One of the most common examples from the teachers is the choice many of them made to only tell positive stories of their work if telling any stories at all. These are moves to reject or ignore victim narratives that friends and family place onto them when the teachers share stories of struggle or conflict. Struggle and conflict are not unique to the teaching profession, but they seem to impact the identities these teachers felt were being constructed of them by friends and family outside the teaching profession. Too often the teachers felt they were being figured as victims, leading those outside the profession to feel sorry for them and, in some instances with parents, to question their decision to become a teacher as misguided and a misuse of their talent or intellect.

The stories that were told in schools also had powerful symbolic meaning and concrete impacts on the teachers. For example, Amelia was caught between competing stories in which her racialized identity was both hyper-realized when she was told she "checked the box" as a teacher of color, and seemingly erased when her white administrator lectured Amelia about how race played a factor in classroom dynamics. Symbolically, Amelia's professionalism and skills as a teacher were erased by both stories, which caused her to take a defensive, distrusting stance towards her colleagues. In very practical terms, this isolated Amelia from her colleagues, possibly placing a heavier burden on Amelia in future times of struggle. In the meantime, her professional relationships were changed. This was even more concerning for Amelia as a new teacher

who would benefit from closer mentorship as she navigates the induction period and establishes herself as an expert in her field.

Less dramatic but no less impactful are examples like the narrative of teachers needing to volunteer their time, working on weeknights and over weekends on lesson planning and grading. Seth's children were the ones who lost out on time with their father until they pointed out the new pattern that he had enacted. Talia continued to feel guilty when she had even the smallest amount of free time, filling up her weeknights and Sundays with school-related work. All of these stories figure particular available identities, or identity components, for new teachers to assess. As inductees into a new cultural world, they are most likely to take up the options presented to them in stories before they critique, revise, or even reject narratives that do harm. To be sure, not all stories new teachers tell or encounter are detrimental. However, these were the stories that were most often brought up by the teachers, understandably wanting to think them through with each other.

Conceptualizing teacher identities as storied helps to point to the nuanced ways in which the teachers who worked with me on this project engaged in and recognized storytelling as a daily practice in their work and how engaging in storytelling can support teachers' individual and collective sense of identity. This practice made stories, however overt or covert their presence might be, a tool of self-reflection and community-building within a profession and induction process that can feel isolating and oppressive.

The Stories of New Teachers

The stories teachers told could be divided into three groups: stories about students, stories about colleagues, and stories about systems. On their surface, many of

the stories could easily be placed in one group or another. For example, the story that

Libby told of a student in one of her classes who makes her nervous or the story Mae told

about a student she shares chips and soda with are clearly about students. Seth's story

about the financial limitations of teaching or Darya's stories about a new teacher

orientation program and tenure observations focus on systems and structures in place that

impact teachers' daily experiences.

Of course, none of the stories fit nicely into a single category. The story Mae

shared about being coached by fellow cohort members during her licensure program that

her pedagogy was too loving, too considerate of students and would cause her problems

speaks to the influence of colleagues in crafting particular classroom cultures. But it also

explores larger social structures that suggest love is a weakness or liability as well as

constructing students as generally untrustworthy and antagonistic to a teacher's job.

Talia's story about redesigning an annual department-wide assignment to an opportunity

for students to explore their own identities through poetry touches on the impact of

curriculum on students' lives, the navigation required to avoid professional criticism from

colleagues, and the ways that the tradition and immense workloads placed on teachers

impact curriculum and pedagogy.

The stories teachers told rarely dealt directly with how they saw themselves as

teachers. This is not surprising given the challenge many of them had in answering my

initial interview questions that specifically asked for stories that demonstrated who they

were as teachers. Their stories always featured them in prominent roles but, for the

teachers, were about things outside of them. Students mostly existed as fully-formed,

complex individuals. They had individual goals and complex social relationships, and

they were often navigating school as both a space and system in similar ways to the teachers.

Some colleagues worked with the teachers in their stories. The school psychologist allowed Seth to visit their office when he needed to process the trauma his students were sharing with him. Colleagues and administration at Valerie's first job supported her professional development by slowing offering her additional responsibilities and, in the case of her principal, offering her camaraderie and understanding as another person of color who could empathize with systemic oppression, particularly while working in a system that was not built for their success.

Beyond the few examples like these, colleagues and broader institutional systems were largely portrayed as two-dimensional obstacles that new teachers needed to learn how to work around or with/in. This social navigation is where many of the teachers commented on a lack of preparation. Seth noted during the sixth workshop that these are the everyday issues that never got covered in the assigned textbooks or articles during their licensure program before directly asking the group for how they respond to being overwhelmed by these aspects of the job.

Though rarely named directly in any story, the broader narrative across all of the teachers was that of a job they cared about deeply which, in a variety of ways, was an extension of their personal values and commitments. The profession, however, was depicted as a system mapped onto the spaces, tasks, and people that collectively figured the job of teaching. For some, it was a system they could learn in order to use it to their advantage as they worked to create critical and meaningful learning experiences for their students. For others, it (mostly) operated outside of the classroom, as did many of the

trappings it brought, encouraging them to focus on students and pedagogy. And still others felt professionally, emotionally, and, in some cases, physically at risk because of it.

Finally, and broader still, was the narrative that day-to-day stories of teaching fail to capture the magic and satisfaction many of the teachers feel. But this feeling in some ways isolates teachers from those outside of the profession because of the concern that the day-to-day stories depict them as victims: victims of the profession, of the colleagues or administration, of their students, or of their own choice to become a teacher. As a result, teachers' stories fall into categories based on who the audience is: public or private (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). In both cases, teachers must choose to tell difficult stories, like many of the ones the teachers in this project attested to sharing, or cover stories (Schaefer, Downey, & Clandinin, 2014). Cover stories are not necessarily false but elide realities that listeners might find unpalatable or even unacceptable. This smooths over other challenging, possibly contradictory truths in a teacher's experience

How Stories Work on New Teachers' Identities

To write about an effect these stories have on teachers' identities is to measure a change from a baseline identity to a new state of being. As I outlined in Chapter Two, such a task would be rife with difficulties. First, identities are fluid from one moment to another as well as from one situation to the next. Second, so many factors contribute to any identity expression that it would be difficult to attribute any particular change to a specific story. Third, I am not sure if it would be helpful, particularly for the teachers, to even attempt to draw these conclusions, at least within the epistemological and

methodological parameters of this study. A linguist or psychologist may have something to say in these regards, but this study is not one of linguistics or psychology.

What this study does explore is the act of storytelling. In both the series of interviews and workshops, storytelling did create something notable. These were emotional experiences, punctuated by moments of revelation, fear, reflection, and expressions of sincere and earnest aspiration. Many interviews began and ended with hugs. The workshops were spaces to connect with old and new friends. The laughter was loud and filled the space. Serious moments were intimate and quiet. Story*telling* created community.

The specifics of this project were unique primarily because we functioned outside of the direct influence of school-specific politics that was woven throughout many of the stories. These politics were the source of many fears—simply stating their perspective prompted many of the teachers to check again and again that the stories and their tellers would be anonymized. They were worried about professional consequences for sharing their perspective on experiences that gave witness to the inner workings of their work spaces. Confirming that their stories would be anonymized usually preceded stories that were unflattering to a school and the people who worked within it such as Talia's administrator calling her a "high flyer" or Rebbekah describing the different attitudes towards her principal. As such, it is not a stretch to say that these workshops and interviews were an opportunity for the teachers to give testimony that is not typically asked for or valued in their schools. This gave teachers the chance to articulate their beliefs, and, by extension, their identities, in ways they might not have the chance to in

other settings. The repeated requests for confidentiality as well as the recognition that these stories would not get shared with non-teachers suggests as much.

Storytelling also offered these teachers a chance to be heard. In some ways, I wonder if this practice, the practice of listening, was also a chance to be seen. Even the stories themselves seemed incidental to the experience for some, reflecting at the last workshop that attending the workshops was meaningful though the particular stories failed to capture how they felt about teaching. Three specific experiences that teachers found dissatisfying (as shared in the final group interview during Workshop 6, 12/8/18) were (1) when they felt their particular story (and their identity by extension) became the specific focus of discussion instead of talking across all of the stories[17], (2) when the teachers who found it difficult to insert themselves in the crosstalk discussion because they wanted time to process felt they could not share within the structure of the practice[18], and (3) when crosstalk failed to build from one idea to the next but progressed as a series of individual ideas with little recognition of what had just been shared. Storytelling, and the story circle practice of listening with a commitment to focus on the speaker more than how one might respond, was an opportunity to be heard. And being heard was an opportunity to be recognized.

It is difficult to say how the rehearsal and revision that accompanies many tellings of a particular story produced particular identities in the teachers based on how I constructed this study. Though I had heard some of the stories before, it was not my

---

[17] Amelia's line in the Prologue section of the ethnodrama "But there's so much more than you can ever capture in the one story beyond the event itself" comes from this discussion.

[18] Discussed in Chapter 7 in the section titled Discomfort. Alexia also specifically addresses this in Chapter 6 in the section titled Story Circles and the Hope of Dialogue.

intention to track revisions or draw conclusions from text-level changes. That said, the collections of stories as teachers responded to what they heard previous storytellers share and what that stirred them to share did depict clear beliefs that informed how the teachers talked about different topics. The clearest example of this is how the teachers talked about their administration. The stories they told in the workshops and during the one-on-one interviews repeatedly cast administration as people who could not be trusted, were out of touch with the experiences of new teachers, and were thus rarely helpful in any meaningful way. With the exception of one story, administration were absent at best and combative and insulting at worst.

Another belief that the teachers expressed was the importance of their work with students. While this work may be expressed through course curriculum, very rarely was that what their stories were actually about. As Mae reflected during the final workshop:

I think it's so interesting too that you made a qualifying statement about being a good teacher. And like I- very few of our, honestly I can only remember Abby actually saying something about content teaching. Like what we're actually teaching in the classroom. Very few of our stories were about, and it was not even during one of our stories...Like nobody told the story that was like 'I really fucked up and I taught [students] that a verb was a noun...And it was really bad in it and it showed me something about…' Whatever. Like, very few of our stories have been about standing like this like a model of what a good teacher—I don't know.

Very few of our stories have been classroom centered. (Workshop 6, 12/8/18)

Whether it is Seth's story about his struggle to process his student's trauma, Talia's story about revising curriculum so that it reflected students' interests and identities more

meaningfully, or Alexia's story about continuing to support a student who was failed by the school's systems and procedures (and other teachers), students are at the center of the work for these teachers.

In this way, the stories these teachers told in our story circles and presumably continue to tell other colleagues, teacher friends, and to themselves as they replay these moments over and over again position the teachers with students and away from administration. While there are many implications for this, one question that Mae asked seemed particularly salient. How does a teacher advance in their profession when the only paths for growth are out of the classroom and the majority of teachers she sees who stay in the classroom are unhappy? In other words, "[I] got to figure out where this love of children is going" (Workshop 6, 12/8/18). Is it possible to love children and remain a teacher? So far, the stories that are available for these teachers lack definitive or hopeful answers.

How Teachers Engage with Stories

Teachers engaged with narratives in many ways that I suggest fit into three categories: Taking Up, Ignoring, and Rejecting. The first is Taking Up. To take up a narrative is to incorporate it in some way into the expressions of identity teachers make. For example, Seth shared that the licensure program emphasized the ownership teachers should take in amount of interest students have in the curriculum. As a result, Seth altered his teaching when his students were not engaged during class.

Taking up a narrative did not only happen in the licensure program, nor was the narrative always taken up without revision. Talia agreed about the importance of documenting student referrals in order to create a way to audit the school on its goals

regarding equity. When that same system was used to characterize Talia as a problematic teacher, Talia was forced to make sense of two competing stories: one that valued the referral system and one that used the referral system to cast her in a negative light. As a result, Talia told a story of a referral system that was valuable to the school but detrimental for her.

The second category is Ignoring. This occurred when stories did not serve or support the identities of these teachers but were not ultimately threatening to their sense of self. This was different than the third category, Rejecting, in that the teachers did not feel the need to intervene in any way. A powerful example of this was Darya's story about the male student who included a pornographic picture in an essay and the joking but demeaning way a male guidance counselor told Darya it was her fault. She responds by saying "It just makes me think of, there's times where I've really felt like I can't care because it would hurt me" (Workshop 2, 11/3/18). While the guidance counselor's comments draw on narratives that blame women for the sexual harassment they experience, and the assistant principal's betrayal of confidentiality casts Darya as someone to be used as fodder for everyday gossip, Darya asserts her agency by dismissing the influence of the guidance counselor, assistant principal, and the student. She ignores the objectification all three do to her as only powerful if she gives it credence. Instead, she decides to not care. While this has potential implications for other relationships—for example, will she care less about all students?—it allows her to recognize their stories as unhelpful but ultimately only damaging if she cooperates. With the little social capital she has as a new teacher, she chooses to ignore these stories.

Similarly, Valerie was able to ignore the majority of her colleague's story that cast her as an irresponsible teacher for letting her student leave class early to return a book. Valerie recognized a broader racist narrative that cast black and brown bodies as disruptive to institutions that focus on control and obedience (hooks, 1994) and effectively ignored it with a large, dismissive shrug saying, "If they feel like I'm not fit to teach this job cause I had a couple of students leave the classroom early, not a lot that I can do about that" (Workshop 3, 11/10/18). Different than rejecting her colleague's story through a calculated response that signifies a different identity within the hierarchy of their school, Valerie simply refuses to acknowledge the power her colleague attempts to figure around Valerie's actions. Instead, she reifies a different identity by defining her practice as student-focused in contrast to something more medieval as she responds "Right now, what I was doing was I was talking to a few kids about why they chose not to participate in a discussion. And for me that felt more important than barricading the door like you want me to."

Some stories the teachers encountered required something more. Rejecting stories accounts for the times when teachers felt the need to respond in some way in order to clarify or disrupt what these stories seemed to communicate. These moves were done in their daily work as teachers in a number of different ways. For example, Seth felt the need to reject the broader narrative of the dedicated teacher who grades at home on weeknights and weekends. Thus he tells a story of the moment he realized the effect that practice had on his kids and the beginning of a new story in which he never grades outside of school again. Mae tells a story from her licensure coursework in which she was explicitly told by multiple cohort members that she needed to toughen up in order to be

an effective teacher, but she adds an ending that reflects on her experience as a teacher and how her choice to build loving relationships with her students has served her well. In our work on this project, the teachers did some of this work through stories of their own.

These teachers used stories to signify how they understood themselves within a cultural milieu, constructing identities that they felt best reflected their own ideological commitments. They also used stories to align themselves with as well as critique socio-historically situated ideologies that circulated within and around the teaching profession. The stories that the teachers told also had direct implications for how they utilized the common resources available to them in their work (e.g. behavior referrals, curricular materials, or approaches to classroom management). Finally, the stories collectively figured a world of teaching in which the teachers used cultural resources to improvise acts of agency while attempting to be recognized by the other members as legitimate constituents. As these stories circulate among various and particular groups of teachers, the sociocultural context constructs a system of ideological signs in which they are understood. In turn, these stories signify new ideas built with, and in response to, this cultural context. This feedback loop reifies some narratives while reconstructing others. In this interaction, the figured world of teaching is constituted anew both locally and broadly. It is within these figured worlds that the teachers attempt to construct their identities.

The stories teachers told in the workshops and interviews for this project were primarily a way of showing group membership. Our group was certainly defined by our affiliation to the university where I met all of the teachers as they were earning their licensure, in part through my role as an instructor and thus a representation of the norms

and expectations the teachers experienced during their time in the program. We did not pay special attention to this connection, but it was always present. There were times that some of the teachers worried that their stories veered away from some underlying assumption of what it meant to be a good teacher as defined by the licensure program and would clarify or amend the story to more accurately align to this assumption either in the moment, later in the workshop, or even days later in email correspondence. They also crafted their stories in ways that showed affinity to the other members of the group, presumably because they valued their opinion, genuinely believed in this depiction, or some gradient between the two.

In this way, the teachers' interactional dynamics worked to figure their own world of teaching that was both tied to and independent from the figured worlds at their specific schools. Their stories responded to their experiences, recognizing the stories as Bakhtinian signs that communicated larger cultural discourses that they could critique and revise in their own telling in order to understand themselves in ways that reflected a different perspective. This perspective was, in part, based on the critical, social justice orientation of their licensure program to which they occasionally referred. But they also accounted for their experiences as new teachers that worked within different cultural parameters figured through the interactions and lived stories of their colleagues, administration, students, and other stakeholders that did, within their larger cultural ideologies, recognize the same values as the licensure program. In other words, these teachers' stories bridged the commitments and critiques they developed in one setting and the lived practice of their profession by other teachers who often held different values. Telling these stories in yet another, third space of our workshops enacted a storied

reflection in which the teachers constructed identities in interaction with the reflections of other new teachers. As they returned from this rehearsal space to their independent professional spaces, the teachers took stock of the stories that were helpful to them in defining their professional identities, as well as the stories that they felt did not fully or accurately signify who they saw themselves to be.

Of course, the stories rarely if ever fit neatly into just one of these categories. The stories often responded in multiple ways, alternately taking up, ignoring, and rejecting in various combinations. Stories were spaces to construct identities within social relationships that required complex responses. Mae's stories focused on the personal relationships she had with her students, rejecting the teacher-victim identity many of the teachers attested to friends and family placing on them, while also ignoring stories her peers told that constructed the importance of a teacher identity that favored control over love. But her stories also took up stories she read in articles and heard from her cooperating teacher about the importance of teacher/student relationships in meaningful learning experiences.

Valerie's stories set up a symbolic yet clearly defined line of demarcation between her identity as a teacher and traditional schooling systems. In one instance, that system was represented by a white administrator who did not understand the various forms of labor required of a teacher of color. In others, it was represented by colleagues who used their authority to avoid dealing with racism or to control others, including students and new teachers. In all of these stories, Valerie moved back and forth between rejecting stories that questioned her commitment and effort as a teacher (e.g. detailing many of the curricular and pedagogical choices she made to support students, specifically

students of color), and ignoring components of stories that she simply did not have the energy to deal with (e.g. educating her white administrator about the labor involved in being a teacher of color).

Talia and Amelia's stories explicitly state their rejection of administration, building-wide systems of discipline, and other representatives of authority that they were taught to access as a form of support. Rejecting these resources was the byproduct of a critical reading of the structures of power and control they worked in and contributed to identities of self-reliance within, and awareness of, them. While rejecting the stories the depicted administration as a supportive resource, Talia and Amelia both took up components of the stories that depicted them as attempting to navigate the difficult terrain of being a new teacher. This navigation was recontextualized to describe how Talia and Amelia responded to the ways their principals failed to support them, depicting them as knowledgeable in both their navigation of power and teaching. Just as any story must decide what plot points and perspectives to put in and what to leave out, the stories these teachers told indicated which people, beliefs, and actions were in their best interest, and which were not.

These teachers, particularly the teachers of color, were very aware of their inability to completely ignore the stories of others that they found unhelpful or harmful. Their identities were not completely defined by the stories they told themselves. Identities are social constructions which meant that who they were seen as was, at least partially, determined by the stories others told. Darya alluded to this when she worried about the lack of transparency in the tenure process. Valerie articulated it explicitly when discussing some of her professional fears as a new teacher and a teacher of color.

Um, but also being very aware that I am a black teacher and that I am very scared

of administration a lot like Talia's because we're not safe right? And we are on the

chopping block, you know, not literally but kind of? Right? At the end of every

year. Um, and so how do I do what's right for my students that's not going to put

myself in the scary place or you know, like the idea of losing my job is really

scary, you know? So how do I do both of them? (Workshop 5, 12/1/18)

Valerie takes seriously what she sees as her responsibility to bring in curriculum and

engage in pedagogy that affirms the lives of her students, particularly her black and

brown students, because of the damaging impact she sees traditional schooling and

ideologies have on her own children. She is also aware that enacting such an identity can

cost her social capital within her school that she might not have as a new teacher and a

teacher of color. Students and colleagues who view the work Valerie does as markers of

bad teaching have the ability to tell their own stories rooted in dominant narratives and

white-supremacist culture within schools that impact the way she is viewed

professionally.

Almost all of the fifteen teachers who participated in this project shared examples

in which the stories of others depicted them in an unfavorable way. They were able to

ignore these stories to various degrees in their more personal relationships as allies often

put little stock in negative depictions of their friends. But these stories and the broader

narrative they constructed about the teachers were always a concern when the teachers

thought about their professional careers. Before this project had started, two of the

teachers had already lost their first jobs partially because of, as they described it, the

damaging stories that others told about them. By the time we met for the final workshop,

two more were seriously considering leaving their jobs because of the negative impact stories others told about them was having on them professionally and emotionally. An additional three others said addressing the damaging stories others told about them was a regular part of their work day. And of these teachers, it disproportionately impacted teachers of color. These teachers had to regularly contend with narratives about teaching and themselves that had the potential to depict them in negative ways, often without the social capital other teachers with more years at their schools had available. The racial identities of teachers of color impacted this task, often in ways that allowed race to remain unspoken but clearly present (as discussed in Chapter 5).

The examples here are meant to demonstrate the particular moves I saw the teachers making with their stories: Taking Up, Ignoring, and Rejecting.Yet the teachers' stories never did just one of these things. Every story and its telling had components of each, ignoring some things, rejecting others, and taking up others. And within each of these categories were many different approaches. For example, taking up a story might involve revision in order to align it to the identities the teachers were already expressing. Ignoring might simply require overlooking a particular story or its telling while other times it might include shutting out the storyteller altogether. The way these teachers engaged with stories and storytelling was a complex series of social interactions in which they attempted to navigate dominant and counter stories in order to stake a claim as to who they are and wish to be.

Teacher Storytelling: A Sociocultural Theory of Identity Negotiation

The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of the sociocultural moves that new teachers make as they work to craft a teacher identity that attends to their

personal motivations and commitments within the broader professional community. The stories new teachers encounter throughout their induction into the teaching profession are a part of the interpersonal socialization process in which new teachers come to understand themselves. The stories teachers shared in this project worked at two levels. Interpersonal interactional dynamics of storytelling introduced new teachers to a shared repertoire of cultural narratives and identities that often positioned new teachers within traditional socio-historical imaginaries of education that valued obedience (hooks, 1994), altruism, and the normalization of and silence around white supremacy (Thandeka, 1999).

Storytelling allowed authority figures within the cultural world of teaching and education (e.g. administrators, tenured teachers, instructors, and, to a certain extent, professional literature encountered in their licensure program or through other professional development) to frame ideologies as natural, emanating from the ground up in past experiences. Direct stakeholders in the work of teaching such as teachers or, for the teachers of color, other people of color in education, gave stories more clout than other narratives of what it means to be a teacher that get passed down from sources removed from daily experiences such as administrators, parents, or research published in academic journals. Stories of experience signaled authority in the work of figuring the world of teaching.

Because of this authority, new teachers were able to use stories of their experience to assert variant identities as a way to address the competing chronologies (Britzman, 2003) they experienced as new inductees to the profession. Stories that utilized recognizable signs within the cultural world of teaching that the teachers then recontextualized with, in the case of the stories shared in this project, critical perspectives

215

provided opportunities for new teachers to exercise agency within a world that often relegated their experiences and perspectives as secondary. More so than contextualizing claims within literature on anti-oppressive pedagogy or sustainable practices, sharing stories of their experience as a practicing classroom teacher allowed them to stake a claim in who they were within the figured world of teaching.

The second level at which the stories told during this project functioned was in the intrapersonal work the new teachers did to internalize these stories as ways of understanding themselves in symbolic and practical ways. These are the moments when stories and their telling functioned as Vygotskian signs, helping new teachers to understand and master themselves within the cultural world of teaching. Many of the stories worked to position the teachers in isolation from others. This was the work of the stories that Talia's and Amelia's principals told about them by betraying their trust in support from administration and depicting them in ways that showed a lack of understanding of who Talia and Amelia understood themselves to be. When Talia and Amelia shared their storied versions of those experiences, they ended in concrete imagery depicting them closing a literal and figurative door in order to shut out access to their teacher selves. Libby also storied herself into isolation in the way she depicted colleagues refusing to engage in meaningful collaboration or critical feedback. Storytelling reified the professional identities of teachers in isolation.

In the flow of ideology through language that signifies and reifies cultural norms and practices, storytelling was a way these new teachers could place themselves within that community, much like stories of recovery place new members of Alcoholics Anonymous within that figured world (Holland et al., 1998). More often, these new

teachers used storytelling as a way to respond to institutional narratives that conflicted with the identities, and the ideologies that they signified, they brought with them as they entered the figured world of teaching. Stories staked claims as to who the new teachers saw themselves being as teachers. Storytelling enacted improvisational (Holland et al., 1998) negotiation of the ways those stories were recognized and offered avenues for agency within a professional milieu that was otherwise largely ambivalent to the perspectives of new teachers.

Racialized identities

Race was addressed by the teachers during one-on-one interviews in a notable way. Of the fifteen teachers I interviewed, the only teachers who mentioned their own race as a component of their teacher identity were the teachers who identify and present as a person of color (four of the fifteen), those whose parents are immigrants (two of fifteen), and one teacher who grew up abroad. The teachers who identify as white and had parents who were born in the United States did not mention their whiteness as a component of their teacher identity. They seemed to be participating in what Thandeka (1999) described as the "great unsaid" (p. 3), an unvoiced racialized identity for white people. Recognizing this difference in the ways teachers talked about themselves, particularly with the understanding that race is always present, especially when it goes unnamed, I came to the workshops wondering how race would show up.

Race is addressed specifically in the ethnodrama five times. Amelia names race as a primary consideration for her when she describes the way her white administrator tells her "that different races have different cultures and if a student is screaming and disrupting your space, that might just be their culture" and, even though she is "a teacher

of color, that I didn't know that race played a role in the classroom." She also describes the experience of having colleagues—people she sees as friends—tell her she does not have to worry about losing her job like other teachers because she is not white. She "checks the box."

Alexia also names race. She describes the ways other (white) teachers "talk about race, but I don't see them putting it in the curriculum". She also notes how her treatment of white students was a product of her upbringing in predominantly white spaces. "I guess I was protecting them because that's how I was raised. You're always careful around white people with how you phrase things about race, ethnicity, culture." Additionally, both Alexia and Mae note the race of their students in a story each of them tells. Mae also more broadly notes that the majority of her students are students of color and the way that pushes her to think about the curriculum and her pedagogy, asking "where's the learning happening and where is it not?"

Valerie brings up race when alluding to the "crazy, crazy, crazy stuff that people of color have to deal with. Like having to deal with my colleagues saying the N-word." She also addresses the need for colleagues and administration to support teachers when parents or students critique the inclusion of authors of color who are not widely accepted as part of the American or European literary canon. Though it goes unsaid, context clues from the rest of that conversation in the workshops suggests that Valerie is identifying a type of vulnerability unique to teachers of color, which aligns with Alexia's experience of having a white student and his white parents critique her inclusion of conversations acknowledging race, thereby questioning her ability to teach, with Alexia receiving no public support from her white colleagues.

The prompt that explicitly addressed race (Workshop 5, 12/1/18) elicited stories that focused mainly on students' racial identities or perceptions of race. One story explored the ways students of color were kept out of gifted and talented classes because they typically did worse on the entrance exam that was required for placement in those courses. Two of the stories explored the challenges with developing and engaging in curriculum that asks students to engage with their own racialized identities. Still another depicted the struggle of a black middle-school student to see parallels between derogatory language used against black people, specifically the n-word, and his use of the word "faggot".[19] And another story described the struggle of a teacher of color to navigate working with a white student who had been jokingly teased as racist by other white students.

Vygotskian signs alter understanding by assigning new meaning to an object or gesture. Such is the case when a stick is understood to represent a horse or a bundle of fabric is understood to represent a baby based on how the gestures surrounding it are culturally recognized as those done around what is being signified (a horse or baby). Vygotsky (1994) describes these significations as "the working out of new methods of reasoning, the mastering of the cultural methods of behavior" (p. 57). The presence of race in these stories and what they signify within the figured world of teaching is also a mastering of cultural methods of behavior. And, as Vygotskian signs, the way culture is

---

[19] The white teacher attempted to explain that they were not trying to equate the experiences of black people and LGBTQ+ communities, but the student could not get past defending the historical struggle of black people in comparison to LGBTQ+ communities.

understood through the cultural context of these signifiers informs how teachers understand and come to master themselves within culturally figured worlds.

The absence of whiteness produces a sense of neutrality. This is the neutrality that Alexia's white colleagues engaged in when she is confronted by parents who use coded signifiers such as height and volume to question her ability to teach. Alexia understands this silence as an act of whiteness, especially in contrast to the way her administrator, a black man, comes to her defense.

Alexia, Valerie, and Talia also understand whiteness as neutrality when they acknowledge their decisions to incorporate authors of color or simply considerations of race in the curriculum. These are moves that make them not neutral (Fisher & Sterner, 2017). Alexia is personally critiqued by white parents who accuse her of pushing an agenda that does not serve the education of their white child. Valerie and Talia note the personal risk they take when making similar moves. And Valerie extends this risk by commenting that being a person of color puts her at more of a risk to lose her job, a point confirmed in the one-on-one interviews when two of the teachers of color shared that they believe they were fired in large part because of their racialized identities and the ways they brought those identities into the classroom.

hooks (1994) describes the difference between a white classroom and a black one as she experienced them during desegregation.

Gone was the messianic zeal to transform our minds and beings that had characterized teachers and their pedagogical practices in our all-black schools. Knowledge was suddenly about information only. It had no relation to how one lived, behaved. It was no longer connected to antiracist struggle. Bused to white

schools, we soon learned that obedience, and not a zealous will to learn, was what was expected of us. Too much eagerness to learn could easily be seen as a threat to white authority. (p. 3)

Black schools, curriculum, and pedagogy figured education as a liberating and revolutionary act. White schools, curriculum, and pedagogy figured education as a process of obedience. This is present in the obedience Valerie's colleague attempts to threaten her into by suggesting Valerie could lose her job if she failed to control her (black) students and, by extension, her own actions as a teacher. It is also present when race goes unnamed but is signified in dispositional attitudes towards students as Rebbekah's colleague suggests when he berates her for loving her students first, thus failing to effectively discipline and control them as he wishes to do. Race exists explicitly and implicitly to signify one's relationship to the enterprise and institution of education as enacted through white-supremacist culture.

Vygotsky describes these signs as impacting how one understands oneself within the cultural environment. In this case, non-whiteness is understood within hegemonic ideology to represent an otherness separate from and potentially dangerous to the norm. Some teachers, like Mae, name pedagogical moves, curricular choices, and positionality alongside students (instead of in opposition to them) as acts of social justice. All of the teachers describe this otherness away from what they understood as traditional (i.e. white-supremacist) education as a point of pride and something to which they aspire. However, white teachers dealt with less pushback and fewer material consequences than did their colleagues of color. Even the social capital that Amelia's colleagues assigned to her because of her racialized identity as a person of color worked against her as it

discredited her with any skill as a teacher. Her value was only in her racialized identity that "checked the box" for her white administrator.

While some white teachers were able to see the otherness of their pedagogy and curriculum as a positive attribute, their bodies were still accepted as a part of the group. Amelia and other teachers of color were not able to separate their physical selves from their pedagogical selves. As such, it was not just their pedagogy that rebelled against the oppressive system the hooks describes, pedagogy that could easily be switched if needed. These stories signify the way their physical bodies could be seen as outside what a teacher could or should be. Indeed, a handful of teachers in the one-on-one interviews described a stereotypical teacher as white, even some of the teachers of color. Within the figured world of teaching as a cultural world into which teachers are recruited, these stories signify teachers of color as outsiders and pedagogies of liberation as a threat. To tell these stories to an audience that recognizes these othered identities as valuable and the storied antagonists (e.g. Valerie's and Rebbekah's colleagues) as problematic is to re-figure the world of teaching in which white-supremacy, however prevalent, fails to be normalized. Telling stories that signify teachers of color and pedagogies of liberation as valuable re-figure the world of teaching into a place where these teachers belong.

Conclusion

In Chapters Four, Five, and Six, I frame teacher identity as a narrative construction influenced through sociocultural processes of induction and investigate how teachers use the stories they tell and hear to understand who they are as teachers. I seek to understand what stories about education new teachers encounter during their licensure program and first years of teaching (the induction period). These stories work on the

identities in both symbolic and material ways. In both situations, the teachers'

professional practices respond to these influences. The new teachers manage this process

by taking up, ignoring, or rejecting the stories as they construct, revise, maintain, and

smooth their identities as teachers. The process of engaging in storytelling through story

circles and Theatre of the Oppressed techniques is explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 7: Analysis Part 4: Joy and Struggle

Introduction

Schaefer, Downey, and Clandinin (2014) write about two types of stories that teachers construct when leaving the profession: cover stories and untold stories. Cover stories are the narratives that teachers tell about their leaving because they are socially acceptable (e.g. going to higher education to have a bigger impact). Cover stories may be true, but they avoid addressing experiences and beliefs that create dissonance within broader narratives or interpersonal relationships. This dissonance is seen when Seth shares that he entered the teaching profession for money. Unaligned with the altruism narrative that Talia describes, a handful of teachers attempt to smooth over Seth's story by taking his statement and recontextualizing it in common narratives about the importance of sustainability (drawing on the narrative of teachers as poorly paid civil servants) or Seth's identity as a good dad (suggesting he, like all good teachers, are caring).

When I left the secondary classroom, I told a story about wishing to have time and space to think about teaching in order to get better and contribute more broadly to the profession. This story cast me as someone committed to the profession—not leaving but delving deeper into issues that would help me understand the questions I had been striving to understand throughout my years teaching high school English. And this story is true. But it was also a cover story for something more intimate and, to me, troubling. I didn't like many of my colleagues and I didn't like myself as a teacher. If this is what it meant to be a teacher, I wanted out. Going to graduate school was an opportunity to re-figure the cultural world of education.

Graduate school has provided me with ways to understand this situation in more nuanced ways. Critical literacy scholars such as Paolo Freire (1972), bell hooks (1994), and Jack Zipes (2004) provided language to name culture, power, oppression, and activism within education. Teaching in a secondary English Language Arts licensure program allowed me to talk with new teachers as they were making sense of many of the same questions I was still struggling to understand: Why doesn't this feel good? What can I do? and How do I do it? Time and again, our conversations centered on how the teachers saw themselves, what they believed, and how they could honor those things within the teaching profession.

Narrative Inquiry honors the constitutive power of stories in an individual's attempt to understand themselves and their place within a community. Stories are at once personal and social, about the individual and the collective. Constructed from the shifting landscape of memory, qualitative research depends heavily on its participants' recollections of past events. Acknowledging the origins of this information, information meant to help make sense of the world and our places in it, helps to accomplish the transition from insignificant to valuable and valid that Haug (1987) describes when she writes "From a state of modest insignificance we enter a space in which we can take ourselves seriously" (p. 36).

In this chapter, I examine the experience of using the narrative and performance methodologies of story circles (Cohen-Cruz, 2010; O'Neal, 2011) and Theatre of the Oppressed (Boal, 1979) to explore teacher identity construction. I do this by answering two questions. What happens when we frame experience through narrative structures as a

way of investigating teacher identity development? And what happens when we frame experience through embodiment as a way of investigating teacher identity development?

Narrative

> [The story circle] is more like: what's going to come out when you give me this prompt? And what's going to come up when I talk about this incident? And what's going to come up when I remember something versus even how I felt when it was happening? Even just the nature of storytelling I think is part of the experience of how we all came together to share the stories and maybe what tone and mood was set through that. (Mae, Workshop 6, 12/8/18)

At our last workshop, Mae reflected on the nature of storytelling compared to other forms of sharing, particularly when someone has the opportunity to think about and draft a version of the story they feel ready to share with a public audience. Speaking extemporaneously in response to a prompt and what others have said before them creates space for possible discovery that opens up a speaker in vulnerable ways. Barone (2001) suggests "[s]uch an epistemological stance seems appropriate to a project of educational inquiry whose role or purpose is the *enhancement of meaning*, rather than a reduction of uncertainty" (p. 153**)**.

For Barone, meaning making is not the same as certainty. Mae explains what comes up in the process of remembering might not be what was felt during an experience. Rebekah reiterates this point when she explains the impact emotional memory has on the ways events are shaped through stories.

> My older cousins used to terrorize me has a child, and every time we talk about the stories, my cousins are like, we don't remember it that way at all. And I was

like well, it's an emotional memory, so the details I'm remembering are actually just indicative of the feeling I had, whether or not they actually happened are irrelevant. (Workshop 6, 12/8/18)

Storytelling presents an opportunity to make meaning more than to represent an unbiased account of what happened. The story will of course include bias as it follows the lens of the individual narrating the event, pointing the listener's attention one way instead of the other. The story itself, much like the ethnodrama in Chapter 4, is an analysis of the event—an interpretive examination. It is a pointing-towards what feels important. Through this pointing, revising the storytelling to craft a representation of an experience that feels meaningful, storytellers craft an identity indexed by the ideologies that echo throughout the language of their story. They craft an identity recognized by others, placing the individual within a cultural context of practices and artifacts that further shape who they are as an individual and as a member of a community.

Joy and Struggle

After the first two workshops, I learned to schedule social time into the three hours we had to work. I always arrived at least thirty minutes early and often had one or two of teachers join me, but the majority of them couldn't make it until at or just after our agreed-on start time due to family obligations. They were very protective of their personal time. The time we did have with each other was often seen as a chance to *be with* each other. We sat around the circular glass coffee table where I had laid out snacks and talked. We shared stories from work as well as stories from home. At times, there was great laughter across the group, and several small conversations at others. Baby toys were passed from one parent to another. Restaurants were recommended for date nights.

Recipes were exchanged. The openings of the workshops often felt like the start of a party—a mood I was loath to break up with a transition into the work I had planned for the session.

The sessions themselves held moments of laughter and jokes as well. But they were primarily times of intense emotional labor. We listened as Darya shared a story of sexual harassment one week and several weeks later how she recognized the emotional barriers that had been built over the previous two years in order to protect herself from students and colleagues. We learned about one teacher being told they would not have a job at the school the following year, another teacher seriously wondering if they could handle continuing to work with their colleagues even one more semester, and another teacher realizing they would be leaving their job to be with their spouse because they were not a US citizen and weren't sure when they would get a renewed visa to return to the country.

The joyous way people entered into the workshops and the weighty, sobering, and sometimes disturbing stories that filled our time felt contradictory. I reflected in many of my post-workshop memos a sense of wonder about what felt very natural in the experience but seemed contradictory in description. How could deeply emotional work leave the teachers feeling good? Why was work that could make teachers feel vulnerable, sad, outraged, or defeated something they looked forward to?

As a figured world, the space of the workshops provided a new and different space for the teachers to engage in reflection, a practice that Mae noted as quintessential to teaching when she said, "Reflection is what we do" (Workshop 1, 10/20/18). Amelia remarked during the first workshop that she would love to bring story circles to her

department in order to hear what other teachers were experiencing in their classes. The physical space of the workshop was merely a pivot, as were the stories, into a figured world that we honored during these times.

The location in a neighborhood of the metro area was a bit of a drive for everyone, including me. We all literally journeyed to a place outside of our regular lives. The building included an electronic lock on the front door that sometimes took a few tries to work. We had to walk up a staircase with shallow steps to a second floor and then down to the end of the hall before entering into the photography studio I had rented. There were chairs that some people joked about vying for. There were large windows facing west so, as the workshops went on, the sun would set, sending long beams of light along the wall and, eventually, shadows. There were fluorescent overhead lights and a series of floor lamps, the former of which the teachers asked me to turn off when we were about to begin storytelling. All of these physical artifacts did not mean anything in and of themselves. But together they signaled a space where the teachers could relate to each other in particular ways that were not available in the schools. In some ways, the space was a Bakhtinian sign recognized by the teachers as representing a different ideology than what they experienced in their work spaces. Here, it is different. Here, we are different.

While the physical space of our workshops framed a new space where we all could relate to each other in ways different than our other work spaces, the stories themselves were powerful artifacts that had great significance for the teachers and their identities. The rules of story circles allowed the teachers to "shift themselves to a conceptual world beyond their immediate surroundings in order to become actors who

submit to the game's premises and treat its events as real" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 50). Storytelling for us was the game we played that figured these new teachers as skilled, expert, and authoritative in regard to their experiences and work as teachers. No longer were they novices in a community of practice because of their newcomer status. This conceptual world was real for us in that space. The rules of story circles, particularly turn-taking, which ensured everyone was heard, and the suspension of commenting on any one story, provided the framework to access these fictitious selves.

It is important to pause here and consider the connotations of *fiction*. Most often, the definition of fiction is related to literature and in reference to non-fiction. This dichotomy suggests a correlation between non-fiction/fiction and true/false. Fiction, however, comes from the Latin word *fingere*, which means to shape, form, or kned. The true/false split assumes there is a truth that stands on its own, not formed or shaped through a lens towards a particular means. History, a subject which some may argue is non-fiction, is a story told from a particular perspective. As the saying goes, it is written by the victors and consequently paints them as the heroes. European colonizers thus get described as friends to Native Americans, and the northern United States is depicted as not racist in comparison to the southern United States. Yet these accounts are constructed by and to serve particular ideological perspectives. Fiction should not connote falsehood so much as construction. The fictitious self that Holland et al. describe is thus not a false self, but a constructed self, just as any identity is a constructed self.

Amelia's desire to bring story circles to her department suggests that this identity, the one that is listened to and not questioned, the one that is understood as insightful and

worthy of respect, the one that she constructs, is not recognized in the figured world at her school. In that figured world, she is safe from losing her job because

> My principal really, really likes me. Um, but it's also difficult because a lot of people at my school who I really trusted and value and I really liked the teachers that I work with, but there have been many teachers who have said to me, like, 'well you'll be fine, it's because you're not white.' And it's always like a slap in the face because I feel like I'm working my ass off. And I think it's because I'm a pretty good teacher. Like, I'm not a perfect teacher, but I think the reason I'm on her good side is because I'm doing a good ass job. but then they'll say something like, well, it's just because you're not white and you're, you're checking the box and it's always just like, [exhales]. (Workshop 3, 11/10/18)

Alternatively, the figured world recognized at our workshops affirmed powerful and thoughtful identities. The workshops positioned the teachers as authors of themselves, constructing identities that witnessed their own understandings of experiences.

The workshops also offered a space of critical reflection absent from most of the teachers' work environments. The story that Amelia tells about what she wishes her department could include, what she wishes her department could be (Workshop 1, 10/20/18), sets a clear comparison between the figured world of the workshops and that of her school. At the workshops, Amelia has something that is valuable and meaningful, something that gives her power and agency not available to her where she works. At school, silence separates Amelia and her colleagues, making them unavailable to build a collaborative understanding of the space and work they do. She suggests that her department could incorporate something like story circles so she could learn from her

231

colleagues, suggesting that her school world is a space where she does not have the opportunity to learn in ways she would like or about the things she would like. This is a problem for Amelia because it damages potential relationships that could sustain her through the difficult work that teachers do. Additionally, there is an opportunity to be heard in the story circles that does not occur in school settings.

The desire to be recognized and in relationship with others came up throughout the workshops. Mae remarks that the rule of not addressing someone's story makes the experience unique and desirable (Workshop 6, 12/8/18). One does not need to worry about doing something wrong, performing wrong, because the shared story is off limits. And this freedom from worry fosters a deeper engagement, much like the one Libby seeks when she attempts to engage in critical feedback with her colleagues.

Holland et al. (1998) write that artifacts, like stories, allow a person to figure themselves in relation to particular worlds. For these teachers in this particular space, the practice of listening and sharing stories as if they (the stories and themselves) mattered figures a world built on the premises that new teachers and the stories they use to make meaning of their experiences and themselves deserve to be listened to, not questioned. Their perspectives, which provide a view into the fictive narrative of education and the teaching profession, deserve to be considered, not covered. In this figured world, the struggles the teachers shared, as well as the joys, do not define the experience so much as they way they are recognized as full and complex individuals.

Laying Bare the Questions

I think even just the use of the 'I' and introducing people in our stories as characters in our stories and trying to frame our schools and our daily lives is so

hard. Even if we're all in the same profession, in the same general area, at the

same stage of our careers, all of our experiences are so different while there's so

many similarities. And so I think there's a level of vulnerability that came with

sharing those stories in the first person. (Mae, Workshop 6, 12/8/18)

Barone (2001) sees Narrative as concerned with subjective truth as evidenced in

his book *Touching Eternity*. He builds a narrative of a successful teacher who has deeply

impacted his students' lives through the recollections of those very students. Yet, to hear

the teacher tell it in later chapters, his legacy seems less picturesque. He alters or even

challenges the existence of pivotal moments his students describe. Barone interviews key

people and collects documents connected to his topic and paints a novel retelling that

incorporates each perspective as a component of the overall narrative. Of the dissonant

accounts, he affirms that they too and their contradictory nature are a part of the

narrative, not, as some might suggest, a problem to be solved. To this end, he quotes

James Baldwin (as cited in Barone, 2001) by describing the success of such narratives as

the "laying bare of questions which have been hidden by the answer" (p. 154).

At our last workshop, I asked the teachers how it felt to think through their

experiences as narratives and what, if anything, they learned about themselves from the

stories they told. The response was mixed. Some were surprised at what their stories

seemed to say about them. Rebekah had never thought of herself as optimistic and nice,

an identity she seemed to defend vigorously in the face of social pressure to distrust and

discipline. Others were struck by the "unsolvable" nature of the profession (Libby,

Workshop 6, 12/8/18). For example, Libby struggled to reconcile her deep commitment

to student relationships, what she saw as quality instruction, and the absence of

professional collaboration. And some, like Seth, were affirmed in what they were experiencing through the realization that others were feeling it too.

The value of these stories in the creation of community and reflection were acknowledged by a few of the teachers, primarily in the way it could translate to their pedagogy and curriculum. Mae discussed her previous annoyance at stories her students told—stories she saw as off topic—and what she now sees that they offer in her class.

> It's an interesting format and I, and I was really engaged in people's stories, and it is a really reflective and that obviously comes through in the way that we talk about it, in the way that we analyze the stories, in the way that we all engage and can relate to one another. Um, but it's not a necessarily, um, I think story- I love storytelling and I love listening to stories and I'm like an epic podcast fiend. I like, I love stories, I love consuming stories, but it's not something that I think is all the time valued in an academic setting. So I think that this is, was a cool way to just for me to bring the value of story up as a way of teaching and learning. (Workshop 6, 12/8/18)

Seth and Amelia shared throughout the workshops how valuable telling stories with their colleagues would be as well as the importance of seeking community either in or out of their schools in order to combat fatigue and isolation. But seeking out professional organizations felt beyond the capacity of many of them, mainly because of how much time their jobs already required. As Libby pointed out,

> Like this whole process, um, even though there were times where I'm like, I'm so fucked cause the kids, and that my husband's job and my parents like suck, and I love them, but they're just a totally not dependable. Like, how am I going to make

234

this [coming to the workshops] all work? I was also aware of that I never felt like coming here was the same thing, like going to the gym where like you, you really, you know, you'll feel really good after, but you have to, like, make yourself go or whatever. Like I always did truly want to go and was bummed when it didn't work out. (Workshop 6, 12/8/18)

Many of the teachers noted the value of professional experiences like this and that opportunities for other professional development existed. But committing more personal time to their professional work when they already struggled with home/work balance, especially those with children, felt difficult to do and frustrating as a need to sustain themselves professionally. In many ways, it echoed Talia's discussion of assumed professional altruism.

And I've been thinking a lot about like, teaching is this altruistic thing, like you're not supposed to want to get time-carded, you're not supposed to want to get compensated because you're helping people. Right?….Whereas like my friends at the business school would do an internship and get paid for their work to support their business to build their resume. Whereas me as a teacher, as I build my resume, of course it's volunteer work, right? It's assumed that like you're going into the community, you can't get paid for that time. So on the side, I also worked in addition to the volunteer hours that I needed in order to really be an effective teacher. (Personal Interview, 8/13/18)

Work like the storytelling workshops was clearly a meaningful and, in some ways, impactful experience for the teachers. It confirmed for some that professional communities could be a way to sustain themselves in a challenging profession. Having

235

the time or willingness in their life outside of the contract day to seek these out and participate was a deal breaker for many of them.

The practice of storytelling also raised questions for many of them. Mae wondered how she could continue to grow as a teacher when she reflected that she was more interested in working with students than other teachers though advancement in education is typically a move away from the classroom. Seth continued to wonder, 'how do we get through the battles we all seem to be going through?'. And Valerie continually returned to the impossibility of valuing the power of being a teacher and the effect she can have in particular students' lives while being unsure of how to balance the time and energy the job seems to require with the time and energy she desires for her family. How do we grow? How do we get through it? And how do we balance it?

As Seth commented at the end of the first workshop, "I feel like I'm more confused than when I came. [group laughs] But in a good way. A good way." The practice of storytelling required the teachers to pin down moments in an attempt to enter into conversations about relationships, caring, power, purpose, and race in concrete ways. Storytelling required that the teachers take stances on the issues at hand in their stories through the voicing of perspectives in response to other perspectives. This process of ventriloquation (Bakhtin, as cited in Wortham, 2001) pushed the teachers to draw the parameters of their professional and personal ideologies in different ways than they did when simply talking about the concept itself. Storytelling asked the teachers to examine their ideologies *in action*.

Each teacher's active ideological moves provided a space to reflect on who they were in the narrative construction of their identity. It allowed them to ask, who am I in

this moment? Is this who I want to be? Is this where I want to be? What does this say about me to others? These questions were rarely addressed outright in the storytelling itself. But the practice opened up a reflective space to consider, perhaps on the periphery, deeper questions that seemed to be easy to avoid in the crosstalk as conversation got abstracted away from actual practice or, in the less successful moments of our conversation, focused on one story or the next instead of what the stories offered collectively.

A Critical Pedagogy

A consideration of the attempts and limitations of narrative and Theatre of the Oppressed methodologies is necessary in analyzing a research project meant to engage with anti-oppressive pedagogy. Critical pedagogy cites voice and agency as foundational commitments in the pursuit of anti-oppressive, liberatory education (Freire, 1972; Giroux, 1988; hooks, 1994). Boal's (2008) application of this work in Forum Theatre affirms the possibility of theatre as a creative space to enact critical pedagogy and anti-oppressive education. He points to theatre not as a verb in which knowledge is learned but as a noun that asserts itself as knowledge, a tool to transform society. "Theatre can help us build our future, rather than just waiting for it" (p. xxxi). Freire (1972) writes about critical pedagogy that it requires practitioners to "not go to the people in order to bring them a message of 'salvation,' but in order to come to know through dialogue with them both their *objective situation* and their *awareness* of that situation" (p. 95). Critical pedagogy thus requires a dialogue between participants towards an understanding of the current situation and an active construction of a different situation based on love, humility, and faith (p. 91).

Ellsworth (1989) suggests that commitments to critical pedagogy often function on a relatively abstract level as "repressive myths" (p. 298) and that, left untheorized, have the power to compound the very forces critical pedagogues work to resist. Discourses and strategies of empowerment work to equip students with analytic tools to better understand and take stances on narratives of their own and others' experiences, but are founded on an assumption of universal truths to which rationalism would undoubtedly lead. "This would force students to subject themselves to the logics of rationalism and scientism which have been predicated on and made possible through the exclusion of socially constructed irrational Others—women, people of color, nature, aesthetics" (p. 305). In the following section, I examine how dialogue worked for and against my goals for an anti-oppressive pedagogy and the significance of discomfort felt by participants in light of those goals.

Story Circles and the Hope of Dialogue

I left our third workshop excited by the work we had done. The image theatre (Boal, 2002) had produced evocative tableaux and insightful conversations. The brief time we had for stories seemed to push us to focus our narratives that cut to the quick of meaningful questions we had been circling in past workshops and individual interviews. How do schools support (or not) new teachers (in such stories as Valerie's about teacher retention in "The Job")? How are teachers used to make schools look good, eliding substantive engagement with systemically racist, sexist, and oppressive work cultures (in such stories as Talia's about being a high flyer or Darya's story about being teasingly blamed by a senior male guidance counselor when her male student gave her a pornographic picture)? What are teachers expected to give personally in order to be

successful professionally (in such stories as Seth's struggle both to deal with processing his students' trauma and justify a job that does not pay him enough to financially support his family)?

The next night, I received an email from Amelia sharing the struggles she was going through because of the responses to her story. This along with other moments throughout the workshops echoed the primary title of Ellsworth's (1989) article titled "Why doesn't this feel empowering?" 30 years later, practitioners still wrestle with how to avoid the oppressive nature of critical work. For Ellsworth, this had to do with gender oppression and the patriarchy of Critical Pedagogy. For this project, it had to do with the creation of collectivity that erased difference and suppressed dissent within the discourse of the group.

Reckoning with this question became a recurring activity in post-workshop reflections, particularly as I sought to answer my research questions about what happens when narrative and embodiment methodologies are used to investigate teacher identity. Chodron (2014) suggests that moments of struggle can be opportunities for investigative questions to lead a reflective practice: What is happening here? What is the narrative I'm constructing about this situation? What might I learn if I reframed the narrative? Or, in the words of Baldwin (1985), how might these experiences that bristle against the smooth narrative of anti-oppressive, democratic methodology provide a counter story that **"drive[s] to the heart of every answer and expose the question the answer hides"** (p. 316)?

One possible question that might be asked is how the relationships I had with participants before the study impacted the work we did. Further, how did the

relationships the participants did or did not have with each other prior to the study guide our work? Indeed, Bakhtin (as cited in Morris, 1994) writes, "[t]he understanding of a sign is, after all, an act of reference between the sign apprehended and other, already known signs; in other words, understanding is a response to a sign with signs" (p. 52). The language used in our workshops thus echoes within the frame of previous socio-historical contexts. Our work did not exist on its own terms but built on past contexts that provide us with an already-made system of ideological signs which inform our understanding of our current work.

As a former instructor and/or supervisor for all of the participants, there were components of our workshops that fit within the student/teacher relationship. As a result, different moves I made as the leader could have signified power dynamics that muddied the waters of collaborative, democratic inquiry. One example of this was my choice to plan the agenda for our time together without collaboration with participants. This move makes sense for me as the person in charge of a dissertation research study, yet it complicated if not undercut my goal of creating an experience for the teachers that was as much for them as it was for me. When I would ask the teachers what they would like to do in moments when our work could move in different directions, sometimes a teacher or two would respond by asking what would be helpful for my research. They were always aware that I had at least two goals for our work, one of which (my own research questions) might direct us down different paths than my goal of creating a space where they could investigate issues that were important to them.

This was articulated clearly during our final workshop which served as a group interview. In response to a question that asked the teachers how it felt to do the workshops, Amelia described feeling more like a student in this work than a teacher.

I just haven't had an experience where I've been forced to confront the other identity [I have] as a student, which is making me think a lot about how I position my students in the classroom and who is experiencing or feeling the discomfort that I felt a lot of the time doing [the story circles]. Because it's so easy when you're teaching, and you forget- You're like, '*I* know what's coming next.' Like in the lesson, you feel just like really energized. And like I love teaching and I like being with the students, but it's so interesting to be in the students' perspective again…or you feel. like, uncertainty—or at least that's how I felt, um, a lot as a student. I have not felt like that, um, since I started teaching. I just haven't been in this situation… like this. (Workshop 6, 12/8/18)

Amelia understands the agenda for our workshops as a lesson plan within a framework of signs in which I signify a teacher and her colleagues signify students. Amelia compares this to her experiences as a teacher, noting that the two positions feel different and offer different possibilities for action within the work together.

Alexia's experience during the crosstalk portion of our work aligns with Amelia's experience. After a round of storytelling, I invited the teachers to talk across stories, sharing observations and wonderings that the series of stories as a whole brought up for them. While I sometimes began this with another round of individuals taking turns going around the circle sharing the observations, the bulk of this activity was done as a free-flowing conversation. Alexia shared that this was difficult for her because it takes time

241

for her to process what others share, construct a response to it, and find a good moment to insert herself into the conversation.

> I like taking turns with speaking so then I know everybody gets a chance to speak. And it's something I bring into the classroom too. Like everybody gets a chance to talk. Everybody can… anyone can pass, but I would appreciate it if I heard everybody's voices. And then we all practice our listening skills just by listening. But then I have a hard time with the crosstalks because that's just…, like Amelia was saying, anybody can go, and it's usually the more assertive people. And then I'm usually, I'm, I'm introverted, and so I have a hard time just speaking up or um, wanting to say things. So I think crosstalk is really hard. And it's something I also have a hard time bringing in the classroom too because it's… I can't show my students how to crosstalk if I can't crosstalk. (Workshop 6, 12/8/18)

The way I facilitated some of the crosstalk after everyone shared stories created a situation in which Alexia struggled to participate. If, as Lave and Wenger (1991) argue, participation and understanding are mutually constitutive (p. 52), then these were moments when Alexia's struggle to participate created a barrier for her full membership in the community I wished to support in our work together.

This is not to say that Alexia was not able to participate. She noted the structure of the theatre activities as very conducive to engagement. This is because there were specific directions around sharing in pairs. Also, our theatre work raised up gesture and embodiment as equal to or more important than verbal dialogue. The teachers had to depend on their bodies instead of verbal processing to communicate ideas before opening up opportunities to discuss what had been done. In this space, Alexia created simple yet

arresting images that she was able to refer back to during the crosstalk later in the workshop.

For example, when teachers were asked to represent how they feel within their school's power structure, Alexia simply sat cross legged on the ground. When everyone had a chance to title their image, Alexia stated, "Sitting Duck." This title captured the powerlessness Alexia felt in her position, tasked with raising reading scores across the building on her own with an overloaded schedule and no feedback from administration on her work. The title also evokes the violence done to new teachers—particularly teachers of color, as was heard across multiple stories shared by Alexia, Amelia, and Valerie—as they strive to balance administrative expectations and expectations of leadership without the social or professional capital to back up moves they make that veer outside of common practice or might not immediately succeed.

Discomfort

While I was driving here, I was like, if we're doing the drama thing today, I like may ask if I can just sit out [laughs]. And I was like, then what would Lee write about in his dissertation? Like 'one participant chose not to engage…' I literally can't deal with that, so I'll just do it. And I for sure don't do that stuff with my students and that's a very conscious choice because I loathe it so I don't. I'm just like, oh, I feel so bad making you do this crap. (Libby, Workshop 6, 12/8/18)

I called two of my advisors after the second workshop unsure of what to do about the theatre activities. As a teacher, I had engaged both high school students and graduate students (including some of the participating teachers) with image theatre work and other embodiment activities I used in my lessons, including many of the teachers in this

project. These methods were the foundation of activities that I always perceived as extremely generative and illuminating about whatever topic we were exploring as a class. Yet the general response from many teachers was lackluster and sometimes even resistant. Libby's comments in our final workshop sum up the attitudes of some of the teachers: *I really don't want to do this, but I like Lee and don't want to be the odd one out in such a small group, so I guess I'll go along with it.* This relationship that Libby cites can account why she and other teachers who did not like the theatre activities still signed up for a project that they were told included theatre work. Many of the initial interviews began with hugs and catching up about personal lives. The interviews themselves often felt like an extension of those relationships, unfolding easily with a trust and understanding that likely would have taken many interviews to develop with teachers I did not know. And it is perhaps because of that familiarity that the teachers felt comfortable sharing their displeasure. So why didn't this feel empowering?

One possibility is the sheer discomfort some of the teachers had working with their bodies when we were already working through complex issues verbally. Sitting and talking about the meaning of stories can be incredibly easy for many teachers, particularly English teachers. Shifting from a place of cognitive comfort to physical discomfort understandably would make someone bristle. Taking away a person's verbal language and asking them to engage in a different style of communication, particularly when there is a constant awareness of participating in research, is certainly disconcerting. Still, a bit of pressure to do something one does not feel equipped to do is a common pedagogical tool. This was a move I learned from my own education courses, used when teaching students from elementary to graduate school, and experienced as a graduate

244

student myself. Discomfort often accompanies theatre games for many people. However, I did not expect the discomfort to get in the way of engagement.

Additionally, Libby's comment indexes her as someone, a person in general or, more specifically, a teacher, who does not "do this crap." Holland et al (1998) write that "[t]hinking, speaking, gesturing, cultural exchange are forms of social as well as cultural work. When we do these things we not only send messages (to ourselves and others) but also place 'ourselves' in social fields, in degrees of relation to—affiliation with opposition to, and distance from—identifiable others" (p. 271). Sitting and talking, as cultural work, felt extremely familiar to many of the teachers. Teaching itself was described at various times throughout the workshops as cognitive work. This is not to say that teachers' bodies were or are not a part of being a teacher. Many studies show the ways teachers' bodies are present (e.g. Bresler, 2004; Stutelberg, 2016) even when they are ignored (Hughes-Decatur, 2011; Freedman & Holmes, 2003; hooks, 1994). Further, the emotional moments throughout the workshops were felt bodily in full-chested laughs, hugs as expressions of literal and emotional connection, and the tightening of the muscles when people attempted to control their sadness and tears. As Lewis and Crampton (2013) write, "emotion is mediated by bodies and signs, occurs in and around bodies, is constructed through bodies, and moves in ways that are integrally tied to meaning-making and the transformation of signs" (p. 106). Though bodies were present, they were not the preferred (or perhaps even the acceptable) tool for analyzing our teacher-selves. These Language Arts teachers generally preferred utilizing verbal instead of body language to think about themselves and their collective experiences. Asking the teachers to explore their identities through cultural work that was not familiar to them was like

245

asking them to describe themselves using a language they did not know nor necessarily trust.

Theatre practices, like athletics or studio arts, is often placed on a continuum of good or bad. Expressions in this frame are not places of exploration but demonstrations of skill. The theatre games that were the hardest were those in which the teachers felt expected to perform in some way with an audience watching. Many of the teachers did not trust themselves to play the game correctly though there was no such thing as correct or incorrect. "Play" was a difficult form of expression to engage in theatrically.

Holland et al. (1998) suggest that members of figured worlds improvise to make sense of unique situations within the frame of cultural norms. Improvisations aid the individual as they "reiterate and remake the world in which they live, in circumstances where they may consider different courses of action possible and desirable" (p. 42). In other words, improvisations allow individuals to reorient themselves within a particular figured world while, perhaps, refiguring the world itself to make room for such an orientation. Various studies (e.g. Juro, 2005; Rush & Fecho, 2008) explore how students use improvisation to navigate the different cultural definitions of knowledge between schools and home. As a series of moments when their identities as people who do not see themselves as theatre people did not need to figure something out in the same immediacy as they do when in their schools, some of the teachers may have chosen to improvise by calling on these specific identities to allow themselves distance from the activity, going through the motions but at arm's length so as not to put themselves at risk of getting stuck. The theatre games were not something they saw as helpful, so they might not have been worth the investment.

Those that did engage with the theatre games did so because it offered them space to explore their ideas that they felt they did not have in the crosstalk portion of the story circle protocol. As Amelia explained:

> I felt like they were an equalizer in some ways. Um, compared to the sitting down in the circle, which I find kind of uncomfortable. Um, and I feel like when we're in the circle, especially for crosstalk, there's, it almost feels like a competition to get your voice in the, in circulation. And so I feel like people who are really good at like asserting themselves in conversation do really well and have a conversation like this. And that's certainly not what I feel comfortable doing. (Workshop 6, 12/8/18)

The games allowed them time to think, a different avenue to express and explore their thoughts, and, notably, the opportunity to verbalize their ideas because of the time they had to think through the experiences. There were moments when everyone engaged with the games in some way, often after they were able to leave behind the cop in the head. Boal defines the cop in the head as internalized oppressions (Boal, 1990, p. 35). He writes, "The cops are in their heads, but the headquarters of these cops are in the external reality. It is necessary to locate both the cops and their headquarters. In this instance, we are at the border of psychology, but always on the side of theatre" (p. 35).

For Boal, theatre is not the skill of memorizing lines and performing realistic scenes to escape reality. In Theatre of the Oppressed, there are no lines to memorize because play is improvised. And theatre does not offer an escape from life because it is an explicit examination of the lives of those participating. "Theatre is the act of looking at ourselves" (Boal, 2002, p. 15). Or, in the words of Baldwin, it is the laying bare of

247

questions. The cop in the head in this case might be a cemented conception of who the self is or a comfort in verbalizing a story that has happened instead of embodying a possible story. When individuals were able to engage in the activities, it was with a sense of questioning: Who am I? What does this look like? How do I connect with what others are doing? It is not that full engagement with the theatre games was free of unknowing. Instead, unknowing spurred moments of inquiry about what might be. It spurred moments of play.

Storytelling Methodologies as Critical Inquiry

I had hoped that the storytelling methods I planned to use for this project would decenter my own role as a researcher, creating a more democratic and critical space to think about the experiences of new teachers. I was focused on who I would be in the space as a researcher and former instructor and how that would impact the teachers' willingness to talk about topics in the presence of an outsider.

A generous analysis of the use of story circles as a method could argue that this was largely successful. The repeated requests for and checks about anonymity suggest that these teachers were talking about experiences that were only meant for a select group of people. While I had the authority to direct the trajectory of the workshops and confirm or deny confidentiality, that power did not extend so far as to make the teachers uncomfortable with my presence.

Another analysis of the workshops could argue that my presence ultimately did not matter even though my identity as a researcher and a former instructor was constantly on my mind. I was outnumbered by currently practicing teachers and, however important the university was to them at one time, it was so far removed from their professional lives

that any institutional authority I might have claimed was not recognized by these teachers. It was something they were aware of to be sure. There were a number of occasions when the teachers checked in with me to make sure what we were up to was accomplishing what I needed as a researcher. Ultimately, though, the storytelling practices provided space for them to focus on themselves and what mattered to them.

Some of the teachers did recognize storytelling and the particular practice of story circles as something uniquely democratic and critical. Amelia commented on the story circle process during a moment of reflection at our first workshop.

> I'm thinking a lot about story circles and it would be really great to bring it back to my department. Just the opportunity to share stories with the other teachers and hear them share stories. I think it would be really powerful. Because I don't know what they're thinking about, so I assume that they aren't thinking about the things I am. Just to have the chance to hear each other would be really powerful.
> (Workshop 1, 10/20/18)

Amelia described storytelling practices as a tool she could bring to her department to build understanding and trust in a social space fraught with power imbalances and political consequences for saying or doing the wrong thing. She specifically noted during our last workshop the Law of Listening component of story circles as well as the structured reflection that occurred in our theatre games (e.g. talking to a partner before each pair gets an opportunity to share with the group) as key to navigating the ways power operated in group discussions. These moves provided opportunities for each person to be heard while also protecting them from becoming the focus of pointed analysis, keeping conversations focused on large ideas and broader patterns that affected

everyone instead of making anyone specifically responsible for their experiences or the issues they illuminated. In this way, storytelling offered a way for new teachers to be recognized within political and power hierarchies in their professional circles while also keeping conversations focused on systemic concerns, addressing core issues instead of just the symptoms.

These were the possibilities seen by Amelia and other teachers for the practice of storytelling. But aspirations are not always realized in practice. There were moments during the story circles when conversation did focus on specific individuals and their stories. Some of the teachers commented during the last workshop that the conversation after sharing the stories sometimes felt as if people were simply waiting for their turn to speak instead of listening deeply to the comments of each person and building off of them. Others noted that the free flow of conversation made it difficult for them to process the information fast enough to feel comfortable participating, resulting in an inadvertent silencing of some voices and a privileging of others.

Additionally, some of my research questions directed our work in ways that we likely would have abandoned had the agenda for our work truly been a collaborative practice. The topics for two of the workshops and the inclusion of activities from Theatre of the Oppressed practices were moments when I felt my personal interests steering the work. They were not wholly unproductive. As I mentioned previously, some of the teachers felt more supported in the theatre activities. There were also many insightful stories and subsequent conversations during the two workshops where I decided the topic. Yet I did feel the energy shift in those moments. There were even a couple teachers who expressed dissatisfaction in some of those particular moments while acknowledging

my role as a researcher and not wanting to mess things up for me. The dual purpose of the project—creating a meaningful and useful learning space for the teachers as well as completing a research project I was conducting on my own—sometimes took me or the teachers out of the experience, making us aware that working towards one of the objectives might discount the goals of the other objectives. And, ultimately, the decisions were mine to make. Often I leaned towards creating the most meaningful experience for the teachers. Other times, I attended to my research objectives in ways that did not fully honor the democratic goals of the project.

Framing Experience Through Narrative and Theatre

Asking these teachers to share the stories that are important to who they are as teachers and help them understand what it means to be a teacher was often met with hesitation or confusion. Framing teacher identity and experience as a narrative construction was an approach that felt removed from their daily experience, highly theoretical and impractical. I went through several iterations of questions in the interviews before arriving at an entrance point into this topic with the teachers. I asked them to 'Tell me a time when…'—a time when they were excited, a time when they felt questioned, a time when they felt success or struggle. A time when they felt like a teacher. Then the teachers had something to say.

Approaching the idea of narratively constructed identities from a metacognitive perspective asked the teachers to think about their experiences in unfamiliar ways. The teachers were certainly capable of discussing complex issues as they did in every workshop. Some of the interviews got to similar points of complexity. What I found was that my approach, an approach that was highly abstract, was difficult to latch onto. Once I

was able to reframe the questions to be about specific experiences that meant something to them in a visceral, concrete way that impacted the way they showed up to work each day and thought about how they would engage with people, these teachers easily engaged in the conversations I was trying to seed.

This issue of application to their daily work as teachers surfaced several times throughout the workshops. The teachers who found the theatre games helpful in creating space for them to think through their ideas, practice the communication of those ideas in low-stakes one-on-one conversation, and finally share those ideas through turn-taking saw those games as a valuable opportunity and beneficial for them to contribute to the group discussion. Others who had a much easier time talking, thinking on their feet, and inserting themselves into a conversation struggled to engage in the games in a meaningful way.

Each teacher's first time participating in the story circles was also done somewhat hesitantly, unsure of what it would be like or if they would have something to add. The practice of storytelling in such a highly structured way required time and attention on the task of simply sharing stories—something these teachers would have few opportunities to do at any point of the school year, much less the desire to do with all of the other tasks teachers need to accomplish on any given day. Storytelling, whether in story circles or through theatre games, was a luxurious act, one that asked them to set aside other considerations for a few hours each time we met.

That said, taking time for storytelling became a desire for a handful of the teachers once they had done it. This was the sentiment shared by Amelia during our first workshop. Darya adapted the story circle process to use with her classes during the fall

semester, and Mae reflected on her usual move to avoid storytelling in her classroom because of concerns for time and staying on task. Her reflection felt similar to the skepticism some of the other teachers had towards the theatre games. Schooling systems are highly mechanized with bells signaling not only when classes begin and end, but also what times are available for socializing or going to the bathroom. I remember taking a two-week trip to China while I was working at my former high school and regularly wanting to know what time it was as well as being able to tell what point in the school day my students and substitute were in halfway around the globe. The psychology of efficiency is an easy practice to habituate, regardless of whether or not it is consciously valued. Storytelling asked these teachers to pause both in their daily or weekly schedule as well as in some ways of thinking and engage differently with those around them and their own thinking.

Lastly, many of the teachers came to a conclusion during the final group interview that the stories they told did not always reflect broader attitudes they have. For some of the teachers, their stories were too disparate, too wide-ranging to paint a meaningful picture for them about who they were or what they believed. There are many possible reasons for this, including not feeling connected to some of the topics I chose for each of the workshops or simply the small amount of stories they told over the course of the workshops. However, I believe this to be partially caused by the contrast between the relatively hopeful and positive view many of them had about what it meant to be a teacher and the primarily weighty and sometimes disturbing experiences many of them told stories about.

Story circles invite participants to engage in listening to stories and responding to them with their own stories. Though I attempted to create prompts that did not require stories of oppression (as described in Chapter 3), the circles often began and continued with teachers sharing difficult stories. The workshop on relationships with *students* included many examples of bullying from *colleagues*. The workshop on caring included stories of fearing students who might turn violent and students whose behavior was a point of struggle for teachers. The interactional dynamics of the story circle could have encouraged such stories possibly because it was a space in which teachers could share struggles without worrying about professional repercussions or even having to explain themselves. Mae even noted during the final workshop that she purposefully chose to tell stories that were both positive and focused mainly on her own agency in relationships with students, making her stories unique among the others.

Additionally, the stories some teachers told of daily experiences failed to illustrate the broader attitudes they had about their work. The daily moments could not account for the sum of their beliefs. As Amelia said in the final workshop, an individual story (or, in this case, a small number of stories) simply cannot capture an individual's total experience within the figured world of teaching. The stories were meaningful to them and gave testimony to profoundly impactful experiences. But the identities they held as teachers extended far beyond any one or small collections of stories. Identities are too rhizomatic in breadth and fluid in nature. What happened to them as teachers was not the same as how they felt about being a teacher.

These limitations of storytelling in this project do not suggest the practice itself is limited. On the contrary, the majority of teachers affirmed the careful decisions they

make about what stories get told to which audiences in order to avoid being identified in ways that run contrary to their experiences and beliefs (see analysis of the Prologue and Power/Agency in Storytelling in Chapter 5). Stories themselves are powerful markers of identity. They construct a particular perspective of past events that provide commentary on what happened and who was involved. It is this, the story, that then gets used to signify identity in the context of the events as the story circulates. Story circles and Theatre of the Oppressed practices may simply be better used at understanding collective experiences and identities than the experiences and identities of any individual.

Conclusion

The concept of counter stories was integral to framing identity through narrative and embodiment. The work of the workshops was, in part, to build a community that existed as a counter story to what I and many of the teachers had experienced as a culture of isolation in our schools. I chose story circles and Theatre of the Oppressed techniques as a methodology to create a counter story to the researcher/participant relationships that populate much of the Narrative Inquiry research about teachers (Barone, 2001; Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007; Polkinghorne, 1995, Wortham, 2001) and education research (Duke & Mallette, 2011; Patton, 2014; Plano Clark & Creswell, 2014). The methodologies also served to create spaces where I hoped the teachers (and I) could create counter stories in response to generalized narratives about the identities of new teachers and their contexts. And some of these things occurred.

Analyzing what happened when we actually did these things also provides a counter story to the anti-oppressive goals of Theatre of the Oppressed and democratic goals of story circles. These counterstories don't negate the potency of the meaningful

experiences and powerful moments of learning that happened when the methods worked as I had hoped. They do, however, offer an opportunity to explore the commitments of anti-oppressive work that Ellsworth (1989) suggests function on a relatively abstract level as "repressive myths" (p. 298) and that, left untheorized, have the power to compound the very forces critical pedagogues work to resist.

The myths Ellsworth lays out suggest that democratic and anti-oppressive pedagogies logically lead to democratic and anti-oppressive communities. Just as critical sociocultural theory points to the need to consider issues of power, identity, and agency within social worlds, power, identity, and agency are also at work within work meant to support democratic and anti-oppressive spaces. Power does not cease to impact the relationships among people. Agency, as improvisations, accounts for systems of power and constructs identities within and in response to them. This recognition does not negate the possibilities of story circles and Theatre of the Oppressed techniques. It simply places them within constitutive forces that impact how these practices are taken up and experienced.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

The difficulty with a conclusion, particularly the conclusion of a story, is that it has the potential to suggest a definitive ending and clear parameters of what and where a story is and isn't. Yet the storied lives of the teachers who worked with me continue, and have continued since I last met with them in December of 2018. In addition to that continued movement forward, there are too many tributaries to and off-shoots from these stories to ever account for them all. The connections and impacts run wide and deep, and mapping them feels a fool's errand.

My work on this project began with a question about how stories functioned as a space for identity development as new teachers made their way through four years of induction, beginning with their licensure program through obtaining tenure status. Stories, I believed, offer a metaphorical as well as a very real space to understand, revise, and communicate who teachers are and what they do. I still believe this. And I believe the stories the teachers shared and those I chose to incorporate here illustrate these things: understanding, revision, and communication.

At the end of this project, the argument I wish to make is less about telling stories and more about listening to them. As a teacher, especially in the first few years, I wished someone would have listened to me, asking me about my experiences and taking what I said seriously. I took this desire to share the experience of teachers with me as I transitioned from the secondary classroom to graduate school. I also recognize that I am no longer a secondary teacher, which means this project and this document have become a meditation for me on listening more than sharing. After six months of working with the teachers, I asked them during our final workshop what they wanted to make sure I

understood, what they wanted to clarify. The following lines from the ethnodrama come from their responses to that question.

> AMELIA: It took me so long to figure out that my story was powerful.
>
> ALEXIA: Everyone needs a chance to talk.
>
> TALIA: But I don't know if the content of my stories is the big takeaway.
>
> MAE: It's important for teachers to reflect on our collective struggle.
>
> AMELIA: The challenge of telling these stories is, sometimes, it feels like it's supposed to represent everything, but it's just one moment.

What I have collected here is my interpretation of the work I did with these teachers. It accounts for more than just a single moment, yet it is still partial. Many of the stories and discussions that took place during the workshops have not been included, nor have the majority of the one-on-one interviews with those teachers, nor the six other teachers I talked with and who helped shape the beginning of this project and the thinking that led into the workshops. As such, much can be said about the content of this work with new teachers. It is my hope that this work adds to the literature that advocates for the importance of not only allowing new teachers a seat at the table, but the opportunity to speak as a polyvocal group who are poised to help experienced teachers and education leaders understand the cultural world the construct and reify in their stories of teaching just as they work to help new teachers understand themselves within that cultural world.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this narrative study was to develop an understanding of the sociocultural moves that new teachers make as they craft a teacher identity that attends to their personal motivations and commitments within the broader professional community.

This study explored the stories of new teachers as they work to incorporate their learning from a English education licensure program focused on critical literacy and anti-oppressive pedagogy within a wide range of urban and suburban schools, the identities they construct in the process, and the moments of improvisation (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998) within broader systems of power during the induction process (i.e. their licensure program, student teaching, and first three years of employment). Additionally, it serves as an example of arts-based research that imagines knowledge as contextual, experiential, and collaborative.

This study used the Narrative Inquiry methods including interviews that asked teachers to share stories and workshops that utilized story circles (Cohen-Cruz, 2010; O'Neal, 2011) and Theatre of the Oppressed games (Boal, 2002) to gather qualitative data including individual stories and personal reflections from one-on-one interviews, video and audio recordings of group storytelling sessions and participation in theatre games, written reflections from teachers, and email and text correspondence with teachers. Participants in the study included fifteen teachers all from the same licensure program and within the first four years of teaching (the project spanned the end of the third year and the beginning of the fourth year for those who had been teaching the longest). The research materials were coded, analyzed, and organized first through inductive in vivo codes and then constructed into an ethnodrama (Mienczakowski, 2003; Saldaña, 2003; Vanover, 2016) as described in Chapters 2 and 3. Because I see identities as social constructions that exist within socio-historically situated discourses (Bakhtin as cited in Morris, 1994) in which power circulates within narrative structures that offer particular roles, plotlines, and relationships, I sought to braid together Narrative Inquiry,

Sociocultural Theory (specifically figured worlds and critical sociocultural theory), and Theatre practices in order to enter into a multi-dimensional, embodied analytic space "that accounts for these larger systems of power as they shape and are shaped by individuals in particular cultural contexts" (Lewis et al., 2007, p. 9). My own experience as a classroom teacher and former instructor of the teachers informed my coding practices and how I made meaning through my analysis processes. This analysis was a fluid and iterative process though I attempted to lay out in Chapter 3 the various moves I made.

I sought to understand how the teachers understood themselves as teachers through the stories they encountered and told. I did this by exploring the ways teachers drew on a variety of narrative resources and engaged in interactional dynamics that constituted identities within and at odds with the various social expectations of the figured world of teaching. Two research questions drove my work: 1) What stories about education do new teachers encounter during their licensure program and first years of teaching (the induction period)? 2) Do storytelling research methodologies generate spaces of critical inquiry into teacher identity construction?

The previous chapters discussed the findings of this study by utilizing ethnodrama to invite the reader into an interactive engagement and collaborative analytical relationship with the research materials and my own thinking before articulating my own analysis, organized first as an explication of the individual moments (Kaufman & Tectonic Theater Project, 2001) of the ethnodrama, then as an overarching analysis of the entirety of research materials, and finally an examination of the success of storytelling and critical methodologies. Through the discussion in Chapters Four, Five, Six, and

Seven, I constructed a nuanced narrative of what it is for these teachers to construct a professional identity within a distinct cultural world. In this chapter, I revisit my research questions, summarizing my findings and discussing implications for each question. The implications of my findings explore the possibilities of sociocultural theory to help make sense of narrative identity construction and critical narrative methodologies. The chapter concludes with implications for using Narrative Inquiry and sociocultural theory in research that seeks to understand new teacher identity.

The Narrative Lives of Teachers

In Chapters Four, Five, and Six, I sought to understand the sociocultural moves new teachers made when encountering and telling stories of teaching and being a teacher. The analysis in these chapters was framed by three sociocultural concepts: figured worlds (Holland et al., 1998), communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), and signs (Morris, 1994; Vygotsky, 1978). In conjunction with these concepts, I used critical sociocultural theory (Lewis et al., 2007) to analyze how power and agency functioned within the interactional dynamics of storytelling. Findings from these chapters suggest that the stories teachers told effectively communicated stances towards and within the complex figured world of education and practicing teachers. In these stances, teachers took up, revised, or rejected cultural narratives that implicated them in broader cultural narratives, and the stories themselves functioned as a form of agency and a site of struggle as teachers attempted to signal themselves to others through the stories.

Implications

New teachers engaged in storytelling to understand their experiences and share those understandings with other new teachers or colleagues that would listen. They used

these retellings as a space to respond to the signified ideologies their colleagues and the larger school system operated within. The narratives they encountered functioned as a way of communicating socio-historically situated practices and beliefs that were expected of new teachers as they situate themselves within the profession on a macro and local level. In other words, the stories teachers encountered depicted coded but explicit expectations for how to be and act as a teacher within the figured world of teaching. The stories teachers told were spaces where they were able to assess those expectations and decide whether to take up, ignore, or reject them as they constructed a professional identity that navigated the competing chronologies of their own commitments and the professional milieu of teaching. These stories affected both the teachers' internal understanding of themselves and their external relationships with the multiple stakeholders in education including fellow teachers, students, administration, and parents.

Given that storytelling is such a common and pervasive practice in teaching, it follows that teacher educators and those within schools involved in the induction of new teachers must interrogate the ways they talk about teachers and teaching. The broader narratives they reference and the ideologies they communicate through their own stories and the stories they reference are powerful induction tools that position them and the new teachers with whom they work in specific ways to the larger profession, colleagues, and students. These stories have practical and material consequences that contribute to a new teacher's sense of belonging and capability that could be seen as an extension of the stories that get used to communicate with teachers what it means to be a teacher in their specific professional context and the broader profession.

Further, new teachers should be aware of the ideological positioning that occurs in storytelling and the agentic moves they can make in the interactional dynamics during the storytelling event. The teachers were able to respond to the messages others were communicating about who they were or should be by calling on a repertoire of culturally acknowledged signs that reframed them in new narratives. Through direct engagement with the sociocultural tools others used to define who these teachers were, new teachers are able to subvert oppressive gestures of power and assert authority in their own identity construction.

Storytelling also rationalizes breaks away from cultural norms, refiguring the world new teachers find themselves in and imagining ways of moving forward. Clearly aware of a system of power to which they do not have access as a new teacher, new teachers are able to improvise practical responses within accepted practices of the cultural world. Amelia and Talia told stories of shutting their doors and dealing with behavior problems on their own because administration used Amelia's and Talia's engagement with systems of support to signify their failure. Seth and Mae told stories of positive interactions with students because telling the more complicated stories was used to disparage their identities as teachers or their students' identities as full and nuanced individuals. As Vygotskian signs, stories are able to help the individual master themself within a cultural landscape that is difficult to navigate.

The findings about race in Chapter Six reveal how teachers of color work within the cultural world of teaching and contribute to the field of critical race theory (CRT). It extends applications of CRT to education that critiques what it means to be seen and valued within a system that was built upon and furthers white supremacy (Ladson-

Billings, 2014). It serves as an example of how teachers of color must negotiate their perceived racialized identity by students, colleagues, and parents when encountering the stories others tell about their work as teachers. In the case of the new teachers of color who worked with me on this project, their storied identities were multilayered. Their engagement with curriculum, pedagogy, and institutional policies were in many ways directly connected to the way they understood themselves to be raced by others. As Valerie shared about a student identified by his peers as racist:

> And, and when I think about it more now, I think about all of our interactions that we've ever had together. And I'm wondering, you know, were they based on... like the way he treats me or the way he speaks to me, is it because he feels like he can do that because he's superior or is it... what is it? Like I don't really know. So I just think those layers of always questioning...where your color fits in a place that's not really accepting of color is... tiring. (Workshop 4, 12/11/17)

Unchecked stories have the power to normalize racist ideologies that otherize and undercut the positionality of teachers of color in their classrooms and schools. Additionally, the ease of white supremacist discourse to permeate conversations in all spaces around school suggests the need for explicit structures to name and talk across stories that construct racist identities for teachers and students.

White teachers were, of course, not immune from the impacts of racialized identities. The ability of white teachers to name race as a contributing factor in their experiences when those stories dealt with the race of their students provided important pivots into a critical consciousness that allowed them to engage more explicitly with issues of racism and white supremacist ideology. Less likely were white teachers to

mention their own race as a contributing factor to their interactions with others and enactments of personal ideology. These absences are all the more notable in the light of their licensure's focus on anti-oppressive pedagogy and critical consciousness. Racial consciousness is a complex process of negotiation, particularly in spaces that seek to erase and normalize whiteness in its reification through systems and policies based in white supremacist ideology. Praxis (Freire, 1972) thus existed in their work with racialized others, but not in their understanding of their own identities. These silences did not erase their racialized identities. Instead, they became missed opportunities to constitute themselves as racialized individuals and make sense of the interactional dynamics this created, particularly for students of color. Yes, race is always present, but lack of explicit acknowledgement and consideration allows race, and particularly whiteness, to operate silently to the detriment of teachers and all members of the figured world of education. Thus, storytelling that directly addresses race and the way it informs the lived identities of teachers is meaningful not only as part of the storied identities of the teachers but also as part of the storied profession of teaching.

Storytelling Methodologies and Critical Inquiry

In Chapter Seven, I addressed whether storytelling research methodologies generated spaces of critical inquiry into teacher identity construction. I again used figured worlds, communities of practice, and signs to examine the interactional dynamics and sociocultural moves within the storytelling workshops. I analyzed how the teachers used the approaches to storytelling provided by story circles (Cohen-Cruz, 2010; O'Neal, 2011) and Theatre of the Oppressed (Boal, 1993) to negotiate their own teacher identities within the overlap of the figured worlds of their individual teaching contexts, licensure

program, and the community we formed during this project. Further, I explored the specific offerings of Narrative Inquiry and embodiment techniques to investigate new teacher identity development. I found that the ways in which the teachers enacted storytelling practices through sociocultural moves critiqued the disempowering experiences they had in their schools while, at the same time, engaging in other practices that created power imbalances within our work. Story circles afforded the teachers who were comfortable with thinking as they spoke and inserting themselves within conversations more authority over the narratives that got constructed during discussion. Theatre games renegotiated that power, notably making some who felt at ease exploring identity in the story circles resistant to embodiment practices that valued alternative forms of exploration and communication. Through embodied and narrative literacies, the teachers in one way or another had opportunities to reflect on, critique, and author stories about who they are as teachers through sociocultural interaction. The complicated enactment of anti-oppressive pedagogy (Ellsworth, 1989; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Paris, 2012) shaped the production of these identities and the teachers' attitudes towards Narrative Inquiry.

Implications

Through methodologies meant to disrupt traditional power structures found within schools and traditional research relationships between participants and a researcher, the teachers developed an awareness of their roles in participating in and critiquing storied identities that implicated them in oppressive relationships and practices as teachers. Amelia, Mae, and the other teachers' experiences as participants in critical storytelling practices provide important insight into how stakeholders in the induction of new

teachers can leverage storytelling as a way to understand the experiences and developing

identities of new teachers as well as critical opportunities to engage in exploring the

storied ideologies of their programs, institutions, and practices. More specifically, the

findings illuminate how new teachers who engage in careful listening as well as

storytelling attend to the interactional dynamics and sociocultural positioning within the

storytelling event. For instance, when Valerie was unsure if she would have something to

share when it was her turn to tell a story, Seth, having done a story circle once before,

assured her that something would come up for her as she listened to others. Listening is

thus an important social stance that assists in understanding oneself while giving space

for others to contribute to the collective project of figuring the cultural world they share.

Using critical sociocultural theory to make sense of the enactment of critical

methodologies helped me understand how teachers negotiated power and agency by both

claiming and giving space to author individual and group identities. The social act of

engaging in collective story*telling* and *listening* demonstrates how critical methodologies

disrupt but do not dispel opportunities for power imbalances. Successful moments of

storytelling and discussion rely on careful listening and building on what others have

previously shared.

In sum, I believe that it is the perspectives of new teachers engaging in an

induction process that will help the teaching profession and educational researchers

understand the cultural world of teaching and the cultural ideologies that are enacted in

the practice of teaching and the stories that get told about it. The sociocultural landscape

that the new teachers navigate as inductees reveals the importance of agency in storying

their own identities within the cultural world of teaching. Because of this, storytelling

methodologies that explicitly address power and agency, regardless of the difficulties inherent in enacting them, are helpful tools to engage new teachers and relevant stakeholders in meaningful dialogue that open up critical inquiries into cultural ideologies and the identities these ideologies request of new teachers.

Many of the teachers struggled to trust they had stories to share when I first began to interview them. Describing stories as knowledge and tools to construct identity was unfamiliar. It took storytelling as a regular and structured practice to open up their storied knowledge as a place where they could take themselves and their understanding of experiences seriously. Ultimately, storytelling became recognized as a meaningful way to construct and signal identities as teachers. Learning how to do this in structured ways shaped an awareness of the interactional dynamics of storytelling and how they worked on their individual identities within a community of practice and the figured world of teaching. Vygotsky (1978) writes that "cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level" (p. 57). Interpersonal processes become intrapersonal ones. The new teachers I worked with took up a practice of storytelling that engaged them socially with other new teachers as they sought to define who they are as teachers. These sociocultural interactions pushed them to name, for themselves, who they saw themselves to be as teachers, even if it was in contrast to the stories they told. As such, storytelling practices create opportunities for critical engagement with the stories and narratives that get used to figure the world of teaching. Further, storytelling practices open up spaces for counterstories that offer new ways forward for teachers as they make sense of who they are within socio-historically constructed cultural worlds. The research materials discussed and analyzed in Chapter Seven illustrate how storytelling

methodologies can engage new teachers in rigorous negotiations of storied identities in efforts to address power and declare agency that supports professional growth within local and grand narratives of teachers and teaching.

Conclusion

In this dissertation, I framed teacher identity as a narrative construction influenced through sociocultural processes of induction and investigated how teachers use the stories they tell and hear to understand who they are as teachers. The findings from this dissertation, the community built with the teachers, and the ways I enacted the methodologies and theoretical approaches are partial and are offer numerous possibilities and opportunities for critique. And they evidence a sincere attempt at bridging the distance between academic research and teachers' firsthand accounts of their experience in ways that honor what is useful and meaningful to them. In doing so, this dissertation is an attempt to emphasize the power of telling, and listening to, stories as a critical practice that offers opportunities for developing community that supports new inductees while recognizing the systems of power and ideology that inform how we engage with each other. Further, the possibility of revision offers the chance to imagine new, anti-oppressive relationships that will benefit teachers, students, and the wider goal of education.

References

Althusser, L. (1971). Ideology and ideological state apparatuses. In L. Althusser (Ed.), *Lenin and philosophy and other essays*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Ahmed, S. (2004). Affective economies. *Social Text 22*(2), 117–139.

Alverman, D. E., O'Brien, D. O., & Dillon, D. R. (1996). On writing qualitative research. *Reading Research Quarterly, 31*(1), 114–120.

Anzaldúa, G. (1999). *Borderlands: La frontera*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books.

Bakhtin, M. M., & Holquist, M. (1983). *The dialogic imagination: Four essays*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Baldwin, J. (1985). *The price of the ticket: Collected nonfiction 1948–1985*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

Bamberg, M. & Georgakopoulou, A. (2008). Small stories as a new perspective in narrative and identity analysis. *Text & Talk - An Interdisciplinary Journal of Language, Discourse Communication Studies, 28*(3), 377–396.

Barone, T. (2000). Ways of being at risk: The case of Billy Charles Barnett. *Phi Delta Kappan, 7*(2), 147–151.

Barone, T. (2001) *Touching eternity: The enduring outcomes of teaching*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Barton, D. & Hamilton, M. (2005). Literacy, reification, and the dynamics of social interaction. In D. Barton & K, Tusting, (Eds.), *Beyond Communities of Practice* (14–35). New York, Cambridge University Press.

Beaton, J (2014) Perceiving professional risk in five stories. *Qualitative Inquiry, 20*(8), 1033–1044.

Beauchamp, C., Thomas, L. (2009). Understanding teacher identity: An overview of issues in the literature and implications for teacher education. *Cambridge Journal of Education, 39*(2), 175–189.

Behar, R. 1996. *The vulnerable observer: Anthropology that breaks your heart*. Boston: Beacon.

Beijaard, D., Meijer, P. C., Verloop, N. (2004). Reconsidering research on teachers' professional identity. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 20*(2), 107–128.

Ben-Peretz, M. (1995). *Memory and the teacher's account of teaching*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Bloom, L. & Munro, P. (1995). Conflicts of selves: Nonunitary subjectivity in women administrators' life history narratives. In J. Hatch & R. Wisniewski (Eds.). *Life history and narrative* (pp. 99–112). London: Falmer.

Bloomberg, L. D. & Volpe, M. F. (2015). *Completing your qualitative dissertation: A road map from beginning to end* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Boal, A. (1993). *Theatre of the oppressed*. New York, NY: Theatre Communications Group.

Boal, A. (2002). *Games for actors and non-actors* (2nd ed.). (A. Jackson, Trans.). New York, NY: Routledge.

Bresler, L., ed. (2004). *Knowing bodies, moving minds: Towards embodied teaching and learning*. Massachusetts: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Britzman, D. P. (2003). *Practice makes practice: A critical study of learning to teach*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Brown, R. (2017). Teaching love: "teaching the power of the word". *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 27*(7), 943–945.

Brown, R., & Heck, D. (2018). The construction of teacher identity in an alternative education context. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 76*, 50–57.

Bruckheimer, J. (Producer), Simpson, D. (Producer), & Smith, J. N. (Director). (1995). *Dangerous minds* [Motion Picture]. United States: Buena Vista Pictures.

Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble*. New York: Routledge.

Butler, J. (2005). *Giving an account of oneself*. New York: Fordham University Press.

Calabrese-Barton, A., Kang, H., Tan, E., O'Neill, T. B., Bautista-Guerra, J., Brecklin, C. (2013). Crafting a future in science: Tracing middle school girls' identity work over time and space. *American Education Research Journal, 50*, 37–75.

Caldas, B. (2017) Shifting discourses in teacher education: Performing the advocate bilingual teacher. *Arts Education Policy Review, 118*(4), 190–201.

Callier, D. M. (2011). Longing to be Langston. *Qualitative Inquiry, 17*(10), 956–961.

Case, S. (2012). Broken and buried in Arkansas: A nonfiction short story. In T. Barone & E. Eisner (Eds.), *Arts based research*, (pp. 73-100). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Casey, K. (2013). *I answer with my life: Life histories of women teachers working for social change*. New York, Routledge.

Chase, S. (2011). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA.

Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (1995). *Teachers' professional knowledge landscapes.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Clandinin, D. J. & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Cohen-Cruz, J. (2010). *Engaging performance: Theatre as call and response*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Coffey, S. & Street, B. (2008). Narrative and identity in the 'language learning project'. *The Modern Language Journal, 92*(3), 452–464.

Coulter, A. (1999). Paternalism or partnership: Patients have grown up – and there's no going back. *BMJ, 72*(12), 719–720.

Darling-Hammond, L., Wilhoit, G., & Pittenger, L. (2014). Accountability for college and career readiness: Developing a new paradigm. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, *22*(86).

Davies, B., & Gannon, S., (Eds.). (2006). *Doing collective biography*. England: Open University Press.

Day, C., Kington, A., Stobart, G., & Sammons, P. (2006). The personal and professional selves of teachers: Stable and unstable identities. *British Educational Research Journal, 32*(4), 601–616.

DeFina, A. (2011). Researcher and informant roles in narrative interactions: Constructions of belonging and foreignness. *Language in Society, 40,* 27–38.

Denzin, N. K. (2015). Disneyland Indians: circa Paris, 2014. *Qualitative Research, 15*(4), 506–524.

DeVito, D. (Producer), Shamberg, M. (Producer), Sher, S. (Producer), & LaGravenese, R. (Director). (2007). *Freedom writers* [Motion Picture]. United States: Paramount Pictures.

Dewey, J. (1934). *Art as experience*. New York: Penguin Putnam.

Dornan, T., Pearson, E., Carson, P., Helmich, E., and Bundy, C. (2015). Emotions and
identity in the figured world of becoming a doctor. *Medical Education, 49*(2),
174–185.

Ellis, C. & Bochner, A. P. (2003). Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity:
Researcher as subject. In N. K. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Collecting and
interpreting qualitative materials* (2nd ed., pp. 199–258). Thousand Oaks, CA:
Sage.

Ellsworth, E. (1989). Why doesn't this feel empowering? Working through the repressive
myths of critical pedagogy. *Harvard Educational Review, 59*(3), 297–324.

Feagin, J. R. (2013). *Systemic racism: A theory of oppression*. New York: Routledge.

Fisher, L. C. and Sterner, S. K. (2017). Making sense of the now. *Anthropology &
Education Quarterly,* 48: 362–370. doi: 10.1111/aeq.12217

Freedman, D. & Holmes, M., Eds. (2003). *The teacher's body: Embodiment, authority,
and identity in the academy*. New York: State University of New York Press.

Freire, P. (1972). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Herder and Herder.

Gee, J. P. (1990). *Social linguistics and literacies: Ideology in discourses*. London:
Falmer. Press.

Gee, J. P. (2001). Identity as an analytic lens for research in education. *Review of
Research in Education*, 25, 99–125.

Giroux, H. (1988). Literacy and the pedagogy of empowerment. *Literacy: Reading the
Word and the World, 38*(1), 61–75.

Golden, N. A. (2017). "There's still that window that's open": The problem with "grit".

    Urban Education, 62(3), 343–369.

González, N., Moll, L., & Amanti, C. (Eds). (2005). *Funds of knowledge: Theorizing*

    practices in households, communities and classrooms. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Grande, S. (2004). *Red pedagogy: Native American social and political thought*. Lanham,

    Md: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Greene, M. (1995). *Releasing the imagination: Essays on education, the arts, and social*

    change. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Hammerness, K., Darling-Hammond, L., Bransford, J., Berliner, D., Cochran-Smith, M.,

    McDonald, M., & Zeichner, K. (2005). How teachers learn and develop. In L.

    Darling-Hammond & J. Bransford (Eds.). *Preparing teachers for a changing*

    world: What teachers should learn and be able to do. San Francisco, CA: John

    Wiley & Sons.

Harris, J. (2006). *Rewriting: How to do things with texts*. Logan, Utah: Utah State

    University Press.

Haug, F. (1987). *Female sexualization: A collective work of memory*. Verso: New York.

Hill, E., Solomon, Y., Dornan, T., and Stalmeijer, R. (2015). 'You become a man in a

    man's world': Is there discursive space for women in surgery? *Medical Education,*

    49(12), 1207–1218.

Holland, D. C., Skinner, D., Lachicotte Jr., W., Cain, C. (1998). *Identity and agency in*

    cultural worlds. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*. New

    York: Routledge.

Hsieh, B. (2016). Professional Identity Formation as a Framework in Working with

    Preservice Secondary Teacher Candidates. *Teacher Education Quarterly, 43*(2),

    93–112.

Hughes-Decatur, H. (2011). Embodied literacies: Learning to first acknowledge and then

    read the body in education. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, *10(3),* 72–

    89.

Jupp, J. C., & Lensmire, T. J. (2016). Second-wave white teacher identity studies:

    Toward complexity and reflexivity in the racial conscientization of white

    teachers. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 29(8), 985–

    988. http://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2016.1189621

Kamler, B. (2001). Relocating the personal: A critical writing pedagogy. Albany, NY:

    State University of New York Press.

Kaufman, M., & Tectonic Theater Project. (2001). *The Laramie project*. New York:

    Vintage Books.

Kelly Pryor, B. N. (2016). "Hope's elevator": Young black women and the performance

    of identity. *Qualitative Inquiry, 22*(5), 406–416.

Kington, A., Stobart, G., & Sammons, P. (2006). The personal and professional selves of

    teachers: stable and unstable identities. *British Education Research Journal,*

    32(4), 601–616.

Kliebard, H. M. (1995). *The struggle for the American curriculum, 1893-1958*. New

    York: Routledge.

Kozol, J. (1991). *Savage inequalities: Children in America's schools*. New York:

    Random House.

Kumashiro, K. K. (2002). *Troubling education: Queer activism and antioppressive pedagogy*. New York: Routledge Falmer.

Kumpulainen, K., & Rajala, A. (2017). Dialogic teaching and students' discursive identity negotiation in the learning of science. *Learning and Instruction, 48*, 23–31.

Labov, W. (1972). *Language in the inner city*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Labov, W. & Waletzky, J. 1967. "Narrative analysis". *Essays on the Verbal and Visual Arts*, ed. J. Helm, 12-44. Seattle: U. of Washington Press. Reprinted in *Journal of Narrative and Life History* 7, 3–38, 1997.

Ladson-Billings, G. (*2014*). Culturally relevant pedagogy 2.0: a.k.a. the remix. *Harvard Educational Review, 84*(1), 74–84.

Lather, P., & Smithies, C. (1997). *Troubling the angels: Women living with HIV/AIDS*. Boulder, Colo: Westview Press.

Lather, P. & St. Pierre, E. (2013). Post-qualitative research, *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *26(6),* 629–633.

Lauriala, A., & Kukkonen, M. (2005). Teacher and student identities as situated cognitions. In P. Denicolo & M. Kompf (Eds.), *Connecting policy and practice: Challenges for teaching and learning in schools and universities* (pp. 199–208). Oxford: Routledge.

Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Lee, S. E. (2018). Mentoring new English writing teachers: Advice from experienced teachers. *English Teaching, 73*(2), 87–113.

Lensmire, T. J. (2000). *Powerful writing/responsible teaching*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Leonardo, Z. (2002). The Souls of White Folk: Critical pedagogy, whiteness studies, and globalization discourse. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 5*(1), 29–50.

Lewis, C. & Crampton, A. (2016). Literacy, emotion, and the teaching/learning body. In Enriquez, G., Johnson, E., Kontovourki, S., and Mallozzi, C. (Eds.) *Literacies, learning, and the body: Putting theory and research into pedagogical practice*. New York: Routledge.

Lewis, C., Enciso, P., & Moje, E. (Eds.) (2007). *Reframing sociocultural research on literacy: Identity, Agency, and Power.* New York: Routledge.

Li, J. (2010). 'My home and my school': Examining immigrant adolescent narratives from the critical sociocultural perspective. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 13*(1), 119–137.

Matias, C. E. & Mackey, J. (2016). Breakin' down whiteness in antiracist teaching: Introducing critical whiteness pedagogy. *The Urban Review, 48*(1), 32–50.

Mienczakowski, J. (2003). The theater of ethnography: The reconstruction of ethnography into theater with emancipatory potential. *Turning Points in Qualitative Research: Tying Knots in a Handkerchief, 1*(3), 415–432.

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). California: Sage.

MnEDS Research Group. (2016). *CEHD dispositions assessment*. Minneapolis, MN: Regents of the University of Minnesota. Morris, D. B. (2001). Narrative, ethics and pain: Thinking with stories. *Narrative, 9*(1), 55–77.

Morris, D. B. (2001). Narrative, ethics and pain: Thinking with stories. *Narrative, 9*(1), 55-77.

Morris, P. (Ed.). (1994). *The Bakhtin reader: Selected writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev, Voloshinov*. (L. Matejka, I. R. Titunik, M. Holquist, & C. Emerson, Trans.). London, UK: Arnold.

Nasir, N., & Shah, N. (2011). On Defense: African American Males Making Sense of Racialized Narratives in Mathematics Education. *Journal of African American Males in Education, 2*(1), 24–45.

National Center for Education Statistics. (2018). Number and percentage distribution of teachers in public and private elementary and secondary schools, by selected teacher characteristics: Selected years, 1987–88 through 2015–16. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/tables/dt17_209.10.asp?current=yes

United States. National Commission on Excellence in Education. (1983). *A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform: A report to the Nation and the Secretary of Education*. United States Department of Education. Washington, D.C.: The Commission: [Supt. of Docs., U.S. G.P.O. distributor].

O'Connor, K.E. (2008). 'You choose to care': Teachers, emotions and professional identity. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 24*(1), 117–126.

O'Neal, J. (2011). Guidelines for story circles. *Acting Together on the World Stage: Tools for Continuing the Conversation*, 3–5.

Olsen, B. (2011). "I am large, I contain multitudes": Teacher identity as a useful frame for research, practice, and diversity in teacher education. In Ball, A. F., & Tyson, C. A. (Eds.), *The American educational research association handbook on*

studying diversity in teacher education (pp. 257–273). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Paris, D. (2012). Culturally sustaining pedagogy: A needed change in stance, terminology, and practice. *Educational Researcher, 41*(3), 93–97.

Parkison, P. (2008). Space for performing teacher identity: through the lens of Kafka and Hegel. *Teachers and Teaching, 14*(1), 51–60.

Pew Research Center. (2016). America's shrinking middle class: A close look at changes within metropolitan areas. Retrieved from https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2016/05/11/americas-shrinking-middle-class-a-close-look-at-changes-within-metropolitan-areas/

Pifer, D. A. (1999). Small town race: A performance text. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *5*(4), 541–562.

Pinnegar, S. & Daynes, J. G. (2007). Locating narrative inquiry historically: Thematics in the turn to narrative. In D. J. Clandinin (Ed.). *Handbook of narrative inquiry: Mapping a Methodology* (pp. 3-34). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publication, Inc.

Pollock, M. (2004). Colormute: Race talk dilemmas in an American school. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Rolling, J. H. Jr. (2013). *Arts-based research primer*. New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.

Sachs, J. (2005). Teacher education and the development of professional identity: learning to be a teacher. In *Connecting policy and practice: Challenges for teaching and learning in schools and universities*, Edited by: Denicolo, P. and Kompf, M. 5–21. Oxford: Routledge.

Sacks, Harvey. 1992. *Lectures on Conversation*. Vol. I and Vol. II. Edited by Gail

 Jefferson. Oxford: Blackwell.

Saldaña, J. (2003). Dramatizing data: A primer. *Qualitative Inquiry, 9*(2), 218–236.

Saldaña, J. (2005). *Ethnodrama: An anthology of reality theatre*. Walnut Creek, CA:

 AltaMira Press.

Saldaña, J. (2015). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed.). Thousand

 Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Saldaña, J., & Wolcott, H. F. (2001). *Finding my place: The Brad trilogy*. Unpublished

 Manuscript.

Sangha, J. K., Slade, B., Mirchandani, K., Maitra, S., & Shan, H. (2012). An ethnodrama

 on work-related learning in precarious jobs. *Qualitative Inquiry, 18*(3), 286–296.

Schaefer, L., Downey, C. A., & Clandinin, D. J., (2014). Shifting from stories to live by

 to stories to leave by: Early career teacher attrition. *Teacher Education Quarterly,*

 41(1). 9–27.

Sfard, A. & Prusak, A. (2005). Telling Identities: In Search of an Analytic Tool for

 Investigating Learning as a Culturally Shaped Activity. *Educational Researcher,*

 34(4), 14–22.

Shalaby, C. (2017). *Troublemakers: Lessons in freedom from young children at*

 school. New York, NY: The New Press.

Shelton, N. R. & McDermott, M. (2010). Using literature and drama to understand social

 justice. *Teacher Development, 14*(1), 123–135.

Smith, A. D. (1993). *Fires in the mirror*. New York: Doubleday.

Smith, L. T. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*. London: Zed Books.

Snaza, N. & Lensmire, T. J. (2006). Abandon voice? Pedagogy, the body, and late capitalism. *InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies.* Vol. 2, Issue 2, Article 3. http://repositories.cdlib.org/gseis/interactions/vol2/iss2/art3

Sowel, M. (2017). Effective practices for mentoring beginning middle school teachers: Mentor's perspectives. *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas, 90*(4), 129-134.

Sparks, J., Tsemenhu, R.,; Green, R., Truby, W., Brockmeier, L. L., Noble, K. D. (2017). Investigating new teacher mentoring practices. *National Teacher Education Journal, 10*(1), 59–65.

St. Pierre, E. (2015). Afterward. In M. Perry & C. Medina (Eds.) *Methodologies of embodiment: inscribing bodies in qualitative research.* New York: Routledge.

Strauss, V. (2018). How are America's public schools really doing?. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2018/10/15/how-are-americas-public-schools-really-doing/?utm_term=.f671f916f070

Stutelberg, E. (2016). These are stories about our bodies: Collective memory work and the pedagogical imaginaries of our teacher bodies (Doctoral Dissertation). Retrieved from Proquest Dissertation & Theses. (10153283)

Talmy, S. (2011). The interview as collaborative achievement: Interaction, identity and ideology in a speech event. *Applied Linguistics, 32* (1), 25–42.

Taylor, J., Namey, E., Johnson, A. C., & Guest G. (2017). Beyond the page: A process

    review of using ethnodrama to disseminate research findings. *Journal of Health*

    Communication, 22, 532–544.

Thandeka. (1999). *Learning to be white*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Publishing Inc.

Thomas, L., & Beauchamp, C. (2007). Learning to live well as teachers in a changing

    world: Insights into the development of a professional identity in teacher

    education. The Journal of Educational Thought, 41(3), 229–243.

Tusting, K. (2005). Language and power in communities of practice. In D. Barton & K,

    Tusting, (Eds.), *Beyond Communities of Practice* (36–54). New York, Cambridge

    University Press.

Urrieta, L. (2007). Figured worlds and education: An introduction to the special

    issue. *The Urban Review*, *39*, 107–116.

Vanover, C. (2016). Inquiry theater. *Qualitative Inquiry, 22*(4), 238–248.

Vanover, C. (2017). From connection to distance: Using the practice of arts-based

    research to interpret field work. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, 46*(1),

    51–80.

Vanover, C., & Saldaña, J. (2005). Chalkboard concerto: Growing up as a teacher in the

    Chicago Public Schools. In J. Saldaña (Ed.), *Ethnodrama: An anthology of reality*

    theatre. New York, NY: Alta Mira.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological*

    processes. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1994). The problem of the cultural development of the child. In R. Van

    Der Veer & J. Valsiner (Eds.), *The Vygotsky reader* (pp. 57-72). Oxford, UK:

    Oxford University Press.

Wallace, D. F. (2009). *This is water: Some thoughts, delivered on a significant occasion,*

    about living a compassionate life. New York, NY: Hachette Book Group.

Watkins, W. H. (2001). *The white architects of black education: Ideology and power in*

    America, 1865–1954. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*.

    Cambridge, U.K: Cambridge University Press.

Wortham, S. (2001). *Narratives in action: A strategy for research and analysis*. New

    York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Wortham, S., Mortimer, K., Lee, K., Allard, E., & White, K.D. (2011). Interviews as

    interactional data. *Language & Society, 40,* 39–50.

Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of

    community cultural wealth. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, *8*(1), 69–91.

    http://doi.org/10.1080/1361332052000341006

Zembylas, M. (2018). Rethinking the demands for 'preferred' teacher professional

    identities: Ethical and political implications. *Teacher and Teacher Education, 76*,

    78–85.

Zembylas, M. Charalambous, P., & Charalambous, C. (2012). Manifestations of Greek-

    Cypriot teachers' discomfort toward a peace education initiative: Engaging with

    discomfort pedagogically. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 28*(8), 1071–1082.

Zipes, J. (2004). *Speaking out: Storytelling and creative drama for children*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Appendix A: Individual Interview Protocol

Opening Script

I'm interviewing you today to learn more about the stories you encounter as a new teacher. The findings from this study will be used for my dissertation. The findings may also be shared in presentations and articles. My hope is that it will provide new teachers and those involved in teacher education with helpful perspectives for their work with and as teachers.

During the interview, please let me know if you want me to repeat or restate a question. If you do not wish to answer a question, you can just say, "I want to pass on the question." Also, the recorder may be turned off at any point, upon your request.

Do you have any questions before we begin the interview? [After answering questions or if there are no questions]. I'm going to turn on the recorder now so that we can begin the interview.

1. How would you describe your experiences in becoming a teacher?
   a. You might consider your time as a licensure student, student teacher, or licensed teacher.
   b. Were these surprising or expected experiences?
   c. What were the take-aways for you from these experiences (either directly named during the experiences or implicit)?
2. In your opinion, what does it mean to be a teacher?
   a. What are the characteristics of a teacher?
   b. What does a teacher look like?
   c. What do teachers do?
   d. What are the struggles that teachers encounter?
   e. What are the possibilities for teachers? What can they accomplish? What might they work towards or grow to do?
3. How would you describe the ways your licensure program imagined teacher identity (e.g. who a teacher is and what a teacher does)?
   a. How often was this idea presented?
   b. What were some of the activities or situations in which these ideas about teacher identity occurred?
4. How was this supported, complicated, or challenged in your student teaching experience? (e.g. by a Cooperating Teacher, colleagues, students, admin, parents)
   a. How often was this idea presented?
   b. What were some of the activities or situations in which these ideas about teacher identity occurred?
5. How would you describe the ways teacher identity has been constructed in your first year(s) as a teacher? (e.g. by you, students, parents, admin, other faculty, other staff)
   a. How often was this idea presented?

     b. What were some of the activities or situations in which these ideas about teacher identity occurred?

6. How have your experiences related to teacher identity (at any point from your licensure program to now) contributed to your development of your own teacher identity and/or understandings or thoughts around what it means to be a teacher?

7. How would you describe the impact of the stories you've encountered that inform your identity as a teacher on your pedagogy?
     a. How have the stories you've heard and the identity you've constructed impacted your interactions with student and other faculty or staff?
     b. How have the stories you've heard and the identity you've constructed impacted your curriculum or the strategies you use to teach?

8. How would you describe the impact of the stories you've encountered that inform your identity as a teacher on relationships in your classroom?
     a. How have the stories you've heard and the identity you've constructed impacted the way you care for students?
     b. How have the stories you've heard and the identity you've constructed impacted the way you care about student performance?
     c. How have the stories you've heard and the identity you've constructed impacted your classroom management?

9. How have the stories you've heard and the identity you've constructed impacted your work with other people?
     a. Students (inside or outside classroom)
     b. School colleagues
     c. School leaders
     d. District facilitators
     e. Families
     f. Community

10. What advice do you have for other teachers who are working to understand the stories they've heard and the identity they're constructing in their licensure or teaching settings?

11. What else would you like to share to help me understand the stories you've heard and the identity you've constructed during your licensure program and first year(s) teaching? [Important question. Be sure to ask even if short on time.]

Appendix B: I Statements

Person 1

1. I am an only child.
2. I tend to stay quiet in groups.
3. I have run a red light in the past 6 months.
4. I feel comfortable talking about my religious beliefs or lack thereof.
5. I feel satisfied.
6. I have changed careers.
7. I have been in a Synagogue.
8. I believe in spirits.
9. I have been in a building where I felt I did not belong.
10. I feel stuck.

Person 2

11. I am afraid of some people.
12. Comfort is important to me.
13. I trust most people.
14. I feel like I am safe.
15. I have been talked about behind my back.
16. I have talked about others behind their back.
17. I play an instrument.
18. I have a pet.
19. I have seen the Northern Lights.
20. I think things are going in the right direction.

Person 3

21. I have regret.
22. I am in contact with people outside of the U.S.
23. I enjoy weddings.
24. I feel sad.
25. I like not knowing.
26. I feel free.
27. I am hesitant.
28. I am skeptical.
29. I am loved.
30. Schools are places of learning.
31. I have ideas about how to improve my school.