Teacher Life: A Narrative Inquiry into the Storied Knowledge of Teachers

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Abstract

Teacher development has traditionally focused upon the technical side of teaching—lesson planning, educational technology, and classroom management. The true work of teachers, however, is best understood using the conceptual framework of practical reasoning—how teachers decide what actions to take. Aristotle claimed that practical reasoning comes from action, but also guides that action. Shulman called this the "wisdom of the practice," which is an apt description of teacher knowledge—both teacher knowledge itself as well as the ways in which it is produced.

In this narrative inquiry dissertation study, I gathered a group of six teachers in an inquiry group to discuss a common text and to share stories of our teaching practices. Additionally, I conducted a semi-structured interview with each teacher. The narratives that I collected, analyzed, and (re)told give insight into the storied nature of the knowledge of teachers, as well as the ways in which teacher knowledge is developed and can be used in the education of teachers.

In this dissertation, I develop a new conception of teacher development, which I call "teacher life." Teacher life describes the complex and nuanced process of becoming in the lives of teachers. It also speaks to the ways in which our professional and personal lives combine to move us into new places as teachers and as people. By connecting the storied nature of teacher knowledge with the theoretical framework of practical reasoning, I describe teacher life as a concept defined by moments in a teacher's life and the commitments that they make. I explore the key components of constructing a teacher life,

and suggest a pedagogy for teacher development, case-based teaching, that uses the stories that we teachers tell and the knowledge those stories contain.

Teacher life, as a concept, offers teacher educators a new way to consider the development of teachers. With the careful and intentional curation of the lived experiences of teachers, communicated through the medium of story, the knowledge that is intrinsic to, as well as a product of, teacher's practical reasoning could be brought to bear in the development of teachers at all stages of their careers.

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It would be pleasant to be able to say of my travels with Charley, “I went out to find the truth about my country and I found it.” And then it would be such a simple matter to set down my findings and lean back comfortably with a fine sense of having discovered truths and taught them to my readers. I wish it were that easy. But what I carried in my head and deeper in my perceptions was a barrel of worms. I discovered long ago in collecting and classifying marine animals that what I found was closely intermeshed with how I felt at the moment. External reality has a way of being not so external after all.

John Steinbeck, *Travels with Charley*, p. 209

Chapter 1
Introduction

"It is also, in significant and
indelible ways, my story."

I am a teacher.

In fact, I have been a teacher for longer than I have been almost anything else, except alive. Longer than I've been a husband, longer than I've been a father, longer, in many ways, than I've been an adult. I have, since the beginning of my career, cared very deeply about teachers, our craft, and the profession. This is the same impetus that I feel in my desire to be a teacher educator.

How did I get here?

When I was in the very early stages of developing this dissertation, I went to the modern oracle, the seeming and alleged font of all current knowledge—Google—to see what other people had done and were doing that passed for doctoral research. To be honest, I really didn't know what I wanted to research. One of the issues that I have had throughout my graduate program is that nearly everything that I read, heard, or took a class on was

interesting to me.[1] I would describe myself, academically speaking, as something of an intellectual omnivore.

So what, then, to research? In reading abstract after abstract of published and non-published dissertations in education, I realized that I needed to choose a topic that was close to my heart—this is perhaps the only way that a dissertation project is sustainable and therefore ultimately realizable.

Nearly all of the most compelling courses that I took in my graduate program dealt with teachers and teaching. I found intrinsic kinship with my fellow graduate students who were teachers. In the schools that I work in, I find myself organizing book clubs and informal professional development and learning communities for like-minded teachers and serving in leadership positions that I think benefit teachers and our profession. Being a teacher, for me, is something that I do; it is my job. It goes beyond that, however. Teaching is an act that involves the mind and the heart. To do it well, it becomes part of one's life—it has for me, anyway. Teaching is important, and it is an important part of me, of who I am. From these ruminations came the realization that I needed to research teachers.

My peregrinations in the murky underworld of a Google Scholar search for "education dissertation" provided me with another key insight that guided my choice of dissertation topic. I saw many dissertations that focused on esoteric topics and were overly theoretical in their approach, so much so that they would seem to be of limited practical use to teachers, despite being work done in the field of—and supposedly in service to—education.

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[1] Except for those stats classes. Sheesh.

It called to my mind a poem that I first encountered in a high school English class[2] more than three decades ago:

To be of use

by Marge Piercy

(verses 3 -5)

I want to be with people who submerge

in the task, who go into the fields to harvest

and work in a row and pass the bags along,

who are not parlor generals and field deserters

but move in a common rhythm

when the food must come in or the fire be put out.

The work of the world is common as mud.

Botched, it smears the hands, crumbles to dust.

But the thing worth doing well done

has a shape that satisfies, clean and evident.

Greek amphoras for wine or oil,

Hopi vases that held corn, are put in museums

but you know they were made to be used.

[2] Thank you, Ms. Blom! (English 12, Patrick Henry High School)

The pitcher cries for water to carry

and a person for work that is real.

The lines of this poem by Marge Piercy (1982) gave me direction for my research in two ways. The third verse of the poem (the first in the excerpt) precisely and succinctly describes the teachers who I respect and are privileged to call my colleagues. They are the ones "who submerge in the task," who "are not parlor generals and field deserters," and whose work is very, very "real." The teachers who graciously and generously agreed to collaborate with me in this study are indeed such people.

I realized too, that this study needed to be *of use*. Of use to me in achieving this degree that I have been chasing for more than a decade, to be certain. But much more importantly, my research needed to *be of use* to teachers and to the profession of teaching. It needed to serve a purpose, both in the end product but also during the course of the research. This emphasis on both process and product, and the melding of the two into a singular entity, will be a recurring theme in this dissertation.

As a result, I decided to recruit a small group of teachers from my school to serve as co-researchers with me in the process. My hope, as I formulated my research questions and diligently planned my conceptual framework and methodology, was that my co-researchers—my colleagues, my friends—would benefit from this research project as well. My fervent hope is that this process, and our time together, has been "of use" to them.

This study has both personal and professional significance for me. It is a continuation and furthering of the interest in the practice and craft of teaching. In this sense, it feels true to me, because by conducting research about teachers and teaching, I was able to deepen my own understanding about my profession. This was not only intellectually interesting for me, but also helped me in my perpetual quest to become a better teacher myself. Finally, I hope that this study will support a research trajectory for my future scholarship that will always invite teachers into the research process (Elbaz, 1981) in meaningful, authentic, and generative ways.

Learning with my colleagues

As I thought about designing a study that would be of use to not only me but also my colleagues, I grounded my thinking in a past project that I developed at my school. Four years ago, I formed a voluntary, opt-in group of teachers and staff who wanted to learn and talk about issues of equity in our school and in education more broadly. A group of about a dozen staff (teachers, office staff, and paraprofessionals) met bi-weekly for the entire school year at a local bar to discuss a common text that we had collaboratively chosen, *A Good Time for the Truth* (Shin, 2016).

This experience proved to be an enlightening one on several levels. I was able to get to know and connect with some of my colleagues with whom I had previously had limited contact. The exchange of ideas, while always respectful and thoughtful, was in turns thought-provoking, intellectually and emotionally challenging, and, ultimately, affirming. Some of the stories that we shared were joyful, even triumphant; some difficult, even painful; some were venting; some were celebratory. They all resonated with us, collectively

and individually. Each story, somehow, on some level, found its mark within our teacher selves, within our teacher lives. The connections that we forged in those conversations went beyond surface-level collegiality, extending into professional collaborations and personal connections.

In this study, I wanted to emulate that process, because all of us felt that the process was *of use* to us. Of course, it helped that the teachers who responded to my initial recruitment letter for this study were friends, people with whom I enjoyed spending time and discussing teaching and education. I had read part of a book called *Troublemakers*, by Carla Shalaby (2017)[3] in a course in my graduate program. It proved to be a challenging and thought-provoking book for me to read—and I wanted to share it with my colleagues. *Troublemakers* focuses on the ways in which kids who do not hew closely to the "norm" in school are othered, labeled, and treated in schools. It made me hold my own practice as a teacher up to the proverbial mirror and think through the ways in which my teaching does and does not meet the needs of all of my students. I wanted to bring this same experience to my friends and colleagues—to be of use to them. As I will discuss below, this happened in a curious and somewhat unexpected way.

The group—whose members I positioned as co-researchers—met as an inquiry and discussion group over the span of two months. I also conducted a one-on-one conversation with each teacher after the group meetings finished. These conversations, in the group and individually, were the data that I collected and subsequently analyzed for this dissertation.

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[3] Thanks to Dr. Jehanne Beaton (Narrative Inquiry course, University of Minnesota) for giving me the gift of this book.

So many questions, even more answers…

As I began the research process, I had a set of research questions that were different than those that inform and structure this study. Originally, I intended to examine the ways in which teachers make decisions and how they think about their interactions with students, especially students who are different from them racially, linguistically, economically, socially, and culturally. As I heard and listened to the stories that the teachers in this study told, I realized that I was learning about something that was markedly different. The narratives that the teachers related told, individually and collectively, a story of *becoming*. As a result, I adapted my methodology as well as my research questions. The questions that ultimately guided this study are:

1. How do teachers' stories about their practice, when stimulated by a common book reading about teaching practice, give insight into how they construct their lives as teachers?
2. What do these insights from teachers' lives suggest for teacher education practices?

These questions inform and frame this dissertation, from the conceptual framework and the methodology through the data collection and analysis.

Practical reasoning as a theoretical framework

The main theoretical framework upon which the study rests is practical reasoning. The work that we teachers do is, at its root, practical work. It follows, then, that a

consideration of the development of teachers as professionals and as people should be rooted, conceptually and theoretically, in practical reasoning.

Practical reasoning, however, can be a slippery concept to define. As Audi (1989) attests, practical reasoning "has little life in ordinary parlance and a multiple personality in the philosophical literature" (p. 3). To provide a bit of traction in the definition of this concept, I'll offer two points that will additionally help to define practical reasoning. The first is that practical reasoning is agentic, in that it addresses what is to be done – it provides a basis or foundation for action. The second is that practical reasoning has, as its goal, a 'knowing' or understanding of the issue at hand. It is not like the traditional conception of learning in which there is customarily a knowledge-based end point, a sense of having *acquired* a new bit of information. Acquired knowledge is discrete, in the sense that it can be *had*—possessed and stored, ready to be articulated or used at a later date in a different context. Practical reasoning, however, "is primarily a deliberative capacity" (Reeve, 2013, p. 11). It is focused less upon the accumulation and assimilation of new information or knowledge, and more focused on determining the proper (or best) course of action or what is to be done in a specific situation.

Practical reasoning, despite being a form of reasoning that is both vital and intrinsic to our daily existence, is often denigrated and poorly understood, due to modern connotations of the word 'practical,' which is commonly understood to be synonymous with terms such as 'pragmatic,' or 'competent' (Brickhouse, Stanley, & Whitson, 1993). Brickhouse and colleagues extend this argument to say that practical reasoning "is often understood as involving nothing more than instrumental skill or technical proficiency" (p. 364). They provide the necessary philosophical rejoinder to this view on the same page,

contending that "we need to understand that it is not possible for humans to have a purely instrumental or technical competence" (p. 364). Instead, the technical competence that we possess as human beings in the various areas of our lives is tempered, even guided, by practical reasoning.

Practical reasoning is especially important in the lives of teachers. It guides not only our day-to-day actions in classrooms with our students, but also the ways in which we structure and construct our lives as teachers. It is, in the end, how we are *of use* to ourselves, our students, and our profession.

I recently went to a high school Robotics competition that was held in the gym of one of my old elementary schools—the school where I attended 4th grade. The school is now closed and unused, except for the occasional event held there and storage for the school district. Most of the school, including the classrooms and main office, is empty, showing the general dinginess, dirt, and dust that years of disuse bring.

On the way there, I mentioned to one of the teenaged robotics team members who was riding with me that it was, in fact, where I went to one year of elementary school. She asked, "Are you going to find your locker?" Despite the fact that 4th grade is very nearly four decades in the rearview mirror at this point in my life, I remembered very clearly where Mr. Jankowski's class—my class—was, on the second floor, halfway down the hallway. Same for Mrs. Sanderson's class, where I went for reading, and the class one door down the hallway in the other direction where Lisa, the cute girl who was the first real "like" of my young life, spent her days.

As I walked the deserted, dusty, dirty hallway towards my old classroom (and I do think of it as "mine," even all these years later), memories flooded back. The Pony hightops that I had to have that year for my school shoes, the Dallas Cowboys backpack that I chose, mainly because it was my older (and über cool) cousin Lee's favorite team, and the freaking rice cakes that I had every day for lunch instead of bread because of my allergies.

When I got to the door of what I discovered was room 212, I paused for a moment, somehow 9 years old again, but not really. As I crossed the threshold, I was struck by the utter and complete emptiness of the room. It was, of course, devoid of any desks, tables, chairs, pencils, or anything that suggested its former vibrant and fully alive life as a classroom. The emptiness was more than that, though. It was bereft*, as though its soul had left. I could see, in my mind's eye, the four rows of desks, arranged in two rows facing each other, on one end of the room, the teacher's desk up against the window in the middle, and the kidney-shaped reading table on the other end by the low, now-cloudy blackboard that once held weekly spelling words. I could hear, in the ear of my heart, the chatter of the kids—white, black, and brown, like an inner city, low-rent Benetton ad.*

I felt a sense of nostalgia for times gone by—simpler times, perhaps. But more than that, I felt, in the depths of my being, a sense not of despair, exactly, but perhaps melancholy. The emptiness—the lack of kids, teachers, joy, sadness, longing, learning—was palpable in my mind, in my heart, and in my soul. It felt as though the classroom were yearning to be full again, incomplete somehow without the cacophonic presence of young people and their teacher learning and living together.

My life now, as an adult, is the life of a teacher. Walking into room 212 at Buchanan Elementary School on the northside of my city, I saw—no, it was more than 'saw.' I felt, I

experienced, I lived that room not only as a former student, but on a deeper, more profound level as a current teacher. Feeling the haunting emptiness of that space made me realize the impact that teachers have in the world. That room was made by my teacher, in ways both extraordinary and mundane, compassionate and harsh, whimsical and serious.

Teacher life, the concept that I will develop in this dissertation, allows me to really feel Room 212 in a physical, emotional, and very personal manner that a friend (who was in that same class with me that year) did not get in the same way. When I recounted this experience to her, her comment to me was, "That's cool that you were there. Must have been kinda weird, huh?" No. It was way beyond "weird" —my teacher life connects me in powerful ways to that room, and to all the rooms in which I have learned and taught over the past [cough] 43 [cough] years since I began kindergarten. It transcends a personal connection and it transcends a professional connection as well—it's more than both of those things, and somehow different than both as well. The nature of teacher life is the subject of this dissertation, but it is also, in significant and indelible ways, my story.

Chapter 2
Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

"Yes. Those three are teachers. We just
have to teach them how to do it."

The everyday goings-on in a classroom are what van Manen (1991) calls "pedagogical situations." These incidents—moments in time, really—permeate and shape the days and lives of teachers in classrooms and schools the world over. From instructional decisions such as which book to use to teach a particular lesson or how best to help a student understand two-digit multiplication, to immediately recognizing and responding to an angry, sad, excited, or indifferent student, to simply deciding how to respond to a student's question, these seemingly infinite decisions that teachers encounter during the course of a day at school represent the actual work of an educator, more than lesson plans, assessments, and test scores. It is a teacher's understandings of and reactions to these pedagogical moments that define the culture and functionality of a classroom or educational setting, as well as the effectiveness and efficacy of a teacher's practice.

How to react to and find meaning in these situations is rarely taught or discussed in teacher preparation programs (Clarke, Triggs, & Nielsen, 2010). Additionally, many new teachers find themselves un- or under-prepared for dealing with these types of scenarios (see e.g., Blocker & Swetnam, 2010; Kingen, 1984; Zeichner, 2010), which very often get lumped into the vague, catch-all phrase "classroom management." New teachers very often become discouraged and even disillusioned by the profession in their first years (Kagan,

1992; Liston, Whitcomb, & Borko, 2006; Tabachnick, 1980; Vilani, 2002), despite perhaps feeling comfortable implementing the instructional tools and techniques they have acquired in their teacher preparation programs.

If reacting to or dealing with scenarios like those listed above is in fact part and parcel of what we do as teachers, then perhaps the most pressing question for a researcher interested in teachers, teaching, and learning pertains to the type of knowledge that a teacher must possess to successfully navigate these incidents. What kind(s) of knowledge must teachers have and draw upon to react in an appropriate and positive manner to one's students in each and every situation that arises in our classrooms? How do we, in the words of Thomas Aquinas, undertake "right reasoning about what is to be done" (Aquinas, 1272/1966)?

The pondering of how teachers come to "do the right thing" in interactions with their students is the question that informs the choice of the theoretical and conceptual framework for this dissertation. In this chapter, I will examine three different scholarly and philosophical perspectives on teachers' knowledge, each of which falls under the umbrella term of "practical reasoning." In chapter 1, I provided a brief introduction to the concept of practical reasoning. In the sections that follow, I will further develop this idea, using the thought and writings of three scholars whose work is foundational to practical reasoning. First, I will describe a classical conception of practical reasoning, that of *phronesis*, which comes from Aristotle. I will then turn to the work of Max van Manen, who described this type of knowledge as "pedagogical tact." Next, I will consider the work of Michael Polyani, who discusses practical reasoning as well, labeling it "tacit knowledge." I will then work to synthesize these different names for practical reasoning, drawing out similarities and

highlighting key differences between them. Finally, I close the chapter with a brief discussion that connects the literature surrounding teacher development with the concept of practical reasoning.

"Phronesis," said Aristotle

Aristotle was the first philosopher or scholar to give intentional and direct attention to the issue of practical reasoning. For him, the consideration and classification of practical reasoning was part of a larger examination of knowledge in general, which he principally does in *Nicomachean Ethics*, as well as in other books to a lesser extent.

For Aristotle, every thought or bit of reasoning falls into one of three broad categories: theoretical (*theoretike*), productive (*poietike*), or practical (*praktike*) (Metaphysics, 1025b25)[4]. This tri-partite conception of knowledge appears repeatedly in his writings (Orton, 1997). In order to come to an understanding of how Aristotle understands practical reasoning, a brief examination of what practical reasoning is not will prove illustrative.

The first category of knowledge, or reasoning, that Aristotle describes is theoretical reasoning, what he called "*sophia*." This class of reasoning, according to Aristotle, is "the most precise and perfect form of knowledge" (EN, 1141a17). It encompasses both intelligence (*nous*) and scientific reasoning (*episteme*) (EN, 1141a19). Intelligence is the base upon which science rests; it is the foundation for scientific understanding and discovery

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[4] For the balance of this paper, I will follow academic convention, both for abbreviations of Aristotle's work as well as references to particular passages within them. His *Metaphysics* will be abbreviated to 'Met.' and his *Nicomachean Ethics* will be referred to as 'EN,' based on the Latin title for the work, *Ethica Nicomachea*. The numerical citations refer to specific passages according to the Brekker pagination scheme.

(EN 1140b34). Scientific reasoning, in contrast, is reasoning that comes not only from intelligence, but also from logic. Aristotle's litmus test for scientific reasoning is that the starting points of the logical progression must be known and able to be articulated (EN 1139b32-34).

Productive reasoning, what Aristotle called *poietike*, is typified by art and applied science (*techne*) (Orton, 1997). *Techne*, which can also be translated as "making" or "production," has as its final result "a durable outcome, a product or state of affairs (a house, a goblet, a person restored to good health) which can be precisely specified by the maker before he engages in the activity" (Dunne, 1993, p. 9). In short, the end result of techne is a discrete product, whether tangible or not. This is, Dunne continues, the "kind of knowledge possessed by an expert maker" (1993, p. 9). Aristotle calls the act of production *poiesis*.

The final form of reasoning in Aristotle's writing is *praktike*, or practical reasoning. This form of reasoning is differentiated from the others because it deals specifically and intentionally with action and doing. Aristotle calls this form of reasoning *phronesis*, which has been variously translated as "practical intelligence," "practical wisdom," or "prudence" (Birmingham, 2004). Phronesis lies in direct contrast to techne, because while techne is the expert knowledge of a craft and a strong sense and understanding of the process by which something is made, phronesis is the understanding of how to live well, and how to act properly in a given situation. This type of reasoning is not simply what we might call "decorum," "manners," or "good behavior," although one could argue that it does include those things. Instead, phronesis is more concerned with the manner in which an individual reacts to situations such as those outlined at the beginning of this chapter. Indeed, Aristotle states, quite plainly, that "making and acting are different" (EN 1140a2-5) and that

"phronesis cannot be … techne … because making and acting are different kinds of things" (EN 1140b1-4).

Phronesis can be further distinguished from techne in that while techne is focused upon the completion of a pre-determined (or at least pre-known) end goal, phronesis does not, and in fact, cannot, have the same end, since it is reasoning related to right action. This means that phronesis, as a process as well as a type of reasoning, must be subject to continual redefinition and reinvention. A related distinction between the two types of reasoning or knowing is in what might be termed the "productive" aspect of each. *Poiesis*, as previously described, is the act of making or producing something. The related concept in practical reasoning is *praxis*, which Aristotle considers to be action or conduct in the public sphere with others without an ulterior motive, aimed at the improvement of the greater community.[5]

In addition to defining phronesis by distinguishing it from the other types of Aristotelian reasoning, it is important to describe specifically what it is. The most succinct definition that Aristotle offers is found in *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 6, in which he writes that phronesis is "a state of grasping the truth, involving reason, concerned with action about things that are good or bad for a human being" (1140b5-8). This is a seemingly simple definition, but it has several powerful and meaningful words that bear closer examination.

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[5] It is important to note here that the Aristotelian conception of *praxis* is markedly different from the use of the term by contemporary scholars from the critical tradition, such as Paulo Freire and other critical pedagogues. See, for example, Freire, 2000; Shor, 1992; Giroux, 1988; hooks, 1994. For a broader conception of praxis, see Arendt, 1958 and Gramsci, 1992.

The first significant term is “grasping,” which implies not only a lack of pre-ordination, as mentioned previously, but also a lack of certitude about the course of action that one is to take. This grasping, however, is tempered in the next clause by the word “reason,” which shows that Aristotle considers phronesis to be orderly and conforming to a process; it is not the random flailing about that one might imagine implied by his use of “grasping.” In this instance, a better image than “grasping” might be “seeking.”

Next in this humble definition is the word “action,” which underscores that which is the main defining characteristic of phronesis—that it is wholly concerned with action, and the underlying knowledge or reasoning that shapes our individual courses of action in (or in reaction to) everyday circumstances in which we find ourselves.

Lastly, we arrive at an interesting component of this definition—that phronesis is concerned with action about things *that are good or bad for a human being*. This phrase implies—perhaps mandates—a moral dimension to phronesis. This moral aspect bears further consideration, especially since it is the only one of the conceptions of reasoning that Aristotle discusses that includes explicit conceptions of morality.

To be sure, Aristotle imbues phronesis with a moral component when he classifies it as a Virtue. Actions are related to virtue but are not inherent to it; virtuous action is a result of and flows from a virtuous character (Birmingham, 2004). It is not enough, Aristotle claims, to profess one’s moral nature, but it must also be evidenced in one’s actions. The connection between phronesis and virtue of character is complete, according to Aristotle. “Practical wisdom [phronesis] … is linked to virtue of character, and this to practical wisdom, since the principles of practical wisdom are in accordance with the moral virtues and rightness in morals is in accordance with practical wisdom” (EN 1140a15).

The moral dimension to practical reasoning in Aristotle's writing is worthy of further examination. Practical reasoning, for Aristotle, is aimed at "doing good." Obviously, "doing good" is a value-laden proposition, and one that relies upon one's sense of right and wrong and appropriate behavior—in short, one's character. Aristotle affirms this in *Nicomachean Ethics*, asserting that "we cannot be fully good without prudence or prudent without virtue of character" (EN 1144b 31-33). He continues, stressing not only the importance of practical reasoning, but of virtue, and, by extension, character and one's internal moral compass:

> It is now clear that we should still need practical reasoning, even if it had no bearing on action, since no choice will be right without practical reasoning and virtue. For virtue determines the end, and practical reasoning makes us do what is conducive to the end. (EN 1145a 3-7)

In considering practical reasoning as a means to an end, Aristotle is not making a judgment or creating a hierarchy of means and ends, but rather demonstrating that phronesis is both the pathway towards an end, but also a factor in determining the end itself.

To return to Aristotle's definition, phronesis is the process of reasoning by which individuals understand the proper (the "good") manner in which to respond to a situation. This reasoning, according to Aristotle, is deliberative in nature – "a man [*sic*][6] of practical reason is he who has the ability to deliberate" (EN 1140a31). Further, the act of deliberation that a person undertakes is an existential imperative to live well. "For we say this is above

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[6] Here I would like to acknowledge the gendered language that Aristotle employs. I mark it in this quotation, and do so implicitly in those that follow, to encourage the narrative to move forward smoothly.

all the work of the man of practical wisdom, to deliberate well … and [to enact] a good that can be brought about by action” (EN 1141b6-9).

Aristotle continues, in *Nicomachean Ethics*, to expand the nature of this deliberation. Phronesis, he writes, is not a one-way street. “Further, a man has practical wisdom not by knowing only, but by being able to act” (EN 1152a10). Phronesis is not only the process that enables our daily existence but is also a product of that very same daily existence.

This leads, then, to a curious paradox, one that Dunne (1993) describes as a circle. “We are accustomed to looking at phronesis as knowledge that will *guide* action; but the circle resides in the fact that phronesis also arises from good action (as something to which we are already habituated)” (p. 290). The autopoietic nature of phronesis is an interesting concept. Later in the same book, Dunne (1993) concludes that “it is plain then after what has been said that it is not possible without phronesis to be really virtuous, nor without virtue to be phronetic” (p. 305). As noted above, not only is phronesis auto-constitutive, but its dual nature extends to the direction(s) in which phronesis leads an individual. It provides the means to an end, but it also actively works to define the end itself.

In the next section, I turn from Aristotle’s classic conception of practical reasoning to a contemporary philosopher and educator, Max van Manen, whose view of practical reasoning owes much to Aristotle, but takes a different, more contemporary tack, one that is more rooted in schools and pedagogy.

“Pedagogical Tact,” added van Manen

Max van Manen has taken a slightly different approach to understanding practical reasoning. In fact, while he does not specifically refer to practical reasoning in his writing,

his work on pedagogy and pedagogical tact certainly describes the same phenomenon, as I will discuss below. Neither does he claim lineage from Aristotle and phronesis, but there are distinct parallels, as will become evident.

In much of his work on teachers and teaching, van Manen uses a broad definition of pedagogy as a central theme.[7] His conception of pedagogy is not the more common one—in schools of education, we most often speak of pedagogy as the collection of techniques and methods that teachers-to-be are expected to learn and master. This typically amounts to a menagerie of lesson planning, proficiency with the latest technology, content knowledge, and the amorphous category of "classroom management." Pedagogy, for van Manen, is both fundamentally distinct from this definition and much more expansive.[8] It is more than a set of rules or processes that a teacher is to follow to be considered "good." Indeed, as he writes, "Pedagogy itself is a mode of life that always and by definition deals with practical action" (1990, p. 154).

Since van Manen is primarily concerned with the teaching of children and young people, his work focuses mainly upon how pedagogy happens in schools. He defines pedagogy as having two facets. The first is that pedagogy is the way in which educators live as professionals everyday with children. It is the sum of the lived experience that constitutes our beings as teachers (van Manen, 1991). Importantly, pedagogy is also our need as

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[7] In his writing, van Manen also applies the term pedagogy to parents and caregivers, and nearly any adult that has sustained and meaningful interactions with children or young people. For the purposes of this dissertation, however, I will limit the discussion to the implications for teachers and schools.

[8] In *The Tact of Teaching* (1991), van Manen makes this point etymologically: "The agogical sciences are practical disciplines concerned with providing education, help, support, and care for people" (p. 221). His conception of pedagogy encompasses various fields and disciplines, such as psychotherapy, nursing, health care, and counselling, in addition to education.

teachers to reflect upon this pedagogical living with children. This is significant, because, as van Manen suggests, "there is value in this pedagogical reflection and everyday theorizing" (1991, p. 41).

Within the broad umbrella of 'pedagogy,' van Manen describes what he calls "pedagogical moments." These are the moments of "that active encounter [between adult and child] … the site of everyday pedagogical practice" (p. 40). While pedagogical moments are, in a sense, what we *do* as teachers, they are not the incidents themselves, as such. In order for a pedagogical situation to bear a pedagogical moment, van Manen writes, "the adult must do something pedagogically right in his or her relation with some child or children" (p. 40). In this statement, we can see the first resonance with Aristotle and phronesis. Intrinsic to the pedagogical moment is the importance of 'right action,' of doing the right thing for, by, and with other people, in this case, one's students. Further, the same duality that Aristotle's thought implies is evident here for van Manen as well. The pedagogical moment is our quotidian work as teachers—it's what we do—but it is also a product of our pedagogical action in classrooms.

One final concept that van Manen outlines is important here. He discusses the "pedagogical understanding" that comes from both pedagogical moments and the pedagogical action that both guides and comprises them. Pedagogical understanding has five main forms in the pedagogical lives of teachers. It includes non-judgmental understanding, developmental understanding, analytic understanding, educational understanding, and formative understanding. Without describing these five areas in great detail, it clear that there is a mixture of skills, dispositions, and knowledge that forms a solid foundation for a teacher.

Much like the discussion of phronesis above, an examination of pedagogical moments and pedagogical understanding leads us to some fundamental questions. How do teachers act within the context of these pedagogical moments? On what basis to they act, and from what knowledge? In van Manen's view, the answers to these questions form a rebuttal to the common thinking that what teachers do in classrooms is based upon proficiency in, if not mastery of, the technical side of teaching, the "basic facts and empirical knowledge produced by scientific inquiry into how children learn, and into the conditions that hinder or contribute to the processes of child development" (p. 41).

Teaching, however, is so much more than proficiency in empirically derived, mechanistic moves that teachers perform with (for?) their students. There must be something beyond this superficial, surface-level view of teaching. For, as van Manen argues, if

> teaching was merely a technical enterprise, then good teachers would rarely make mistakes, since teaching (like plumbing) would consist of applying technical knowledge and skills upon which an expert could be relied. … But the essence of an educator does not lie in technical expertise but in a complex of pedagogical qualities." (p. 81)[9]

This describes the thesis of his work—the work of a teacher is best described and understood as something beyond, and more profound, than this. Van Manen calls this "pedagogical tact."

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[9] Of course, there are still varying levels of technical proficiency among plumbers, as with teachers. Some plumbers are not as "good" technically (not as skilled) as others, but a plumber does not often do the wrong thing to fix a problem. She may, however, do the right thing less well than another plumber. In this instance, though, she would still be performing the correct action.

Pedagogical tact could also be understood as pedagogical understanding (van Manen, 1991). To go a step further, it is what we actually do when we have pedagogical understanding. It is the operationalization of pedagogical moments in a classroom or other educational setting. In his writing, van Manen (1991) describes pedagogical tact in many ways: as "always in the service of the person toward whom the tact is directed" (p. 138), as "the practice of being oriented to others" (p. 139), as "the appropriate thing to do in a particular situation" (p. 143), as "the sensitive practice of heedfulness" (p. 127), as "more complex than the notion of caring" (p. 146), and "to 'touch' someone" (p. 142). There are definite echoes of Aristotle and phronesis in these words—the outward focus of tact and the understanding of the right action to undertake in a situation are both fundamentally phronetic. Spence (2007) affirms this, writing, "I would argue that … 'pedagogical tact' describe[s] teacher judgment that is founded upon phronesis" (p. 316).

The activity implicit in van Manen's use of an active verb ("touch") also correlates to phronesis. Indeed, he affirms that "a pedagogical situation and a pedagogical relationship come into being through pedagogical action" (p. 78). Phronesis is fundamentally grounded in action as well. This is also further evidence that tact, like phronesis, has a dual identity of sorts—it, once again, is the work that we teachers do, but it is also produced by that same work. Finally, despite the fact that van Manen mentions neither Aristotle nor phronesis in his work, tact seems to be, in many ways, a concretization of phronesis, and a way of bringing it, in a direct way, into the contemporary world of teachers and education.

Descriptors are instructive in understanding a concept, but a definition is even better. Van Manen offers several definitions of tact. Perhaps the most direct and practical of them is that pedagogical tact is "instantly knowing what to do, an improvisational skill and grace in

dealing with others" (p. 125). Van Manen's addition of improvisation and in-the-moment knowing in pedagogical tact stands as a contrast to Aristotle's more deliberative conception of phronesis. Phronesis is more of a process that guides action, or understanding of one's actions, while tact can appear, outwardly, to be almost instinctual, although van Manen affirms that tact is not instinct, but truly reasoning. Later he underscores the practical nature of tact, affirming that "tact is not an esoteric theoretical phenomenon" (p. 137). In a statement that must be considered to be at least slightly esoteric itself, he also declares that "tact is a kind of practical normative intelligence that is governed by insight while relying on feelings" (p. 146).

We have previously seen several ways in which van Manen has described tact. Is it possible to reach an even more granular level in the definition of tact or tactful behavior? Van Manen's answer is worth quoting at length here:

> There are no rules to follow for being tactful. There are no theories or models that explain the principles for behaving tactfully. It is impossible to reduce tact to a set of techniques or skills for acting predictably and consistently in situations calling for tact. In spite of this uncontrollable nature of tact, it must be said that tact expresses itself in a positive and normative manner in practical situations. At the basis of tact is a certain thoughtfulness or mindfulness that animates tactful behavior." (p. 147)

Here again we see the self-generative, autopoietic nature of practical reasoning. While the thoughtfulness and mindfulness that van Manen describes drive tactful behavior, they are also part of the behavior itself.

Van Manen insists that in naming and describing tact as a concept, he has not "discovered a new skill that teachers should acquire" (1991, p. 184). Rather, he contends

that tact works to “bring into view aspects of pedagogical thoughtfulness and action that are already present in everyday life and that have always been vitally at work in many classrooms” (1991, p. 184). This rings true with van Manen’s other academic claim to fame, which is phenomenology. Epistemologically, it makes good sense for a phenomenologist to understand the concept of tact as a descriptive entity that labels and defines the work and lived experience of teachers rather than a teaching point, or a technical/instrumental theme that needs to be “covered” by teacher educators in schools of education and learned by teachers.

Another way in which we can come to know and understand tact more fully is by contrasting it with tactics, which is what many would consider to be techniques, at least in the realm of education. While tact is “essentially unplannable” (p. 126) and is best described as being “fully in touch, thoughtful, sensitive, perceptive, prudent, sagacious, and gracious”[10] (p. 126), tactics are a different kettle of fish altogether. Tactics are “maneuvers, stratagems, directives, and objectives” (p. 126) that teachers can choose to deploy or follow in our daily lives. They are calculated and planned, involving both forethought and foresight. To be sure, teachers must know tactics, and be fluent in the particulars of lesson planning, management, and the like, as previously noted. But, as van Manen sagaciously points out, “the real stuff of teaching … happens in the thick of life itself when one must know what to do” (p. 130).

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[10] In this use of the word “prudent,” we see once again echoes of one of the modern English translations of phronesis.

Within the context of the discussion of tact, he also uses the term "praxis" to describe the process of tactfulness. It bears repeating at this point that praxis is used here in a different manner than it is used in current critical scholarship. Within van Manen's (1991) description of praxis as "action full of thought, thought full of action" (p. 147), two important issues arise. The first stands in contrast to the definition that we have previously seen from Aristotle, which dealt with action in the public sphere, with others, with no ulterior motive, and aimed at the improvement of the community. Van Manen's definition is more personal and, on the surface, less outwardly focused and engaged. It also seems to lack the intrinsic moral and other-focused bent that Aristotle advocates. In reality, however, in van Manen's conception, much like in practical reasoning writ large, the predilection towards "right reasoning" (to return to Aquinas) and doing what is right for one's pedagogical object is implicit and, to some extent, taken for granted. The "thought" that van Manen includes in his definition of praxis is, by its very nature, other-centric. This is, he suggests, what good teachers—indeed, good people—do.

Second, we can see the duality in van Manen's praxis that was also evident in Aristotle's thinking. The "action full of thought, thought full of action" clearly shows the auto-constitutive nature of tact. Action does not precede thought; but neither does thought precede action. They are symbiotic and mutually generative. The circle that Dunne (1993) ascribed to Aristotle's work is applicable here as well, in a strikingly similar way.

In the next section, I turn from van Manen (tactfully, I hope) to another conception of practical reasoning, that of tacit knowledge. This theory of practical knowing was put forth by Michael Polyani, principally in his book *The Tacit Dimension* (1967). It is the

culmination, in many ways, of his earlier work, both in the realm of physical science and human science.

"Tacit Knowledge," Polyani interjected

Tacit knowledge is a form of practical reasoning that has its genesis in the work of Michael Polyani, a scholar who began his academic career as a physical chemist but turned first to the philosophy of science, and then to social science, becoming one of the rare academic personages to literally trade an endowed professorship in chemistry for a similar appointment in social science. Beginning with *Personal Knowledge* (1962) and continuing with *The Tacit Dimension* (1967), Polyani outlined the basis for tacit knowledge.

Polyani and nearly all the other scholars and theorists who have written about tacit knowledge do not refer to it as "reasoning." This is a subtle but important distinction that I have chosen to not discuss until this section of the paper. I have used the term "practical reasoning" instead of "practical knowledge" because "reasoning" carries with it the connotation of action, as well as the implication that we are concerned here with a process, one that, as previously explained, is both constituted by and constitutive of knowledge. Practical knowledge insinuates a fixed and explicit corpus of information that a teacher could acquire. As such, practical reasoning is a more inclusive term, with greater generative possibilities. However, in this section's discussion of tacit knowledge, I will follow Polyani and use the term "knowledge" to describe what I will show to be a similar concept.

To begin to understand tacit knowledge it is fitting, perhaps, to begin with what is likely the most famous quotation from Polyani's work. It is worth quoting at length:

> I shall reconsider human knowledge by starting from the fact that we can know more than we can tell. This fact seems obvious enough; but it is not easy to say exactly what it means. Take an example. We know a person's face, and can recognize it among a thousand, indeed among a million. Yet we cannot tell how we recognize a face we know. So most of this knowledge cannot be put into words. (Polyani, 1967, p. 4)

This passage serves as a convenient jumping-off point for this discussion of tacit knowledge.

I begin this section with what has become the classic definition of tacit knowledge: that "we can know more than we can tell." This is the essence of the concept: that human beings possess knowledge that we cannot easily express or represent. Polyani also characterized this type of knowledge as "ineffable" (1962, p. 89). The corollary to this, of course, is that if the knowledge is not able to be expressed, it is not able to be transmitted, or passed from person to person, at least in an explicit manner.

Many scholars have taken the foundation that Polyani laid and extended his conception of tacit knowledge. The application of his theory has been varied. It has been used in many fields, including medicine, military science, law, education, and perhaps most notably in the field of management. Tacit knowledge has been applied to both individuals as well as organizations. For the purposes of this paper, however, I will focus on how tacit knowledge works in, with, and for individuals.

While the definition than Polyani offers is a solid point of departure, Sternberg (1988) offers a more concrete definition. He proposes that tacit knowledge is the key to intelligent behavior in practical settings. Here we again see echoes of both Aristotle and van Manen. There is an explicit focus on action—Sternberg refers to it as behavior.

Interestingly, he uses the term “intelligent” to describe the behavior. This term does not carry the same moral or ethical implications that Aristotle and van Manen included in their descriptions of phronesis and tact. This is a major difference between these three names for practical reasoning— “intelligent” could be interpreted as “right reasoning,” but a more common instantiation of that word would likely be closer to “strategic,” “intentional,” or even “cunning.” This, of course, runs directly counter to the beneficent, “greater good” moral component of both phronesis and tact. It also does not allow tacit knowledge to have an object, as such, at least not in the same way that the other two have.

Tacit knowledge is less a way of being and knowing (in a larger epistemic or ontologic sense) than the state of an individual possessing concrete (yet difficult to express) knowledge of how to do something. In this, there are resonances with the distinction, first made by Ryle (1949), between “knowing that” and “knowing how.” Tacit knowledge is “knowing how,” typically. It is an understanding of procedures, but also relies upon one’s personal experience(s) and does point toward doing. In a sense, tacit knowledge, as commonly conceived, could be understood as the knowledge base for action, as opposed to the deliberative process that we saw with phronesis or the product of personal characteristics that van Manen imputed to tact.

Similarly, Horvath et al. (1999) offer characteristic features of tacit knowledge. They write that it is “intimately related to action, [and] relevant to the attainment of goals that people value” (p. 45). Once again, it is clear that “goals that people value” indicates at least the opportunity for tacit knowledge to be used in the service of one’s own interests, instead of the other-focused dimension of phronesis and tact.

We have thus far seen a crucial way in which tacit knowledge differs from both phronesis and tact. Patel, Arocha, and Kaufman (1999) offer another. They affirm Polyani's assertion that "tacit knowledge is used to refer to knowledge that is not easily articulated" (p. 78). They extend the definition of tacit knowledge, however, by adding that it "frequently involves knowledge about how to do things" (p. 78). The idea that tacit knowledge is more akin to procedural knowledge (Anderson, 1983) further distinguishes it from phronesis and tact.

In its application, especially in the field of education, tacit knowledge is often used to denote the preconceived notions that individuals hold about teaching and learning (e.g., Freeman, 1991; Torff, 1999). This view of tacit knowledge is akin to intuition: "even people who are untrained in education have powerful intuitive/tacit conceptions" about it (Torff, 1999). In this sense, tacit knowledge is more about these understandings that are held as knowledge than a recipe for action, like phronesis and tact. Tacit knowledge, viewed in this manner, can become a set of uncritical beliefs for teachers and teacher educators to counter, in much the same way that Lortie (1975) describes in his classic text *Schoolteacher* as the "apprenticeship of observation." It is also important to note that the opposite can also very well be true. Teachers possess a wide range of tacit knowledge that, while they may not be able to articulate it, contributes to their effectiveness as educators. Much like the instinctual appearance of van Manen's tact, teachers often act in the classroom without overt or conscious deliberation, drawing on tacit knowledge that they were perhaps unaware that they even possessed.

In some sense, tacit knowledge is something of the odd one out in this discussion of practical reasoning. While phronesis and tact have much in common, and, as several have

argued, tact builds upon and extends the Aristotelian concept (e.g., Birmingham, 2004; Riedler & Eryaman, 2016; Spence, 2007), tacit knowledge has become a different entity, and one that, while typically classified as practical reasoning, does not explain precisely the same phenomenon as the other two. Toulmin (2001, pp. 179-180) relates the story of cook Ding, taken from the Taoist text *Chuang-tzu*. Ding is a cook whose skills at butchering animals have been honed to "a point that was beyond improvement" (p. 179). As his Lord admiringly congratulates Ding on his abilities, Ding asserts that his skill is not at issue in this instance. Contrasting his work with that of lesser cooks, Ding maintains that his performance as a butcher is not based upon skills that he has learned, but rather on knowledge that resides deep within his being. He is, as he relates, "guided by … what is intrinsically so" (p. 180). This "intrinsic" knowing is the essence of tacit knowledge. It is deeply held—felt, even—and difficult to convey in words, but evident in actions. Having said this, in the following section I will begin to synthesize phronesis and tact within the realm of teaching and learning, utilizing some aspects of tacit knowledge to provide clarity.

Phronesis, tact, and tacit knowledge, oh my!

Since one of my main academic interests is teacher development,[11] I think about and interact with practical reasoning in general and phronesis, pedagogical tact, and tacit from that perspective. In this section, I will discuss how these conceptions of practical reasoning can work with (and within) teachers at various stages of their professional lives. As Orton

[11] I purposefully chose the term "teacher development" to describe my interest and to organize this section because it is a broad term that encompasses both pre-service teachers and practicing educators. Each stage of becoming a teacher in unique, to be sure, but they are also closely connected, for obvious reasons.

(1997) wisely counsels, “teacher reasoning is productive in so far as it is related to student achievement” (p. 579). At the end of the day, a teacher’s work is remarkably lacking in substance without students. This section will bring the philosophical discussion of the previous sections into more real-world, concrete themes and practices in the area of contemporary education.

There is an interesting tension and dynamic that arises from Aristotle’s distinction between phronesis and techne, as we have seen. This dynamic is also present in van Manen’s pedagogical tact. It is important to note, however, that Aristotle did not advocate a separation or partitioning of phronesis and techne. In fact, he explicitly stated that practical reasoning guides, or “initiates” technical reasoning (EN 1139a36-b4). Van Manen agrees with Aristotle, saying that “the essence of an educator does not lie in technical expertise but in a complex of pedagogical qualities” (1991, p. 81). Unfortunately, much of the time that pre-service teachers spend in schools of education as well as much of the time practicing teachers spend in professional development activities is dedicated to the technical part of teaching.

As discussed above, it is axiomatic that the technical part of teaching (lesson planning, classroom management, technology, etc.) is vitally important to being a successful educator, and effective teachers display high proficiency in, if not mastery of, these skills. An understanding of the role and importance of practical reasoning in the lives of teachers helps to explain why teachers who do have high levels of proficiency with the technical part

of the work may still not be "good teachers."[12] The converse of this assertion is also true. The importance of practical reasoning, I think, helps explain the "feeling" that I had about several of my teacher candidates when I worked as a teacher educator. From their very first semester in their education programs, in the Introduction to Education course that I taught, I looked at Amelia, Catherine, and David and thought, "Yes. Those three are teachers. We just have to teach them how to do it." Perhaps practical reasoning is or explains that "it" factor that anyone who has spent time observing teachers knows. The "it" factor is the intangible perception that one gets upon entering a classroom that the teacher there either "has it" or does not.

As van Manen wrote, it is much less about technical proficiency than it is about one's pedagogical acumen (remembering van Manen's particular conception of pedagogy), and, as Aristotle reminds us, practical reasoning governs technical reasoning. This "it" factor may also be explained by Polyani's conception of tacit knowledge—each of these young people brought knowledge, as a product of their lived experience(s) into their teacher preparation program. Because Amelia, Catherine, and David were already well on their way to becoming phronetic, our job as a faculty was to teach them the technical side of teaching and help to further, or at the very least not impede, the development of their practical reasoning, while at the same time acknowledging, and perhaps even leveraging and using, their tacit knowledge.

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[12] I acknowledge that "good teacher" is not only a loaded term, but also a subjective one, in many ways. Explicating this phrase, however, is beyond the scope of this chapter.

So why, then, does the instruction of future teachers and the evaluation of practicing teachers place such heavy (nearly exclusive) emphasis upon technical proficiency? This is partly, as van Manen rightly points out, because, “rather than being demonstrative, true tact is subtle and hardly noticeable, even though we do recognize it as a positive quality in people” (1991, p. 136). In being difficult to quantify, practical reasoning is often overlooked in the evaluation of teachers (Van Driel, Beijaard, & Verloop, 2001). In teacher development, we often focus upon a teacher’s techne because it is expedient, if not, perhaps, as important in the development of effective teachers in the long term as focusing upon practical reasoning.

The issue of bringing experiences into teacher development that promote the development of practical reasoning begs the question of how practical reasoning can be taught and learned by teachers and teachers-to-be. Each of the philosophers discussed thus far has a different take on how their respective conception of practical reasoning can be taught and learned.

Aristotle, for his part, considers the acquisition of phronesis to be the product of experience. He contrasts the development of phronesis to the development of competence or mastery of theoretical reasoning:

> …while young men become geometricians and mathematicians and wise in matters like these, it is thought that a young man of practical wisdom cannot be found. The cause is that such wisdom is concerned not only with universals but particulars, which become familiar from experience, but a young man has no experience. (EN 1142a7-12)

Indeed, Aristotle continues, adding that, "one might ask this question too, why a boy may become a mathematician, but not a philosopher" (EN 1142a16). This emphasis on experience as the main vehicle by which one can acquire and develop one's phronesis is in line with Aristotle's conception of practical reasoning as a journey, a process by which one is constantly "grasping the truth" (EN 1140b5).

Similarly, for Aristotle, practical reasoning is not something that one has, inherently. That is to say that people are not born with phronesis, at least not fully developed phronesis. Phronesis is "acquired by repetition of corresponding acts" (EN II 1103a). Phronesis, then, is developed through the practice of phronesis, and living with and understanding the actions of phronetic people. Aristotle is explicit about this fact, writing that, "it is also plain that none of the moral virtues [of which phronesis is one] arises in us by nature" (EN II 1103a15).

In his discussion of pedagogical tact, van Manen has a slightly different take on how practical reasoning can be developed. While he does not specifically explain how one is able to develop or 'learn' tact, several inferences are possible. Throughout his book *The Tact of Teaching* (1991), he continually describes tact in various ways, as previously discussed. Each of these aspects of pedagogical tact seem to stem from personal qualities that an individual possesses—their character. In this, he is in agreement with Aristotle, because these constituent characteristics are the moral makeup of a person. He lists such qualities as empathy, compassion, understanding, love, caring, and responsibility as both the foundation of and the catalyst for the development of tact. By acknowledging this dual nature of tact, van Manen is further agreeing with Aristotle about the importance of experience, although

he does not go so far as to say that tact is unattainable by the young, for the young can and do possess at least nascent forms of these qualities.

Tacit knowledge, like phronesis and tact, is knowledge that an individual may not even be aware that they possess. Because it is, by definition, not knowledge that is readily or easily expressed or codified, it is often acquired on one's own, often with limited resources and support (Hedlund et al., 2003). Because it is a more personally unique entity than either phronesis or tact, much of the literature that deals with tacit knowledge talks about it not as learned or taught, but rather as transmitted (e.g., Gertler, 2003; Koskinen, Pihlanto, & Vanharanta, 2003; Linde, 2001). This is also because much more work on tacit knowledge has been done in fields other than the "agogical sciences" (see footnote 8), such as business, military science, law, and medicine (Sternberg & Horvath, 1999). Often, this transmission takes place through participation in a network (Goffin & Koners, 2011) or a community of practice (Wenger, 1998). Transmission of tacit knowledge also occurs via experience gained in a specific social or professional context (Schmidt & Hunter, 1993).

Practical reasoning, as we have seen, describes the ways in which we teachers think about, approach, and understand our work and our professional lives. As such, it is intricately connected to and interwoven into the process of becoming a teacher. In the following section, I will briefly discuss the large body of literature of teacher development as an additional manner in which teacher development can be conceptualized, adding onto and perhaps extending the conceptualization of practical reasoning developed above.

Connecting the dots: practical reasoning and teacher development

Teacher development is a broad literature that encompasses pre-service education through teacher leadership in practicing teachers. It has multiple facets and components, each with its own lines of inquiry and intellectual bases, as well as its own journals and conferences. Here, I use the term "Teacher Development" as a blanket label, one that includes the entire gamut of teacher learning, from teacher education (teachers-to-be) as well as professional development (practicing teachers).

On a basic level, "professional development can be seen as a process of professional growth" (Keiny, 1994, p. 158) for teachers. While this is a vague and somewhat unhelpful definition, it nevertheless points us in the proper direction to begin a consideration of the concept of teacher development. It can be considered a process (Miller & Silvernail, 1994), but it is not necessarily a linear one, nor is it limited to formal learning spaces and opportunities. Teacher development can occur in ways that are decidedly non-systematic and unplanned, even incidental and accidental (Evans, 2002), as we will see in the stories (re)told in this dissertation.

Teacher development involves, certainly, pragmatic aspects of a teacher's job and life, such as "advances in teachers' sense of purpose, instructional skills and ability to work with colleagues" (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992, p. 8-9). While teacher development does necessarily involve the acquisition and (hopefully) the mastery of the skills and techniques of teaching (Aristotle's techne), it is simultaneously more than that. As Darling-Hammond (1994) suggests, it is also the place in which, as well as the process by which, teaching transformed from a "bureaucratized occupation to a profession" (p. 3). Teacher development, as a field of study and practice, is also where the knowledge base for teaching

has become defined and developed, as will be discussed further in Chapter 6. It is also, as Darling-Hammond (1994) asserts, the epistemological and ontological base for teaching, which is, of course, intimately related to the development of the technical skills of teaching—but more importantly, as we have seen above, is connected to practical reasoning. Practical reasoning, we recall, is the capacity and the agility of teachers to wisely and prudently deploy their technical skills.

Another interesting similarity between practical reasoning and teacher development is noted by Grossman (1994). In writing about teacher development in a middle school that she studied, she opines that "all instructors acquire new knowledge and perspectives from interaction on planning and teaching the class" (p. 59). This clearly has resonance with the auto-poietic nature of practical reasoning—in fact, it seems downright phronetic. One of the best and most authentic sources of teacher development for teachers is the practice of teaching itself. This phenomenon will become clear in the stories (re)told in Chapter 4, as well as the subsequent analysis in Chapters 5 and 6.

Throughout this dissertation, I will return to the concept of practical reasoning, as detailed above, as a way to frame teacher development; I will use it as a lens through which teacher development can be understood and theorized. Practical reasoning and teacher development, as noted, have a profound connection and relationship, and practical reasoning is the theoretical framework within which this study of teacher development unfolds. The thinking of Aristotle, Max van Manen, and Michael Polyani provides one of the epistemological bases of this study. The addition of narrative epistemologies and methodologies provides the full research context for this study, and it is to narrative that we turn in the following chapter.

Chapter 3
Methodology

"A lot of proverbial plates to spin."

When I was in college, I spent my junior year studying in Europe. The break between the fall and spring semesters meant that I had the entire month of January free to backpack around the continent. So, with a Eurail pass in hand, two changes of clothes in a backpack, and sturdy shoes on my feet, I set out to explore Europe. My fall semester had ended in Strasbourg, France, and I took the train to Amsterdam, which is something of a hub for European travel. On the overnight train to Amsterdam I studied the *Let's Go Europe* *guidebook that I had wisely purchased months before to guide me in the four weeks that I had on my own before I needed to turn up at the Madrid airport to begin my spring semester in Spain.*

While in Amsterdam, I knew that I wanted to see the Anne Frank House. In the Amsterdam Centraal train station, I changed some money into guilders (this was before the Euro became the central currency of Europe), bought a cup of coffee and a pastry and made a seat of my backpack to study the Amsterdam transit map, like every other American tourist in the station. When I had mapped out the route, the tram number, and the travel time to the Anne Frank House and committed it to memory, I finished my breakfast, stowed my cumbersome backpack in a pay locker, and confidently strode out into the bright Dutch sunlight to the tram stop in front of the station.

After a short wait, the tram approached. When it came to a stop, I boarded and bought a ticket from the machine inside the door like a native (I read all about how to do just this in my soon-to-be-tattered guidebook the night before). I took an empty seat next to an exceedingly clean window about halfway back in the tram, and looked out, watching as the city of Amsterdam began to crawl by.

I knew that the Anne Frank house was about seven minutes and three stops away from the Central Station. As I watched the blocks roll by my window, I counted the stops and glanced at the watch on my wrist. After five stops and eighteen minutes, I knew that something was amiss. I looked at the signage at the front of the tram and saw that I had taken the Number 13 instead of the Number 12. In my desire to not appear to be a tourist, I had taken the wrong tram. Still playing it cool, but unable to speak Dutch—and not wanting to "out" myself as a lost and clueless American—I continued to ride, watching out the window for any hints as to where I was or where I was going.

Just as panic was starting to rise in my throat, I saw a sign that told me (in English!) that the Van Gogh Museum was two blocks ahead. Van Gogh has always been one of my favorite artists, so I thought that I would give that museum a try. I rang the bell for the next stop (as though I had done so a hundred times in my life—thanks, <u>Let's Go</u>!). As I disembarked from the tram, entered the building, and bought a ticket, I hadn't yet realized that this museum, in which I would pass the next four hours blissfully enjoying paintings, drawings, and letters by the artist, would be one of the highlights of my month traveling through Europe.

I relate this narrative because I followed a very similar process with this dissertation. I began the process with a clearly planned and carefully defined research methodology. I had written two exhaustive (or were they just exhausting?) preliminary exams—one of which detailed the methodology that I was proposing to use in this study. With that exam as my Let's Go Europe of dissertation research, I embarked on my study. About one third of the way through my data collection process, I realized, with an existential panic that echoed the physical panic I felt on that tram in Amsterdam nearly thirty years ago, that my carefully planned methodology was not answering the questions that I had planned and was not responsive to the themes and concepts that I was collecting and observing.

The change of plans that occurred through careful observation out the tram window of my research process led me in a slightly new direction that spoke much more directly to who I am as a teacher and as a researcher, as well as the stories that I was hearing and was to retell. Initially, I had designed something of a hybrid methodology that combined critical ethnography and narrative inquiry. By joining these two paradigms of research, I had hoped to gain the methodological benefits of each—having my epistemological cake and eating it too.

Instead, I found myself drawn to, intrigued by, and engrossed in the stories that the teachers in the group told. I realized, as I reviewed the transcripts of our meetings and the conversations, that there was poignancy and profundity in those stories, and the stories, as data, had much to say about the lives of teachers and how teachers continually develop and grow throughout their lives as teachers. Teachers are truly best known and understood through their stories. We teachers are, in a very real sense, our stories. As Clandinin and Connelly attest,

> Teachers know their lives in terms of stories. They live stories, tell stories of those lives, retell stories with changed possibilities, and relive the changed stories. In this narrative view of teachers' knowledge, we mean more than teachers' telling stories of specific children and events. We mean that their way of being in the classroom is storied: As teachers they are characters in their own stories of teaching, which they author. (1995, p. 12)

A narrowed focus on narrative inquiry as not only the methodology for this study but also its epistemological and ontological foundation seemed to intuitively follow from this realization. In addition, this narrative research involves, for me, what Du Bois (1983) termed a "passionate scholarship" —it stems from and is fueled by my love for and fervent belief in teachers and the work that we do on behalf of our students, their families, and our collective community.

In the sections that follow, I will first explain narrative inquiry as a methodological and epistemological stance. I will then turn to the methodological specifics of this study, explaining how I carried it out.

Narrative inquiry as methodology and epistemology

Narrative inquiry as a field is typically considered to reside under the aegis of arts-based research (ABR) (Estrella & Forinash, 2007; Leavy, 2017). Inasmuch as the arts are meant to provoke empathy and, as a result, deep(er) understandings of lived experiences, narrative inquiry and its ABR cousins are designed to do just that. Barone and Eisner (2012) explain that "arts-based research emphasizes the generation of forms of feeling that have

something to do with understanding some person, place, or setting" (p. 7). Narrative inquiry approaches this goal in an active, participatory manner, employing what Barone and Eisner (2012) call an "evocative utilization of data" (p. 8).

A passage from two of narrative inquiry's foremost practitioners, D. Jean Clandinin and F. Michael Connelly, provides a strong starting point for this discussion of narrative inquiry, and is worth quoting at length:

> Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience. It is a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in this same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experiences that make up people's lives. Simply stated, … narrative inquiry is stories lived and told. (2000, p. 20)

There is much to unpack in these four sentences, to be sure. In the sections that follow, I will explore four conceptual aspects of narrative inquiry highlighted in this definition by Clandinin and Connelly: the drive to understand lived experience, the collaborative relationship between researcher and participants, the metaphorical three-dimensional research space, and the iterative process of telling and retelling stories.

Understanding lived experience

Clandinin (2006) traces the etymology, if not the lineage, of narrative inquiry to the humanities and the concept of "narratology," which refers to the branch of literary thought that seeks to understand the structure, form, and function of narrative and its themes, structures, and symbology. Building in part upon Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) ideas about the novel and storytelling, narrative inquiry seeks to focus upon stories as a way into a profound

and authentic understanding of people's lived experience and the meaning that is both produced by and resides in that lived experience.

Narrative inquiry, at its core, is about stories and the people who both live them and tell them. The recognition that participants are both author and audience of their stories is vital, because narrative inquiry as a methodology positions narrative "as both phenomena under study *and* method of study" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 4, emphasis in original). This dual utilization of stories by narrative inquirers fits with narrative inquiry on a fundamental level because, as Okri (1997, quoted in Huber et al., 2013, p. 212) offers, "we live by stories, we also live in them." Indeed, narrative and story is what allows us as human beings to learn—story is the vehicle through which knowledge and information is transmitted.

Relatedly, there is a real and pressing concern among many narrative inquirers for human agency, and the effect that bringing stories that might otherwise go untold can have on groups whose narratives and life experiences are perhaps lesser heard and more poorly understood. This is true of the role that the voices of teachers have traditionally played in educational research (e.g., Atkinson & Rosiek, 2008; Hargreaves, 1996). Casey (1995) writes that narrative researchers "cannot give voice, but we do hear voices that we record and interpret" (p. 223). This brings us to the next point in Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) definition of narrative inquiry—the nature of the relationship between a researcher and participants.

Collaboration between researcher and participants

Given the intimate and personal nature of stories, when a researcher elects to use stories and narrative as a research methodology, there is much to consider in the realm of

relationship between researcher and participant, as well as the proper role of the researcher in the research endeavor. The need for thoughtful and intentional planning and designing in this area is certainly not limited to narrative inquiry, but there are ways in which narrative inquiry is unique in this regard.

Following John Dewey, who taught that experience is fundamentally about people in relationship with each other in a particular time and space, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) note that "participants are in relation, and we as researchers are in relation to participants" and that "narrative inquiry is … people in relation studying people in relation." (p. 189). The relationship between researcher and participant is paramount—Clandinin and Connelly go so far as to say that "relationship is at the heart of thinking narratively. Relationship is key to what it is narrative inquirers do" (2000, p. 189). This relationship has been described as something very much akin to friendship. Clandinin and Connelly (1998) suggest that since "the idea of friendship implies a sharing, an interpenetration of two or more persons' spheres of experience," the same could be said of "collaborative research, which requires a close relationship akin to friendship. Relationships are joined … by the narrative unities of our lives" (p. 281). All the relationships that are a result of a narrative inquiry necessarily take place within a particular and specific research context. It is to this space, in a metaphorical sense, to which I turn in the following section.

Three-dimensional research space

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) developed an important heuristic for both structuring and understanding narrative inquiry as an epistemology and as a practice. As I will describe in this section, the metaphor of the three-dimensional research space is instructive on an epistemological level, as well as for those learning about how to "do" narrative inquiry.

Clandinin and Connelly reach back to the educational theory of John Dewey, whose work on experience formed the basis for their conception of narrative inquiry. They cite his thinking on "situation, continuity, and interaction" (2000, p. 50) as particularly influential. The terms that they use are "personal and social," "past, present, and future," and "place," each of which correspond to Dewey's interaction, continuity, and situation, respectively. Together, these three concepts form what Clandinin and Connelly call "a metaphorical *three-dimensional narrative inquiry space*, with temporality along one dimension, the personal and the social along a second dimension, and place along a third" (2000, p. 50, emphasis in original).

On a theoretical and conceptual level, the three-dimensional narrative space is important because it gives insight into the epistemological and ontological bases for narrative inquiry as a methodology. Once again, we can see that the collaborative, intimate, and profound connection and relationship that is formed between researcher and participant is vital and leads to the ways in which knowledge is produced, understood, and communicated. Clandinin affirms this, writing that "the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space highlights the relational dimension of narrative inquiry" (2006, p. 47). By positioning themselves as "part of the metaphoric parade" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2006, p. 47), the researcher is not limited to the role of observer, recorder, and reporter, as can be the case with qualitative research methodologies. Instead, the narrative inquirer has an active, even agentic, role in the construction of knowledge throughout the narrative inquiry process.

The three-dimensional research space is also a helpful construction for practitioners of the methodology who are engaged in research. This heuristic, in fact, serves as one of the main frames through which I viewed and began to make sense of the data in the study. The

stories that we told in the inquiry group meetings situated both the teller and the group in time—as a teacher just beginning their career, as a seasoned teacher, and before their teaching career. Similarly, the stories located us, individually and collectively, in place—in a classroom, a school, and even in a shopping mall. These stories were intensely personal, offered from a place deep within ourselves for the group to enjoy, contemplate, and learn from. These stories, and the content, context, and meaning that they convey and contain were a window into the teacher lives that each has built and continue to build.

In terms of narrative inquiry, any data that a researcher might collect will reflect (and be composed of and from) varying degrees of the temporal, the personal and social, and place. The influence that each has on the data is, in fact, data itself. This is a key manner in which using this heuristic/metaphor is helpful to a practitioner who is "in the midst" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) of a research puzzle. Understanding where, both physically and metaphorically, the data are located is an important layer of both collection and analysis—one that is often not fully captured by researchers employing other research methodologies.

In the following section, I will describe the final aspect of Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) definition of narrative inquiry. In some sense, the telling of stories is what narrative inquiry is and does. However, as is the case with every research methodology, there is nuance and subtlety that provide richness and depth. It is to these details that I now turn.

Telling and retelling stories

Stories are the lifeblood of narrative inquiry—they are both data and procedure, the unit of study and the method of analysis. But, as Clandinin and Connelly assert, "collecting and analyzing stories is only part of narrative inquiry. It is in the living and telling of

experience that we locate what represents our sense of the experience as narrative inquirers" (2000, p. 189).[13] It is not coincidental that Clandinin and Connelly use active verbs in their description— "living" and "telling" connote not only activity, but also agency. They are also largely synonymous throughout the narrative inquiry process, because the stories that narrative researchers hear, tell, and share are living entities that they inhabit—physically, intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually—alongside their participants.

The centrality of relationship in the narrative inquiry process has been discussed above, but this concept is also crucial to understanding the very nature of stories as well as how stories get told and retold. If it is true that we make the world as we live in it, as the ontological assumptions of narrative inquiry suggest, then we are constantly negotiating stories in spaces, both temporal and physical. The stories, then, in addition to being living, changing, and evolving creatures, are also a product of the social space, and gain meaning in both the shared experience that the story represents and the act of sharing the story with others. In narrative inquiry, stories come into being through a reciprocal connection between a researcher and their participant(s) (Sparkes, 1994). There is a social contract contained in the interaction between a researcher and participant, characterized by a gradually emerging trust and respect facilitating the construction of a story. This gradually emerging trust and respect, it is important to note, is based, in large part, on the researcher opening up to their participants, reciprocating the openness and vulnerability that the participant is showing by allowing the researcher to enter into their stories[14].

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[13] It is this act that makes up much of the presentation of the data in this study in Chapter 4.

[14] One of the benefits, as I will discuss below, of conducting my research in the school in which I teach and with teachers who are my colleagues is that this trust and familiarity was present as we began the study.

One of the main dilemmas that faces a narrative researcher is presented in the issue of voice (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). They present it as

> living on an edge, trying to maintain one's balance, as one struggles to express one's own voice in the midst of an inquiry designed to tell of the participants' storied experiences and to represent their voices, all the while attempting to create a research text that will speak to, and reflect upon, the audience's voices." (p. 147)

Using the researcher's voice to represent the voices of others while simultaneously taking into account the voices of the audience is a tall order indeed—that is a lot of proverbial plates to spin.

Narrative inquirers, as a result of this central dilemma, face the issue of how and to what extent the researcher should appear in the research text and the stories that it contains. Sparkes (1994), following Richardson (1992), discusses the need for a researcher to engage in self-reflection and analysis, coming to know and understand themselves and their multiple subjectivities and positionalities. Sparkes offers two (of many) key questions that should loom large in the mind of a narrative inquirer considering how and what to write about themselves in a research text: "What part of my biography and process is relevant to the text? How do I write about myself without being self-absorbed or unduly narcissistic?" (p. 166). Leaving aside the word "unduly," as though some measure of narcissism is either welcome or inevitable (or both), it is clear that the reciprocal, transactional, and relational aspect of narrative work requires a researcher to be quite clear on who they are (and who they are becoming) as they enter the research field.

Research design

Research plan overview

The basic plan for this study was to engage five teachers who volunteered as co-researchers in what I called an "inquiry group." This group met eight times to discuss the book *Troublemakers* by Carla Shalaby (2017). I provided each group member with a copy of the book for them to keep. During the group meetings, we used the book content as a catalyst for sharing stories and experiences from our own teaching lives. These stories became the data that I collected and subsequently analyzed.

In addition to these meetings, I also met individually with each teacher for a conversation,[15] in which we further explored themes or topics that arose during the group meetings. These conversations also allowed teachers a chance to share more of their own stories in a smaller space. All of these group meetings and individual conversations were recorded and transcribed for analysis, using a web-based, automated, machine-learning service to transcribe each recording. I then reviewed each transcript for accuracy, compared against the original recording. Each inquiry group member also completed one reflective writing response about the text and their reactions to it. These entries were similarly analyzed and provided additional material for group discussions and the individual conversations. The transcripts of the meetings and the conversations formed the main source of data used in this study.

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[15] I use the term "conversation" here purposefully. I do not consider these meetings to be "interviews" as such, because of the inherent power dynamic that is in play when an interaction of this type is portrayed as an interview.

Research site

The research was conducted in Marie Raymond Community School,[16] a relatively large community public school in River City Public Schools (RCPS). It is also the school in which I currently teach. The school serves students in kindergarten through fifth grade and has approximately 775 students. There are 45 licensed teachers at the school, and about a dozen support staff. The adults at Marie Raymond are nearly all white, and, somewhat uniquely for an elementary school, almost exactly split between men and women. The students at Marie Raymond are predominantly white[17] and middle- to upper-middle class, and 15% receive free or reduced-price lunch services. Four percent of the students are classified as English Language Learners (ELL), and about 8% receive Special Education services (School Website, ND).

As it is a community school with students largely drawn from the surrounding neighborhood, Marie Raymond is reflective of the neighborhood in which it sits. In addition to its community school designation, there was once a bilingual program at Marie Raymond, in which one classroom in each grade level was taught in both Spanish and English. Three of the teachers in this study, including me, were hired to teach at the school as the bilingual teacher in a specific grade level. The program has since been discontinued, but some of us have chosen to stay at the school and teach solely in English.

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[16] The name of the school, the district, as well as all the teachers and students in this dissertation are pseudonyms.

[17] The racial demographic breakdown is as follows, in descending order: White, 75%; African-American, 10%; Latinx, 5%; Asian, 4%; Native American and Pacific Islander, 1% each.

Participants

After addressing a recruitment letter (Appendix A) to all of the teachers at the school, I received interest from six of my colleagues at Marie Raymond. I then scheduled a meeting with each person who indicated interest in taking part in the study to further explain the study and answer any questions that they had. Of the six who expressed initial interest, five agreed to take part in the study (one had family commitments that prevented participation). The teachers were four men (including me) and two women. Among the group we had two resource teachers, two intermediate grade (3-5) teachers, and two primary grade (K-2) teachers. I will provide more detail and backstory for each teacher in Chapter 4.

The fact that I chose to conduct this study in the school in which I have taught for the past thirteen years brings several interesting issues to the research process. The first, and perhaps most obvious, is the fact that I know the research context intimately. The fact that I have had four different teaching positions at Marie Raymond in thirteen years makes me a somewhat well-travelled individual in that school. This emic positionality enabled me to understand more easily and quickly issues that the teachers in the group were discussing; they were, in many cases, my issues too. It also gave me easy and ready access to the teachers—more than one of the group members told me that their willingness to participate was motivated, at least in part, by the fact that we were colleagues and friends.

As a result of the existing relationships in and among the members of the inquiry group, as well as the relationships that I have with each of them, this study is somewhat unique. The familiarity that I felt at the outset of the study brought an ease, both in the recruitment process as well as when we began the inquiry groups and individual conversations. I had much less of a need to quickly establish a rapport with the teachers in

this study than other researchers who conduct studies in contexts with which they are not familiar (or already a part of). The relational dynamic that existed among our group bears further discussion and examination.

As I mentioned above, the teachers who agreed to be a part of this study were (and are) my friends. Clandinin and Connelly, as we have seen, have written of the friendship as descriptive of the interplay between a narrative inquirer and their participants. Indeed, friendship would seem to be an apt characterization of the relationship that can form collaboratively between researcher and participant within the context of a narrative inquiry process. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) discuss the ethic of care that is inherent in the narrative research relationship – the care that one must have for and with one's participants and "the life stories that sustain them" (p. 173-174). This care, it is important to underscore, must be developed, nurtured, and sustained for not only the participants in the study, but also for the stories that they share.

Another aspect of the researcher/participant relationship that fortifies friendship as a descriptor also reinforces the collaborative nature of the relationship. Narrative inquiry, on an epistemological level, sees and constructs the researcher/participant relationship such that it can, when done with thoughtfulness and intention, transform the relationship, imbuing it with the care and equality that is the hallmark of a true friendship. As a result, I felt a very personal and emotional burden and responsibility to represent these teachers' stories and lives in a fair, honest, and accurate manner—in a way that would honor our individual and collective relationships, as well as my professional and ethical duties as a researcher.

Researcher positionality

There are two aspects of positionality that are important for this study. The first is the manner in which I position myself within the context of the study. The second encompasses the competing identities that I embody—what I call my "teacher self" and my "researcher self."

As I explained above, I positioned myself as a co-researcher, working alongside the teachers in the group. While I led the group, I felt and continued to feel strongly throughout the study that the group should run as though we were each there to learn, and not as though the inquiry group members were there simply for me to learn from them. I felt acutely aware of and sensitive to issues of hierarchy and power, and I took care to cast myself as something of a "first among equals."[18] While I set the agenda, broadly speaking, for the group, the direction that the discussions in the group took was very much guided by the stories and insights that the members provided.

I took care to note my own positionality as a researcher was important at the outset of and throughout this study as well. Encouraging, and in fact requiring, the examination and inclusion of one's own "conceptual baggage" (Kirby & McKenna, 1989) involves researching the impact that the researcher has on all facets of the research process (Madison, 2005; Thomas, 1993). One of the heaviest items of "conceptual baggage" that I bring to this study is the sense of dual identity that I feel as a teacher and as a graduate student/neophyte researcher.

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[18] This metaphor has been helpful to me to conceptualize my role as a researcher providing an outside input, or catalyst to the process (Stringer, 2014), while not being seen as or acting as "the expert."

As I very clearly stated at the beginning of this dissertation, I have been an elementary school teacher for a long time, and it forms a large part of my identity, both professionally and personally. At the risk of sounding trite (or worse, corny), I am one of those who believe that teaching isn't merely something that one *does*—it is something that one *lives*. The commitment to the work and assuming the responsibility for thirty or more souls every year are tall orders indeed. In order to do it well, teaching is not the sort of job that one just goes to and does. Teaching requires a person to put their mind, body, heart, and soul into the work. This belief forms the core of my "teaching self" —as well as a large part of my interest in and how I am approaching this research project. As I reflect upon my own practice as a teacher, I can see how the practical reasoning and tacit knowledge that I have as a teacher influences the ways in which I approach my students personally and pedagogically. I see other teachers being a teacher—living their teacher life—in different ways. These different ways are not necessarily better or worse, but often simply different.

The other identity that has loomed large throughout this study is my developing sense of myself as an educational researcher—my "research self." I feel a definite sense of solidarity and camaraderie with teachers that I don't necessarily feel (yet?) with the larger academic/research community. I felt and feel an additional bond with the members of the inquiry group, since they are my colleagues and my friends, as discussed above. It is because of this connection to teachers and teaching that it is essential for me to make this study actively benefit all of us involved—not only me as a researcher. As a researcher, I feel uneasy at the prospect of conducting research that does not involve two things—a strong, caring, and meaningful connection between me and the community in which I conduct research; and that any research that I undertake must be of direct and meaningful benefit to

the people with whom I do the research. As I discussed in Chapter 1, one of the research goals that I hold in the forefront of my mind is the need to "be of use" (Piercy, 1982).

As a researcher, I am acutely aware of what Lather (1997) calls "the indignity of being studied" (p. 234) and feel called to plan and carry out research activities that are respectful to and beneficial for all involved. That is to say that not only should the community of people with whom I conduct research benefit in some way, but also, and more importantly, their lives and circumstances should be changed and improved. In short, I feel very deeply the moral imperative that is inherent in bringing my own personal and professional identities into the research process. I feel compelled to be reflexive in my work as a researcher because of my simultaneous teacher and researcher identities and the conceptual baggage that I carry as a result.

Common text

There are several reasons why I selected *Troublemakers* (Shalaby, 2017) as the common text that we read as an inquiry group. The first is, simply, that it is an amazing book. I found it to be very impactful on me as a teacher and as a human being. Shalaby's writing style is powerful, and I found that it put a mirror up to my teaching and forced me to reflect—truly and deeply reflect—upon my teaching and the way that I *am* in the classroom. I had such a profound reaction to the book when I read it that I wanted my colleagues to have the same experience, in the hope that they would have a similar encounter with the book. In addition, since the book is written in a storied form—it comprises four portraits of children—my hope was that it would push the teachers in the study to begin to think and talk about themselves and their practice as educators in a narrative fashion. In the end, it did precisely that—we teachers reacted and responded to the text with stories of our own.

The four portraits of first graders—Zora, Marcus, Sean, and Lucas—that Shalaby draws in the book not only allowed us to come to really know these children, but also helped us examine our practice in a new way, through a new lens. Through these children's experiences, I think, teachers can and do gain a new sense of what makes kids appear to be "troublemakers." The absolute demand for compliance in schools forces us to categorize such children not by their strengths and aptitudes, but by their supposed or ascribed pathologies. Shalaby's writing and the stories that she conveys in the text focuses teachers' collective gaze on ourselves and our practice, inviting us to consider in a real and visceral way what we can do to make our classrooms and schools more equitable and just places for all of our students.

The focus on teacher agency is underscored by the fact that the classrooms that these four young people in Shalaby's book attend are not taught by struggling teachers—these are not stories of kids failed by inadequate, inexperienced, or otherwise sub-par teachers or underfunded schools. All of the teachers in the book were identified by their principals as strong teachers in schools that are deemed to be high quality. The previous sentence nicely describes the teachers in the group as well—they are all accomplished, "successful" teachers, well-regarded by their peers as well as their students and families. Marie Raymond Community School is similar to the schools in *Troublemakers* in its levels of student achievement.

This book served as a catalyst for introspection on the part of the inquiry group members, as well as a launching pad for conversations about our own practice—collectively and individually. In reading the transcripts of the group meetings and the individual conversations, I found that it pushed us in directions that we may not have otherwise gone.

Group meetings

The inquiry group was the foundation of this study. During each meeting, we discussed a section of the book. Appendix B contains a list of questions that we used occasionally as conversations starters. More frequently, we simply dove right into the book and related it to our own lives as teachers. The inquiry group also served as an opportunity for me to engage the members in the research process itself, through the periodic review of data and sharing of my preliminary forays into data analysis. At two points in the group meetings (meeting #4 and meeting #8) I paused the discussion of the text and ourselves to check in with the group members about the process. While they offered suggestions and sought clarifications about the research process, the teachers were much more interested in *Troublemakers* and the stories and insights that they had to share with each other than in the study itself.

Individual conversations

In addition to the inquiry group meetings, I conducted one "conversation" with each teacher outside of the group meeting time. Each of these conversations lasted approximately one hour. These conversations took the form of a non-structured interview, which Morse (2003) describes as a shared experience "in which researchers and interviewees come together to create a context of conversational intimacy in which participants feel comfortable telling their story" (p. 338). These conversations were another aspect of the researcher/participant relationship that leveraged my friendships with the teachers in the study while also reinforcing the collaborative nature of our relationships. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) opine that the exchanges between narrative inquirer and participant should be "conversations marked by equality" (p. 109). Such a dialogue often stands in marked

contrast to research interviews, which "normally have an inequality about them" (p. 110). Each teacher and I took these conversations as an opportunity to delve into ideas, concepts, or experiences that either did not come up in the inquiry group setting or that the teacher elected not to share in that space for some reason. Much like the group meetings, these conversations were recorded and transcribed.

Reflective writing response

The final component of data collection that I used was a reflective writing response from each teacher. I had initially planned for each teacher to write at least four entries in a journal, which I would then analyze in concert with the transcripts from the group meetings and the conversations. Appendix B lists some of the planned writing prompts for the journal entries. The genesis of the idea to use writing was the fact that the act of writing can be generative in its own right, and my hope was that writing would stimulate the teachers to reach into their stories and share them in new and unique ways—ways that they might not have done otherwise.

In the end, I only asked each teacher to respond to one prompt, which was very open-ended. I simply asked them to write about how their past experiences are reflected in their practice as a teacher. I decided to pare down the writing because it became apparent that reading and meeting as a group during the school year, as they were all also teaching full time, was too great a demand on their time and energy. Further, I also saw the quantity of data that the group meetings were generating and felt that I was gathering a more than sufficient amount of data. My suspicion was that having the teachers do additional writing would pass the point of diminishing returns—it would likely dampen their enthusiasm for the project if the project itself became too cumbersome or onerous. This hunch was

corroborated by the fact that I had to remind a couple of the teachers more than once to send me their one piece of writing.[19]

Data analysis

The (re)presentation of another's experience, as well as my own, is neither straightforward nor simple. As Hunter (2010) writes, it "needs to be done with respect and humility" (p. 50). It was in this spirit that I approached the analysis of the data in this study. There is a trust that is (ideally) engendered between all involved in the research process, and respect for and careful stewardship of this trust was even more critical in this study, in which I conducted research with my colleagues, who are also (still!) my friends.

Methodologically, the manner in which I conducted the analysis, while following narrative inquiry broadly, was to some degree organic and flowed from both the data and the spirit of the discourse in the inquiry group meetings, the individual conversations, and the reflective writing. As such, I made a number of adjustments, corrections, and re-thinking of my analysis plan as I encountered what James (2017) aptly called analytical "cul-de-sacs," in which I needed to alter or even reverse my course—I did, after all, end up in the Van Gogh Museum, if you will recall.

In anticipation of the organic and responsive nature of my inquiry, it did not make sense to pre-determine a coding scheme for my data, or even to commit to coding, in the traditional sense, before the study commenced. For me, it was helpful to conceptualize the task of analyzing data as an act of "assemblage" (Augustine, 2014), in which threads from

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[19] Perhaps writing isn't as common or necessary part of teachers' lives as it is for graduate students. Food for thought.

various sources and in various forms are pulled together to create meaning. This is an acknowledgement and understanding that the work of data analysis “cannot be neat, tidy, and contained … because it is emergent and experimental” (St. Pierre & Jackson, 2014, p. 717). This stance is not a methodological cop-out or a way for researchers to avoid planning a coding protocol in advance of their research. It is, instead, a blueprint for what Childers (2014) calls “promiscuous analysis,” a permission slip of sorts that allows an investigation to follow its own momentum and path. For, as Childers (2014) suggests, “coding, or any other systematic, a priori structural process of analysis, is a failed attempt to discipline a world that is uncontainable” (p. 819). The world of stories is nothing, as we shall see, if not uncontainable.

I wrote both reflective and analytic memos (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011) after each research encounter and, as needed, throughout both the data collection and data analysis processes. These memos not only served as a means to track my progress and process through the course of the research, but also as a way to organize and justify my data collection and analytic decisions and insights as the research process developed. These memos also served as a way to systematize and organize my thinking, as well as a data source in and of themselves.

Polkinghorne (1995) offers an important clarification on data analysis using narrative data. He makes the distinction between “analysis of narratives” and “narrative analysis.” On a rudimentary level, the former describes an inquiry that uses narrative and stories as data, and the latter is the practice of crafting stories in order to analyze data as well as report on findings. In this study, I used both methods—much of the data that I collected was in storied form, flowing from the conversations in the inquiry group as well as in the individual

conversations with the teachers. I examined stories that my colleagues told holistically, using them as representations and manifestations of the lived experiences that gave me insight into the lives of these teachers.

The stories that we shared in the inquiry group were the data that I collected and analyzed (Polkinghorne's "analysis of narratives"). In reading and re-reading them, I developed a holistic sense of the direction of the data, and the broader narrative to which these data pointed. As broad themes emerged and settled in my mind and in my heart, I began to assemble the stories and choose stories from the meeting and conversation transcripts and the reflective writing. I selected the stories that I retell in this dissertation using two main criteria. The first was that each story that you will hear[20] in this dissertation contributed in an interesting and meaningful manner to the overall narrative of teacher life that I was constructing. Secondly, and perhaps most importantly, I chose stories that resonated with me—as a teacher, as a researcher, and as a human being. The power of stories resides in their resonance (Conle, 1996). This is particularly true in this study, in which the subject, teachers, is near and dear to my heart, not to mention my own life experience and identity.

I used the stories also as the means to report on my data (Polkinghorne's "narrative analysis"). In this dissertation, the stories are both data that I extracted from the full collection of information produced in our inquiry group as well as findings that provide an illustration of what I call *teacher life*—both process and product. As I absorbed the stories

[20] I feel as though, despite the fact that the stories here are written, "hearing" them is a truer representation of how they are, or at least should be, processed.

that we shared in the inquiry group, I realized that, when taken as a whole, they told a powerful story about *becoming*—how we have individually become the teachers that we are today, and how we are moving toward the teachers that we will be in the future. These teachers—who we are now and who we are becoming—are connected to each other (and to the teachers who we have been) through our lived experiences, and these are communicated through story. As a result, I decided that the best way to (re)present teacher life is through stories—my stories, such as the one that I told in Chapter 1, as well as the stories that we will hear in Chapter 4.

My research design, together with narrative methodology and epistemology, worked to provide a physical and metaphorical narrative space inside which we could tell and hear our stories. The stories formed the body of data that I collected and analyzed, but they were also more than that. They were both process and product, a vital means to both understanding our teacher lives as well as key components to the development of that life. The power of stories is in the telling, however. In the following chapter, we'll meet the teachers in this study and hear some of the stories that they told.

Chapter 4
Data Analysis: (Re)presenting Teachers' Stories

"An opportunity to dive into this mystery."

The corpus of data that I collected in this study is storied in nature. In this chapter, I will share stories from each of the teachers in the inquiry group, including myself, and will endeavor to draw out elements of practical reasoning that they contain, using these stories as a way to illuminate and give life to the concept of teacher life, which I will develop in Chapter 5. While each of the stories that I offer in this chapter is unique—they are, after all, a product of one teacher's lived experience—they collectively fit together to form a representation of what it means to be a teacher. This is not to say that the experiences, feelings, thoughts, and emotions are directly representative of the experience of every teacher. There are threads, however, that will strike a chord with teachers, and the careful consideration of the knowledge that these stories contain will prove a useful exercise in the corresponding conceptualization of teacher life.

Given that most narrative inquiry projects, at least in an academic context, generally result in the telling or retelling of participants' stories in some format, a consideration of how those stories are told is warranted. A common reaction (at least among graduate students that I have observed) to reading a narrative research report is that it is typically much more "readable" and "enjoyable" than a traditional article or book that is relaying the results of a research endeavor.

Often narrative research reports are written in a more engaging manner—who, after all, doesn't love a good story? Huber et al. (2013), however, caution narrative inquirers that "the priority in composing research texts is not, first and foremost, to tell a good story; the priority is to compose research texts in relation with the lives of our participants and ourselves" (p. 225).[21] In these sobering words, we can hear an invocation and acknowledgement that narrative inquiry is not just the telling of wonderful stories, although it certainly can (and, I would argue, should) be that. The telling of wonderful stories, however, necessarily takes place within a certain and particular context. Before we hear from the teachers in this study, a brief discussion about context is important.

Contextualizing the stories

As Shuman (2012) reminds, us, stories are located in a particular context—a specific time and place. It bears repeating here that the stories that I retell in this dissertation come from teachers who work in a school that is located in a largely white and affluent part of a major city. The teachers in this study are all white, which is reflective of the teaching corps in the United States as a whole. While the students at Marie Raymond Community School are predominantly white and middle- to upper-class economically, there are students from other parts of the city who bring cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic diversity to the school.

You may be reading this as a person of color and think about how all of the teachers in this study are white. You may be reading this as a person in a rural or suburban school

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[21] I would argue, parenthetically, that a story composed "in relation to the lives of our participants and ourselves" cannot help but be an engaging story, writing style and writing ability aside. This is, in many ways, the very definition of a good story.

and think about how this school in located in an urban setting. You may be reading this as a beginning teacher and think about these more experienced teachers and the years of experience that they have to draw upon. For me, as I hear the stories that the teachers in this story told, and as I talk with my friends, my colleagues (who, of course, include the teachers in this study), and my students, these stories resonated with me. They resonated because I could hear these teachers speaking their experiences, their beliefs, their truths, and their lives into the world with their words. These stories are glimpses into their classrooms, their practice as teachers, and their professional selves.

However you read these stories, and however (or not) they resonate with you personally and/or professionally, there are ideas about teachers and teaching that we can draw out of these stories. They are not meant to be generalized to every educational context or situation. Rather, they are offered as a way to provoke the reader's "sociological imagination" (Mills, 1970). These stories are embedded in the context of this study, this school, and the lived experiences of these teachers, but they are simultaneously indicative and evocative of bigger ideas than that setting. They illuminate aspects of teachers' lives, such as the commitments that we make and sustain, the role of deliberation in our lives, and how stories themselves contain and communicate the knowledge the we hold. Each of these concepts will be developed in the following chapters.

I enter into this narrative inquiry with eyes wide open, fully cognizant of the fact that, as Sikes (2012) asserts, "in a research context, if I'm writing, I'm crafting a narrative" (p. 124). This is true of any research endeavor, but it is especially true of narrative inquiry. The narrative crafted in this dissertation is mine; the interpretation is mine as well. I have tried, as Richardson (2007) suggests, to "keep [the] control of the text with its author … it is

the author's story, after all" (p. 171). The stories that I (re)tell in this chapter are true, as told to me by the teachers in the inquiry group. While the stories are theirs, the act of retelling their stories is a complicated one. I have engaged in what Polkinghorne (1995) referred to as "narrative smoothing," which in this case involves not changing the story, but rather presenting it a form that fits within the broader narrative of this dissertation as well as makes it more readable. I present the stories in this chapter in the same format, chronology, and spirit in which they were told to the inquiry group and/or me.

As explained in Chapter 3, I selected the stories that appear here—both stories from the teachers as well as stories that I wrote as I considered, processed, and analyzed the data. I undertook this process in an intentional and purposeful way. However, the act of curating these stories and organizing them in the manner in which I did makes this dissertation a narrative itself, one that tells a larger story that I have crafted. My hope is that in telling the broader story that I relate here, I do justice to the stories that the teachers told, and that they, individually and collectively, help to shed light on the concept of teacher life that is the focus of this thesis. In the sage words of Sparkes (2007), "in the end, the story simply asks for your consideration" (p. 522). It is in that spirit that I offer both the narratives from the teachers as well as the larger narrative of this dissertation.

The teachers who appear in this chapter—my colleagues and friends—and the stories that they share are full of meaning, emotion, and life. These stories are "shaped by each person's choice and selective memory and by the circumstances of our work together. No doubt they're shaped again by my own selections, resonating variously with my own experience" (Bateson, 1989, p. 34). I have used these stories to think with, just as these

teachers have used these stories as a way to (re)present their teacher lives. Here again, we see a clear emphasis on the epistemological imperative of relationship in narrative inquiry. Because these stories are from the life experiences of Annie, Thomas, Elizabeth, Ralph, Dominic, and me, they are necessarily and inextricably embedded in the narrative of our teacher lives. Similarly, these stories are spatially situated within the narrative of this paper, but also within the narrative space of the inquiry group. In this chapter, I'll share six stories from these teachers. They are connected, obviously, by the fact that they were told within the setting of this research project. More significantly, they are connected because they provide insight into the ways in which we teachers see, feel, and experience ourselves operating within a teacher life, simultaneously building and living our lives as teachers.

I will let the stories and, I hope, the voices of the teachers speak. As you hear the stories, I encourage you to pause and consider the story and the knowledge that is contained in it, how (and if) it resonates with you, and what thoughts, feelings, and insights it provokes in you about teachers and teaching.

Annie

It is always a pleasure for me to step into Annie's classroom. The first reason is that it was my classroom, several years ago. There is a connection to the space, I think, that teachers feel long after the desks and shelves have been differently located and filled. I can hear echoes of the students who I taught and the often amusing (and sometimes trying) events in that room.

I also love going into Annie's classroom because of the sense of closeness and teamwork that is apparent, even when her young charges are not present. From the desks

huddled in small work teams, to the community art project that hangs on the wall, refreshed every year by a new set of small hands, to the colorful posters strategically placed around the room, Annie's classroom is an open, welcoming space where students come to feel a part of a community—a family, even.

Annie has been a teacher in River City Public Schools (RCPS) for more than 25 years. She has taught in several different schools, which vary widely socio-economically, racially, culturally, and linguistically. Before coming to Marie Raymond Community School, she was a classroom teacher at an elementary school that served mainly students whose home language is Spanish.

Annie is in her mid-fifties ("and not afraid to say it, either"). Like all the licensed (teaching) staff at Marie Raymond, Annie is white. She was born and raised in a medium-sized rural town. Her family was decidedly working class, and she is a first-generation college graduate.

Marie Raymond Community School is located in one of the more affluent neighborhoods in River City. It is a neighborhood full of single-family homes that are largely full of white, upper-middle and upper-class families. Because Marie Raymond is a neighborhood school, its student body reflects the surrounding community. The school, however, also draws students from other neighborhoods that are markedly more diverse than the blocks surrounding it. Students from outside Marie Raymond's immediate neighborhood often bring increased diversity—racial, economic, linguistic, and cultural—to the otherwise mostly homogenously white and middle- to upper-class student body.

During the fifth meeting of our inquiry group, we were talking about the racial and social isolation of Marcus, one of the students that Shalaby profiles in Troublemakers *(2017). Marcus is an African-American first grader in a predominantly white school. Marcus' story sparked Annie to recount her reaction to something we had read and discussed in our book group from a previous year.*

At Marie Raymond, economic disparities are sometimes unintentionally highlighted in school-wide and public ways, often at events. One such event is the annual "State Float Parade," which is done by the fourth grade every spring as a culminating event for their study of the United States. Each student is assigned a state to research, both at school and at home. There are two main products of this research—an oral presentation to the class, and the Float Parade. Each fourth grader constructs a "float" at home that they then wheel on an oval path through the gym, while the entire student body looks on and cheers. The floats are often built on top of a wagon or small cart and range from very creative and elaborate to more modest affairs.[22]

The Float Parade has been a tradition and source of community pride at Marie Raymond for many years—more than a decade, certainly. My own children attended Marie Raymond and were rightfully proud of their floats, pulling them around the ring with smiles and waves to their friends. There has been another conversation, however, undertaken in quiet moments in the hallways among some of the staff at Marie Raymond about the floats that are on display, and specifically how some students—all too often the students of

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[22] For those who have participated in or know of Cub Scouts, there is something of a "Pinewood Derby" phenomenon at play here, which entails whispered commentaries from staff (and some families) about which floats were *actually* done by the kids, and which were done with varying amounts of adult help.

color—have floats that are simple cardboard boxes hastily attached to a gym scooter and pulled by a rope or random piece of twine.

As I described in Chapter 1, for several years I organized an Equity Book Club at Marie Raymond. As a group we read selections from A Good Time for the Truth *(Shin, 2016) together, meeting at a local bar after school hours. Annie was an enthusiastic member of this Book Club, and during one of its meetings she spoke about the influence that the Equity Book Club, the readings, and the conversation had on her. At one of the* A Good Time for the Truth *meetings, the Marie Raymond Float Parade came up, in response to a passage in the book. The discussion centered around the disparity in access to materials and expertise outside of school that our students experience. We discussed this, related it to the text, and expressed our disappointment and frustration with the situation. Then, as such conversations often do, the talk shifted to other topics, and the Float Parade was left behind.*

But not for Annie. She, as a primary grade teacher, saw three of her former students, now fourth graders, in this reading. She knew them, their families, and the challenges that they might face in completing this project. Quietly, she gathered proper wagons, posterboard, markers, and access to a printer for the various and sundry state facts that Delaware, Kansas, and American Samoa[23] *would require for each of her students.*

This event and Annie's reaction to it point to three important aspects of Annie's teacher life. The first is the importance of 'catalytic moments' that inspire, provoke, and

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[23] With only fifty states and 120 fourth graders, the fourth grade team decided to include U.S. Territories as well.

sustain action and growth for teachers. For Annie, the Equity Book Club served this purpose. It was a springboard that propelled her into action on behalf of and in solidarity with her students. This is in spite of, or at least contrary to, her self-image of being "more of a rule-follower than a rule-breaker." She did advise her students' teacher of her intent, and their teacher was very welcoming of and grateful for the help. The book club was a moment in her teacher life that gave clarity, and importantly, a path toward actually doing something to remedy a situation that she had perceived before but had not addressed. Looking back, she commented that she now has an increased "sense of sometimes you have to go your own way to do stuff that you're proud of." It was, by her own admission, "stressful" to put action into the school community, mainly because she said she has always felt an imperative to "stay in her lane."

The second important aspect of the Float Parade narrative is that it points to a personal, embodied aspect of Annie's teacher life. She noted repeatedly that she felt pride as a result of her action. She commented that, "I was very proud of helping Devante, Thomas, and Marla have a float, like a real live float in the state parade. And I felt really, really good about that. I didn't ask anybody if I could do it. I just got the wagons, got the stuff. I arranged it myself." She added that, "I felt really proud about that because they would've had nothing. We would have had the cardboard box on the scooter." The pride that Annie felt in taking these students under her wing and providing them with supplies—not to mention encouragement—demonstrates the personal, human aspect of her life as a teacher. Teaching is a very personal endeavor for Annie, and for her, as with many teachers, it is visceral, emotional work that is mainly done very close to her heart.

Pride is a deeply embodied emotion, one that is provoked in Annie by her connection and commitment to her students and her work. When her actions responded to her commitment to her students in what, for her, was a somewhat unexpected way[24], she felt a sense of connection to herself and her commitments as a teacher and as a person. The work for her students was a response to her internal moral compass, and was an opportunity for her to work against, while still within, a system that she knew was rife with inequity. For Annie, the equal access to supplies and full participation in the Float Parade that she provided to her students was born of the moral imperative that she felt on behalf of her students. She recognized the need and felt compelled to act. This agentic movement by Annie is the animation of her moral stance in her practice that connects her human and personal interior self with the external world—with all of its attendant rules, power dynamics, and systemic practices. By acting in a way that is counter to the tacitly accepted organizational structure in the school, Annie acted as a disrupter of the system.

Thomas

When Thomas was hired at Marie Raymond School, he came very highly recommended. He was my nephew's teacher at another school in the River City Public Schools—and he was beloved. When my nephew heard that he was coming to Marie Raymond, not only did he enthusiastically endorse him, his younger sister loudly proclaimed, "NO FAIR! I wanted to have Mr. Johnson too!"

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[24] Especially considering her "rule-following" self-concept.

Thomas is the kind of teacher who thinks especially deeply and intentionally about his work. Even though he has more than twenty years of experience as an elementary school teacher, he is constantly trying new things. He works to bring real-world, meaningful learning to his students, and frequently pushes back, in ways both overt and subtle, against district-mandated curricula when it does not fit his standards of rigor and authenticity.

Thomas is a teacher who is outspoken about the nonsensical mandates that come down from administration, as well as the inanity of many of the curricular and pedagogical decisions that he views as being made for him by someone who is not a classroom teacher, and perhaps has never been, or only in the distant past. He does not adhere to the 'party line,' and, in many cases, works to subvert the mandated curriculum, both official and hidden. On the other hand, he enthusiastically and whole-heartedly immerses himself in the initiatives in which he believes and sees value.

At the school where Thomas taught before he came to Marie Raymond, he taught second grade. In his reflective writing response, done after the group meetings had finished, he related a story about one of his students, James. During the inquiry group meetings, Thomas was drawn to the story of Lucas, another of the students that Shalaby (2017) profiles. She describes Lucas as, charitably if not euphemistically, "a child for whom individual desire is exceptionally strong" (p. 51). For Thomas, James was a similar kid. He was loveable, sweet, funny, and amazing, and he could drive you up a tree four times before lunch, on a good day.

One day in the classroom, near the end of the school year, as Thomas was sitting on the floor having a reading conference with another student, James jumped into him, pile-driver style, into his back, knees full on into his ribs. He wasn't a big kid, but with the element of surprise, it hurt. It felt, Thomas commented, like an assault. Just after that, one of the girls in the class approached Thomas and said," I don't feel safe anymore." He replied, "Don't worry, Sylvia, you're safe."

This was about two weeks before the end of the year, and James was a student who had experienced and was still experiencing various kinds of trauma in his young life. Thomas knew this, and very much understood that the reason James jumped on him was not malicious, but rather a response to the uncertainty and upheaval that his summer vacation was going to bring. James had no idea—nor any input into—what his summer would entail. "Am I going to be shipped off to Arkansas for the summer?" "If not, who is going to make my breakfasts and lunches while my mom is at work?" These fears were very, very real in his mind.

As Thomas struggled with how to balance his message to Sylvia that she was, in fact, safe at school and in their classroom with the fact that James had physically attacked him, he realized that a lot of his time and focus had gone to James that year. James took up a lot of the oxygen in the classroom, and Thomas also needed to be aware of the other kids in the room, the quieter, "easier" ones, like Sylvia, and what they needed. Thomas commented that he felt a connection to kids like Sylvia, likely because, as he commented, "I was that kid."

As he thought through this story, Thomas explained that, in his mind, it all comes back to the foundation in his classroom of love. He didn't necessarily think that he needed to convince Sylvia that she actually was safe, because she already knew it, on a deep level. She

was already convinced. But in that moment, she needed reassuring because James's actions were, in fact, scary.

Thomas describes his classroom as based on a "core value of love." He reflected that James and Sylvia responded to that core value of love in different ways. Sylvia's and James's ways of being and their reactions are equally valid, given their individual experiences and lives, both inside and outside of school. For Sylvia, Thomas's classroom was an extension of her home life, in many ways. She felt safe and secure at home, which is also probably why this incident was so jarring for her. The way the classroom and his relationship with the kids worked was like a baseline for her—it "fit."

For James, though, end-of-the-year events at school like Field Day and music programs were markers, a kind of signal to him that the school year, and, by extension, this safe, loving, comfortable place in which he has lived for the past nine months was coming to an end. Throughout the year, even though he had constantly tested Thomas's patience and limits for most of the year, he knew, on a foundational level, that Thomas loved him. In fact, Thomas commented that "he *always* came to me. Always, for whatever thing." But at the end of the year, James didn't know what was going to happen. Paradoxically, if the classroom hadn't been as loving or as safe a space as it was; if he hadn't felt—knew—that he was loved, the end of the year probably wouldn't have been as traumatic for James as it was. But he knew that he was safe, knew that he was loved, and also knew that he was going to grieve, but couldn't express it any other way than by jumping on Thomas in their classroom.

This story from Thomas illustrates an important aspect of teacher life. Love is foundational in the work that we teachers do and is an apt descriptor of how a good teacher goes about doing that work. This love, obviously, is not romantic love. It is a profound connection with students, a consideration of and striving toward what is best for them, as well as a motivation to persevere in doing the work of an educator.

Perhaps the most famous conception of love in teaching and education comes from Paulo Freire, who teaches us that love is active (1993), radical (2000) and "armed" (2005, p. 74). In the end, he concludes that "education is an act of love," (1973, p. 38) and urged educators to "teach with love" (1998, p. 126). It is through love, Freire claims, that true growth and transformation can happen in both teachers and their students.

The term that perhaps best captures the sentiment of love in teaching and in the story that Thomas recounted is "the thinking heart." This phrase is generally attributed to Etty Hillesum, who hauntingly described herself in her Holocaust memoir as "the thinking heart of the barracks" (1983, p. 199). At the risk of co-opting the profound implications of her self-description, I think "the thinking heart" describes very well what we teachers do, and what Thomas expressed in the story above, very well. It is action that begins in the heart, full of love—love of people, love of beauty, and love of learning. This loving action is formed and shaped, perhaps propelled, by our knowledge—our teacher-thinking—into a unified, if perhaps tacit or unconscious practical understanding of a proper course of human and pedagogical action.

Elizabeth

During the course of one of our group meetings, we discussed our families of origin. As she talked about her sister, Elizabeth said that, “I don’t know how to describe her. She’s way more prickly, she’s way more abrasive than I am.” The immediate rejoinder from Thomas, echoed by several members of the group was, “I think everybody’s more abrasive than you, Elizabeth.”

Elizabeth is a resource teacher at Marie Raymond. There is more to her than meets the initial eye. Lurking beneath a smiling, pleasant, and easy-going exterior is a fierce advocate for students and for equity in schools. Elizabeth is the quiet kind of teacher leader that every school needs—she’s not the one who will necessarily be outspoken at a staff meeting, or even in a smaller team meeting. Indeed, in this study there were broad expanses of transcripts in which Elizabeth did not talk, and then, suddenly, there would be a paragraph, an exchange, in which she would offer some supremely profound insight into the issue at hand.

Elizabeth, in practice, is one who will do the work—getting to know and welcome families from diverse cultures and linguistic backgrounds and making sure that all students have what they need to succeed at Marie Raymond. She’s the one who can quietly suggest and cajole teachers into seeing things in a different way, subtly persuading and gently enticing adults in the school to see beyond their own classroom and their own ways of doing school.

The point to which Elizabeth frequently returned, in a variety of ways, in our inquiry group discussions was reflection. This practice[25] *formed, in large part, the foundation of her teacher life. As a resource teacher, Elizabeth works with many of the same students for multiple years, and she is able to establish deep relationships with them, in ways that classroom teachers simply cannot in nine months. The fact that she sees her students in small groups also contributes to this opportunity. She constantly examines and reflects upon her practice, thinking deeply about how she conducts herself and her classroom. For instance, as she spoke about the relationships that develop between her and her students, she commented that,*

> *[The students] change. They have things that go on in their lives that are happening that makes things different. So, you know, it also kind of depends on the time. It's like a pendulum, you know what I mean? Like sometimes you need more of that relationship building and then sometimes you can focus more on the curriculum that you want to get done. And it just kinda depends on what's happening in the world and in their lives and everything.*

This kind of meta-thinking, a close examination of not only her actions, but the environment—physical, emotional, and psychological—of her teaching space is a hallmark of Elizabeth's practice, and a key for her growth as an educator. Through this reflection,

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[25] I'm not completely sure that reflection, at least for Elizabeth, could (or should) be called 'a practice,' however. She rarely used the term, or even referred to reflection as something in which she was intentionally and purposefully engaging. Perhaps 'trait' is a better descriptor of how reflection showed up in Elizabeth's life as a teacher, because it seems to be more a behavior that is intrinsic to her way of being, more than a method that has been taught and learned, or at least consciously committed to.

Elizabeth is able to not only look back on what has transpired in her classroom and evaluate it but is also able to look forward and plan.

Her reflective nature has a deliberative quality to it as well, as much reflective practice does, taking on a moral aspect. As Elizabeth talked about how her students' behavior impacts her practice, she described the tension that exists between her ideas about what a classroom should look and sound like and the reality of classroom life for an elementary school student. She noted that,

> *it's hard, as a teacher, I feel like I've kind of had to reconcile certain things, and say to myself sometimes, does this behavior that this student is doing right now—is it really worth a fight, is it really that bad? Is it just because I have these expectations of how things should be, ideally? If they're doing something silly, and I really want to be like, "knock it off." But is it really, in the long run, that horrible? Do they really need to be reprimanded for that?*

The constant mulling over of situations and actions, both hers and her students, helps Elizabeth frame her practice as a teacher. It clarifies and defines; it provides structure and meaning. In short, it not only describes who and how she is as a teacher, it also provides the input that leads to her development. This recursive and circular process recalls the autopoietic, auto-constitutive process of phronesis that Dunne (1993) describes as a circle. In Chapter 2 I introduced the idea from his work that while phronesis guides action, it is also the product of good action, including things that we do as a matter of course. Elizabeth's reflection is phronetic, and, as such, resides very much in the realm of practical reasoning.

The genesis of this reflective practice certainly comes from Elizabeth's nature and has its roots in her personal characteristics. The curiosity and yearning for knowledge and bigger, more diverse experiences than she was able to perceive and experience in her small, rural hometown is part of the root of this practice, certainly. Her reflection has another, perhaps less expected source as well. Because she is supremely focused on her students, getting to know them as people as well as learners, they are the impetus and the sustaining factor for the fact that reflection plays such a key role in her teacher life. She acknowledges this, saying, "They [her students] make me think about, like *really* think about my teaching and myself more."

This statement is revelatory in a couple of ways. The first is that the role that one's students play in promoting—inciting, even—reflection on the part of their teacher is less explored in the literature than perhaps it should be. Reflection is often discussed as a process interior to the teacher, in which a 'good' teacher somehow 'possesses' this trait or disposition as a result of teaching or coaching. We are told that it is something that we do because we were trained to do it[26] and we are told of its value. The fact that one's students can be the stimulus for reflection is somewhat novel.

Elizabeth's statement about her students is also important because she correctly, if subtly, hints that her reflection is not only about her teaching, but it is also about her as a person. Once again, we see the intertwining and enmeshing of the personal and the professional in the progression of a teacher's life. By bringing an examination of herself to

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[26] Witness the number of teacher preparation programs whose conceptual framework is some variation of "reflective practitioner," as though this were the apotheosis of a well-prepared teacher and the summative goal of the program – something to be taught, learned, and mastered.

the fore, Elizabeth is working on her human self at the same time she is considering her pedagogical self.

Ralph

On my very first day teaching at Marie Raymond I arrived early enough to collect the keys for my classroom, drop off my backpack, and head to the all-staff welcome back breakfast hosted by our principal. Knowing no one at the school, I sauntered over to the end of the line that had formed in front of the tables, which were filled with the obligatory pastries, egg bakes, and juices, in three shades of orange. I stood quietly, trying to look like I fit in, when a man, about my age, joined the line behind me. Much to my surprise—not to mention my delight and relief—he said, “Hey, you must be the new kindergarten teacher. Welcome to Marie Raymond. I’m Ralph, second grade.” We struck up a conversation as we collected our eggs, rolls, and juice, facilitated by Ralph’s easy-going manner and our matching positions as bilingual teachers on our respective grade-level teams.

That breakfast was 13 autumns ago, but I still remember Ralph as the first person at Marie Raymond who spoke to me and included me in the life of the school. That act, as much as any description I could offer, sums up Ralph. He is a genuine, thoughtful, and exceedingly decent person, but in a quiet, unassuming way that often flies under the radar.

When prompted to talk about his background in the individual conversation with me, Ralph described his path to becoming a teacher. It was something of a non-traditional path, in that he went to a community college for two years before transferring to

a large, state university where he majored in psychology. After college, not really knowing what he wanted to do, Ralph moved to Mexico to teach English at a small language school. He reflected on what a great experience it was for him, saying, "not only did I learn Spanish, I learned to teach. I learned that I really liked this profession." Upon returning to the United States, Ralph enrolled in a master's program and received his elementary education teaching credentials.

After spending a year teaching in a suburban school, he landed a job in River City Public Schools (RCPS). In his second and third years of teaching, he felt that he was floundering a bit, unsure of not only his ability as a teacher, but perhaps his commitment to the profession as well. He commented that,

> *then I [got] into the public schools and I'm teaching and I'm liking it and, and then I have to … keep going and then start making the decision that I really want to learn this craft and not just come to work. And so, I take a chance and go to a workshop that I didn't really want to go to, but it's like now I gotta get better at this shit because classroom management … I did not probably understand.*

For Ralph, attending a training about nonverbal classroom management was a turning point in his career, one that reaffirmed and renewed his commitment to teaching as a profession and to his teacher life. It was a moment, early in his career, when he realized that he needed to fully commit to becoming a teacher. At that point, he began to consider teaching as more than just a job, or even a career. He made the conscious decision that his

teacher life was his "craft," and that he was "just being dedicated to it. That was a big decision." He realized, in that decision, that "I should be honing my craft on this stuff there."

This was a crucial catalytic moment for Ralph. As he was telling this story, an earnestness came over his face, and his voice changed in tone—both of which stood in contrast to the casual, easygoing garrulousness of speech that is typical for Ralph. As he committed to his development and learning as a teacher, he was forging a model and charting a path for his continued professional learning for the next two decades of his teacher life. It set him on a course of curiosity and wonder: about children, learning, classrooms, and the profession of teaching. This was echoed and exemplified in Ralph's explanation about why he agreed to join this study. In addition to the personal connection that we have as colleagues, friends, and parents of very similar-aged children, he commented that joining this study was "another opportunity to dig into this mystery [of teaching and learning] and [a way to] see kids in different lights."

As he talked about what motivated him as a teacher, Ralph spoke about his high-school aged daughter, Olivia. Despite the fact that she is "not a very good test taker," she is a bright and very motivated student. When she began high school at a local private school, she wanted to take honors English, because reading and writing are two of her particular passions. At her high school, the main determinate of placement in advanced classes is a student's standardized test scores from the previous year, especially for an incoming ninth grader, with whom no one at the school had any prior experience. Olivia did not receive a

high score on the standardized test that she took in eighth grade. However, as Ralph observed, "she really wanted to get [into] an honors English class. She wanted to work hard and be in the top classes."

Olivia had saved a piece of writing that she had done in eighth grade, and she showed it to the placement coordinator and the teacher at her new school as proof of what she was actually capable of, as opposed to what her test results said. She was admitted to the honors course, and did well because, as her father said, with an understandable and palpable sense of pride, "she's a hard worker."

It is significant that when Ralph considers what motivates him in his professional life, he automatically reaches into his personal life. In a sense, the two are, if not the same, then intertwined in meaningful and tangible ways. Through his experience with Olivia, Ralph constantly makes a concerted effort to really "see" his students, and to get to know them in deep, personal, and authentic ways, as scholars and as individuals. He comments that he "has worked really hard to know every kid" and to give each student a chance to shine and be their best selves. Ralph sees his students in much the same way that he sees his own children. He prioritizes "one-on-one conversations" with his students, encouraging them to share their talents and skills in ways that perhaps are less apparent through more conventional means, such as tests and even essays.

Dominic

Dominic is that teacher that all parents want for their child. In fact, he taught both of my children when they were students at Marie Raymond Community School. He is clever and creative, and typically has a fun, over-the-top (in a good way) final project for each unit that he teaches. I connected with him when I began teaching at Marie Raymond because we share a love of offbeat humor and terrible puns, and we were both members of the bilingual team at the school. We bonded over the trials and tribulations of teaching in two languages as well as either translating or inventing much of the curriculum for our students.

Despite a slightly goofy and rambunctious affect, Dom is singularly focused on his students and their learning needs. He is a big thinker, and I have enjoyed conversations about education and schooling with him, always in a vain attempt to solve all of the educational establishment's problems. A common refrain that often ends our conversations is, "If only everyone else would just ask us what to do, we'd all be fine."

Dominic's very first job out of college was not as a teacher. In fact, he didn't even major in education as an undergraduate. His first job out of college was working for a small social service agency that served Spanish-speaking communities in River City doing outreach, advocacy, and education.

One of the parts of the job that Dom particularly enjoyed was co-leading a group for middle- and high-school aged Spanish-speaking Latinx kids at a local high school. In addition to training the students as peer educators, the group also provided them experiences and outings to local attractions. In this sense, the agency-led youth group filled

the same place in these young people's lives that Dom's church youth group did for him while growing up. Dom led the group to amusement parks, movies, camping, rock climbing, and other fun activities.

One of these outings left an indelible mark on Dom—it was an experience that he would never forget, and it changed the way he viewed the world, in fundamental ways. At Halloween time, the group leaders decided (or, more accurately, were persuaded) to take the young people to a local mall to go through the haunted house.

On the appointed day, just a couple of evenings before Halloween, the group loaded into the van and drove to the mall. Since they inadvertently parked on the exact wrong side of the mall, they went inside and walked halfway around the mall to get to the haunted house. Dom's colleague, Cristina, with whom he led the group, was Mexican. As soon as they began to walk around the mall—two adults and 15 Latinx kids—Cristina pulled him aside and said, "Are you noticing this?" Dom, in his white naiveté, replied, "Noticing what?" She indicated across the wide hallway with a slight nod of her head. As his eyes tracked her subtle pointing, he saw three security guards walking slightly behind their group.

"So?" he asked. "It's just a couple of security guards doing their job." "Okay," Cristina replied. "Then how about that?" she said, with an equally subtle flick of her head in the other direction, ahead of them. "Watch those two people up ahead of us as we walk,"

Cristina told him. "Why?" he asked innocently. "Just humor me, güerito[27], okay?" Cristina jabbed back. "Sure," he replied.

As the group walked, the security guards behind them kept pace precisely and only semi-unobtrusively. The pair ahead of them continued to walk causally but steadily ahead of the group. Cristina said, "Okay, watch now." She called out to the kids, who were walking ahead of them, to come and look at a sweater in a store window. As the group stopped and walked back toward Cristina and Dom, the "couple" ahead of them did the same and began ambling back in their direction. Then Cristina upped the ante, saying, "Hey, let's all go in and take a look. I think I want that one," as she pointed at a sweater.

The pace of the "couple" ahead of them quickened, and Dom noticed three other tall men, all dressed in plain clothes, suddenly materialize seemingly out of nowhere to follow them into the store.

Dom realized simultaneously how heavily this group of brown-skinned young people were constantly surveilled as they moved through the world, how privileged his place in this society is due to his whiteness, and how pitifully little he truly knew about what it was like to be a person of color in America.

That experience, with a colleague and a friend as well as with kids for whom Dom cared deeply, changed him. It made him see the world with more expansive and realistic

[27] Güerito (or güero) is a term (in this case) of endearment. Literally translated, it means something akin to "whitey." It can also be used pejoratively to great effect in the proper context. With Cristina, nearly always, it was used with great affection for Dom.

eyes. For perhaps the first time in his life, Dom saw and felt that his experience and understanding was controlled and enforced by his whiteness, and that he had walked through the world in a rather charmed way indeed, for no other reason than being white.

This influenced his decision to become a teacher and led Dom to commit himself to being a bilingual teacher, teaching in a language and culture (Spanish and Latinx) that is not his own.[28] It is important to note that in order for this incident to be an important moment in his teacher life, there was a confluence of several variables, like tributaries into a larger river. Of course, Dom had to be in the situation in the first place—the fact that he was working at a Latinx-focused, bilingual social service agency made this experience possible, as did his proficiency in Spanish and English.

Equally as important, however, was the fact that he was open and receptive to the experience and was able to "be with" the feelings that this experience brought up. The experience was both intellectually and emotionally impactful in meaningful and lasting ways for Dom. Finally, another key element in this situation was his colleague Cristina. If she hadn't called Dom's attention to what was *actually* happening—to her reality, and that of their students—the incident, and its attendant opportunity for growth and learning, would have passed Dom by completely. The key role that others often play in catalyzing, facilitating, or even causing these moments of learning and growth cannot be overstated. The growth that teachers (and human beings) make throughout our lives is very often connected to other people—living a life is, after all, is a very human and personal endeavor.

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[28] Dominic is white, and grew up in a small, rural, predominantly white town, speaking only English.

Jake

As I was reading and (re)writing the stories that the teachers were telling, I realized that I had stories as well. While the story that I retell below was not one that I told in the group meetings, several of the teachers in the group have heard it in other contexts. It is also one of my "go-to stories" that I tell as a teacher educator. Since I was very much a part of the group discussions and the individual conversations, and since this story resonates at many of the same frequencies as the stories that Annie, Thomas, Elizabeth, Ralph, and Dominic told, I include it here.

I did half of my student teaching at Fillmore Elementary School, which is also in River City, in a kindergarten class. It was in the second half of the year, which meant that I began my student teaching in late January. In the second week of my experience, my mentor teacher, Marcia, and I received a new student. His name was Abdi, and he had never been to school of any type before and spoke not a word of English. In addition, he was the oldest child in his family, which meant that he had no siblings at the school to help ease his transition. To add to the newness and difficulty for this child, we had no other Somali-speaking students in our class.

I can only imagine how big, scary, and unfamiliar the school must have seemed to Abdi. As he was led into Room 102 by the school secretary, Marcia and I both greeted him and showed him how and where to store his jacket and Spiderman backpack and how to tuck his hat and mittens into the sleeves of his jacket so they would not get lost. Thankfully we had had an hour or so of lead time before school in which to prepare a cubby and table spot

for him, as well as a Morning Journal, in which all of his new classmates were diligently "writing."

The small plastic bag of breakfast that was thrust into his small hands in the cafeteria upon his arrival must have seemed equally strange and incomprehensible to him—the small and soggy, but somehow still very strongly smelling, plastic bag of mini blueberry pancakes, an equally small and equally soggy bag of sliced green apples, and the ubiquitous carton of 1% white milk were clearly things with which he had no previous experience. Since it was relatively early on in my student teaching experience, Marcia was doing the full-time teaching, and I was mainly observing. As a result, that Tuesday morning I decided that I would attach myself to our new student in an attempt to help him find his way amidst the routines, the spaces, and the people that were Fillmore Elementary School.

At 11:30 in the morning of Abdi's first day, I walked the little-duckling-esque line of kindergarteners to the buses that would take them home after their morning class, with Abdi walking uncertainly at the head of the line. As we arrived at bus 3, I pointed to the door of the bus and the smiling bus driver, who was waving him aboard. As he mounted the first step, which seemed to be nearly waist-high for him, he turned to look back at me, his shock of curly brown hair and wide, brown eyes belying emotions—perhaps hope, perhaps gratitude, most assuredly unease and uncertainty. I waved, with a big smile on my face, and said, "Goodbye, Abdi! I'm so glad that you were here today. See you tomorrow!" While I realized that he understood nothing of what I had just said, I hoped that the tone of my voice, the smile on my face, and the friendly wave conveyed, in some small way, the sentiment, if not the precise meaning, of my message to him.

When I returned to the quiet of our classroom, Marcia and I talked briefly about Abdi and his first day. I was concerned about how we were going to help him become a full member of the classroom community. Marcia suggested that I go speak to Mr. Mohammed, our Somali Family Liaison.

I ventured down the hallway and timidly knocked on the door. I heard a gentle, calm voice come from inside. "Come in, please," it said. I opened the door to see a tall, thin man with graying hair covered by a beaded koofiyad *(a traditional Somali cap). His entire countenance projected peace and calm. After introducing myself, I explained about our new student. Then, in a voice that was perhaps as timid as the initial knock on his door, I asked, "Mr. Mohammed, could you teach me how to say something in Somali for Abdi tomorrow, please?"*

He looked at me, a half-smile appearing on his face. He asked me in return, "What would you like to know how to say?" I paused, pensive, wondering what phrase would be most welcoming to a frightened and understandably overwhelmed five-year-old upon his return to kindergarten in the morning. Finally, I responded, "Maybe good morning?" Mr. Mohammed nodded appreciatively. "A fine choice," he said. He then proceeded to rattle off a two-word phrase of which I caught exactly nothing. Mr. Mohammed looked at me expectantly. I tried to parrot the words that he had just given me. He slowly shook his head and repeated the process. Twenty minutes later, I emerged from Mr. Mohammed's office, armed with "good morning" in Somali. I practiced it all the way back to our classroom and all the way home in my car that evening.

The next morning, as I walked out the front doors to meet the kindergarten buses, I watched Abdi step—well, actually more like jump—off the bottom step of the bus. As his feet

*hit the sidewalk, I put on my widest smile and warmest voice, and said, "Hi Abdi!" He looked up at me with wide eyes that seemed to be the size of saucers, startled perhaps, but also maybe a bit relieved to hear his name among the cacophony of students getting off buses and marching towards the school. As he walked over to me and took my hand, I said, "Hey Abdi. Guess what?" He looked up at me uncomprehendingly but also somehow expectantly. I said, using my best Mr. Mohammed-inspired Somali pronunciation, "*Subax wanaagsan*, Abdi!" Upon hearing that simple phrase, his whole face changed. His eyes lit up and his smile seemed to go from ear-to-ear.*

From that moment on, for the rest of my eight weeks in that classroom, Abdi was attached to me emotionally as well as physically. My typical teacher uniform was khaki pants and a button-down dress shirt. By the time I left Fillmore, the pocket slit on the right side of all of my pairs of pants had a little rip at the bottom, because Abdi's hand was usually gripping the edge of my pants pocket for security—all because of those twenty minutes spent learning and rehearsing with Mr. Mohammed in his office.

I will remember those words—*subax wanaagsan*—for the rest of my life. Not only have I taken those words with me as I have moved through my life as a teacher and as a person, but I also take that image of Abdi in his first days of school—timid, tentative, small, and unsure of anything; knowing no one and not a word of English. Those words and that image help me to never lose sight of the big impact that a simple kindness and a simple act on the part of teacher can have for our students.

Chapter 5
Theorizing Teacher Life

"Moments opened up and considered."

We in the business of teaching and teacher education tend to default to thinking of teacher development as a linear process through which teachers-to-be and practicing teachers acquire knowledge that extends and builds upon their existing knowledge. In this conception, teacher learning is an accumulation of information, techniques and theories that are given to them over the course of the teacher education program and subsequent professional development regimes that they experience throughout the course of their careers. We often position teacher education and professional development as a series of standards or "learning targets" to meet, and engage teachers in courses to accomplish these standards in the equivalent of an educational cattle call, with every teacher learning in a very similar, if not identical, sequence with very similar, if not identical, content.

Of course, the great Brazilian educator and theorist Paulo Freire has much to say about this way of understanding teaching and learning. In his seminal work, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970/2000), he condemns this "banking model of education." Freire argues that this type of education is characterized by belief that "knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable," in which "the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor" (p. 72) of knowledge. This removal or disallowance of agency on the part of the teacher as a learner is central to Freire's argument, and will prove critical in the following discussion.

Using these stories, I have come to view teacher development in a different way; one that hews more closely to the ways in which teachers talk about and understand their own growth and development throughout their careers. It adds the non-linear, more nuanced manner that experiences, such as the ones detailed in the stories that we heard in Chapter 4, are lived. Incidents such as these accumulate throughout a teacher's life and career, adding up to a lifetime of experiences and learnings, the sum total of which is far greater than the component parts. This new way of looking at the development of teachers at all levels, which I call "teacher life," reflects insights gleaned from the analysis of the teachers' stories as well as interactions with the conceptual, epistemological, and theoretical framework of practical reasoning laid out in Chapter 2 and the corresponding elements of narrative inquiry described in Chapter 3.

I heard the stories from the teachers in this study (as well as my own stories) within and against the backdrop of the research questions that I framed at the outset of this study. The content of this chapter forms the response to my first research question, which was: How do teachers' stories about their practice, when stimulated by a common book reading about teaching practice, give insight into how they construct their lives as teachers? To unpack my understanding of this research question, I will take the stories that I (re)told in Chapter 4 and the teacher knowledge that they contain to formulate a new conceptualization of teacher development. In the sections that follow, I will describe teacher life as a concept, examining the moments and commitments that define teacher life, and exploring how it describes the process of becoming that teachers experience throughout our careers.

Teacher life (practically speaking)

As teachers continue along the path of becoming on which we all find ourselves, in teaching and in life, the combination of our personal qualities, our experiences, our backgrounds, our beliefs—in short, our stories—all inform the choices that we make as people and as teachers. For teachers, these choices are any of the myriad decisions that we make during the course of a day in a classroom. Teacher life, however, operates on a larger scale than decisions and choices. While the day-to-day of teaching is the most obviously visible part of the job, the growth and development of a teacher operates on a level at once more profound, more personal, and more intimate than that of decision-making.

Teacher life is a collection of experiences and decisions, of moments and choices, happenings and judgements. It is more than the technical aspects of teaching, which we typically learn in our education programs and in formal professional development opportunities; these learning opportunities represent the techne that Aristotle describes, as discussed in Chapter 2. Where teachers operate—where we *live*—is squarely in the realm of practical reasoning: Aristotle's phronesis and van Manen's pedagogical tact. Again, as Aristotle teaches us, phronesis governs techne. Since teacher life is rooted in practical reasoning, an important aspect of teacher life that bears discussion here is that while these moments that are contained in stories are the building blocks of teacher life, the active process of *using* these moments, of doing something deliberate and intentional with the knowledge held by the moments/stories is how teachers construct a teacher life.

This agentic and active process of construction is evident in the stories related in Chapter 4. In Dominic's story, the possibility and opportunity for learning and growth from his experience in a mall with a group of young Latinx students was a result of his personal

characteristics of empathy, curiosity, and humility. However, his learning and growth actually happened because of what he did with the experience. In other words, Dom found himself in that situation[29] because of who he is, but the experience only became part of him—as a teacher and as a person—because of the manner in which he assimilated it into his professional knowledge landscape (Clandinin and Connelly, 1995). The experience, in and of itself, merely happened to Dominic. It became meaningful for him because of the thought and moral, emotional, and intellectual work that he did on and with the experience.

There is also a social aspect to the meaning-making process. For Dominic, who he was with played a key role in this story and his learning. Cristina, his colleague, essentially guided Dominic through the experience. Her direction led Dominic to see and understand the significance of what was taking place around him. Without her and the context in which Dominic found himself, the moment would not have occurred. Despite the socially mediated and facilitated nature of this story, the process of making meaning of the incident and assimilating this learning into his professional knowledge landscape is largely internal to Dominic and a result of his personal agency and intention. The power that resides in experiences (and the subsequent stories that we make and tell about them) comes not from the "lesson" that we learn from them, but from the meaning that we make/construct from creating and interacting with a story (Toulmin, 2001). This experience at the mall could very well have been left behind for Dominic as he went about building and living his teacher life.

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[29] In terms of physically being in the mall, with that group, at that time. He took the job that led him to that incident because he was bilingual and felt compelled to that type of work. He also organized the trip to the mall for his youth group because he felt it was important. Both decisions are based on his personal characteristics and beliefs.

Instead, he very much took it to heart—he internalized it, it became part of him, and, as a result, became part of his teacher life.

The process by which teachers make meaning from an incident in their lives is practical reasoning. As we saw in Chapter 2, Aristotle claims that phronetic understanding and learning comes from experience and is predicated upon an intentional deliberative and reflective process. Van Manen makes this process more concrete (and contemporary) by showing that this process of practical reasoning is driven and facilitated by pedagogical moments, such as the one that Dominic experienced at the mall. In his consideration of that moment, Dominic had something of an epiphanic moment. He was changed as a result—not as a result of the incident itself *per se*, but rather as a result of the deliberative process of meaning-making that he undertook in its wake. The process of practical reasoning that he carried out was both process and product—it was *how* he grew and developed as a teacher, but also the *knowledge* that facilitated that growth.

Annie's story is another example. As she considered her students and their participation in the Float Parade, she had several decisions to make. Her decision to support her students in their academic work was born of a similar process of practical reasoning. As we saw in Chapter 2, practical reasoning, for Aristotle, is born from a moral imperative to "do the right thing." Aristotelian phronesis is one of the Virtues. Annie felt that moral nudge, which impelled her to practical action. She was spurred on, certainly, by her own moral compass and beliefs, but an additional spark—a catalyst—was provided by the text that we collectively read in the Equity Book Club at Marie Raymond. These factors worked in tandem, along with the strength of her relationship and affection for Devante, Thomas,

and Marla, to move her to action, despite that action being previously uncharacteristic of her and her teacher life.

A related facet of practical reasoning and teacher life that we see in Annie's experience is deliberation. Not only did she make a moral judgement toward right action, but she also deliberated about how best to act within the existing rules (written and unwritten), power structures, and webs of relationships within the school. She chose to let her students' teacher know about her plan (and asked permission, in fact). This deliberative process, for Annie, was complicated by the fact that helping her students felt, as she commented, like she was "stepping out of her lane." The deliberative process is closely related to and is a factor in the moral action that Annie took.

Stories in teacher life

Teacher life, like life in general, is comprised of moments. These moments, some of which are illustrated by the stories in Chapter 4, are the building blocks with which we teachers build a teacher life. While they are discrete moments in time and seem to be nothing more than snapshots in the photo album of a teacher's personal and professional experience, they are more than that. These moments, when stitched together, *are* teacher life. Once again, they are both the material through which a teacher builds a life—how we grow, learn, and develop as teachers—and also the outcome of our learning and growth.

One of the reasons that I chose narrative inquiry as the epistemological and methodological framework for this study was that stories offer a unique and authentic means to access the practical knowledge the teachers possess—we can bring the knowledge to light and discuss, ponder, analyze, and begin to learn from it through the medium of story. In this study, teachers' stories appeared as recollections and representations of moments in their

lives that held meaning for them. In the telling of stories, these are moments opened up and considered in ways that are meaningful and insightful for both the storyteller and the listener.[30]

In Chapter 4, we heard the stories of six teachers. Their stories were evocative, and resonated deeply with me, as I suspect they did for many who have spent time, especially as adults, in schools and classrooms. Having read these stories, you now know something about teachers and teaching that you didn't know before. These teachers, through their stories, tell us something about teacher life, about how teachers live, think, and work. The beauty and the power of using narratives to understand a concept is that they speak directly to us, entering into our minds as well as our hearts—even our souls (Toulmin, 2001). As we interact with stories, we process them through our own unique filter of experiences, emotions, and knowledge (Bateson, 1989). The stories that I included in the previous chapter surely spark many diverse thoughts and feelings about teachers and teaching—indeed, this is what stories do. In this dissertation, however, I have used the stories given by the teachers as a springboard and a window into the process of growth and development throughout the lives of teachers.

The stories that we[31] tell about moments in our lives are of two types, generally. Secret stories are stories of our practice, "lived stories [that] are essentially secret ones" (Craig & Olson, 2002, p. 25). These stories are lived out in our classrooms and are relatively

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[30] The telling of stories is a very human endeavor. Many, or even most, of us communicate our truths and our experiences to others using story. In this, teachers are no exception. This study uses this very human process to understand the very human act of teaching.

[31] The "we" in this sentence applies to both "we teachers" as well as "we human beings." As 'we' have seen above, the personal is intertwined in meaningful and intricate ways with the professional in a teacher's life.

secret, autonomous spaces according to Craig and Olson (2002). When these stories are told to other teachers, they are told generally in "safe spaces that they or others have created or found" (Craig & Olson, 2002, p. 25). The inquiry group in this study was just such a space. This physical and metaphorical space formed an important part of the implications of this study which will be explored in greater detail below.

When teachers move out of the classroom into more public spaces in their professional knowledge landscapes (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995), teachers "often live and tell cover stories, stories in which they portray themselves as experts, certain characters whose teacher stories fit within the acceptable range of the story of school being lived in the school" (Craig & Olson, 2002, p. 25). I would add that as we teachers create, tell, and inhabit stories with the public at large (non-teachers), we further deploy cover stories that fit within a publicly and socially acceptable narrative of "teacher." These stories are often, if we are to be honest with ourselves, very different from the secret stories that we live out in our classrooms.

In addition to the dichotomous nature of teacher stories, Richert (2002) suggests that teachers do not talk often enough about "the challenges that they encounter, the puzzles they have not solved, the things they don't know" (p. 51). She continues, adding that using a narrative methodology raises a challenge to this silence by provoking careful examination about the inherent uncertainty of teaching. Once again, the creation, recognition, and intentional maintenance of spaces that can hold these conversations will prove to be an important part of the implications of using teacher life to conceptually understand the growth and development of teachers.

I would locate the stories that the teachers in this inquiry group generously and graciously shared as somewhere between "secret stories" and "cover stories," as there are elements of both in each story, in varying amounts, including my own story. All of the teachers in the inquiry group were and continue to be colleagues and friends. As a result, there was a sort of trust, familiarity, and intimacy that was born out of both those pre-existing relationships as well as the common professional and personal bond that we felt as fellow educators.

There is still, however, a very human inclination, even among friends and colleagues, and even in such an august setting as an inquiry group that is part of a doctoral dissertation study, that inhibits us from being perfectly ourselves, from telling our secret stories. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that while we may tell *most* of a secret story, my suspicion is that something is generally held back in the telling. As is true with everyone, the stories that we tell have elements of both secret stories and cover stories—even the stories that we tell ourselves. Layered on top of that need is the basic fact that all stories are based upon and colored by one's own perception, biases, and positionality. [32]

The stories that we teachers tell and the mélange of elements of secret and cover stories that they contain can perhaps best be understood using the concept of horizons. A horizon is a location in space and time, sometimes physical, other times emotional or intellectual, from which certain aspects or layers of reality can be seen or apprehended. Alcoff (2006) suggests that a horizon

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[32] Hence the notorious unreliability of eyewitness testimony, in every situation from courts of law to second grade classrooms.

is a substantive perspectival location from which the interpreter looks out at the world, a perspective that is always present but that is open and dynamic, with a temporal as well as physical dimension, moving into the future and into new spaces as the subject moves." (p. 95)

By understanding that our stories originate in and flow from a particular and unique horizon, it is clear that the telling of a secret story (or a cover story) does not automatically imply or assume subterfuge, dishonesty, or nefarious intentions, although it can. I would argue, with narrative epistemology, that the 'truth' is in the words and in the story as meaning is co-constructed in the real world and in real time. By sharing a story, either with others or simply with oneself, we are telling a truth, describing and interpreting—in fact creating—our own reality, viewed from our own unique horizon.

Commitments in teacher life

Teacher life is based upon the *commitments* that we teachers make. It is not the personal characteristics that we possess, but rather the active, agentic construction of an existence—a life. Teacher life is not, strictly speaking, about who we are, but rather what we do. The commitments that we make, in addition to being active, are also intentional—we choose them, seek them out, and pursue them. They reflect our values and are responsive to our experiences.

I wish to underscore at this point that while these commitments are different from the personal characteristics that a teacher may have, the commitments that define teacher life are related to and built upon these characteristics. Personal characteristics can lead a teacher to a situation and even, perhaps, cause it—or at least cause a teacher to be in a situation where a significant moment/story can happen, as we saw with Dominic in Chapter 4. A brief return

to practical reasoning will help illustrate this fact. Pedagogical tact and tacit knowledge each form a part of phronesis, or, rather, contribute to and describe practical reasoning. Tact stems from personal qualities or characteristics of an individual, such as compassion, empathy, caring, love, and responsibility. These qualities are who teachers (or teachers-to-be) *are*, intrinsically. While they can be cultivated and perhaps even learned, they often operate on a subconscious level, in the background. They contribute to a teacher's practical reasoning in a manner that is analogous to the way that a given medium contributes to an artist's product. They do not solely determine the end result, but they are the starting point for and are constitutive of an artistic endeavor. Much more important in the ultimate production of a piece of art is the process by which it is made—what the artist does with the materials that they have at hand.

While the legal/technical manner by which one becomes a teacher (e.g., earning a college degree, completing clinical experiences, passing licensure exams) is somewhat standardized, the "real" way in which teachers become teachers is much more nuanced, complicated, and individual. Teachers, and the teacher life that they build, are the gathering and merging of their experiences, beliefs, and values. A teacher life is the actualization of these experiences—the way that we act upon them and put them into motion. This mobilization of our lives as teachers is intertwined with and driven by our commitments—the things that we deem important, worthy, and integral to our practice and ourselves.

Teacher life is defined by the *commitments* that teachers make, claim, and hold. Importantly, these are also what emerges when we teachers tell stories. We saw in Chapter 4 that Annie's work with her former students grew out of her commitment to equitable practices in our schools. Similarly, Thomas's story demonstrated his commitment to creating

and maintaining a loving and caring environment for his students. Elizabeth recounted a dedication to her craft and her students that is rooted in a deliberative and reflective stance. Ralph's dedication to learning about and becoming better at teaching stemmed from his commitment to the profession and a desire to making his life as a teacher as meaningful and authentic as possible.

The commitments that we teachers make and live by and with are, by nature, practical. We do not make commitments, in this moral and ethical, personal and emotional manner, to the technical aspects of teaching, such as lesson planning or classroom management; although our commitments can and do manifest themselves in those areas. The commitments that we make move us, propel us, and guide us toward the actions that we take. The circular, auto-constitutive construct inherent in practical reasoning can be seen here again, in that commitments provide, enable, and structure our agency as teachers, while simultaneously being the outcome of those same agentic moves, in a phronetic feedback loop.

Practical reasoning is, as Aristotle reminds us, based upon experience. The commitments that we make are, as I stated above, practical in nature. The commitment that is evident in my story (Jake) in Chapter 4 is illustrative of this experiential base. The fact that I was drawn to our new student Abdi reflects, I think, a commitment to inclusion and belonging, as well as an empathetic stance in my teacher life. While some of this is a product of personal characteristics, as we saw in the discussion of Dominic's story earlier, this commitment is more directly connected to experiences that I have had throughout the course of my life. I can, for example, recall being the only boy, and the only white person, at my best friend LaToya's birthday party in second grade. I remember going to a new school

in sixth grade, knowing no one, and struggling to fit in. I recollect being a member of the soccer team in college and being left off the organizational chart repeatedly, as though I did not exist. I can still see—no, feel—these moments; they are a part of me, a part of my history. These stories inform who I am, as a person and as a teacher. As such, they help determine my commitments, and led me to respond to Abdi's arrival in our classroom as I did.

To this point, I have described teacher life as built of moments collected and shared in stories and as being formed by and anchored in the commitments that teachers make and live out. In the following chapter, I will expand upon this discussion, to include the interaction between how we teachers choose to live our teacher lives and the means by which we construct them. I will also discuss how we teachers and those in the business of teacher development can develop more intentional ways for constructing a teacher life, for teachers at all stages of their careers.

Chapter 6
Implications and Conclusion

"Powerful windows into the lives of teachers."

When I was in college, in the previous century, I had a thoroughly intimidating and incredibly intelligent political science professor. Dr. C. was famous (many would say notorious) around campus for his oral final exams. At the end of each semester, he would schedule a 45 minute individual exam with each student, in his office. His in-class admonishment—the only preparatory advice that he offered—was to "bring items to talk about for 45 minutes, young people, or I will start asking questions." When the Political Theory course that I took with him in the fall of my sophomore year came to a close, I dutifully, but with much trepidation, penciled my name in a time slot on the form hanging on a clipboard on his office door.

At the appointed time, I entered Dr. C.'s office, sat down in the proffered rocking chair across from the manual typewriter on which he did all of his writing. Remembering Dr. C.'s advice, I took out the stack of note cards on which I had written themes and notes from all of the texts that we had read over the past four months. As I launched into a semi-rehearsed and marginally coherent comparison of Plato's Republic *and Thomas Hobbes's* Leviathan*, Dr. C. interrupted me, politely but firmly. He said, "That's fine, Jake. But what is*

the implication of your thesis? What does it mean?" After I took a deep breath and collected my wits, I offered my thoughts.[33]

This final chapter is the answer to that daunting, but essential question that I (repeatedly) answered in a rocking chair on the third floor of Old Main many years ago. Below I discuss three broad areas of implications from this dissertation study: implications for practice, implications for policy, and implications for research. These implications supply the answer to my second research question, which was: What do these insights from teachers' lives suggest for teacher education practices? Or as Dr. C. would have phrased it, "What does it mean?" Finally, I end the chapter with some closing thoughts on this dissertation and the process by which I completed it.

Implications for practice

The first category of implications for this study is perhaps the most important one, or at least the one that is closest to my professional heart—implications for practice. This is especially true as it is the category that contains that which is most "of use" to teachers and teacher educators. As such, it is also the longest section in this chapter. It represents the answer to the omnipresent question of every teacher after a professional development learning session: "So what?" The "so whats" that I describe in this section have bearing

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[33] In the end, Dr. C. became my undergraduate advisor and mentor, as well as a friend well beyond my college years. When I became a college professor, I used oral final exams in all of my upper level courses.

directly on our practice as teachers—the ways we learn about, improve, and live out our lives as educators. Considering the impact that the concept of teacher life could have in, with, and for teachers, there is a corresponding and important connection to the work of teacher educators—both those who work with pre-service teachers as well as those who work with those already in the profession.

Teacher life, like the commitments that we make within our teacher lives, is autopoietic—we make the life by living it, and by living it, we define what teacher life is. As the poet said, “Caminante, no hay camino/se hace camino al andar” (Traveler, there is no path/We make the path by walking).[34] Walking this path of creating a teacher life in an intentional and meaningful way is fundamentally an act of *constructing*. My choice of the word “constructing” is intentional. Like others who have described a similar process as “composing” (most famously, perhaps, Bateson, 1989), “creating” (Hollis, 2001), or “inventing” (Savigneau, 1993), the verb “constructing” is both active and personal. “Constructing,” however, connotes an additional physicality and concreteness that is a part of a teacher life, with its dual nature of embodied emotions and tangible outward actions. Constructing a teacher life is more than composing, which intimates the arranging of pre-existing entities into something new. Similarly, it is not creating or inventing, both of which imply a product that is sprung from one’s own creativity or imagination wholly new and unique. Teacher life is not a new arrangement of things or a singular formation—it is a

[34] Antonio Machado, *Caminante no hay camino*. (Machado, 1965/1917), p. 229. (Translation mine.) Thank you to Señora Crespo, IB Spanish, Patrick Henry High School, for giving me this poem.

rather a new edifice, built piece by piece through a process of making meaning from interactions and experiences in collaboration with and influenced by other people.

In the following discussion, I will consider four implications for practice of this study that surround and support the construction of a teacher life that the stories told in Chapter 4 helped me to identify. The first is what I term “narrative spaces.” These spaces are physical as well as emotional and metaphorical. The second aspect of constructing a teacher life that I will discuss concerns the importance of stories and narrative epistemology to understanding the practical knowledge of teachers and the relationship that this understanding has to the knowledge base of teaching. Next, I bring the power of stories and storied teacher knowledge into the realm of teacher development by suggesting that stories can form a key aspect of the pedagogy of teacher education. Finally, I present a new way to consider the role and position of teacher educators that includes and foregrounds the value and importance of narrative in the lives and development of teachers.

Narrative spaces

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and Clandinin (2006) refer to the “three-dimensional research space” for narrative inquiry (see Chapter 3). They delineate the three dimensions in which inquiry takes place as a) temporal (past, present, and future), b) personal and social, and c) place. We have seen elements of each of these dimensions in the stories that we heard in Chapter 4. They took place in the past, the near-present, and they hinted, certainly, at the future. They all also necessarily contained a personal element, since they were stories from these teachers’ lives. As we have seen, the personal and the professional are interconnected and interdependent in the lives of teachers. In this section, I turn to the last aspect of the three-dimensional research space, that of place. Interestingly, any consideration of place in

the realm of narrative often includes a social element as well (Clandinin & Huber, 2002; Smith, 2007).

Not only do the stories that we teachers live in and through often involve other people, but the meaning that we make of and from them is also socially situated in and mediated by the spaces and the people in them. These spaces are often actual physical locations, but due to the emotional and intensely personal nature of telling (and hearing) stories, these physical spaces must also be emotional and intentional. With only a physical location and no emotional connection and support, as well as the intention to tell, hear, and learn from stories, we are left with the difference between conversations in the teacher's lounge at any school in the world and the conversations like those in our inquiry group. While some of the same stories might be told, they are told in a different way, and are heard in a different way. Recall the distinction that Craig and Olson (2002) drew between secret and cover stories. If the space in which we tell stories is not one of intentionality, safety, and trust, the stories that we—teachers or 'civilians'—tell will inevitably fall more heavily into the category of "cover stories."

The narrative space that we established in the inquiry group was an intentional space, one that I initially structured and the group collaboratively developed and maintained. It, and we, supported an environment in which stories could be told and heard. Through the telling and hearing of our stories, we learned about ourselves and our practice as teachers in ways that had not happened in the scores of professional development sessions that we have attended together and separately over the years. The growth and learning that occurred in and because of the group suggests that finding and creating these spaces for teachers to tell

their stories and hear the stories of other teachers can be an important part of facilitating teacher development.

It is important to note that it is not necessary for these spaces to be formalized and highly structured. They surely can be, as in the case of an inquiry group formed as part of a doctoral dissertation (for instance) or a classroom within a teacher education program or professional development regime. These spaces can be informal as well, such as within a grade level or departmental team in a school or contained within a mentor-mentee relationship. In fact, the most meaningful, authentic, and valuable professional conversations I have had in my career as a teacher took place in a (long) carpool that I had with my good friend and colleague Maurice.[35] We commuted together an hour each way to our jobs as teacher educators at a small college every other day for five years. The conversations that we had and the stories that we told enabled me to reflect, process, struggle with, and ultimately understand myself as a person and a teacher in ways and to depths that I would never—could never—have reached on my own. The crucial element of a narrative space is that it facilitates the learning and meaning making by serving as a medium through which the practical knowledge that resides in teachers can be found, expressed, appreciated, examined, accepted, and learned from.

Narrative spaces are also important to constructing a teacher life because one does not become a teacher, nor live as a teacher, in a vacuum. Our teacher lives are a product of our own experiences, as we have seen, but they are also socially constructed, supported, and

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[35] My friendship with Maurice echoes the discussion in Chapter 3 about the relationship between a narrative researcher and their “research participants” being akin to friendship.

developed. Our teacher lives are not built only by us, or by other people, but rather *with* other people. Aristotle, in *Nicomachean Ethics*, and Dunne (1993) remind us that practical reasoning is auto-constitutive. As a process, it encompasses both means and ends. The growth and development of teachers—the construction of our teacher lives—is a similar process. As we live our lives as teachers, we make choices and decisions, struggle with puzzles and wrestle with moral and ethical dilemmas and try to determine and do the right thing(s) for our students. These actions are what define teacher life, certainly, but at the same time, they are also inherently the product of teacher life—all of the experiences, beliefs, and even the actions in the previous sentence inform and lead to those very same actions. Working within an intentional narrative space to share stories enables teachers to co-construct knowledge to understand and refine these actions, and therefore construct their teacher life.

The spaces in which we tell stories have an impact on how the practical knowledge that we teachers possess is communicated and understood. For example, I read *Troublemakers* (Shalaby, 2017), the text that we used in the inquiry group, twice. I read it once as a graduate student, as a class assignment, when I was on sabbatical from my elementary school teaching position. I read it again, alongside my teacher colleagues, as a part of this research project.

When I read it as a graduate student, having fully assumed and assimilated into that role as a result of having the year off from teaching children, my fellow students and I read broad themes of racism, oppression, and critique of schooling as an institution into the book and had hearty and insightful debates about the role(s) of teachers as participants in an oppressive (especially for students of color and/or who have learning differences)

educational system. These debates and discussions were certainly informed by my previous experiences, thoughts, and feelings, but were heavily colored by the group in which I found myself. I was fully immersed in the more abstract and theoretical world of graduate school, separated from the everyday concerns of a teacher in an urban public school.

In contrast, when I read *Troublemakers* again with the inquiry group of teachers for this study, the discussion proceeded very differently, for me and for the group. Since I was no longer on sabbatical, I was back at Marie Raymond Community School, teaching young children. Additionally, I had finished all of my coursework and credits at the university, so I was nearly fully disconnected from graduate school life. As I discussed in Chapter 3, I chose the book because it was narrative-based, and I hoped that it would stimulate and promote the telling of stories in the group. I also meant it to be provocative and evocative about the issues that it presented, and about the role of teachers within our educational system—the selfsame read that I had as a graduate student.

Within the cozy confines of the inquiry group, however, we teachers had a quite different take on the text. From our teacher perspective, Shalaby's writing came across as oppositional or even anti-teacher at times to the group (including me). Her critiques of schools, in this setting, transformed from the social critiques of schools and schooling that my fellow graduate students and I read to criticisms of teachers and our practices from a "I-used-to-be-a-teacher-for-a-couple-of-years-and-now-I-know-all-about-it-but-have-forgotten-what-it's-really-like-in-a-classroom-professor-type," in the words of Thomas, during our fourth inquiry group meeting.

In truth, the content of the text was of comparatively little consequence to the inquiry group. While it served, during most meetings, as a jumping-off point for our discussion, our

conversation typically moved on from the text rather quickly and into stories of our own practice and our own school. Of greater consequence for the learning, in both of the narrative spaces in which I read *Troublemakers*, was the space itself—and the people, emotions, intentions, experiences, and contexts that filled it.

Storied teacher knowledge

If narrative spaces are the contexts in which teachers' stories can be told and heard, what of the content of those stories—the moments that they hold? These stories contain and convey the practical knowledge that teachers possess. They are the experiences that we have had as well as the manner in which we learn about them. While practical knowledge, as we saw in Chapter 2, can at times be "subtle and hardly noticeable" (van Manen, 1991, p. 136), it looms large in the lives of teachers. It guides the technical aspects of our work. Practical reasoning comes from experience and contains both moral and deliberative elements, all of which focus on knowing the proper action to take at a particular moment.

Paradoxically, the stories that we teachers tell are particular and unique to us, but contain knowledge that resonates with other teachers, showing commonalities and even kinship among our profession. This seeming inconsistency points to the nature of teacher knowledge. A return to the distinction that Aristotle draws between techne and phronesis is helpful here. Technical reasoning, by its very nature, deals with general cases (Dunne, 1993). Aristotle claims that

> none of the *technai* [technical sciences] theorize about individual cases. Medicine, for instance, does not theorize about what will help to cure Socrates or Callias, but only about what will help to cure any or all of a given class of patients: this alone is subject to techne. (Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, quoted in Dunne, 1993, p. 259)

The issue here is that in education, as with all of the human sciences, we deal with individual cases as a matter of course. Dunne adds that “once we descend to particular cases of dealing with *this* or *this*, we are no longer securely within the governance of the techne, which always remains limited to general rules” (1993, p. 259). Toulmin (2001) agrees, asserting that “we are more certain about the rights and wrongs of particular case[s] [than] about the general principles we appeal to in explaining them. I *know that* my headache was relieved by taking an aspirin with greater confidence than I can *explain why* taking an aspirin relieves those headaches” (p. 136, emphasis in original).

The task (and challenge), then, for teacher development is to move beyond teaching and learning experiences for educators that focus exclusively or even primarily upon technical reasoning and de-emphasize (or do not even attend to or acknowledge) practical reasoning, while at the same time not neglecting the technical aspect of teacher development. When one is dealing with human behavior, it can be difficult, if not counterproductive, to strictly apply theoretical and “scientific” knowledge to a given context.[36] Indeed, Kessels and Korthhagen (1996) echo Aristotle when they assert that “with scientific knowledge, that certitude lies in a grasp of theoretical notions or principles. In practical prudence[37], certitude arises from knowledge of particulars” (p. 19).

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[36] By this statement I do not mean to be dismissive of work in the human sciences generally, and education specifically, that seeks to understand cognition or learning processes in a broad, general manner. Rather, I mean to say that in practice, the work that we teachers do is highly contextual and situation-dependent, and a high level of proficiency in practical reasoning is paramount for educators. Practical reasoning governs the technical aspect of what we teachers do on a daily basis in our work with our students. If a teacher does not have a developed and well-honed facility with practical reasoning, it is possible, and even likely, that teachers could very well be highly skilled technically, but still not a successful educator (recall our plumber from Chapter 2).

[37] “Prudence” is a common English translation of “phronesis.”

What if teacher development, as a field and as a practice, were to shift its organizational, indeed its epistemological and ontological, framework from a focus on the technical, skill-based proficiencies upon which we have come to rely? What might it look like for teacher development to focus upon practical reasoning and stories as the foundation of what we know (and subsequently teach) about teaching? These questions point to yet another: What if we considered narratives and stories as both the framework for and the content of the knowledge base for teaching—the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings of what we know about teachers and teaching? I will consider that topic, and its implications for the pedagogy of teacher development, in the following section.

Stories as pedagogy

More than forty years ago, McPeck and Sanders (1974) argued that a profession has four requirements, the first of which has bearing here. They claim that a profession can only be labelled as such if "there exists a specialized literature which forms an intellectual basis for practice" (p. 64) [38]. While McPeck and Sanders stipulated the existence of a specialized literature, they did not clarify or codify what might comprise this literature for any particular profession, including education.

Into this breach steps the seminal work of Lee Shulman on the knowledge base for teaching. In his assertion that teachers should indeed be considered professionals and that teaching should indeed be considered a profession, Shulman recognized several things. The

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[38] The other three are as follows: that the group concerned provides a needed social service to the public as its reason for being; that it provides minimum standards for competency among its members; and individuals and the group itself enjoy a broad range of autonomy in their practice. While these are interesting to consider within the context of education and in fact integral to its practices and its identification and identity as a profession, only the first is germane to the discussion in this dissertation.

first was that teachers were the unique possessors and producers of what he called pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987). Pedagogical content knowledge is different than knowledge held by other professions, primarily because it is something of a "third rail"—an amalgamation of content knowledge (the "what" that we teach) and pedagogical knowledge (the "how" we teach). This context-specific and -dependent knowledge clearly forms part of the knowledge base for teaching.

Shulman and Wilson (2004) also argued that a vital source of legitimate knowledge for teachers, as professionals, comes from the "wisdom of the practice itself" (pp. 232-233). It is well worth noting here that Shulman's assertion that the knowledge base for teaching stems from the practice itself hearkens directly back to Aristotle's conception of phronesis as experiential and auto-constitutive, as well as Dunne's (1993) depiction of practical reasoning as circular in nature (see Chapter 2). This is to say that the knowledge base of teaching is less a collection of things to "know," but is the practical understandings and wisdom that result from the "process" of becoming a teacher itself. Shulman (2004) also insisted that stories of teachers that involved pedagogical[39] action, thinking, and reasoning are inherently highly practical. As such, they are not isolated tidbits of information collected over the course of an education program or a career, but rather are constitutive of and resultant from our practice as teachers. This process is simultaneously the knowledge base itself as well as the manner in which one develops competency or fluency in teaching. A

[39] "Pedagogical" in the same sense that van Manen uses the term—a broad conception of meaningful interactions between adults and young people (see footnote 7).

teacher develops the “wisdom of the practice” through practicing but is also at the same time defining what that wisdom is, as they work to actively construct a teacher life.

There is an important thread that runs through Aristotle’s phronetic practical reasoning, Shulman’s wisdom of the practice, and the epistemology of narrative methodology. The epistemology of story stipulates that meaning is found in the stories that we tell, the stories that we live, and the stories that we experience—in, once again, the particulars of a situation rather than general principles. Toulmin (2001) clarifies this as he asserts that, “What is particular in any given case is of course in part the *situation*, but depends even more on the *person* or *people* whose lives a case affects; and, even more, on the adventures (or *mis*adventures) that befall those characters” (p. 112, emphasis in original).

As Elizabeth, whose story we heard in Chapter 4, undertook a process of reflection about her practice, her action was not in response to a broad directive from the administration; neither did it come from a book that she read or course that she took. It came from two places, primarily. The first was from her commitments—Elizabeth is firmly committed to and focused upon her students and their needs. The second impetus for her reflective practice is in response to the particulars of her situation. She is reflective because both the commitments that she holds and the context in which she teaches calls her to live her teacher life in this manner. The deep knowledge about teaching that is contained in her story is not didactic and prescriptive, imposed from without; it flows from Elizabeth and her understandings of herself, her students, and her profession as well as the very act of reflection and deliberation itself. We (and I include Elizabeth in this “we”) can see, examine, appreciate, discover, and ultimately learn from this knowledge through the gift of her story. As Elizabeth and the rest of the teachers in this study—and the rest of the teachers in our

lives—share, hear, and interact with stories, we build, piece by piece, the knowledge base for teaching.

The knowledge base for teaching, in this conception, is not a monolithic entity, sent down from on high, passed on from generation to generation since time immemorial. It is created and re-created in each one of us as we persist in our individual processes of *becoming* a teacher, of *constructing* a teacher life. The knowledge base is built by our becoming, and our becoming is both a result of and dependent upon it. This is not to assert, however, that the knowledge that teachers possess and use in their teacher lives is unique to them, and different from that of every other teacher. There is a reason why the stories that we teachers tell resonate with other teachers—the lives that we construct as teachers are connected in important and very real ways, and share common themes and understandings, however colored in ways that are specific to each of us and the contexts in which we teach. We find meaning, opportunities for growth, and purpose in our own stories, the stories of other teachers, and the connections that we make between them.

This conception of the knowledge base for teaching is what Fenstermacher (1994) described as "knowledge *of* teachers" (p. 11), the practical knowledge that comes from our practice[40]. This stands in contrast to what he termed "knowledge *for* teachers" (p. 9), which is formal "theoretical and propositional knowledge" (Verloop, Van Driel, & Meijer, 2001, p. 444) that is scientifically and empirically derived. There is room for both in the broad view

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[40] Interestingly, Fenstermacher's idea and phrasing follows the thought of Connelly and Clandinin (1990), as well as Polkinghorne (1983), both of whom were working with narrative methods and epistemologies.

of the knowledge base for teaching. The knowledge of teachers, I suggest, is best accessed and understood though the medium, and epistemology, of narrative.

If we were to use narrative to access and understand the knowledge of teachers, and if we were to consider teacher development as a process of developing practical reasoning in teachers using stories, there are several pedagogies that we might consider for teacher development, such as dilemma cases (e.g., Lampert, 1985; Wakeham, 2016; Winkelaar, 2016), reflection (e.g., Birmingham, 2004; Dunne, 1993, Schön, 1983), and case-based instruction (e.g., Darling-Hammond & Hammerness, 2002; Harrington, 1995; Lundeberg & Fawver, 1994; Merseth, 1991). There are compelling cases to be made for the use of all three pedagogies in teacher development, but in the discussion that follows, I will develop the idea of case-based methodologies, because I believe that it has the strongest theoretical base and most closely aligns to the epistemology and ontology of both practical reasoning and narrative inquiry.

Cases are “a particular type of narrative which can be used to explicate and clarify the professional knowledge of teachers" (Koballa & Tippins, 2000, p. 11). Arellano et al. (2001) add that cases can serve as a “common text that prompts conversation and reflection on issues that invite a variety of interpretations” (p. 506). The knowledge that is inside of—and comes from—cases is narrative in nature. We hear it, think about it, and consider it as a story. Case knowledge is “knowledge of specific, well-documented, and richly described events … [and] the knowledge they represent is what makes them cases” (Shulman, 1986, quoted in Sato & Rogers, 2010, p. 592). Recall that at the beginning of Chapter 4 I asked you to pause after hearing each of the stories, to consider it, the knowledge that it contained,

and the ways in which the story resonated with you. This pondering and careful inspection of a story is, pragmatically speaking, what separates a case from a good story.

Cases allow prospective teachers the opportunity to experience, if vicariously, the "context complexity of classrooms" (Harrington & Garrison, 1992, p. 717). The complexity inherent in cases provides us the opportunity to wrestle with the challenges and puzzles that Richert (2002) alluded to in Chapter 5. This is a critical part of the induction process for new teachers.

Similarly, case-based pedagogy provides teacher educators with a way to begin to bridge the oft-commented upon gap between theory and practice (Mayo, 2004; Strangeways & Papatraianou, 2016). As Sato and Rogers (2010) assert, "case methods have the potential to not only situate the learning of the teacher in a particular context but also to provide opportunities to theorize from practice while practicing theory" (p. 596). Cased-based pedagogy aligns directly with the epistemology of practical reasoning as well, especially given the fact that cases deal with a particular situation (Levin, 2003) and not with general cases[41]. Stories, as we have seen, do the same—they are concerned directly with a specific moment in time and space.

The stories that teachers tell have the potential to be used to great effect in teacher education, especially with aspiring teachers and those new to the profession. The implication for teacher development is that one could begin with practical reasoning and stories through the use of case-based pedagogies, adding in proficiency in the technical aspects of teaching as they are needed to properly understand or resolve the case or dilemma. This rings true,

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[41] Recall the passage from Aristotle about curing Socrates and Callias in Chapter 5.

once again, with the tenet that in the life and practice of a teacher—teacher life—practical reasoning guides and governs the technical.

As we have seen, stories are an important part of the knowledge base for teaching and present a unique avenue for accessing and exploring the moments and knowledge that they contain. By situating stories as cases and utilizing them pedagogically with teachers in all phases of their teacher lives, teacher educators can utilize the power of cases to help teachers realize and develop their facility with practical reasoning and aid in their process of becoming a teacher. With the preceding discussion in mind, I turn now to a discussion of how best to organize these stories, these cases, for teachers and teacher educators to use together.

Curating storied teacher knowledge

The stories that teachers tell are told within a narrative space and contain and convey important practical knowledge. These stories also demonstrate the power and influence of practical reasoning in teachers' lives, as well as provide teachers with the opportunity to reason practically. An important piece of this puzzle is how to organize these stories: How can teachers, and those who facilitate learning for teachers and teacher candidates, use this conception of teacher life, told and processed through narrative, to promote, enable, and understand growth and development throughout teachers' lives?

Part of being an elementary teacher in River City Public Schools involves taking one's class on a field trip to one of the city's art museums, with whom the district has a

partnership. While the museum itself is free for the public, the museum pays for school buses to bring our students to the museum for an hour-long guided tour.

Apart from the fact that the tours are always done in the middle of winter, which brings with it the thorny issue of what to do with thirty sets of winter jackets, mittens, and hats, our time at the museum is always lovely—the kids, almost universally, leave wanting more.

While the docents who conduct our students around the exhibits are volunteers, they are uniformly well trained and kid-focused. The tour of the galleries—replete with sculpture, paintings, cultural works, and other objets d'art—is carefully and professionally curated around a theme developed by the professional staff at the museum.

The goal of bringing students to the museum from all over River City is twofold. The first goal is to introduce young children to the amazing collections that are housed in the museum and encourage them to ponder art and connections to their own lives. The second goal is to immerse kids in the world of art, which is both slightly different and a degree of complexity and nuance above the first goal, because it involves the docents helping students to make meaning from the art. They endeavor to have the students meld their own impressions and reactions to the art with a bit of the backstory of the artist and the time period and culture in which it was made. In short, they hope to bring kids more fully into the world of art and begin to see the art world as one which they can choose to inhabit, now and in the future.

The curated nature of these visits has always struck me as particularly well done. Over the course of an hour, the students see perhaps ten works of art, from different media, time periods, and cultures that all speak to a common theme. The intentional and thoughtful

character of this curation provides the students with a varied and diverse experience, with multiple entry points for their understanding and meaning-making. The docents pay special attention to the students' points of view and lived experiences, encouraging them to inject their own understandings—cultural, linguistic, emotional, physical, and cognitive—into the experience, and, as a result, into making meaning from the art.

The image in the story above is often juxtaposed in my head with a contrary situation, of a class of second graders set loose in that same art museum to explore on their own. While there might be a handful of kids who would carefully examine the artwork and read the adjacent placards, the natural inclination of a small child would be to run roughshod and directionless around the galleries, perhaps glancing fleetingly at a bright color or a particularly captivating design. Without an intentional focus, and a careful selection of pieces, very little would be gained from a visit to the museum.

The same is true of visits to our stories as teachers. Without intentionality and a careful consideration of the stories, it is difficult to see and experience the knowledge that they hold. John Dewey, who wrote extensively about the critical role that experience plays in education, maintained that "experiences may be so disconnected from one another that, while each is agreeable or even exciting in itself, they are not linked cumulatively to one another" (1938/2007, p. 26)[42]. This is true in the narrative lives of teachers—without a way

[42] Dewey's writings were also foundational in the pioneering work of Clandinin and Connelly in narrative inquiry, as we have seen.

to organize the stories, the chance to learn from them more intentionally and more fully develop as a teacher can be lost.

An important component in using stories to promote the growth and development of teachers is a method of organizing them so that they can be "of use" (once again) to us. The work that curators do in museums and other spaces fills precisely this role, and I offer it here as both a metaphor as well as a concrete label for this process. The professional curators and the docents at the art museum in the story above selected the works and arranged a tour of the museum for my students in a way that would present the works as parts of a larger whole, as building blocks for the students to use to construct a larger understanding of art, as well as a deeper understanding of themselves and the world around them.

The concept of curating teachers' stories in the service of helping teachers construct their teacher life has three elements to it. The first is on a personal level. We humans internally curate our own experiences, both consciously and subconsciously. What we think about when we think about teaching and ourselves as teachers is a subset, or a selection, of the multitude of stories that we have—that we have lived. Just as we tell ourselves certain stories, we select stories to tell others. This type of curation took place in our inquiry group—teachers told stories that they wanted (or needed) to tell. They decided which stories to share; each teacher curated their stories for the group.

In this curation, we can again see the impact of secret stories and cover stories, as discussed above. Within the context of the inquiry group in this study, I acted as the facilitator (recall my role as "first among equals") as well as a curator of stories. The stories in the group and in this dissertation came directly from the teachers. I smoothed them for

clarity and concision, as well as curated the stories that arose in the group to fit this dissertation and illustrate the concept of teacher life that I have developed here.

The second type of curation is interpersonal. This is curation that we do in conjunction with other people. In the inquiry group, for instance, often a story that one teacher told would lead to, connect to, or encourage a story from a different teacher. This mutual curation—one story connecting to and eliciting another story—operates on an interpersonal level. More than one of the inquiry group members commented to me after the group meetings had concluded that they told stories in the group that they didn't even recall having before they heard another story that another teacher told and connected with it.

This interpersonal curation can also occur in the formation of a story, as we saw with Dominic and his colleague Cristina. Cristina did what might be considered a form of "advance curation," in which she helped the story become a *story*, and not something that merely happened. By pointing out the meaning of what was transpiring to Dominic, she showed, much like the docent in the museum, the important aspects of the event.

The final form of curation that I would like to consider here is formal curation. This is a more structured and "official" form of curation, much like the work the docents and curators at the art museum did for my students. This dissertation is just such a curation. I selected—curated—the stories that have appeared in this text purposefully and intentionally. They are stories that resonated with me as a teacher and as a researcher and helped to tell a larger story about the concept of teacher life.

Formal curation is also the type that might occur in a teacher education program or a professional development scheme for teachers. What if the field of teacher development was reoriented to finding ways of curating stories that teachers and teacher candidates generate

and searching out and/or creating narrative spaces in which those stories can be told and heard? What if teacher educators and professional developers assumed the role of curator and docent for those that we teach, presenting teachers with stories—cases—that would help them to closely consider their own teacher life?

The role of a curator, however, is a complex one. As Lucy Worsley, a professional curator in the United Kingdom explains, "people think that curating just means choosing nice things. But this is only half of it. Our real job as museum curators is to look after artefacts from the past, *yet also* to be the repository of knowledge about them" ("People think curating," 2016, emphasis in original). The first step for those who teach teachers would be to choose (and elicit) "nice" stories from and about teachers, certainly. The second half, though, is equally, if not more, important. There is an additional layer or understanding involved in formal curation. Teachers of teachers have the unique perspective to be able to become repositories of knowledge. This is how the knowledge base for teaching, as discussed above, forms and expands. Through the act of curating teachers' stories, we can build our understanding of teachers, teaching, and teacher life.

Implications for policy

Although this dissertation is grounded in the practical—theoretically I have based this study on notions of practical reasoning, and I am primarily interested in the practical implications of teacher life—there are some policy-oriented implications as well. By policy, however, I do not mean to describe broad or sweeping policy recommendations that might be considered or implemented at a broad or legislative level. Instead, I use the word "policy" in this context to describe shifts of thinking or ways of considering teacher development that

could be undertaken more locally. In the sections that follow, I outline two policy-related implications of this study. They build directly on the practical implications discussed above in much the same way that our practice as teachers rests on and is guided by our practical reasoning.

Emphasis on the technical

In my experience, much of teacher development focuses upon the technical side of teaching, what Aristotle called techne. Of course, competence in, or, better still, mastery of, these skills is critical for the creation of a successful learning environment for students and an effective teaching practice for educators.

This rings true with my own experience as a both a pre-service teacher (in the previous millennium) and as a teacher educator. In my own education program, as I was learning to be a teacher, I was required to take a course titled "General Education Methods" before I took any of the several content-specific methods courses that were required of an elementary education major. Looking back, I can see that this was so that the faculty (and, one supposes, their accrediting body) could feel secure about each of their students being taught, if not learning, about classroom organization, lesson planning, behavior management, educational technology, and the like.

This is evident in the organizing standards that most teacher education programs and professional development departments employ, such as the INTASC standards (CCSSO, 2013) or the various state standards of effective instruction. While each of these sets of standards include a few lines that discuss topics such as "decision making," they are largely comprised of items that are best understood as skills or competencies by which one can

gauge or evaluate the readiness of a teacher candidate or the effectiveness of a practicing teacher.

In my work as a teacher educator, we as a department were constantly worried about where each of the technical parts of our students' training would take place. We diligently divided up the applicable state standards for teacher education, allocating them to different courses and instructors to be sure that they were all "covered." Our preoccupation with our students' acquisition of the techne of teaching led us, perhaps unconsciously, to neglect the importance of practical reasoning, which, as Aristotle once again reminds us, governs and guides the use of technical skills.

This is all to suggest that there is room in teacher development for a shift in thinking from an emphasis on technical aspects to creating and maintaining spaces—physical as well as intellectual and emotional—in which the practical reasoning that guides and shapes, indeed defines our work as teachers can be pondered and learned from. This epistemological movement seems simple, even commonsensical, perhaps. I classify it, however, as a policy implication, because such a change in thinking would have effects that would permeate into some of the foundational ways in which we think about and structure teacher development programs, as outlined in the previous section.

Cultural changes

Another policy implication of this study is that an understanding of teacher knowledge as being storied in nature, the development and use of narrative spaces, and intentional curation of the knowledge of teachers in cases can collectively be an agent for change in the culture of teacher education programs and teacher development regimes, which have historically been standards-driven (Beyer, 2002; Bulloch, Clark, & Patterson,

2003), one-size-fits-all (Flint, Zisook, & Fisher, 2011), and outcomes focused (Cochran-Smith, 2001a, 2001b). If we acknowledge and value the role that teachers' knowledge, embedded in the stories that we tell, plays in teacher development, as this study suggests, we can create a new way of talking to each other (and to the public) about teaching and learning—one that is more authentically representative of the work that we do with students in classrooms every day.

This new cultural way of approaching and talking about teaching can also be a way for teachers and policy makers to speak back to the neo-liberal influence (some might say hegemony) of test scores on the training and learning of teachers. We have seen this process play out in schools across the country as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was implemented. At about the same time, Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) were becoming very fashionable as the means for professional development in schools in the United States, at all levels. The basic idea behind this structure was that educators would meet in what were essentially affinity groups to learn about a topic of interest. These topics, as well as the material studied (books, articles, videos, etc.) were often selected by the teachers, and the teachers typically self-selected into groups. In my experience, which is shared by many, PLCs were corrupted and co-opted in short order by a school or a district's administration, and quickly became a way for teachers to examine testing data, in response to the mandate for accountability that NCLB required.

Reconceptualizing teacher development, especially for practicing teachers, as teacher life, guided by storied teacher knowledge and thoughtfully curated by teacher educators would place the focus of professional development back onto the teachers, building on the practical reasoning and wisdom, the lived experiences, and the contextual and nuanced

understandings of teachers, as this study suggests. This would be a cultural shift away from the one-size-fits-all, mechanistic, and largely disembodied professional development that we teachers commonly experience today.

Implications for research

I group the implications of this study on the existing body of educational research in the area of teacher development into three main categories. These categories largely parallel the implications for practice above, which is very much in keeping with the practical spirit of this dissertation. The areas that I will outline as significant for future research relate to the nature of teacher stories, narrative spaces, and the process (and art) of curation in teacher development. I will discuss each below before turning to some closing thoughts.

Since this dissertation is largely a conceptual one, this study raises perhaps more questions than it answers. My contention in this discussion is that one of the main roles that this study plays is to offer a conceptual frame for understanding teacher development in a new way. If we are to consider teacher development differently, we should be led to a host of avenues that could be explored for additional clarity and ideas.

The nature of stories

Given the centrality of narratives in this study, there are several aspects of teachers' stories that bear further investigation and attention. While these considerations were not central to this dissertation, a more nuanced and fully realized understanding of the nature of these stories would provide the concept that I have developed here, teacher life, with additional depth and character. For example, there is more work to be done on how teachers create the stories that we tell—in other words, how do the experiences that we live get

translated or ‘recorded’ in our minds as stories. There are interesting social and psychological elements to the construction of stories that very well might shed additional light on how we teachers use these stories and how they help us construct our teacher selves.

Similarly, while the concepts of secret stories and cover stories that Craig and Olson (2002) describe (see page 101 above) begin to provide insight into the kinds of stories that we teachers tell, they do not go far enough into examining the ‘inner life’ of these stories—their essence. As an example, as I suggested in chapter 5, the cover stories that teachers tell are not only in response to the local school context in which teachers find themselves, but also are constructed and told to correspond to a larger, societal narrative of what a teacher is and what a teacher does. This larger context is less examined in the teacher development literature that perhaps it should be.

There are other additional, larger contexts and forces at play in teacher development. An examination and understanding of the role that race, language, culture, religion, class (as well as a host of other issues, such as immigration status, first generation college graduate status, among many) play in the ways in which teachers’ stories are told and heard is crucial as well. It is important to note that the telling and hearing of teachers’ stories is not done only by teachers, but by the public as well. Bringing a critical perspective (e.g. Giroux, Freire, & McLaren, 1988; Kinchloe, McLaren, & Steinberg, 2011; McLaren & Giarellli, 1995) to bear on the stories that we tell will help to elucidate, expand, and clarify them. Issues of power and equity are key to developing a deeper and more nuanced understanding of teacher life.

In a similar vein, given the fact that the overwhelming majority of teachers in the United States are white and female (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005), it is important

to view and analyze the stories that teachers tell, such as the ones that I related in this dissertation, through the lens of an all-too-common trope in the literature—that of the white teacher as savior. This trope is a recurrent (and insidious, if often subconscious) one in the common narrative of teachers, and it bears examination in this context as well, especially since in this study all of the teachers (and the researcher) are white.

Narrative spaces

Another concept that I have developed in this dissertation is that of narrative spaces. As I described earlier in this chapter, narrative spaces are a key part of how we as teacher educators can use stories and the storied knowledge of teachers in our practice. However, there is work to be done in this area as well. Much like the nature of stories discussed above, the nature of narrative spaces is not well understood or documented, at least within the context of teacher education and professional development.

Narrative spaces, like most aspects of education, is context-dependent. That is to say that what a narrative space in teacher development might look like—physically, emotionally, and intellectually—very well may differ from university to university and school to school. More in-depth study of spaces that function as a narrative space, their characteristics, and the ways in which they do (or do not) promote the telling and hearing of teachers' stories and teacher development is an important step in further developing the concept of teacher life and the storied knowledge of teachers, as well as understanding the role that practical reasoning plays in our practice as educators.

Finally, very similar to the previous section, a critical perspective should be brought to bear on the concept of narrative spaces. As a site of human discursive interaction, there are issues of power and equity that are inherent to these spaces. In addition, issues of race,

language, culture, religion, and class permeate all facets of our society, and narrative spaces within the context of teacher development are certainly no exception. These issues clearly have an impact on and affect how, when, and even if teachers' stories are told and heard. If we are to promote actively anti-racist, openly welcoming, and generative spaces for authentic teacher learning for every teacher and teacher-to-be to take place, all of these theoretical and practical issues and forces must be considered and studied.

Curation in teacher development

The final idea that I have developed in this dissertation is curation as a method and practice for organizing and using the stories that contain the practical knowledge and reasoning that teachers possess in an effort to help them successfully build their teacher lives. This is a new construct in the field of teacher development. As such, it needs to be more fully explored and described. This process by which teacher educators could work with the narrative knowledge of teachers gives rise to several interesting avenues of inquiry.

The first and perhaps the biggest question that the act of curating teachers' stories brings to the fore is of the universality of these stories. Teachers stories are ubiquitous; teachers the world over tell them. Do these stories traverse time and space? Are they in fact universal, or are they, like the work of teaching itself, contextual and particular to certain educational and life situations? The answers to these questions will give shape and definition to the act of curation in teacher development. In other words, is the end goal of teacher educators' curation a compendium of cases, made from the experiences and stories that teachers tell that could be used with any teacher to further the development of their teacher life? Or, on the other extreme, does the act of curation produce local—at the level of a community, perhaps—cases to use with teachers?

Of course, as mentioned in the previous two sections, the role that power and equity play in the curation process, especially given that the majority of teacher educators, like teachers themselves, are white and often monolingual cannot be overstated. Curating stories, as I have described earlier in this chapter, is, like teaching, an intensely human and personal endeavor, and the possibility for one's biases to influence the process is high. Similarly, there is a risk of one's own story becoming the dominant (or only) narrative that is present in a classroom. Research into the process of curating stories/cases by teacher educators, done through a critical lens, will be imperative in further developing this concept and practice.

In the end, more needs to be understood about how curation as a gathering and assemblage of cases and stories about and from teachers could be used in teacher development. Curation, like the concepts of storied teacher knowledge, narrative spaces, and teacher life itself, offers possibilities for all teachers to begin to learn from the wisdom of *our* practice, and not only the wisdom of one's own practice.

Closing thoughts

As we have seen throughout this dissertation, stories are powerful windows into the lives of teachers and what it means to be a teacher. They are, in ways both overt and unseen, the medium through which teachers grow and develop throughout their teacher lives. They are also powerful ways to gain insights into the lives of teachers and understanding the complex, nuanced, and intricate lives that we lead, both professionally and personally (although, as we have seen, these lives are at least complementary and interdependent, and very often inextricably intertwined). We live in our stories; our stories are us. At the same

time, our stories are the fundamental building blocks of us, in a beautiful, circular, organic, and authentic process.

Teacher life, as a concept, speaks directly to the human spirit of teaching—it goes directly to the heart of the matter[43]. It moves away from technical, mechanistic, and procedural ways of conceptualizing and understanding the work that we teachers do and moves toward the ways in which we *become* teachers. It is through the stories that the teachers in the inquiry group shared that we can come to know them and begin to think about and understand teachers in an authentic, if different, manner.

I began this dissertation with a simple, three-word statement: "I am a teacher." This statement has profound implications for me and my life and reaches into the very heart and soul of who I am, professionally and personally. This research process and writing this dissertation has provided me with the opportunity to put my teaching self and my research self to work, shoulder-to-shoulder, in authentic and meaningful ways. Discovering and beginning to understand the connection and interplay between these two parts of myself is the foundation of a new identity for me as a researcher and a scholar. I will always be a teacher, and I look forward to seeing how my researcher self will assimilate into and become a part of my teacher life going forward.

[43] Pun intended.

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Appendix A: Recruitment and Consent Letter

Date: January 10, 2019
To: Marie Raymond Community School Staff
From: Jake Knaus
Re: Participation in Research Study

Dear Colleague,

As many of you know, last year during my sabbatical I finished the coursework for my PhD degree at the University of Minnesota. The next step, after passing my preliminary exams, is to conduct a research study and write my dissertation. I am at that stage now, and I will be collecting data and writing during this school year, after I receive approval for my study from both the University of XXXXXX and the XXXXXX Public Schools.

The study that I am proposing seeks to understand the ways in which we teachers make "in-the-moment" decisions and interact with our students in our classrooms. I will use a concept called "practical reasoning" to try to understand how teachers make such decisions throughout the course of our days, with a particular focus on decisions and interactions that involve, either implicitly or explicitly, race, gender, language, and culture.

To accomplish this, I am looking for a group of between three and six teachers who would be willing to be a part of this research. The data collection would begin as soon as I receive approval from XXXXXX Public Schools and the University of XXXXXX – likely in the beginning of February.

I am using a research methodology called "Narrative Inquiry," in which stories are used to understand human experience. I invite you to be a member of this inquiry group, working as a co-researcher with me to co-construct an understanding of teachers' decision making. Our commitment, as members of this collaborative inquiry group, will be to meet 8 times in a ten- or twelve-week period between January 2019 and May 2019. Our work together will include reading a book (Troublemakers by Carla Shalaby), reflective journaling, and discussions. I will provide you with a copy of the book, for you to keep (I'll also provide snacks for the meetings, if that is additional incentive). You and I will also two other times, for about one hour each, outside of the group to discuss and share stories.

If you are interested in being a co-researcher with me, learning about our practice as teachers and how we can become more equity-minded and better teachers for all of our kids, please join me.

Here's some information about your rights as a participant in this study:

Confidentiality:
The records of this study – all data collected – will be kept private. In any sort of report that may be might published (including my dissertation), there will be no information that will make it possible to identify participants (this means that you will get to choose a cool pseudonym). Research records will be stored securely and only I will have access to the records.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of XXXXXX or the XXXXXX Public Schools (or with me ☺). If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:
The researcher(s) conducting this study is Jake Knaus. You may ask him any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him XXXXXX, XXXXXX or in person. His advisor's name is XXXXXX.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Research Subjects' Advocate Line, XXXXXX

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

If you would like additional information about this study or would like to participate, you can send me an email at XXXXXX or stop into Room 107 and have a chat about it.

Thank you for considering being a part of this study.

Jake Knaus
Doctoral Student
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
University of XXXXXX

STEM Teacher
Marie Raymond Community School

You are being asked to take part in a research study.
Before you agree to take part, someone will explain to you:

- You are being asked to take part in research
- The purposes of the research
- How long you will be in the research
- What will happen to you
- Risks or discomforts to you
- Benefits to you or others
- Who will see your information
- Whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You can choose not to take part.
- You can agree to take part and later change your mind.
- Your decision will not be held against you.
- You can ask all the questions you want before you decide.
- How you can provide feedback after the study is over.

Someone will also explain to you:

- When you may be taken off the research without your agreement
- What will happen if you stop taking part
- Steps to safely stop taking part
- When new information will be told to you
- The number of people expected to take part
- What happens to collected data if you stop taking part

Signature Block

Your signature documents your permission to take part in this research.

______________________________________ __________________
Signature of subject Date

____
Printed name of subject

______________________________________ __________________
Signature of witness to consent process Date

____
Printed name of person witnessing consent process

Appendix B: Inquiry Group Meeting and Reflective Journal Questions*

Sample Guiding Questions for Reading and for Group Meetings:

- Choose a short passage (roughly 3-5 sentences) that stood out to you from the reading. Why was it significant to you? What does it evoke from you in your own history as a teacher?
- How did the actions of the teacher make you feel? How did the (re)actions of the child make you feel? Are these new feelings, or do they resonate with your experience as a teacher?
- Be alert for issues of race, language, culture, gender, or class as they arise, either explicitly or subtly in the text. What made you notice them, and why are they significant?
- Which kid (if any) does this reading make you think about? Is there a specific instance that you can relate to what we read?
- How did race, language, culture, gender, or class play a role in the selection that we read? How did each of the people in the text see themselves in these terms, and how did others see them?

Guiding Questions for Reflective Journal Entries:

- Think of something in your classroom (room arrangement, a poster, or a classroom routine) that is a "must-have" or a "non-negotiable) for you. Describe what it is, where the idea came from, and why it is important to you.
- Think of a time that race, language, culture, gender, or class was an issue when you were a student? Describe what happened, and how has that incident shaped who you are as a teacher?
- Why did you become a teacher? Describe the pivotal events that led you to this career.
- How do you define yourself in terms of race, language, culture, gender, or class? Why and how do you claim these identities? What are some defining moments in your life that have (a) developed these identities, (b) solidified these identities, and (c) challenged these identities?
- Think about your racial, linguistic, cultural, gender, or class identity. How has that changed, if at all, as you have grown up, and why? Are there specific incidents that you can point to that have changed your perception of one of these identities?
- How does your racial, linguistic, cultural, gender, or class identity come into your classroom or your practice as a teacher? What instances or incidents can point to that illustrate this?

*These questions and prompts are starting points for the group meetings and journal entries. The conversations will begin after several journal entries have been completed as we have met as an inquiry group at least 2-3 times. The direction of those conversations will largely be dictated by the content of the discussions and writing of each teacher.