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Investigating Tension in Collaborative Action Research about Comics Writing

by

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I dedicate this writing to James, my closest friend, who listened to me on many car rides and walks over several months as I wrote this thesis.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation was written as a commonplace text (Havens, 2001; Sumara, 2002), where I gathered multimodal texts (print, visual, audio, video) of importance to the five teacher participants and me and interpreted them through sociocultural, historical and critical theoretical lenses to answer two research questions: How is professional learning experienced by teachers participating in collaborative action research? and What is the role of tension in critical, collaborative inquiry-based communities? The five teachers, who were new to critical, collaborative inquiry-based ways of learning, chose to engage in comics writing as a new approach to teaching narrative writing in their grades three, four, and six classrooms with me as an outside researcher over four-five months. The teacher participants found that taking on new teaching and learning identities created various tensions in their everyday planning, teaching and reflecting practices that shaped and were shaped by the diverse communities of practice that we developed in various spaces, including their two different schools. I investigate our learning experiences and the role of tension in them by conceptualizing settings as social spaces (Leander, 1999), where we cocreated patterns of practices. I examined these patterns using Kemmis, Hardy, Wilkinson, Edward-Groves and Lloyd's (2010) emerging "ecologies of practice" theory. First, I took a macroview of the teachers' and my social spaces by analyzing the "practice architectures" and metapractices (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008) or institutional practices of professional learning at work in their schools. Second, I engage in microanalyses of the teachers' and my practices according to multidimensions (cultural/discursive, material/economic and sociopolitical) within and across our different communities of practice. Finally, I present my findings about how our social spaces developed and what the role of ethical, material/economic, emotional and relational tensions were as we learned through collaborative action research (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005).

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Introduction: Creating a Dissertation as a Commonplace Text

Personal Reflection

I live amongst, between, and inside texts. My living room, den and spare room are lined with bookcases with over three thousand picture books, novels and academic books. Sometimes I wish that I could get rid of them because they are heavy, hard-to-move, and high maintenance, requiring constant dusting and organizing. I have been embarrassed on more than one occasion when a friend looked at my collection and commented, ‘Hey did you notice that you have two copies of this one?’ Sometimes I know it and other times I am genuinely surprised. At such times, I live amongst but apart from my books and feel weighted down by them visually and physically. At other times, when I have almost forgotten a birthday gift, I look at my duplicates and locate just the right title for the recipient. Like many book lovers, I have stacks of books by my couch and bed that I can hardly wait to read. Presently I am reading Suzanne Collins’ *The Hunger Games* (2008) about a group of youths who are forced to play/live a survival game/reality where only one of the players will be alive at the end. The minute I open it, I am in the game.

Throughout my doctoral study, I have collected and organized various texts (transcripts, copies of teachers’ journals, including their writing and drawings, my journals, student work, pictures and video clips). I enter my home office and can feel overwhelmed by the sheer volume of what I have collected. I organize and reorganize the data in an effort to gain control over it and my anxiety. Another student described her feeling as ‘facing the beast,’ and although I do not see writing the dissertation as beast-like, it is a mystery and mysteries are double-edged. I stand in the fold of such a double-edged world and force myself to look, read and compose texts that I do understand. For example, I often start my morning by reviewing my day timer, which usually includes scheduled meetings with my supervisor (who expects to discuss my progress). Facing what I know supports me to face what I don’t know. It is right then that I am mentally prepared to physically start reading, writing, and eventually “in-dwelling” (Barrs, 1984) in my data, research literature, and composing.

Making spaces to wonder, imagine and create

We live in a textually mediated social world, where what it means to be literate is navigating amongst such texts, their symbol systems and relationships to one another (Barton, 2007). As I stand back from the social events reified in the form of transcripts, words, pictures, audio and video, I situate myself as a participant who was part of such events and a spectator who pivoted continually to look backwards and forwards from them (Britton, 1970). Because time moves quickly, my shifting of stances throughout the research happened instantaneously. Although I knew that such a shifting of positions was difficult as a teacher, I

marveled at how dynamic, rapid and complex such repositioning was as a researcher and co-teacher. I describe my first day in Ben and Mark's grade six classroom at Jackson Elementary to illustrate my point.

Ben and I had planned the lesson to kick-off a comics writing project the previous afternoon because Mark was repeatedly called out of the planning meeting to deal with parental issues; Mark shared the grade six teaching responsibilities with Ben, but he was also the assistant principal at the school. Therefore, Ben and I co-taught the lesson we had planned while Mark wrote observations in his journal. As the students entered the classroom, they noticed the SMART board lesson, charts and comics texts. Students reacted to the novelty of such changes by approaching Ben or me with questions about what we were doing and when we were starting, and sharing personal stories about comic books and graphic novels that they liked, other books that they were reading, and personal writing that they did at home or with their friends. One student opened his desk drawer, which was filled with eleven different *Naruto* titles, and he said, "It's about time that we learn about graphic novels." I was torn between talking with Ben before both of us were about to begin the lesson and taking a moment to record students' comments. I took a few pictures and jotted down some quick notes before we began. At the end of the lesson, Mark and I were walking to his office, and he shared his observations about students, and I shared how surprised I was by the challenge of participating in the moment and stepping outside of it to observe and record what students were doing. Mark replied, "Yeah, I find it hard to be 'on' when I'm teaching. It's like you notice something on the other side of the room, but there is something equally important right in front of you."

Taking an inquiry stance and being 'on': Wondering, imagining, creating

The roles of teaching and researching require individuals to be "on," where they situate themselves to notice important learning moments, to move between times and spaces where those moments happen, and to reflect on what went on. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) defined such a positioning as central to what it means to take on an "inquiry as stance" approach to teaching and learning:

...In everyday language, stance is used to describe body postures, particularly with regard to the position of the feet, as in sports or dance, and also to describe political positions, particularly their constancy (or lack thereof) over time. In the discourse of qualitative research, stance is used to make visible and problematic the various perspectives through which researchers frame their questions, observations, and interpretations of data. In our work, we offer the term ‘inquiry as stance’ to describe the positions teachers take and others who work together in inquiry communities take toward knowledge and its relationship to practice. We use the metaphor of stance to suggest orientational and positional ideas, to carry allusions to the physical placing of the body as well as to intellectual activities and perspectives over time. In this sense the metaphor is intended to capture the ways we stand, the ways we see, and the lenses we see through...(pp. 119-120)

The notion of taking a stance depends on being ready or prepared to stop, which is of particular importance because it implies that a person sees a need to stop and to create the time and space for inquiry.

Britton (1970) emphasized that everyday life requires doing, but the only way “to savour, to appreciate, to interpret” (p.104) such doing is to give oneself permission to stop. Cobb (1977) defined seeing or feeling the need to stop as living by wondering: “Wonder is a response to the novelty of experience (although not the totally unexpected, which tends to arouse anxiety)...wonder is a kind of expectancy of fulfillment” (p.28). In other words, when I stopped to write a few notes and take pictures on the first day of teaching with Ben, I expected that taking that time would pay off later because I am required as a researcher to collect data about the participants’ and my experiences. Ben, too, found that taking the time to write a couple of paragraphs about the lesson and talking with his wife about it was personally and professionally valuable.

Inquiry stances are rooted in wonder, which is a way of approaching everyday experiences as though there will be something and someone worth noticing. Greene (1995) describes the ability to create such spaces for wonder as

enacting one's imagination— “It [imagination] is what enables us to cross the empty spaces between ourselves and those we teachers have called ‘other’ over the years” (p.3). When we stop and wonder, we create intellectual, emotional and social spaces to consider what another person might think, feel and see, but we also transform the way that we approached something in the past. Barry (2008) spoke about the image as central to whether and how we use such stopping points or pivot points well: “It’s the pull-toy that pulls you, takes you from one place to another. The capacity to roll...The ability to stay in motion, to be pulled by something, to follow it and stay behind it” (p.122). Britton (1970), Cobbs (1974), Greene (1995) and Barry (2008) concur that human beings learn by stopping to wonder about another person and what he/she is doing that may help us to see the world in a new way.

Gathering placeholders of wondering, imagining, and creating

My research was focused on how five teacher participants and I learned together through collaborative action research (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005; Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008). As I worked iteratively with the data, multimodal texts (i.e. children’s literature, participants’ personal stories about trips to Mount Kilimanjaro, for example, or sketches and photographs) became placeholders of conversations for participants and me at and away from the schools. Certain texts reappeared throughout the data and became locations for individuals’ and the group’s learning.

I gathered texts that resonated for participants and me and considered how to arrange them so that the richness of each person’s and the whole group’s personal and professional learning experiences would resonate for them, me and the reader of this dissertation. Therefore, I have created a dissertation that is a commonplace text, which “refers to a collection of well-known or personally meaningful textual excerpts organized under individual thematic headings” (Havens, 2001, p.8). I organized chapters thematically using excerpts from *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* (2006) to start each chapter and sometimes subheadings within chapters because these excerpts were

commonplace texts for me. Hence, I continually returned to them to weave intertextual comparisons between Alice and her experiences of identity transformation and the teacher's and my experiences of learning through collaborative action research.

Creating a dissertation as an intertextual weaving

Sumara (2002) argued that texts that draw us to them are those that make us stop and wonder; they are often the “small stories” that encourage us to linger by rereading, remembering, and/or feeling something about a certain description of an event or character. The literary practices that support such embodied lingering are commonplace text practices. In the case of Sumara's and Sumara and Luce-Kapler's (1993) descriptions of how their community of action researchers read *The English Patient*, they engaged in commonplace practices by each writing margin notes as they did close readings of the novel and later shared their notes to generate new interpretations of the novel. They referred to this commonplace text practice as “writerly work,” where they wove multiple texts together from their cross-cultural, personal interpretations into a complex, emergent intertextual weaving of their diverse and dynamic understandings.

The process of creating my dissertation was such an embodied, identity-shaping intertextual weaving. I began my dissertation by selecting texts of importance to the participants and me throughout the study: excerpts from *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* (2006), photographs, sketches, written reflections, poems, excerpts from transcripts, stories about climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro, and references to children's literature that represented participants' and my learning through collaborative action research. Selecting texts happened side-by-side with my ongoing interpretations of them: I wrote in margins of transcripts, on Post-its stuck to visuals, composed charts of recurring ideas and topics, and chapters from reflecting on my notes and suggested revisions by my supervisor and supervisory committee. I talked with other scholars (Drs Susan Lytle, Gerald Campano, Larry Sipe) at the University of Pennsylvania and preeminent action research scholars through my concurrent interview research

study about stories of my dissertation experience that illustrated tension because I was stumped about how to understand such a construct theoretically. Through such an ongoing, dynamic interweaving of insights from multiple conversations, readings, writing and rewriting within, amongst and between texts that represented the participants' and my experiences of collaborative action research, I composed this thesis as a commonplace text (Havens, 2001; Sumara, 2002). It is also timely to mention that I have published images from *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* (2006) and from the participants in my study with permission.

Chapter one is about understanding tension in my life as an educator. I describe my process of writing this dissertation as “working the dialectic” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009), where I speak to tension in my life as an educator as something that I did not fully understand until I wrote this dissertation. I conclude by reviewing the design of this thesis and the relationship of it to my concurrent interview research.

Chapter two is about interpreting tension at an epistemological-methodological crossroads. Just as Alice was reminded by the Cheshire Cat that walking around in Wonderland was an identity-shaping experience, the five teachers and I experienced tension as a location for learning and also a barrier to our learning. Tension and its relationship to learning is a central construct in my review of scholarship, and I found that relatively few academics report on experiences with teachers who were new to research-based ways of learning. Of those who did, tension was a vague or incoherent construct (Cook, 1998, 2009; Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 1993). I discuss such vagueness and incoherence as a disconnection between declared epistemologies and methodologies or modes of inquiry in research literature.

Chapter three is about theorizing tension beyond an epistemological-methodological crossroads. In chapter two, I interpret the confusion about the role of tension in teachers' and researchers' learning in critical and/or collaborative inquiry-based communities, and I outline my ontological and epistemological commitments in my theoretical framework.

Chapter four is about philosophizing methodology. I frame my work as a practical philosophy and use an “ecologies of practice” (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008) and hermeneutic (Gadamer, 1975) stance towards data collection, methods and analysis to represent my collaborative action research as a multisite case study.

Chapter five is about ‘caucus-tales’ and ‘breathing boundaries.’ I provide a macro-frame of teachers’ experiences of professional learning and teaching writing by analyzing their principals’ views of professional development at their schools, and I write narrative portraits of each teacher as a learner and writing teacher before the research began.

Chapters six and seven are about growing and shrinking communities of practice. In chapter six, I report on the teachers’ and my experiences growing as communities of practice through collaborative action research about comics writing over the first six weeks of the study. In chapter seven, I focus on the last nine to ten weeks of the study, where I explore the meaning of our professional learning experiences and the role of tension in our work together.

Chapter eight is about writing in liminal spaces. I report on the findings and implications of this thesis and my final reflections on my experiences of collaborative action research as an approach to professional learning.

Chapter 1: Understanding Tension in My Life as an Educator

With practitioner research, the borders between inquiry and practice are crossed, and the boundaries between being a researcher and being a practitioner are blurred. Instead of being regarded as oppositional constructs, then, inquiry and practice are assumed to be related to each other in terms of productive and generative tensions (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 94).

Writing *about* and *into* tension

In this chapter, I reflect on how my experiences living in tension as a school- and university-based educator over the last decade were the impetus for this dissertation. I begin by writing *about* tension while living hybrid identities in liminal spaces between school and university contexts. Because I have understood such tensions as anything but productive and generative over the last decade, I write *into* such tensions to blur boundaries between researching and teaching, knowing and doing, and inquiry and practice by “working the dialectic” (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 2009). Through such a writing-as-inquiry process, I illuminate how my dissertation aims and research questions evolved over that time. In the second part of this chapter, I review the statement of the problem in scholarship of collaborative inquiry-based teacher-outside researcher communities. I found that even though critical collaborative inquiry-based professional learning approaches are considered to be transformative of teachers’ practices, pedagogies and identities, such reports emphasized how tension was central to such learning contexts, but they were unclear about what the role of tension was in critical and/or collaborative inquiry-based learning and whether and how it could be productive. In the last section of this chapter, I outline key aspects of my dissertation (i.e., mode of inquiry, participant recruitment processes, ethical tensions, significance, delimitations and limitations) and an interview research study that I conducted concurrent to this thesis. I explain how both studies address the gap about tension in scholars.

Learning from liminal spaces



...When the rabbit actually *took a watch out of its waist-coat pocket*, and looked at it, and then hurried on, Alice started to her feet, for it flashed across her mind that she had never before seen a rabbit with either a waistcoat-pocket, or a watch to take out of it, and, burning with curiosity, she ran across the field after it, and was just in time to see it pop down a large rabbit hole under the hedge.

In another moment down went Alice after it, never once considering how in the world she was to get out again...[emphasis in the original] (Carroll, 2006, p.12).

Alice followed her curiosities down a rabbit hole and wasn't always sure how to move between the realities of Wonderland and the real world. I too have followed my desire to work collaboratively with teachers from multiple roles—literacy coach, consultant, school-based administrator, coresearcher, and doctoral student—that have positioned me within liminal spaces, where I transitioned back and forth from school to university settings. Because I lived multiple roles simultaneously in such settings, I enacted the contradictory perspectives and visions of reality attached to them. Just as Alice felt conflicted about being in between two diverse worlds, I questioned whether it was possible to work within the tensions that arose while living such hybrid identities.

Writing *into* tension: Working the dialectic

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) defined how “working the dialectic” is about challenging the “tensions and presumed contradictions between a number of key ideas and issues that have to do with research, practice and knowledge” (pp.93-94). In other words, the person who works the dialectic seeks to disrupt

dichotomized understandings of what counts as researching and teaching, of who is understood to be the researcher and teacher, and of what counts as objective/global knowledge versus subjective/local knowledge. They tied the concept of “working-the-dialectic” to “inquiry as stance”—an educator who adopts an inquiry stance “works the dialectic” by disrupting dichotomized roles (practices that meet social expectations) and discourses (ways of talking, thinking, valuing) that are grounded in a positivistic worldview.

Over the last decade, I did not live my life as an educator by consciously “working-the-dialectic;” instead, I developed an inquiry stance over time by being pulled in diverse directions by opposing discourses intrinsic to my dichotomized roles. It wasn’t until I became a full-time doctoral student that I consciously adopted an inquiry stance, and it was only through the writing of this dissertation that I came to know that such a stance is always in process and therefore unfinished. In keeping with enacting an inquiry stance, I engage in a writing-as-inquiry process, where I stop to wonder how to reimagine the role of tension in teacher-outside researcher collaborations by looking again at key moments over the last decade of my life as an educator.

Living tensions as a literacy educator: Dissertation aims and research questions

Over the last decade, I have occupied roles that placed me simultaneously in the university and public school contexts. I began my part-time master’s program in language and literacy in 2003, while I was the English Language Arts Consultant (2001-2007) for a medium-sized urban school district. I continued with my part-time doctoral program in language and literacy from 2007-2009. At the same time, I was a full-time assistant principal and literacy coach, and a co-researcher on a funded collaborative action research study (2008-2009) with two grade six teachers at the same school. I will speak to what tension meant as I lived my hybrid identities and how my research questions and dissertation aims emerged over that decade.

Part-time student, full-time consultant

As an English Language Arts Consultant from 2001-2007, I collaboratively wrote and/or implemented three different three year language and literacy Alberta Initiatives for School Improvement (AISi) projects for approximately 1000 K-12 teachers. AISi projects were funded by the School Improvement Branch of Alberta Education and implemented by school districts in cycles, each cycle being three years in length. In total, our school district received almost ten million dollars in government funds for teacher education in language and literacy over nine years or three AISi cycles. Taylor, Servage, McRae and Parsons (2007) analyzed 35 annual reports from all provincial projects submitted after the completion of AISi Cycles I (2000-2003) and II (2003-2006), and they concluded that “collaborative professional development models have been foundational to successful AISi projects since [their] inception in 1999” (p.5). However, they admitted that “there [were] many definitions of collaborative professional development...and that, even when the term ‘professional learning community’ was used, the reports reviewed did not precisely define what they meant...” (Taylor et al., 2007, p. 9).

Collaborative professional development took three forms in my school district over the course of three AISi Cycles: (a) Large-scale professional development: district level release time was provided to every division one teacher in Cycles I and II and to every division two and many division three teachers in Cycle III (2006-2009) to attend mandated in-services where they learned and worked alongside other teachers, (b) Literacy coaching: funds were allocated for a 0.1 to 0.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff member to act as a literacy coach at each school site, and (c) Job-embedded collaborative teacher learning: individual schools were encouraged, but not mandated, to organize job-embedded time for teachers to meet as grade level or inquiry-oriented groups for thirty minutes to two hours per week to address AISi goals.

Throughout Cycles I and II and for the first year of Cycle III, I was a district consultant who supported all three forms of collaborative professional development. I typically held five to six large-scale in-services throughout each

year attended by 40-50 participants or as many as 100-120 participants if I co-presented with a second consultant. Throughout that time, one positive change that I observed was the increase in requests from those who attended sessions to seek personalized follow-up: individual teachers called me to plan and work in their classrooms; principals initiated on-site professional development; the elementary principal group requested ongoing updates; and I participated in one school's action research project that was published as both a print and digital resource. A second positive change was how, at the action research site, a small group of teachers worked together on an ongoing basis to mark students' written work, and the teachers sowed seeds for transformational collaborative professional learning through their meetings (Nixon & McClay, 2007). There were negative results of the large-scale professional development, results were akin to the commonly reported drawbacks in research literature: teacher feedback reflected that individuals found the pace of sessions was too slow or too fast, and/or the content of sessions was often disconnected from their interests or readiness for such learning (Guskey, 2000).

Because I was searching for new ways to approach ongoing teacher learning in literacy education, during the summer of 2006, I completed an independent study of collaborative approaches to teacher inservice education. I reviewed research literature on how academics and/or consultants worked productively with teachers to address questions of importance to them in literacy education. I found that critical and/or collaborative inquiry-based approaches to ongoing professional learning were transformative of teachers' practices, pedagogies and identities (Cochran-Smith & Lytle 1993, 2009; Goodnough, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2010; McClay, 2006; Wells, 1994, 2001). Thus, my independent study illuminated my dissertation intentions—I was inspired to work with teachers to investigate a concern of importance to them in literacy education through collaborative inquiry-based approaches such as collaborative action research.

Throughout my doctoral course work, I had many opportunities to write assignments, where I received feedback from instructors about my dissertation

intentions and research questions. Such feedback from instructors and my supervisor supported me to articulate my intentions as a research question. My first research question for this thesis is: *How is professional learning experienced by teachers participating in collaborative action research?*

After an intensive summer of thinking about the rich possibilities of collaborative inquiry-based approaches to teachers' inservice education, I began AISI Cycle III (2006-2009) in my role as Elementary Language Arts Consultant with many ideas about how to enrich the school district's mainly large-scale model of professional development. However, a major structural change of school district personnel during AISI Cycle III dramatically impacted how AISI proposals were written and how consultants worked with schools from 2006-2009. Senior district administrators placed principals in charge of writing AISI applications and overseeing consultant staff designated to implement them. Prior to that year, consultants managed their own budgets and worked with small groups of teachers and other consultants to write AISI proposals. At the request of the principals who were writing the language and literacy AISI proposal in May and June 2006, I designed an application process for high needs schools (i.e., approximately 8 schools) to access collaborative action research professional development with the support of a consultant. However, my comprehensive proposal was reduced to an application form for such schools to apply for \$10,000.00 to use on staffing and resources without a detailed professional learning plan. After the language and literacy AISI proposal was accepted in the fall 2006, I assisted many principals to fill out the application form, which they construed as "another hoop to jump for money." Being removed from vision-setting for ongoing professional learning rubbed up against my beliefs as an educator and forced me to rethink whether I could continue to make a positive difference to teachers from my role as a consultant.

While living mostly intellectual and emotional tensions (i.e., I remained silent for the most part about my real thoughts and feelings) within my consultant role, I also lived them as a part-time doctoral student/full-time consultant. Because I had requested permission to be away from my job and paid for

substitute time to attend daytime graduate classes, I was often rushing into class from having just taught a lesson at a school or having given a session at a professional development site, and I relied upon “car time” to make the transition to be ready to think and talk critically with other students about varied topics and issues. Because teachers’ learning was central to class negotiations, it was not uncommon to listen to graduate students and professors critique my school district’s approach to teachers’ inservice learning. Because of my district position, I usually remained quiet during such conversations. However, when I reflect back on such discussions (i.e., including school-based staff who often complained about preservice teacher education), I am struck by how statements made at the school and university, although indicative of personally felt needs for change, reflected oversimplified views of each setting. Because I knew firsthand how complex it was to operationalize visions of inservice and preservice learning, I had a unique perspective to offer to such discussions even though I silenced myself.

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) theorized the tensions that I described above as examples of working the dialectic between local and global knowledge: “Our notion of local knowledge of practice challenges the view of knowledge production as something disembodied from the knower and the context and therefore untenable” (p.95). In other words, the district principals who were put in charge of writing the language and literacy proposal involved consultants *outside* rather than *inside* their vision-setting meetings, and such outsider-insider ways of working privileged some voices and knowledges as global/objective and debased others’ voices who represented local/subjective knowledges. In contrast, in the university settings, I acted like an outsider, but I was an insider-outsider who was part of the conversations and therefore had a responsibility to offer my perspective, which was informed by my “epistemic privilege” (Campano & Damico, 2007) of living hybrid identities in liminal or in between spaces.

Why did I not participate in graduate course discussions about approaches to ongoing teacher learning in my school district? My primary role, which was in the school district setting, required me to enact a positivistic conception of

teaching and learning that rested upon the belief that knowledge is held within individuals (i.e., objective truths), that some individuals know more than others (i.e., knowledge can be accumulated and measured), and that collaboration is about reinforcing socially created power hierarchies (i.e., those who know the most make the decisions). Thus, in the school district, collaboration was what Gutiérrez, Baquedo-Lopez, Alvarez, and Chiu (1999) defined as “co-participation,” where individuals learned *from* rather than *through* each other while engaged in “joint activity”: “Collaboration here is understood as a process in which participants acquire knowledge through co-participating, co-cognizing, and co-problem-solving within linguistically, culturally, and academically heterogeneous groups throughout the course of task completion” (p.87).

Collaboration as co-participation epitomized the literacy education inservice model, which was organized as top-down delivery by consultants as literacy experts who told teachers what they ought to do in their classrooms. Although I did not see my role in that way, the model itself perpetuated that understanding. Thus, given my immersion in a culture of co-participation, I understand why it was difficult for me to see graduate school classes as opportunities for collaboration. I did not appreciate that I needed to construct a new identity as a *collaborative* group member in such classes because I didn't see my hybrid roles as identities, and I didn't see that my identities were multiple and coconstructed (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986). I recognize now that my internal tension (i.e., silence about my real feelings and thoughts) was really the local-global knowledge tension that I could have conceptualized as locations for “generative tensions” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p.94), where I was expected to be transparent in discussions as joint activities. By the time I opted to leave my consultant role and to accept a position as a school-based administrator, I recognized that my dissertation aims and questions had shifted. In addition to inquiring into how teachers learned with me as an outside educator, I wanted to understand better what the role of tension was in collaborative learning contexts. I wondered whether and how it could be a productive and generative location for

professional learning between teachers and district consultants or school administrators.

Part-time student/researcher, full-time administrator/literacy coach

As an assistant principal, I attended district in-services, managed data collection protocols, ordered student and professional resources, and communicated with teachers about AISI requirements, all necessary and practical aspects of taking ideas shaped as AISI projects and operationalizing them at a school level. As a literacy coach, I worked with grades 4, 5 and 6 teachers for one hour per week; we co-planned lessons, collectively assessed student work, and read pedagogically relevant material chosen by the teams. I also scheduled one hour of in-class coaching time for each teacher. We co-taught lessons or observed each other's lessons. When I first arrived at the school, the grades 4, 5 and 6 classrooms were initially organized in rows with sparse student libraries, few or no picture books or graphic novels, limited technology, and no space to gather as a whole class or to work in small groups. Over six months, the principal invested monies into classrooms, and the teachers and I worked together to transform them so that they had cozy corners, independent reading libraries with varied literature, and tables for small group work, guided reading and one-on-one conferencing. However, as I considered my coaching experiences in the same classrooms, I realized that physical and pedagogical changes were shockingly dissimilar. Some teachers requested that literacy coaching take the form of ongoing modeling by me before attempting pedagogical strategies; others tried ideas but quickly abandoned them when I was not in their rooms.

Because I was determined to find ways to open up opportunities for teachers to engage in collaborative professional learning approaches that inspired them, I invited teachers on staff to consider the International Reading Association (IRA) Teacher-as-Researcher (TAR) Grant Award application as a possibility for supporting their professional learning inquiries. Because teachers worked in grade-level groups for as much as two hours per week, I knew that many of them had questions that drove their professional reading, interclass visits and literacy

coaching time. After Christmas, three grade six teachers, who had been working with me in my role as a literacy coach to explore various ways of improving students' reading of science texts, decided to apply for the grant with me. We received the award in January 2008 and waited until the fall 2008 to begin our study. We designed a collaborative action research study to investigate how guided reading in science would impact grade six students' reading practices and vocabulary development. Although enthusiasm for the study was high at the beginning, after the summer, teachers returned to school with limited memory of and personal attachment to the study, and one teacher opted out of the research because he had decided to retire at the end of the year. Therefore, the two grade six teachers, Colleen and Sara, and I proceeded with the action research, but it took a lot of maneuvering on my part to keep everyone going (e.g., I gave each teacher a tape recorder to audiorecord guided reading lessons to prevent teachers from having to take detailed observational notes or mark all of students' work). The principal had structured collaborative professional learning time according to grade levels, which meant that the two teachers and I made time on our own (30-45 min/week) to engage in discussions about our research. By mid-November, I approached both teachers about the possibility of giving back the money to the IRA because we had an interim report to write, and they had struggled to integrate guided reading on a consistent basis in their classrooms.

During our collaborative planning times, Colleen and Sara initially relied upon me to suggest lesson ideas, so I considered how to redistribute responsibilities more equally for planning and teaching by talking with the principal about giving them my substitute time (2 ½ hours/week) that I paid for in order to attend doctoral classes. Even though I provided Colleen and Sara with my half-day weekly substitute time, I could not be a part of the meetings and such increased time for them and comparably decreased time for our whole group to work together further polarized our ways of talking, thinking and working as a community. We chose to continue the study, but even though we shared planning, teaching, assessing and reflecting roles, they admitted that they relied heavily upon me for direction because they saw me as having more expertise in literacy

and research, and they didn't see themselves as coresearchers until near the end of the second year. The following transcript illustrates the teachers' perspectives:

Colleen: You know what the teacher hat is and you're in your world, you're in class. Okay you work with kids all day...

Sara: It's ...always there, everything is coming at you...

Colleen: You kind of just go for it, whereas when you're a researcher, especially in this research, when you have certain, especially constraints with the study, you have certain variables that you have to control. There are certain things that you need to keep constant. And you know, I think that the mantra is the classroom and just really not putting that [researcher's] hat on deep enough. I think it clouded my ability to be a good researcher because you know what? I see what you've said, like you know when we we're talking in November or December... it was...you know interruptions, and, like as for a teacher, that's just the way it is...that's cool right? Now come on, no big deal, but when you view it from a researcher's perspective and you're running a study, you know what? Uh...uh, like we need to work with that, but we need to make sure that our ducks are, you know...are in a row. Like I understand that a lot better now than I did before (Transcript, March 24, 2009).

Colleen and Sara portrayed classroom life as full of interruptions and partially completed plans. Colleen acknowledged that she hadn't realized until almost halfway into our study that, because our research was funded, we had to maintain pedagogical routines and data collection protocols— “to have our ducks in a row.” When Colleen, Sara and I copresented at the International Reading Association Conference in April 2010, we agreed that Sara's statement in our final report, “We all wear the researcher's hat but Rhonda wears a different hat” illuminated the tension that we felt throughout our research. “I just assumed that you knew what the research part was, and I left it to you... it took me working with you and thinking about it and presenting before I could really articulate it,” explained Sara. “Yeah, we just teach and put some students' work in a bucket...it wasn't until you had us highlight transcripts and talk about them, and even then I

didn't feel like a researcher," Colleen added, "I felt like I knew when I watched other presenters and thought, I guess we are researchers, but it just takes time to get it."

I avoided conflict as much as possible in my role as an administrator and a coresearcher and therefore didn't cultivate moments for sharing different points of view on questions and issues. Part of the problem was that the principal equated the research with a "project" and not with professional development that the school was committed to, so, although she did pay for the teachers' and my flight to attend the IRA conference, it wasn't without a lot of negotiating on my part (i.e., the IRA grant only covered part of the expenses for travel and accommodation). Instead of addressing the tensions that undergirded research as professional learning, I handled the tension by doing more for the teachers (i.e., writing reports, preparing the main parts of the presentations, organizing student data, etc.), and by saying less to the principal (i.e., paying for transcribing without saying anything).

At the time, I didn't realize that by doing more and saying less, I likely reinforced a hierarchical understanding of expert researcher and teacher researcher, which relied upon a dichotomized conceptualization of practitioner research and professional learning at our school. Some people might argue for a central-peripheral conception of the teachers and me as participants, where some individuals choose to stand on the periphery. While I was better positioned to do some tasks (i.e., writing reports) because of doctoral work, how such tasks were to be done was for Colleen, Sara and me to negotiate together; "working the dialectic" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) depends on disrupting the taken for granted, which includes assumptions about what I was better positioned to do versus the teachers. Also, the teachers and I had to work against the dialectic of administrator-teacher and graduate student-classroom teacher by opening up opportunities for such negotiations as opposed to silently taking them away.

Also, when Colleen and Sara revised the interim report and omitted anything that could have been read as limitations of their teaching abilities, I went along with it instead of challenging such revisions as disguising the value of

teaching from an inquiry stance, which is about growth and change. Even though the interim and the final reports were supposed to address two research questions, one about our learning through collaborative action research and one about students' learning, I focused on students' learning and mentioned our learning in positive terms only. I relocated my discussion of the tensions in the research away from the findings and into the limitations section of the study (i.e., not enough time to collaborate). Thus, I didn't pursue how such tensions were generative of our discussions about what it meant to teach/research and to learn/inquire because it was difficult for me, at that time, to see how to write about such aspects positively. Because I knew that the teachers and principal would regard them as negative, I opted to write a traditional research report that allowed me to tuck away tensions into the limitations of our study (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2007; Newkirk, 1996; Thomas, 1998). Counter to Thomas' (1998) point that narrative structures promote smoothed-over research accounts, I did not rely upon narrative-style reporting because narratives require more detailed descriptions and explanations.

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) defined the tension described in my collaborative researcher-administrator example above as working the dialectic between research and practice:

When research and practice are assumed to be dichotomous, then analysis, inquiry, and theorizing are understood to be part and parcel of the world of research, while action, experience and doing are considered integral to the world of practice... With practitioner research, the borders between inquiry and practice are crossed, and the boundaries between being a teacher and being a researcher are blurred (p.94).

Colleen and Sara spoke about the need for time to work with me by engaging in researching tasks (e.g., systematically collecting and reflecting on data) that did not come naturally to them in classroom worlds. The principal, too, required time to see the research unfold, to take part in it (i.e., we invited her into classes to take field notes), and to discuss her experiences with us afterwards, before she committed to support the two teachers with extra school resources.

To conclude, by writing *about* and *into* the tensions that I lived as an educator over the last decade, I shifted from seeing tension as an *object* to seeing it as a *process* that was generative of my dissertation aims and questions. It wasn't until I had collected my data for this dissertation and engaged in writing-as-inquiry by "working the dialectic" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) that I uncovered and refined my second dissertation aim and question. My second aim is to understand better the role of tension in collaborative teacher-outside researcher inquiry-based learning approaches. My second research question is: *What is the role of tension in critical collaborative inquiry-based communities?*

Reviewing the research literature: Statement of the problem

Educators from diverse philosophical orientations agree that the most credible approaches to ongoing teacher learning are collaborative (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Levine & Marcus, 2009). Many international critical and/or collaborative inquiry-based professional learning studies substantiate how such approaches to teachers' inservice education are transformative of teachers' practices, pedagogies and identities (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, 2009; Elliott, 1991, 2009; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988a, 1988b; Wells, 1994, 2001, 2009). However, most collaborative inquiry-based scholarship was conducted with teachers who were graduate students, Ph.D. candidates, or university instructors. Of the few academics who worked with teachers who were brand new to such learning approaches, they emphasized how tension was central to how they worked together. However, most scholars were vague about what tension was practically and theoretically (Goodnough, 2008; Hoban & Hastings, 2006), confused about how they defined tension theoretically (Somekh, 1994), or limited in descriptions and explanations about how it was a productive aspect of collaborative inquiry (Elliott, 2007a; Wells, 2001).

Although I am focused on how academics conceptualized tension as part of their learning with teachers who were new to research-based learning approaches, Cook (1998, 2009) and Sumara & Luce-Kapler (1993) indicated that very few research reports defined the relationship between tension and

collaborative inquiry-based learning in all contexts. Almost twenty years ago, Sumara and Luce-Kapler (1993) questioned why collaborative learning was often associated with glib comfort slogans that disguised the hard, uncomfortable parts of groups creating critical insights together. Cook (1998, 2009), too, was surprised that researchers swept the critical insights or creative “mess” of collaborative inquiry under the carpet.

Thomas (1998) noted that the narrative rhetorical structure of many practitioner research studies enabled such writers to smooth over or cover up what might be viewed negatively about teachers and/or their learning. However, as I stated earlier, I found that traditional research reports were far better for such tidying. In my review of research literature, I discovered how the limitations’ and implications’ sections of the traditional research report were prime locations for objectifying tension as something to get rid of or to avoid (Goodnough, 2008). Other scholars blamed their epistemologies’ and/or methodologies’ sections for derailing their research purposes, and they critiqued and revised such epistemologies and/or methodologies in their implications’ and conclusions’ sections (Esposito & Evans-Winters, 2010; Jones & Stanley, 2010; Waters-Adams, 1994). Hence, few researchers, including those who worked with teachers who were new to critical collaborative inquiry-based learning approaches, considered whether and how tension was a necessary, productive aspect of critical and/or collaborative inquiry-based teacher-outside researcher learning because they conceptualized tension as *something* to get past, not *some process* to write into. Therefore, more research is required that addresses how academics work with teachers who are new to critical and/or collaborative inquiry-based approaches to professional learning. Future research reports need to be detailed on a practical level about how such relationships begin, develop and whether or not they are sustained, and on a theoretical level about what tension is

Investigating tension: A multi-site case study of collaborative action research

I take an “ecologies of practice” (Kemmis, Wilkinson, Hardy & Edwards-Groves, 2008) spectator’s view of the teachers’ and my experiences of

collaborative action research, and I represent such practices as they unfolded within and between diverse communities of practice as a multi-site case study (Merriam, 2009). I chose a case study mode of inquiry because it afforded me an in-depth, up-close, rich and thick view (Geertz, 1973; Merriam, 1998, 2009) of what and how we worked and learned together as diverse communities of practice (Wenger, 1998), and what the role of tension was in our learning contexts. My main case study is about the patterns of practices the five teachers and I developed in social spaces (Leander, 1999) as we learned together away from their schools, and I investigate subcases of the main case or patterns of practices within social spaces of diverse communities of practice in school-based contexts that overlapped at nexuses of main case practices. Hence, Kemmis et al.'s (2008) and Kemmis, Hardy, Wilkinson, Edward-Groves and Lloyd's (2010) ecologies of practice frame is focused on practices as living, emerging entities and less on the people who enact them.

I define collaborative action research as a practical philosophy (Carr, 2006a; Elliott, 2006; Kemmis, 2009b; Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008). As a practical philosophy, I frame teacher-outside researcher collaborative inquiry-based learning according to ethical imperatives or principles that request the researcher and teachers to consider whether and how their collaborative practices, the situations within which they practiced and their identities were changed for the “better” (Lytle, 2008). Therefore, the criteria for judging whether and how such a philosophy was enacted are part of what determines the credibility of this thesis.

Hence, framing collaborative action research as a practical philosophy does not mean that I did not have methods of data collection and analysis. I rely upon multiple scholars (Carr, 2006a; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Elliott, 2006; Kemmis, 2006, 2010a, 2010; Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988a, 2005; Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008) to guide my choices about methods for planning, teaching, and reflecting together, where the teachers and I as an outside researcher are “joint participants” (Gutiérrez et al., 1999) to enact a practical philosophy. Thus, I assumed that the teachers and I would work together as different but equal

knowers (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) who co-investigate their questions about their practices and the situations within which they practiced through “a spiral of self-reflective cycles: planning a change; acting and observing the process and consequences; reflecting on these processes and consequences...” (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 276). When I took a spectator’s stance towards our action research experiences, I used a macro- and micro-analytical lens by relying especially on Handsfield, Crumpler and Dean’s (2010) and Leander’s (1999) focal interaction analytic approach.

In the next section, I provide an overview of how I engaged in participant recruitment and the ethical tensions involved. Such participant recruitment processes set the tone for how the teachers and I understood what it meant to work together as collaborative inquirers, and how and why the teachers chose to shape an inquiry about how to teach narrative writing through comics. Although I take time to detail the conversations I had with principals, such detail is necessary to illuminate what I mean by ethical tensions during participant recruitment processes that are referred to throughout my thesis.

Participant recruitment processes and ethical tensions

Calling principals. On January 19, 2010, I began recruiting participants for my research. I followed my Cooperative Activities Program for District Access agreement and contacted the district staff member responsible for research approval who recommended five schools for recruitment purposes. I began with the first school, which was Jackson Elementary, and I spoke with Kathy, one of the principals. I asked her to consider names of teachers who might be interested in shaping an inquiry about teaching and assessing writing and working with me in their classrooms and with a small group of teachers for 4-5 full days over the next four to five months through collaborative action research. Kathy described two potential teacher candidates but worried because of their outside district professional development commitments. She eventually decided on Ben, who was a teacher leader for AISI Social Studies Inquiry PD, had been teaching for over a decade and was interested in leadership. She agreed to talk with the co-principal

who was not there at that time and to call me the following day.

I called the second school and spoke with Matthew, the principal of Parker Elementary, and we talked for almost one hour. He shared that his school was focused on writing and that a district consultant provided an analysis of the provincial achievement tests results, which showed that students had underperformed in narrative writing at grade three, and narrative and news article writing at grade six. Matthew wanted as many staff involved in the research as possible. I emphasized the criteria—the staff member will have to have the interest, time and energy to shape an inquiry in writing and to work with an outside researcher in their classroom. Matthew reluctantly removed a few names from his list, which now included four teachers, and I asked that he think about it and wait before approaching anyone until I heard back from the other school. I had a call back from Kathy almost immediately after my call with Matthew. She explained, “The assistant principal was so excited about this opportunity that he covered Ben’s class so that I could tell him about the research. Ben is excited, too, and he said that you could stop by at lunch tomorrow.”

That night I reviewed the names of suggested participants and the only one that worried me was Samantha at Parker Elementary. She had been my main case study participant for my master’s study, and I felt that our pre-existing relationship might compromise her freedom to decline to participate in this research. Given my friendship with her, I called her at home and explained how Matthew had put her name on his list and that I wanted her to feel no obligation to agree to be involved in the research. I provided her with a brief explanation of the research, and she said, “Yes, I really want to do it!” I asked her to wait until after the information day before making her decision and explained how my main concern was that she would agree to it out of loyalty to me instead of honestly wanting to take on a research project. The next day, after Matthew called back, I went to the school and spoke with three of the four teachers. The grade five teacher opted not to participate. The third teacher, Carmen, whom I had never met, was the grade six teacher, and she was away from school at a running event. Before I left to see my doctoral supervisor, I asked the principal whether or not

Carmen was too busy with extracurricular commitments to be thinking about research. He considered the possibility of a different teacher but decided to give her the option, so I called Carmen the following day and she chose to attend the information day.

I had a meeting with my supervisor and she suggested that Ben be given the option to have a buddy because he may feel isolated. I went to Jackson Elementary at noon and explained the research to Ben. He was genuinely interested and told me that he liked teaching language arts and that this was a good opportunity because his inquiry project for the district was done. He asked me for an example of a writing project, and I said that I would show two examples on the information day from previous action research projects. Ben agreed to attend the information day. Both principals and the assistant principal met with us, and I explained what my supervisor had said about asking a second person. The assistant principal, Mark, said that he taught English language arts in Ben's classroom twice a week and would like to participate in the study. My immediate reaction was that it would be too much with his administrative role. The principals left the decision up to Mark, and he opted to come to the information day.

Information day. The five teachers talked about their experiences of professional development and research within their large urban school district in Alberta. All of them described “knowledge-for-practice” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999) images of professional learning, where they attended sessions led by consultants who provided them with handouts that summarized research-based strategies. Samantha had taken part in a district-level action research study, but it was heavily driven by the school district consultant. As well, the strategies for planning, teaching and assessing narrative writing were clearly outlined by the literacy consultant involved.

Based on a brainstorming activity, where the teachers listed phrases of what they considered to be research, I noted that all of their lists reflected mostly positivistic conceptions of an outside researcher who comes into classrooms to do research on students and teachers. I clarified how my understanding of my role as an outside researcher was not positivistic and that I saw us as coinvestigators of

classroom writing practices. I used Kemmis and McTaggart's *Action Research Planning Guide* (1988a) to focus on what it meant to engage in a "reconnaissance period" (i.e., to consider potential concerns and questions for inquiry during our first five-six weeks together) through Lewin's (1946) action research cycle—planning, teaching, observing, reflecting—as an iterative, reciprocal professional learning process. I shared my story about working as a literacy coach with two grade six teachers at the same school on a participatory action research study (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005) and provided examples of small inquiry projects that other teachers had explored. By the end of the morning, the teachers had a lively discussion about the challenges of teaching narrative writing and identified a "thematic concern" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988a, pp.9-10)—that teaching narrative writing had become too narrowly focused on meeting the requirements set by standardized writing tests.

Kate explained, "When too much pressure is placed on teachers, students feel the pressure that teachers have and the writing isn't good." Kate also indicated, "I want to focus on my boys because they shut down the quickest." Carmen and Samantha echoed a similar interest in inspiring students "to be creative and to take ownership over their writing." Samantha added, "I find that when my students write stories, they don't always connect events together and they have big gaps or too many events." Carmen emphasized, "I am new at teaching narrative writing to grade six students, and I have a lot of strong writers. I want to find ways to keep them interested and to challenge them because a lot of them see it as 'practice tests,' not stories." Ben stated, "I find that all of my students avoid revising, my good writers, my weak writers. It's like pulling teeth to get them to revise. I think it's like Carmen said that they just want to get it done." Mark reinforced Ben's concern, "...I find that there are quite a few students who will cut middles or endings too short. Maybe it's partly the time limit of practice tests, but it's true even when we don't put strict time limits on them."

Although we had discussed numerous possibilities for teaching narrative writing and writing generally, when the teachers saw Ben's students' comics

retellings of *Maniac McGee* (1999), they were impressed by the quality of students' work and Ben's stories about students' engagement in the writing process, and they imagined that teaching narrative writing in comics form would be equally successful. I was surprised that there was a rush to make a decision when they knew that I was meeting with each teacher the following week to consider how their classroom contexts and teaching preferences influenced what they would focus on. I asked, "Why do you think this is the way to go?" Samantha said, "Wouldn't it be easier if we all did the same thing?" It was difficult, but I elected to be silent. The silence was broken by Carmen who asked Ben whether or not he wanted to do another comics writing project. Ben smiled and Mark laughed. I turned to Kate and she said, "What if I can't draw something that the students need me to draw?" Carmen jumped in, "You'll learn. It will be fun!"

I suggested that we brainstorm what might be some starting points for having students write comics based on what each teacher planned to teach the following term. One idea was to have students write comics about concepts in a content area like science. Samantha said, "I just can't see it. Comics in science?" Another idea was to write stories using comics because story writing is already something that teachers were planning to do to prepare for the provincial achievement tests. We considered how to use our vision for a good writing classroom to guide possibilities. The focus shifted to Health, Religion and Social Studies, which provided a broader basis for possible topics.

Kate mentioned that the school's annual theme was centered on the book, *Hope is an Open Heart* (2008). Ben and Mark talked about the district theme, "What Breaks Your Heart?" which was the focus of a school district professional development day. We imagined using the two themes together and brainstormed how students might start a story about bringing hope into our lives around issues that break our hearts. We tried writing stories about what breaks our hearts and shared them. At some point in the discussion, Samantha said, "This is complex." I recalled thinking about my supervisory committee's feedback to make teachers feel safe, and suggested that we map out what a comics writing project might look

like in terms of the time it might take. I drew a plan onto chart paper as everyone provided input about likely steps in the process of teaching students about comics writing. The plan had comics slotted into language arts twice a week in each teacher's classroom from February-May. I clarified how I had not booked time for each teacher to plan on a weekly basis with me, but I expected that they would initiate it. I explained that planning and teaching together is one way to work in a highly participative way, but I also provided teachers with the option to plan and teach without my help and that I would assist during class. We exchanged phone numbers, and I encouraged them to call me at any time. By the end of the afternoon, the group agreed that the plan was workable, and we left thinking that the group's inquiry was "How can we inspire students to write stories by using a comics writing approach to teaching narrative writing?"

I suggested that if they decided to proceed with this research that I would meet with each one of them the following week to further consider how this project would fit into each of their classrooms, their report cards and schedules. I suggested that Scott McCloud's *Making Comics* (2006) book would be an excellent resource for us and after next week I would order it for each of them should they decide to continue with this direction. The group also thought that it would be helpful to have a copy of Michael Bitz's "The Comic Book Project" (2004) teaching materials so I ordered each teacher their own copy. I also agreed to gather information about district protocols for setting up a blog for us to communicate based on Mark and Ben's suggestions at lunch. I gave each teacher a consent form and was clear that there was no pressure to sign the form that day. If they did sign it, they could change their minds at any time throughout any point of the project and opt out and there would be no negative repercussions for doing so. We read it together and I asked whether anyone had questions. Everyone signed the consent forms.

Ethical tensions. My research study complied with the University of Alberta and Tricouncil's guidelines for conducting research with human subjects. All ethical procedures happened before the study formally began and the five teacher participants had attended an information day, where they were provided with an

overview of what was involved in action research, and they were informed in writing and verbally of their right to opt out of the research at any time without negative repercussions even after they had signed consent forms. As well, administrators, teachers, students and parents were provided with copies of any data that was gathered for the purposes of publication in this thesis.

Although formal ethical parameters were adhered to throughout the study, during the participant recruitment process, the participants and I faced ethical tensions because my vision of working as coinvestigators from a critical collaborative inquiry-based approach to professional learning clashed with their knowledge and expectations of me as a district consultant. I had been the English Language Arts Consultant who led most of the professional development in the school district from 2001-2007, so Samantha, Ben and Mark, especially, had interacted with me in that role throughout that time. Now, I was approaching them with them the dual purpose of getting data to satisfy requirements of my PhD and to work with them as equal collaborative learners.

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2007) stated that “there are a number of ethical dilemmas involved in taking an inquiry stance... There is a fine line between collaboratively constructing an agenda within an inquiry community... and predetermining the content, processes and outcomes” (p.35). The temptation for researchers to fall into the expert-researcher trap is enormous:

For many years— and especially now in the current era of accountability— university experts have been expected to offer the latest theories (although often considered too abstract and thus irrelevant to ‘real’ school) or to provide training and coaching on ‘best practices’ to be immediately applied in classrooms (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p.35).

Because I had been the consultant in the school district where I set out to conduct my study, I fell into the expert-researcher trap in several ways.

The main way that I fell into such an expert-researcher trap was that I trusted that a phone call with each principal was a sensible way to explain what was involved in collaborative inquiry-based professional learning. The Cooperative Activities Program ethical requirements for the school district make

it so that researchers first contact school principals about the prospect of working with teacher participants prior to contacting teachers. Although I am not debating the necessity of contacting school principals, I am rethinking whether a phone call is a good way to inform them about the purpose and intensity of such research-based professional learning opportunities.

At Jackson and Parker Elementary schools, the school principals and assistant principals were so excited about my research invitation that they may have inadvertently coerced teachers to participate in it. When I spoke with school principals, I had emphasized that the purpose of my study was to engage in a case study of how teachers worked with me in highly participative ways to plan, teach, collect and reflect on data about teaching writing over four-five months and that this was not a commitment suitable for every teacher because of the time commitment and agency required. However, at both schools, the principal or assistant principal became very enthusiastic about the research as a professional learning opportunity for teachers and such positive energy may have compelled teachers to take part without considering seriously what they were committing to.

In Kathy' case, she initially held back, but the well-intentioned assistant principal and co-principal wanted to be supportive of me and what they perceived to be an excellent prospect for Ben to learn more about teaching writing. Ben admitted near the end of the study that he had brought comics to sway the group towards a project that he understood and was comfortable with:

Rhonda: Why did you have them [the students' examples of comic book reviews]?

Ben: Because you had mentioned that that was a possibility and I got very, very, very excited about it.

Rhonda: I had given that as an example when we talked a few days before the information day, so how did you?

Ben: Because we had already been working on a project, a novel study, and the kids were drawing something from *Manic McGee* (1990), so when I found there was a possibility of this being the project, and I thought I would bring some examples and try to convince people.

Rhonda: Here's the thing, I really don't remember what I said to you. Could you refresh my memory?

Ben: You had said that we were going to be looking at writing and you had said, 'Well, maybe we could look at poetry or this and that, and we could potentially do it on comic books...It was my subtle way of shifting the study into the direction I wanted to focus on [laughs] (Transcript, May 11, 2010).

There are two possible assumptions underlying Ben's actions. First, it is possible that Ben mistook my comments to mean that the purpose of engaging in research was to develop a whole group genre-based writing project and for each teacher to implement it while the researcher observed the results. Second, it is possible that Ben fully understood the purpose behind inquiry-based professional learning and wanted to change it into a genre-based writing project that was technically rather than critically focused on transforming teaching practices, pedagogies and identities. The ethical tension evident in both options is that Ben was compelled to participate in research that he changed to suit his own needs. Ben admitted, "[One of the principals] had said that it would be good for me to take this on because of my goal of being a school leader. I am in the leadership course so I thought, 'I'm up for it,' and I knew that you had a good reputation so I thought it would be good...It was and I'm glad that I did it" (Research journal, May 14, 2010). When I asked Ben whether it was what he had expected, he laughed and said, "No."

Mark, too, laughed and said, "If I were to do this again, I would do so many things differently. I guess I didn't believe you when you said that you wouldn't be the consultant [laughing]" (Research journal, February 9, 2011). Mark confirmed that he had learned a lot from this way of learning and was happy that he did it, but he recognized how he did not see himself as a full research participant for almost half of the study. Thus, Ben and Mark intentionally controlled their level and nature of engagement in collaborative inquiry-based professional learning before they participated in the information day.

At Parker Elementary, because Matthew had spent almost an hour with me on the phone, I had thought that he understood the purpose and nature of the research invitation. I had called Samantha ahead of Matthew talking with her because, as I explained earlier, I had a pre-existing relationship with her and worried that she would feel compelled to accept based on our relationship. Regardless of my assumptions, there were many indicators that my invitation to participate in research was understood by administrators and teachers at Parker Elementary as a consultant-teacher professional development opportunity. Thus, when I called Samantha after she had talked with the principal, she stated, “You should have seen how excited he [the principal] was. It was like the best thing that had ever happened to him!” When I asked her how she responded to his invitation to attend the information day, she said, “I told him that we were helping you to do your homework. I said that I would do it because I had worked with you before and that we were friends” (Research journal, February 4, 2010). I was taken aback by Samantha’s characterization of my invitation to participate in research as all about my homework and me. Although I realize that, in part, it was my PhD “homework,” I had made it clear that I only wanted to engage in such homework with teacher participants who had a genuine interest in learning through collaborative action research. I debated about whether she was joking, serious or a combination of both, but other than reinforcing that she could opt out at any time, I did not voice my concerns. On the one hand, I wonder whether it is really possible to invite teachers to engage in collaborative action research when the researcher, in my case, a doctoral student, had a larger vested interest in engaging in such work. On the other had, is it ever possible to collaboratively inquire without individuals taking part for various reasons, including social, academic or other payoffs?

Carmen and Kate admitted that they were not completely clear about what they were committing to when they joined the research and that it was more of a push or a challenge than what they had expected. Carmen indicated, “I took it on because I wanted to learn and I thought it would be fun, but I also felt pressure from the writing results and the school’s focus on raising them...” Carmen

concluded, “I am happy that I did it, but it was a push because of the other things going on, but I knew that I wouldn’t drop out” (Transcript, May 10, 2010). Kate felt that she had taken on an inquiry stance but that the comics writing focus made it challenging for her to take on an inquiry stance:

I truly felt like my boys were disengaged, and I knew that I had become too comfortable with how I teach narrative writing. I was not convinced about comics at all, but it turned out that comics did exactly what I wanted—to move my boys and me out of the comfort zone of the same old ways of writing...I guess I really did have an inquiry, but you asked me about advice, and I would say that starting with a whole group project focus made it hard for me to find my own reasons and ways of changing the way that I thought about teaching writing (Transcript, May 10, 2010).

In conjunction with these initial participant recruitment experiences, the events of the information day confirmed that teachers as a group were quick to pigeonhole the inquiry into a technical comics writing project and to see my role as an expert-researcher. Ben admitted that he had hoped that everyone would take on comics writing, and Mark saw his role as “supporting Ben,” not being a full participant on his own terms. Samantha found the research to be “complex” and thought that taking on one project would make it simpler and easier for everyone, especially for me. When I drafted a rough schedule for how the research could go, Kate and Samantha later commented that they noticed that we had deviated from the draft plan. Hence, the research was reified into a traditional researcher-expert driven project, where I was responsible for everything from the classroom schedule to details about the project plan regardless of my explanations about taking on different inquiries as individual teachers or working on diverse timelines and planning schedules according to classroom needs and contexts.

There are several implications stemming from such ethical tensions in my participant recruitment experiences. The first implication is that the participant recruitment process begins with the phone calls to school principals and phone calls may not be enough. Because administrators associated my research invitation with what they knew about me and district-based professional

development, it was important to consider a more extensive half-day, after-school or whole staff introduction to what it means to learn with an outside researcher through collaborative action research. Second, because it is impossible to explain inquiry without living it (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009), it may be warranted to have a pilot phase, where teachers agree to engage in a six week reconnaissance period (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988a), where they work with the researcher in their classrooms and outside of their classrooms to live what it means to work from “inquiry as stance” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). After such a pilot phase, the teachers can then decide whether or not to continue to work from such a stance with the researcher and the group of teacher participants. Finally, although I conducted research in a school district where I had worked, it is possible that principals and teachers who have not participated in research-based ways of professional learning would have responded in similar ways to me and to my invitation. More research is required to determine whether and how researchers who conduct collaborative inquiry-based professional learning in their own school districts experience ethical tensions that are particular to such a context.

In the final section of this chapter, I clarify how a concurrent interview research study complemented and strengthened this dissertation. I review the research questions, and outline limitations and delimitations of this thesis.

Concurrent interview research study

Because little is known about how researchers initiate, develop and sustain relationships with teachers, especially those who are new to collaborative inquiry-based approaches to professional learning, and what the role of tension is in such learning relationships, I conducted interviews with preeminent practitioner researchers to address such a gap in research literature. I conducted 16 interviews from May 2010 until the present, and such interviews were semi-structured and intended to evoke storytelling from participants (Ellis, 2009). I engaged in this research because I received the *Michael Smith Foreign Study Supplement* from September 2010 until April 2011 to work with Dr. Susan Lytle at the University of Pennsylvania and with my supervisor, Dr. Jill McClay, on the analysis of

transcripts from the audiorecorded interviews. Therefore, the purpose of the study coincided with but was not part of my thesis. However, because the gap in research literature is what directed my decision to structure my thesis and the interview study, I rely upon the emic data from such interviews in my thesis. I cite numerous excerpts from interviewees in chapter two, which is my literature review of practitioner-outside researcher learning, and in chapter four, where I discuss how I frame collaborative action research as a practical philosophy.

Research questions

My thesis addresses a gap in research literature about how outside researchers learn with teachers who are new to critical and/or collaborative inquiry-based approaches, and what the role of tension is in such contexts. My research questions are: 1) How is professional learning experienced by teachers participating in collaborative action research?, and 2) What is the role of tension in critical collaborative inquiry-based communities?

Limitations and delimitations

This study is limited to a time period of five months (February 9, 2010 – Jun 17, 2010). The findings are limited to the teachers, their students and the principals in two school sites. The teacher participants were selected based on district protocols, which required school principals to select potential candidates. The teacher participants had an interest in writing pedagogy and engaging in collaborative action research as an approach to their professional learning. This study has been delimited to five teachers, the students whom they teach and the principals of their schools and me as participants.

Chapter Two: Interpreting Tension at a Crossroads



... The Hatter opened his eyes very wide on hearing this; but all he said was, “Why is a raven like a writing-desk?”

“Come, we shall have some fun now!” thought Alice. “I’m glad they’ve begun asking riddles. I believe I can guess that,” she added aloud.

“Do you mean that you think you can find out the answer to it?” said the March Hare.

“Exactly so,” said Alice.

“Then you should say what you mean,” the March Hare went on.

“I do,” Alice hastily replied; “at least— at least I mean what I say—that’s the same thing, you know.”

“Not the same thing a bit!” said the Hatter. “You might just as well say that ‘I see what I eat’ is the same thing as ‘I eat what I see’!”

“You might just as well say,” added the March Hare, “that ‘I like what I get’ is the same thing as ‘I get what I like’!”

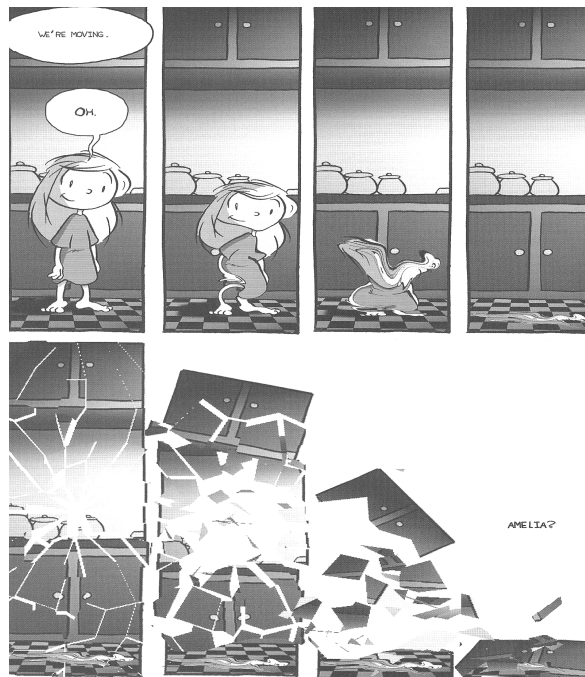
“You might just as well say,” added the Dormouse, who seemed to be talking in his sleep, “that ‘I breathe when I sleep’ is the same thing as ‘I sleep when I breathe’!” (Carroll, 2006, pp. 82-83).

Entering a new, not so comfortable world

In the excerpt above, Alice is reminded that by virtue of walking and talking in Wonderland, she enacts an identity (Bakhtin, 1981). Regardless of Alice’s uncertainty about her next move, she has to make one, and when she does, her choices matter because they determine where she will end up and who she will become. I recall how the five teachers and I felt uncertain like Alice because the teachers had no exposure to graduate work or to research-based professional learning, and I was a new researcher who was tentative about my moves.

During our first planning session, Kate, Carmen, Samantha and I were flipping through published comics texts, and the image of the main character, Amelia, in *Amelia Rules! Superheroes* (Gownley, 2006), showed how Amelia's world began to crumble when her mother told her that they were moving. As we looked at the page below (Figure 1), smiles crossed all of our faces, and I stated, "This reminds me of us!" and everyone laughed.

Figure 1



Our simultaneous noticing of this page and our laughter pointed to our joint recognition that we had moved away from teacher-consultant towards teacher-outside researcher ways of professional learning. Such a move mirrored Amelia's melting into something and someone unknown by shattering what she had known and who she was. As Sumara and Luce-Kapler (1993) underscored in the excerpt below, embarking on a collaborative action research venture is more like uncomfortable toiling than blissful creating together:

It seems that the word *collaborate* arises from the Latin *collaborare*; *col* (together) + *laborare* (to work, labour), defined as 'to work in conjunction with another or others, to co-operate'. So far this sounds as though it reinforces the 'comfort' slogan;

however, if we travel a little further in this word trace to the Latin word *Laborare* we find that it originates from *laborem* which means ‘toil, distress, trouble; exertions of the faculties of the body or mind especially when painful or compulsory.’ It would seem, then, that to collaborate really means to toil *together*, often under conditions of *distress* or *trouble*; to exert body and mind in ways which are sometimes *painful*. Collaboration is labour; it is *work*...[C]ollaborating within community should be understood as an activity which is at times likely to be *uncomfortable* rather than *comfortable* [emphases in original] (p.393).

Thus, our first planning session required us to come face-to-face with a new world, one where what we said and did were not always mutually understood and sorting out misunderstandings was not as lighthearted as solving riddles. Although this example comes from my first planning meeting with Parker Elementary, such a moment was illustrative of what Ben and Mark went through as well.

Standing at an epistemological-methodological crossroads



“Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?”

“That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,” said the Cat.

“I don’t much care where,” said Alice.

“Then it doesn’t matter which way you go,” said the Cat (Carroll, 2006, p.76).

Just as the Cheshire Cat forced Alice to acknowledge that walking around in Wonderland can lead somewhere important only if she takes the time to consider her choices, the five teachers and I realized that being new to critical collaborative inquiry-based learning positioned us in a location of struggling to consider what it means to learn together. Because being new mattered, I reviewed studies where teachers who were new to research took up an invitation to work with an outside researcher through such approaches. The majority of these accounts highlighted how teachers and researchers experienced a lot of tension. The Latin root of tension is *tensionem*, which means “a stretching” or “a struggle, a contest,” and the Latin root of inquire is *inquaerere*, which means *in* (into) + *quaerere* (ask, seek). Tension in critical collaborative inquiry, then, is created when a community gets together for the purpose of learning by seeking and struggling to understand each other’s perspectives on important decisions or questions. Thus, tension is about dwelling in difference—different ways of thinking, speaking, feeling and valuing.

Facing confusion and vagueness about tension in research literature

Adamson and Walker (2011) and Cook (1998, 2009) indicated that, as collaborative action researchers, they experienced tension as points of negotiation that were “messy” because they involved the group in struggling to understand each other and to seek clarification about ideas that were complex and ephemeral. When Diane Waff, who was at the time a novice teacher researcher, referred to her experiences learning with other teachers and outside researchers through critical inquiry-based collaborative methods, she found that such learning was about “breaking silences and surfacing long held beliefs and assumptions about teaching and learning [that] were generating new forms of co-laboring or collaboration” (Lytle, Portnoy, Waff & Buckley, 2009, p. 30). She added that such a surfacing of long held beliefs and assumptions was not a “smooth and easy process, as many teachers were unaccustomed to raising troubling questions...” (Lytle et al., 2009, p.30). Similarly, Waters-Adams (1994) reported that critical collaborative action research created intellectual tension, where “teachers found

that they were having to question much of their previously taken for granted practice,” and emotional tension, which was “a general feeling of deskilling” and “feelings of insecurity” amongst teachers (p.201). Finally, Sumara and Luce-Kapler (1993) outlined how their collaborative action research was a “writerly text” (Barthes, 1974), where they co-laboured to interpret unfamiliar, challenging, unpredictable written texts and group discussions about them that demanded patience to stay with the uncomfortable, even frustrating process of creative idea generation. They admitted that some people abandoned particular texts because of the discomfort involved in negotiating ideas written in inaccessible ways that made learning too hard.

Images of negotiating, breaking, surfacing, troubling, questioning, deskilling, doubting, co-labouring and abandoning paint a picture of teacher-outside researcher learning as an intellectual, social and emotional struggle, where participants deconstruct previous ways of being to invent new identities shaped by multi-voiced visions for teaching, learning and living. Hence, teachers represented their experiences using verbal imagery that echoed that of Amelia who metaphorically shattered one world to melt/transform into another, and Alice who was immobilized by the realization that when others think deeply about what she says and does, she has a responsibility to contemplate where she is going and who she wants to become.

A plethora of experienced practitioner researchers, who engaged in critical collaborative inquiry communities as part of their graduate studies or seminars, have written about how they cultivated oral and written practices to create moments of collective struggle or tension, where they had to think critically about their pedagogies from multiple perspectives and theoretical lenses (Campano, 2007, 2009; Chilla, Waff & Cook, 2007; Fecho, Graham & Hudson-Ross, 2005; Harper, 2009; Kowal, 2001; Livesay, Moore, Stankay, Waters, Waff & Gentile, 2005; Maimon, 2009; McGlynn-Stewart, 2001; McPhail, 2009; Mehta, 2009; Simon, 2009; Waff, 2009). Waff (2009), an experienced teacher researcher and leader of inquiry communities, explained how group discussions afforded her new ways of seeing, thinking and talking about her practices: “Inquiry communities

are a safe space for the examination of familiar ways of thinking and the exploration of assumptions that have influenced my practice...” (p.310). Maimon (2009), a primary teacher and doctoral student wrote, “The journals I keep about my classroom help me to fuse feeling and thought in order that I might act humanely and not emotionally” (p.216). Campano (2007) clarified that although he had participated in many such critical collaborative inquiry communities, he found it much harder to cultivate the same kind of community when he engaged in his dissertation research as a grade five teacher at an elementary school:

My professional community... included teachers, professors from various departments, activists, community members and students— a collection of disparately located kindred spirits who informed my thinking... Too often, however, it was an exertion of will, an internal conversation that did not reflect my day-to-day existence, which remained professionally isolated... (pp.16-17).

Comparatively few inexperienced collaborative inquiry communities have published accounts that discuss whether and how they cultivated tension to think critically together (Cook, 1998, 2009; Goldstein, 2002; Sumara and Luce-Kapler, 1993). By inexperienced inquiry communities, I am referring to teachers who were new to inquiry-based approaches to professional learning and new to research (i.e., did not have graduate studies background or inquiry-based learning experiences), and, in some cases, researchers who were novices (i.e., Ph.D. candidates). For those inexperienced collaborative researchers who published research accounts, they typically held sociocultural and/or critical theory epistemologies that conceptualized tension as a productive and inherent part of critical collaborative inquiry-based learning. However, when they wrote about their processes of learning, which were inseparable from their methods and methodologies, they often failed to provide specific details and/or theoretical explanations about the productive role of tension in their learning, and some authors conceptualized tension negatively (Butler, Novak-Lauscher, Jarvis-Selinger & Beckingham, 2004; Esposito & Evans-Winters, 2010; Goodnough, 2008; Jones & Stanley, 2010; Waters-Adams, 1994; Weaver-Hightower, 2010).

Also, an admixture of terminology is used to define collaborative professional learning between teachers and outside researchers—critical participatory action research, critical action research, critical collaborative inquiry communities, collaborative action research, which perpetuated confusion in an already complex scholarship. The problem with inconsistent terminology, omissions and contradictions is that the current research conversation is incoherent, and it is polarized by glory stories about transformations in teachers’ and/or students’ learning or cautionary tales that depict teacher-outside researcher learning as rife with struggles that ought to be overcome or avoided altogether. Because scholars who wrote cautionary tales attend to tensions experienced by teacher-outside researcher communities, I stopped to take careful look at them.

Looking closely at tension in cautionary tales

Waters-Adams’ “Collaboration and Collaborative Action Research: A Cautionary Tale” (1994) is an extreme example of a cautionary tale. He described how most epistemologies underlying collaborative action research assume participants to be collaborative: “The grounds for insisting on collaboration as an essential part of action research are largely epistemological” (p.198). He acknowledged that his approach to action research involved participants in “critical enquiries,” but he argued, “the insistence on collaboration as an integral part of the structure of an action research inquiry may be at best problematic and possibly misguided” (p.207). He assumed that collaboration was a methodological flaw of action research because it required participants to unearth assumptions and beliefs about their classroom practices, which was “fine in principle...[, but it] was having seriously destabilizing effects” (p.201).

Although Waters-Adams (1994) claimed that collaboration was grounded in the epistemology of action research, he spent the majority of his time talking about action research as a method. He began an epistemological discussion when he questioned whether Winter’s (1987) understanding of knowledge as an intersubjective creation was credible, but he did not explain his own conception of what knowledge of critical inquiry-based professional learning is (epistemology)

or how it is the same or different from Winter's idea. Thus, his argument, "There is evidence to suggest that although knowledge construction within action research may need collaboration for validity, the same process may have also acted against that happening" (p.197) depends on his explanation of what knowledge construction is. Instead of discussing the relationship between collaborative learning and knowledge construction, Waters-Adams explored how collaboration is required to validate knowledge claims and how it threatens such a validation process because of the potentially negative emotional baggage that comes along with engaging in action research as a method of professional learning.

Although Waters-Adams (1994) could have tied his concern with emotional tension to his explanation of his methodology, he does not. Instead, he referenced Elliott's (1991) "types of action research," and stated that he and the teacher participants began with a "critical inquiry," but that "...the interrelationships between different modes of enquiry are complex" (p.196). He does not clarify what the relationship is between emotional tension and critical enquiry, or what the other interrelated modes of enquiry were or how they connected to teachers' and an outside researcher's learning together. Given his abbreviated theoretical explanations of his epistemology and methodology, Waters-Adams' claim that collaboration is a problematic or misguided aspect of action research is unsubstantiated.

Jones and Stanley (2010) are a second, recent example of a cautionary tale. They found that their attempts as outside researchers to manage the ethical tensions associated with multiple conflicting agendas of teachers, teacher educators, and local authority learning network coordinators on a funded critical collaborative action research project made it impossible to keep a "critical" research agenda. They discussed how ethical tensions rested on "epistemic drift" in their research design, where their interpretive paradigmatic commitments went astray in the face of requests by different research partners. For example, they revised their data collection methods to include more quantitative measures, omitted a question on a survey/questionnaire about pupils' expectations of new

teachers and therefore sacrificed the purpose of the data collected, created a pamphlet that was separate from their final research report to highlight primarily positive outcomes of their study, and accepted that data collection limitations threatened the credibility of their research findings.

Unlike Waters-Adams (1994) who posited that action research was a flawed methodology because of the collaborative requirements, Jones and Stanley (2010) questioned collaborative action research because of its “critical” research epistemology. They claimed that all action research has a “critical purpose” and an “emancipatory agenda” (p.152), and they argued, “Kemmis (2006, 471) regards action research as a superior form of critical educational research, [but] we contend that when the participants are the researchers and the researchers are the participants this equation is oversimplified” (p.155).

In Kemmis’ (2006) article that Jones and Stanley (2010) cited, Kemmis referred to his scholarship with Wilfred Carr, *Becoming Critical: Education, Knowledge and Action Research* (1986), where they claimed that action research is associated with positivistic, interpretive and critical paradigmatic stances and that not all action research is critical or emancipatory. Kemmis (2006) described critical participatory action research (CPAR) as a methodology that addressed issues of importance to educators, issues that stem from the historically unjust effects that a “performative culture” (Jones & Stanley, 2010) of schooling has had on students. Because he characterized schooling as harmful to students, he underscored that educators ought to take a critical or an ethical stance towards their learning that asks how to make schooling more educational for students. As Jones and Stanley (2010) pointed out, taking such a critical stance cannot be oversimplified, and, in my view, Kemmis (2006) agreed with them: “...[T]here is much grey between the black of schooling for domestication and white of education for emancipation of individuals and societies” (p.464).

Jones and Stanley (2010) took up Kemmis’ (2006) and others’ calls to be critical by acting dialectically as participants and researchers. They do not explicitly say that they failed to meet the criteria of a critical educational research (Kemmis, 2006), but their focus on collusion and compliance indicated that their

critical agenda was compromised. While it makes sense that Jones and Stanley considered the sacrifice of their beliefs and values as being at odds with taking a critical stance, such results do not eliminate the possibility of their study being an example of CPAR (Kemmis, 2006).

Kemmis (2006) recognized that researchers and teachers, and researching and teaching are dialectically, not dichotomously related, which means that the processes of researching and teaching are as important as the results of engaging in critical action research. Thus, Kemmis argued for researchers to problematise relationships between people, things, ideas and discourses through open, ongoing and voluntary communication. Thus, critical knowledge construction is a process of intersubjectivity. Jones and Stanley (2010) provided ample evidence of the *results* of such conversations about ethics, data collection, and research reports, but they did not discuss whether and how discussions were generative of critical insights and/or practices that were aimed at making schools and schooling more educational. Hence, the reader learns very little about the intersubjective experiences of research participants learning together through the *process* of negotiation or tension. Just as Waters-Adams (1994) was preoccupied with relational and emotional tension as a byproduct of action research as a method, Jones and Stanley were overly attentive to the negative results of ethical tensions, and omitted whether or how tensions were generative of educational changes that made students' lives better. Vagueness about the processes of negotiation amongst participants makes it impossible to decide whether Jones and Stanley enacted the epistemological commitments of CPAR (Kemmis, 2006). Thus, a more practical description and theoretical explanation of what happened in Jones and Stanley's study is required before their claim that Kemmis' (2006) dialectical conception of researchers acting as participants in CPAR is questionable.

What exacerbates the epistemological vagueness problem in Jones and Stanley's (2010) and Waters-Adams' (1994) scholarship is that they cite multiple action research scholars who make different theoretical and philosophical commitments. For example, Waters-Adams lists several scholars' definitions of action research to make the point that they all call for "collaboration," but he does

not explain how such scholars conceptualize what it means to collaborate, to learn, to inquire or to be critical. Interestingly, Elliott (1991), whom Waters-Adams cited alongside Carr and Kemmis (1986) had written an article in 1987, where he made it clear how he differed from Carr and Kemmis (1986) on epistemological grounds based on the Habermas-Gadamer debate. Similarly, Jones and Stanley cited multiple scholars' definitions of what it means to be critical without clarifying how such scholars share or not the same epistemological commitments.

My intention is not to point fingers at particular scholars but to accentuate how vagueness and confusion in research literature is, in part, perpetuated by glossing over such scholarly differences *between* researchers and *across* the scholarship of especially prolific researchers. For example, Jones and Stanley cited Kemmis and McTaggart (2000) and Kemmis (2006), but Kemmis and McTaggart (2005) had written a chapter that identified how their views had changed since 2000. To complicate matters, Stephen Kemmis has written a lot and he has changed his views and even the name of CPAR when he coauthors with particular people or when he writes alone. During my Skype interview with Kemmis (2010), he expressed his surprise at how many scholars continue to cite Carr and Kemmis' *Becoming Critical: Education, Knowledge and Action Research* (1986), and he noted how they continue to change their views:

...And we can't understand why people continue to read it [laughs]. When we wrote it, we never expected, of course, that anybody would read it or that anybody would want to read it, so it's always been a great mystery to us. We two men in our early thirties, setting out to write a book and we didn't think it would have quite as much impact as it had. For awhile we thought that we would write "Staying Critical" as a kind of sequel, but, then we decided that, at this stage in our lives, it might be kind of better to pull an Alasdair McIntyre and write the kind of book we're currently intending to write, which is "After Education"... (personal communication, June 3, 2010).

Given the extensive, diverse and dynamic scholarship by preeminent action research scholars, Jones and Stanley's (2010) and Waters-Adams' (1994) cautionary tales about action research require more in-depth practical description and theoretical explanation to be convincing.

Other scholars told more subtle cautionary tales. They put forward sociocultural and/or critical epistemologies that conceptualized tension as generative of learning but simultaneously argued that tension was something to get past and suggested revisions of their methods and/or methodologies to achieve it. Esposito and Evans-Winters (2010) conceptualized teachers' resistance to being self-reflective as negative tension that was a product of a flawed critical action research methodology that was the basis of their university course (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). However, they did not consider what it meant for students to be self-reflective as part of the critical inquiry-based process or epistemology of critical action research. They cited Carr and Kemmis (1986) and Kemmis and McTaggart (2005) who defined their critical methodology as dependent upon whether participants engaged in "self-reflective cycles of inquiry" that required them to be critical by overturning assumptions that prevented them from making their practices and situations within which they practiced better. Although Esposito and Evans-Winters provided examples of how students failed to change their assumptions about urban students, they did not reflect upon whether their course tasks encouraged critical self-reflection.

Similarly, when teachers were resistant, uncertain and/or anxious about shaping inquiries, analyzing data, or handling ambiguity as they learned through collaborative action research, some scholars assumed that such tension was negative and could be avoided in the future with better facilitation methods (Butler et al., 2004; Goodnough, 2008). Even though it is true that facilitation was an important aspect of how such tensions could have become productive rather than unproductive, such a connection was not explored comprehensively or at all by the researchers cited. Finally, Burbank and Kauchak (2003) viewed preservice and inservice teacher teams' conflicts about the goals of their shared inquiries as the result of developmental differences amongst more and less experienced

teachers, and that such conflicts were barriers to collaborative inquiry-based learning.

To conclude, the researchers cited in this section treated tension in learning as a byproduct of a flawed methodology and/or epistemology without clarifying whether and how they enacted the epistemological commitments that they made in their studies. Such a contradiction forces current researchers to stand at a crossroads because the coherence of a theoretical framework is dependent upon matching knowledge constructs (epistemology) with knowledge claims (methodology). On the one hand, if current researchers follow Jones and Stanley (2010) and Waters-Adams (1994), they turn their backs on critical and/or collaborative learning approaches and walk along alternative epistemological-methodological paths. On the other hand, if they follow those who called for tension in such learning and then failed to discuss tension practically and theoretically and suggested that future researchers take methodological leaps to bypass it, they perpetuate incoherence in the research literature. Hence, current researchers are left stranded at an epistemological-methodological crossroads wondering which way to go.

Dwelling in vagueness and confusion about tension

I contend that current researchers interested in working with teachers who are new to critical and/or collaborative inquiry-based approaches to professional learning have no choice but to do the harder interpretive work of dwelling in the epistemological and methodological confusion to make sense of the research literature. What intensifies the interpretive task ahead is that, for more than a decade, professional learning community scholars recognized that teachers and/or researchers who worked together in schools “treaded lightly” (Magyar & Mayer, 1998) or avoided taking a critical inquiry stance towards each others’ practices because such a stance was often coupled with emotional and relational tension that was considered to be at odds with healthy school cultures grounded in norms of privatism, politeness, collegiality and conformity (Achinstein, 2002; de Lima, 2001; Dooner, Mandzuk & Clifton, 2008; Goldstein, 2002; Hargreaves, 2001;

McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; Torres, 1999; Warren Little, 2002; Westheimer, 1998). When such professional learning communities engaged in critical conversations, the conversations became expressions of will (Campano, 2007), personal conflicts or combative discussions (Hargreaves, 2001; Torres, 1999) that were far from sincere inquiries.

Tension is central to critical and/or collaborative inquiry-based learning on school landscapes. However, confusion exists about how to theorize and to enact theories about the role of tension in such approaches to professional learning. Given such confusion amongst academics who report on their critical and/or collaborative inquiry-based professional learning studies with teachers who are new to such approaches, I review research reports that are sufficiently detailed about what such teachers and outside researchers did together when they participated in moments of tension. I treat silences, limited reporting or vagueness about the theoretical relationship amongst the constructs—collaborative learning, inquiry, criticality and tension— as locations to do interpretive work, and for those authors who theorized the role of tension in collaborative learning, I analyze critically their epistemological and methodological claims. As Sumara (2002) argued, “Acts of reading deeply, like the acts of cultivating, nurturing, and tending that are part of gardening, generate knowledge that transcends the acts themselves” (p. xiii). I begin my interpretive work here by identifying theoretical commonplaces as common issues arising across the studies reviewed. I develop my theoretical framework from such commonplaces in Chapter Three.

Identifying theoretical commonplaces

I reviewed research written by academics and/or teachers about their experiences working as collaborative inquiry communities, where the teachers were new to research, and, in some cases, the researcher was also inexperienced. I concentrated on such studies that provided sufficient details about how academics and teachers initiated, developed and sustained critical and/or collaborative inquiry-based ways of learning together, and whether and how tension was

considered a productive aspect of their approach to professional learning. I found that the research reports converged around three theoretical commonplaces.

The first commonplace, *seeking differences*, is about teachers and outside researchers planning, teaching and reflecting together to cultivate differences between pedagogical visions and realities to unearth and work through emotional, intellectual and ethical tensions that comprised their professional identities, pedagogies and practices. The second commonplace, *deconstructing differences*, is about teachers and outside researchers intentionally processing relational tension residing in perceptions of some people possessing more or less power than others. The third commonplace, *sidestepping differences*, is about teachers and/or outside researchers treating anxiety and ambiguity connected to critical and/or collaborative inquiry-based learning as something to get past or to avoid altogether. It is also about teachers and/or outside researchers not planning, teaching, or reflecting together and consequently avoiding tension needed to spur inquiries into their practices, pedagogies and professional identities. Because many of the researchers whom I cite were also part of my interview research and are preeminent scholars, I first contextualize their scholarship in terms of their geographical location, areas of interest and accomplishments to frame particular studies cited.

Seeking differences and cultivating tension

Hoban and Hastings (2006) and Wells (2001) illustrate how teachers and outside researchers develop inter- and intramental (Vygotsky, 1978) routines to cultivate a collective metatheoretical, ethical commitment to their work (Campano, 2009). They underline how such communities inquire together by surfacing dissonances between classroom realities and pedagogical visions (Dewey, 1938), and they seek to cultivate and understand emotional, intellectual and ethical tensions associated with such dissonances when they communicate distinct perspectives on educational issues (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005).

Hoban and Hastings. In 1994, Hoban and Hastings (2006) engaged in Hoban's dissertation research, which involved Hastings and two other secondary science teachers at the same school near Sydney, Australia. Hoban's conducted "...a research project for [his] Ph.D. ...[, which was designed to] explor[e] the use of student data as a catalyst for teacher reflection (Hoban, 1996)" (Hoban & Hastings, 2006, p. 1008). Hoban and Hastings continued to work together when Hoban's dissertation was complete.

Throughout their ten-year collaboration, Hastings valued listening to students' audiorecorded comments about classroom lessons because the act of listening to them helped him to imagine the lesson from a student's point of view: "Students' voices were really powerful because I could associate the names and faces and what they were saying" (Hoban & Hastings, 2006, p.1010). Hastings explained how the act of listening evoked an empathetic reimagining of the teaching-learning situation from the students' points of view that raised dissonances about what he envisioned for students' learning and what they told him about their experiences. Hoban and Hastings had cited Dewey (1933) at the beginning of their article to posit that an inquiry begins with a suggestion that raises doubts, perplexities, conflicts, disruptions and obscurities.

When Hastings first began such a reflective process, he found that students' evaluations raised doubts within him about his teaching and his capacities as a teacher. Such doubts were "personally confronting" and when Hastings became a school principal, he posited that teachers who are new to inquiry-based professional learning are better to start with general surveys of students' opinions: "He thought...that the three procedures for gathering student data...interview tapes, learning logs and the observation schedule...were too personal and possibly confronting for some teachers... and might not encourage reflection" (Hoban & Hastings, 2006, p.1013). Over several months, Hastings changed the way that he read and listened to students' comments: "[R]eflection means that I have a basis for looking at what I do which means that I can be self-critical and I know that as soon as I slip back [in my teaching] and take the easy way out that I feel guilty" (Hoban & Hastings, 2006, p.1010). Hastings' change in

his ways of reading and listening to student feedback sent him along two dissimilar paths of inquiry.

In the early period of Hastings's work with Hoban, Hastings received students' feedback as negative teaching evaluations because he was coming from a positivistic stance, where he envisioned a direct, linear relationship between teaching and learning. When he received students' feedback as evaluative of his practices, pedagogies and professional identity, his inquiry was focused on processing emotions evoked by such evaluations. After several months, when Hastings saw students' feedback as representative of their multiple and diverse beliefs and values about teaching and learning, his inquiry was refocused from an emotional inquiry into how to avoid tension to an ethical inquiry into how to transform his practices and pedagogies to make classroom experiences better for everyone involved.

When Hoban and Hastings (2006) considered learning to be coowned by them and Hastings' students, they committed to making changes that benefitted everyone in the classroom, which meant that they contemplated ethical questions and issues connected with classroom practices and pedagogies:

...[T]eacher research involves a metatheoretical stance whose underlying ethical imperative is to respond to students in their full humanity and dignity and thus must be understood within the dynamism and lifeworld of the classroom. The second proposition is that when theorizing occurs in collectivities concerned with humanization, it becomes a form of practice that aims to create more just and equitable educational arrangements (Campano, 2009, p.327).

How did Hastings develop such an ethically reflective professional learning position when he worked with Hoban? From their descriptions of how they worked together, I interpret Hoban and Hastings' (2006) relationship as premised on a dialectical conceptualization of learning as colearning, where they shared a multiple, fluid, dynamic and diverse sense of themselves as researchers and teachers (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991). They had a mutual agreement to seek differences in the way that they each understood classroom lessons, so they

shared their diverse knowledges and perspectives on instructional issues that arose in such lessons to see what they could not see alone. Thus, they enacted Bakhtin's (1981) dialogical understanding of a person's sense of self as depending on utterances of others who afforded them "surplus ways of seeing" (Holquist, 2005, p.35): "...I [Hoban] have the theoretical knowledge and can...use this in a situation such as collecting and analyzing the student data. Geoff [Hastings] provides practical knowledge in terms of what ideas work or not and why..." (Hoban & Hasting, 2006, pp.1015-1016).

Although I defined Hoban and Hastings' (2006) relationship according to a sociocultural understanding of learning, Hoban's statements connote a positivistic worldview. First, he put forth that it is possible to divide practical from theoretical knowledge. Second, he suggested that an individual's knowledge is singular, discrete and easily labeled. Regardless of such positivistic undertones in this excerpt, there is substantial emic evidence throughout the article that depicts Hoban and Hastings as having a collaborative learning relationship premised on a social constructivist stance. Thus, each of them sought to reimagine a classroom situation from different outlooks, and such a multiple and diverse way of seeing practices and the beliefs and values that grounded them depended upon Hoban and Hastings' intermental processing (joint discussions and puzzling together) to encourage intramental processing (transformations of Hastings' pedagogy and stance as an educator) (Vygotsky, 1978).

By his own admission, Hastings' desire to seek multiple viewpoints on his practices was rooted not only in his cognitive interest—to understand classroom practices better—but in his ethical commitment—not to slip back into old ways of teaching, where he avoided seeking and/or taking seriously students' feedback. Dewey (1912) identified a genuine inquiry as one that begins when a person is perplexed by a situation, where the "thing seen is regarded in some way [as] the ground or basis of belief" (p.7). Unless the person in question is musing the belief underneath a perplexing situation, according to Dewey (1912), he/she is not contemplating seriously the object at the center of such perplexity and will not

engage in acts of inquiry by seeking more information to confirm or disconfirm the dissonance.

Inquiries begin with tension, where someone notices an object, which stands for evidence of knowledge that is in opposition to the beliefs and values that the inquirer holds. In Hastings' case, students' feedback represented diverse knowledges that rubbed up against Hoban's beliefs and values. Hastings admitted that he felt guilty when he neglected to reflect on students' feedback because avoiding students' perspectives was the equivalent of dismissing his students' thoughts, feelings and values—who they were as human beings. Because Hastings claimed that he taught to make students' lives better, he recognized the ethical imperative attached to collecting and reflecting seriously on students' feedback. Thus, Hoban and Hastings' (2006) purpose was "...not primarily to 'do research,' but, rather, to teach better" (Lytle, 2008, p.373).

To conclude, Hoban and Hastings (2006) relied upon Dewey's (1933), Fullan's (1999), Schon's (1982, 1983) and Vygotsky's (1986, 1978) social constructivist stance towards learning, but they didn't explicitly connect their descriptions of how they learned through points of tension back to these theorists or to other theorists who reinforced the ethical imperative of their work. Hoban and Hastings collaboratively analyzed student data to inquire into dissonances between classroom realities and their pedagogical visions based initially on emotional and later on ethical reasons for professional learning.

Gordon Wells (2001) worked with teachers in a longstanding collaborative inquiry community, which began as a school-based study, evolved into a university course and then a funded collaborative action research study (Developing Inquiring Communities in Education Project [DICEP]). They engaged in reading, writing and conversational practices that were forms of inter- and intra-mental processing (Vygotsky, 1978) that cultivated conditions of inquiry as an intellectual and moral endeavor into the group's practices, pedagogies and identities.

Wells. During his time at the Ontario Institute of the School of Education (OISE) in Toronto, Ontario, Gordon Wells (1994, 2001) published two books of teachers'

accounts of their successes engaging in collaborative action research through university courses, led multiple collaborative action research projects (Wells, 1994), and, in 1998, founded and was the first editor of *Networks: An Online Journal of Teacher Research*. Hence, Wells is one of the first Canadian academics who legitimized collaborative action research as a credible approach to preservice and inservice teacher education. He articulated in a recent autobiographical article (Wells, 2011) that Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) based on Vygotsky's (1978, 1986) scholarship grounded his approach to learning. In this section, I focus on how Wells (2001) initiated, developed and sustained his work with teachers who were initially inexperienced with collaborative inquiry-based learning approaches and then became a morally committed community of inquirers.

Wells (2001) started a collaborative inquiry-based learning group at a school with three teachers, called "Learning through Talk," but he admitted that only one teacher was genuinely interested in such an approach to professional learning. Therefore, after one year, Wells (2001) re-envisioned his LTT study: "...[W]ith the first year being less than completely satisfactory... Through the M.Ed. program at OISE, we advertised it as a seminar-workshop for teachers interested in an inquiry approach to teaching science" (p.8). Five teachers signed up, including the one teacher from the LTT study. The class spent several months reading articles about social constructivism, science and classroom research; and "[j]ust as important, we also talked about significant events that had occurred in participating teachers' classrooms... and began to make recorded observations and to analyze the transcripts of the talk that occurred (Wells, 2001, p.8). He explained how an article written by Judith Newman (1987) had a significant impact on the teachers and Wells about how to reflect on their practices, and it was integral to how they shaped and conducted their inquiries: "As she suggested, by reflecting on the mismatches between our expectations and what actually transpired, we had a basis for thinking and acting differently on future occasions" (Wells, 2001, p.8). In the first year of Developing Inquiring Communities in Education Project (DICEP), each teacher structured his/her own research

question, and in the second year, the group decided to structure questions within an agreed upon topic of mutual interest (i.e., building community).

Wells (1994) explained that developing a question was an essential aspect of his conceptualization of a collaborative inquiry approach to professional learning: "...[S]imply learning to ask questions and to be responsible for finding answers through their own inquiries is itself a new mode of action and a worthwhile outcome of their research" (p.30). While some teachers entered into action research with a very clear question already in their minds, others needed time for close and systematic observation of classroom observations (transcripts, field notes, student's written reflections, etc.) "to see what question the teacher-researcher really want[ed] to address" (Wells, 1994, p.29). Although he did not specify what happened when teachers "s[aw] a question," he published teachers' retrospective accounts, and they commonly framed their inquiry processes around dissonances created by seeking to change aspects of their own classroom practices that didn't match their visions of what constituted good pedagogy (Donahue, 2001; Hume, 2001a, 2001b; Kowal, 2001; Van Tassel, 2001). Hence, differences between teachers' classroom realities and their visions of classroom pedagogy prompted individual inquiries, and such differences were created through intermental and intramental processing (Vygotsky, 1978).

In *Action, Talk and Text: Learning through Teaching and through Inquiry* (2001), teacher researchers discussed how they worked as a community of inquirers that developed the collective capacity to take a metatheoretical, ethical (Campano, 2009) or critical (Kemmis, 2006) approach to collaborative action research. Thus, the DICEP group supported each other to question whether and how they enacted the pedagogies they studied and whether and how their classroom practices approaches made students' lives better. For example, Donahue (2001), a grade two teacher, initially set out to study how implementing class meetings influenced the sense of community of her grade two classroom, and she was surprised when "[t]he children seemed quite flattered that [she] ...[thought] their comments were important enough to videotape," (p.39). Through her discussion with the DICEP group and her personal writing and

reflective processes, she discovered how involving students as coresearchers in her inquiries changed the children's sense of belonging in the classroom community and her sensitivity to the importance and necessity of students' feedback. Thus, the teachers' inquiries often began with a technical or practical focus on testing out new pedagogical approaches, but many of them, including Wells (2001), developed an ethical interest in understanding the histories of the students, each other as educators, and the contexts within which they practiced to consider how to make classroom situations more just and equitable for all students (Campano, 2009; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Kemmis, 2006; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). When such a meta-theoretic stance focused on histories and ethics was predominant, teachers' inquiries were examples of praxis or critical educational research (Kemmis, 2006).

The development of fluid and dynamic stances towards their inquiries happened as part of the DICEP group's weekly writing routines and group meetings. Writing was an act of intermental processing because the DICEP teachers relied upon the words and ideas from classroom discussions and from the scholarship that they read to come to terms with what such ideas meant by writing reflections about them. Thus, when a teacher wrote reflections, it was like holding a conversation on paper or screen about what others were saying about a particular question or issue of interest and such learning through writing was colearning or a transaction that generated spontaneous insights (Britton, 1970). Because the DICEP teachers regularly communicated their written reflections at meetings, the written ideas became tools for evoking intermental processing through group discussions and later intramental processing or self-talk about whether and how they still agreed with themselves about particular issues. When intramental processing took the form of internal wrestling with one's own beliefs, assumptions and values, it was "writing as identity work" (Ivanic, 1998). Ivanic (1998) claimed that writers discover their multiple, fluid and dynamic identities when they write; they realize their autobiographical selves (who they are), their discursal selves (who they represent themselves to be), their authorial selves (who they are as authors), and possibilities for selfhood. Thus, writing was

another way that the DICEP group engaged in inter- and intramental processing that potentially led to individual and collective personal and pedagogical transformations rooted in unearthing new ways of feeling, thinking, talking, valuing— new identities.

To summarize, my review of Hoban and Hastings' (2006) and Wells' (2001) scholarship clarified how teachers and outside researchers developed inter- and intramental (Vygotsky, 1978) dialogical routines that cultivated emotional, intellectual and ethical tensions within their groups around dissonances between their varied pedagogical visions and classroom practices. Ethical tensions were locations for intersubjective processing of “generative tensions” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) and such processing transformed their practices, pedagogies and identities.

Deconstructing differences and processing tension

The second commonplace, deconstructing differences, is about teachers and outside researchers working through relational tension emanating from group members holding on to beliefs about each other based on their institutional roles. When group members developed perceptions of individuals based on their institutional roles, there was tendency for members to assign different amounts of power to individuals within the group. In this section, I review Wells' (2001, 2009) and Somekh's (1994) studies, where they explored how teachers and researchers struggled to process relational and emotional tension associated with deconstructing perceptions of individuals as holding more or less power in their groups.

Wells. Wells (2001, 2009) and the DICEP teacher participants who engaged in a sustained collaborative inquiry through a funded collaborative action research study discussed how they had to deconstruct institutional expectations to get past conceptions of power as something possessed by individuals. Thus, it took them years to discuss their real feelings about how they saw each other as having more or less power dependent on their roles as graduate students, classroom teachers

and professors, and to break through such feelings that were otherwise silent barriers to good communication and healthy working relationships.

The DICEP group began as five teachers who completed a M.Ed. seminar-workshop with Wells as their professor. They studied and worked together in that course by taking on the role of collaborative action researchers, and later continued as collaborative action researchers in a funded study. At the start of this study, Wells (2001, 2009) worked hard to reposition himself out of the role of professor. Wells (2009) emphasized how such a repositioning was hard because they had “to bridge the university-school divide in order to become a cohesive, collaborating group” (p.56). Thus, Wells (2009) highlighted the practical actions that he had the group take: they named their group (i.e., that’s where DICEP originated); they agreed to have a rotating chairperson for their monthly meetings; they agreed that teachers would reflect critically on video footage of their own classrooms; and they set goals to publish and present their work together. In other words, even after the teachers had participated in the graduate studies seminar, the teachers and the researcher committed to how they worked with each other to reconfigure the professor-student asymmetrical power relationship.

Wells (2009) aimed to reconfigure the group’s relationships according to a dialectical rather than a dichotomized stance, so power was conceptualized as practices members engaged in rather than something that they each possessed. Thus, the strategies mentioned above were designed to blur traditional boundaries delineating teaching and researching, and teachers and researchers. I view such practices of the DICEP group to transform their ways of thinking about the dichotomized relationship between Wells/professor and the teachers/students as a recognition that teachers and outside researchers had created hierarchical ways of relating based on their histories of social interactions: “...Even when we turn to mental [individual] processes, their nature remains quasi-social. In their own private sphere, human beings retain functions of social interaction” (Vygotsky, 1981, p.164). Thus, it seemed that Wells (2009) hoped that by teachers taking on roles typically assigned to researchers and by the researcher taking on teaching roles that they would each develop ways of seeing, hearing and feeling what it

was like to experience classroom situations from diverse stances. In essence, by participating in tasks that were normally kept separate and attached to particular institutionalized roles or socially constructed ideas of what teachers and researchers do, the DICEP teachers and researchers shattered historically entrenched dichotomized ways of being teachers working with an outside researcher, and they melted relational boundaries that prevented them from working dialectically or fluidly together.

McGlynn-Stewart (2001), a founding teacher member of the DICEP group, emphasized that it took well into the second year for such a dialectical relationship between teachers and researchers, and classroom-based teachers and graduate students to develop: “Some members felt that the university-based members still exerted considerable influence over the research focus, budget, size and functioning of the group, leadership and decision-making generally” (p.197). Van Tassel (2001), as cited in McGlynn-Stewart’s chapter, added,

Certainly, in those earliest years, the university group set the agenda; they had applied for the funding and had set the ball rolling. I didn’t have a problem with that, but I did feel that what we said was going on did not match what was really going on...I liked how the group evolved to share responsibilities for the meetings... that was a really significant shift...(p.197).

The teachers highlighted how the institutional grounding of the individual group member (i.e., where he/she spends the majority of his/her time) mattered because it was difficult for them not to associate the individuals with roles that they fulfilled at their institutions.

School-based teachers felt that they had less influence on grant applications, which set the research ball rolling, and graduate students and professors were forced to get the ball rolling in ways that they didn’t have complete control over. For example, when the university-based DICEP group wrote the grant, they applied to the Spencer Foundation that agreed to fund the project “...as long as there was systematic research on classroom discourse as well as teacher-initiated inquiries. The dual nature of the project—systematic

traditional research and teacher-initiated action research—was the cause of some tension in the group” (McGlynn-Stewart, 2001, p.197).

The relational tension that divided university-based and school-based group members was rooted in disparate institutional demands or practices but was felt as personal slights, jealousies and resentments. The university people had to conform to outside grant agency expectations, university research ethics guidelines, and academic discourse expected in the genre of a grant application. The school-based people dealt with the complexities of trying to carry out data collection and analysis protocols that didn't always make sense of their classroom landscapes. Thus, classroom-based teachers, according to Van Tassel's (2001) comments above, perceived differences in such practices as differentiating hierarchically graduate students from teachers within their group.

What Wells (2009) called “bridging the university-school divide...” (p.56) is what Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) described as “working the dialectic” (p.93) and what I understand as processing tension. Such processing involved individuals in struggling together against social norms rooted in dichotomous relationships between teaching and researching and teachers and researchers. The challenge for these teachers and for Wells, who occupied the primary researcher role on the grant application, was that they faced a dichotomized worldview imposed on them from their respective institutional positions that defined their ways of working, talking, writing and relating to each other from different physical, social, political, and cultural locations. As they struggled together, they recognized that they wore the cloaks of the long histories that divided teachers from researchers, so they devised ways to see persons underneath their institutional roles by sharing tasks associated with the roles. Their role sharing process eventually illuminated internal doubts, resentments and jealousies as misdirected towards individuals and personal relationships rather than institutions and historical, cultural processes.

Carr and Kemmis (1986) described the shedding of institutional cloaks or shattering of institutional roles as working a “double dialectic” of dissolving global-local and historical-present tensions. It is evident in the comments written

by DICEP members above that tensions were a series of misdirected emotional irritations about what particular individuals did and why they did it that built up as wrong assumptions about who people were. Such assumptions became relational barriers between classroom-based teachers and graduate students because the graduate students were thought to have more social capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) or power in the group. Thus, power was felt initially as emotional tensions that reified into social boundaries that quietly divided DICEP group members rather than as invitations for the group to negotiate tensions.

Because it took the DICEP teachers and researchers a couple of years to recognize power as a process, tensions built up within the group as intellectual, social/relational and emotional obstacles that stopped people from saying what was really going on. Perhaps it was too difficult to say what was really going on because it required immense courage or because *it* was too ambiguous to articulate until the DICEP had changed their practices for a long enough time to simultaneously change their ways of thinking and feeling. Hence, inter- and intramental processing by “working the dialectic” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) is not a linear but an iterative, reciprocal process, a process that is as much about shifting identities and worldviews as it is practices.

Simons (2009) reported how, in his role as professor of a methods course, he and his students explored similar tensions as the DICEP group when they worked together as a critical collaborative inquiry community. They treated relational tensions as openings to make a commitment to be “transparent” about their often hidden thoughts and feelings. To be “transparent” meant that group members acknowledged that they faced the constant tugging of dichotomized thinking, which was evident in their discourses. They kept such discourse discontinuities in check by being “real” in their reactions, saying what they meant and “not fak[ing] it.” Because language is an imperfect translator of individuals’ meanings, they had to regularly bring to light what the “it” was that they were talking about. At times, the *it* referred to ideas underneath pedagogical strategies or to their ways of relating to one another or to teachers they were working with in schools. Regardless of what the *it* referred to, the group inquired into what *it*

was by talking about the assumptions hiding beneath their discourses. Thus, the DICEP group faced tension that was, on the surface relational, but they eventually recognized that it was a more deeply created tension that was institutionally shaped as ideologies that served to divide them and that lurked beneath their taken for granted practices and discourses.

In the following section, I examine Bridget Somekh's (1994) Pupil Autonomy in Learning with Microcomputers [PALM] collaborative action research study and her discussion of the way the teachers, research assistants and she, in her role as outside researcher, worked through power differences and the relational and emotional tensions involved in being inexperienced collaborative inquirers.

Somekh. Recently, Bridget Somekh celebrated a 30-year career as a collaborative action research scholar in the United Kingdom (See the 2009 tribute edition of *Educational Action Research*). In this section, I focus on Somekh's (1994, 2006) PALM research, where she worked with 100 teachers in 24 schools who were invited to join the study if they were interested in learning how to use computers to promote autonomy in student learning. Because she had to apply for the funding ahead of getting participants, she framed the study around this curricular issue because teachers in the three local school authorities that she drew from in the United Kingdom were only beginning to use computers as part of their classroom teaching. Thus, the teachers who chose to participate developed their own research questions that connected with this overall aim, and most teachers were inexperienced with collaborative action research.

Somekh (1994) relied on Bruner's (1986) notion of constructing possible worlds to think about her role as a collaborative action researcher: "It starts from the premise that researchers bring to the process of inquiry their own prior knowledge, values and beliefs, and that these, as much as any research data, construct their research outcomes" (p.358). She listed several strategies that she employed to reduce what she conceived as a power differential between teachers and the researchers (e.g., she hired three teachers to work with her; teachers shaped their own questions based on their classroom contexts). However, she also

noted that the power differential was more complex than many academics make it out to be because the staff in the schools where she conducted research did not necessarily assign a high status to researchers; particular staff, especially principals and teachers responsible for staff development in technology, willingly used researchers to carry out their own goals: “Our relationships with teachers had to be ‘hooked on’ to the existing spider’s web of their relationships with colleagues. We often became pawns in the operation of power within the school” (p.352).

Initially, she portrayed power as something that was possessed by individuals and exercised by decisions made or skills employed. Somekh (1994) relied upon “Luke[s]’ ‘three dimensional view’ [which] takes account of a whole host of subtle ways in which power is exercised consciously or unconsciously by individuals within organizations and the organization as a whole” (p.363). However, later in the article, she cited Foucault’s (1972) notion of power that is discursively defined, where every society has its own types of discourses that create what the truths, politics, and techniques of such values and belief systems are. She clarified how Foucault’s understanding of identity as dependent upon ideologies represented by languages used in social groups fit with Bruner’s (1986) constructivist ideology: “Through discourse human beings construct their castles. More than this, discourse makes up the fabric of the building, defining the questions which can be asked, the nature of ‘what counts as true’ and the accepted ways of establishing ‘truth’ “ (Somekh, 1994, p.374). Thus, she redefined power as a struggle for individuals to metaphorically inhabit each other’s castles or identities rather than something they possessed and wielded according to their personal repertoires of social management strategies.

Because her definition of power changed shape, so too did her representation of the role of tension in collaborative teacher-outside researcher relationships. Tension was characterized initially as something to plan for and to overcome. For example, she mentioned how the researchers “frequently resist[ed] the expectation that [they] would take control, allocate tasks and operate as research managers of teacher-research assistants” (p.363). Later in the article,

tension was redefined as a process of identities struggling together to get through differences created by inhabiting different ideological perspectives, where “collaboration [was] about celebrating difference and strengthening one’s own sense of identity” (p.373).

Somekh (1994) emphasized how teachers and researchers who expressed anger during their collaborative struggles to inhabit each other’s castles reported such an expression as being necessary to develop good working relationships. “It seems that honesty is often only achieved after the expression of anger” (p.366), and anger was described as a way for teachers and researchers to shatter institutional roles that sometimes played out in unconscious ways when teachers and academics worked together (i.e., anger disrupted poor or disrespectful treatment and created an opening for more in-depth collaborative relationships). She also explained how language was a source of division in terms of talking with each other about students’ work/data, reading academic articles, etc., but that such linguistic divisions also became relational openings or productive sources of tension in collaborative learning: “But the problem was productive. The strength of the collaboration lay in continuous challenge to both partners resulting from discourse confrontation” (p.374). Thus emotional and linguistic tensions were generative locations for teachers and researchers to work through differences in understandings of what constituted good collaborative relationships, and what ideologies governed the action research processes that they shared.

To conclude, Wells (1994, 2001, 2009) and Somekh (1994, 2006) illuminated how teachers and outside researchers who inquire into power as a process of deconstructing beliefs about each other that are rooted in social roles or identities create the relational conditions of trust and transparency that are required for critical and/or collaborative inquiry-based professional learning.

Sidestepping differences and avoiding tension

The third commonplace, sidestepping differences, is about teachers and/or outside researchers who avoided tensions associated with critical inquiry-based collaborative learning by not seeking dissonances between their practices and

pedagogical visions. First, I review Goodnough's (2008) study, where she discussed how two teachers sidestepped anxiety related to their inquiry-based approach to teaching and learning about science by changing pedagogical approaches and, according to my analysis, using action research as a technical tool rather than engaging in it as a critically reflective process during a multi-year critical participatory action research (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005) study. Second, I interpret Wells' (1994b) reflections about not collecting student feedback throughout a summer course and therefore avoiding tension and sidestepping pedagogical differences between his and his students' points of view on classroom experiences. Finally, Elliott (2007a) shared how he and Clem Adelman struggled to get teachers to engage in data collection and reflection, and how their triangulated data method was designed to cultivate tensions and to increase teachers' self-monitoring of their pedagogies and practices.

Goodnough. Karen Goodnough began her career working with teachers to engage in collaborative action research at OISE. She completed her dissertation, which was a collaborative action research study focused on science education in 2000, and she continues to write extensively about her collaborative learning with mostly science teachers in Eastern Canada. In this section, I focus on Goodnough's (2008) article, where she wrote about two teachers, Ada and Tanya, who required most of the first year in a three-year action research study, called "Science Across the Curriculum," to understand what it meant to shape an inquiry and what it felt like to engage in collaborative action research.

Goodnough (2008) indicated, "Although I did not know it until later, Ada and Tanya started the project with their own notions about the purpose of the project and how the process would work" (p.438). She described Ada and Tanya's struggles with knowing how to shape an inquiry and plan for data collection and analysis, and how their ambiguity dampened their enthusiasm for learning through action research:

Their enthusiasm was dampened by feelings of insecurity about their plan of action: "I am still very unsure about what we are doing. What do I know? I want kids to think and figure things out without being spoon fed .

. . . inquiry . . . but it is messy. They make a lot of mistakes and as a result, draw poor conclusions. Is that really wrong? Isn't that how science develops anyway?" (Ada, journal entry) (Goodnough, 2008, pp. 440-441).

Goodnough (2008) characterized Ada and Tanya's emotional dissonances about not being sure what action research was all about and not knowing how to use students' journal entries to support changes in their teaching practices as something they worked past by taking up a different inquiry based on their experience at a professional development workshop on differentiation of instruction:

Continuing to assess students' work through journal writing using three key areas (explanation of new concepts, use of scientific vocabulary, and formulation of research questions), they would now deliver their Optics unit using a new instructional lens: differentiated instruction. Their final research question was, "How can differentiated instruction be used to improve the quality of student journal entries?" (Goodnough, 2008, p. 442).

Although it is good that the teachers found a way to look for particular areas of student growth in journal writing and to integrate these aspects of their first inquiry with their second one, it is unclear what and how they made this transition. Because Goodnough (2008) relied upon Kemmis and McTaggart's (2005) CPAR criteria, which emphasized the need for teachers and researchers to develop critical insights about their practices as well as understandings of the situations within which they practiced, it is necessary to learn about whether or not Tanya and Ada used data analysis to question their understandings of their practices and to take a meta-view of their critically reflective professional learning practices. In other words, their original anxiety and ambiguity connected to interpreting students' journals seemed to be erased or fixed when they attended an inservice on differentiated instruction. Thus, it is unclear whether the session on differentiated instruction furthered their inquiry-based collaborative professional learning or offered them a way out of having to engage in self-reflection about

their emotional dissonances stirred by not understanding what students were struggling to know and do in science.

By the end of the study, Ada and Tanya put forward an instrumental view of action research as a pedagogical testing tool rather than as a critically reflective collaborative process:

Action research is a method that offers a researcher the flexibility to make changes and adjustments as situations occur. This was a very positive learning experience . . . our students are benefiting as we incorporate new ideas into our current and future science units. We are also incorporating differentiated instruction into and using action research in other subject areas. (Tanya, interview) (Goodnough, 2008, pp. 444-445).

Their instrumental understanding of action research as a cycle of methods that can be “used” and “applied” to multiple subjects was also evident in the answer they gave to Goodnough (2008) when she asked them for suggestions about how she could improve her approach as a facilitator of action research:

They suggested that a more exhaustive exploration of pedagogical approaches occur up front. For example, Ada said, ‘If we had known about differentiated instruction at the beginning, things may have proceeded differently. Perhaps future groups could explore teaching approaches in more detail.’” (p. 448).

Goodnough (2008) cited an excerpt from her conversation with Ada and Tanya about shaping a research question to guide their inquiries. This excerpt reflects how a technical view of action research as a vehicle, method, or testing tool was reinforced:

Ada: So, does action research have to be a problem?

Karen: From my perspective, no. Sometimes action research can stem from a problem in your own classroom. Not always, but it can. For example, when I did my small action research project last year in my preservice classroom, I had read a lot about problem-based learning, as an instructional approach. Based on the research at post-secondary level

that's been done, it seemed to be a very effective form of instruction. It could also add variety. So for me it wasn't that I perceived a problem, I just wanted to try a new approach and ascertain the outcome (p.439).

Such a technical focus on testing out instructional approaches is at odds with Kemmis and McTaggart's (2005) critical participatory action research (CPAR) approach, which is central to Goodnough's (2008) methodology: "In the research I report in this article, teachers used participatory action research (PAR) (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005) to study their classroom practice" (p.433). It is doubtful whether Kemmis and McTaggart would agree that PAR can be "used" because such wording implies that it is a noun or thing that can be applied to achieve some ends. Rather, they defined CPAR as a critical collaborative inquiry-based process of learning, which is akin to a process/verb that people engage in, not one that they "use."

Kemmis and McTaggart emphasized the following epistemology behind engaging in self-critical reflective cycles of inquiry: "In the process of participatory action research, the same people are involved in two parallel, reflexively related sets of practices" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 292). Goodnough focused mainly on what Ada and Tanya learned about classroom practices, and she did not discuss how teachers engaged in metapractices of their professional learning. Hence, Kemmis and McTaggart distinguished their methodological approach as "critical" because when teachers and researchers take a metaview of how they learn as professionals, they expose their own beliefs and assumptions about learning that create conditions for what Fals Borda called *vivencia* or the "decolonization of [their] lifeworlds that have become saturated with the bureaucratic discourses, routinized practices and institutionalized forms of social relationships..." (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p.288).

CPAR depends upon researchers and teachers working collaboratively to engage in a self-reflective spiral of planning, acting, observing, reflecting "to create forums in which people can join one another as coparticipants in the struggle to remake the practices in which they interact" (p.277). When tensions arose for Ada and Tanya about what their inquiry was and what to do with

students' journals, their struggles were an opportunity for other teachers and the researcher to work through their questions as a community. Goodnough reviewed her early attempts to explain different ways to shape an inquiry as cited above, but she did not say what she did or did not do to work through such tensions with Ada and Tanya or other teachers. Instead, Goodnough concluded that she needed to improve her facilitation methods by offering more upfront suggestions to teachers about how to shape inquiries and by being more involved in community-building throughout her future collaborative action research studies. Goodnough's vagueness about what she managed to do or not do during times when teachers struggled to analyze data (e.g., to reflect students' journals) is a gap in her report that makes it difficult to decide whether or not she conducted a critical, practical or technical collaborative action research study as discussed by Carr & Kemmis (1986) and Kemmis & McTaggart (2005).

In the following section, Wells (1994) offered an inside glimpse into his practices as a professor of a university summer graduate course offered to students who were new to collaborative action research.

Wells. Wells (1994b) wrote about his experiences developing a collaborative action research summer course for students in British Columbia, with whom he had no previous interactions, and who were taking the course in the summer and so didn't have their own or others' classrooms to study. Because he engaged in an in-depth retrospective analysis of his relational tensions as an outside professor and action researcher (i.e., he considered this course an opportunity for his own self-study of his work as a leader of action research) working with graduate students who were new to sociocultural theory and collaborative action research, his reflections are instructive for outside researchers preparing to work with teachers who are new to collaborative action research.

He called his course, "Talk and Text: Learning and Teaching Across the Curriculum," and he focused on four goals— how to reconceptualize teaching and learning as collaborative inquiry, how to understand the central role that discourse plays in teaching and learning, how to make social action the purpose that drives teaching and learning, and how to engage in course work through action and

reflection on each other's practices (Wells 1994, p.238). He pointed out that although he knew that he sought to provide teachers with choices about what to inquire into and to make action and theory central to their work together, he was only generally clear about such goals at the time that he set out to engage in course work: "Stating my intentions in this way, however, gives a quite false impression of my actual thinking processes, which were much less sharply focused" (p.240). Also, Wells admitted that after the first week of the course and at the end of it when he read the final reflection papers, he realized how easy it was for him to avoid seeking students' feedback and to ignore emotional, intellectual and relational tensions that existed amongst them but were not surfaced for discussion.

When Wells (1994b) had sent his introduction letter to students and revisited it on the first day of class, he explained his choice of "time" as his broad theme for students' inquiries, his goals for the course, and his course materials (i.e., articles, video clips of elementary students' classroom inquiries). Although he felt positively about the first week of classes, Wells (1994b) indicated that many students felt "disoriented" by the sociocultural stance of the course design and of his interactions with them but that he had failed to notice their tensions:

In my enthusiasm to design the course as a challenge to the students to initiate and prepare their own inquiries... I had neglected to think about how my plan would be perceived by those whose prior experiences led them to have different expectations (p.246).

Wells (1994b) reflected on how such a realization surprised him, and he later changed his future ways of interacting with students because of it: "But, this time, I actively encouraged them to express their doubts and concerns so that we could, together, think about ways of addressing them" (p.246). He also concluded that eventually the students in his summer course did become more comfortable with a collaborative inquiry-based approach to teaching and learning, especially once he was responding to their off- and on-line journals and group conversations.

By his own acknowledgement, Wells (1994b) made the error of forgetting how much he lived an inquiry stance, and how his stance was jarring for others

who did not understand his worldview. Bakhtin (1986) conceptualized the self as dialogical or living in relation to others, where life events are tricky because even though individuals experience an event together, they do not experience it in the same way. Wells animated the tricky nature of the principle of dialogical subjectivity because his, what he called, “insensitivity” to his students happened because he mistook his own reflections about students’ responses to him and the course as reality. Thus, it is natural for human beings to assume that they know who they are because they live each day in their own skins, but living dialogically, according to Bakhtin (1981, 1986), means that human beings cannot simultaneously see and hear themselves while living, so they depend upon the perceptions of others to know who they are.

I conclude with John Elliott’s (2007a, 2010) scholarship and Skype interview about the Ford Teaching Project because he worked with teachers who were mostly new to collaborative action research, and he theorized what the role of tension was in that context. He found that teachers avoided seeking different pedagogical perspectives about classroom situations, and he and Clem Adelman had to work hard to cultivate emotional, intellectual and relational tension in the outside researcher and teacher relationship so that there was an impetus for reflecting on student data.

Elliott. John Elliott has had an almost 40-year career working in East Anglia, England with teachers who were unfamiliar with research-based approaches to collaborative professional learning:

You see most people in universities would tend to get into doing collaborative action research through their post-graduate students, through people doing master’s degrees or part-time doctorates and things like this, but in the Ford Teaching Project, I mean one inspector said to me, ‘Well John, nobody could accuse you of working only with an elite of the teaching profession,’ because, although there may have been the odd person doing a master’s degree, or something like this, most of those teachers were not hooked into higher education institutions (personal communication, October 19, 2010).

Elliott founded the Collaborative Action Research Network, which continues today as an international online network of educators who hold conferences, study days at various universities internationally, and who write about their experiences with action research in the blind peer-reviewed journal, *Educational Action Research*. Thus, Elliott is a pioneer of action research in the United Kingdom; he continued work that began with Lawrence Stenhouse, which was aligned with a curriculum movement that inspired teachers to adopt inquiry-based stances towards teaching and learning, and he mentored other preeminent scholars (e.g., Bridget Somekh) who are also recognized for their conducting collaborative action research with teachers.

In this section, I focus on how Elliott (2007a) engaged in collaborative action research with 40 teachers as part of the Ford Teaching Project in East Anglia, England from 1973-75. It was a funded study supported by the Ford Foundation in the U.K. because the Nuffield Foundation and the Schools Council in the U.K. had sponsored the inquiry-based curriculum reform movement, which they saw as slow to take hold in classrooms. Elliott (2007a) and Clem Adelman designed their collaborative action research study to support teachers with the exploration of such inquiry-based teaching approaches in interdisciplinary subjects. Teachers developed their own research questions that reflected their specific concerns about taking an inquiry-based teaching approach in their different subject areas.

Elliott indicated that the hardest part about this research was that teachers agreed to participate for reasons unrelated to collaborative professional learning, and he surmised that part of the problem was that the researchers had to go through administrators who approached teachers to participate. “By the time we met groups of ‘interested’ teachers, it was difficult to determine how the project had been communicated to them” (Elliott, 2007a, p.33). Elliott (2010) illuminated the larger political context that shaped how the Ford Teaching Project unfolded:

The criteria basically...were those teachers who were engaged in some kind of pedagogical innovation... But, of course, it is in a time where a lot of teachers said that they were engaged in curriculum and pedagogical

innovation because they wanted money to buy equipment like an innovatory science program... They weren't necessarily interested in the pedagogical principles and values of the project... (personal communication, October 19, 2010).

After the initial recruitment of teacher participants, the teachers participated in a conference about action research and requested that Elliott and Adelman get them more job-embedded time to embark on such work, so they negotiated more time for teachers to engage in the many collaborative processes of action research (i.e., co-planning, co-teaching, co-collecting and co-analyzing data). Even after Elliott and Adelman had negotiated more time, Elliott (2007a) found that only “a small minority of teachers used field-notes, tape-recorded their lessons, and discussed classroom problems with students” (p.35), and two-thirds of the teacher participants did not seek out opportunities to share action research processes; they were “no problem people” who were not self-critical of their practices. Elliott (2007a) explained, “It became clear that our problem was how to motivate the majority of teachers to adopt a reflective stance, since the action research approach presupposes a readiness to reflect” (p.35).

He and Clem Adelman spent considerable time with teachers to develop a shared vision of what an inquiry classroom is; they used video clips of classroom lessons from other schools, and they held focus group discussions about such clips to identify together whether and how such teachers in the clips enacted inquiry-based ideologies. Elliott (2007a) engaged in such activities because he was also interested in rating teachers' readiness to be what he called “self-monitoring teachers”—“Self-monitoring is the process by which one becomes aware of one's situation and one's own role as an agent in it” (p.35). In addition to these initial meetings, Elliott and Adelman worked with teachers in their classrooms to collect and reflect on at least three different sources of data that included students', teachers' and a participant-observer's point of view of a classroom lesson or interaction (e.g. transcripts of students' and teachers' audiorecorded interviews, researchers' field notes about classroom practices). Thus, Elliott (1988) understood “[t]he task of the facilitator is not to generate critical theories but to

stimulate the processes of reflection which will enable insiders to generate their own” (p.165).

Elliott (2010) described how he and Adelman supported teachers to self-monitor by having the teachers reflect on the differences between students’ views of their teaching and their perceptions of their practices:

Once they found out that the students were interpreting the meaning of their pedagogical interventions totally differently to the teachers, then, this motivated the teacher...to try and narrow that gap...that interpretive gap..., and so it was that that caused a lot of teachers to be very reflective (personal communication, October 19, 2010).

Thus, researchers created triangulated data and shared discursive routines that opened up opportunities for teachers and researchers to talk about differences between students’, teachers’ and researchers’ views about classroom practices and whether and how to change them. Elliott (2007a) admitted that initiating and developing such a critically reflective collaborative stance as teachers and researchers was difficult, but sustaining it once the research was over was almost impossible: “interdisciplinary teams tended to collapse because competition made openness between teachers difficult” (Elliott, 2007a, p.58).

Elliott (2010) claimed that Polanyi’s (1967) construct of tacit knowledge influenced his understanding of what made it hard for teachers to self-monitor:

I was quite influenced by the work of Michael Polanyi... so I mean Polanyi’s argument, basically, is that once you start reflecting about your behavior and about the tacit knowledge that is involved in that behaviour then you become almost like a cripple. And I think, I link that with, I could tell teachers who were trying to self-monitor, so that, you know because I had spent a lot of time helping teachers to locate the conditions of genuine discussion...and I saw teachers start to ask a question and think, ‘Oh my God, I’m not asking this question properly’...(personal communication, October 19, 2010).

In addition to his contention that teachers struggled to teach after becoming aware of teaching behaviors that were previously tacit knowledge, Elliott (2007a),

in his chapter about the Ford Teaching Project, presented his self-monitoring theory as a series of 13 hypotheses (appendix, figure 1). Elliott (2007a) assumed that a teacher's self-monitoring capability was related to his/her capacity to accept another person's feedback without personalizing it and to unearth his/her tacit knowledge and to keep it in view without becoming immobilized by it. The implication of his assumptions is that collaborative action research presupposes that an individual has developed several capacities to be self-critical in order to engage in research on their own practices. I offer an alternative way of looking at teachers and outside researchers' learning together, where tension is socially rather than individually located. However, I also provide excerpts from my interview with John Elliott, and such excerpts indicate that he viewed collaborative inquiry-based learning as socially, culturally and historically situated.

I agree with Elliott that individuals require critically reflective capacities to engage in meaningful collaborative learning, but I query whether it is possible to differentiate individuals' from the group's capacities to self-monitor when the individual teachers worked so closely and in highly constructed ways with their students, and a team of other teachers and researchers. In part, I am skeptical because the teachers in Elliott's study were, by his own admission, too competitive to maintain collaborative practices necessary to self-monitor their ongoing professional transformations once the researchers were gone. Thus, it wasn't as though some teachers had superior self-monitoring skills to keep other teachers going. Perhaps the teachers, without the presence of the researchers, slipped back into old roles and discourses, where norms of privatization, conformity and politeness were valued more than criticality and professional transformation.

Because Elliott and Adelman worked with teachers in highly constructed ways, the teachers self-monitored within a group structure that created routines, where teachers and researchers developed discourses of inquiry, analytical skills to reflect on triangulated data, and ways of relating that cultivated open discussions. According to Elliott's hypotheses, especially statements 6-11

(appendix, figure 1), teachers' self-monitoring readiness was dependent upon who was offering feedback. For that reason, it may be that teachers' self-monitoring readiness was related to the persons to whom they were talking, as much if not more, than what the person(s) had to say. Hence, it may not be true that teachers' self-esteem was related to the content of the feedback or whether or not the teachers were able to separate their personal identities from their roles or identities as teachers. Instead, teachers' critically reflective learning approaches may have been related to the people present and how they handled tension when working with particular people. In other words, it may be a group's collective strategies for critical reflection that distinguished a collaborative from a non-collaborative learning community or culture rather than any one teacher's strategies for being critically reflective about his/her teaching practices.

During our Skype interview, Elliott (2010) clarified that he agreed that the geographical, historical and political context had a significant impact on teachers' capacities to engage in collaborative action research:

...And...here's a theory about the professional development of teachers that I've built into [the Ford Teaching Project], which was really derived for me from reading Dan Lortie's *SchoolTeacher* (1975), and it is: Why aren't teachers a profession? They are not a profession basically because of the individualistic nature of their socialization, that they have very little shared pedagogical knowledge...(personal communication, October 19, 2010).

Also, Elliott (2010) considered collaborative action research to be a sociocultural, historical process of learning together as teachers and researchers in a dynamic world:

Action research is not going to save any souls...It's not going to make teachers as people or as professionals perfect. Do you know what I mean?...It is a way, there's a marvelous book I read actually, about spirituality called, *Ways of Imperfection* (1985)...Now for me action research is a *way of imperfection*. It's a way in which we can hang onto our values and our ideals and make a little progress...in realizing them in

our practices, but my God, it's lifelong and a very difficult process... and there's not going to be any salvation.

To summarize, Elliott worked in unique circumstances, where he learned together with teachers who agreed to engage in collaborative action research for reasons that he perceived were often disconnected from their professional learning. By his own acknowledgement, he and Adelman devised a triangulation method that depended initially upon the researcher collecting particular predetermined types of data and devising routines of reflecting that sometimes created conditions for inquiry (Dewey, 1912). Although Elliott acknowledged the situated nature of teachers' learning, he argued for, in my assessment, a more individualistic view of how individuals learn that portrays collaborative learning as "co-participation" rather than "joint participation" (Gutierrez et al., 1999).

In all of the studies in this section, the scholars cultivated ways to share researching roles, but they did not or could not share teaching roles. Because in studies cited prior to this section, teaching-researching role sharing was central to how action researchers "worked the dialectic" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) and created tension that was transformative of schools and schooling, limited role sharing meant reduced tension and increased difficulties with initiating, developing and sustaining critical inquiry-based approaches to professional learning.

Looking at difference across theoretical commonplaces

Difference is at the root of tension in teacher-outside researcher communities. Teacher-outside researcher communities (Hoban & Hastings, 2006; Wells, 2001, 2009) that treated differences between their pedagogical visions and realities as generative tensions (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) to process from their diverse perspectives thrived as longstanding communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). However, some critical and/or collaborative inquiry communities had to process relational tension understood as power differences between group members before they could cultivate generative tensions (Somekh, 1994; Wells, 2001, 2009). Other groups struggled to seek out differences and to cultivate

tension needed for inquiry-based critical collaborative learning. Such researchers and/or teachers talked about how they avoided tension (Goodnough, 2008), why they avoided tension and wished that they hadn't (Wells, 1994), and what they did to try to cultivate tension (Elliott, 2007a, 2010). Thus, teachers and researchers who seek to understand their differences as locations to struggle to see the world from their diverse stances transform their practices, situations within which they practice and themselves to be "better" (Lytle, 2008).

In the next chapter I take a critical, sociocultural, historical theoretical stance towards such commonplaces to theorize tension beyond an epistemological-methodological crossroads.

Chapter Three: Theorizing Tension Beyond a Crossroads



“How are you getting on?” said the cat, as soon as there was enough mouth for it to speak with.

Alice waited until the eyes appeared, and then nodded, “It’s no use speaking to it,” she thought, “until its ears have come, or at least one of them.” In another minute the whole head appeared, and then Alice put down her flamingo, and began an account of the game, feeling very glad she had someone to listen to her (Carroll, 2006, p.101).

Returning to an epistemological-methodological crossroads

Kemeny (1959), author of *A Philosopher Looks at Science*, referred to the infamous moment when Alice asked the Cheshire Cat which way she should go as exemplifying the divide between science and ethics. Alice met up with the sign and the Cheshire Cat, and she looked to both of them as though there was some predetermined, scientific way for the Cheshire Cat to know what Alice should do and which way she should go in Wonderland. She was unprepared initially to think for herself and to make choices that enacted an identity in this new world. It wasn’t until later in the story, as exemplified in the excerpt above, that Alice realized that the answer to her question was not directly available in any sign, animal or being. Instead, the Cheshire Cat represented the dialectical relationship that human beings have with reality; he faded in and out of sight and represented how human conceptions of reality are transitional, fleeting, and between objective/scientific and subjective/ethical ways of knowing. Eventually, Alice recognized that she needed to see just enough of the cat to talk with him because reality was always in process and partially available; she understood that to make

sense of what was going on around her, she had to talk with others, which was an iterative external/social and internal/personal interpretive activity (Gardner, 2000, footnote 7, pp.65-66). Thus, what Alice could know was located in the generative space between science and ethics— “a grin without a cat”—a dialectical reality.

Initially, I grappled with the vagueness and incoherence in research literature about teacher-outside researcher learning in the same way that Alice struggled to understand why the Cheshire Cat did not answer directly her question about which way to go. I soon realized that sociocultural, historical theorists (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986; Bruner, 1986; Dewey, 1912; Leont’ev, 1978; Roth, 2007a, 2007b; Vygotsky, 1978, 1981, 1986; Wertsch, 1991, 1998, 2007) brought some clarity, and literacy theorists (Gutiérrez, Rymes, & Larson, 1995; Handsfield, Crumpler & Dean, 2010; Leander, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2004; Sterponi, 2007), who came from a critical (Apple, 1993; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Foucault, 1972/77; Luke, 1996) and Third Space (Bhaba, 1994; Lefebvre, 1991; Soja, 1996) standpoint brought even more. Just as Alice learned that her existence in Wonderland had to be reframed according to her new reality, I, too, had to use the theoretical commonplaces identified in the last chapter as locations for theorizing thoughtfully and critically in this thesis from a sociocultural, historical critical theoretical stance.

In this chapter, I outline my social constructivist stance, where I contend that what is known and can be known is socially constructed through intersubjective descriptions of reality. I also outline my participatory epistemological or interobjectivist view of human interactions, where I see human interactions as mutually constitutive, so what we do shapes others and the world around us. I underscore how educators who work together enact such a worldview because they cultivate a lived as much as a perspectival and conceptual “inquiry as stance” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). In the first section, *sidestepping differences and avoiding tension*, I examine strengths and weaknesses of Vygotsky’s (1978, 1986) sociocultural, historical learning theory for studying teacher-outside researcher communities. Because Vygotsky concentrated on what claims could be made about how individuals learned together and not on the role

of tension in learning, I considered activity theorists' methodological extensions of Vygotsky's last thoughts on consciousness. In the second section, *deconstructing differences and processing tension*, I concentrate on Leont'ev's (1978) and Roth's (2007a, 2007b) analyses of emotional and ethical tensions in human activities. Roth illuminated how activity theory has the conceptual tools for describing and explaining ethical and emotional tensions in communities when emotional transparency is not an issue and inquiries are already in motion. I turn to Wenger's (1998) social learning frame to better understand how communities co-develop inquiries from a grassroots level and work through emotional, relational tensions that are not always obvious or articulated. Wenger advanced my understanding of negotiation, tension and learning, but he did not sufficiently address the constructs— identity and power. In the last section, *seeking differences and cultivating tension*, I contemplate Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) dialogical epistemology and spatial, critical theorists' application of his scholarship to reframe the relationship between identity, power and tension in critical, collaborative inquiry-based learning.

Setting out on a sociocultural, historical theoretical pathway

I hold a realist ontology, where human beings compose multiple conceptions of one socially, culturally, historically mediated reality: “The dialectical approach, while admitting the influence of nature on man, asserts that man, in turn, affects nature and creates through his changes in nature new natural conditions for his existence” (Vygotsky, 1978, p.61). According to Vygotsky (1978), knowers are primarily social beings: “Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first between people (interpsychological), and then inside the child (intrapsychological)” (Vygotsky, 1978, p.57). Thus, individuals live and learn in a physical world shared with other living things, where their representations of experiences are descriptions of reality composed of intersubjectivist discourses that define who they are.

Vygotsky's paradigm is referred to as social constructivism and/or social constructionism (Crotty, 2003; Davis, 2004; Schwandt, 1998). Radically skeptical social constructivists, also called "strong social constructionists" (Schwandt, 1998), assume that because individuals have distinct discourses and histories that knowledge claims cannot be made about their learning. Contrarily, scholars who take a critical or sociopolitical stance (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Elliott, 2007a, 2009; Gutiérrez, 2008; Kemmis, 2006) are examples of "weak social constructionists" (Schwandt, 1998) because they concur that there are satisfactory ways to judge the credibility of interpretations of reality. In this thesis, I take a social constructivist stance towards learning and a 'weak social constructionist' (Schwandt, 1998) epistemological orientation towards assessing representations of learning.

Sidestepping differences and avoiding tension

Vygotsky (1978, 1981, 1986) studied children's responses to pre-defined problem-solving tasks that took on fairly predictable and similar learning trajectories; emotional and relational tension was not a focus of his research. Practitioner researchers study teachers' unique inquiries and learning trajectories, which are often tension-filled, so Vygotsky's ideas are necessary but not sufficient to understand them.

Vygotsky's sociocultural, historical learning theory

Vygotsky (1978) concluded, "children solve practical tasks with the help of their *speech as well as their eyes and hands*" (p.26). In other words, children's learning happens through the activity of problem solving, which is mediated by explicit sources (cultural tools, the presence of adults or more capable peers) and by implicit sources: "Implicit mediation typically involves signs in the form of natural language that evolved in the service of communication..." (Wertsch, 2007, p.185). Vygotsky (1987) also explained: "The relationship between thought and word is not a thing but *a process*, a movement from thought to word and from word to thought. [It] is a developmental process which changes as it passes

through a series of stages...” (p. 250).). The underlying assumption is that individuals’ experiences of the material world are indirect because they are socially mediated. Human activity depends upon language as a primary mediational means, and language is imperfect because words stand for ideas but ideas are always in process. Because what can be known at any moment changes over time, reality is dynamic and so is knowledge. Vygotsky’s dialectical reality underlined how there is always a difference between what is known and can be known, and what can be represented and understood.

Three implications follow from Vygotsky’s (1987) dialectical conception of reality. First, no one person can access reality in an objective essential form, so individuals learn by offering their descriptions of their experiences to others. Second, collaborative learning requires individuals to co-cognize with others to interpret the world from their perspectives. Third, because knowers, knowing and knowledge are in motion, learning is a simultaneous living/practicing and describing/reifying process, which is better thought of as *practice*:

And if we think about knowledge as a kind of after-image (like looking at that light globe and then closing your eyes and seeing the after image) and as only the after-image of practice, then we might spend more time thinking about the practice; that is, education for living rather than accumulating a whole lot of stuff in your head (S. Kemmis, personal communication, June 3, 2010).

Implications for teacher-outside researcher communities

Vygotsky’s (1978, 1981, 1987) sociocultural, historical learning theory has heuristic value but also limitations for my theoretical framework. Vygotsky documented children’s, not adults’ ways of solving cognitively, not ethically oriented tasks. Also, he worked from a “spectator’s view of practice” (Kemmis, 2009a), where he created problem solving tasks for children and observed whether and how they used cultural tools, especially language, to successfully complete them. Conversely, in teacher-outside researcher communities (Elliott, 2007a, Goodnough, 2008, Hoban & Hastings, 2006; Somekh, 1994; Wells, 1994,

2001, 2009), researchers aimed to have teachers identify their own pedagogical inquiries that had cognitive and ethical dimensions and to work with them from a “participant’s view of practices” (Kemmis, 2009a) to take part in joint problem solving. Vygotsky’s child participants presumably consented to and were motivated to engage in tasks, but practitioner researchers had difficulty ensuring teacher participants’ genuine consent, motivation and participation.

For example, Goodnough (2008) cited a teacher’s reflections: “Early in the project, there were times when I felt I was lured under false pretence. There was considerable trepidation on my part. It was not what I expected. (Ada, post-study interview)” (p. 439). Even though Goodnough had done a detailed presentation for prospective teacher participants, Ada and Tanya misunderstood such reifications: “...[T]hey misinterpreted the information that was sent to the school district and had not paid careful enough attention to what was stated in the consent form, although I had explained the nature of the project and participant expectations” (Goodnough, 2008, p.438).

From a Vygotskian stance, mismatches between teachers’ and researchers’ understandings of collaborative action research were predictable. Meditational devices or reifications (e.g., administrators’ explanations, written materials, audiovisual examples) distorted communication. The distortion was partly due to teachers having limited or no experience with collaborative action research, so invitations to participate were filled with reifications that were unfamiliar to them. In other words, “the tool can ossify activity around its inertness” (Wenger, 1998, p.61). Distortion was also related to some teachers appropriating artifacts into their own ideological orientations and construing them differently than intended by the researcher— “forms can take a life of their own beyond the context of origin” (Wenger, 1998, p.62).

In chapter one, I described how my five teacher participants did not fully appreciate what was involved in collaborative action research even though we spent a whole day processing examples. Over five months we overcame some of our mismatched understandings by developing planning, teaching and reflecting routines, but we also struggled to maintain them and experienced emotional,

relational tension that, at times, compromised our learning. Some scholars secured teacher participants' agreement to engage in highly participative routines. For example, Hoban and Hastings (2006) took part in the same lessons, decided how to observe students during the lessons, and what data to collect. Although they did not always plan and teach classroom lessons together, they were actively involved in the lessons and knew what to observe while the lesson unfolded. Other academics found it extremely difficult to establish routines. McGlynn-Stewart (2001), Somekh (1994) and Wells (2009) eventually succeeded to process emotional and relational tension, but Jones & Stanley (2010) and Waters-Adams (1994) claimed it was practically impossible.

Even though, in chapter two, I questioned whether or not such scholars enacted the epistemologies that they cited; nevertheless, their studies exposed how emotionally laden and tension-filled teacher-outside researcher learning can be, and how theoretical explanations of tension are underdeveloped. Vygotsky (1986) anticipated but did not fully theorize the relationship between motivation, tension and critical and/or collaborative inquiry-based learning. In the next section, I take up such missing conversations (Lytle, 2000) starting from Vygotsky's last words on consciousness.

Vygotsky's last words on consciousness

I conceptualized tension in teacher-outside researcher communities using Vygotsky's (1978) inter- and intra-mental processes between learners' planes of consciousness. A plane of consciousness is comprised of thought and language, which are separate and therefore *in process* as individuals share consciousness (Vygotsky, 1978). Bruner (1987) described Vygotsky's co-consciousness as relational and dialogical: "Once a concept is explicated in dialogue, the learner is enabled to reflect on the dialogue, to use its distinctions and connections to reformulate his own thought. Thought, then, is both an individual achievement and a social one" (p.4). In this dissertation, I investigate individual and group learning by documenting changes in practices over time. However, as Jones and Stanley (2010) emphasized, documentation is not as simple as focusing on

transformations of practices as solely cognitive achievements because questions of emotions, ethics and power complicate the work.

Vygotsky (1978, 1986) recognized that consciousness is the root from which all thoughts are born, and that cognition is *not* its sole impetus:

Thought is not born of other thoughts. It has its origins in the motivating sphere of consciousness, a sphere that includes our inclinations and needs, our interests and impulses, and our affect and emotion. The affective and volitional tendency stands behind thought. Only here do we find the answer to the final ‘why’ in the analysis of thinking...A true and complex understanding of another’s thought becomes possible only when we discover its real, affective-volitional basis (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 282).

Vygotsky’s (1987) lecture about the relationship between emotions and consciousness confirmed that he saw emotion and cognition as mutually constitutive: “Psychological research has moved the emotions from the hinterlands to the forefront of the human mind, no longer treating them as an isolated ‘state within a state,’ but including them within the same structure as the other mental processes” (p.336). Not only are individuals’ emotions, thoughts, instinctual inclinations intermeshed as motivation for their actions, but observations of human activities are only small windows on what compels people to engage in practices. “Consciousness is reflected in the word, as the sun is reflected in a droplet of water. The word is related to consciousness as a miniature world is related a larger one...the meaningful word is a microcosm of human consciousness” (Vygotsky, 1986, p.9). By Vygotsky’s (1986) own acknowledgement, consciousness was in need of further investigation, and he posited that the next step was to understand the root of consciousness, *motivation*: “The final and most secret plane of verbal thinking...is its motivation. With this, our analysis is finished” (Vygotsky, 1987, p.283). Second and third generation activity theorists extended Vygotsky’s thinking by theorizing motivation, tension and learning.

Deconstructing differences and processing tension

Activity theorists

Activity researchers theorized consciousness and motivation by developing different methodological approaches for studying how groups learn from ideological contradictions or tensions (Daniels, 2010a, 2010b; Engeström, 1987, 2005; Middleton, 2010). The problem is that they investigate collaborative learning settings, where others frame participants' inquiries. For example, Engeström (2007) reported on postal workers' inquiries into the problem of inefficient mail delivery identified by upper management. In contrast, outside researchers who invited teacher participants to shape and investigate their own inquiries often faced teachers' resistance to the collaborative process (Waters-Adams, 1994; Wells, 2011). Engeström (2007) admitted that the beginning of research was often rife with emotional tensions, but emotions did not become stumbling blocks of learning as they did for practitioner researchers (Elliott, 2007a; Jones and Stanley, 2010; Waters-Adams, 1994).

Although some activity scholars (Daniels, 2010a; Middleton, 2010) examined complex educational problems (e.g., how to improve inclusive education practices), they used highly specific methodological processes that reduced constructs like power to plus and minus signs on a chart (Daniels, 2010a). Daniels (2010b) admitted that activity theorists are just beginning to develop discourses to study qualitative transformations of identities and practices, and Roth (2007a, 2007b) is one of the few activity scholars who made this leap by studying the role of emotional and ethical tensions in human activities. In the next section, I review Leont'ev's (1978) activity theory, which is the basis of Roth's work, and I discuss strengths and limitations of such scholarship for my theoretical framework.

Leont'ev's activity theory. Leont'ev (1978) stated, "...consciousness is the product of activity in the human world" (p.19). The first level of Leont'ev's theory is that individuals work together in collectives when they are driven by socially defined needs, where needs begin as biological functions that are

answered by human interaction in the world. In other words, human motivation begins as a sensory experience that is not often consciously recognized:

That which we call internal experiences is the essence of the phenomenon, taking place on the surface of consciousness, and it is in this form that consciousness appears directly for the subject. For this reason, the experiences, interests, boredom, inclinations, or remorse do not disclose their nature to the subject” (Leont’ev, 1978, p. 94).

Sensory experiences are felt as something below conscious awareness, but psychic reflection on them, which requires individuals to use their cultural tools, especially language, makes them objects of their consciousness awareness. “The object of an activity is its true motive. It is understood that the motive may be material or ideal, either present in perception or existing only in imagination or in thought” (Leont’ev, 1978, p.62).

There are two implications of Leont’ev’s conception of human motivation. First, learners are compelled by their senses to engage in activities for reasons that do not become apparent without reflection, and second, activities are motivated even though individuals sometimes refuse to acknowledge their motives: “Activity does not exist without a motive; ‘nonmotivated activity’ is not activity without a motive but activity with a subjectively or objectively hidden motive” (Leont’ev, 1978, pp. 62-63). Thus, reflection is an emotional, cognitive experience, and ongoing reflection is necessary for individuals to be consciously aware of their motives.

The second level of Leont’ev’s theory is that individuals within a collective develop goals for their actions that realize the “motive-goals” of a group’s activities. Hence, there is a dialectical relationship between what individuals do and what a group does because the agreed upon motive that sets activities and actions into motion are not separate from the practices themselves (Roth, 2007a). The third level of Leont’ev’s (1978) theory is that the situated conditions of an activity presuppose the operations, including the cultural tools available that mediate human actions and activities. There is a dialectical relationship between all elements of this three-level structure; no one element can

be reduced to another as being the sole cause of human activity. Although it is sometimes tempting to assume what a person's motives are for an action, it is premature to do so because of the interrelated nature of actions, thoughts, emotions and instinctual impulses.

From a practitioner researcher's stance, Leont'ev (1978) made it possible to take a micro- and macro-view of a teacher-researcher community as activity systems, where a community's activities and an individual's actions can be studied as polycontextual, dynamic learning (Engeström, 1987; Gutiérrez, 2008). He provided researchers with the conceptual tools to describe the transformation of individuals' and a group's motives and practices.

Roth's exploration of emotions. Roth (2007a) reported his findings of a five-year ethnographic study of fish hatchery culturists to theorize how emotions influence human activities, identities and motivation. He found that human emotions not only motivated individuals' actions and groups' activities, but that they also were reified as products of such practices that were positive and negative "emotional payoffs" for continuing or not to engage in activities. For example, in one participant's case, Erin, who was a competent fish culturist, learned that she would not have a job in the near future but the positive emotional payoffs of the work erased the potentially negative ones of finding out that her job was ending. In a second example, Jack, who was also an exemplary fish culturist, had negative emotions resulting from a lack of administrative support at work, so his negativity motivated him *not* to perform certain activities at his usually high level. Thus, individuals' and groups' assessments of emotional payoffs of work are inseparable from the work (practices) and the motives that drive it (Roth, 2007a).

Emotional tensions can be a facilitator or barrier of teacher-outside researcher learning (Elliott, 2007a; Goodnough, 2008; McGlynn-Stewart, 2001). Roth's (2007a) scholarship provided practitioner researchers with a way to conceptualize emotions as reifications of individuals' and groups' practices that perpetuate certain patterns of learning. The limitation of Roth's work for my thesis is related to the difference between my positioning and his with respect to participants. Roth was an outside researcher who took a spectator's view of

participants' practices and participants were willing to be forthright about their thoughts and emotions. Conversely, I worked from a participant-observer's orientation, where emotional and relational tensions related to my positioning made it difficult to be privy to teacher participants' 'real' thoughts and feelings; sometimes emotions flooded our group interactions, were saved for private discussions after the interactions took place, or happened but were ignored as though they didn't matter or hadn't happened. Because it is a challenge for researchers who take a highly participative role in researcher-teacher communities to document participants' emotions, an activity theory frame has limitations for making inferences about the relationship between emotional tension and learning in these contexts.

Roth's exploration of ethical motives. Based on Roth's (2007b) study of a community of environmentalists, including elementary students, parents, graduate students, and scientists, he theorized the nature of ethical motivation in communities as activity systems. Roth taught middle-school students and collaboratively introduced them to a unit on water and the environment. After reading and talking about articles focused on concerns about problems such as high coliform count in local water forms, the students worked with the other participants to investigate their surroundings to decide how to "revitalize and save local creeks and watersheds that feed the ocean" (Roth, 2007b, p.85).

The community's motives to save the local creek and watersheds necessarily had an ethical impulse: "In fact, the ethical aims inherent in subscribing to the object/motive of the environmentalists do not simply arise within Michelle and Graeme [two elementary students]; the aims and the awareness for the connection between humans and their environment are an integral part of what and how a particular society thinks of itself" (Roth, 2007b, p.91). The groups' inter- and intramental processes (Vygotsky, 1978) to learn about the local water forms and how to solve problems associated with them enacted their ethical principles and established moral norms in the group. Roth (2007b) showed how activity theory explains what it means for a group to engage in ethically oriented learning: "...[B]ecause [in] the ethics/morality dialectic,

which is sublated in (mediated by) activity, neither term has to be brought in from the outside as an enhancement of conceptualizing theoretical and practical knowledge otherwise devoid of ethico-moral principles” (Roth, 2007b, p.92).

Implications for teacher-outside researcher communities

As I described briefly in chapter one, the five teachers and I set out to inquire into teaching narrative writing in comics form because we were concerned that teaching and learning story writing had become overly focused on meeting provincial achievement test criteria; the teachers underscored how narrative writing had lost its creative impetus for children and for them. Thus, the whole group’s inquiry was ethically, not just technically oriented. However, we found it difficult to get past emotional, relational tensions over five months to keep our ethical motive-goal in view. Roth (2007a, 2007b), Dewey (1912) and Bruner (1986), together, have moved my thinking forward in terms of how to theorize the relationship between motivation, tension and critical, collaborative inquiry-based professional learning.

According to Dewey (1912), inquiries begin as: “(a) a state of perplexity, hesitation, doubt; and (b) an act of search or investigation directed toward bringing to light further facts which serve to corroborate or nullify the suggested belief” (p.9). Dewey (1912) highlighted that creating a state of perplexity is often problematic because curiosity depends on an awareness of one’s thoughts, and “...thoughts grow up unconsciously and without reference to the attainment of correct belief. They are picked up and we know not how” (p.4). Bruner (1986) surmised that individuals’ thoughts are part of mental models about how the world works and dissonances rarely happen because mental models are shaped by the social, historical, and cultural ideologies of which they are a part. “With experience, our models both specialize and generalize: we develop theories about kinds of people, kinds of problems, kinds of human conditions. The categories and maxims of these ‘folk theories’ are rarely put to the test” (Bruner, 1986, p.49).

Roth (2007a, 2007b) confirmed that individuals do not suddenly inquire into their familiar surroundings without engaging in practices that make the familiar strange. Roth (2007b) described how the community of which he was a part worked within their familiar surroundings and engaged in social practices that raised questions about what ideologies ought to be enacted by the group to change the poor state of affairs of the water system in their area. Just as Roth (2007b) had initiated social practices to stir the community's discussion about their collective beliefs and values, Elliott (2007a), Goodnough (2008), Hoban and Hastings (2006), Somekh (1994) and Wells (2001, 2009) also started their collaborative inquiries by encouraging collective reflection on practices in teachers' immediate contexts. Unlike Roth (2007b), the researchers in the studies cited focused on changing teachers', not children's practices, and they were interested in making individuals' relations to each other, not their relations to the environment, their objects of collective study. However, participants in Elliott's (2007) and Wells' (2001) studies did not want to participate in inter- and intramental practices with a researcher or with other teachers, and, in the case of Goodnough (2008) and Waters-Adams (1994), teachers experienced negative emotions connected to inquiry practices and stopped inquiring with others or streamlined inquiry practices to mirror a technical rather than an ethically oriented learning process.

As I explored in chapter two, Carr and Kemmis (1996), Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009), Kemmis (2006), Kemmis and McTaggart (2005) and Elliott (1991) defined critical inquiries according to ethically, not technically motivated inter- and intramental processing activities. Because the teacher-outside researcher communities reviewed in chapter two attempted to be critically rather than technically oriented, they set out with a vision to problematize not only their pedagogies about teaching, but also their ideologies about living that were deeply embedded in who they were as educators, which was influenced by their institutional settings.

In Roth's (2007b) context, where he entered into schools with an already established group of environmentalists interested in taking action with school-based participants to improve local water forms, he had a critical inquiry agenda

already rolling and school-based participants jumped on board. He was not shaping a critical inquiry with teachers and students from the grassroots level of searching for suggestions about what they cared to inquire about, and he was not focusing on whether and how teachers took a critical or ethically oriented stance towards their practices, pedagogies and identities as science teachers. I am not devaluing what Roth (2007b) did, but I am pointing out the contextual differences that differentiate his setting from those of the teacher-outside researcher community studies cited.

Bruner (1986), Bourdieu & Passeron (1977), and Leont'ev (1978) provided a rationale for why making the familiar strange is challenging for teachers working with outside researchers. Bruner (1986) noted that human beings strive for emotional stability, which is inextricably connected to maintaining practices that perpetuate individuals' mental models and institutional ideologies:

Emotion is not usefully isolated from the knowledge of the situation which arouses it. Cognition is not a form of pure knowing to which emotion is added...And action is a final common path based on what one knows and feels. Indeed our actions are frequently dedicated to keeping a *state of knowledge* from being upset...or to the avoidance of situations that are anticipated to be emotion-arousing [emphasis is mine] (p.118).

Bruner's (1986) "state of knowledge" parallels Bourdieu's (1977) "habitus": "The habitus is the universalizing mediation which causes an individual agent's practices, without either explicit reason or signifying intent, to be none the less 'sensible' and 'reasonable'" (p.79). In other words, individuals' routine ways of thinking, feeling, acting and valuing create a ready-made set of reasons why it is important *not* to change what works.

I am not making the claim that such ideologies are part of a community's collective consciousness that entrap them (i.e., false consciousness). Instead, I am underlining how findings from practitioner researchers reviewed in chapter two indicate that critical inquiry-based learning is notably challenging because of technical rational ideologies interwoven into all aspects of schooling, teaching and learning. In the case of inexperienced teacher-outside researcher communities

reviewed, there were many complexities for creating initial conditions for inquiry (e.g., teacher not being sure what they were getting into, teachers having different goals for inquiry than the researchers) that were not aspects discussed by Roth (2007b). Roth (2007a, 2007b) provided the theoretical rationale for studying further the relationship between emotions, motivation, and identity, and the nature of ethical motivation in teacher-outside researcher communities. However, because many inexperienced teacher-outside researcher communities struggled to work through emotional tensions to surface ethical motivations, and ideologies/discourses guiding their professional identities, I further examine the relationship between tension and identity in Wenger's (1998) social learning theory.

Wenger's social learning theory

Wenger (1998) paralleled activity theorists' visions of communities as unfolding activity systems that hold dialectical relations between the individual-group-society, and he investigated individual and group learning at points of tension or negotiation as central to his study of learning. In this section, I discuss Wenger's theory in three parts: learning, practice and negotiation; social identities, negotiation and tension; and boundary artifacts, brokering, and boundary practices.

Learning, practice and negotiation. A community of practice happens when individuals are mutually engaged in a negotiated joint enterprise and have a repertoire of shared social practices that coalesce around artifacts/reifications, which include:

language, tools, documents, images, symbols, roles, procedures, regulations, contracts, etc., but it also includes the implicit relations, tacit conventions, subtle cues, untold rules of thumb, recognizable intuitions, specific perceptions, well-tuned sensitivities, embodied understandings, and shared world views" (Wenger, 1998, p.47).

Patterns of practices that emerge as negotiated meanings exist "neither in the world...nor in [the group], but in the dynamic relation of living in the world"

(Wenger, 1998, p.54). As Wenger studied Alinsu workers' social practices, he confirmed that they did not differentiate learning from their everyday practices: "One reason they don't think of their job as learning is that what they learn *is* their practice" [emphasis in original] (p.95).

Because learning happens through Alinsu workers' practices, it necessarily involves participation and reification. "Participation and reification cannot be considered in isolation... They come about through each other" (Wenger, 1998, p.62). Thus, teachers and outside researchers participate in activities— "...making, designing, representing, naming, encoding and describing as well as perceiving, interpreting, using, reusing, decoding, recasting" (Wenger, 1998, p.59)—where a "certain understanding is given form. The form [or reification] then becomes the focus of negotiation" (p.59), and reifications that are "boundary objects" (Wenger, 1998) — "artifacts, documents, terms, concepts [etc.] around which communities of practice...organiz[ed] their connections" (p.105) are foci for communities' negotiations.

Negotiation is the impetus of learning: "Human engagement in the world is first and foremost a process of negotiating meaning" (Wenger, 1998, p. 53). By his own admission, Wenger (1998) used negotiation in general terms to refer to the meaning made during all practices, and he understood the intensity of negotiations as associated with individuals' care for or sense of personal challenge connected to their participation in particular practices:

I have argued that even routine activities like claims processing, eating in the cafeteria involve negotiation of meaning, but it is all the more true when we are involved in activities that we care about or that present us with challenges: when we look in wonder at a beautiful landscape, when we close a delicate deal, when we go on a special date...In such cases, the intensity of the process is obvious, but the same process is at work even if what we end up negotiating turns out to be an experience of meaninglessness...(p.53).

He does not define “care” or “challenge” or explain how individuals participate intensely in practices with little or no care or sense of personal challenge (i.e., they engage in practices at an intense level that is demanded by employers).

Social identities, negotiation and tension. Negotiation and identity are mutually constitutive constructs. Wenger (1998) described how Alinsu claims processors negotiated their needs and the institution’s requirements by choosing to do tasks in unique ways using a range of reifications that got the jobs done in ways that diverged from management’s expectations but were tolerated. Because negotiation of practices involved questions of balancing individual beliefs, values and commitments alongside institutional ones, such decisions were a form of identity work—“identity [was]...an interplay of participation and reification... not an object, but a constant becoming” (Wenger, 1998, pp.153-154).

Wenger (1998) traced how such identity work happened by focusing on how new members to the insurance claims processors community developed a social identity or “community membership.” Specifically, he studied how new and experienced members cultivated three modes of belonging: a) **engagement** (the ongoing negotiation of meaning, the formation of trajectories, the unfolding histories of practices), b) **imagination** (creating new images in relation to practices performed) and c) **alignment** (participants coordinate their energies to align practices). In other words, new Alinsu employees developed routine ways of working, learned how to stop and consider new ways of working that fit into expectations set by more experienced members, and aligned new and old ways on a regular basis. Such identity work centered upon whether and how new Alinsu workers took on the collective’s discourses, their ways of doing, talking, thinking and valuing their relations between each other and the practices and reifications that was the learning or work of being an insurance claims processors—“In sum, membership in a community of practice translates into an identity as a form of competence” (Wenger, 1998, p.153).

Tension is natural and necessary for learning because it requires individuals to constantly negotiate meaning at “nexuses of practices,” where they run into “boundaries,” which keep them outside, and “peripheries,” which bring

them inside of interconnected communities. Tensions can be clearly identifiable: “[d]isagreement, challenges, and competition can all be forms of participation” (Wenger, 1998, p.77) or less obvious: “Ambiguity is not an absence or lack of meaning. Rather, it is a condition of negotiability and thus a condition for the very possibility of meaning” (Wenger, 1998, p.83). Shared histories of practice reduce tension within communities.

Boundary artifacts, brokering, and boundary practices. Creating shared histories of practice requires communities to work through tension, which involves individuals in particular forms of participation and reification at boundary objects. Boundary objects are artifacts (i.e., physical artifacts, routines, locations for meetings, etc.) that are representative of a “nexus of perspectives” (Wenger, 1998, p.108) because they obtain their meanings from multiple, often diversely ideologically and physically located individuals. For example, insurance forms used in one Alinsu office had to work for individuals from other offices. Wenger (1998) understood all shared artifacts to be “boundary objects, and designing them is designing for participation rather than just use” (p.108). Because artifacts ossify when people forget how to use them or use them incorrectly, “brokers” are members of multiple interconnected communities. They “transfer some element of one practice into another” (Wenger, 1998, p.109).

Brokering is complex. Brokers require credibility amongst diverse group members and knowledge about how to coordinate, translate and align perspectives. It is a “participative connection” (Wenger, 1998, p.109) that often goes unrecognized or even abused by members in communities. Part of the reason is that brokers are in the position of relaying beliefs and values underpinning reifications and practices in abbreviated explanations or short interchanges, where what is remembered is what to do with the artifact, not what ideologies are enacted. Therefore, when individuals who implement new practices fail in some way, they are inclined to blame the broker, not their own actions or ideologies driving their actions.

Finally, Wenger (1998) discussed how bringing two or more diverse communities of practice together requires a commitment to “boundary practices,”

where individuals agree to negotiate “by addressing conflicts, reconciling perspectives, and finding resolutions” (p.114). The problem is that “they present the danger of gaining so much momentum on their own that they become insulated from the practices they are supposed to connect” (Wenger, 1998, p.115).

Implications for teacher-outside researcher communities

Wenger (1998) posited that communities evolve as constellations of communities of practice, where relationships between communities are important to understanding what learning means within one community. Because I worked with five teachers who formed different communities of practice, an interconnected vision of communities is crucial to investigating how our social practices unfolded in unique locations over five months. Plus, I was a broker who worked between two schools and communities within schools, so I was in the fortunate position of witnessing and sometimes instigating the melding and transforming of ideas and resources between classes, teachers and teacher groups within and between schools. Thus, Wenger’s social learning theory (1998) presented me with conceptual tools to discuss productive negotiation within and across our diverse communities of practice. However, his theory does not address my questions about power, identity and nonlinear trajectories of participation and learning.

Wenger’s (1998) community of practice criteria (i.e., individuals who are mutually engaged in a negotiated joint enterprise and have a repertoire of shared social practices) works well for examining what happens in trajectories of critical and/or collaborative inquiry-based professional learning studies, where researchers establish clear-cut methods for teachers to share the data collection and reflection aspects of being a researcher. For example, Hoban and Hastings (2006) began their work together with a commitment to reflect on what students had to say about teaching and learning (joint enterprise) because they agreed students’ voices mattered and often went unheard in the busyness of daily teaching (motive). They developed four ways of collecting and analyzing student data and engaged in collective reflective practices that required them to listen to

others' views about students' feedback (shared practices). Thus, Hoban and Hastings (2006) remained tightly focused on determining the best ways for teachers and an outside researcher to collect and respond to student feedback, and it was expected from the outset that teachers were jointly participative researchers.

However, when using Wenger's (1998) social learning theory to examine what happens in communities of practice, where researchers aim to work with a group of teachers to jointly plan and reflect on classroom practices, theoretical problems arise. For example, Waters-Adams (1994) worked with seven teachers and school administrators to investigate science teaching practices (joint enterprise) because the group wanted to get a handle on the new National Curriculum (motive), and they made a joint commitment to "meetings in which people would present the evidence of their practice before the group for some kind of helpful feedback, and it was appreciated that this should...be critical" (p.196) (social practices). The problem, as outlined in more detail earlier in chapter 2, was that negative emotions resulting from their work was blamed on having to learn collaboratively.

Wenger (1998) discussed how learning is akin to negotiating and that negotiating typically happened around boundary artifacts using "boundary practices," where individuals agree to share diverse perspectives of issues. Teacher participants in Waters-Adams' (1994) study expressed concern about honestly sharing their views about classroom evidence at meetings: "I think people felt vulnerable to say, 'Well, I'm having this problem, I just cannot cope with it. I've just given up or something like that'" (p.201). Wenger understood negotiation as central to practice, which was the basis of learning, but negotiating meaning in a group necessarily involves open and transparent communication. Wenger (1998) noted the danger of outside negotiations taking on a momentum that could not be translated into practice, but he did not discuss what to do when a group could not have open discussions to gain momentum in their learning.

Waters-Adams (1994) noted that there was a lack of positive momentum in collaborative discussions due to perceived power imbalances that thwarted

individuals' willingness to be outspoken and honest. Such power imbalances that ultimately rested on larger questions about the culture, history and ideologies at work in the school were not a focus of Wenger (1998) because he concentrated on how individuals worked strategically past such tensions in order to become "competent" workers at Alinsu. Thus, he did not talk about how brokering involved occupying hybrid identities, how boundary practices involved language as an imperfect mediational device, or how individuals who held management positions distorted negotiation processes.

As stated earlier, although Wenger (1998) associated the intensity of individuals' motivations to participate in a joint enterprise with how much they cared about and felt challenged by the enterprise, he does not explain where "care" and a "sense of personal challenge" come from or how identity is related or not to both constructs. Because he represented identities as dialectically related to mediated learning practices, he may agree that care is driven by identities, which are ideologically and discursively oriented (Bakhtin, 1981), but, without knowing his conception of identity and power, it is theoretically challenging to make sense of Waters-Adams' (1994) study using his social learning theory.

I am not the first to recognize the limitations of Wenger's (1998) theory for educational contexts. Barton and Hamilton (2005) argued that the dynamics within communities of practice are not well understood because Wenger (1998) requires more in-depth theories of language, literacy and discourse to address the fluidity and dynamism within and between groups. Other scholars (Creese, 2005; Keating, 2005; Martin, 2005; Tusting, 2005) found that local knowledges and the sociocultural, historical contexts from which such local knowledges evolve are devalued because of Wenger's (1998) interest in discussing patterns or similarities across multiple groups of workers who remain in one location. Finally, Kemmis and Grootenboer (2008) found that Wenger deemphasized the role of historical influences on the development of constellations of communities of practice.

In my thesis, Wenger (1998) provided me with some conceptual tools for understanding my work with five teachers across two sites, and he provided me with a language to talk about negotiations and tension within and across

communities. However, he did not theorize power, identity and tension, which are key constructs in this thesis.

Seeking difference and cultivating tension: Taking a spatial, critical turn

Spatial, critical theorists address “missing conversations” (Lytle, 2000) about identity, power and tension needed to understand critical, collaborative inquiry-based learning. They view moments of tension as integral to how individuals’ identities and practices are mutually constituted in social contexts (Gutiérrez et al., 1995; Hirst, 2004; Handsfield et al., 2010; Leander, 1999, 2002, 2004; Sterponi, 2007), and they rely on Bakhtin’s (1981, 1986) dialogical epistemology: *voice, utterance, tension* (simultaneity and difference), and *chronotope* and *authoritative texts and social heteroglossia*. For that reason, I begin this section with a review of Bakhtin’s key constructs and continue with an examination of how such theorists applied his scholarship and what the implications are for my thesis.

Bakhtin’s dialogical epistemology

Voice, utterance and tension. An individual’s ideas have multiple authors because no thought is singly constructed or owned, and therefore no idea represents truth. For this reason, Wertsch (1991) called his sociocultural approach and his book defining it *Voices of the Mind*: “I have chosen to speak of voices rather than voice because I believe that there are multiple ways of representing reality in approaching a problem” (pp.13-14). In other words, when practitioner research communities negotiate the meaning of an issue, they acknowledge that individuals have unique voices that originate from society’s ideologies, which have influenced particular courses of action over time. Such communities, according to Davis (2004), hold participatory epistemologies because they realize that what is said and done by them impacts what happens in their settings. Therefore, they listen to multiple and diverse voices (polyvocality) in an active, mutually constitutive way, where utterances happen as parts of a conversation or

“chain[s] of speech communication” (Bakhtin, 1986, p.84), and “utterances are not indifferent to one another, and are not self-sufficient; they are aware of and mutually reflective of one another” (Bakhtin, 1986, p.91). Hence, participatory communities recognize the interconnectedness of knowing and doing, and they make knowledge claims by making democratic ideological commitments and designing activities, actions and operations that enact them (Leont’ev, 1978). However, questions persist about how communities develop participatory epistemologies.

Bakhtin’s (1986) theory of living and learning dialogically is central to what it means to hold a participatory epistemology, which starts with his relational conception of identity:

Dialogism argues that all meaning is relative in the sense that it comes only in relation between two bodies occupying simultaneous but different space, where bodies may be thought of as ranging from immediacy of our physical bodies, to political bodies, and to bodies of ideas in general (ideologies) (Holquist, 2002, p.21).

When individuals work in groups, their identities are created by living dialogically between knowing that they occupy their own spaces while simultaneously acknowledging that they do not occupy others’ spaces or ways of seeing the world. Thus, the self enacts an ideology or a discourse, which is “a culturally recognized way of representing a particular aspect of reality from an ideological perspective” (Ivanic, 1998, p.17). An individual enacts a discourse according to what a person says (addressor), to whom they say it (addressee), and to “the particular image [superaddressee] in which they model the belief they will be understood...” (Holquist, 1981, p. xviii), which takes the form of various social languages (ideologies) and speech genres (i.e., situations where social languages are invoked). Given that individuals’ positionings within social spaces are discursively defined, the next step to understanding how participatory epistemologies develop within groups is to understand how such positioning happens.

Identity, chronotopes and dialogical texts. Individuals' identities are events that are in a perpetual state of motion and represented as aesthetic forms— "a telling, a narrative..." (Holquist, 2002, p. 29). Individuals enact possibilities for selfhood from a three-dimensional stance: self, other and the relation between self and other. Just as Alice had no choice but to realize that by being in Wonderland, she enacted an identity, Bakhtin (1986) defined human identity through aesthetic forms in literature to point out that even though identities are in motion, individuals have identities that are inferred from how they construct themselves in temporal, spatial moments.

These temporal, spatial moments are "chronotopes": "We will give the name chronotope (literally, 'time space') to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (Bakhtin, 1981, p.84). Chronotopes are forms of authoring, where "[s]haring existence as an event means among other things that we are—we cannot choose *not* to be—in dialogue, not only with other human beings, but also with the natural and cultural configurations we lump together as 'the world.' [emphasis in original]" (Holquist, 2002, p. 30). Because individuals' voices or identities are the discourses that individuals know, such discourses orient their interactions and reflections as chronotopes, but individuals have several, not just one identity to balance at any one time, so their identities are dynamic hybrids.

Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner and Cain (1998) defined individuals' hybrid identities as "figured worlds," which are "socially and culturally constructed realm[s] of interpretation in which particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others" (p.52). Individuals' "figured worlds are socially organized and reproduced" (p.41) by artifacts that they use to reinforce or shift their positioning within and amongst narratives of figured worlds that compose who they are at particular times and places. In other words, Holland et al.'s (1998) spatiotemporal narratives that help individuals to organize and to imagine their next moves mirror Bakhtin's chronotopes that "thicken time" externally through the novel and internally for the author who narrates the tales.

Just as Bakhtin (1981) conceptualized individuals as engaged in a dialogical process of understanding who they are with others and with their multiple options for selfhood as figured worlds, Holland et al. (1998) defined living in such external/social and internal/personal tension between different possibilities for selfhood as “identity in practice” (p.271). While living in such tension, individuals construct multiple, often conflicting or hybrid identities: “Humans are both blessed and cursed by their dialogic nature—their tendency to encompass a number of views in virtual simultaneity and tension” (p.15). They construct such hybrid identities by improvising: “Improvisations are the sort of impromptu actions that occur when our past, brought to the present as habitus, meets with a particular combination of circumstances and conditions for which we have no set response” (p.18). Individuals’ improvisations are ways of enacting social languages or discourses and are therefore always acts of “ventriloquation”: “The word in language is half someone else’s. It becomes one’s own only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention” (Bakhtin, 1981, pp.293-294). Whether or not individuals populate their words with intention, their discourses orient their stance towards the utterances of others and open up or not opportunities to “interanimate the utterances of another” (Holquist, 2002, p.52).

Interanimation is dependent on individuals positioning themselves within a conversation, as they juxtapose words and meanings of their own with others: “[U]nderstanding strives to match the speaker’s word with a *counter-word* [emphasis in original]” (Voloshinov, 1973, p.102). Wertsch (1991) explained how Bakhtin (1981) acknowledged that the “degree to which one voice has the authority to come into contact with and interanimate another” (p.78) reflects whether and how groups learn collaboratively and dialogically. When inter- and intramental processing promotes interanimation of voices or polyvocality, differences between words and ideas are locations for exploring the heteroglossic nature of language. In other words, the collective juxtaposes meanings of each other’s words as locations for generating new ideas: “The semantic structure of an

internally persuasive discourse is not *finite*, it is *open*; in each of the next contexts that dialogize it, this discourse is able to reveal ever new *ways to mean* [emphasis in original]” (Bakhtin, 1981, pp.345-346). In other words, collaborative learning as “joint participation” (Gutiérrez et al., 1999) is an ethical orientation, which presupposes that others have something valuable to say and that interchanges with diverse individuals enhance opportunities to create generative collective texts and possibilities for selfhood.

Authority texts and socially heteroglossia. Bakhtin (1981) explained how univocality happens when “authoritative texts” predominate in prose. In the case of teacher-outside researcher contexts, when individuals rely on ideologies that do not value joint participation (Gutierrez et al., 1999) and are ethically positioned to see some individuals as having more or less valuable things to say, such an authoritative orientation can dominate and stifle conversations:

It is by its very nature incapable of being double-voiced; it cannot enter into hybrid constructions. If completely deprived of its authority it becomes simply an object, a relic, a thing...an alien body, there is no space around it to play in, no contradictory emotions—It is not surrounded by an agitated and cacophonous dialogic life; and the context around it dies, words dry up (Bakhtin, 1981, p.344).

Individuals who speak from authoritative discourses do not necessarily do so consciously because such discourses may be a significant and habitual part of their figured worlds (Holland et al., 1998). However, as Holland et al., 1998, pointed out, habitus (Bourdieu, 1977) does not preclude interactions from opening up moments of social heteroglossia, where multiple words and ideas come together during a conversation.

Because my review of teacher-outside researcher studies illuminated how opening such moments of social heteroglossia within communities of practice was, at minimum, a challenge, and at worst, a practical impossibility, it is this final issue that I explore in this chapter.

Spatial, critical theorists

Spatial, critical theorists analyzed classroom and professional learning interactions as potential “third spaces” or “contact zones...spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power...” (Pratt,1991, p.33). In this section, I discuss how Gutiérrez et al.(1999), Leander (1999, 2001, 2002, 2004), Handsfield et. Al, (2010), and Sterponi (2007) applied Bakhtin’s (1981, 1986) scholarship to investigate how individuals’ and groups’ transformed and stabilized their practices and identities in diverse contexts.

Gutiérrez and colleagues. Gutiérrez et al. (1995) imagined the classroom as a space for social heteroglossia (Bakhtin, 1981), and they analyzed not only the ways that the teacher constructed “authority texts” (Bakhtin, 1981) or dominant “scripts” in the classroom, but also how culturally and linguistically diverse students engaged in “counterscripts” that interacted with the teachers’ scripts and “transcendent scripts” in schools. “A script...represents an orientation that members come to expect after repeated interactions in contexts constructed both locally and over time” (Gutiérrez, 1993 cited in Gutiérrez et al., 1995, p. 449). By tracing patterns of participation within the classroom, which they posited “mirror[ed] the larger societal structures and power relationships...” (Gutiérrez et al., 1995), they conceptualized such mutually constituted social spaces as windows into whether and how students and teachers took critical stances towards each other, their practices and issues raised by their participation in classroom activities. By critical stances, they meant that individuals cultivated third spaces: “...the social space[s] within which counter-hegemonic activity, or contestation of dominant discourses, can occur for both students and teachers” (Gutiérrez et al., 1995, p.451). They aimed to get past critical theories that “glorified” the marginal student as someone in need of rescuing and/or that “blamed” the teacher for not doing the rescuing; instead, Gutiérrez et al. (1995) argued, “It is within the third space that the *how* of both a social and critical theory can be implemented [emphasis in original]” (p.451).

The focus of their study was on power and how to understand the relationship between power, discourses and identity stabilization and transformation in the classroom. In their view, power is inextricably related to the practices that individuals participate in, which are influenced by the ideologies or discourses of communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) of which they are a part, which are, in turn, affected by ideologies and discourses of the institutions within which they coexist (i.e., “transcendent scripts”). They relied on Luke (1996) who subscribed to Bourdieu’s (1977) notion of habitus, and Gutiérrez et al. (1995) posited that researchers who take a critical stance towards their work are best to document classroom interactions by analyzing “scripts” and “counterscripts” to determine how to create “counter-hegemonic activity” (Apple, 1993) in classroom communities.

Because teacher-outside researcher reports gloss over tension, Gutiérrez et al. (1995) illuminated tension as a valuable aspect of learning. Their analysis of small snippets of classroom transcripts, where they searched for points of tension that showed teachers’ and students’ scripts interanimating each other, uncovered critical learning within lengthy transcripts that might otherwise have been interpreted negatively. Gutiérrez (2008) looked back on the 1995 study and realized that “It was these analyses that pushed me to attend to contradictions and to rethink a strict temporal analysis of classrooms...to view classrooms as multiple, layered and conflicting activity systems with various interconnections” (p.152). Gutiérrez (2008) explained how attending to “borderlines” of scripts and counterscripts illustrated how “...formal and informal, official and unofficial spaces of the learning environment intersect, creating the potential for authentic interaction and a shift in organizations of learning and what counts as knowledge” (p.152).

Leander. Leander (1999) acknowledged Gutiérrez and colleagues (1995) for pointing out the importance of taking a spatial turn in his scholarship: “The more or less metaphorical use of ‘space’ in Gutiérrez et al.’s research...seemed like an invitation for me to begin to more thoroughly theorize the relations between space and classroom discourse” (p.8). He took a spatial turn away from an overly

temporal analysis of classroom interactions because he posited, “*The production of social space is a powerful tool for understanding the dynamic, co-constructive relations between classroom discourse and identity*” [emphasis in original] (Leander, 1999, p.2). Just as I am concerned about reducing teacher-outside researcher learning to reductive and prescriptive analytic methods in this thesis, Leander (1999) aimed to avoid making inferences about students’ identities and practices based on discourse analyses that treated classroom spaces as “containers” for their learning. Instead, he reconceptualized classrooms and classroom interactions as third or social spaces (Lefebvre, 1991; Soja, 1996):

A social space is a set of relations produced by persons with symbolic and material means that is meaningfully used in the production of (self and other) identities. Symbolic and material means may include architectural spaces, imagined geographies, spoken and written discourse, embodied practices, etc. As social spaces involve the production of identity, they are constituted as relations of power. Social spaces are always dynamic and multiple, and are produced over time in complex relation to one another (Leander, 1999, p.9).

Leander’s reconceptualization meant that he studied verbal, nonverbal and material artifacts as he observed interactions inside and outside classrooms, and he conceptualized interactions as “figured worlds” (Holland et al., 1998), where “rather than being a system of activity in particular, the figured world is more of a socially constructed genre of activity that is used in the production and interpretation of social life” (Leander, 1999, p.52). He attended to patterns of individuals’ and groups’ figured worlds as “speech genres” (Bakhtin, 1981), which mirrored Gutiérrez et al.’s (1995) scripts, counterscripts and transcendent scripts.

Leander (1999, 2001, 2002, 2004) illuminated a way beyond the epistemological-methodological crossroads because he extended Gutiérrez et al.’s (1995) temporal focus on verbal artifacts with his spatial-temporal focus on multimodal artifacts.

Sterponi, and Handsfield, Crumpler and Dean. Sterponi (2007), and Handsfield et al. (2010) applied Bakhtin's (1981) chronotopic conception of timespaces and turned to de Certeau's (1984) "strategies and tactics" to investigate whether and how participants confront institutional discourses in their contexts. Sterponi reported on how child participants resisted the silent independent reading practices, a habitat (Bourdieu, 1977) in their school, by creating alternative spaces for peer reading interactions. Although students were not openly verbally disruptive, they actively opposed the silent reading ideology through nonverbal and verbal moves that was their counterscript, which was carefully orchestrated to work in clandestine but agentic ways. Handsfield et al. (2010) studied how one teacher tactically negotiated her identity and practices in multiple social spaces over time. They were amongst the first scholars to consider how teachers interact with each other by invoking particular chronotopes that made it possible for counterscripts to run parallel to dominant scripts in schools.

Implications for teacher-outside researcher communities

Practitioner researchers require theoretical tools to understand how to study tension, identity and power, and spatial, critical theorists provided conceptual and methodological ways to understand such constructs and their relationship to critical, collaborative inquiry-based learning. Gutiérrez et al. (1995) investigated emotional, relational and ethical tensions as opening up potential third spaces that could be "counterhegemonic" (Apple, 1993). Their work provided practitioner researchers with a way to talk about disruptive interactions as moments of criticality instead of assuming tension in learning meant that something was wrong with their methods. They also highlighted the power of analyzing focal interactions or small snippets of transcripts that centered upon points of tension in interactions rather than glossing over such moments and "blaming" them on students' backgrounds that did not adequately prepare them to take part in school discourses or teachers' incapacities to meaningfully involve students in their lessons. Leander's (1999, 2001, 2002, 2004) reconceptualization of scripts as chronotopic (Bakhtin, 1981) third or social spaces (Lefebvre, 1991;

Soja, 1996) afforded scholars ways to discuss how patterns of activity stabilize or destabilize individuals' or groups' identities by taking a spatial-temporal view of learning and attending to multimodal aspects of spaces. Finally, Sterponi (2007) and Handsfield et al. (2010) showed that students' and teachers' interactions are often tactical moves against a dominant discourse rather than examples of passive resistance. Thus, I apply such theoretical and methodological understandings of tension, power and identity to my study of critical, collaborative inquiry-based professional learning in this thesis to enlarge possibilities for thinking in new ways about teacher-outside researcher learning.

Moving beyond an epistemological-methodological crossroads

To summarize, I take a realist ontological social constructivist and a “weak social constructionist” (Schwandt, 1998) stance in this thesis. I contend that what is and can be known is socially constructed through intersubjective descriptions and that truth claims can be made about reality. I take a participatory epistemological or interobjectivist view of human interactions, where I see human interactions as mutually constitutive, so what we do shapes others and the world around us. Therefore, I posit that educators who work together are enacting a lived as much as perspectival and conceptual “inquiry as stance” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009).

Vygotsky's (1978, 1986) theoretical framework concentrated on how individuals learn together and cocreate intersubjective truth claims, so I moved from his key understandings about inter- and intrasubjective processing to activity theorists who defined the interobjectivist nature of coconstructing knowledge and the emotional and ethical tensions that are inherent in such processes. Roth (2007b) illuminated how Leont'ev (1978) imagined human activity as rooted in an ethical impetus, and I emphasized how taking an ethical stance towards an inquiry is fundamental to taking a critical stance (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 2009). Leont'ev (1978) and Roth (2007a, 2007b) also opened up a new conversation about the emotional dimensions of motivation, identity and practice. Wenger (1998) created a theoretical window through which to view tension as negotiation;

however, a more in-depth discursive view of identity was required to understand how individuals worked through such emotional, ethical tensions in collectives. Bakhtin (1981, 1986) uncovered the relationship between dialogical living inside ethical tensions or differences as discursively mediated chronotopes. Spatial, critical scholars addressed “missing conversations” (Lytle, 2000) about how such moments move between authoritative and social heteroglossic texts and contexts as third spaces.

Chapter 4: Philosophizing Methodology



She had quite forgotten the Duchess by this time, and was a little startled when she heard her voice close to her ear. “You’re thinking about something, my dear, and that makes you forget to talk. I can’t just tell you now what the moral of that is, but I shall remember it in a bit.”

“Perhaps it hasn’t one,” Alice ventured to remark.

“Tut, tut, child!” said the Duchess. “Everything’s got a moral, if only you can find it” (Carroll, 2006, p. 107).

Orienting stances

When the Duchess first arrived, Alice was musing to herself about whether or not it was pepper that made people hot-tempered and sugar that made them sweet-tempered. When the Duchess reminded her that there wasn’t a rule book for how to enact an identity in Wonderland, Alice reconsidered the implications of having to think ethically, not just technically, about how to get along in this new reality. Similarly, I had conceptualized collaborative action research as a methodology, but after talking more about it with scholars in my concurrent interview research, I reframed it as practical philosophy. In this thesis, I take two stances towards my research questions: How is professional learning experienced by teachers participating in collaborative action research?, and What is the role of tension in critical, collaborative inquiry communities? I am an action researcher who had an “intersubjective” (Kemmis, 2009a) or “insider-outsider” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993) perspective working with five teachers on their inquiries, and I am a spectator of our experiences. As a participant, I conceptualize collaborative action research as practical philosophy and introduce teacher participants’ contexts, and our data sources and methods. As a spectator, I describe my ecologies of practice (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008) frame for my multisite case study and hermeneutic philosophical approach towards data analysis.

Collaborative action research: Practical philosophy

It took me several months of rethinking what it meant for the teachers and me to engage in action research to appreciate that our learning was not guided by a theory of methods. “Strictly speaking, ‘methodology’ refers to the theoretical rationale...that justif[ies] the research methods appropriate to the field of study” (Carr, 2006a, p.422), which meant that if the teachers and I had approached action research as a methodology then we followed “a priori theoretical knowledge” (Carr, 2006a, p.422) that guided our data collection and analysis.

When we met on the information day, I had used Kemmis and McTaggart’s (1988a, 2005) ideas to structure my presentation. What I stated that day and maintained throughout the study was that action research was about us jointly planning, teaching, analyzing and reflecting in self-critical iterative cycles that did not prescribe particular methods or steps:

The criterion of success is not whether participants have followed the steps faithfully but rather whether they have a strong and authentic sense of development and evolution of their *practices*, their *understandings* of their practices, and the *situations* within which we practiced [emphasis in original] (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p.277).

I emphasized that decision-making was collaborative; nevertheless, the teachers regularly wanted me to tell them whether and how they were “doing” action research “right,” and I was challenged to let go of my methodological thinking:

The teachers want to plan more, so I will make more time for that...but I am worried that we are not reflecting on practices in a deep enough way....When I reread Kemmis and McTaggart’s (2005) criticism of their previous scholarship, they caution against researchers “seeking to empower” by advocating for a...political agenda for the group or applying “techniques of facilitation”...The supervisory committee said, “Do safe things with teachers.” Should I try more structured ways of reflecting...but if I do that...will they take ownership if I orchestrate it all? (Research journal, March 12, 2010).

Practical philosophy as praxis: ‘knowing doing’

Kemmis and colleagues have been working together as part of an international research program, Pedagogy, Education and Praxis, at Charles Sturt University, Research Institute for Professional Practice Learning and Education (RIPPLE) in their “Teacher Talk” group. They are developing their theoretical and practical understanding of action research as practical philosophy or praxis. I rely upon their conception of *praxis* rooted in the Aristotelian and post-Marxian use of the term because, as Kemmis (2010c) argued, education is about developing practitioners’ conduct in ways that will allow them and others around them to flourish and to guide the development of education as a practice. The Aristotelian use of praxis relates to developing persons who live well, and the second use of praxis is about developing societies worth living in— “the double purpose of education.” Because such scholars define action research using diverse terminology (e.g., critical participatory action research, critical action research), I call my study “collaborative action research.”

The teachers and I cultivated social spaces in various settings (school and away spaces), where we took on multiple stances towards our work together by cultivating *dispositions*-aims and (actions/types of reasoning):

- a) *episteme*-to seek knowledge (theoria/theoretical reasoning),
- b) *techne*-to seek to produce something (poiesis/practical reasoning),
- c) *phronesis*-to seek to act wisely and morally (praxis/moral reasoning),
- and
- d) *critical*-to seek to overcome irrationality, injustice and suffering (criticality/emanicipatory reasoning) (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008).

In practical terms, we engaged in professional reading about teaching comics writing and we read comics texts to seek knowledge and to shape plans for our classroom work and reporting requirements (episteme/theoria/theoretical reasoning); we created materials for classrooms lessons that we shared between and within schools (techne/poiesis/practical reasoning); we reflected on our practices often in brief moments in class and for more extended periods after class and in the away space, where we asked: What should we do to ensure that we are

making students' lives better? and In whose interests are we acting? (Kemmis & Smith 2008a) (phronesis/moral reasoning/praxis);and, we reflected during such inside and outside classroom contexts about injustices, irrational practices and suffering caused for students and for teachers because of practices and traditions within the school, school district and education generally that required change or creating conditions for change (criticality/criticality/emancipatory reasoning).

From an Aristotelian stance, we enacted praxis as “morally-committed action, oriented and informed by traditions in the field” (Kemmis & Smith, 2008b, p. 263). “An act of praxis is to be understood as an act in life, an act that will or will not contribute to living one’s life rightly and well” (Kemmis, 2010a, p.2). The teachers and I engaged in praxis to understand better ourselves, our practices and the situations within which we practiced; however, we also engaged in praxis as “history-making action,” a post-Marxian use of the term (Marx, 1971 as cited by Kemmis, 2010b).

Praxis as morally-committed action. Kemmis (2010a) presented criteria for assessing whether or not we enacted morally-committed action in various social spaces. He began from the premise that action researchers can only work from a participant stance to transform their individual and collective ways of thinking and talking (understandings), acting (actions) and relating (relationships). In other words, an outside researcher cannot impose action research as a form of professional learning onto a person or group; it has to be taken up, in this case, by the individual teacher participants and groups of which they are a part. In this thesis, I present evidence that illustrates how the five teachers and I took up the various dispositions, aims and forms of reasoning listed on the previous page and how we changed our understandings of our practices, situations within which we practiced, and our ways of talking, thinking, acting and relating over five months. Because I am especially interested in how we cultivated praxis, in this section, I focus on what it means to describe and analyze praxis *in process* as a spectator of our interactions.

During my interview with Stephen Kemmis, I asked him to elaborate on his thoughts about what it means to participate in action research as praxis and to

take a critical stance towards collaborative inquiries. He told me a story about his experiences in the Teacher Talk group as they inquired into changes in the way that professors were expected to communicate with students using a new technological platform (Interact):

The University tells us we have to do it; well, maybe we should just get on with it and say, 'Fine,' but to what extent does it change the nature of our real educational work? If Interact causes us to have a highly mediated relationship with students, of a kind that means that we no longer care about them or connect with them or can engage them seriously in grappling with ideas, then maybe we should refuse it (S. Kemmis, personal communication, June 3, 2010).

He emphasized that they enacted praxis in the Aristotelian sense of the term when their group sought to *think morally* about what their possible courses of action could be on this issue of whether or not to take on Interact. They cultivated such a moral stance by locating the *value* and *purpose* in their everyday practices as educators and by assessing whether or not Interac supported their moral commitments to students. As well as thinking morally, they cultivated ways to *think historically* about their possible courses of action:

...I think we're really wanting to understand how we are connected with the world in the way that Hans-Georg Gadamer (1975) describes as "effective historical consciousness." How do we develop effective historical consciousness of ourselves as in a tradition and part of a tradition (like the tradition of university work)? And of course, we know we must be misled and self-deceived and self-interested and so on about some of the ways we see the world, but, you know, the 'Teacher Talk' time is a kind of privileged, enchanted time where it's possible for us to see how we are within it, but it's also a time to affirm...(S. Kemmis, personal communication, June 3, 2010).

Hence, praxis happens in dialogical processes or conversations, where educators think morally and historically about how to aim for more just, equitable and sustainable ways of engaging in classroom practices to make students' lives

“better” (Lytle, 2008). Kemmis confirmed that such a dialogical approach has a moral aim, but the process itself surfaces the value and purpose of the work that educators do, which is affirming of who educators are:

It’s immensely affirming despite change and difficult circumstances in the contemporary university, which most people these days have in most universities in Australia anyway. Despite these difficult times, we nevertheless feel a sense that our work has a real value and purpose (personal communication, June 3, 2010).

Collaborative action research as praxis or morally committed action is to be judged on the basis of whether and how dialogical interactions cultivate *individual praxis* and *collective praxis* (Kemmis, 2010a), where such methods engage participants in ways of interacting that not only lead to potentially life-affirming practices, but they are nurturing processes that support educators to grapple with difficult issues and surface their moral commitments to working through such issues that verify the importance of their work and identities as educators. Kemmis underlined that such conversations are not “therapy sessions,” where the goal is to make everyone feel good; they are morally-oriented think tanks, where people have the support of each other to think through what can be insurmountable problems if faced alone (personal communication, June 3, 2010).

In this thesis, I study praxis *in process* by focusing on the teachers’ and my dialogical negotiations, where we brought different points of view to bear on ethical issues about whether and how we could make students’ lives better. I also attend to the nature of the dialogical process itself. Specifically, I focus on cultural/discursive, material/economic and sociopolitical tensions in such interactions as points of struggle or contestation, where we puzzle through troubling emotions and relational issues that coexist with challenging ethical problems. I also investigate whether and how complex tensions within interactions become power struggles rather than morally-oriented intellectual negotiations and ways that such interactions stabilize practices and identities that work against praxis.

Praxis as history-making action. Action research is “history-making action” or praxis that comes about through a *critically* oriented inquiry, where action research communities seek to make others’ lives better:

So maybe the answer is that it’s changed our work a little bit, so we constantly are trying to explore the nature of our educational practices and how they connect up to the affordances and constraints of the actual institutions we work in, the actual lives we lead, to see whether we can really act as we intend to. So, to me, having a ‘critical’ grasp is to say that we want to be acting in the real history in which find ourselves, for the good for humankind and for the good for our students, for example: for those we are researching with (S. Kemmis, personal communication, June 3, 2010).

Kemmis (2010a) posits that action research: “... is for the sake of history—what happens as the consequences of our actions, individually and collectively, for others and for the world. In this sense, what happens is more central than our knowledge of it” (p.423).

He underlined that, in the past, he and Wilfred Carr, being new academics writing at a time (mid 1980s) when critical thinkers such as Habermas and Marx deeply influenced their thinking and few feminist scholars had entered into the “critical” research conversation, likely overemphasized the need for “consequences” of “history-making action” to resemble Marx’s (1845) “revolutionary action.” However, in the above excerpt, Kemmis sees praxis as “history-making action” that is dependent on action researchers developing *critical insights* together, where such insights carry along with them identity transformations that have long-lasting impacts on the institutions within which people work and on education as a sociohistorical practice.

If I understand Kemmis correctly, critical insights reflect that a group or an individual recognizes that their actions impact all living things as part of an interconnected, global planet. In many respects, it blurs with praxis as morally-committed action, but where it differs is that it is aimed at thinking about the potential effects of individuals’ actions beyond the local contexts within which

they live and work. Kemmis (2006) stated that critical participatory action researchers have the “double-task of the development of individual persons and the development of good societies and the good for human kind” (p. 468). Therefore, I investigate whether and how the five teachers and I negotiated broader implications of our work as educators; for example, how we could impact positively others beyond our communities of practice (e.g., parents, other teachers) and other educators and students in various parts of the world.

Participants

Parker Elementary

I worked with Carmen (grade 6), Kate (grade 3), and Samantha (grade 4) at Parker Elementary, a middle-sized elementary school with approximately 300 students (Kindergarten to grade six) located in an upper socioeconomic part of a city in Alberta. Samantha was in her eleventh year of teaching; she had taught special needs students (3 years), and grades three (3 years) and four (5 years), and it was her ninth year at this school. Kate was in her ninth year of teaching, and she had taught grades one (4 years) and three (5 years), and it was her fifth year in the school. Carmen was in her fourth year of teaching, her second year of teaching grade six, and she had taught grades one (1 year) and two (1 year), all at Parker Elementary. Samantha and Carmen were related, and Kate and Samantha had been grade level partners, so they knew each other well. I did not know Carmen before the research but had a professionally friendly relationship with Samantha and had met Kate on a few occasions. The school principal was enthusiastic about the project because writing was the professional development focus for the school.

Samantha and Carmen were involved in numerous teacher leadership activities. Carmen ran a competitive running club, prepared grade one students for musical concerts, and worked with Samantha on the Technology Committee responsible for teaching staff about SMART boards. Samantha mentored a student teacher, who taught 80% throughout March and April, and Samantha was part of the AISI-funded Science Inquiry professional development project that involved

her in extra outside sessions and in-class and on-site learning and sharing with staff. Kate took part in extracurricular duties such as planning religious celebrations, but she had learned that she was pregnant at the start of the research and, by her own admission, had put limits on her extra commitments.

Carmen and Kate had relatively small classes of 19 and 23 students respectively and described their groups as mostly “at-level” writers. Carmen commented that she had one girl who was a very talented writer, but who was emotionally unpredictable, and she had a few boys who required close monitoring because of behavior problems. There were five students who occupied more of her time because of their language learning needs, but she did not have any students on individual learning plans (detailed individual learning goals and instructional strategies). Kate spent more time with a number of boys who did not like narrative writing, a few students who struggled to write coherently, a second language student who required notable differentiation, and an Autistic child. Kate had two students on individual program plans. Kate and Carmen chose to combine their students for comics writing lessons at the beginning of the study.

Samantha had 28 students, “This is a weak group. Kate can attest to that because we taught them last year.” Samantha had two boys whose first language was Spanish, and one boy was just beginning to speak and write in English. She did not have any students on individual program plans. A second teacher taught her Social Studies curriculum so that she could work with such students more intensely individually and in small groups, and/or take prep time because of her large class compared to others in the school.

Jackson Elementary

I worked with two male grade six teachers at Jackson Elementary, a small K-6 school (approximately 165 students) located in a lower-middle socioeconomic area of the same city as Parker Elementary. They had 26 English-speaking students and one boy whose first language was Korean. They had four students on individual program plans for behavioral, emotional, and language learning needs. Ben was the main grade six teacher, and Mark taught English

language arts twice a week by doing his own writing projects with students. Ben was in his eleventh year of teaching, had taught grades one (2 years), two (2 years), five (2 years) and six (4 years), and he had been at Jackson Elementary for three years. He had taken part in an AISI-funded Social Studies Inquiry project, but he had completed it before the research began. Mark was in his seventh year of teaching at Jackson Elementary, and he had taught grades 4 (1 year), 6 (3.5 years), and special needs students (2 years), all at Jackson Elementary. Mark was an acting assistant principal, and in that role he was responsible for the technology professional development for his staff.

Timeline

On January 28 and 29, 2010, I contacted the five prospective teacher participants through school principals at two different elementary schools, Parker and Jackson Elementary, located in the same city in Alberta. The teachers met for a full day information session on February 9, 2010 at a centrally located professional development building, the “away space” that remained the same throughout the study. The whole group met for 4 ½ days at this away space (i.e., February 9, March 12, April 9, 22, 23, and May 21) to plan, assess and analyze student data, and to reflect on our practices.

I met with the three teachers, Carmen, Kate and Samantha, from Parker Elementary on February 16, 2010, at a local ski hill to plan for our first comics writing lessons, and that same group met on a regular basis, for a total of 8 times at their school for approximately 35-40 minutes (usually Mondays at lunch time) and 6 times at recess for approximately 10-15 minutes from March-May, 2010. I met with individual teachers at Parker Elementary informally and worked consistently with each of them in their classrooms twice a week (i.e., approximately 60-75 minute classroom periods) for 10-12 weeks with two breaks, Spring Break (March 30, 2010-April 5, 2010) and a conference that I attended from April 26-29, 2010.

I met with Ben and Mark from Jackson Elementary at their school on February 18, 2010, but Mark was called out of the meeting and was absent for

most of it due to administrative duties. I met less regularly with Ben and Mark together, but I did meet with Ben before and after class (i.e., approximately 15-20 minutes in total) most days that I was in his classroom, which was twice a week for 90-120-minute English language arts blocks for 16 weeks from February 20-May 19, 2010. I met with Ben, 4 times, and with Mark, 6 times, outside of regular class time to plan and/or reflect on our classroom and professional learning experiences throughout the study.

Data sources

Classroom

We collected student artifacts (i.e., pictures, written reflections, written responses to surveys, comics writing drafts), student transcripts and emic data from audio and video recorded writing conferences and interviews. We each used digital audiorecorders to document student-teacher writing conferences and formal/informal student interviews from March-May, 2010. Approximately 22 hours of student conference and interview data was collected over five months, and all of the audiorecorded data was transcribed. We also collected 132 hours of audiorecorded classroom lessons. I transcribed 6-9 lessons per teacher from February-May. We collected 467 pictures and 5 hours of video footage.

Professional learning

I transcribed 62.5 hours of audiorecorded group meetings at the away space and at the teacher participants' schools. I also copied teachers' journals, artwork, poetry, and collages, and I wrote over 600 pages of professional reflective research journal entries and field notes, and I took pictures and video clips of professional learning interactions. I transcribed all video footage.

Methods

Classroom

Teachers revised or created their own student data collection tools (i.e., surveys, interview questions, assignments, assessment materials, student

reflection prompts). They used each other's and my ideas or suggestions in on- and offline professional resources, including but not limited to Bearne, Graham and Marsh's *Classroom Action Research in Literacy: A Guide to Practice* (2007). In February, Mark and I created a blog space through Edmodo, where students wrote reflections in cross-school collaborative groups and teachers had their own space to write and share resources. Throughout the project, the teachers wrote notes and reflections on students' learning, especially when I taught and they observed classroom lessons.

Professional learning

I wrote and sketched in-depth field notes during all classroom and professional development activities. Each day I "expanded" (Kouritzin, 2002) the field notes using a different color of pen. For example, I revised details of sketches (e.g., I sketched positioning of individuals or visual cues such as charts, change of classroom seating arrangements, etc.) and added extra details to my first rough notes of stories that teachers shared. I also completed jot notes about non-verbal aspects of our interactions (i.e., mood, tone of voice, facial expressions) and placed relevant pictures and references to video clips in my expanded field notes.

I conducted semi-structured interviews with the teachers and principals that were designed to evoke storytelling (Ellis, 2009). Because teachers' time was limited, I only conducted formal interviews at the end of the study. For such interviews, participants received the questions that were used to guide our conversation (appendix, chapter 4, figures 2 and 3) prior to the interview. I audio- or video- recorded and/or took field notes about the formal and informal conversations that occurred throughout our everyday interactions inside and outside of the school.

Although I took a lead on planning and organizing the materials for our whole group meetings (i.e., booked the facility, ordered snacks and lunches, brought extra planning materials, set up a computer), teachers willingly gave me their input regarding what we should do and how we should use our time. For

example, based on the teachers' requests, I went to the principals to request two extra half days for whole group planning. I also scheduled a local artist to teach art three times (60-75 minute blocks) for each teacher throughout March and April. I booked an extra half-day to collaboratively plan our end-of-project celebration, where students from both schools got together to read their comics to each other and to local professional comics writers and artists, and to watch a celebratory video created from various clips of our entire journey.

Our whole day meetings included time for planning, reflecting, analyzing data, and an extra agenda item (i.e., learning how to use the blog, sharing comics texts). Our reflection time was 20-30 minute conversations between 1-3 group members that focused on what teachers were learning about themselves as teachers of narrative writing through comics and themselves as learners through collaborative action research. We typically debriefed and engaged in some kind of artistic reflection for another 15-20 minutes; such reflections included: writing a poem about who I am as a collaborator; drawing, painting, and/or listing personal reflections connected to the word, collaboration; creating a school collage of critical insights about what it means to teach and learn through comics writing. Our planning time involved working as a whole group and in pairs and threes to read professionally and to compose lessons. Our assessing of student work included marking comics drafts in pairs and jointly writing feedback to students, and analyzing transcripts of writing conferences and providing critically constructive feedback.

To conclude, several students from both schools approached me about preparing something for their teachers about how much they had enjoyed the comics writing project. I met privately with each class and the consensus was to create a book of students' reflections to be presented by the students to their teachers at the final celebration. During May, I met with each student, transcribed their reflections, and had each student revise their draft reflection and select a picture for their page. Many students' parents were excited to see what students were preparing, so I sent home their preliminary reflection page, including their pictures, and parents signed a consent form for reflection pages to be published in

a book for the child's teacher. I received permission from most students and their parents to use their written reflections, comics and pictures (where faces and any identifying features of the students, teachers and school are obscured) as part of my thesis. Students also received a copy of their classes' final comics in a book form.

Collaborative action research: A spectator's view

In this section, I take a spectator's view of our practices from an "ecologies of practice" (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008) stance, indicate how such a stance helped me to frame chapters five, six and seven, and conclude by describing my representation of our learning as a multisite case study.

Ecologies of practice

The five teachers and I met in different groups at each school site and at the professional learning away space over five months. Kemmis, Wilkinson, Hardy & Edwards-Groves (2008) "ecologies of practice" theoretical frame, which coincides with Wenger's (1998) and others' thinking about communities as fluid, dynamic and interconnected "life-like" entities has heuristic value for seeing how our diverse groups interconnected. An ecological view assumes a dialectical relationship between individuals' practices and "practice architectures" and/or "metapractices," where such practice architectures and metapractices mediate learning (Kemmis, 2009a). Therefore, in my thesis, I am interested in the study of practices distributed within and across communities of practice, where no individual holds all of the knowledge and skills needed to engage in practices.

The five teachers and I engaged in practices of collaborative action research about teaching narrative writing through comics, and we learned together as individuals who were already part of well established school and district practice architectures and metapractices of professional learning and teaching writing. Our individual and collective practices in teachers' schools and away spaces were preshaped by such practice architectures that have mutually constitutive theoretical dimensions: a) *cultural-discursive* (medium of language: our sayings), b) *material-economic* (medium of work/activity: our doings), and c)

social-political (medium of power: our relatings). Even though I reflected on our practices through such individual theoretical windows, I studied our practices as fluid, ephemeral, dynamic living things (Kemmis, 2009a, 2010ba, 2010b).

Leander (2002) argued that a dialectical, dynamic conception of practices requires researchers to pay equal attention to macro- and micro-views of social spaces. Leander (2004) put forth that specific practices are understood as inextricably connected to the macro-frames of broader spatial-temporal practices or “spatial temporal histories” that are at work in classrooms and schools. I understand Leander’s spatial histories as resting on theoretical commitments that align with Kemmis’ (2009a) notion of practice architectures as “teleoaffective structures” (Schatzki, 1996, 2001, 2002): “densely woven patterns of saying, doing, and relating that enable and constrain each new interaction, giving familiar practices like education...their characteristic shapes” (Kemmis, 2007, p.6). Therefore, in chapter five, I represent teacher participants’ “spatial histories” (Leander, 2004) of professional learning through my analysis of their principals’ descriptions of collaborative professional learning at Parker and Jackson Elementary and by presenting each teacher’s narrative portrait of who they were as professional learners and writing teachers before the research began.

In chapters six and seven, I take an up-close view of the teachers’ and my practices within and across the settings within which we learned together. In chapter six, I report on how our communities of practice emerged in the first six weeks at Parker and Jackson Elementary Schools, and in chapter seven, I concentrate on the growing and shrinking of our communities of practice at both schools and away spaces for the next 9-10 weeks of the study. Although the research took place over five months, different teachers stopped working closely with me at different times, and I spent more time during the last 4-6 weeks of the study on research-related administrative tasks (e.g., scanning, fixing and copying students’ comic drafts, working with individual students to complete their comics).

In chapters six and seven, I describe and analyze social spaces that emerged through patterns of practices over the last 9-10 weeks. I investigate such

patterns of practices or social spaces as multimodal chronotopes (Bakhtin, 1981) or practice architectures: “[They are] breathing boundaries, like a skin that defines for the moment, the limits of this or that kind of action in and through time. They define for a moment the scope and reach of a practice” (Kemmis, 2010a, p.10). These “skins” are dramaturgical passages or textually mediated worlds that human beings continually slip into and out of: “The concept of passages is not only architectural... We also speak of passages of music, passages of text, and passages of play in some kind of games. These are passages in and through time—coherent passages of action” (p.10). I make connections between such patterns of practices that shaped and were shaped by our different communities of practices by representing them as “social space narratives” or narrative tableaux (Laidlaw, 2004). I describe what I mean by narrative tableaux in the data analysis section. In this thesis, I represent these social space narratives of our constellation of communities of practice within and across settings as a multisite case study.

Multisite case study

A qualitative case study is “an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (Merriam, 2009, p.43). Merriam (2009) stated, “the unit of analysis, not the topic of investigation, characterizes a case study” (p.41). Wenger (1998) emphasized: “It is a...mistaken dichotomy to wonder whether the unit of analysis of identity should be the community or the person. The focus must be on their mutual constitution” (p.146). My unit of analysis for this case study is the “mediated action” (Wertsch, 1998) of the multiple social spaces that emerged as patterns of practices of the different communities of practice over four-five months of the collaborative action research study. I “fence in” (Merriam, 1998, p.27) the mediated interactions that I study according to the constellation of communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) that unfolded at the away space and each school site.

The five teacher participants and I formed a main case, which had the following boundaries: **relational** (five teachers and one researcher); **temporal** (15-16 weeks); **geographical** (professional development away space located in an

urban centre); and **cultural** (ways of working within the local educational context). We also formed sub-cases of the main case at two school locations, Parker and Jackson Elementary. At Parker Elementary, Carmen, Kate, Samantha and I emerged as a community of practice (Wenger, 1998) by meeting on a weekly basis, usually one lunch hour and/or recess each week in an empty classroom or one of the teachers' classrooms and developing ways of talking, thinking, valuing that was unique to our group over five months. Each teacher and I also worked as dyads twice per week inside their classrooms and in informal spaces, where our purpose was to develop collaborative or "jointly participative" (Gutiérrez et al., 1999) ways of planning, teaching, collecting data, reflecting as a teacher-outside researcher communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). Similarly, at Jackson Elementary, Ben and Mark met with me more often as individuals and more informally and less consistently than at Parker Elementary. Therefore, we formed two separate teacher-researcher communities of practice, where we worked mostly inside Ben and Mark's classroom and sometimes in peripheral spaces (e.g., office, library).

Case studies ought to be particularistic, descriptive and heuristic (Merriam, 2009, 1998). I adopt a particularistic stance towards each participant and the communities of practice within which individuals learn by taking a macro-view and micro-view of our practices. My macro-view is richly descriptive of teachers' histories as professional learners and writing teachers and their school principals' approaches to organizing ongoing professional learning at their sites. My micro-view of our interactions across diverse settings gives readers a comprehensive, emergent picture of what our experiences of collaborative action research were in such social spaces. My analysis of the role of tension in our practices has heuristic value for educators interested in ongoing teacher learning because I illuminate the generative potential of what can be portrayed as strictly negative emotional, relational struggles.

Data analysis

Packer and Addison (1979) described hermeneutic inquiry as a circle with a forward and backward arc. In the forward arc, I entered into the process of data

analysis with a forestructure of thoughts, beliefs, values and feelings which influenced my preliminary understanding of what I thought such data meant (Packer & Addison, 1989, p.277). After the forward arc, I entered the backward arc of the hermeneutic circle of inquiry: "...[I]n the backward arc, one evaluates the initial interpretation by re-examining the data for confirmation, contradiction, gaps or inconsistencies" (Ellis, 1998, p.26). Such an iterative process of practical reasoning is more accurately called a practical philosophy mode of inquiry than a theory of method (Carr, 2006).

I began my data analysis by organizing my data sources (fieldnotes, transcripts of audio- and video-recorded interactions, pictures, video clips, journal reflections, artistic reflections) into chronologically organized files. For my first pass through the data record, I entered the forward and backward arc countless times. Gadamer (1975) described how we can only engage in meaning-making by being open to the meaning of the other person or text, and we need to acknowledge that our fore-meanings necessarily alter how we see and hear texts. I realized that it was my job as a researcher to come to know my fore-meanings through data analysis and to be prepared for my interpretations to take time to develop: "interpretation begins with fore-conceptions that are replaced by more suitable ones. The constant process of new projection constitutes the movement of understanding and interpretation" (Gadamer, 1975, p.269).

As I read through the data as a story from beginning to end, I first saw what I believed were repeating "literacy events and literacy practices" (Barton & Hamilton, 1998, 2005) associated with particular written artifacts (e.g., Scott McCloud's texts). For example, four lengthy transcripts of audiorecorded planning sessions involving McCloud's *Making Comics* (2006) was evidence of how the teachers and I or the teachers in pairs or threes engaged in negotiations about the meaning of the text as we/they created comics writing lesson plans. As I continued to read theoretical literature and rethink the meaning of such interactions, I found that I continually returned to "...a storied understanding of participants' experiences" (Ellis, 2009, p.484) to ground my analysis. I created small stories or narrative tableaux (Laidlaw, 2004) of moments in our learning,

where we negotiated meaning about professional learning and teaching comics writing. I made margin notes again until I uncovered recurring topics, which were preoccupations of more than one participant over time (e.g., remarks about worrying, not having enough time, not knowing how to draw, etc.). Eventually, upon my third pass through the narrative, I categorized recurring topics into “clusters of stories” (Ellis, 1998, p.41) that illuminated preliminary findings: destabilizing identities, stabilizing identities, resisting identities, and improvising identities, where the identities were represented, in part, by discourses: top down professional learning, critical inquiry-based professional learning, transmissive and social constructivist views of teaching and learning.

Although I had reached some understanding of what it meant for each of us to transform our identities and practices as professional learners and writing teachers, I did not yet have the theoretical language to talk about emotional and relational struggles as they appeared in transcripts from audio- and video-recorded conversations. I returned to my written narrative accounts of our learning and realized that I had left out many emotional and relational tensions in emic data. For example, I had omitted or ignored the following paralinguistic aspects of transcripts: silence, defensive comments and gestures, jokes about one person being different from another; gestures (e.g., playing a finger violin in the air); highly emotional comments or gestures; not participating by doing something else during the meeting; sharing knowing personal glances; leaving the room to have a related side conversation; unexpected gestures and/or remarks (e.g., having to leave the room because he/she couldn’t stop laughing). When I looked at this list of what seemed to be “private” data, I wondered what to do with such data or if I should leave it alone.

When I attended Larry Sipe’s and Thomas Crumpler’s roundtable session at the 32nd Annual Ethnography Conference, University of Pennsylvania, they told stories about their data analysis experiences with multimodal data. I shared my question about how to study tension in transcripts from audio- and video-recorded sessions, and Dr. Crumpler referred me to his recent article, Handsfield, Crumpler and Deans (2010). Based on that article and my reading of cited works, I created

focal interactions from my clusters of stories, where a focal interaction was a bracketed portion or snippet of transcript data, where the participants negotiated some question or issue. I also created interaction units within focal interactions based on a change of speaker/interactant and his/her contributions (verbal, nonverbal) that had notable perlocutionary effects. Thus, I found a way to notate my transcripts with previously omitted paralinguistic information.

At the time of the conference, I was fortunate to be working with Susan Lytle at the University of Pennsylvania. Larry Sipe, whose office was beside Dr. Lytle's office, saw me periodically the week after the conference and offered to review my focal interaction analyses. Together, we analyzed three focal interactions and found that points of tension in such interactions were often locations for negotiation of identities in the form of verbal and nonverbal ways of relating. Such a discovery reminded Dr. Sipe of Leander's (1999, 2001, 2002, 2004) scholarship and of Betsy Rymes's' work because she is also at the University of Pennsylvania. I reviewed how their scholarship applied to this thesis in chapter three.

Based on my clusters of stories, I did a comparative analysis of focal interactions and uncovered themes that illuminated how we learned together to stabilize and transform our identities as writing teachers and collaborative action researchers. I weave together my findings from the combined focal interaction and narrative analyses and represent them as "social space narratives" that resemble Laidlaw's (2004) narrative tableaux:

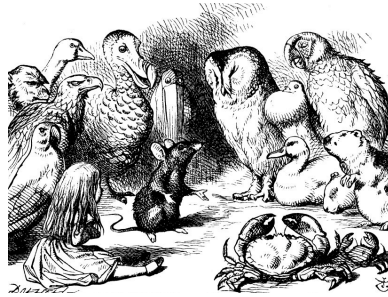
A *tableau* is a structure commonly used within theatre or drama education and described as a sort of 'frozen statue' created by the bodies of a group of participants for the purpose of being viewed by an audience. The technique of tableau is also known as *still picture* or *freeze frame*. The structure of tableau presents a contained yet complex image that can be viewed and interpreted in multiple ways. Viewers can move around a tableau and view it from different angles or perspectives and when several tableau are presented at the same time they can be interpreted in relation to

one another, layered to provide additional perspectives and interconnections [emphasis in original] (p. xvi).

My aim is to illuminate how the teachers and I experienced collaborative action research about comics writing over the 15-16 week period of intensive professional learning as diverse communities of practice in two schools and away spaces. Such findings answer my research questions: How is professional learning experienced by teachers participating in collaborative action research? and What is the role of tension in critical, collaborative inquiry communities? Such social space narratives comprise chapters six and seven of this dissertation.

In chapter five, I create the spatial histories of teachers' settings by analyzing my interviews with principals and by presenting narrative portraits of teachers. I used Sperling's (2004) categories for *what* and *how* each principal spoke about collaborative professional learning (See appendix, chapter 4, chart 1 for an example) and Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) scholarship to interpret such discourses. Such spatial histories focus on what teachers think about professional learning and teaching writing generally, not on their experiences of collaborative action research.

Chapter 5: Telling Tales of ‘Caucus-races’ and ‘Breathing Boundaries’



“In that case,’ said the Dodo solemnly, rising to its feet, “I move that the meeting adjourn, for the immediate adoption of more energetic remedies—”

“Speak English!” said the Eaglet. “I don’t know the meaning of half those long words, and, what’s more, I don’t believe you do either!” And the Eaglet bent down its head to hide a smile: some of the other birds tittered audibly.

“What I was going to say,” said the Dodo in an offended tone, “was, that the best thing to get us dry would be a Caucus-race.”

“What *is* a caucus-race?” said Alice; not that she wanted much to know, but the Dodo had paused as if it thought that *somebody* ought to speak, and no one else seemed inclined to say anything.

“Why,” said the Dodo, “the best way to explain it is to do it” (Carroll, 2006, p.34).

Interweaving voices

In Lewis Carroll’s time, the term “caucus” was used by one political party “as an abusive term for the organization of an opposing party” (Gardner, 2000, p.31). In the excerpt above, Carroll used the word “caucus” to symbolize the cacophony that results when a group of individuals hold a meeting that becomes pointless because they do not understand each other’s discourses or they’re preoccupied with their own agendas rather than sincerely listening to each other. In the case of Wonderland, the language mishaps had another purpose—to entertain readers. Later in the same chapter, Alice asks the mouse to tell his life history, and the mouse responds by saying that he has a long and sad *tale* to tell. Alice assumed that he was telling a story about his *tail* and spent her time listening to him only to picture the mouse’s words as a figured verse.

Bakhtin (1981) investigated how words evoke different timespaces or chronotopes depending on the perspective from which they are read. In the excerpt above, from an historical perspective, “caucus” conjures up images of the cacophony of political meetings, but from a literary stance, “caucus” refers to Carroll’s use of animal characters to anthropomorphize the egotistical nature of human beings, and the disharmony that results in groups because of the slippage between words and meanings. Such a heterochronotopic understanding of this text affords readers opportunities to appreciate it from diverse stances.

Bakhtin’s (1981) conception of novels as multivoiced artifacts presupposes that they were created as complex intertextual weavings of interanimated voices. In the next three chapters, I engage in such a weaving of the teachers’ and my voices in various configurations in a constellation of communities of practice as we participated in collaborative action research in schools and away spaces. I understand these settings as multiple social spaces (Leander, 1999) or patterns of relations produced by participants through their practices in such settings. In chapter four, I combined this social space understanding of learning with Kemmis and Grootenboer’s (2008) “practice architectures,” which Kemmis (2010a) argued were like “breathing boundaries” that mediated individuals’ and groups’ practices. I argued that it is necessary to know individuals’ histories of professional learning to appreciate what mediated their experiences of research.

In this chapter, I introduce the discourses of professional learning and teaching writing that cut across the participants’ data. Such discourses represent the diverse stances that the five teachers, principals and I took towards teaching and learning. Then I report on principals’ stances towards professional learning to uncover government, district and school practice architectures and meta-practices (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008; Kemmis, Wilkinson, Hardy, & Edward-Groves, 2008) referenced in our interviews. Finally, I compose a narrative portrait of each teacher and their experiences of professional learning and teaching writing before taking part in collaborative action research.

Diverse discourses and stances in education

Teachers take stances (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 2009) towards their work, which are lived orientations or identities enacted through their everyday practices. In this section, I discuss the diverse stances that participants take towards professional learning and teaching writing using the metaphor of readerly-writerly literary practices (Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 1993). I frame these orientations within the larger discourses of transmission and social constructivist philosophies of education of which they are a part. Although I use words like transmission, social constructivist, readerly, and writerly, I underline that I do not think that there is any such thing as a “pure” stance. I hold that stances *represent* identities and experiences: “...[T]he ideological value of a text (moral, aesthetic, political, alethiological) is a value of representation, not of production (ideology ‘reflects,’ it does not do the work)” (Barthes, 1974, p.4). In other words, I argue that the metaphor assists the reader of this thesis and me to differentiate stances while, at the same time, acknowledging that individuals and collectives live hybrid and improvisational identities.

Transmission stances. A transmission conception of education assumes learners are autonomous knowers who have predefined capacities to accumulate knowledge and skills (Street, 1984, 2001). The implication is that curriculum development is a process best handled by subject area experts who create curricular objectives to guide teachers on what is taught (Bobbitt, 1918; Tyler, 1949). In its most extreme forms, a transmission approach to curriculum development and implementation positions teachers as technicians who deliver mandated curricula through scripted teaching programs leaving little room for teacher agency in the classroom or in professional learning contexts. Edward-Groves et al. (2010) found that scripted curricula and large-scale professional development aimed to disseminate it have taken a stronghold in Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States and parts of Canada. According to my review of 2010 Alberta Initiatives for School Improvement (AISI) online reports, school districts did not encourage teachers to use singular programs or scripted curricula. However, Alberta teachers surveyed about their experiences of AISI-

funded professional development indicated that they had little input into what and how they learned, insufficient resources to implement multiple initiatives, and were frustrated by the fragmentation that results when three-year AISI projects change from one focus to another (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2010).

Various scholars (Hirst, 2004; Kress, 2003; Leander, 2009; Street, 1984, 2001) emphasized that transmission-oriented literacy instruction is more commonplace because it is driven by narrowly defined local, national and international reading and (to a lesser extent) writing assessment results that are used by politicians to rank order countries in the local and global marketplace. Street's (1984, 2001) "Autonomous Model of Literacy" posits that such a market ideology rooted in competition, individual competence and privatization makes literacy into a thing or product, which perpetuates the impression that literacy is something that can be defined and delivered to children.

In Canada, the triennial Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reports The Composite Learning Index, which includes mean scores of youth in reading, mathematics, problem-solving and science. Such scores are used to show Canada's competitiveness in the world economy. Alberta is consistently ranked the top province in Canada on all PISA measures and is second only to Finland in reading (Statistics Canada, 2009; Tucker, 2011). Hence, Alberta teachers, especially those who teach exam years, feel the pressure of teaching to ensure good results.

Social constructivist stances. A social constructivist conception of education assumes that learners' innate capacities do not delimit their potential for academic success because learners shape and are shaped by others and the artifacts that mediate their activities. Schwab (1973) was amongst the first curriculum of theorists to argue that teachers must be involved in curriculum-making as a deliberative process, where such collaborative approaches focus on understanding the affordances and constraints of meeting objectives in their contexts. Although Schwab did not give up on the need for involving "experts" in curriculum-

making, teachers were cocreators of curriculum artifacts. Hence, he envisioned teachers as having greater agency than his predecessors did.

Street's (1984, 2001) "Ideological Model of Literacy" exemplifies a social constructivist image of literacy educators. He sees literacy teaching as a sociocultural practice, where teachers make use of children's cultural resources, which includes their home-based literacy practices that are constantly multiplying because of ever-changing technologies, including the Internet, that make multimodal (print, visual, audio and/or video) text production and communication a norm. Thus, what it means to be literate is no longer strictly defined on print-based or monomodal terms, so literacy teaching is about developing multiliteracies, which are the social practices required to combine learning and living between digital and real worlds. Because children engage in such practices across everyday settings (multilocalization), and they communicate with each other without necessarily staying in one place (delocalization), children develop multiliteracies without clearly defined timespace boundaries (Caron & Caronia, 2007). The implication is that children enter schools with fewer divisions in their minds about what counts as literacy and where certain literacies happen. Consequently, literacy teachers who respond to such dynamic multi- and delocalized multimodal literacies will cultivate classroom contexts that are "participatory cultures," where *affiliations* (socializing on social network sites), *expressions* (producing new text forms), *collaborative problem-solving* (working in teams), and *circulations* (shaping the flow of media) are understood to be necessary skills (Jenkins, Clinton, Purushotma, Robison and Weigel, 2006, p.8). ***In between stances.*** Leander (2009) argued that literacy educators have had different reactions to the dynamic state of what counts as literacy. Some take printcentric stances (i.e., a "resistance stance," where they resist multimodal literacies or a "return stance," where new literacies are fine as long as they connect with print literacy). Others assume a "replacement stance," where they wholeheartedly adopt multimodal literacies and consider print literacy outdated, or they assume a "remediation stance," where no media is privileged and they adopt "parallel pedagogies" to make room for old and new together. I argue that

there is little choice but to take on a parallel pedagogical stance, but I contend that the reality of enacting parallel practices and pedagogies as an elementary teacher in Alberta raises interesting questions about what is meant by the word “pedagogy” and what the implications are for enacting a parallel pedagogical stance.

Alberta’s literacy educators who face print-based tests and the numerous transmission-oriented artifacts and practices that go with them as well as twenty-first century professional learning initiatives funded by the Education Ministry (Alberta Education, 2010d) are required to engage in print-based and multimodal practices. While one might argue that teachers can engage in multimodal text composition with students in transmission-oriented ways, it seems that the dynamic and complex nature of technologies and multimodal literacies necessarily requires a more side-by-side way of working in the classroom (McClay & Mackey, 2009). Such a side-by-side way of working flattens the dichotomy of teacher-learner and expert-local knowledges and, I would argue, the competitive, top-down ethics that are usually associated with test-based writing practices. Therefore, by taking on multimodal projects, it seems that teachers are more likely to participate in an ethics of collaboration that counters a competitive ethics. It also seems reasonable to say that teachers who weave print-based, test-oriented and multimodal writing practices together are intermeshing contradictory ethical commitments through their parallel practices.

From a praxis-orientation, it is precisely this dynamic *in between* positioning of contradictory ethical commitments that affords educators openings for “working the dialectic” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). Kemmis, Mattson, Ponte and Ronnerman (2008) contend that diverse international understandings of the word “pedagogy,” which can mean everything from theory of learning, teaching practices, and/or ethical/moral commitments to students, can lead to confusion and omission of discussions about ethics. In this thesis, I define pedagogy as referring to the beliefs and values that orient an individual to talk, think, act and relate with others in particular ways. I argue that because teachers are working from in between, contradictory ethical commitments, they necessarily

choose to take stances towards their practices by resisting some practices, refusing to engage in certain practices and/or sharing their critical insights about how and why they ought to change a practice.

‘Writerly-readerly’ stances

Sumara and Luce-Kapler (1993) stated that their lives as educators were about negotiating a “tangle of texts.” This metaphor was compelling to me because the teacher participants and principals described their lives as educators as being caught up in a flurry of texts, and, in the introduction of this dissertation, I described my world as “living amongst, between and inside texts,” and I understood the process of writing this thesis as creating a commonplace text (Sumara, 2002). Hence, a textual metaphor had heuristic value for talking about the participants’ and my experiences taking diverse stances towards our work as professional learners and writing teachers.

Writerly stances. Sumara and Luce-Kapler (1993) drew an analogy between Barthes’ (1974) metaphor of writerly and readerly texts and practices to their teaching and learning processes as action researchers. Writerly texts refer to narratives that are open, ambiguous, unfamiliar and unsettling and require readers to do *writerly* or *interpretive* work to understand the texts and themselves as readers. By analogy, writerly professional learning requires teachers to treat professional learning texts (e.g., presenters’ information and activities, classroom experiences) as invitations to inquire into points of ambiguity and feelings of discomfort to better understand themselves, and their practices and pedagogies as educators. Hence, a writerly view of teaching and learning corresponds to the social constructivist orientation, which portrays teachers as agentive learners who work alongside each other and their students to draw upon each other’s cultural resources for the group’s benefit and to permit different individuals to lead learning for the group.

Just as Sumara and Luce-Kapler’s (1993) group had to push themselves to reread and to talk, write, sketch and somehow work through their thinking about what seemed to be a difficult read, writing teachers are often in the position of teaching writing when they are not accustomed to writing themselves or to writing

in front of others (Grainger, Gooch & Lambirth, 2005; Kaufman, 2009). Part of the problem is that teachers are spending more and more time teaching towards writing tests using prescriptive teaching materials (rubrics, planning sheets, formulaic step-by-step strategies) (Wilson, 2006). Test-based writing practices cultivate technical versus creative stances towards writing. Because writing is not a prescriptive step-by-step process, when it is taught that way, it confuses and frustrates students (Grainger, Gooch & Lambirth, 2005). Grainger et al. (2005) underscored that teacher participants who wrote as part of their collaborative action research approach to professional learning described themselves as becoming “teachers-as-artists” because they developed their writing processes alongside students. Kaufman (2009) did a self-study of his own practices as a university professor and found that a shift from “teacher-as-demonstrator” to “teacher-as-living a literate life” in front of students changed teaching writing from one of demonstrating writing processes, genres and skills (readerly work) to one of uncovering them by living them with students (writerly work).

A writerly stance towards teaching and learning places value on *differences* between individuals and their interpretations of texts and blurs the processes and purposes for learning so that individuals change not only their practices and pedagogies but also their identities. In a professional learning context outside of the classroom, a writerly teacher-researcher community takes turns leading each other’s learning by asking genuine questions and taking up each other’s ideas and capitalizing on one another’s cultural resources. A writerly classroom learning community operates according to the same side-by-side ideology (McClay & Mackey, 2009), where students, teachers and researchers work together to negotiate different perspectives on writing questions and challenges. Thus, the ‘writerly’ teacher and action researcher is a cocreator of ideas and practices and is an active agent of his/her own learning.

Readerly stances. Sumara and Luce Kapler described how their community of English teachers initially preferred “readerly” novels because they were familiar with particular genres (e.g., mysteries, historical fiction) and could easily “lose” themselves in such stories given their familiarity with the rhetorical structures.

Their group felt uncomfortable when they took on *The English Patient* (1993) because it has a nonlinear, unfamiliar plot structure, which required more interpretive energy and attention than readerly texts that afforded them the chance to “get lost” in the story. However, they also found that once their group gained momentum in their reading and discussion of *The English Patient* (1993) that they changed not only their reading practices but also who they were as readers and learners. Hence, a readerly view of teaching and learning corresponds to the transmission orientation, which portrays teachers as seeking out “teacher-friendly” or familiar texts for teaching and learning because such texts provide a sense of comfort within the “tangle of texts” (Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 1993) that constitute educators’ busy lives. Just as the teachers in Sumara and Luce-Kapler’s (1993) study admitted that they enjoyed familiar reads because they knew what to expect, the readerly teacher is one who is inundated with texts (many of which they did not create) and who is forced, to some extent, to be a technician who learns how to search for and recreate texts that support them to get their jobs done and to make teaching and learning a manageable and comfortable process.

A readerly teaching and learning approach draws clear lines between individuals and purposes for learning, and it is structured to anticipate individuals’ reactions and questions so as to overcome different interpretations, dissonances and feelings of discomfort to perpetuate a uniform and comfortable learning experiences. Such a transmission orientation towards professional learning perpetuates an image of the teacher as a technician whose main task is to apprehend the knowledge and skills represented by the artifact and to deliver/model them well.

In between stances. As I stated at the end of the last section, I posit that teachers necessarily take in between stances that are constantly changing and negotiated as they work with a flurry of artifacts, mandated testing requirements, and with their own ideas about how to teach writing based on twenty-first century or other professional learning that they embrace. I contend that principals, too, are constantly negotiating what it means to set visions for professional learning when they are brokers of multiple, conflicting agendas.

In this chapter and the following ones, I turn to de Certeau's (1984) constructs, strategies and tactics, to theorize tensions that occur when individuals shift within readerly-writerly stances. Strategies are practices used by those in positions of power to exercise control over others who are beholden to them in an environment (i.e., a particular space and for certain periods of time). "Every strategic rationalization seeks first of all to distinguish its own place, that is, the place of its own power and will, from an 'environment'" (de Certeau, 1984, p.36). In the case of schools, I contend that principals' comments can be misread as being their personal stances unless such comments are contextualized by the "transcendent scripts" (Gutiérrez et al., 1995) or meta-practices that are handed down to them by Education Ministries and school districts. For that reason, in this chapter, I aim to provide the larger Education Ministry and school district traditions within which principals work in order to contextualize their strategies.

Similarly, teachers' reactions to principals' approaches can also be misread as unjustifiable resistance unless their positioning within schools as hierarchical systems is considered so as to contextualize their responses. Tactics are typically used by those in lesser positions of power to carve out spaces of their own to have a voice. When marginalized individuals exercise tactics, they often create a "counterscript" (Gutiérrez et al., 1995) to the dominant or transcendent script at work. de Certeau (1984) posited that marginal players who construe a more powerful individual as exerting pressure on them to do something that they don't want to do will respond on a "blow-by-blow" basis to resist such pressure. de Certeau (1984) points out that such tactics make use of "cracks" or what I later describe as "discursive loopholes" in higher-ups' readerly plans to turn them back on themselves in what can appear to be or be very subversive, even nasty power plays within a "tangle of texts."

In the next section, I provide an overview of the context of Parker Elementary and introduce Matthew, the current principal, and describe and analyze his discourses of professional learning. After Matthew, I report on Jackson Elementary and the two principals' approaches to professional learning.

Parker Elementary

When I entered Parker Elementary on January 29, 2010, the large number of boots in the foyer belonged mostly to parent volunteers, and two of those parents were talking with the artist-in-residence who was painting a wall mural just outside the gymnasium. The parents told me that the students had completed a successful Christmas card fundraiser by working with the artist-in-residence in the fall. One more parent was working with a small group of students to rehearse for an upcoming presentation about the Olympics in Vancouver, and one student shared, “You will see us on the news!” The energetic, friendly ambience was in keeping with my recollections of the school.

In April 2006, I had co-presented a workshop on how to integrate drama and English language arts to Parker Elementary staff, which fit with the principal’s goals and school theme, Imagination. At that time, the theme was posted throughout the school in the form of wall quotations and plaques (many of which are still visible in the school) and Thomson’s book, *Imagine a Day* (2005), was placed on a decorative table at the front entrance of the school. Now, three years later, I noticed a similar table in almost the same place with a different picture book, Thompson’s *Hope is an Open Heart* (2008), which matched the school’s theme, Hope. As I entered the office and waited to speak with the principal, I scanned the staff list and realized that the majority of the teachers had remained since 2003-2004. Since then the school has had three administrative teams. The first team (2003-2004) focused on improving narrative writing through action research, and their school’s professional learning story was published as part of a print and DVD resource. The second administrative team (2004-2007) concentrated on differentiation and integration, the development of a strong robotics program and resources for Autistic children. Finally, the third administrative team (2007-present), the principal, Matthew, and the assistant principal, Victoria, were at the school when I began this study in February 2010.

Matthew

Matthew and I did not know each other before the research. Matthew is an experienced junior high school teacher and assistant principal. He admitted, “You know, I am not an elementary guy, but I know that my job is to learn” (Research journal, January 28, 2010). During my first phone call with Matthew, he described his master’s research in teacher learning and assessment, and he emphasized how his investigation of assessment for learning strategies with a junior high staff had taught him about the importance of giving teachers plenty of time to work together and to construct their own ways of implementing practices in their classrooms. He added, “That’s why I’m excited about your research because we are already working on writing, so this is just one more way for the teachers to share ideas during staff PD” (Research journal, January 28, 2010).

Bringing professional learning ‘home’

Matthew stated that teachers’ professional learning had to be relevant, and “relevance” was associated with teachers’ engagement in purposeful professional learning processes:

Well, quality professional learning has to have two things. Number one...whoever’s involved have to be *totally engaged* in and part of the process; otherwise, it’s top down...and...people don’t respond to that. So...whatever level it’s on, [they] have to be *totally engaged in and involved in* [it]. And that’s hard to define, but they have to be...And of course they only do that...if it’s relevant. And if it doesn’t have a direct application to something they do in the classroom, teachers shut down...and they don’t see the relevance of it...So just like constructivism in the classroom, kids learn when there’s a purpose, and they see relevance to their life or their world, so whenever we do professional learning of any kind, if it doesn’t make their life easier or show a significant increase in whatever they’re doing, we don’t do it [sic] (Transcript, May 16, 2010).

Simultaneous to this research study, Matthew brought a district English language arts consultant into the school to lead three professional development

sessions about writing because he was concerned about the declining results for the grade 3 narrative writing and the grade 6 narrative and functional (newspaper article) writing provincial achievement tests. Matthew reported on the consultant's use of Fountas and Pinnell's (2007) writing continua (K-2 and 3-8), which was comprised of lists of instructional goals connected to linguistically oriented text types/genres (narrative, poetry, functional writing), crafts (rules for producing text types), and conventions. Based on his understanding of the consultant's use of this resource, he asked teachers to identify when and how they taught writing in their classrooms on a blank schedule. Matthew explained that he collected teachers' schedules because he wanted to show teachers that writing is a natural part of all teachers' everyday classroom lives and that they don't need another "trick pony" quick-fix instructional strategy to improve writing results. However, teachers questioned Matthew's intentions for having them submit their schedules. Matthew inferred that collecting the charts shifted teachers' perceptions of the session from a genuine opportunity to learn about teaching writing to an administrative mandate: "...[I]f the teachers were to engage and see the relevance, then the writing PD we've been doing sometimes has lacked relevance and therefore it hasn't *come home*" (Transcript, May 16, 2010).

Matthew responded to teachers' concerns by discussing his intentions with them, but he persisted with a writing focus for school-based professional learning:

So this is one where I have to direct them because... we had to have... a meeting where we had to get everything on the table. If we're doing the same thing over and over again, and we expect different results, well, Einstein says that's the definition of insanity [laughing]. Do the same thing over and over again and expect the same results. So they were, they finally said, 'Yeah, we know we're frustrated' because it's perceived as work, and, at first, they thought, 'Well, he's checking up on us,' but I said, 'You come up with a better plan, I'm all ears, go for it. Here's the plan that I have for us...to look at this. I don't know where we're going on this' (Transcript, May 17, 2010).

Because school principals are responsible for submitting school growth plans to

Superintendents and identifying goals and strategies for improvement of provincial achievement test results, Matthew saw the need to persist with a writing focus on Thursday afternoon PD time.

I asked Matthew how he defined collaborative teacher learning and what made it successful and fall apart. Matthew described how collaboration could be done one of three ways—by grade, division or lead teacher format—and he saw successful collaborative learning as “teachers sharing ideas as 90% of the work.” He also posited that clear but not overly prescriptive expectations for sharing were necessary and that his role as a principal was about setting parameters for sharing and deciding when to “push forward” or “pull back” on his own agenda for staff learning:

Well, first of all, one of the things that makes it fall apart is if it’s prescriptive and, while as administrators we need to lead them, we can’t force them in that direction. So it’s a fine line between leading them and pushing them. And at this school it’s easy to lead them in most things, but they had developed a mental block about writing, and so, even if you didn’t push them and you just lead them in certain ways, they had in the back of their mind subconsciously, ‘Oh well, that’s still a push because it’s writing’ (Transcript, May 16, 2010).

Because I knew that Samantha and Carmen had been involved in a committee to organize a few different school-based professional development sessions about technology, I was interested in how Matthew conceptualized the interconnections between the school’s Thursday collaborative time with such committee-led staff development. He explained how he makes time for lead teachers who are part of outside, district professional development to lead school-based sessions, and he therefore avoids naming his various agendas for staff development:

Transcript, May 16, 2010

So let’s say I want to accomplish 21st Century Learning, so instead of by grade levels, I took it out of the grade levels, I said, ‘We’re going to get collaboration by teachers leading teachers, so you form a committee, you

had two teachers that were lead teachers, but then we also formed a committee on technology.’ They didn’t realize it, but they were basically signing up for collaboration for integration of 21st Century Learning...so they don’t realize they’re actually the 21st Learning Committee, but they lead the PD in those areas. So we had about three/four PD days where the teachers, because they love to collaborate, they were put in charge of the presentations of the PD, and, of course, they turned it around right away into a collaboration.

Rhonda: ...So...in this case, when you set up the tech committee, how did you set it up? Did it involve any of the people who were in the research project?

Matthew: No. It was...the AISI project, so we had two people in grade 4 that are going to the Science AISI. They knew that they were supposed to come back and present something, and they did. They did about three presentations. But then you extrapolate from that, and all of a sudden you say, ‘Well, we have a tech committee that is going to look at inquiry-based learning.’

Matthew later corrected himself because he realized that Samantha and Carmen were involved in these committees and responsibilities for staff development associated with them. Matthew saw collaboration as a vehicle for addressing his school growth plan agenda, and he didn’t always name his agenda because he felt that naming it might take the focus away from teachers’ purposes for leading learning.

When I described how the research process involved teachers in naming their own agendas for inquiry, which just happened to coalesce around comics writing, Matthew was surprised because he had thought that I had pre-selected the comics writing focus. Matthew expressed an interest in having a research project in his school every year, but he admitted that his role in our research was to provide supports to make it work rather than being an integral part of the process.

A ‘writerly’ vision with a ‘readerly’ twist

In this section, I interpret Matthew’s approach to professional learning

about writing in multiple ways. In many respects, Matthew's conception of teachers leading their own learning echoes Alberta Education's vision. According to section 25(1)(f) of the *Alberta School Act, Teaching Quality Standard* (TQS):

They [Teachers] know how to assess their own teaching and how to work with others responsible for supervising and evaluating teachers. They know how to use the findings of assessments, supervision and evaluations to select, develop and implement their own professional development activities (4.2.1.o).

When Matthew acknowledged that his collection of teachers' writing schedules legitimately raised questions amongst teachers about his intentions, he asked teachers for their suggestions about how to address falling writing results — “You come up with a better plan, I'm all ears, go for it. Here's the plan that I have for us...to look at this. I don't know where we're going on this” (Transcript, May 16, 2010). One way to interpret Matthew's expectation that teachers develop a professional learning plan to address school-based concerns is that he mirrors the TQS expectations that teachers lead their own learning based on assessment information.

In 1999, the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AIS I) began as an initiative of a separate branch of Alberta's Education Ministry, originally, the School Improvement Branch, and it was a multi-million dollar program designed to support Alberta's school districts to enact the TQS vision of teachers as leaders. When Matthew underlined his reason for striking committees of teachers to lead professional development to keep the focus on teachers' purposes for learning and not his own, he reflected the teacher-as-leader, teacher-as-researcher vision of AIS I. Parsons (2011), a university researcher who has co-written research reports about over 1500 AIS I projects since the initiative began, wrote a reflective piece about the value of positioning teachers as leaders of their own learning: “AIS I shows that teachers are competent researchers and leaders...teachers are perfectly situated to innovate and implement positive action, track how their actions influence learning and determine the effect of change” (p.1). Parsons titled his article, “Eleven Years of Teacher Action Research: *How AIS I affects education*”

without defining action research, but his description of teachers having a community, a sense of personal and communal agency, and a service orientation towards their learning is commensurate with the criteria of TQS and many aspects of collaborative action research as writerly professional learning. However, just as the word “caucus” had multiple layers of meaning in *Alice in Wonderland*, it is important to take a step back to see how the school district within which Matthew worked enacted Alberta Education’s vision of ongoing teacher learning because Matthew’s notion of teachers “leading” their own learning may be understood as having “readerly” undertones.

I began my research partway through the first year of AISI Cycle IV. The AISI Cycle IV literacy professional development initiative was focused on junior and senior high teachers’ learning, not elementary teachers’ needs, and on the integration of technology and twenty-first century learning pedagogy and content literacy in English language arts. The previous nine years of AISI had paid for grades 1-3 (Cycles I-II) and grades 4-9 (Cycle III) teachers to attend balanced literacy and district reading and writing assessment sessions, and to receive financial supplements for classroom and professional learning resources. Cycle IV district consultants had more diverse portfolios than in previous AISI Cycles; they had to integrate K-10 teachers’ needs into their sessions and school visits, twenty-first century and content literacy practices and pedagogies and maintain a schedule of providing on-site support to individual teachers and schools. Given the increased demands and limited human and financial resources, the AISI Literacy and Math, Social Studies and Science Inquiry initiatives relied on a lead teacher model of professional development, where lead teachers worked with consultants and then shared strategies with their staffs.

The Inquiry project requested two lead teachers from each school, and the Literacy project held sessions and offered a “residency” professional development option for staff members who had a coaching or “lead teacher” role in their schools. The residency option meant that a consultant would work with lead teachers at their schools to support in-class translation of sessions, which was intended to support lead teachers to proceed with staff PD. In the final report for

year one of the AISI Inquiry project, they equated the lead teacher professional learning approach with “action research”: “Using an ‘action research’ model, inquiry-based learning strategies were introduced, modeled to teachers during in-service sessions and further supported at the classroom level by consultants” (Alberta Education, 2010c). The districts’ reports from the AISI Literacy (Alberta Education, 2010b) and Inquiry projects indicated numerous successes and the following concerns: making time for follow-up, keeping up with technology as well as other curriculum areas, changing lead teachers due to staff turnover or grade/school changes, depending on school-based administrators who did not always make time for the sharing component of the lead teacher model or encourage staff to take on the role of lead teachers or coaches (Alberta Education, 2010b, 2010c).

During 2009-2010, school budgets were restricted and ongoing teacher learning depended to a large extent on AISI-funded initiatives. Matthew’s notion of teachers leading teachers came from a district staff development approach, where he was informed by district principals who were responsible for AISI projects to make time for AISI lead teachers to bring back learning from their participation in outside consultant-led district sessions to schools. Hence, the district lead teacher approach could be characterized as ‘teacher-as-conduits of research’ (readerly professional learning) rather than ‘teachers-as-researchers’ (writerly professional learning) who generated their own knowledge of practice as portrayed by Parsons’ (2011). In other words, principals were asked to make time for district professional learning agendas in 21st century learning and inquiry to be “shared” at the schools in Thursday staff development time.

When Matthew explained that he didn’t have to worry about naming his agendas for teachers, he was right, not because teachers had created their own purposes for staff learning, but because they were “lead” teachers who dutifully delivered AISI Literacy and Inquiry district strategies. Although teachers had latitude in terms of how they interpreted and represented such agendas; nonetheless, they did not come from teachers. The agendas came from mixed committees of administrators, consultants, and teachers who wrote AISI

applications that went through a review and revision process with an Alberta Education Ministry representative and ultimately AISI District Principals who were financially responsible for them. I am not criticizing the school district or Matthew for upholding what they contend are positive images of “teachers-as-leaders” or “teachers-as-researchers” and professional learning as “action research” about “inquiry-based learning,” but I am suggesting that looking at such claims through the legislative and district mandates that gave birth to them illuminates conflicting ethics of readerly realities behind the writerly images of words used to talk about professional learning.

Given such multilayered, conflicting agendas and discourses, it isn’t surprising that Matthew’s use of the word “relevance” simultaneously occupied a readerly and writerly stance towards professional learning. From a writerly stance, Matthew appealed to the discourse of constructivism, where he equated “relevant” professional learning to constructivist teaching and learning—“kids learn when there’s a purpose, and they see relevance to their life or their world.” Matthew’s analogy positioned him as taking a writerly orientation towards professional learning because teachers were imagined to be agents of their own learning who developed their *own* purposes for learning connected to their real world questions, concerns and interests. Matthew voiced how such a professional learning approach is emergent and responsive to the complexities of teachers’ classrooms and therefore not easy to explain or articulate in words within actually living it, and he said he was “all ears” to hear other ways to learn together because he had not predetermined which way they should go. Thus, Matthew’s vision for professional learning about writing could be interpreted as fitting many aspects of a writerly action research (Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 1993).

However, there are readerly twists to Matthew’s writerly vision. Matthew appealed to a norm of top-down professional learning when he assumed that staff development is a process *created for* staff rather than *emerging through* staff interactions, and one that is seen as relevant if it provides visible connections to classroom practices— “...And if it doesn’t have a direct application to something they do in the classroom, teachers shut down...and they don’t see the relevance of

it” (Transcript, May 16, 2010). In essence, Matthew described good staff development as a readerly process that is shaped by insiders and/or outsiders and anticipates whether and how teachers will see the relationship between the PD activities and their classrooms, and the value of such learning is weighed according to whether and how it is attached to a visible, tangible result for teachers, not on how it stirs intrinsic motivations of teachers to change their practices. Although Matthew indicated that he hoped that teachers would see that they already engage in quality writing practices and do not need quick-fix strategies, there was little evidence that teachers saw anything but a possibly subversive administrative agenda at work connected to staff development. Even though Matthew reported that he was “all ears” for teachers’ ideas about professional learning, he proceeded with grade-based, lead teacher and whole school sessions, where outsiders and teacher leader committees addressed his pre-established plan for implementing Fountas and Pinnell’s (2007) writing continua.

Matthew’s choices were pragmatic. It was efficient and affordable to rely on consultants and district-based curriculum support materials, and to plan collaborative time by grade levels and committees. Also, when he said he was “all ears,” he may have attempted inquiry-based professional learning, but I was not invited to any school-based staff development, so I am not privy to whether and how Matthew’s invitation for teachers to set direction for their own writing professional development played out.

Matthew’s focus on results as the driving force for shaping professional learning is rooted in Alberta Education’s privileging of quantitative indicators of district, school and individual professional growth outlined in yearly Accountability Pillar reports (Alberta Education, 2010a). Since 2004 Alberta Education mandated the Accountability Pillar as a means of assessing district, school and individual staff’s professional growth based on: *student achievement* (provincial achievement test and diploma exam results), *educational goals* (survey data), and *high school completion* and *post-secondary transition rates*. In Matthew’s school district, principals receive an annual report that is in the form of a colorful chart, where principals often ask, “Do you have any autumn colors?”

because “autumn colors” (red, orange) are viewed as “bad” and “spring colors” (green, yellow) are considered to be “good” indicators based on the school’s achievement and growth.

Matthew, like all principals in Alberta, submitted to the Superintendent a school growth plan, which specifies the staff’s goals and strategies for improving areas of weakness as identified in the Accountability Pillar report. In addition, teachers submitted personal professional growth plans that aligned with school growth plan goals, a requirement of the *Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy* (1997). Elementary teachers’ plans are usually aligned with weaknesses in provincial achievement test scores, but Matthew said, “As far as individual professional learning, I support as many requests as I can because *all* professional learning supports student learning.”

The results-driven growth plan structure narrows teachers’ opportunities to direct their own professional development because their professional learning goals are expected to align with school, district and Alberta Education Ministry goals. An alignment philosophy is problematic in two ways. First, it assumes that teachers cause students’ test results, and that students have little to do with their learning and achievement. Second, it assumes that one teacher is a carbon copy of another because poor test scores based on the previous teacher’s teaching reflect what current teachers will struggle to teach students. If the same teacher is responsible for multiple years of poor achievement test results, then the logic is that this teacher requires *more* professional development to fix the teaching problem. It may be true that a pattern of poor test results points to an individual teacher’s struggles with particular aspects of teaching and learning, but if outside professional development did not “fix” the struggles in the past, then it is reasonable to argue that a different, more contextualized approach to professional learning is required. While writerly professional learning positions teachers as leaders of their own learning, the results-based growth plan structure re-positions them as readerly professional learners who are directed by Accountability Pillar reports, not their own professional judgments, about what will support their growth as learners.

Matthew had a “push-forward/pull-back” approach to school-based professional learning. On the one hand, he took a writerly stance and pulled back on his own agendas to make room for teachers’ aims. On the other hand, Matthew *revoiced* his writerly views into a readerly stance when he inferred teachers’ resistance to a writing focus was “a mental block” about writing, when it could have been a response to the never-ending reading-writing swing perpetuated by results-oriented planning. When he said, “If we’re doing the same thing over and over again and we expect different results, well, Einstein says that’s the definition of insanity [laughing],” Matthew implied that at least grades 3 and 6 teachers were *doing the same thing* repeatedly and that their practices were linked to poor test results. He also implied that all teachers *had the same mental block* about his proposed writing focus, and that their mental block had to be broken down: “So now I think teachers are ready to move on with writing and try new things...” (Transcript, May 16, 2010). While Matthew may have been right that writing practices needed to change, so, too, did the professional learning approaches that had had little effect on them.

Matthew acknowledged that teachers required freedom to engage in group learning, but he spoke more about the payoffs of collaboration than the learning that happened because of it: “... [T]hey understand that they can distribute the work between two people, it will be better for them. Again, it has something, it has an intrinsic motivation that ‘I’m gonna get something out of this,’ and they will do it” (Transcript, May 16, 2010). Hence, collaborative teacher learning is about getting a readerly professional learning agenda done quicker and easier.

Finally, Matthew’s habit of not naming his agendas was an example of where his writerly intentions (i.e., to maintain a focus on teachers’ learning) were misread by teachers who worked within a readerly system. Matthew acknowledged that not naming his reason for collecting writing schedules backfired by reducing the relevance of the PD session. Regardless of his positive intentions, I contend that nondisclosure ran the risk of being construed as a “condensed reminder of the kind of time and space that typically functions there” (Morson & Emerson, 1990, p.374). Nondisclosure within teachers’ readerly world

of top-down district agendas is more likely to be seen as a subversive strategy to control teachers' behavior (de Certeau, 1984). Thus, Matthew upheld many aspects of a writerly action research (Sumara & Luce Kapler, 1993) ideology, but he had top-down readerly agendas putting a readerly twist on his writerly vision.

In the next section, I provide an overview of Jackson Elementary's context and introduce the two school principals and their views of professional learning at their site.

Jackson Elementary

As I entered the office from the library side, Dan, one of the principals, greeted me with his usual hug, and the assistant principal, Mark, who shares an office with Dan, said, "You don't expect a hug from me, right?" Everyone laughed. Kathy, the second principal had just arrived with several bags in each arm. I grabbed a couple of them as she opened her office door, and once inside, she stopped to say, "Welcome! [Looking at her many bags of work] Not much changes even when you become a principal." Dan, Kathy and Mark were a relatively new administrative team. Kathy joined Dan to share the role of principal in 2009-2010, and it was her first principalship. Dan had another role in a provincial association and therefore only worked part-time. Mark had been at the school for seven years when he took on the role of Acting Assistant Principal. Dan had been the principal for the last two years.

Prior to his time, there was a principal who had taken on his first principalship at the school and worked with two different assistant principals. That team (2005-2009) had focused on developing professional learning with the whole staff by doing a book study about teaching reading, and they had worked on developing reading conference time and portfolios at each grade level. The principal and assistant principal took an active role in teaching and learning with teachers; they attended the AISI literacy sessions and both of them taught and/or cotaught with teachers as part of the school's coaching professional learning model. When Dan took over in 2008-2009, he worked closely with Kathy and Mark to build from the history of professional learning established at Jackson Elementary, so he continued with collaborative professional learning as a whole

staff, by divisions as well as with a nearby school. The staff maintained their focus on language and literacy and the integration of technology.

Dan

Dan and I knew each other very well and had worked closely together in his former school, which had been a part of the previous Superintendent's Target School Improvement Project (TSIP). My role in that project was to co-lead large-scale sessions of all five TSIP schools, and to follow-up with school-based professional learning support at each site. Dan is an experienced principal. Because he has been an instructional leader of bilingual programs as well as responsible for bringing a specialty program into an already existing bilingual school, he shared wisdom about collaboration gained from those experiences that he felt shaped his journey at Jackson Elementary.

Chewing the land to bring two streams together

Dan approaches collaborative professional learning by providing staff with ample time to work together in diverse ways— as a whole staff to learn from another staff member who has attended outside professional development, as divisional groups, and as individuals working together and apart at or away from their school. When I asked him whether he outlines parameters for learning, Dan stated that he did not use provincial achievement tests to determine a focus; instead, he uses staff questions, concerns and areas of interest that take all kinds of information into consideration. I asked Dan whether he felt it was necessary to structure collaborative groups by grade or division if ideas inspire professional learning and his response reflected his interest in my suggestion but that it was a new insight for him: “This gives me courage. Now, this conversation could happen at a staff meeting. That’s where it’s going to begin, collaboration begins with the idea...and just to get the thoughts and the juices flowing” (Transcript, May 16, 2010).

Dan described how he has only been at Jackson Elementary for two years, but he noticed that collaborative professional learning is sometimes thwarted by relational tensions amongst staff. He inferred that part of the reason why adults

struggle with relational tension is that they see themselves as different from children:

That we sometimes as adults, we expect the kids to do things that we refuse to do ourselves, i.e., collaboration. So they know we've got four little kids in grade 3 who have a strained relationship. Rather than dealing with that, they will insist that those four kids work together in a group; yet, they...one person will refuse to walk into a collaborative meeting in the staff room or avoid it
(Transcript, May 16, 2010).

Because Dan defined collaboration as being dependent on good relationships, he made relationship-building his primary concern as an instructional leader. He referred to collaboration as bringing people closer together to create genuine relationships that cultivate conditions for them to puzzle together about issues of mutual importance. He explained his approach at Jackson Elementary by using his prior school experience, where he combined a gender-based program within a bilingual school:

Transcript, May 16, 2010

Dan: I don't think it was a pushing together [two programs] as much as it was almost like, and now I'm pushing myself for an image, almost like two small streams that are, in a way, are parallel and there's something in front of them kind of chewing away at the land, and before they know it, you've got one stream.

Rhonda: And what's chewing away at the land?

Dan: Relationships.

Rhonda: Are you the one creating relationships to erode barriers?

Dan: No, I'm the one acting in ways that work against tides of privacy, jealousy and all of that... those pressures that prevent us from being good to each other.

Dan concluded that a genuine collaboration is when two or more people work together for the betterment of students, not because they get something out of it for themselves.

Dan's main role in our collaborative research was to work against a readerly ethics that promotes privacy and competition in schools by chewing away at such an ideology by inverting the usual teacher-principal hierarchy that exists in schools. He flattened the hierarchy by participating in the research (i.e., drawing with students, coming into class to see students' work, engaging in comics composing, conducting student conferences), and his only regret was that he did not have more time to do it. He indicated that rather than talking about how good the research is, he took part in it and then took advantage of moments to have side conversations, where he could reflect with students, staff and parents about the value of comics writing and having outsiders in the building.

Dan also highlighted how it didn't hurt that he had a "deep affection" for me based on our history—"You know, you're my girl. Everybody knows that" (Transcript, May 16, 2010). He used our prior consultant-principal relationship as "bragging rights" with parents to promote research. He also used it to encourage Ben to continue with the research when he was feeling intimidated about having other adults in his room:

I think that he understood that I really wanted to have you in the building, and he's on a leadership quest. He's trying to determine where he wants to go with his career, and so I'm hoping, even selfishly, he was saying, 'You know, if I do this, it'll look good on a resume,' and it does, and I think he struggled through it at beginning part with you and Mark in the room (May 16, 2010).

Dan felt that research-based learning required a trust by the teacher in an emergent process of teacher and student learning, so he regularly articulated to Ben that good teaching and learning ensured successful provincial achievement tests results. Thus, he emphatically deemphasized a results orientation towards classroom and professional learning.

Dan posited that his participation in the classroom work illuminated his support of a different way of engaging in professional learning. He described how several other teachers noticed his involvement and also poked their heads into Ben's room, especially when the artist visited, and they noticed and commented

on comics writing as an interesting and legitimate approach to teaching narrative writing. Thus, Dan felt that a research-based approach to professional learning was superior to many other ways of leading professional learning in a school, and he hoped to find a way to continue such professional collaborations with outsiders.

A ‘writerly-readerly’ shape-shifter

Dan enacts aspects of a writerly vision of professional learning. He refuses to use provincial achievement test results as the primary determinant of professional learning. However, at the same time, he knows that his disregard for a highly regarded form of assessing learning unsettles teachers and parents who otherwise have been invested in using quantitative data to monitor teaching and learning progress. He handles this discomfort by focusing on relationships and relationship-building (i.e., reassuring Ben that he didn’t need to worry about results).

He provides staff with a lot of time and control over their learning, and he participates with staff in their diverse collaborations to show his understanding and support of them and the process. While he acknowledges that the positive side of his participatory approach is that he flattens the hierarchy of the usual principal-teacher divide, he knows that having two other administrators and a small staff makes this possible. Dan equated participation as a “power-with” (Bloome et al., 2005) leadership, and he hoped that such participation nurtured relationships, which later paid off in the form of good teaching and learning and growth in provincial achievement test results. Thus, Dan’s shape-shifting from the principal who shared business items at a staff meeting to another teacher taking part in all aspects of what teachers do was his power-with “strategy” for working in a readerly world on writerly terms (de Certeau, 1984).

The problem with this relational stance is the time, energy and resources it takes to shift a school culture from a readerly/market economy culture towards a writerly/democratic ideology. For example, “the chewing” is relational work that requires Dan to stop his other paper-based administrative work to pay close

attention to every person in the building on a one-on-one basis and to invest time in classroom and professional learning groups. He invests this time in order to work through emotional tensions (i.e., Ben's worry about having people in his room and achievement tests) and social tensions that are inevitable with change in cultures or ideologies.

Dan is realistic about the time that it takes to shift a readerly culture into a writerly one, and he uses readerly strategies when he is short of time to address his own agenda. For example, he encouraged Ben to take part in the research by telling him that it would be good for his career, and he used "bragging rights" to illuminate the potential benefits of having an outsider in his school when talking with parents, students and staff. Thus, Dan shape-shifts by working against a readerly professional learning vision, but he also strategizes in readerly ways to forward his own agenda for professional learning.

Kathy

Prior to taking on the role of co-principal at Jackson Elementary, Kathy had been an assistant principal of a high needs elementary school, and she was also a literacy coach and Special Education Resource person. We knew each other from our Reading Recovery™ training seven years prior to the research, and we had worked closely in Kathy's last school because, from 2004-2005, I was assigned to work there as a literacy "coach" because they were part of TSIP.

Putting the pieces together

Kathy posited that instructional leaders put pieces together for collaborative professional learning, and those pieces are determined by a vision based on multiple sources of information, including results, histories of professional learning approaches in the school, and current staff talents, abilities and goals. However, Kathy highlighted that an administrative vision shouldn't be overly prescriptive or explicit: "One of the teachers said it best, 'Sometimes I don't even realize that you guys wanted us to do this, and I switched something up and then I think, hmmm, (laughs)'" (Transcript, May 16, 2010). Once the

vision is set, administrators ensure that the resources such as time for collaboration, whole school professional development, and classroom resources are designated to support teachers.

Kathy described how Jackson Elementary partners with a nearby elementary school, and both schools' administrative teams set the focus together, but a large part of that focus comes from who is available to present professional development. Because Mark was willing and able to lead professional development in technology, the focus naturally shifted in that direction. The collaboration between the schools is structured by grade level because Kathy empathized the importance of having another person at your grade level who experiences similar things and can be a legitimate listener and puzzler who works through how to make ideas happen in the classroom:

[Staff] feel that it's just too much, another thing coming at them [when they engage in professional learning without a grade level partner]...we paired with [another school] to give them that grade partner...It's huge to have somebody who's living your experience with you...to support and we always presented it to them as, 'We're going to our fourth PD, we're going to have a focus with this,' so we gave them parameters, and 'We're going to give you a grade level partner to bounce ideas off of' (Transcript, May 16, 2010).

When I asked Kathy whether she thought collaborative learning is effective when grade level partners are not available, she posited that collaboration depends on each person feeling as though they have a partner who is genuinely supportive and understanding of their needs. For Kathy, the key to structuring collaboration is that people work with others to avoid feeling alone.

Kathy thought that creating good administrative and staff relationships is the primary way to create conditions for the growth of a school vision. Although some staff at Jackson Elementary found it harder to change their practices in some areas than in others, Kathy stressed the importance of seeing teachers as professionals:

[Instructional leadership requires] a very sensitive approach, because you know all teachers in this building are professional, and they all have their own unique styles and abilities, but, at times, you [administrators] want to move forward and try new things, and I think you have to be supportive...then, at least, people feel more comfortable (Transcript, May 16, 2010).

She underlined how support is key for especially those individuals who are not risk-takers because strained relationships between staff, and staff and administrators make it impossible for people to want to try ideas presented or to explore new practices. Kathy felt that a coaching model, where staff work with other staff by collaboratively planning and teaching in an emergent and fluid way nurtures risk-taking: “And that’s where that teachers working with other teachers, and it’s almost like a *hand-over-hand* type of thing. Come together, plan, you do it, or you model it, then I try it, or we planned it, and let’s try it and go with it” (Transcript, May 16, 2010).

When I asked her what advice she had for me regarding participant selection for future collaborative action research, she said, “They have to be open with themselves” and “someone who doesn’t take things so personally that when things don’t go right that it’s the end of the world” (Transcript, May 16, 2010). She explained how Mark was an obvious person to approach because he “jumps on board with everything,” and Ben is “so easy-going” that he, too, was likely to agree to something new. We both agreed that it is impossible to adequately describe and explain collaborative inquiry-based professional learning because it is emergent and requires living it to define it.

Kathy acknowledged that she, Dan and Mark had kind of pushed Ben into the collaborative research because of their genuine excitement about the prospect of bringing outside learning into the school: “There’s a little bit of endorsement here, you know what I mean? Because I think we did it as, you know, there’s a research project and who do you think would like to participate, but then, there’s that relationship piece” (Transcript, May 16, 2010). Kathy pointed out that she uses humor to downplay the workload excuse that can get in the way of

capitalizing on good opportunities, “It was a great opportunity, so, from that opportunity piece...there was a little bit of joking...I think you always have to kind of make things light-hearted” (Transcript, May 16, 2010). Kathy thought about collaboration from multiple stances—relational, learning, and economic/material. “If he [Ben] wants to be in leadership, then it is important to know what it is like to take on different types of professional learning, so, you know, it looks good for the hiring piece (Transcript, May 16, 2010).

A ‘readerly’ piece maker, ‘writerly’ peacemaker

Kathy envisioned collaborative professional learning from readerly and writerly stances. She held a writerly vision of collaborative professional learning, where she saw her role as being a “gentle” nurturer of staff relationships. Because she understood professional learning as relational work, teachers require the social, intellectual and emotional resources to work “hand-over-hand” to discover how practices work and what the implications are for transformations of future practice. She emphasized that such transformations of practice is really an emergent process, where individuals achieve it when they seek to be gentle, empathetic listeners, where they recognize the need to fuse each other’s horizons or perspectives. Thus, Kathy pictures collaboration as individuals working together because they are interested in cultivating a genuine relationship, where ideas can be shared openly and honestly and where a “power-with” (Bloome et al., 2005) stance towards collaborative learning dominates.

Kathy struggled with a readerly pull away from her writerly vision. She admitted that administrative agendas for professional learning are necessary because of a limited availability of resources (time, money, staff to lead PD). Kathy’s assumption is that professional learning requires time, money and leadership within or from the outside to push staff development forward. Part of the reason why a “push” is required is that many teachers have learned *not* to take risks in a readerly system that has privileged privacy and competition. Kathy acknowledged that her role is to be positive about outside professional development opportunities, and such excitement can translate into endorsement.

For example, she admitted that she had “endorsed the research” when talking with Ben, and she shared the story about the staff member who remarked on the seemingly invisible pressure of an administrative vision that essentially pushed him/her forward to change classroom practices without knowing it. Finally, Kathy admitted that her gentleness and humor are necessary for shifting a readerly culture towards a writerly one because they are “strategies” (de Certeau, 1984) for exercising subtle “power-over” others. Thus, her gentle peace-making is the invisible hand that makes readerly pieces fall into place.

Readerly visions, writerly wishes

I provided a macro-view of principals’ discourses of collaborative professional learning. Regardless of whether or not the principals focused on results as a driving force of professional learning, all of them underlined the power of a market ideology in their contexts. They worked against it by not naming their administrative agendas (Matthew), naming their agendas but participating in them (Dan), and naming them and nurturing individuals to carry them forward (Kathy). The principals, therefore, enacted readerly visions of their writerly wishes for teachers’ ongoing collaborative learning at their sites.

Writing resources and district professional development

There were three writing resources purchased and/or promoted at the school district level from 2006-present that were accessible to the teacher participants and had been used by all of them in some form of district- or school-based staff development about teaching writing. In this section, I briefly describe each resource and my direct involvement in using them as part of district level professional development.

All district consultants used Lucy Calkins’ *Writing Workshop* boxed kits (2003, 2006) for K-6 professional development about teaching writing. There were two kits, one for K-3 and one for grades 5-8 teachers, and each kit listed children’s literature supporting lesson-by-lesson suggestions for how to teach writing from a writer’s workshop approach. From 2006-2009, every upper

elementary classroom teacher had \$1000.00, and every school was given an additional \$10,000.00/year to be used, in part, for purchasing resources, especially children's literature. I had created the district literature lists used during that project and other consultants who updated such lists after me included titles recommended in these two kits. I had also arranged for the titles and kits to be shown at principal meetings and many schools had purchased both the kits and literature to go with them.

Lucy Calkins (2003, 2006) took a more prescriptive approach to introducing how to use a writer's workshop approach than she did in *The Art of Teaching Writing* (1994), and she indicated that she chose to be prescriptive to support teachers with one example of how writer's workshop can unfold and to address what she felt was a weakness in her previous professional learning materials—a way to balance preparing students for writing tests as well as teaching students how to write well. Therefore, she provided teachers with lesson-by-lesson steps and materials using a lesson structure (teacher-as-writer approach to modeling and teacher working with small groups and individuals to address their questions while developing individual writing pieces that aligned with different genres) For example, memoirs and personal narratives. Although Calkins (2003, 2006) provided diverse ways of generating ideas, drafting, revising and editing writing pieces with students, she feared that her step-by-step way of writing her text might give the impression that writer's workshop would look exactly the same from one class to the next.

Second, Fountas and Pinnell's (2007) boxed reading and writing assessment and teaching strategies kits (K-2) and (3-8) were used for the district reading assessment data collection in AISI Cycle IV (2009-2012), so every classroom teacher required access to the kits. It is an American-based writing curriculum and instructional and assessment strategies kit that framed a teaching writing program around instructional approaches (modeled writing, guided small group writing, independent writing) that are designed to meet the objectives for teaching students to write particular genres (e.g., narrative, expository, poetry). Finally, Ruth Culham's *6+1 Traits of Writing* (2003) was another popular text

because every grades 3-6 teacher received a copy of it during 2005-2006, when I was the Elementary Language Arts consultant. This text was similar to Calkins' boxed set because it provided lesson suggestions for teaching by genre (narrative, poetry, expository text types) and trait (ideas, organization, word choice, voice, sentence variety and conventions).

The teachers and I found the above texts to be our "readerly" (Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 1993) professional development texts about teaching writing because they followed similar structures of blending theory alongside strategy explanations and examples (including step-by-step lessons and suggested lesson materials) to make teaching and learning about writing a straightforward practice. I would also argue that my direct involvement in choosing, promoting, funding and using such texts at district level and principal professional development meant that my processes for talking about these texts are part of the readerly professional learning practices about teaching writing that further influenced how such artifacts were used at schools.

As stated earlier, I had worked with Jackson Elementary staff from 2006-2009 to develop reading portfolios. Mark and Ben indicated that they had focused mostly on reading with little staff development at school or district levels on writing for the last three-four years. Both Ben and Mark relied on the previously mentioned resources because they had seen them at in-services and Mark said that he also used literature as mentor texts to support students to develop linear beginning-middle-end stories. Ben agreed and added, "I have students choose different genres of stories like 'Choose your own adventure' and then we all go down that road and create our own" (Transcript, April 23, 2010).

Unlike Jackson Elementary or Ben's prior school, which had also focused on reading professional development as part of TSIP, I was very involved in Parker Elementary staff development about teaching writing. In 2003-2004, all of the teachers worked with me and another consultant on a year-long technically oriented action research project designed around the question: How can we improve narrative writing results in our school? To begin, we collected samples of student' stories and charted what students could do at every grade level as a

means of developing a common language about teaching writing. From that process, we developed and continually revised a writing continuum based on our K-6 collection and collaborative assessment of student writing, and we posted it in the school library with samples of students' writing to celebrate what students could do at the different points throughout the school year. Our DVD resource had students using the continuum, even at Kindergarten, to talk about what characteristics they could identify in their writing and what they hoped to do to improve their writing. Samantha was a teacher leader in this project, and Carmen and Kate were not at the school at that time but were aware of many of the resources and ideas stemming from it.

While we created many resources from what we read professionally, we also used the *K-9 English Language Arts Program of Studies* (Alberta Education, 2000) and provincial achievement test resources, which focused on linear beginning-middle-end conceptions of stories. Although I had encouraged and modeled multiple approaches to teaching students how to generate, plan, draft and revise story ideas, Kate and Samantha admitted that they continued with one particular approach that I had shared at several staff development sessions. That approach involved brainstorming story ideas using a picture prompt (because grades 3 and 6 provincial achievement tests require students to use pictures to generate story ideas), modeling how to do a two or three quick writes for possible story beginnings, and choosing one quick write to work from to develop story middles. The story middle worked from the conflict or "problem," where students mapped using sketches and/or words a very quick progression of cause-effect events until they resolved the problem.

To conclude, I reviewed such "transcendent scripts" (Gutierrez et al., 1995) of teaching writing carried forward in the form of artifacts and professional learning practices of which I was an integral part at the district level to frame the following narrative portraits of each teacher participant.

Meeting the teachers

In this section, I provide a narrative portrait of each teacher participant. My aim is for the reader to interanimate his/her reading of who each teacher is as a professional learner and writing teacher with the aforementioned description and analysis of their schools as professional learning institutions.

Samantha

Flashback

My relationship with Samantha began in 2003-2004 when the principal of Parker Elementary, who was worried about declining narrative writing achievement test results, brought me into the school as a district consultant to lead the school's professional learning. That year I worked with a Special Education Consultant, Ted, where most of our sessions involved all teachers, administrators and consultants in collaborative assessment of students' writing samples from K-6, and in reading about assessment for learning strategies and writing pedagogy to cocreate lessons together. The staff documented the school's story in print and DVD formats. Samantha took a lead role in preparing the staff to copresent their journey at a national conference in 2004. From 2005 until the present, Samantha has taken part in many district-level English language arts, inquiry and technology professional development, and she has been a teacher leader on staff to lead school-based learning.

Flashforward

Six years later, in 2010, during our first phone call, Samantha said, *I am not the person you remember. I am not as energetic as I used to be, and who knows? I may be the worst one you have, but I want to do it* (Research journal, January 28, 2010). At that time, I was surprised by her comment, but I didn't say or think too much about it.

In mid-April, part-way through the research, Carmen, Kate, Samantha and I had an open discussion about what made teaching worthwhile, what made it hard, and what made professional learning work or fall apart. As part of that talk,

we discussed whether or not there is a certain length of time that is ideal for a teacher to stay in a school. Samantha stated that five years is a good length of time because otherwise there is a danger of becoming too comfortable. She later retracted her statement and argued that teachers need at least three years to get comfortable enough with a grade level and curriculum to do creative work and become known as “good” teachers by the parent community:

Transcript, April 15, 2010

S: Well, it’s... remember when I said you can get comfortable in a school. It can be bad but it can also be good, so when you get to a point like Dana [who has been at the school for 27 years], for example, and myself, to an extent, you have developed a reputation with the parents so you can do more stuff, take more risks because you’re a trusted person.

R: How have you experienced that risk-taking? Can you give an example of where that’s happened?

S: Well, let’s take science fair as an example. This school has run science fair exactly the same way since before I got here. This year we’re trying something new and no one is questioning us on it.

R: How is it different?

S: It’s new because there is no teacher direction. We were just kind of there to help facilitate and helping them with scheduling...the entire process is theirs, which in this community, they’re not challenging it because in this community they know [my grade level partner] and they know me. Right?

R: Yeah

S: And they also know that if they did challenge me they probably wouldn’t win.

Thus, Samantha described how her considerable teaching experience and solid reputation amongst parents at Parker Elementary makes it easy for her to take on something potentially controversial like comics writing or to change routine approaches to teaching and learning projects.

Throughout 2009-2010, Samantha's lead teacher role for the AISI Science Inquiry Project and her technology committee responsibilities challenged her faith in some forms of collaborative professional learning. Although Samantha saw the value in collaborating with her grade level partner because they knew what each other was doing and could rely upon each other if one of them had to be away, she found that the tech committee did a lot of work to prepare staff development that wasn't always visibly beneficial. "It took us a lot of time, like extra time and then when we led the PD, it's like, 'When's this going to be over?', and there's the sense of, 'I don't need this'" (Transcript, May 21, 2010). She highlighted how the same people tend to take leadership on staff development, while the same individuals resist it.

In addition to such staff involvement imbalances, Samantha stated that administrative changes, which are usually every 3-5 years, mean that previous professional learning goals are often forgotten and rewritten, which is a blatant disregard of the hard work of especially teacher leaders or staff development committees (Transcript, May 21, 2010). When I asked Samantha about the writing practices that had been a strong focus six years ago, she said, "Don't get me started, I can barely talk about it...It was too hard to explain it to [the new principal], and it was an excuse for people who were never on board to push for a change" (Research journal, February 16, 2010). Samantha described how she continued collaborative marking with her grade level partner, which was a big part of the 2003-2004 PD focus. Samantha explained how she has been a broker (Wenger, 1998) when there is a principal change, but she found that while she's busy explaining why something should continue, other staff are devoted to telling the principal why it should stop.

Samantha sees herself as a learner who wants to read and explore new ideas because "it's what makes teaching and learning creative and interesting for students" (Research journal, February 16, 2010). She is especially excited about keeping up with new ideas in English language arts. For example, she attended a district workshop about digital stories and adapted the ideas right away, where she had her students prepare digital stories about their learning in various subjects for

their parents for “Celebration of Learning” (Research journal, February 9, 2010). Samantha teaches writing through small group, whole group and individual conferencing approaches, and she noted how she usually teaches story writing as part of her “mini-units such autobiography, poetry” and she uses good literature as mentor texts, where students create “copy-cat books” (Samantha’s written notes, May 21, 2010).

Although Samantha usually has numerous literature or book club groups and writing and reading conferencing schedules happening in her room, she explained, “This year has been very hard because I don’t have that ‘beg and borrow’ time that I usually have. I have a student teacher who has to teach 80%... Plus, I have [another teacher] teaching my Social and Music, and it’s hard to get routines going” (Research journal, March 18, 2010).

Kate

Flashback

I met Kate in 2006, when I observed Samantha, Kate and another teacher engage in collaborative marking of narrative writing samples at Parker Elementary. Because I had audiorecorded that marking session, I listened to it again just before I met with Kate to talk with her about coming to the information day. I reminded her of how I had observed that session and how I really appreciated her willingness to be upfront and honest about her ideas and questions. I shared how she had said, “How on earth do we help eight year olds talk about voice?” and that she had compared learning how to skate with teaching students how to develop their writer’s voice. She laughed and said, “Really? [surprised] I don’t remember that, but I know we’ve met” (Research journal, January 29, 2010). Kate said that it had been awhile since she had “pushed herself” to move past her usual writing routines, “You know, I think I need a little push, but I am nervous, but I’m always nervous, and I over think everything so don’t worry about that” (Research journal, January 29, 2010).

Flashforward

Kate valued collaborative professional learning with her grade level partner because “we are working on the same stuff and aim towards the same goals” (Kate’s written reflection, May 21, 2010). However, she thought whole school professional development was “hit and miss” because “some PD is repetitive, while some is new but not relevant to what I am doing” (Transcript, May 21, 2010). She provided an example of being one of the people who zoned out during the technology committee professional development when teachers who had not followed up on what was shown previously expected an in-depth review of old material. Kate highlighted that professional learning should be dialogic and interactive but not about putting certain individuals on the spot to present in front of the whole staff:

I have a love/hate relationship with it [i.e., sharing ideas explored in her classroom]...I also don’t love it because I don’t like being the person sharing what I did because when if it’s not as creative as what Samantha did, and I feel like we’re in a room with each other. But that’s my insecurities, but I think there’s a lot of other teachers who feel that way (Transcript, May 21, 2010).

Kate reflected on why she has insecurities and wondered whether it was more to do with being “analytical,” “the over thinker in the group,” and “someone who needs time to talk and to listen to sort out ideas” (Research journal, March 8, 2010).

Kate felt that she could work with almost anyone because she said, “You know, I went out with [a grade six teacher on staff] and found out that she loves to garden. Plus, we were shopping so I learned about all kinds of things about her likes, her family, and now we have that connection” (Research journal, April 15, 2010). Kate emphasized that personal relationships are central to whether and how collaborative learning happens, and strong collaboration depends on finding ways to “nurture connections.” When I asked her what helps teachers to nurture connections, she mentioned that principals are very important. She talked about a previous principal of Parker Elementary as working in a nurturing way, but she

underlined its ups and downs. “She acted more like a mother because she would put nice notes in people’s mailboxes, and she was always checking to see how people were doing, which was just a nice part of her style” (Research journal, April 15, 2010). She reflected on the many positives of such a nurturing style, but she also noted, “It can be bad, too, though, because it’s kind of natural for a principal to talk to people who are motivated, so those people become like ‘go-to’ people who wind up feeling slighted when a new principal comes in” (Research journal, April 15, 2010). I asked Kate how people feel slighted, and she said, “Because they might not be the lead teachers anymore because that principal might bring staff from another school or they aren’t always consulted on things like they were in the past” (Research journal, April 15, 2010). Although Kate felt the principal mattered, she also thought that teachers could make it difficult for administrators to make changes. Kate posited that it is probably a good idea to change schools every 3 years “to keep growing,” but she also added, “I’m not saying that it’s true for everyone because we know that [a senior teacher on staff] has been here for like 27 years and never stops learning, but I think she is an exception” (Transcript, April 15, 2010).

Kate described her teaching approach in English language arts as being structured and organized, “I like to give students freedom to write about what interests them, but I know that I also like to keep them focused on small parts at a time so that they feel a sense of accomplishment” (Research journal, March 8, 2010). She recounted trying Lucy Calkins (2006) “small moments” writing, “I worked with [another teacher] to see how she used ‘small moment writing,’ where students write about very specific and memorable places, things and people and it was very powerful” (Research journal, February 9, 2010). When I asked her what made it powerful, she said, “I just couldn’t believe that they all wrote, it was mature writing, and they liked to listen to their friends read their writing because they learned about them” (Research journal, February 9, 2010). Kate uses many resources for supporting her writing program, but she liked genre-based writing, where she could integrate expository text types across the curriculum through genre-based projects. She showed me her butterfly life cycles and students’ visual

and written descriptions as one example of how she felt good about “doubling-up single projects for two subjects.” She also integrated many “assessment for learning” (Davies, 2007) practices, where students generated their own criteria for assignments and engaged in self- and peer assessments.

Carmen

Flashback

Carmen was the only teacher participant whom I had not met prior to the research, but she was easy to talk to and open about her teaching experiences. During our first meeting, she remarked on how glad she was that she had taught grade one even though it is a challenge for especially a first year teacher, “You know because you’ve taught grade one. It’s like the best way to learn how to teach because they won’t do anything that they’re not interested in, and you have to think on the spot all of the time” (Research journal, February 9, 2010). Carmen explained that she was amazed at how it is so natural to integrate drawing and writing with grades one and two, and “we get to grades 4, 5 and 6, and it’s like a free time thing or seen as a waste of time” (Research journal, February 9, 2010). Although Carmen has not had a lot of grade level partners for more than one year, she remarked on how important collaborating with grade level partners can be, “I see how Samantha and [her grade four teaching partner] share ideas and they think the same way, but I haven’t found it as easy because I haven’t stayed at a grade long enough” (Research journal, February 9, 2010).

Flashforward

Carmen arrived at school on the first day of our comics writing lessons ready to teach even though she was very sick with bronchitis. When we told her to go home, she responded, “No way. I’m not missing this! I love this!” (Research journal, March 8, 2010). Everyone laughed, but such a moment speaks to who Carmen is. She smiles and says, “I love this!” even when she doesn’t necessarily love whatever it is we are doing. When I asked Carmen what she likes best about professional learning at her school, she thought for awhile, and said, “I guess I

really like that I can go to almost anybody and they will share their ideas. The only problem with that is, and maybe it's because I'm so new, that I want to *share* ideas, not just *take* what someone else gives me" (Research journal, March 8, 2010). Because Carmen had only taught at Parker Elementary, and had only taught for four years with three grade changes in that time (grades 1, 2 and 6), she found that she had not had enough time at any one grade to get to know the curriculum, which made it hard to attend professional development that was carried on year to year. Although she is closely related to Samantha and spends a lot of time with her outside of school, she did not plan or work on school-related tasks with her because she said that she has always had different grades than Samantha and they tend to keep their personal and professional lives separate (Research journal, February 9, 2010).

In terms of teaching writing, Carmen emphasized the importance of providing time for her students to write everyday. She gave them choices of topics and projects, and explored multimodal texts (i.e., she used *Flotsam* (Weisner, 2006) to get them story writing with pictures, and she used clips from *Kong Kong* to prompt various types of writing) (Research journal, February 9, 2010). She admitted that she was still learning "what worked and didn't work," but she had explored multiple genres, including poetry, journal writing, reader response novel study activities, and she felt that it was revisiting writing with students for the purposes of revising and editing that helped them to improve as writers (Carmen's written reflection, May 21, 2010). Carmen engaged in follow-up lessons on concepts that students needed to focus on based on her regular review of their writing, and she usually taught story writing in parts (beginning, middle, end) before having students set out to write an entire story (Carmen's written reflection, May 21, 2010). Carmen told me on several occasions, "I am not a confident L.A. teacher," and she followed that statement up with, "I'm here to learn."

Ben has taught in rural and urban settings, in six different schools, and grades 1, 2, 5 and 6 as well as being a substitute from K-12 throughout his eleven year career. He has worked collaboratively with grade level partners, divisional groups, cross-graded school-based and district professional development. In 2009-2010, Ben chose to take the district leadership course because he explained, “I am ready for that challenge now” (Researcher’s journal, February 18, 2010), and he also became the lead teacher for the Social Studies AISI Inquiry project for the school. Hence, Ben was well into his career when he took on the research and was candid about his strengths and weaknesses as a teacher.

Ben described his collaborative relationship with Mark as sharing the workload of grade six English Language Arts: “We talk and make a plan to keep lessons focused on the same theme, so there’s continuity” (Ben’s written notes, May 21, 2010). When I asked whether or not they plan and teach together, Ben said that they follow up on each other’s work, but they do not typically share the detailed planning and teaching. For example, just before the research began, Mark had completed a two week newspaper writing project with Ben’s class, and Ben had provided extra time for students to finish it, but he did not teach it with Mark. Therefore, by taking on the research, Ben did not explicitly say it, but he willingly lost significant flex/prep time (60-90 minutes/week).

When Ben talked about his experiences with professional development, he was blunt about having taken part in one too many top down style sessions:

It’s sometimes, you go to some professional development sessions, and I use the term loosely because...I find myself disappointed a lot, somewhat because I rarely walk away with stuff you can really, really use in your classroom. It’s often, and I’ll be blunt, I think there’s some pompous windbag that thinks he knows everything about everything, and all he’s doing is regurgitating an idea from twenty years ago with his own name on a book so he can make money, and he’s not giving you anything new. Whereas, when you’re working with a group, like we did, it’s like, ‘I tried

this and it didn't work, so let's try something else'" (Transcript, May 14, 2010).

Ben felt that his school's professional learning was beneficial because "I have Mark and you know he is a tech guy and that's good because he shows us what he's learning, and we take part in actual uses of technology for our classroom" (Transcript, February 19, 2010). Ben clarified that he explores the Internet, professional learning resources and sessions and easily takes back ideas, "Like even our first day [information day], I came back and used the vocabulary idea in Social Studies" (Transcript, February 19, 2010).

When he talked about his English language arts program, he explained, "I try projects, where students will be engaged, something that reaches everybody because I have many students who not only struggle with learning, but...behavior and social skills" (Transcript, February 19, 2010). When I asked Ben for an example, he shared, "I did a novel study on *Maniac McGee* (Spinelli, 1999), and they did a comics retelling of the novel because I knew that it would reach everyone" (Transcript, February 19, 2010). Ben described language arts time as a blend of independent and project work, where he taught writing based on different genres, including expository, narrative and poetic forms. "Okay, I'll be honest that I'm not really a super strong L.A. teacher, but I like the creative aspect of it" (Research journal, February 9, 2010). By "creative aspect," he said, "It's not so driven by outcomes like Science or Math, where I'm always thinking, 'Did I cover that? Are they good with that for PATs?' because it's the reality of grade 6 that we have PATs in four subjects" (Research journal, February 9, 2010).

Mark

Flashback

Mark has been at Jackson Elementary for seven years, and I knew him from my work as a consultant at the school. In 2006-2007 Mark took on more literacy leadership at school and district levels and worked closely with teachers in their classrooms to develop independent reading libraries and reader response routines. He attended my literacy coaching sessions and openly shared his

successes and challenges with coaching, where he coplanned and cotaught, modeled and observed lessons at his school. At the time of the research Mark had only been at Jackson Elementary as a student teacher, teacher, literacy coach and acting assistant principal, and he was interested in becoming an administrator when the research began.

Flashforward

During the research, Mark attended a large amount of professional development in literacy and technology (i.e., he had 20 meetings from February-May), and he led most of the school-based staff development. He worked in a couple of classrooms as a literacy support person, had numerous administrative duties, and taught in Ben's class twice a week. When I asked Mark why he chose to engage in lesson-splitting rather than a more participative coaching approach with Ben, he explained that they have two very different teaching approaches and it was easier to split rather than to force their diverse ways of working together (Research journal, February 23, 2010).

Mark described professional learning as most productive when it is highly collaborative. "When I work with my sister, we think and plan the same way so we can get together and do something really productive" (Researcher's journal, April 10, 2010). He went on to say that it is tough to find someone that can be a "side-by-side collaborator" because it takes that "letting go of feeling judged" (Transcript, February 23, 2010). "I know that when I first started as a literacy support person, I was lucky to work with teachers who are still my friends today. I felt comfortable with them, right? We can talk, read, share resources and it's a true give-and-take" (Researcher's journal, April 10, 2010). When I asked Mark how to cultivate that kind of relationship, he said, "It is all about relationships, right? I have to develop relationships with people before I expect to work well with them. They have to be willing to really work with me, too, right? " (Transcript, February 19, 2010). He described collaborative professional learning at their school as divisional meetings that were mainly focused on twenty-first

century learning. He provided an example of how he had the staff create their own digital stories using images around the school.

Mark defined his approach to English language arts as following a balanced literacy and literature-based approach:

I collect literature, as you know, and I think it is like the basis of so much of what I do. Like when I used *Zoom* (Banyai,1995) to talk about story development last year, right? It was another way for students to think about stories. I build from a lot of conferencing from their reader responses and then I take from there, like I work on projects, different genres of writing and cross-curricular projects (Transcript, February 19, 2010).

When I asked Mark to describe his approach to teaching English language arts in Ben's classroom, he said, "I do single projects, mostly in writing, and we talk about them so that they are connected to the rest of the curriculum, but not always closely connected" (Transcript, February 19, 2010). He concluded by reminding me, "When I was a classroom teacher, I had a literature-based balanced literacy program, and I was always, always conferencing with kids" (Transcript, February 23, 2010).

Chapter Six: Growing Communities of Practice



It was much pleasanter at home,” thought poor Alice, “when one wasn’t growing much larger and smaller, and being ordered about by mice and rabbits. I almost wish that I hadn’t gone down the rabbit-hole— and yet—and yet—it’s rather curious, you know, this sort of life! I do wonder what *can* have happened to me! When I used to read fairy tales, I fancied that kind of thing never happened, and now here I am in the middle of one! There ought to be a book written about me, that there ought! And when I grow up, I’ll write one—but I’m grown up now,” she added in a sorrowful tone: “at least there’s no room to grow up any more *here* (Carroll, 2006, pp.43-44).

Jumping into a rabbit hole

When the five teachers signed their consent forms on the information day, even though they knew that they could opt out of the research at any time, there was a feeling that we had grabbed onto each other’s hands and jumped down a rabbit hole. Just as Alice was drawn by her curiosity to follow the white rabbit, we jumped into collaborative action research (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005; Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008) after one day together and entered a seemingly new world where artifacts, words and actions took on altered and unpredictable meanings for each of us. Just as Alice entered a new, not so comfortable world, our identities as writing teachers and professional learners were constantly in motion over five months.

An ecological unfolding of social space narratives

In chapters six and seven, I weave the tale of the teachers’ and my experiences as collaborative action researchers investigating how to teach narrative writing in comics form at Parker Elementary, Jackson Elementary and

away space settings. Such a tale is told as interwoven social space narratives that illuminate answers to my two research questions: How is professional learning experienced by teachers participating in collaborative action research?, and What is the role of tension in critical, collaborative inquiry communities? All focal interactions are in the appendix under chapters six and seven, and, for example, (f2, 3-15), means focal interaction 2, lines 3-15. In this chapter, I report on our learning at both schools from February 16—March 12, 2010 and how we grew as newly formed communities of practice (Wenger, 1998), and I analyze such interactions by relying upon the readerly-writerly professional learning discourses outlined in chapter five.

I understand our interactions as shaping and shaped by social spaces (Leander, 1999) that can be viewed through mutually constitutive dimensions: cultural/discursive (ways of talking and thinking), material/economic (ways of acting) and sociopolitical (ways of relating) (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008). In other words, I posit that the practice architectures and meta-practices of readerly-writerly discourses of education reviewed in chapter five were like “breathable skins” (Kemmis, 2010a) or preconditions that prefigured each participants’ approach to planning, teaching, and reflecting as collaborative action researchers. Hence, settings were not containers for our interactions (Leander, 1999); they were timespaces or “chronotopes” (Bakhtin, 1986) that had parameters of value (Morison & Emerson, 1991). When individuals engaged in practices that operated according to a readerly ethics, then they were valuing privatization, competition, set standards, and individual competence, which enabled and constrained possibilities for shaping a community’s interactions (Kemmis, 2010a). If they operated according to a writerly ethics, they valued transparency, collaborative capacity, and different knowledges and collective expertise. I underlined throughout this thesis that I see all individuals’ subjectivities or identities as multiple, dynamic and in process so there is no “truth” that can be held still about who a person is by following a particular methodology.

Parker Elementary

Just outside the school office, there is a stairwell that leads to Carmen, Kate and Samantha's classrooms on the second floor of the school and their classrooms were in close proximity to each other and to an empty classroom, where we ate lunch together on Mondays, and to the staffroom, where we met informally with other staff. Their classrooms were large and comfortably accommodated a teacher's desk, students' desks, small round tables for group activities, and cozy corners with ample and varied children's literature. Each teacher had a SMART board, document camera, DVD player and one computer that she used regularly. I worked at Parker Elementary on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings (7:45 a.m.-11:00 a.m.) at the start of the research. For the first few weeks, Kate brought her grade three students into Carmen's classroom for cross-graded lessons because each of them had relatively small classes; however, by March 22, 2010, Kate and Carmen split their classes. After that I stayed longer on Mondays and Wednesdays to work with Kate and Carmen separately, and I stayed for lunch on Mondays from March 22-May 9, 2010. Before March 22nd, our group met during morning recess (15 min) in Carmen's classroom or I met individually with teachers in their classrooms.

How we began

At the end of the information day, when the five teachers chose to explore teaching narrative writing through comics, I agreed to purchase some comics writing teaching materials and to deliver them to their schools. On Friday, February 12, 2010, I put a copy of Scott McCloud's *Making Comics* (2006), *The Comic Book Project* teaching package, and teachers' signed consent forms into their mailboxes. Carmen, Kate, Samantha and I scheduled our first planning meeting for February 16, 2010, which was the date of the grades 4, 5 and 6 ski field trip. Samantha and Carmen were not skiing, so they were free to work together in the chalet, and Matthew provided internal coverage for Kate's class. The purpose of getting together at the ski hill was to use job-embedded time for planning. We agreed to prepare for the meeting by considering how comics

writing would fit into the next reporting period (i.e., scheduling it, integrating it or not with Health or Religion, making it work as part of teachers' routines for English language arts). I had sent a one-page summary of the Health outcomes to all teachers by email to support this process. Everyone agreed to bring whatever they felt would help them to plan together.

Planning at the ski hill

I arrived at the ski hill at 10:00 a.m. I brought the professional texts that I had put in the teachers' mailboxes, and my sketches and notes from reading chapters one and two of *Making Comics* (2006) (appendix, chapter 6, figure 7). I also brought about 20 comics texts from a local comics shop, where the shop owner offered to give the schools half-price on classroom materials. When I entered the chalet, there were four teachers chatting with parents, students and each other, and Samantha pointed me to a table, which she had reserved because it was by a large window, where she could visually monitor students on the ski hill. Samantha was designated as a lead teacher for the field trip, which meant that she reported medical and behavioral issues to the school principal. Given that there were several other teachers who were at the hill, Samantha was not overly consumed with disruptions.

Before we began planning, Carmen, Kate and Samantha talked about their school's writing professional development and indicated that our research fit their school's focus. Samantha looked forward to me being a broker (Wenger, 1998) who could bridge our research aims with the principal's agenda for staff development: "Now that we have an outside person, [the principal] has someone to go to. He recognizes that he doesn't know [how elementary classrooms work]...Now, he has someone he can trust and...talk to and it isn't all about results" (Transcript, February 16, 2010). After this discussion, we planned from 10:30 a.m. until noon (90 minutes), and later that night, Samantha and Carmen called me from Chapters with questions about which comics to buy, and Kate sent an email later that week to let me know that she had reserved comics from the public library for their classrooms.

Uncovering competing chronotopes

In this section, I present three social space narratives from our planning at the ski hill: Discovering competing chronotopes, shifting between competing chronotopes, and ‘cracking open’ competing chronotopes. All of the focal interactions referenced in this section can be located in the appendix, chapter 6 under “Planning at the Ski Hill,” and transcript conventions are listed in the appendix, chapter five, figure 4.

Discovering competing chronotopes. Samantha started our meeting by joking around, “I will have to watch what I say now....[makes her voice like an announcer’s voice]. Since the tape recorder is on, I would like to take this opportunity to complain about the complexity of this research [looks at the bundle of professional resources that I had dropped off at their schools]. Kate then pointed to her non-existent sketches and to my notes and sketches and said, “I could never do that” (f1, 6-7), and then Kate and Samantha simultaneously joked about me being *crazy organized* and an *over-achiever* (f1, 6-8). Kate explained that she found it hard to plan because “her excitement was huge but her nervousness was more” (f1, 11-12), and Samantha stated that she didn’t have time to read and that she was overwhelmed (f1, 13-14). I paused and temporarily shut my journal, “//I think this is new for everyone because we have few resources so we just have to try ideas out” (f1, 15-16). Samantha concluded, “You plan with *those* books all of the time, but we don’t. I have no comfort level working from scratch about something I know nothing about. It’s not what *we* do” (f1, 24-26).

This focal interaction was only 6.5 minutes long. Leander (1999) emphasized that groups cultivate social spaces and stabilize identities and power relationships very quickly. Kemmis and Grootenboer (2008) looked at how social spaces took shape by looking through cultural/discursive, material/economic, and sociopolitical theoretical windows. From a cultural/discursive perspective, by using an announcer’s voice to say her words, Samantha (f1, 1-3) created a discursive “loophole”: “A loophole is the retention for oneself of the possibility for altering the ultimate, final meaning of one’s own words...” (Bakhtin, 1984, p.233). Her comment carried a double-voiced “sideways glance” (Vice, 1997,

p.24), where she distanced herself from associating too closely with the identity of questioning the research and planning resources, but she simultaneously raised a discursive eyebrow about the complexity of research-based learning. When Kate worried about her missing sketches, she spoke from a readerly stance, where the teacher must necessarily be an expert who has mastered certain knowledge and skills to be competent. Conversely, I brought my notes/sketches to be seeds for ideas as we collaboratively planned, not lesson plans to foist on the group, so I temporarily shut my sketch book and paused before responding because I was caught off-guard by the contradictory ethics at play. I have little doubt that Kate and Samantha's jokes were backhanded compliments, but they revoiced my artifacts from *my writerly* into *their readerly* chronotope, which recast me as an outsider researcher, not a teacher. Thus, Kate and Samantha were concerned about differences, which reified relational dividing lines according to readerly-writerly ethics.

From a material/economic stance, Samantha worried about having enough time for planning because school-based time was designated for grade-level and staff meetings, and she wasn't accustomed to spending a lot of personal time planning for her grade four English language arts program that she knew well. Given that school- and district-based professional development is typically paid time, Samantha's statements raise questions about whether she had taken on collaborative action research as a "district-like" professional development offer. On the information day, I committed to paying for 4-5 full days away from school so that our whole group could plan and reflect together, but I had said that teachers would need to invite me to plan with them on a weekly basis if they wanted to teach together. "Some of you might be more comfortable with co-planning and co-teaching, and others might prefer to plan on your own and have me play a support role in class, but I think that is a very individual choice" (Research journal, February 9, 2010). I realize now that I made an assumption that each teacher spent some time on a weekly basis to plan for English language arts and that they would invite me to plan with them, especially if they were struggling

to do it alone. I did not think to ask how much time that was, or what the likelihood was of them including me in their routines.

From a sociopolitical standpoint, because I gave minimal directions for how to prepare for our meeting, I disrupted the “transcendent script” (Gutiérrez et al., 1995) of readerly professional learning in their school because I didn’t organize set planning activities. Hence, Kate and Samantha’s comments treated differences between how each of us prepared for the meeting as problematic. Kate worried about not being able to draw and Samantha worried about being too overwhelmed by a lack of time to prepare adequately. Their concerns made sense from a transmission orientation, where teachers must reach a certain level of knowledge and expertise. However, from a social constructivist perspective, our differences were locations for collective sense-making, not for competitively comparing each other and cultivating self-doubt and anxiety.

Carmen’s silence during this interaction is significant. Carmen admitted at the end of the meeting that she had done sketches like mine but didn’t bring them (f2, 10-11). I mentioned that it is important for her to save everything that she does because it is good for us to see each other’s ideas and that I needed to collect copies of their reflections for my inquiry into our learning. It is possible that Carmen chose not to bring her sketches because she knew what Kate and Samantha’s reactions would be based on her close working relationship with them. Also, because she knew that I wanted to inquire into our professional learning, she may have preferred not to bring her sketches out of fear of being judged by me. While Carmen may have simply forgotten or not thought to bring her sketches, the effect of her silence about her experiences reading McCloud’s book and sketching contributed to the event: “The event that has an observer, however distant, closed and passive he may be, is already a different event” (Bakhtin, 1970/1971, p.136).

In a readerly professional learning approach, power is objectified, accumulated and quantified according to what people have, who people know and what they can do. If Carmen had shown her ability to plan lessons using McCloud’s book, she risked being categorized as a “crazy-organized over-

achiever,” which would have aligned her with me, the outside researcher, not her peers. From an individualistic, competitive worldview, Carmen may have thought that showing her sketches could look like a grab for social power that would later be resented by her colleagues. I am not claiming that Samantha and Kate would have resented her, but I posit that individuals interacting based on a market ideology value sameness amongst group members, not differences.

Shifting between competing chronotopes. As our group continued planning, we moved within and between readerly-writerly stances. Throughout our 90 minute session, I posit that Carmen came from a writerly stance towards planning that was not evident until the end of our planning session but which influenced our group. Therefore, I start with a description and analysis of what Carmen shared at the end of our session to frame the following social space narratives.

At the end of our planning, Carmen disclosed that she was excited about the research because she found McCloud’s *Making Comics* (2006) to be very accessible:

It was a relaxed read, not like one of those books that you open up and say, ‘I don’t understand anything that’s going on. I don’t understand, what are my expectations?’ But this was so easy, and it was fun because you got like pictures in the background

(f8, 4-7)

Carmen explained: “When I got to the little man [points to figure 1 below], and I thought, ‘Oh, ya, this is going to be good.’ I could see it playing out in my mind, and I thought, ‘I have to get the kids to do this [pointing to lion comic]’” (f8, 11-14).

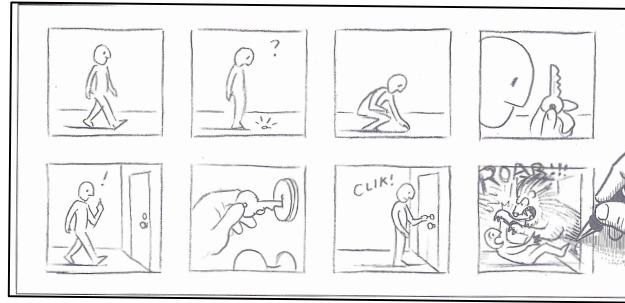
Figure 1: Scott McCloud’s caricature of himself as a narrator



Carmen used reported speech (Sperling, 2004) to indicate what she was thinking at the time of her reading of McCloud's book and that she wasn't reading to apprehend what McCloud was saying, but to imagine what students could be doing with it. Thus, Carmen positioned herself as a "writerly" reader of his text: "The writerly text is ourselves writing before the infinite play of the world (the world as function) is traversed, intersected, stopped, plasticized by some singular system (Ideology, Genus, Criticism) which reduces the plurality of entrances..." (Barthes, 1974, p.5). Hence, I posit that Carmen's preparedness to take on the role of a comics writer meant that she had developed a sense of what it meant to engage in multimodal writing and was likely not as nervous as Kate about sketching and as Samantha about planning from scratch or having the time required to plan.

Samantha began focal interaction two, "Can you clarify for me the definition of comics? I'm wondering if I explained it correctly to my class" (f2, 1-2). I responded by saying that she didn't have to worry because we would build an understanding of what comics are with students, and I read aloud McCloud's definition, "Comics are juxtaposed sequential static images in a deliberate sequence intended to convey information and/or produce an aesthetic response from the reader" (f2, 3-6). Samantha clarified, "Oh, so graphic novels are like complete long comics," and I responded, "I think that sounds right" and pointed to the many samples in his book and on our table (e.g., graphic novels, picture books, etc.) (f2, 8-9). Carmen looked at McCloud's picture of the lion comic (figure 2) and at my sketch of it (appendix, chapter 6, figure 7), and she described how she had done the same sketch but had left it at home. I indicated that we might want to introduce students to what comics are by having them play with creating their own version of the lion comics story (i.e., using cut-outs to recreate and/or add or take away panels) (f2, 12-14). Carmen agreed and noted that making comics would support students to understand them (f7, 22-23).

Figure 2: lion comic (McCloud, 2006, p. 12)



The above interaction illuminated our shifts between readerly and writerly chronotopes. Samantha deferred to me rather than to a text or another group member for an answer to her question. I turned to McCloud as an authority to answer her and didn't offer a definitive reply, but I acted like a leader by taking on the sole responsibility for replying to her question. Hence, both of us operated from a hierarchical stance and reified the dichotomous relational boundaries between researcher-teacher. Carmen worked against such social positioning by spontaneously noticing connections between our texts (i.e., Samantha's question, my reading of McCloud's text, my sketches, Carmen's memory of her sketches) and talking about them. Thus, she operated according to a collaborative ethics that valued everyone's contributions.

'Cracking open' competing chronotopes. Carmen and Samantha contemplated kicking off students' introduction to comics writing with a video clip from "The Comic Book Project," where Michael Bitz talks about how students compose comics by drawing, writing, and using photographs. Their suggestion reminded me of Carmen's comment on the information day, where she said, "I think that it's important that students know that they can draw first to get story ideas, and that they can draw, not just write stories" (Researcher's journal, February 9, 2010). Kate was noticeably quiet throughout our discussion because she was focused on taking notes. She admitted that she felt uncertain about what to do for the first lesson, so we stopped and discussed a good way to pin down the lesson process (appendix, chapter 6, figure 5). After that, I asked whether or not everyone felt like they knew where comics writing fit into their programs and report cards.

While they knew how it fit with their district report card statements for story writing, they were less sure about whether or not to integrate it into Health and Religion. Kate shared, “I’ve looked at Health, and I have done almost every one [outcome] that would work,” and Samantha posited that it might be better *not* to integrate it with Health or Religion, and to call it “social responsiveness” (f3,1-4). Because the students’ samples on the “The Comic Book Project” website were on students’ self-selected topics that revolved around real life concerns: saying ‘no’ to drugs, taking leadership, overcoming peer pressure, dealing with difficult friends, overcoming loss, etc., Samantha raised an important point about *not* connecting our comics writing with anything related to justice. “... Well, we use social justice for March for like charity...I don’t want the kids to think that we are going to sell these to get money” (f3, 3-4). Eventually, Samantha suggested that we consider social leadership and citizenship, and Kate felt that she could then integrate comics writing with Social Studies (f3,15-18). Carmen concluded by saying, “One project for three subjects. I like that” (f3, 19).

At that point, I asked, “Do we...need to return to why we are doing comics writing in the first place. If it is to inspire students to take control, an interest in story writing, then what do *we* have to do to make that happen?” (f4, 1-3). Samantha felt that taking on comics was in itself an act of valuing children’s pastimes: “I think just doing comics because it is *their* world. It’s not our world, at least not *my* world. I didn’t grow up with comics, so it’s a chance to do what’s not a normal school project” (f4, 4-6). Carmen posited that writing comics is a way for students to show us their identities because they are working in a medium that is integral to their world (f4, 7). Kate agreed that she felt nervous, but she laughed at her nervousness and said that students would likely “love” comics writing (f4, 8-9). Carmen continued by saying that she felt that such identity work required different reflection approaches in order to encourage students to be genuine in their responses (f4, 13-14), and suggested a writing attitude survey, “I would like to ask them about their attitudes because if I just ask them to reflect, they’ll just tell me what I want to hear” (f4, 16-17). Samantha extended her idea:

Maybe before and after attitude surveys because I can tell you right now that I might have parents who wonder why we're getting their children to read and write comics so if we can show that motivation is half the writing battle, then they'll get why (f4,19-21).

In this discussion, our group moved from the technical concerns of aligning comics writing with report card statements to moral considerations about what comics writing means to students. On the one hand, the teachers struggled with justifying the time that we had anticipated putting into comics writing by looking for ways for the project to meet other subject-area outcomes. On the other hand, they struggled with the technologizing that can happen with subject area integration and "social justice" projects that would preclude students from taking control over their writing to engage in "identity work." When Samantha pointed out that "social justice" projects had become commercialized and that students would likely reframe comics writing on such a theme as a product to sell for charity, she worked against a market ideology that would reposition comics writing away from our aims, which was to inspire students as narrative writers by returning control to them for what and how they composed stories in this new medium.

The above interaction is the first time in 45 minutes, where we cocreated a Thirdspace (Soja, 1996), where competing readerly-writerly discourses bump up against and refract one another (Gutiérrez et al., 1995). When Kate objectified her fears, she worked through her emotional tension by putting her worries aside and imagining that students would "love" comics writing. Samantha acknowledged that she was coming from a different worldview than her students, and she extended Carmen's idea of an attitude survey as a means of documenting qualitatively instead of quantitatively students' progress as story writers. Carmen continued working from a writerly stance and recognized that we had to stay away from words like "reflection" that had become "teacher pleasing" mechanisms commonplace within a transmission ideology.

Spatial theorists (Gutiérrez et al., 1995; Hirst, 2004; Leander, 1999, 2002, 2004) found that creating such open discursive spaces in classrooms that tend to

work according to hierarchical power relationships and “transcendent scripts” is difficult because “social spaces” (Leander, 1999) stabilize quickly. However, Hirst (2004) and Leander (1999) found that groups within classrooms sometimes “crack open” (Soja, 1996) what is a perceived (lived) space and their precepts about it (conceived space) to borrow from both to imagine an alternative way of relating in a Thirdspace.

Carmen, Kate, Samantha and I listened to each other to hear why integrating comics writing into a social justice theme would work against our moral commitments to students to open up spaces for them to self-select writing topics and redefine social rules for composing stories. Such a moment, where we collectively borrowed from each other’s lived experiences to imagine an alternative way of teaching comics writing, cultivated a Thirdspace (Soja, 1996). Although our group does not launch into a lengthy conversation about the history of market ideologies in schools, when we opened up this social space, I think we cultivated *praxis* as “action that is morally-committed and informed by traditions of the field” (Kemmis & Smith, 2008a, p.4). We aimed to think about students’ worldviews and interests, how to bring such “private” ways of working into the classroom, and we considered ways to work against a school language saturated with market ideologies or “transcendent scripts” (Gutiérrez et al., 1995).

The cultivation of praxis seemed to happen because we reflected together, where individuals objectified their personal feelings and beliefs (i.e., Kate laughing at her anxiety; Samantha talking about her world versus students’ worlds, and Carmen deleting old language for new). Kemmis (2010b) found that communities who return to the value and purpose of what they do as educators cultivate praxis through critical self-reflection. Our process of objectifying and reflecting on emotional tensions as collective artifacts (conceived spaces) based on our personal lived experiences (perceived spaces) afforded us a way “to crack open” a collective Thirdspace (Soja, 1996), where we imagined ourselves as writerly researchers investigating students’ responses to comics writing.

Three week break

At the end of our ski hill meeting, Samantha suggested that we start comics writing the first week of March to give her time to finish her current projects. Kate and Carmen agreed that the break was needed for them to prepare and plan for teaching comics writing. February was a very busy month, including Teachers' Convention, school celebrations, running competitions, Olympics' school events, and a charity event for Haiti, so we confirmed our twice a week schedule for teaching comics writing in March, and I agreed to contact them to double-check on what I could do to support their planning for March. Before we concluded our meeting, we talked about the blog.

Mark and Ben wanted to move forward with the blog, which I explained to Carmen, Kate and Samantha who agreed that it was a good idea to have the option to use it as a way for students to talk with each other about their developing comics drafts. According to the Cooperative Activities Program that outlined my ethical agreement with the school district, I had agreed to ensure that any social media, if it became part of the research, would operate according to school district policies. For that reason, after Ben and Mark had asked to proceed with the blog, I went to each school principal who agreed that it was an excellent idea and asked me to meet with the district staff member responsible for social media to take care of the necessary requirements for set-up at their schools. Before I left our planning meeting, I explained my role regarding the blog to Carmen, Kate and Samantha:

Okay, I will meet with Mark and the [district person responsible for school blogs], and we will set it up. But I don't want anyone to feel obligated to use it unless you have the time and want to do it. I will be there to help make the tech stuff for the district work because your principals asked that I do that, but you know how you work with your parents, so all of that has to be from you (Transcript, February 16, 2010).

I called Carmen, Kate and Samantha once before the first week of March to check on whether they needed my support to plan or get resources ready, and they asked that I have the video clip ready. Kate had emailed me during the three

week break to let me know that she had posters made of the Scott McCloud's "transitions" and she had an extra one for Ben and Mark. I picked up the posters on February 24, 2010 when I dropped off the blog information packages and gave them to Ben and Mark on February 25, 2010. Ben and I emailed the survey (appendix, chapter 6, figure 6) that we created to Mark, Carmen, Kate and Samantha on February 18, 2010. Mark sent his scanned images of the lion comics to everyone by email on Friday, February 19, 2010.

First lessons and reflections

In this section, I describe and analyze the first two comics writing lessons in Carmen and Kate's, and Samantha's classrooms in the first two weeks of March.

Carmen and Kate's first comics writing lesson

Kate's grade 3 students carried their chairs, books and pencils into Carmen's grade 6 classroom. Carmen began, "Today, we are starting our comic book project," and Kate finished, "We are going to decide what comics are and what they are not" (Transcript, March 3, 2010). I introduced myself, "I am a teacher who is going to university to learn more about teaching writing and I'm excited to take part in this comics writing journey" (Transcript, March 3, 2010). Thus, our voices created a unified message for students about *what* we were doing, but also implicitly, about *how* we were doing it, as a community of teachers and learners. Such an intermeshed way of working continued while Kate whispered to Jack, the student teacher who joined us throughout all comics writing lessons, "Do you want to help me put these [the comics texts on the small table in the classroom] in piles that students can work with?" (Transcript, March 3, 2010); they organized the varied comics texts (e.g., comic books, graphic novels, comic strip treasuries) into piles in different locations around the classroom, hallway and attached coatroom. I assisted with this task and then stayed off to the side as Carmen continued.

Carmen asked, “Just out of curiosity, what do we already know about comic books?” (f1, 1). Students responded individually: “Comic books have action, fiction, nonfiction, and some could be scary” (f1, 4). A grade three girl altered the focus when she contributed, “You don’t have to be good at drawing?” (f1, 6), and Kate laughed, “You got that from me because I said that I wasn’t very good at drawing” (f1, 7). After that, the whole class resumed their original attention on comics as physical artifacts and drifted into a unison-style of “Yes/No” responses to a Carmen’s questions (f1, 11-15). Such an IRE (initiate-response-evaluate) lesson was disrupted by Carmen’s question, “Do all of them, [comics] have to have words?” (f1,15); students stopped to debate amongst themselves.

Shortly thereafter students got into their self-selected cross-graded groups. As they completed their charts, Kate, Carmen, Jack and I started with different groups and eventually met together, where we shared our noticings—students were easily listing features of comics (i.e., color, black and white), but they were struggling to list features of non-comics texts (i.e., print-based novels). I mentioned, “I think comics are highly visual, so students can think of features as what they see but they are missing how such features are actually part of story writing practices in all texts” (Transcript, March 3, 2010). Just then we turned towards one particular group that was struggling with this problem:

Debating Comics Artifacts and Practices

The five students were looking at *Garfield*, *Ameilia Rules*, *Alice in Wonderland* as a graphic novel, *Baby Mouse*, and one copy of *Alice in Wonderland* (classic edition). The student who had *Alice in Wonderland* as a graphic novel based on the recently released movie said, “Comics are movies” (f2, 2) and another student said, “That doesn’t make sense. A comic isn’t a movie” (f2, 3). The student immediately offered a verbal revision, “Okay, it’s a book of a movie” (f2, 4), and Kate jumped in and asked, “Can it be both?” (f2, 5). The students agreed that it could be both, and jointly composed, “A comic can be pictures and words that tell the story of a movie that was a book” (f2, 6-11). Kate laughed and said, “Wow! I hadn’t thought about it like that, but it works” (f2, 12). While attending to two other students, Carmen asked, “So what is it that makes the book different from the rest of the comics?” (f2,15). One of the students leafing through the *Garfield* book said, “I don’t think I have a comic book because it’s little skits, not stories, so it is on the ‘comics are

not' side" (f2, 13-14). Carmen wondered, "Can comics be little skits?" (f2, 16). The student responded, "But they are like little skits that don't go together, so it's not a story" (f2, 17). Another student pointed to *Alice in Wonderland* (classic edition) and said, "Yeah, but chapters are little stories" (f2,18). The student with the comic strip noted, "Not like these, though, because they don't go together" (f2, 19). The whole group looked through the Garfield treasury and one said, "...They kinda do have little topics"(f2, 19).

After the above interchange, Carmen reconvened the class to record ideas on the SMART board t-chart. For a final activity, Carmen asked that students to work with partners or groups of three to sequence the panels of the lion comic cut-outs (figure 3) into "one complete story," and then students talked briefly about how they knew whether or not the story made sense. Carmen used Mark's Notebook slide (figure 4):

Figure 3: lion comic cut-outs

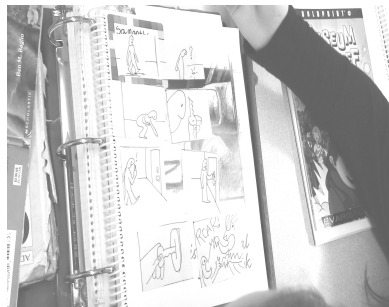
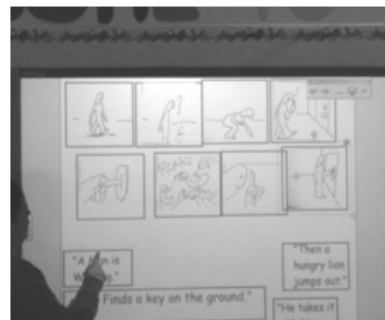


Figure 4: SMART board slide



As Carmen touched the words, she asked, "So which panel does this go with?" and students quickly matched them up. After that, students were asked to create a new lion comics story from as *few* of the panels as possible; they could change the order, spacing and positioning of panels, but they were asked to ensure that it made sense. As the student groups came up to recreate their lion comics on the SMART Board, a vigorous classroom debate occurred around a two-panel creation, where, in the first panel, the man looks at a key and, in the second panel, he meets up with a lion:

Intertextual Weaving of Spyman and Lion Comics

Two boys, Jason and Dean, who regularly draw and share stickman comics (See appendix, chapter six, figure 4 for an example of characters), stood at the front to share their two panel version of the lion comic. Jane, a grade 6 girl, stated emphatically, “You can’t do that, that’s just, that’s” [shook her head, with an expression of disbelief; put both hands on her head] (f3, 2). Jason argued that the character was “Spyman,” which is a stickman character created by Dean who regularly drew what he called “Spyman Series” in his notebooks. Three grade 3 boys followed up Jason’s explanation by chanting almost inaudibly, “It’s like Spyman” to show their support of Dean who gave them a smile and a nod. Kate put her finger to her lips to cue the boys to stop, and Carmen revoiced the moment by asking whether a comics author can do what Dean’s group proposed. A grade 6 boy posited that they could because the audience knows Dean and readers often have to bring knowledge of the author to “get” a text (f3,6). Carmen tested out this idea by thinking aloud as a reader of the two-panel strip; she showed the “writerly” (Barthes, 1974) work she does in the gutter space that she later called the “inference box” between the panels (f3,15). Kate left the class to ponder whether Carmen had to do too much writerly work between panels for the story to make sense (f3, 21).

In the last five minutes, students wrote responses to Carmen’s questions: What is your definition of comic books now? What are some things you learned or discovered about comics? What are you feeling about the project? Just after the recess bell, Jane read me her poem called, “Death,” which she had in her I-phone along with “Ongoing Saga of Grade 6,” which she said, “I do one every year, like since grade three, and I write my good times, sad times, my friendships gained and lost” (Transcript, March 3, 2010). When I asked Jane why she was so emphatic about taking a stand against the two-panel lion comic, she said, “Look. I consider myself to be fair, but I am a regular writer, and, well, people think I am a *mature* writer, so stickman comics that just fall off cliffs and die are not my thing. It doesn’t make sense and *they* [glanced over to the group of boys in the coat room] sit there writing that stuff when they should be working in class. (Transcript, March 3, 2010). The three male students who had been in the coatroom popped their heads into the room when I finished talking to Jane, and they shared their comics series in their notebooks. Dean stated, “You see Spyman does stupid things and that’s why the comics are awesome” (Transcript, March 3,

2010). I asked Dean if he based his character on the comic book *Spyman*, and he said, “No way!” and later, in his final comic at the end of the project, he added a copyright note about *Spyman* (Transcript, March 3, 2010).

Carmen and Kate’s debriefing

Carmen, Kate and I debriefed at recess from 10:35-10:45 a.m. with Sandra, the school literacy coach/resource facilitator, who asked if she could join us. Sandra did not say anything during our meeting, but, afterwards, she commented, “I am really glad to see how this works” (Research journal, March 3, 2010), and we let her know that it would be great to have her join us inside and/or outside of class. Samantha was called away for part of the meeting and caught up with what she missed with Kate and me in the hallway before the next class.

To start our meeting, Carmen said, “I am so impressed. They did so well” (Transcript, March 3, 2010). I complimented her on her “inference box” version of the gutter box discussion that we had at the ski hill, and she said, “Ya, it was perfect to get him [Dean] to read his own comic because he was just assuming that everyone would fill in those big gaps” (Transcript, March 3, 2010). Carmen added, “It was good that we had time to look at so many comics at the ski hill because we didn’t need to stick to a narrow definition” (Transcript, March 3, 2010). She also said that using the gutter space really helped her to think about how to get students to consider their audience: “I’m not sure whether I got through to Dean...Half the time he needs to tell me the parts of his stories that are missing and I always say, ‘But you have to write this detail somewhere’ ” (Transcript, March 3, 2010).

Kate noted, “I was happy with Bob who rarely writes but who got down to work right away today. I wonder if it was the grade 6 ‘cool factor’ that sort of made him see that his ideas are like other boys’, *older* boys [smiles]”(Transcript, March 3, 2010). Kate also added, “I realized that the movies, t.v. shows, books, and comics just fit together and before I used to tell them not to think about cartoons or movies, so that was my big ‘ah-ha’ today” (Transcript, March 3, 2010). Kate explained, “It’s that they [students] use those different sources for

their ideas about what stories are, like they link them together when I never looked at it that way” (Transcript, March 3, 2010). She explained further, “I guess that group that went backwards from the movie to the book, I didn’t trust that they knew there was a book or what a story looked like unless they had the book first, but they do” (Transcript, March 3, 2010). As we talked about what will help students to compose comics stories, Kate felt that reading more comics will give them techniques to think about writing comics (Transcript, March 3, 2010). She finished by saying that she had only ever thought about comics as superhero stories written in the typically “flimsy comic book” formats that promote that kind of “‘Crash! Bang!’ and then this happened and that happened and then they killed the guy kind of writing [laughs]” (Transcript, March 3, 2010).

Carmen and Kate noticed that combining their classes into the grade 6 room altered their students’ usual ways of talking and thinking about stories, and their ways of relating with other students and teachers. Carmen found “...that giving them [the students] the opportunity to ‘argue’ out their ideas gives them a boost, and it allows the other students to think about what made theirs good...” (Carmen’s journal, March 3, 2010). Kate wrote, “Grade 3s might need a little ‘prep’ before going in to join grade 6...that their ideas are just as good. They seemed less confident (some were heard chatting on topic quietly during whole class discussion)” (Kate’s journal, March 3, 2010). At the end of our debriefing, I mentioned, “Jane was interesting because she called into question a comics-style approach to story writing and the boys who created that comic” (Transcript, March 3, 2010). Carmen responded, “Ya, but she relies on her writing for good attention because she has so many emotional issues...and they [the class] know her because they have been together in one group for so long, so she doesn’t like sharing the only good attention she gets” (Transcript, March 3, 2010).

Negotiating the meaning of comic books and practices. From a cultural/discursive lens, Carmen’s and Kate’s reflections on their first comics lesson illuminated that the word “comics” is often associated with *comic books* in a narrow sense of the word (i.e., “flimsy comic books”), not *comics practices*. On the information day, we began with a broad definition of comics: “juxtaposed

pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer” (McCloud, 1993, p.20). Carmen indicated that she was glad that we had taken the time to actually look and talk about a wide range of comics texts because such a broad conception of what counted as comics texts meant that Kate, Carmen and Samantha had gathered a similarly wide range of texts for students. As students entered the room and took stock of this wide variety of comics texts, and as they watched Carmen use *Owly* (2004) (i.e, a wordless comic story series), *The Arrival* (2006) (i.e., a wordless picture book), and *Amelia Rules* (2009) (a book with several comic book stories) within the first 15 minutes of the lesson, they were unable to provide pat answers to teachers’ questions; what would have been a closed question that perpetuated the IRE style of questioning (i.e., “Do all of them, [comics] have to have words?”) opened up a student-student and eventually a teacher-student conversation that continued, as Kate noticed, in the form of “quiet on-topic conversations” that didn’t stop once the teaching resumed.

As both Carmen and Kate stated, they were surprised by students’ knowledge of the reading-writing, author-reader ways of thinking about comics stories and their willingness to debate comics stories by alternating their stances as “spectators” of them as artifacts and “participants” of comics reading and writing practices (Britton, 1970). The grade 3 student who said that she didn’t need to draw well in response to Carmen’s question about comic books treated Carmen’s question about “comic books” as though she was asking about “comics practices.” Similarly, when Dean and Jason shared their two panel lion comic and argued that it made sense because readers of Dean’s comics *know* his writing style, they also assumed that comics are heterochronotopic (Bakhtin, 1981):

Therefore we may call this world the world that creates the text, for all its aspects— The reality reflected in the text, the authors creating the text, the performers of the text (if they exist) and finally the listeners or readers who recreate and in so doing renew the text... (p.253)

Groensteen (2007) agreed that comics readers iteratively read comics by using everything from the panels, gutter spaces and page layout, including margin

spaces that often have authors' signatures in them to make sense of a comics story. Hence, students were talking about comics stories by shifting stances from "writer" to reader of the lion's comic, and from empathizing with the author (i.e., Dean) and his usual composing style. McCloud (1993) anticipated such highly interactive, engaged responses to comics reading and writing because he defined them as "produc[ing] an aesthetic response in the viewer" (p.9). Therefore, Carmen and Kate learned through students what Kress (2003) emphasizes is the transductive nature of comics texts—multimodal text practices and forms are so dynamically related that a discussion about textual objects necessarily assumes an equally animated one about textual practices.

The importance of these realizations is that students mediated our learning. During our first planning session, in focal interaction five, I was teaching Carmen, Kate and Samantha what I knew about comics and reading comprehension. For example, after I shared my insights about the importance of the page turns for inferential reading space (Sipe & Brightman, 2009), I compared it to the gutter spaces in comics, "You know, it just struck me that a page turn has been shown to give readers time to think and so gutter spaces are the same thing!" (Transcript, February 16, 2010). Kate followed with, "It *is* reading comprehension?" (f5,1-2), and I said, "Yes," and instructed the group on possibilities for comics-based reader response activities for 8.5 minutes! At one point, each teacher was so involved in getting the ideas down that Samantha said, "Slow down, Charlie! I've gotta draw this" (f5, 12).

Because I wanted to work with teachers as co-cognizers, my explicit instruction on comics texts was helpful, but it was also damaging because Samantha later said, "I want to be you when I grow up. How can I even try?" (Transcript, February 16, 2010). Again, even though she was joking, such a comment is double-edged; on one hand, she was appreciative of my efforts to share my knowledge about comics. On the other hand, she underlined how my instructional episode reified the difference between the teachers and me as an outside researcher as an impossible social divide to hurdle. Although it wasn't my intention to become the leader of the group, I fell into it instinctively because of

my many years as a consultant in a readerly system that I participated in and perpetuated.

Negotiating ways of relating in a comics writing classroom. To explore what Carmen and Kate were getting at when they discussed the changes in the power dynamics in the classroom, I turn back to what we learned as we participated in the “Spyman” focal interaction during class.

When the grade 3 boys chanted almost inaudibly, “It’s like Spy Man, It’s like Spy Man” they received positive attention from Dean for supporting him as a legitimate comics author and a lion comics composer. Although there is an argument that the grade 3 boys were simply buying into an already established power structure of social cliques in the grade 6 classroom, Kate saw at least one grade 3 boy’s engagement as related to him finding like-minded writers for his often not well-received style of story writing. When Jane contested whether or not Dean’s group had met the class criteria for recreating the lion comic, she also resisted the social power given to Dean in this newly created social space (Leander, 1999). Jane was partial to written, not comics stories, and she did not respect students who used comics writing to resist classroom rules. Hence, as soon as Jane raised her objection to Dean’s lion comic, the grade 3s chimed in and then Eric defended Dean, even though he did so through Carmen who acted as a social mediator.

Such sociopolitical interruptions became power inversions amongst students and teachers that were probably related to the sudden increase in the number of unknown participants/audience members in the room and the new mode of story writing and reading. Dean usually writes comics as a way out of participating in print-based story writing and other classroom activities, but in this lesson, his identity as the author of Spyman comics was the focus of a legitimate classroom debate. Jane who would normally receive similar attention for her “mature” print-based writing now had to share it with someone whom she considered to be unworthy of such attention. Kate recognized this power inversion with respect to her grade students as positive and negative; she felt that she had to “prep” grade 3s who do not normally carry on “on-topic” conversations while the

teacher is talking, but she also noted that their talking was evidence of their genuine engagement in comics writing. She also felt that at least one boy was more involved and felt good about his story writing compared to his usual disengagement from print-based narrative lessons.

I had mentioned that Jane's resistance to the two panel comic might have broader implications for how students who were very successful print-based story writers would receive this new approach. Carmen agreed, but she underlined that Jane's struggle was likely due to her loss of social power, not her dislike of comics writing. In addition to her loss of social power, Jane raised questions about the value of comics writing compared to print-based writing. Jane's objection to Dean receiving attention for tactics that were usually about getting out of classroom work is justified, but her concern about him receiving attention for his comics writing itself reflects a prejudice about comics that is historically rooted. Educators internationally have traditionally referred to comics as poor quality literature (Sabin, 1993), and Versaci (2001) noted that "many adolescents...see comic books as adults do: subliterate, disposable and juvenile" (p.63). Samantha brought such issues up on our planning day when she mentioned that we would need to consider how to prove to parents that comics writing is a legitimate approach to teaching narrative writing. Therefore, by bringing comics texts into the classroom and legitimizing them as authentic literature, we toppled set ideas amongst some students about what counts as story writing, English language arts and literature.

I noticed that not only did students develop new ways of relating in this highly charged social space, but so too did the adults. Carmen was the leader of the whole group and the overall timing of the lesson, but the lesson was collaboratively planned on the information day, so she was not the only one responsible for the vision behind the delivery of the lesson. Kate contributed to getting books and posters made for the classroom, and Kate and Jack were part of the lesson delivery because they organized books for group work. During class, Kate, Carmen, Jack and I flowed into and out of conversation together with each other and students. In our debriefing session, Sandra remained silent when she

would normally easily jump into such discussions. While my presence and/or the newness of the project may have changed the sociopolitical dynamics, it is clear that usual ways of relating amongst adults was altered. Also, such an unusual combination of adults who had limited knowledge of each other's teaching practices and identities in Carmen's classroom overturned "dominant scripts" (Gutiérrez et al., 1995) of teaching as a normally private affair.

Samantha's first comics writing lesson

Samantha posted a morning "To Do" list on the SMART board, so as students entered, they began handwriting and independent reading. After morning announcements, Samantha introduced me as "a teacher and consultant she has known and worked with in our district," and I continued, "I am a student at the university this year, and I am lucky to be here to learn with you and your teacher and some other teachers about what it's like to read and write comics" (Transcript, March 4, 2010). I showed the video clip from "The Comic Book Project," and reinforced that comics writing can take many forms. I also mentioned that they might have an opportunity to post their comics on-line and talk with students from another school about their comics writing.

After the clip, Samantha asked the students, "Is there anything else you've been thinking about? Is anybody worried about anything?" (f1, 1). Two students said "No" (f1, 2-3). Samantha continued, "Anybody? A little bit? What are you worried about?" (f1, 4). Eventually one student commented, "What if somebody's not a good drawer so then at the beginning of the book [i.e., comic book] they have like a stickman and then at the end of the book, they don't" (f1, 5-6). Samantha reassured students that she would bring in an artist to help with drawing questions and problems, and another student jumped in to revoice what Samantha had already told the class, "That's why we're making a comic book at the end of the project" (f1, 11-13). Samantha concluded by describing her "nervous-excited" feelings about the project: "I'm nervous-excited. I am excited to see how this works, but nervous because, 'Oh, my drawing [makes a funny smile], but I am excited to get better at it' " (f1, 18-21).

Samantha began a whole class discussion about comics texts and practices. “Think, what are comics?” Several students provided suggestions— “Comics are books, pictures.” Another student offered, “It could just be like a book, but just with pictures where we have to figure it out, and that’s where you can make your ideas when there is a thing you notice” (Transcript, March 4, 2010). Samantha asked whether all of the information about comics is in the book, and one student said, “No, it’s also in your imagination” (Transcript, March 4, 2010). Samantha added, “So how we use our imagination with comics is important ” (Transcript, March 4, 2010). One student interjected, “Comic books can be chapter books but not always.” Samantha stated, “And so we’re going to look at graphic novels and all comics together because we are really just looking at the format and style of them...” (Transcript, March 4, 2010). She described how to think about style as something the author has to question as he/she composes comics, “So when I see all of this color and this in black and white, I ask, ‘Why did the author do that?’” (Transcript, March 4, 2010). She continued, “I really want you to talk in your group, ‘How is *this* book [held up *Grampa and Julie: Shark Hunters* (2004)] and *this* book [held up *Donald Duck* comic book] similar? Is there something we can say that comics are based on looking at these two? What could we write on our chart?’ ” (Transcript, March 4, 2010). *Shark Hunters* is one complete short story and *Donald Duck* was a comic book with a compilation of connected comics stories, and the students noted that, on the “Comics are” side of the t-chart, they could list that “Comics are stories, have characters, colorful pictures and pictures in boxes” (Transcript, March 4, 2010). Samantha concluded this discussion with a SMART board slide that said, “Walk and Gawk” with three prompts: “I noticed that,” “I didn’t know,” and “Wow!”, and she held up a basket of comics texts and explained to students, “You’re job is to take a good look at the different ones in the basket and have a discussion like we just had and fill in your t-chart” (Transcript, March 4, 2010). She reminded them to be thinking about what they discover about comics that they hadn’t thought about before.

Students spent the next 15 minutes in their groups looking at baskets of varied literature. Samantha, Sanji, the student teacher, and I worked with the six

groups. The audiorecorder was left on near one group, and Samantha and I interacted with them at different times:

'Get back to work! They're coming!'

Initially, I overheard one student say, "I don't want to do this" (f2, 2), and they started reading the comics in the basket at their table and talking casually such as pointing at a character's funny yellow wig and wondering why the blanket in the picture was a "wolverine blanket." I stopped to work with them and said, "Okay, so what are some of the things you are noticing?" (f2, 16), and one student responded, "I noticed that this one that I picked up, the cover is usually in color, but this is black and white" (f2,17). I said, "Great, so what could you write down from what she said?" Just after I walked away from this group and before Samantha walked up, the group returned to a rich conversation about comics they read and what makes comics fun to read. When one student saw Samantha coming, she said, "Get back to work! They're coming!" (f2,15). Samantha walked up to the group and commented, "They're not pictureless [looking at one student's t-chart]. Okay that's good. I notice that Tammy has a lot more writing on her page. I notice that she has more than the rest of you, so would you like to share some of these ideas with the rest of the group" (f2, 19-21).

A few minutes later, Samantha asked me, "Do you notice that they are kind of reading them and not really looking and thinking about the features?" I said, "Yes. Maybe they don't have the language to translate what they're talking about into a chart or maybe they are kind of turning our activity into something else" (Transcript, March 4, 2010). Samantha stopped the class, "I notice that some of you are reading the comics and that's good, but not right now. I really want you to preview them and list what makes comics the way they are, so you have ten more minutes" (Transcript, March 3, 2010). She turned to me and said, "Ya, maybe we have to feed them some vocabulary as they talk."

After we had this brief interchange, Samantha and I altered our interactions with the same small group of students. The first time that Samantha and I talked with them, we had tried to refocus the group away from *their* talk towards *our* task. I said, "Okay, so what are you noticing?" and students offered up revoiced samples of what had been said in class (i.e., different colors, black and white), and I followed up by telling them to write those ideas down.

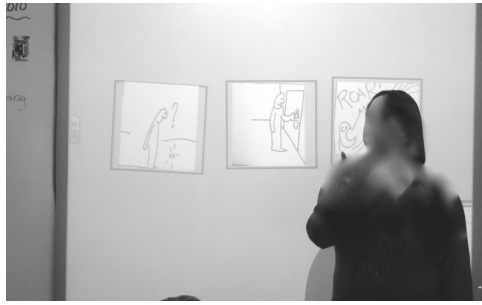
Samantha broke into their discussion to compare how much writing one student

had done compared to the others and refocused the group on their work. Even though Samantha and I had intended for students to extend their ideas beyond what had already been mentioned at the beginning of class, students were listing many similar ideas, so students' lists were copies of "authoritative texts" or "dead quotations" (Bakhtin, 1981, p.344) because they were echoes of teachers' words, not representations of their own rich insights.

After Samantha and I had talked, we changed out next interactions with the same students. For example, one student said, "I read a lot of comics" (Transcript, March 4, 2010), and I asked, "Do you? Do you have a lot at home?" (Transcript, March 4, 2010), and soon the students discussed what they liked about particular comics. One student started, "Oh, I love Archie comics because of the characters and how they are so real," and I jumped in, "Hey, write that down!" (Transcript, March 4, 2010). Samantha also interacted by weaving into the students' conversation, "Why do you think that is [that some comics are black and white]?" and the students debated about whether it was to get attention or to deliver a message or both (Transcript, March 4, 2010). Hence, Samantha and I let go of foisting teachers' words into students' lists; instead, we participated in students' conversations and allowed what seemed sometimes like cacophony to emerge into students' own artistic creations or collective heteroglossic texts (Bakhtin, 1986).

Samantha called the whole group together, "Okay, I would like to share our ideas and I want you to think that how one person shared an idea might give you a way to say something that you hadn't thought of..." (Transcript, March 4, 2010). She asked students to be spontaneous and to add to their charts, and she reinforced the need for piggybacking from each other's ideas: "That is where the best learning happens is when ideas come through sharing" (Transcript, March 4, 2010). As different students shared their responses, Samantha asked them to think about how a comics feature effects them as readers. In the last ten minutes, students created the lion comics and then worked as a whole class to remove panels and to reposition the lion comic in different ways. One group decided that the last two or three panels (figure 2) was the best way to "do" this comic:

Figure 2: The group's three-panel lion comic



Transcript, March 4, 2010

Karen: [moves all of the panels off screen and laughs as she watched Samantha's facial expression, where she points and smiles and says]

Samantha: Trickeee [points her finger, waves it and smiles in the above picture]

Peter: [laughing] You could just have two, you know, the first one and the last one

Samantha: What?

Peter: Just write like "Mystery Solved" if you think people won't get it.

Karen: Mystery solved? I don't get it.

Peter: Ya, he's nosy.

Karen: So how about "Don't Be Nosy."

Samantha: Do you think it works audience?

Elena: Ya, I think it works as three, not two [panels] for like our age, but not for little kids.

Karen: Like it's not a story for little kids because, well, it's a joke story kind of thing.

Peter: It's a story if we know the man.

Researcher: Like a comic strip that has ongoing stories told by the same characters?

Samantha: You mean like we know Calvin in *Calvin and Hobbes* might do something like get into trouble.

Peter: Exactly.

Samantha: Okay, good thinking, that's, that's good backing up.

In the last five minutes, Samantha said, “Okay, now I want you to write your thoughts about today, like what you liked, maybe what you learned and what you feel about comics” (Transcript, March 4, 2010), and the students wrote their responses to the question: What are your thoughts? Most students wrote about a new insight that they uncovered about how comics are written and/or about themselves as readers of comics texts versus chapter books. One student asked, “Is this our reflection, then?” (Transcript, March 4, 2010), and Samantha turned around and used the SMART board to write “reflections” and said, “Yes, this is our new style of reflecting for comics” (Transcript, March 4, 2010). Before Samantha sat down to write, we looked at the following student reflections: “Once I saw the books on the ledge, I wanted to read them all. Ordering the little comics was fun. I think that once we make our comics, it will be loads of fun,” “I learned that comics writers do strips in black on white and in color on Sundays”; “At first, I wasn’t really a big fan of comics books because I loved chapter books, but sometimes when I read chapter books, the only picture I have is on the title page”; “I think comics are confusing and hard to read mostly because I don’t read, but reading a normal book is still better than a comic book. I guess what Emma said is right, sometimes you forget the kid they’re writing about.” Finally, as Samantha wrote in her journal, I walked around and talked with students and read their reflections.

Samantha’s debriefing

Samantha began, “Basically, what I thought would happen, working with you and Kate yesterday, would be pretty much like their lesson went, but lower just because of the age group” (Transcript, March 4, 2010). She added, “But the kids came up with a lot of high level reflections, and I didn’t think grade four would be able to do that, but, in the end, they did” (Transcript, March 4, 2010). I agreed with Samantha, and she qualified her response, “For awhile I thought I was losing a bit of control like when they started taking away the panels because when you plan it out in your mind, you don’t expect that they will take them all away” (Transcript, March 4, 2010). Samantha referred back to when the students created

the two panel comic and said, “So, for example, when Kate said, ‘Let’s leave the last two [panels], I thought we would have to fix it...but, in the end, it was good because it showed what they were thinking” (Transcript, March 4, 2010).

Samantha assumed that some of the thoughtful comments related to students’ reading abilities, “Their reading skills showed up in their abilities to write frames...isn’t that neat?” (Transcript, March 4, 2010).

I asked Samantha if she was still interested in finding a way to track students’ motivation, which I described as quite easy because we could use their written responses like they had done that day or supplement it with some kind of checklist or questionnaire. She concluded, “No, I don’t think so, now, but I don’t know what it will be” (Transcript, March 4, 2010). She said that she liked the idea of doing a case study of three students based on Bearne, Graham and Marsh’s (2007) examples of teacher inquiries into students’ writing (i.e., one student who struggled with comics writing, one who seemed to thrive and a third who seemed to perform as expected). She mentioned, “I have already clued in on one who is my high student (Emma), because, as you said, there are those kids you would expect to excel at everything, but then there is interest, right? This is uncomfortable now...” (Transcript, March 4, 2010).

We explored our hypothesis that students’ comfort with drawing was related to their willingness to engage in comics writing. I told Samantha that my cartoonist friend compared asking adults to draw in front of him to asking some people to sing in public (Transcript, March 4, 2010). Samantha shared a story about a principal who used to ask staff to sing at celebrations in front of the whole school, “But you couldn’t refuse because you were in a group of you know like 300 students and teachers and parents in the gym” (Transcript, March 4, 2010). I mused that the connection to our project might be, “How do we sustain engagement of students who demonstrate their discomfort during the comics writing process?” Samantha wondered, “Maybe it’s about creating safety?” and then she concluded, “I really think that it will boil down to comfort zone” (Transcript, March 4, 2010), and she surmised that choosing her usually high

performing student would probably reveal how this is new and she may not be as comfortable.

Samantha asked me whether there was a lot of research on teachers exploring comics writing, and I told her that I had found a few articles; she posited that it was probably because teachers are not comfortable with it:

Transcript, March 4, 2010

Samantha: Well, ya, because we're all, well, even thinking about when I was in school. When I was in elementary school, there were not comic books in the classroom. There were picture books and there were chapter books and you read one of those two things.

Rhonda: That's true.

Samantha: There were no magazines. There were no newspapers, right, so if you think of what generation in the education profession is mostly used to, well... We never had it and the generations above us certainly didn't have it, and they're not reading comic books.

I agreed with Samantha but also indicated that the survey question about blogging that we administered at Jackson Elementary showed how 23/27 of Ben's students either didn't know what blogging was or had a very limited idea of what it could be. She laughed and said, "Today might have been the first day that some kids picked up a comic book, do you know what I mean?" (Transcript, March 4, 2010). As we wrapped up our debriefing, Samantha remarked on how tough it was to remember what students said because she didn't write it down:

...I wish I had my piece of paper with me as I was circulating throughout the groups just because the little comments that they make, at the moment, you're thinking, 'Oh, ya,' but then, now, you sit down and you have a chat. You think that you will remember, but you don't (Transcript, March 4, 2010).

Shifting between mixed emotions and chronotopes. In this section, I outline how Samantha and I shifted between a readerly and writerly chronotopes during and after the lesson.

Reflecting on the lesson from a cultural/discursive stance, Samantha began by having students revoice her transmission orientation towards comics writing as an “authority text” (Bakhtin, 1981). Authority texts do not leave much room for consideration of diverse points of view. When Samantha began her lesson by asking her class whether they were worried, students didn’t respond, and when two students were asked the same question and said, “No,” then eventually one student wondered about what her comic book would look like if her abilities changed over the term. Another student revoiced the teacher’s words from a prior class discussion by saying that they would focus on process and practice before doing a comic book. Samantha reiterated her point from an earlier class discussion about bringing in artists to make sure that everyone had instruction on how to draw, and she concluded by saying that she was “nervous-excited” about her drawing ability, not her story writing ability, which included both drawing and writing. Hence, in the first few minutes of the lesson, which drew from a prior class conversation, students revoiced Samantha’s readerly ideology that focused on needing to be at a certain level of proficiency with drawing before embarking on comics writing.

Samantha then shifted back and forth between a readerly and writerly stance towards talking about comics texts. For example, during her whole class introduction to comics, Samantha asked students to notice comics features and to question why the author used them. Hence, she recognized the close connection between comics artifacts and practices, where writers are as affectively and personally involved in the writing process as they are focused on technical aspects of it. However, when Samantha and I initially interacted with the small group of students immediately after the whole class lesson, she and I returned to a transmission stance, where we aimed to have students do an activity that we had outlined rather than to consider how students were changing it and why. When we stopped to reflect together after interacting with them, Samantha wondered why they were reading comics instead of talking about them and writing down ideas, and I hypothesized that they didn’t have the language to articulate what they were noticing. My hypothesis came from a deficit view of what I thought children

knew about comics, and Samantha said, “Ya, maybe we have to feed them some vocabulary as they talk,” and, although her statement resides in a top-down view of teacher as giving knowledge to students, it played out quite differently.

Both of us revisited, at different times, the same small group. After our brief in-class reflection, we interacted with this group as “joint participants” (Gutiérrez et al., 1999), where we entered into students’ conversations by asking genuine questions rather than making statements or asking questions that were really “silent hands” pushing students to get our teacherly agendas accomplished. Thus, we moved from a technical orientation (*techne*) of wanting students to get a task done to *praxis*, where we inquired into their thinking and then valued what they said as much as our own points of view about what counted as knowledge on their t-charts. Such brief reflecting between Samantha and me within the classroom appeared to shift our orientations away from a readerly to a writerly position, where we treated *difference* between our initial way of framing the t-chart activity and their way of changing it as a location to linger with students to see how to bring our teacher-student agendas together; hence, what counted as knowledge went from how much writing was on a child’s page to how deep their processing and thinking was around their written t-chart list.

Such a shifting between these opposing stances was not a linear and final move; rather, it was an ephemeral, almost invisible strip of audio recording buried within what sounded like a cacophony of many voices in the classroom. Such an interanimation of Samantha’s and my voices and our voices with students’ voices underlined the way that social spaces within her comics writing classroom developed as emotionally, socially and physically charged timespaces. Samantha’s mixed emotions (nervous-excited) that framed the start of her lesson was a good way to describe our many emotionally and intellectually contradictorily textured moments during the lesson and our debriefing about it.

During the debriefing session, Samantha admitted that she hadn’t expected students would respond to the first comics lesson at such a “high level.” As she zeroed in on one example, where students had demonstrated superior capability when they explained their two panel comics story, I was surprised when Samantha

also said, “For awhile I thought I was losing a bit of control like when they started taking away the panels...” Samantha emphasized that she was “impressed” but her “loss of control” or worry came from her not anticipating students’ responses— “...because when you plan it out in your mind, you don’t expect that they will take them all away.” However, during our debriefing, Samantha realized that part of the reason that she may have felt that she was losing control was that she had trouble focusing on the richness of students’ conversations because she had a firm idea in her mind about how they should respond to the task. She also admitted that “the little things they say” were like teaching “ah-has,” and she surmised that if she had had her piece of paper with her to note down students’ ideas that she would probably see that they were getting something out of discussion and that she wasn’t losing control. Thus, Samantha’s talking with me about her initial assessments of students’ learning allowed her to reify her thinking and to reflect self-critically on it to see students’ responses and her ways of interacting with students in a new way.

However, our collaborative reflecting was not always self-critical and even stabilized our transmission stances towards teaching and learning comics writing. Samantha and I created disjointed analogies within our reflecting that carried forward mixed emotions and messages about next steps for Samantha’s inquiry into her teaching of comics writing. For example, when I asked Samantha whether or not she still thought motivation was an issue to inquire into, she said, “No, I don’t think so...” but at the same time confirmed that she thought we would discover that students capabilities as comics writers would “boil down to their comfort zone[s].” When she asked me about whether or not there was a lot of research about teaching comics writing, I indicated that I had found a few articles, and she hypothesized that it was because teachers come from a print-based generation and are not comfortable teaching comics. When I told my story about how my cartoonist friend compared asking adults to draw for him to asking them to sing in front of a crowd, Samantha gave an example of her own story of what it felt like to be pressured to sing in front of a gym filled with parents, students and teachers. When I followed her story with the one about Ben’s

students' lack of knowledge about blogging, Samantha then said that my story illuminated why she was worried about her students' "comfort zones"— "This may be the first time that some students held a comic book."

The problem with our debriefing about our hypothesis that children's comfort with drawing was related to their willingness to engage in comics writing is that we attended to our assumptions about comics writing as being primarily about performing to a certain level as comics artists. Based on the first lesson, there was little indication that students were consumed by worries about drawing. First, Samantha began her comics lesson with a focus on worry that was not shared by her students (even though they may have shared their worries with her at other times). Second, when students debated whether or not the three and later two panel lion comic was a story, the group recognized it was a "proliferating narrative" (Ryan, 1991), where comic strip characters carry on "little skits" around topics that people relate to in their everyday lives so they willingly explored reading-writing connections of comics in a sophisticated way with little apprehension about whether or not they could do the task. Finally, students' reflections about their first lesson centered on whether or not they liked comics versus chapters books and not whether they worried about creating comics; there were 4 students out of 26 who mentioned worries about drawing comics. Also, Samantha was struck by students' high level of participation throughout the lesson, and that the high performing student, who she thought may have trouble adjusting to this new medium, had cleverly found that comics are like "cheat sheets" for recalling characters.

To conclude, Samantha and I shifted between readerly-writerly discourses during our lesson and within our debriefing session. It seemed that reflecting in class worked to move us out of our transmission stances, but when we debriefed without students in front of us or their artifacts close at hand, we developed hypotheses about students' responses to comics writing that were rooted in adult fears of drawing.

Touching base in the staffroom

Samantha, Kate, Carmen and I touched base in the staffroom after Samantha and I debriefed. They wanted to read through students' reflections and give students an adapted version of Ben's writing survey. As they struggled to find time for such collective reflecting, I offered to teach the next lesson so that they could observe students, read students' reflections and/or consider doing some audiorecorded surveys with students and/or the written surveys. I offered to meet and plan with them individually or collectively, but they did not have the time, so I agreed to do the comics story stretching lesson that we had talked about at the ski hill.

Rhonda teaching

Although I taught in Carmen and Kate's classes on Monday and Samantha's on Wednesday, the two lessons were fairly similar, so I recount the one done in Carmen's room as the basis of describing and analyzing our subgroup debriefing session at lunch on March 8, 2010.

On March 8, 2010, Carmen, Kate and Samantha came into Carmen's room with their journals. I brought my digital audiorecorder and showed everyone how to use it and the video recorder/camera. Samantha asked, "So should we take notes in some way?" I showed my journal and suggested, "Just play with notetaking that suits you. I 'student watch' and try to catch a few details, like enough to remember something they said. You might want to record observations on the left and your questions and thoughts on the right." (Transcript, March 8, 2010). I suggested that they consider interviewing a student, reading through student surveys, and thinking overall about students' responses to the lesson. I showed them the slide (figure 3) of a pre-assessment that I made from an article (Pajares, 2003) about self-efficacy:

Figure 3: SMART board slide of pre-assessment

Stretching Our Comic Stories

Before we begin...

1. I can draw and write a 3 panel comic story.

4	3	2	1
Absolutely	Probably	Maybe	No

2. I can draw and write a 3 panel comic story that makes sense.

4	3	2	1
---	---	---	---

3. I can stretch my 3 panel story using transitions.

4	3	2	1
---	---	---	---

4. I can write and draw a stretched story that makes sense.

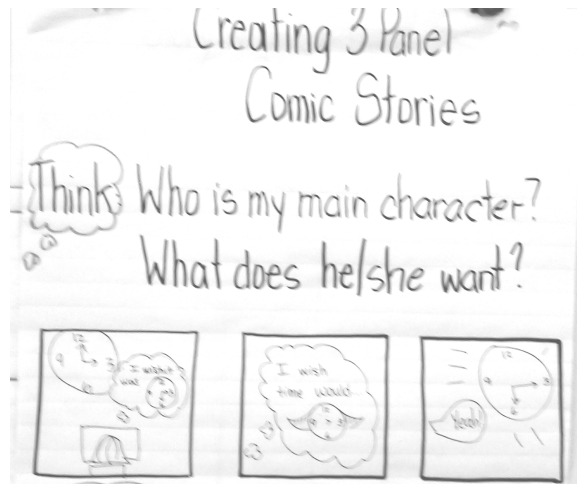
4	3	2	1
---	---	---	---

I discussed the slide, “He [Pajares, 2003] says to assess student’s writing performance, we need to look at the beliefs that students have about their abilities to do a particular writing task, so I thought, ‘Okay, I want students to write and draw a 3-panel comics story,’ so I made that a statement [pointed to first sentence on slide]” (Transcript, March 8, 2010). I noted, “Samantha pushed me to think more about whether or not it was true that students’ comfort or belief in their own abilities as comics writers would influence their engagement in our lessons” (Transcript, March 8, 2010). I continued, “Ya, like I’m not exactly sure how they will respond to it, so if you could think about it and talk to them about it then we’ll have a sense of what they think about themselves doing this” (Transcript, March 8, 2010).

We gathered the grade three and six students in Carmen’s classroom. I began by having students complete the pre-assessment: “Now, this will seem different, but basically I want you to read each sentence and think, ‘Do I absolutely think I can do this; do I probably or pretty much think that I can do this with few problems; do I feel ‘iffy’ like ‘maybe’ I can do this or like; ‘No,’ I am very unsure about doing this” (Transcript, March 8, 2010). I did one example, “[reads first sentence on slide] I draw and write a 3 panel comic story. Well, I am pretty sure that I can sketch out and use words and make a simple story, so, ‘How much do I believe I can do it?’ I say, ‘a lot,’ but maybe not a 4, so circle 3” (Transcript, March 8, 2010). Then we gathered where students could see and hear

me, and I used the chart below and asked students to help me get ideas for my three panel comics story.

Figure: 4 Creating 3-panel comics stories



As the students gave me suggestions, I went with one about a student who hates a subject and just wants to go home. I shared, "This gives me an idea about my real life story. I had a Math teacher, we called him Mr. O., and he was 6'7" so very tall and always wanted us to do 'board drill' or timed paper and pencil math tests at the end of the day" (Transcript, March 8, 2010). I began to think aloud, "I know that I want to draw a figure in an easy way, so I think I'll draw me from the back" (Transcript, March 8, 2010). In the first panel, I drew the little girl [supposed to be me] sitting in a desk, looking at a clock and thinking, "I wish it was 3:30!" For the next panel, I asked the students, "I want to show that she's waiting, so what could I do?" After several suggestions, I chose to combine words and pictures in a thought balloon that took up the whole panel: "I wish that time would [drew a clock with wings]." Because I had only three panels, I needed to show some kind of an ending that made sense, and students suggested drawing her running out at 3:30 p.m. I chose to draw her shouting, "Yeah!" to get across the same excitement without having to draw anyone. I asked students to draw three big panels, and I used one student's visual journal to approximate the size and model how to use a ruler to make the panels. I said, "Talk with each other to get ideas, give ideas, and

don't be afraid to draw and write for each other. You have 20 minutes and we'll gather back here when you're ready."

Students returned and they were excited to share their creations, so we had a whole class feedback time, where they concentrated on the positive aspects of the work, "Jason, I really like how you..." and they asked a question if they had a genuine one. After that students indicated that they had finished their comics and many had used characters of their own. We then returned to my three panel comic and I asked for ways to make it stretch into 6 panels by redrawing it and choosing a starting place for the stretching. I showed the students Scott McCloud's transitions (figure 6) and considered how to use the moment-to-moment stretching technique for my story idea.

Figure 5

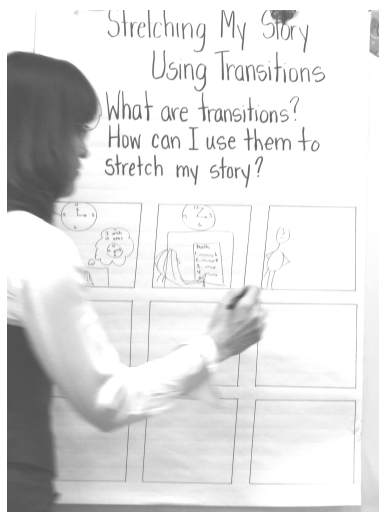
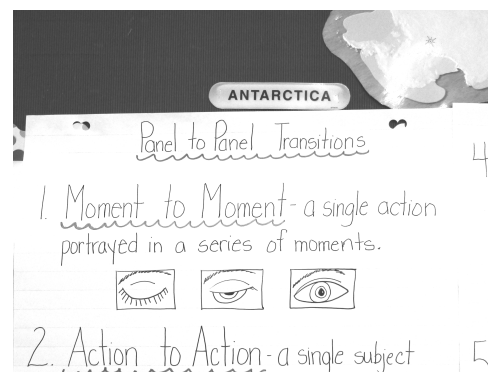


Figure 6



"You know, I think I will show some math questions on her desk (panel 2, figure 5) because that is a detail that everyone can relate to, like having so many questions left and wishing you were done them [laughs]" (Transcript, March 8, 2010). The students were asked to offer their ideas without putting up their hands, and I turned towards them and listened and then grabbed onto one of them. "Yes, yes, I heard someone say 'to show the *big* teacher.' That's good because it shows how she feels so small and he's like so big, so, hmm. How can I draw a person in an easy way? Maybe sticks and...[draws and continues to think aloud]"

(Transcript, March 8, 2010). While drawing the third panel, I turned around and said, “[smiles and grabs research journal], Okay, I admit it that I was, actually, I am still a little scared, maybe a lot scared to draw whole people doing things so I had to practice a little last night.” (Transcript, March 8, 2010). The students returned to their classroom spaces and tried the comic story stretching with a high success rate based on their whole group sharing at the end.

Subgroup debriefing

Samantha started our debriefing by saying that the pre-assessment was a “real eye-opener” because a student (Sandra) who thought she could draw according to a survey question last week was less sure (i.e., Sandra gave herself 2s for each statement) when she was put into the position of thinking about a specific task (f1, 11-16). Samantha also noticed that when I stopped to talk with Sandra and said, “Oh look, you were worried about nothing” (f1, 11-12) that I followed up on the student’s feelings when I wouldn’t have known them without that assessment. Later in the same discussion, I returned to this particular student’s end-of-class written reflection. Sandra wrote, “I found out that I can draw comics, but I don’t have to draw faces. I also learned how to use transitions [like] moment-to-moment” (Student reflection, March 8, 2010).

During our recess chat two days later, Carmen and Samantha looked at Sandra’s written reflection, and Samantha noted, “That’s what I mean, she had to really think about drawing to communicate, not to sketch for herself” (Research journal, March 10, 2010). When I asked Samantha whether she felt that the before and after assessment process was helpful, she said, “Yes, because the teacher has to think ‘Well, is this too much or what do I change?’ It’s that growth in one lesson, not waiting to look at their work that was that eye-opener” (Research journal, March 10, 2010). When I reflected on my lesson, where I had said that I would draw the back of the head so that I didn’t have to draw faces, I wondered aloud, “Do you think this drawing and talking is what helped her or would she have learned that about herself as a writer without the assessment?” Carmen answered, “No, she wouldn’t have thought about what made her worry. This way,

she focuses in and looks to overcome her weaknesses, not just what she didn't get in her comics writing" (Research journal, March 10, 2010).

Samantha emphasized that completing a pre-assessment would be very difficult for her because she would be required "to do the thing I'm not good at" (f2, 1-3). Samantha added that she was so taken with the insight that she wrote in her journal, "It's so important to share fears to create safe environment when they're doing something new, especially" (f2, 8-12). When I admitted that I worried about whether students would feel comforted or vulnerable by being transparent about their emotions, Kate posited that she was always the "cautious child" who wanted "to scream loudly, 'I can't do this!'" and that it would have given her confidence to go ahead and try because she knows that the teacher would offer her help (f2, 5-7). When I asked whether the teachers felt that the students believed me when I said that I was nervous and that I had to practice drawing a little, Samantha stated, "I think they believed you...[but] for a second I thought Parker was going to call your bluff," but then he noticed that your practice pages didn't match the chart story, and you were honest about your worries, so "they're' like, 'Oh, that makes sense'" (f2, 19-22).

Carmen had almost ten pages of journal notes that she had taken during class and throughout our subgroup debriefing and was therefore less visible in the transcript of this debriefing session. Regarding the value of doing pre-assessments with students, she wrote, "[Creates] awareness for the students as well as the teacher. Gives me a head's up on their perception of their abilities and confidence in themselves" (Carmen's journal March 8, 2010). Carmen also wrote for one student, "Automatic response—I can't draw this," and Carmen indicated that she told him, "Just draw, don't worry about quality" (Carmen's journal, March 8, 2010). Carmen connected the value of the pre-assessment and oral feedback because the focus on the positive aspects of what someone can do gave students "a confidence boost, and it allows other students to think about what made theirs good and [they] can apply it to their own. Gives ownership" (Carmen's journal, March 8, 2010).

Kate highlighted how the whole group feedback connected criteria and what students did, “I like how you asked them to use the student’s name and tell them everything that they did along the way even if it wasn’t done. She went on, “I turned to my Assistant and we realized that Darrin was one of the first to volunteer and then there was a steady stream of grade 3s after that, so it opened a door, no more holding back and letting grade 6s do the talking” (Transcript, March 8, 2010). Carmen added, “I like that, too, because they kind of, like whenever we give feedback and then we do deeper peer editing, it’s always, ‘Okay, you made this mistake. Try to fix this paragraph, so this...is like a confidence booster” (Transcript, March 8, 2010).

We concluded our debriefing, where we puzzled what it means to plan and teach a comics writing lesson. In the first part, I read a written reflection from my journal with the group, where I pointed out how moving between schools and classrooms taught me how teaching the same thing is never the same because I felt that for me it was knowing students and teachers that made me feel more or less confident (f3, 1-3). Samantha read from her journal, “I’m glad you said it’s a confidence thing because I drew a huge thought bubble [reads] ‘I’m really glad that Rhonda taught this lesson’” (f3, 4-5). Samantha went on to say that it was my background knowledge and drawing skill that made it work, and she lacks confidence in both areas with respect to teaching comics writing (f3, 8-9,17-19). “You said to the kids, ‘I get over myself because I just have to look past my drawing,’ but I just can’t” (f3, 17-19). When I asked Samantha what she would do differently, she said, “Break it up into mini-lessons” (f3,13) because that would “suit my comfort level” (f3,15). Kate did not elaborate throughout but agreed that she was glad that I was teaching (f3, 51-52).

I addressed Samantha’s point about how to get past the drawing by comparing it to my learning curve of being an administrator and literacy coach the year before, where I learned that I had to do the best in the time available to meet the ever-increasing demands of both roles (f3, 29-33). I claimed that in comics writing the demands are new and we are learning what they are, so we have to accept that learning means not having clear criteria for assessing teaching and

learning (f3, 37-39). Samantha acknowledged my point, but she also underlined how others (i.e., students, parents, administrators) are watching what teachers do, and their standards are often imposed on teachers. I used my university experience to say that my supervisor critiques my writing, and I have had to develop my ability to think critically instead of taking her feedback personally (f3, 43-47). Everyone laughed when Samantha responded to my statement (i.e., that I had learned how to stop giving myself “personal lashings”) by half-jokingly saying, “No, because maybe your supervisor does enough of that? Just kidding” (f3, 48). Although she was teasing me, Samantha underscored that an individual may work against the emotions connected to a supervisory relationship, but such a “working against” is difficult and complex when the social power is real (i.e., the person giving feedback can positively or negatively effect a career path).

It is important to note that although Kate said very little about her feelings and thoughts about teaching comics writing, like Carmen, she wrote a lot (six pages) in her journal. She indicated that she was “more relaxed” about comics writing and she discussed students’ responses to the task and her interactions with students, and her professional wonderings and insights. For example, “Yikes, I was encouraging my students to avoid video games when they develop characters. How to work with this idea” (Kate’ journal, March 8, 2010). She also wrote next steps for furthering her inquiry: “After today, I would like to make a comparison between the comics survey (expectation of success) and the last days’ reflections,” and “My guess/wondering: 3 things that influence self-efficacy?” (Kate’s journal, March 8, 2010). Finally, Kate noted an insight while debriefing, “Perhaps we have a school culture too focused on product,” and she starred, “Our plans have changed (improved) so much from what we originally thought we would do” (Kate’s journal, March 8, 2010). Finally, Kate noticed that a child whom she thought would give himself low scores on his pre-assessment gave himself 3s and proceeded to compose a comic, where he repeated panels and used thought balloons to help the reader to know why he had done that once Kate asked him to explain his reasons. She noted, “I realize that he has some pretty advanced

ideas about what it means to write stories but I didn't see them until today” (Transcript, March 8, 2010).

As I revisited my lesson, I asked for their opinions about how students responded and whether it was possibly too much for one lesson, and Carmen said it wasn't too much because students had to have their last 3 panels in mind in order to stretch them into 6 panels. However, she would have broken down the lesson if she had to do it “...[I]t was just too much information for me to keep in my head at once. I would have to know it really well, all aspects and then deliver it clearly” (f3, 70-71). Carmen did not think that it was the drawing that made it hard for her to imagine herself teaching comics writing; it was the amount of knowledge required to work with students. Samantha, too, said that she wouldn't have known how to answer students' questions about transitions, for example (f3, 76-77). I pointed out that I didn't get any hard questions and that I wouldn't have necessarily known the answers, and I concluded by saying, “I have had to look fear in the face so many times as a consultant” that I developed a way of working through such fear-based emotions that would have prevented me from doing that work (f3, 80-81).

Perpetuating and negotiating assumptions about teaching comics writing.

During our debriefing, we perpetuated readerly assumptions about teaching comics writing by dividing comics artifacts and practices. First, Samantha compared Sandra's responses on a question about drawing on the survey that she used from Ben, and my pre-assessment statement about drawing and writing a three-panel comics story. That is, Sandra stated, “ I love to draw and I do it all of the time at home” to the survey question: “Do you like to draw? What is it about drawing that you like/don't like?” In contrast, Sandra gave herself a “2” when she rated her belief in her abilities to this pre-assessment statement, “I can draw and write a 3 panel comics story.” When I review the survey (appendix, chapter 6, figure 6) that Ben and I had created and passed on to Parker Elementary, I found that we had inadvertently *not* asked a question about comics writing. Instead, we asked questions about how students liked story writing, writing, drawing and blogging. In essence, we assumed that comics writing was addressed by asking

questions about drawing and writing as though they are separate strands of the expressive language arts that are brought together and integrated to make a comics story. Similarly, Samantha assumed that Sandra gave herself 2s because she had to think more about drawing to communicate for an audience. While that may be an accurate assessment of Sandra's thinking, it is also plausible that Sandra realized that she was unsure whether she could put both drawing, writing and storying together. Also, when Sandra said that she learned that "she didn't have to draw faces" in her final written reflection, she may have been commenting on how glad she was to figure out how not to draw as one of the affordances of working in a comics medium rather than admitting her weaknesses as a comics writer. Thus, I posit that circulating comics writing teaching artifacts between schools perpetuated readerly assumptions about comics writing teaching and learning practices because such artifacts were not a location for professional questioning.

In contrast, when Samantha, Kate, Carmen and I treated the pre-assessment tool as a location for negotiating meaning, we surfaced our moral commitments to students and cultivated praxis. When Carmen and Samantha read Sandra's written reflection about her experiences of the first comics writing lesson, Samantha felt that comparing Sandra's pre-assessment beliefs to her final reflection was a "real eye-opener" because it showed Samantha that our teaching made it "safe" for Sandra to be transparent about her feelings. Carmen, too, highlighted how knowing that Sandra had changed her view of her own abilities showed that the teacher and student used the before and after assessment process to discuss her feelings about weaknesses, not just what she missed in her comics writing. Kate compared the pre-assessment to a loud-speaker, where the "cautious child's" voice has a place "to shout out" and let everyone know that she is motivated to learn but is feeling apprehensive and needs help to deal with her self-doubts. Hence, when we treated the pre-assessment teaching artifact as a "boundary artifact" (Wenger, 1998), where we negotiated meaning from the child's and teacher's stance, we returned to the value and purpose of the artifact and for engaging in a comics writing approach to teaching narrative writing.

Through such negotiations, we engaged in moral reasoning and praxis (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008).

Disrupting dominant scripts and social positioning. My intention for teaching the second lesson and getting students composing little comics stories was to show Carmen, Kate and Samantha that they didn't need to be great artists to teach comics writing. However, Carmen, Kate and Samantha responded diversely to being lesson observers.

Samantha seemed to hold onto very transmissive notions of her job as a comics writing teacher; she wanted to divide up the knowledge and skills to be comfortable so that she could anticipate the students' questions, and she identified her fear of not meeting a certain standard of performance as her main reason struggling to imagine herself as a comics writing teacher. When I attempted to alleviate her fear by sharing ways that I faced my own fears as an educator, she clarified that she couldn't get past her internal fear of being assessed by outsiders. Samantha treated my lesson as readerly work, where she was comparing what she assumed was my expert comics writing planning and teaching knowledge and practices to judge whether and how she could reappropriate them as a future comics writing teacher.

Even though I had stated that I was mainly uncomfortable as a comics writing teacher because "I didn't know the students," she assumed that I was mostly worried that students would call my "bluff" because I was "really" delivering a lesson that I had prepared in a very meticulous way the night before. When I look back on how similar my think aloud charts were from Parker and Jackson Elementary Schools, I think that I struggled to take on a writerly stance, but because I did not use my lesson artifacts to jointly puzzle about Samantha's assumptions, we didn't cultivate praxis or criticality. Instead, Samantha reappropriated my lesson artifacts into her transmissive, readerly worldview about what it means to plan and teach a comics writing lesson. She argued that she had an "internal interlocutor" (Holland et al., 1998, p.179) or inner voice that allowed her to appropriate my comics teaching practices into her way of thinking as a future comics writing teacher. For example, she stated how she could not accept

my statement to students that I let go of my fear of drawing; she said, “I just can’t.”

Carmen was relatively quiet throughout the debriefing. She shared that she wanted to know that she could “deliver clearly” the knowledge and skills before teaching a comics writing lesson, and she also indicated that she would reduce the amount of content in the lesson. Although she assumed that her lack of knowledge and skills was the reason for reducing the lesson content, I think, looking back, that the lesson was too jam-packed with comics writing language, especially with my sharing of multiple transitions, not just one. However, my teaching or teaching artifacts were not a location for collective critical thinking even though I asked for honest feedback and reassured the group that I wouldn’t personalize their comments. Hence, a readerly ideology dominated the debriefing, and I infer that it is likely that Carmen, Kate and Samantha would have considered it to be impolite to be too honest and “critical” of a guest teacher’s lesson (i.e., I was still a relatively new addition to their community).

Based on Carmen’s journal notes, she focused on the value of pre-assessments and next steps for working with students (writerly work), and she also took detailed notes on feedback and other aspects of the lesson in the form of scripted observations (readerly work). Kate, too, was relatively quiet throughout this part of our discussion and only said that she was glad that I was teaching. Unlike Samantha, however, Kate created a space for a private conversation with her journal, where she wrote about how taking on the role of an observer in the lesson afforded her the chance “to relax,” and most of her journal notes took the form of identity work, where she wrote her wonders/guesses or questions and insights (writerly work) and scripted observations (readerly work). She also surfaced and questioned the product-oriented school timespace that seemed to look at writing and the teaching of writing as an artifact to be judged.

Holland et al. (1998) stated that taking on new identities requires individuals to self-author by engaging in the practices, including artifact creation and use, to develop new ways of thinking, feeling, valuing and acting. I infer that Samantha’s readerly worldview was, based on her admission, so engrained in her

identity as a writing teacher that she required more intensive collaborative planning, teaching and reflecting to create new “internal interlocutors” for herself as a writing teacher and professional learner. On the other hand, Carmen and Kate had cultivated a back-and-forth readerly-writerly stance in their journals, where they were more focused on next lessons and students than on doubting their confidence about teaching comics writing.

Holland et al. (1998) discussed how working between ideologies as a community means renegotiating social positioning of individuals. The dominant script at Parker Elementary, based on our overall interactions and my analysis of the principal’s stance in the last chapter, is a readerly professional learning, which is grounded in a market ideology, where what counts are results, individual performance and competition. Such an ideology creates hierarchical communities within institutions, where different individuals have different amounts of social capital (Bourdieu, 1977). Samantha, Kate and Carmen had close professional and/or personal relationships, where they knew the dominant script and their roles within it. When I entered their group with different artifacts and practices as a writing teacher and professional learner, I disrupted their habitus (Bourdieu, 1977).

Holland et al. (1998) found that when ways of relating are disrupted, individuals experience “symbolic violence” (Bourdieu, 1977) or internal renegotiation of values and beliefs, where they face conflicting personal and institutional ideologies or identities by retreating into silence or talking sheepishly, less openly or shamefully about the institutions and communities within which they are active participants. For example, when Holland et al. (1998) interviewed a college student who admitted that her social group’s criteria for romantic relationships was based on matching males and females of similar physical attractiveness, the student had a tone of shame in her voice as she explained such practices.

I posit that when Samantha challenged my stories about how I changed my ways of interacting with my supervisor and others in positions of power by changing who I was as a learner, she could not accept my statements as true.

Based on her description of how social hierarchies really work, she used a joke to call into question my *real* relationship with my supervisor. Everyone laughed because just like the interviewee who spoke sheepishly or shamefully about romantic practices of her social group, she participated in them just as we worked within schools and universities driven by readerly concerns while simultaneously cultivating writerly visions of praxis.

I contend that our growing community of practice of three teachers and one outsider-insider researcher disrupted the habitat (Bourdieu, 1977) of Carmen, Kate and Samantha's ways of working at Parker Elementary. Such disruptions took the form of ongoing social repositioning. Carmen and Kate participated in parts of our subgroup conversations, where negotiation about the value of artifacts opened up Thirdspaces (Soja, 1996) for imagining new ways of learning together. However, they were also silent when Samantha and I spoke from competing ideologies about teaching comics. In my view, Kate and Carmen's clandestine ways of blending readerly-writerly scripts in their journals and their nonparticipation in parts of our conversations were their "counterscripts" (Gutiérrez et al., 1995) to the readerly dominant script operating at their school and, at times, within our newly formed community of practice.

Growing communities of practice at Parker Elementary

As a subgroup of four, initially, we occupied competing readerly and writerly stances, which divided us relationally as teachers-outside researcher. We also opened up Thirdspaces (Soja, 1996), where we imagined learning as writerly collaborative action researchers. Such Thirdspaces happened when we reflected critically on our purposes for engaging in comics. Samantha and I shifted between readerly-writerly chronotopes inside the classroom, and we perpetuated a transmissive stance when we debriefed alone without students or their artifacts. Kate, Carmen and I cultivated writerly learning stances inside and outside the classroom because we maintained our focus on students. When our subgroup of four met again, we opened up Thirdspaces (Soja, 1996) when we negotiated the value of the pre-assessment from students' and teachers' perspectives; however,

when Samantha and I verbalized our competing readerly-writerly stances, Kate and Carmen retreated into their journals with readerly-writerly counterscripts (Gutiérrez et al., 1995).

Jackson Elementary

Mark's office is located in the main school office on the first floor of the school. He shared it with Dan, one of the school principals, so they had a fluid way of working as a back-and-forth three person administrative team. Ben's classroom was located on the second floor on the southwest side of the school, and it had a strip of windows looking out onto the large field and playground area. Most mornings I arrived at the school about 45 minutes before classes began and either went directly to Ben's classroom and set up our previously agreed upon lesson materials, stopped to talk with Mark, and/or went to the staff room and talked with different individuals who flowed in and out in the morning.

Ben had a large classroom with a location for varied literature, mostly novels, that students regularly accessed for their morning independent reading time from approximately 8:35-9:10 a.m. each day. We worked on comics writing from 9:10-10:15 a.m. on Tuesday and Friday mornings and sometimes after recess. Mark did not typically enter the classroom until 9:15 a.m., after the morning rush of office business was over, and he was sporadic in terms of when and whether he participated in classroom lessons because of his administrative responsibilities. During the three week break at Parker Elementary, I worked more often at Jackson Elementary.

How we began

My first planning meeting on February 18, 2010 with Ben and Mark was scheduled two days after the one at the ski hill with Carmen, Kate and Samantha. After my planning session with Parker Elementary teacher participants, I wrote in my journal,

I think we had a good planning time, but it was quite focused on planning one lesson. I hope to have a more open conversation with Ben and Mark about whether or not they want to proceed with comics writing and what

they hope to gain from this professional learning process. I used Kemmis and McTaggart's Action Research Planning Guide (1988), where they suggested Schwab's commonplaces to frame our thematic concerns. I have written some questions to get us thinking about inquiring into writing practices from the stances of students, parents, other teachers and ourselves (Research journal, February 16, 2010).

In preparation for our meeting, I suggested to Ben and Mark that they think about why they wanted to inquire into comics writing and whether they had other concerns about teaching writing that we could talk about, and I also asked them to think about how comics writing connects to their report card outcomes and other subjects. They each had a copy of McCloud's book and "The Comic Book Project" teaching package, so I highlighted how easy it was to read McCloud's *Making Comics* (McCloud, 2006) and suggested that they read the first couple of chapters. Because Mark was interested in technology and the potential of a blog space, I encouraged him to think about shaping his own inquiry about teaching writing using technology.

Mark called me the evening before our planning meeting, and we talked about his ideas of working with visuals and technology, and he concluded, "I would prefer to keep my inquiry the same as Ben's because I am in the classroom less often and it will be easier for us to have conversations" (Research journal, February 18, 2010). Before we ended the phone call, I mentioned, "Do you think you will get interrupted at the school? I could never hold a meeting in school when I was an assistant principal. Should we go to a nearby coffee shop?" (Research journal, February 17, 2010). Mark said, "No, no, it will be fine" (Research journal, February 17, 2010).

We began our meeting at 2:45 p.m. on Thursday, February 18, 2010 in Mark's literacy coaching room, which was filled with baskets of children's literature, professional learning materials (i.e., programs of study, books), and a small round table. Just as Mark, Ben and I sat down, Mark was called out of the meeting and only returned twenty minutes later for a few minutes and was called out again until 4:00 p.m. Ben and I abandoned the idea of planning without Mark,

and we talked more broadly about Ben's reasons for engaging in collaborative action research to inquire into his writing practices.

Blowing up, fixing and reloading readerly chronotopes

Ben and I talked for 55 minutes about what he hoped to gain from an investigation of comics writing from students', parents', other teachers', administrators' as well as his own perspective. Ben hoped that his students would locate their creative energy as the impetus for writing stories— “And I think for a kid, that their being able to look back on what they create//I still look back on stuff I created as a ten year old, and I can remember being there” (f1, 5-6). He added, “I would love it if one of the kids came back with a ‘fire burning in their belly,’ ‘I want to do this’” (f1,15-17). Ben posited that comics was a good way to reinvent story writing, which had been “cast with the shadow of tests” (f1, 26) and in need of “blow[ing] up into something else, something where everyone has to just start over and think, ‘Well, I have to write *and draw*, so what does that mean?’” (f3, 16-17).

Ben was fairly certain that parents would question the legitimacy of undertaking comics and comics writing because of their traditional literacy views of English language arts (f2,5-9), where he expected that they would equate writing in school with studying print-based genres and conventions. Ben imagined that we would have to gather evidence on how comics improves the quality of students' writing across the curriculum (i.e., Health, Religion) as part of our inquiry because parents would require proof of the value of undertaking such an approach to writing stories. He also supposed that parents would be pleasantly surprised by what he anticipated would be students' excitement about doing their comics writing homework (f2,11-12).

Ben also anticipated a positive reaction from the two school principals when they went for their “walk throughs,” and he gave an example of how he thought Dan would follow up with one of the school's most troubled little girls who happened to be in his class (f3, 4-6). Ben imagined that this student might take to drawing and writing because she was an avid writer; he hoped that she

would see the magic of putting them together and then sharing that excitement with Dan and others who would listen to her (f3, 9-13). And, for himself, Ben aimed to “add more tools to his arsenal” (f4, 8) to gain “a massive portfolio of examples, of ideas to teach grade six students” (f4,4-5). He also spoke about what he and Mark discussed, which was to improve students’ revising skills, especially a particular group of boys who typically saw little reason to revise and edit their stories (f4, 10-12). He ended by letting me know that Mark had a “Nixon” binder labeled and ready to collect teaching ideas, and I immediately said, “Oh, no, that’s exactly what I don’t want. This is about *your* inquiry, not mine. It has to come from *you*,” and Ben interrupted, “I think it’s *awesome* [big smile]” (Transcript, February 19, 2010). I responded, “Oh goodness, you look just like the Cheshire Cat!” (Transcript, February 19, 2010). We both laughed.

Mixing metaphors. From a cultural/discursive lens, Ben relied upon a war metaphor when he spoke about what needs to happen to transmissive writing practices from the stances of students and parents. For example, he described traditional story writing approaches lurking behind teachers and students in the form of standardized tests that cast big shadows on them. He framed his inquiry as locating the ideology upon which such tests thrive and “blowing it apart” to start anew. Ben also spoke about the need for us to show parents qualitatively how students improved by being inspired to do their homework. In other words, Ben proposed an inquiry that would wipe clean previous story writing practices to make way for a new, emergent, unpredictable approach. Such a critical-practical orientation towards taking on a comics writing inquiry echoed Kemmis’ (2010b) notion of educational praxis as “history-making” action through small scale “revolutionary practice.”

From a cultural/discursive lens, I was happy with how my conversation with Ben was going because it allowed him to articulate why comics writing mattered to him and he did it so powerfully through his war metaphor. However, from a sociopolitical point of view, I recall putting my hands on my head in my car when I left the school that day because I recognized that Ben’s war metaphor did not hold when it came to his understanding of how we would work together as

co-inquirers. Ben slipped back into the lurking shadow or “breathing boundary” (Kemmis, 2010a) that he had hoped to blow up when he aimed to engage in professional learning with Mark and me to accumulate an “arsenal” for teaching comics writing. He thought it was “awesome” that Mark had a labeled binder, “Nixon,” to get ready for such a massive portfolio-building journey, one where I was the leader of the troops. Thus, he worked from an ideology, where knowledge and skills were identifiable and easily accumulated in a binder as a set of predetermined products. Although I appreciated that it was true that we had to aim to gain knowledge (episteme) and to make things (techne) as well as orient ourselves towards praxis and criticality throughout our comics writing journey, I understood Ben’s smile associated with Mark’s binder as knowing that I was the one who was designated by the assistant principal as most responsible for our “shared” aims. In other words, he double-voiced (Bakhtin, 1981) my intentions by refracting my words and invitation to take part in collaborative action research with his smile, words, binder, and, in the next section, his preparedness to be told what to do to take on the identity of a comics writing teacher.

Ben surprises me

Our conversation ended at about 4:00 p.m., and I assumed that Ben needed time to prepare for the next day, so I got my calendar to schedule another planning time. However, Ben surprised me when he said, “I’m going to start comics writing tomorrow.” I asked him what he planned to do, but he didn’t know and asked me what Parker Elementary had planned. I shared an overview with him (See appendix, chapter 6, figure 5). During my quick review, Mark came into the room and, as he listened, he said that he would put the lesson activities into a Notebook file for the SMART board. Although Ben and I hadn’t decided to go with the plan, Mark had to leave to attend a retirement, so it seemed most manageable to go with it. Ben and I created the required teaching charts and drawings, and I gave Ben a copy of Bearne et al.’s *Classroom Action Research in Literacy: A Guide to Practice* (2007) and showed him the example story, where a teacher began his inquiry into his students’ writing using a survey.

When Mark left, I told Ben that I had not yet used a SMART board and I asked him if he knew what to do with whatever it was Mark was creating out of the lion comic. Ben said, “I’m pretty sure he’ll just scan them [the drawings of the lion comic panels, See figure 2] in but just in case something happens and Mark isn’t here, I will draw them” (Research journal, February 18, 2010). As Ben drew pictures for the lesson, I read aloud the survey from Bearne et al.’s (2007) book, and we revised it, and I typed a new one for our lesson (See appendix, chapter 6, figure 6). We wrote a few notes about what parts of the lesson we would share. I emailed the survey to Kate, Carmen and Samantha, and then we gathered our things at 5:00 p.m. to go home.

First lessons and reflections

Before we began the lesson, Ben quickly took notes as we reviewed our parts because he had forgotten his notes at home. Mark chose to observe the lesson and he stopped in before leaving to do announcements with students to let us know that he would be there at about 9:00 a.m. Dan and Kathy stopped in before the first bell and said, “We’re excited to see what’s happening, so we’ll stop in a bit later.” As students entered the classroom, Ben asked them to sit down for independent reading time, but they were extremely excited to have “a researcher from the university” in their room. One student, Megan, gave me a copy of her story, “Whiteangel,” which was all about her adventures as a college student with three other girls in class, and she said, “I knew you were coming so I wanted you to see my story” (Research journal, February 19, 2010). One boy, Nathan, opened his desk drawer, which was crammed with *Naruto* books, and he said, “It’s about time that we learn about graphic novels” (Research journal, February 19, 2010). Several other students asked me to help them pick books from their classroom library. Students were bubbling over with positive energy that filled the room, all before morning announcements. During independent reading time, Ben and I reviewed our notes again, and I reminded him that he could feel free not to use my help or to ask me to cut in for any reason.

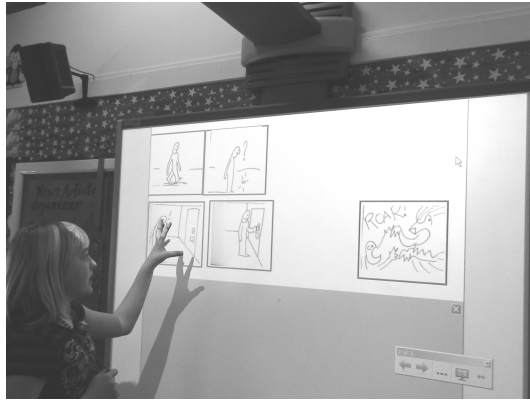
He gathered students on the carpeted area at the back of the room, and he started, “Today, I think you already know that we are beginning comics writing,” and arms shot in the air with “YEAH!” and whistles (Transcript, February 19, 2010). Ben turned to the chart, RAFTS, and said, “Okay, okay, good to see you’re excited because I want you to know why I am doing this. I want you to find your inner fire for story writing, like your creativity,” and one student, Jane interrupted, “So we have to write stories,” and Ben responded, “See, *we have to write stories*, is what I want to erase, like I want you to think, ‘We have new ways of doing this’ ” (Transcript, February 19, 2010). He continued, “Your role (R) is to be comics writers, and your audience (A) will be, well, maybe I shouldn’t say will be, might be online and offline groups//.” Ben asked me to explain, and I said, “Oh, well I think when we show you that some students post online and talk online in a blog that your class might choose to do that, too” (Transcript, February 19, 2010). “So the format (F) is to write comics story, and the topic (T) will be what we decide as a class theme, but you will have a lot of choice in topic...S, is my strong purpose... to reignite that ‘fire in your bellies’ for story writing” (Transcript, February 19, 2010).

As the students moved to the SMART board to watch the video, Dan and Kathy stood at the door and smiled and watched for about five minutes as we proceeded with the lesson. Ben asked me to take over, and I introduced the Michael Bitz clip and myself, “Some of you know that I am from the university. I am a student and I am really excited to join you on your comics writing journey. I want to learn what you feel and think and what I think about comics as an approach to story writing” (Transcript, February 19, 2010). Mark was at the computer to help with the video and technology. After we showed the clip, Mark said, “We will have a blog, too, for sharing our feedback on our drafts of the comics, and we will have to see what else we do with our comics” (Transcript, February 19, 2010).

Ben introduced students to the lion comic on the SMART board, but when he saw the slide, he said, “Oh, there are words on it. How about you take over for this part?” (Transcript, February 19, 2010). I took over and asked Ben, “Oh, do

you want me to use the words?”, and he turned to Mark who shrugged his shoulders and we laughed (Transcript, February 19, 2010). I asked that students work alone or in pairs to sequence it in any way possible and be prepared to retell the story on the SMART board when they finished. Dan stayed for a couple of minutes and worked with Jane (the student who Ben predicted would be Dan’s focus throughout the research). Jane was determined to put the panels backwards like a “Manga” story. After about ten minutes, students shared their retellings. One of the most interesting observations made by students was how changing spacing between panels changed the story:

Figure 7: Sally imagines adding another panel



Transcript, February 19, 2010

Sally: There’s a man walking and he sees a key that he thinks is the one that he lost, and then he recalls the house that it came from, but I would make these [points to empty space, where she will add panels] like maybe blue or something, like in another panel.

Ben: Oh, for remembering. Would you add a panel then or

Sally: Ya, so he remembers that the key was used for this old house [and points to the empty space], where he had heard stories about what was inside but he never made it there, so I would make it a hazy blue or

Jane: That’s stupid, so then there’s like this lion. It doesn’t even make sense.

Ben: Hey, hey, let her finish.

Sally: Okay, so then I would add like maybe words [points to the space before the lion panel] or like put the lion in his imagination.

Jane: No, you would have to put them in a row, like//

Ben: It's all right, show it/

Jane [moves panels in a row] Okay, so he's walking, sees the key and the he remembers the old haunted house, he keeps walking and then you change color and then we know it's his memory and then you put this one [lion panel] in a bubble.

After several students shared, it was clear that we could skip the activity of taking a panel away because the class had already contemplated the effect on the reader of adding and taking away panels.

Ben introduced students to the t-chart, "I want you to think, 'Comics are' [points to his sheet] and list what features of comics stories draw you into them like the color, speech balloon, and so on. Then I want you to think what comics are not...like comics are not, what?" (Transcript, February 19, 2010). As students worked on this part of the activity, they came up with lists of features and talked about the practices of story writing that went with them. For example, Ben asked one student, "So why did you put 'thought bubbles' on your list?", and the student opened up his *Naruto* book and said, "See, it's like I can see the thoughts of the character." When Ben asked him why seeing the character's thoughts makes it a better story, the student responded, "I know Naruto is like always worrying about meeting his nemesis, and he has to be one step ahead of him, so I can see his, like his mind map" (Transcript, February 19, 2010).

Just before Ben was about to pass out the student questionnaires, the recess bell rang and his student teacher, who had entered the room about five minutes before, asked to talk with him. Mark and I talked about what he noticed and he said, "Well, some students caught on right away, and everyone got down to work, which isn't always happening in there, right? Jane, especially, was included in classroom discussion and the other students listened to her, which is something new for her" (Transcript, February 19, 2010). Ben returned and said, "I felt 'off' today. I'm not sure why, but maybe it will be better on Monday"

(Transcript, February 19, 2010). I suggested that he write a reflection in his journal about that and consider why he felt that way.

Mark and Ben's debriefing

Ben asked, "So on Monday, what could we do?" I showed Ben a lesson idea (i.e., composing a simple three-panel comic and then stretching it into more panels) from McCloud's *Making Comics* (McCloud, 2006) and suggested that he think about that for Monday. Given Ben's indication of feeling off and nervous about teaching together, Mark offered to teach with me. I looked at Ben and said, "Maybe that would give you a chance to watch students, maybe interview a couple of them using the questionnaire because we didn't have a chance to give it?" (Transcript, February 19, 2010). Ben agreed, "Ya, that's perfect. I will think more about comics over the weekend, too!" (Transcript, February 19, 2010). When Mark and I returned to his office, he found out that he was away Monday for a district inservice. I agreed to teach alone and asked him to touch base with Ben to get a collaborative planning time, where all of us plan or where he and Ben plan together.

Missing pedagogy and relationships. Ben acknowledged that because his previous collaborative experiences involved sharing the workload only, not the in-class work itself, he found working with others in his room difficult:

Last night Rhonda and I got our materials ready for today. I got to school with some nervousness running through me. I also realized when I got to school that I had left my note page at home. That did not help. Anyhow, I got myself ready and materials ready. I went through the lesson with input from Mark and Rhonda, but I felt I was really dry. Now, I don't know why. I just look back and realize how off I felt. When I talked to my wife, she mentions the number of observers in the room would have thrown her off, very nerve-wrecking. I'm going to go with that. Perhaps the best strategy is to ease in slowly or with fewer observers until as a teacher there is a higher comfort level with the technical material (Ben's journal, February 19, 2010).

Ben's uncertainty and anxiety was likely partly rooted in the way that planning unfolded the day before. I had reviewed what I had planned with Parker Elementary teachers, and Ben and I created the artifacts for the lesson without actually sharing the thinking behind them. In other words, there was division between reifications and planning practices, and Ben was ultimately "delivering" others' thoughts and ideas instead of his own. I infer his feeling dry to an intellectual, emotional reaching for something to grab hold of to ground his teaching, the pedagogy behind the teaching actions, which was not readily accessible to him. To complicate matters, Mark had scanned the lion comic into a Notebook file and included the words from the text, which was a lovely gesture, but, again, it was another artifact that Ben and I were less familiar with because we hadn't talked through Mark's thinking with him about what to do with the panels and words. As it turned out, Mark taught us how to use the screen function of Notebook, and we each learned something new.

While it is easy enough to make adjustments when one person is making teaching decisions, Ben stated how such little changes made it difficult for him to know what to do next because there were two other teachers in the room (Research journal, February 19, 2010). When Ben later reflected on why it was hard for him to work with others in his room, he added, "I guess I needed to get to know you better, and I got to know you better. I got to know Mark better, and I enjoyed interactions we had, and I thought it was fun" (Transcript, May 14, 2010). He went on:

There's still the fear of having someone else in your classroom, and I think once that's gone, then suddenly it's good. It took me a couple of visits [laughs] or maybe more [smiles]. I still remember that it felt like every time I turned around and saw adults in the room, I felt like 'Oh, God, Oh, God! I just thought, they're there, and my lesson is, well, and everything was just compounded I guess" (Transcript, May 14, 2010).

I interpreted Ben's reflections to mean that, in addition to his felt absence of pedagogy, there was also an absence of relationship between him and Mark, and him and me to ground our teaching together.

I hoped to work with Ben and Mark in writerly ways, where we jointly determined methods for working together. However our disjointed beginning made it very difficult to ease Ben's feelings of nervousness as a writerly teacher coming from a readerly stance towards teaching story writing and engaging in professional learning. Ben's world of collaboration at Jackson Elementary was one of lesson-splitting rather than lesson-sharing, where Mark created time in Ben's schedule to do other classroom work that did not typically involve sharing the timespace of the classroom with Ben as coteachers.

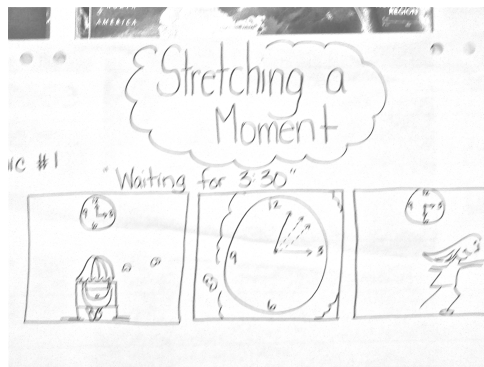
Rhonda teaching

When I arrived on Monday morning, Ben said, "I know you're thinking, 'I've got to get ready, just leave me alone,' but I want you to see some cool books and a website I found on the weekend'" (Research journal, February 22, 2010). Ben had practiced sketching using a vampire website (See appendix, chapter 6, figure 9), and he shared titles by Will Eisner (e.g., Eisner, 2008) that I purchased for our whole group sessions. He had given the student questionnaire on Friday and had read and highlighted key responses: "I noticed that four students are worried about drawing, so I will interview them today" (Research journal, February 22, 2010). I suggested that he also take notes on how students responded to the lesson.

I introduced students to comics story writing, "I am wondering what a comics story is? Turn to your partner and tell them what comics stories you read and what they are" (f1,1-2). Students provided several ideas (i.e., comic strips, graphic novels, webisodes of graphic novels written as short stories, etc.), and I confirmed that comics stories tend to focus on characters we come to know and enjoy or care about (f1, 6). I asked students to help me to develop a comics story using me as a character in school, and I asked them what they know about what students care about or wished for in school. After several comments (i.e., good

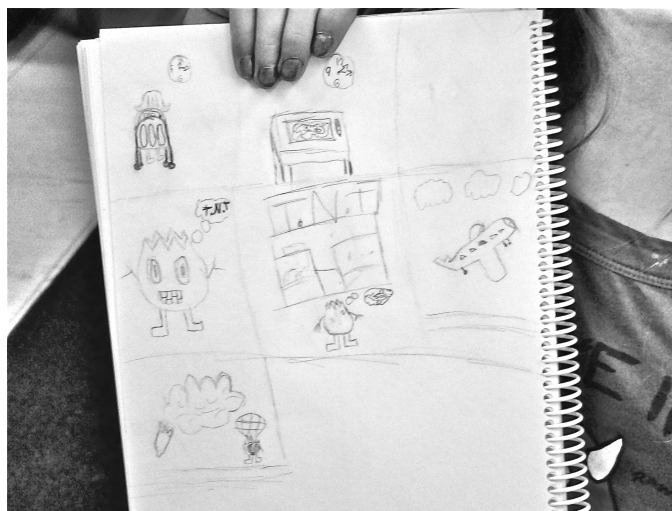
grades, Phys. Ed., recess), I told them about things I cared about when I was in grade six, and I settled on swimming as my story focus. Therefore, I engaged in a think aloud process, “So...I used to stare at the clock when it was close to the end of school, wishing time would move faster because I looked forward to swimming” (Transcript, February 19, 2010). One student suggested, “You could draw a great big clock [pointing].” I responded, “Do you mean here [points to first panel],” and the student said, “No, in the second panel” (Transcript, February 19, 2010). The interactive think aloud process resulted in the following three-panel comics story:

Figure 8: Three-panel comics story



Once students returned to their desks to sketch their own comics stories, Ben and I talked with Kerry who drew the following panels:

Figure 9: The TNT/Al Qaeda comics story



Transcript, February 22, 2010

Ben: Could you tell me about that, Kerry?

Kerry: Sure, it's about a pilot who has to take an Al Qaeda prisoner to war in Afghanistan.

Ben: So why is he in school?

Kerry: He's not, that's his desk. He's an executive for Cyclops Corporation in the U.S., and he's planning his mission and it's almost time to go and he's thinking, 'I know, I'll send TNT, our secret spy villain— heeheehehehehe'

Ben: What do you think? [turns to me]

Rhonda: Kerry, I really like your passion for your story, but what do you think will help readers understand your story line a bit more?

Kerry: I'll tell them and point to it [uses her finger to point from panel to panel]

Rhonda: I think you have a very interesting idea.

I gathered the students to share their comics and Kerry did not share until after we stretched our comics stories from three to six panels. Ben and I stopped to talk about his notes, and Ben said, "See what I mean, I'm not sure whether she would be a good case study. She is, well, she struggles with writing. That's more than she would normally do, but the content [worried expression]" (f2, 1-2). Although Kerry's explanation of her story satisfied Ben's concerns about the content (f2, 4), once Kerry shared it with the students, she elaborated on her original story with details like "TNT blew himself up and the Al Qaeda guy was blown to smithereens!" (Transcript, February 22, 2010).

Several classmates took offence to her story and explained what she needed to do to change it. One student suggested, "It's not right to blow people up into smithereens, I mean we're in a [religious] school, so that's not right," and another student said, "Ya, where's the respect for human life? Extremist religious fanatics are wrong to blow each other up. It doesn't matter if he's Al Qaeda" (Transcript, February 22, 2010). Ben noted in his journal that exploring real life

themes was a good way for students to talk about what matters to them without leaving any student out (Ben's journal, February 22, 2010).

The class conversation was eventually summarized by both Ben and me as we set criteria with students for what makes a good comics story so far: 1) Message: clear, sensible, keeps audience in mind, uses pictures and words, and 2) Effect on reader/Mood: understands message, seeks others' reactions, makes and accepts suggestions to make each other's stories better.

Ben's debriefing

When Ben and I debriefed at recess, he shared his focus on three students who impressed him with their engagement in discussion as well as in their comics writing. I asked Ben where he felt the lesson should go the next day, and he said he would have them do another short comic using any character and following the criteria that we had developed. He also stated, "They don't have a lot of comics in here so I will suggest that they bring some from home, too" (Transcript, February 22, 2010). I had brought a bucket full of comics from the local comics shop (i.e., about 20 titles) and let Mark and Ben know that they could purchase comics at half-price for their classrooms. Ben felt that his students had changed their ways of interacting because of comics:

Ben: I was most impressed that they worked through it as a class because really that's the whole point, but my class can't handle most discussion times. It's usually... it can get out of control easily, you know, so I was really amazed that I didn't have to remove Jane from the whole group discussion because she doesn't handle group things very well.

Rhonda: Why do you think the students are getting along better? Is it comics writing or just the change?

Ben: No, I think it's comics writing because they wouldn't write that much, like enough to talk about it. Plus, they touched on touchy topics, which I'm glad I didn't shut down because I think it got kids fired up (Transcript, February 22, 2010).

Working together in writerly ways. Ben and I had developed a “writerly” way of working with students as partners in our research. When Ben worried about the content in Kerry’s comics story, we created space for students to discuss criteria for comics writing. Thus, Ben and I changed my original lesson to draw from our brief reflecting about our conversation with Kerry, and our observations about the lively discussion about effect of comics writing on readers. In other words, we treated our joint classroom experience as a text to engage in writerly work as coresearchers. Also, once we agreed to change my original lesson plan, Ben took on an active role in criteria-setting with the class. Ben later stated, “I was so impressed that they worked through it because if one of us had said, ‘Okay, you can only write about this, then we would be back to square one’” (Research journal, February 22, 2010). He also mentioned, “I felt a lot better about today. I like the way we can sort of jump in and out. It suits my style” (Research journal, February 22, 2010).

Although I was the main teacher of the lesson, Ben was keenly involved in the whole class and interim discussions with students. He had audiorecorded three conferences with students, and I agreed to transcribe them so that we could talk about them the next time we met for lesson planning. Ben chose to engage in his inquiry into comics writing by choosing certain students because students who do not normally participate in socially acceptable ways in classroom discussions used their comics writing to be involved in them. Finally, I reflected on our writerly relationship in my journal:

I am uncertain how to divide or not the teaching from the researching because today we did both and Ben was more comfortable working with me instead of feeling intimidated by having me in his room as an observer. I think I will raise the idea of lesson-sharing, where we find little opportunities to coplan like today and share parts, where one of us is the lead teacher. I asked Ben if he wanted to meet this or next week to plan together, but he didn't want to because of Teacher's Convention (i.e., short week). The next time we plan together as a whole group is March 12th, so I will ask again for the following week. I'll invite [the cartoonist] in for the week after, which will give him a break, too, so he won't feel like it's becoming too much (Research journal, February 22, 2010).

Mark's debriefing

On February 24, 2010, Mark and I debriefed about what he had missed when Ben and I had met on February 18, 2010. As we talked about what Mark hoped to see as students engaged in comics writing, he focused on aiming to have students narrow their stories on a clear main idea because he described how some students get carried away with the novelty of working in a new genre (e.g., vampire stories) or forms (i.e., drawing) and lose what the story is about (f1, 3-4, 7-9, 11-12). When I asked Mark whether he felt that was a problem based on what he observed over the last couple of classes, he said, "It's the same, where some students jump in right away and others, I had to sit with Aaron quite a while to talk him through where he wanted to start" (Transcript, February 23, 2010). Mark highlighted the changed sociopolitical dynamics in the room as his key noticing,

I think that students who are not usually accepted found their niche in this. I mean Jane doesn't usually last more than two minutes in any group things...Chris, too, he was sharing his comic and wanted you to take a picture of it, and that's *huge* right there" (Transcript, February 23, 2010).

As we continued, Mark shared how he looked forward to learning about comics writing but he underlined how it was a really big challenge for him because "I don't draw...so it's a challenge, and I think it's good that we challenge ourselves..." (f1, 26-27). When I asked Mark what he would do to plan a vision for comics writing, he said, "Oh, I will have to look at how to teach literature and different activities" (Transcript, February 23, 2010). I ended by saying, "We will have some whole group time for planning, but it would be a good idea for you to work with Ben, and I would love to be invited, too, to do exactly that" (Transcript, February, 23, 2010).

Starting on the periphery. Although we had just begun developing our ways of working together, Mark was absent more than he was present, and he and I had talked more one-on-one than the three of us all together. Mark was typically entering the class after we started and left often before the class ended, so he was a peripheral member of the classroom community of practice and of Ben and my community of practice.

Mark introduced inquiry concerns such as revising and staying focused on the story, which were critical points for everyone to attend to, but they came from his own observations working one-on-one with a child, not with Ben and me present, so it was harder to connect to Mark's inquiry as a group. Because Mark was in and out of all aspects of the self-critical action research cycle, he missed too much of the processing to know how to create reifications (i.e., suggestions for planning, reflections on part of a lesson, making a SMART board slide) that were connected to the process itself and to the newly forming relationships of teacher and outside researcher, and teachers, students and outside researcher that had unique sociopolitical dynamics. For example, when Ben and I attempted to use Mark's SMART board slide, Ben turned the lesson over to me because he could not decide what to do and felt too nervous to make a teaching decision. Wenger (1998) notes that learning happens when individuals face such "boundary artifacts," such as unexpected lesson artifacts, and negotiate what and how to use them.

Although difference is a welcome aspect of collaborative action research, in this case, Ben withdrew from an opportunity to negotiate how to use the SMART board slide because he was too overwhelmed to think on his feet. By his final interview, Ben looked back on these first lessons and said that he didn't have a strong enough relationship with Mark or me to be comfortable enough to make mistakes in his teaching. Hence, the sociopolitical dynamics of working together as adults in a normally private classroom context surfaced emotional and relational struggles that made working in this central-peripheral arrangement with Mark challenging.

Setting up the blog

After our first comics lesson, on Friday, February 19, 2010, I learned how to set up the blog. I met with the district staff member, Dale, who showed me the Edmodo platform, which provided us with many options for how to group students into virtual color-coded spaces, and it allowed students to share word, audio and video file attachments without paying for the attachment space.

Although Dale shared an example blog, I knew just enough to work with Mark on Tuesday, February 23, 2010 to set up the two schools' shared blog space. Dale underlined how the alternative district blog space had many technical problems and his Director had advised consultants to suggest Edmodo because of safety and ease of use.

Mark and I engaged in a trial-and-error style of working through our blog set up, and we found that we had to call Dale a couple of times when we were stuck on what to do. Our first question was related to how to create groups of students, and because neither of us had experience with student blogging, we followed Dale's advice. First, he told us that when students look at the screen, it is better to have no more than ten names of other students with whom they can communicate because they can see who they last communicated with, follow multiple threaded conversations, and the teacher can survey ongoing conversations more easily. Therefore, Mark and I created seven color-coded cross-graded groups between the two schools. As we set up the groups, we realized that we had to create temporary passwords for each student. We divided up the class lists and did this according to a set rule that made it easy for us to notice errors in each other's data entries (i.e., student's first name and first and/or second letter of their last name). When we considered creating more complex pseudonyms, we called Dale who advised against it because he felt that it was important for students to easily recognize who they were communicating with and that as long as no identifiers of the school or city were evident on the site that outsiders would not know who the students were or where they were from. He also noted that when teachers and students have technical problems, they usually have to reset a student's identity, and it will slow down the process if they don't know the rule for how it was done originally.

Mark and I completed print lists with all students' names and passwords for our records as administrators of the site and for teachers who were also site administrators. We also created a separate space within the blog for our group of six to converse and share files with each other. I spoke with each school principal to let them know that I would give each teacher a copy of the lists of passwords

along with simple written instructions about how to access the site, and to monitor and change students' communications and rules of use (i.e., there were ways to limit what students could share in terms of attachments and to force every communication to also be sent through email to the teacher). I emphasized that there was no expectation that teachers use the blog and that I would let them know to talk with administrators about school computer-use policies.

Ben surprises me 'take two'

Ben came into the office and touched base with Mark immediately after Mark and I had completed the blog set-up. I was not there but stopped into Ben's classroom afterwards to let him know that we had the blog done and Ben said, "Yes, I talked with Mark. That's great. We should start this afternoon because I have computer time" (Research journal February 23, 2010). I stopped to talk with Mark before he left the school for his afternoon meeting and mentioned that Ben thought we should start that afternoon. Mark indicated that he knew that was Ben's plan and gave me the password list so that I could create password cards for each student. Because Ben and Mark worked closely together and Mark was the assistant principal, I thought that they felt comfortable with Ben proceeding with the blog lesson.

Ben brought his students into the computer lab, and I waited until he was done showing the students how to log on and facilitated classroom management by trouble-shooting technical issues with log-ins and writing comments. I turned to Ben at one point and asked him whether students usually worked on the district email/blog, and he said, "No." At that time, I realized what a big mistake it was for me not to check into their way of working more carefully. Because I had been an assistant principal and handled all of the computer policies in my last school, I expected that Mark would not allow Ben to move forward unless all of that was in place, and I also didn't expect Ben to bring students into a computer lab to blog without a lesson plan.

Ben called me the next day at home and explained how a parent had sent him a letter about not wanting her daughter to have access to the blog. I called

Dan and Kathy and explained that I had assumed that Ben proceeded because he had a plan. Ben told me, “I pulled the ‘research card’ with the parent so that she would understand what we are doing and why... You have to slow me down sometimes” (Research journal, February 24, 2010).

Giving back responsibility. Ben, Mark and I had different understandings of planning, teaching, and collaborating as a teacher and researcher. I discussed how I assumed that the teacher is legally and ethically responsible for students and therefore controls all planning, teaching, assessing, and classroom management decisions. Ben agreed but reiterated that it was easier to deal with the particular parent who called by using the research as his reason. When I asked Mark why he didn’t stop Ben that day, he said, “I’m not sure. I guess I see the grade six class as his responsibility” (Research journal, February 24, 2010). Such conversations assisted all of us to clarify what the role of an outside researcher was in the classroom and what the role of teacher had to be given responsibilities to the larger community (parents/guardians, administrators). I spoke with Dan and Kathy personally and apologized for not realizing that Ben assumed that I had a readymade plan for everything that we do in comics writing. I followed up with an email to all principals and teacher participants after speaking with them personally.

Ben and Mark and I talked about the next step to work with students to discuss the blog questions and issues that arose, and Ben chose to work through blog entries with students and have them correct them with him for personal identifiers (i.e, use of real names for people and places) and to discuss the purpose of the blog. Ben and Mark agreed to share the lessons for the following week, where they would have students do another short comics story for the first lesson, and I would follow up with a second lesson after we debriefed together.

Mark surprises himself

Ben, Mark and I met briefly on the Wednesday before Teacher’s Convention, and I started the meeting:

It is ideal if we coplan together, so it is up to both of you. You could make a set time and we plan together each week or you could plan together without me. As far as lesson delivery, it worked really well last day when Ben and I each took an active role in it. Even though I was the lead, you wouldn't have known it by watching our lesson (Transcript, February 23, 2010).

Mark offered, "I could be the lead on the next one, maybe we have them do a beginning with a picture or something like that," and Ben followed up, "Ya, I will help, so when does it work for you?" (Transcript, February 23, 2010). We decided that they would teach on Wednesday, and I would debrief with them at recess and take over the Friday lesson, and I also offered to book the artist for their art time Friday afternoon as we had previously discussed.

Mark called me on Monday night after Teacher's Convention and explained, "I have put some slides together and I even bought a blank journal at Teacher's Convention, but I can't bring myself to draw in it (Research journal, March 1, 2010). Do you think that you could teach the next lesson, and Ben and I will teach on Friday?" (Research journal, March 1, 2010). As we talked about the focus on storytelling, not drawing, he acknowledged, "On one level, I know that, but I still have to draw and I just can't do it. Maybe after the artist comes it will be better" (Research journal, March 1, 2010). I suggested that I take the lead for the Wednesday lesson based on his aim, which was to connect comics writing to provincial achievements tests, and he and Ben could take an active role in the lesson and really focus on what students could do as comics writers. I also suggested that Mark interview a student and use whatever questions (i.e., questionnaire as one example) to help him learn more about what composing comics stories involves for students" (Research journal, March 1, 2010).

Rhonda as lead teacher

I had students watch a film clip from *Wallace and Grommet* and learn about the film technique, pull-back-reveal, where a camera shows the audience part of what is happening and then suddenly pulls back to reveal the rest. The

students laughed as they watched the part of this film, where I showed the priest tending to what appeared to be the Eucharist only to see, once the camera suddenly pulled back, that he was not in a church; he was in a greenhouse tending his vegetable garden to enter a garden contest. We discussed how the bigger picture that we couldn't see before the camera pulled back was precisely what made us laugh. One student said, "It's like a trick because we think we know what's going on, but then we see what is *really* going on" (Transcript, March 3, 2010).

After that I brought students to their carpeted area, where I had glued a picture previously used on a provincial achievement test onto a chart paper and asked them how to think about what could be in the picture that wasn't already there. "Okay, so let's 'pull-back-to-reveal' what's in our imagination or mind's eye...to see along all edges of this picture. Think and when you're ready, turn and talk, please" (Transcript, March 3, 2010). The picture was of two people looking out over a forest area into the distance, and two students suggested that the two characters could be looking at a fire. Another student suggested that if we pulled our mind's eye camera backwards that we could show a sign that said, "Watch out for bears" and to draw the edge of a grizzly.

I took their suggestions and composed the next panel using a think aloud process, where I used the sign idea. After that, students selected a picture from one of three choices I brought with me and they drew their own creations (figure 10).

Figure 10: Close-up of the riverbank, where he shows one child left behind, as shown in the right-hand side of the second picture.



Ben and I worked with students and stopped to reflect on students' responses to the lesson. Ben noticed that students had no difficulty using that idea and reframing their own way of coming up with story ideas (e.g., drawing close-ups, drawing an off-to-the-side images), and he said, "Did you notice that everyone had a character that they could put into their panel?" (Transcript, March 3, 2010). I responded, "Yes, and I think that this is why we could have them use the criteria and explore coming up with a short one-page comic. What do you think?" (Transcript, March 3, 2010). Ben felt that this lesson idea would be good for Friday. As the recess bell went off, Mark returned, and he said, "I just thought it would be quieter in my room down the hall to do my interview" (Transcript, March 3, 2010). Mark offered his reflections on the lesson,

Some students got it, but others struggled with how to pull back and picture what else could be there, so I think I might have shown them *Zoom* (Banyia, 1995), where they could see what it means to move back to show more details, right, because some students didn't get it and they just drew the next picture" (Transcript, March 3, 2010).

I concluded the debriefing, "That's just an excellent way to start the lesson, so you two can talk and plan it then? I would love to join you, so just say the word" (Transcript, March 3, 2010).

Starting before I arrive

Mark called me on Thursday to let me know that a band was coming on Friday and that Ben would teach after recess. Mark explained, "Now that the time is changed, I have to go to a grade one class, so Ben will teach" (Research journal, March 4, 2010). When I arrived at the agreed upon time on Friday, Ben had already taught the lesson, and students were working on their comics stories. Students had lost focus by the time I had arrived and they were spending more time talking about unrelated things, not their comics stories. I suggested to Ben that he call them to the carpeted area and have them revisit criteria and share their stories so we could listen to what they had created. When I asked Ben why he didn't wait, he said, "Oh, I don't know" (Research journal, March 4, 2010). I

mentioned how important it was for us to be there for each other's lessons so that we can take an active role in them.

A tactical move. Given that Ben admitted that he felt nervous because he did not have a highly collaborative working relationship with Mark and me, when he was left to introduce a lesson on his own, it is possible that he did his "teaching" before I arrived because he didn't want to be watched by me. Ben knew that Mark had asked that I teach Mark's lesson (i.e., the one that I did on the Wednesday before Ben's lesson on Friday) because he was afraid of taking on the drawing part of comics writing. Because Mark was the one who normally set the vision for their lesson-splitting for English language arts, Ben likely felt nervous about teaching in front of me without a previously set vision to guide what he was doing that day.

de Certeau (1984) described individuals who occupy marginal power positions as making clever use of time to seize opportunities to "turn the tables" on the ones in power. In my case, although I did not see myself as being more powerful, Ben and Mark had deferred to me on all aspects of planning and teaching, including technology use. During this lesson, when students were off-task and struggling to maintain writing stamina, Ben accepted my suggestion to have a whole class feedback time at the carpet. Hence, I was taking over the teaching and, in some respects, the classroom management. de Certeau (1984) argued that tactical moves are usually "seized" because someone who is in a weaker position sees a way to change a situation without completely abandoning it. In Ben's case, I am not suggesting that he consciously tried to "trick" me, but when his class returned from band earlier than he expected, given his nervousness, he took that temporal opportunity to do what he promised (i.e, teach the lesson) by bending the writerly rules that we had discussed (i.e., taking an active part in each other's lessons).

Growing communities of practice at Jackson Elementary

At Jackson Elementary, we were growing as fragile communities of practice. Ben and I had found “writerly” ways of working together by our second lesson, but we were missing time for planning with Mark and each other in order to advance the pedagogy behind comics writing and practices for sharing lessons. Ben struggled to see our relationship as one that was on equal footing as far as professional learning because he knew that Mark envisioned the learning from a “readerly” stance, where he held up the “Nixon” binder as their repository for accumulating ideas and strategies that came from me and what they saw as my research. Because Mark deferred all classroom responsibilities to Ben, and Ben turned over everything from teaching, disciplining and making computer use decisions to me, I was constantly surprised by the level of responsibility I seemed to have without any warning. Because I was new to their school context and ways of working together, I assumed that Ben and Mark would take a lead on all aspects of classroom practices. As newly developing communities of practice, we were constantly negotiating each other’s actions, words and artifacts *in media res*, where usual ways of working were so disrupted for each of us that cacophony resulted on numerous occasions.

In the next chapter, I begin where I end in this chapter. I illustrate how our communities of practice were interconnected bundles of practices that mutually constituted each other and worked in dynamic balance. Such a fluid and life-like way of evolving as communities means that I continue with a focal interaction analysis that traces that evolution of interconnections, negotiations and development of communities’ and individuals’ identities in their fragile forms.

Chapter Seven: Growing and Shrinking Communities of Practice



The Caterpillar and Alice looked at each other for some time in silence: at last the Caterpillar took the hookah out of its mouth, and addressed her in a languid, sleepy voice.

“Who are you?” said the Caterpillar. This was not an encouraging opening for a conversation. Alice replied, rather shyly, “I—I hardly know, Sir, just at present—at least I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then.”

“What do you mean by that?” said the Caterpillar, sternly. “Explain yourself!”

“I can’t explain myself, you see.”

“I don’t see,” said the Caterpillar.

“I’m afraid I can’t put it more clearly,” Alice replied, very politely, “for I can’t understand it myself, to begin with; and being so many different sizes in a day is confusing” (Carroll, 2006, pp.54-55).

Locating a sense of selves

Alice discovered that eating cake and drinking juice would make her grow or shrink in size, which altered how she experienced Wonderland. As the teachers and I participated in collaborative action research, artifacts took on similarly unpredictable meanings. Because we were negotiating professional practices around artifacts that mediated our identities, we were also negotiating our identities in different social spaces (Leander, 1999) as newly developing or growing and shrinking communities of practice. In this chapter, I write social space narratives for our school and away space communities of practice from March 8-12, 2010 until May 21, 2010 to answer my research questions: How is professional learning experienced by teachers participating in collaborative action research?, and What is the role of tension in critical, collaborative inquiry communities? Such narratives continue from those told in the last chapter.

Jackson Elementary

In the last chapter, I highlighted that our communities of practice at Jackson Elementary were fragile because Mark was often in and out of classroom lessons and planning meetings, and Ben and I were changing the co-participative (Gutiérrez et al., 1999) ways of coplanning between Ben and Mark. In this section, I continue from the point after Friday, March 5, 2010 when Ben had taught before I arrived.

Stammering, laughing, joking and cursing

On Friday, March 5, 2010, after Ben's lesson, I went to my car and wrote in my journal:

Although I want to let teachers direct how I work with them, what do I do now that teachers are struggling to plan but don't use job-embedded time for comics prep? I have offered to meet or to use email, blog, phone to plan before, during and after school, and to arrange weekly time through principals. Maybe I'm the only one who sees planning as a problem. I will do some transcribing and get Ben and Mark some coffees and touch base at lunch today (Research journal, March 5, 2010).

I returned to the school at lunch and Ben and I debriefed in his classroom:

Transcript, March 5, 2010

Rhonda: I guess I have been unclear in some way, so I will just say, um [clears throat] this is hard for me to say [laughs]

Ben: [laughs] Oh, thanks for the coffee by the way.

Rhonda: Oh, no problem, so, yes, well, um, I think, you know, we need to, um, actively support each other's lessons, so when you teach before I arrive, then I can't support you because I don't know [clears throat] what's gone on. I, I, I can see from the parable on the white board that you generated some good class discussion, but//

Ben: Okay//

Rhonda: I meant what I said on the information day. It's like, it's a very individual thing, but if you want to plan and teach and I observe, then that's okay, but if you want to coteach or have it where we both take an

active part in each other's lessons, then I have to plan at some point with you or else we both feel like 'a fish out of water' [laughs]

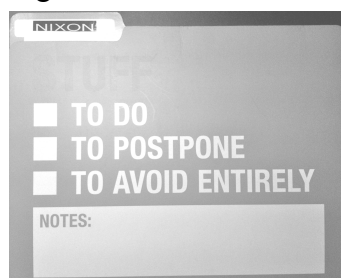
Ben: [laughs] Well, Mark said that we will work on the next lesson, so I'm not sure what we'll do, but I'm sure he'll talk to you about it.

Rhonda: Okay, I'm glad to hear that. And if it is a time thing, then Dan said that we can use Thursday time, but, again, it has to be your decision. Thanks for this, I was feeling a bit worried.

Ben: No, no, hey, did you see Mark's color-coordinated paper clips? [holds up container] Now that's something to worry about [laughs].

After that Mark and I touched base in his office. Mark mentioned, "You know, I think I will plan on my own and then approach Ben because I can't process very well with others [laughs]" (f1, 3-4). He went on, "What I mean is that I need time to just process so I have never been good at planning with others until I've planned on my own, right?" (f2, 6-7). Mark quickly opened a Notebook file that he had created about comics transitions and described how he needs to create by composing on the computer to prepare for collaborative planning. I added, "That's funny, you know, I'm the same way, but sometimes people don't know how to take that kind of preparation" (f2, 8). Mark laughed, "I really don't care what anyone thinks of me or my planning" [dead serious look on face]. I mean it, I don't really give a **** [mouthed words/dead serious look on his face] (f2, 9-12). We both laughed so hard that the two principals walked into Mark's office, and Dan said, "It's too much fun to study comics!" Mark replied, "Oh, *sooo* fun [sarcastic tone]" (f2, 15). After that, Mark called me on the weekend to say that he and Ben would teach together on Tuesday, March 9, 2010, and he ended, "Oh, and I've got a *special* file folder for *your* copy of the lesson [laughs]" (figure 11) (Research journal, March 7, 2010).

Figure 11



Working the dialectic with humor and laughter. As I stated in chapter one, I did not “work-the-dialectic” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) that blurred boundaries between what counted as knowledge, knowing and knowers until I started writing my dissertation. Therefore, in my efforts to blur the typical hierarchical divisions between researcher and teacher, I exposed them but didn’t make them the topic of conversation to work against them. Although I engaged in praxis by deliberating in my car about the right thing to do, my nervousness when I spoke with Ben exposed the mixed ideology driving my words and me.

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2007) argued that their genuine efforts to blur hierarchical lines with preservice and inservice teachers represented “a fine line between inviting practitioners to engage in inquiry...and requiring them to do it in order to get a degree or earn credit for an in-service course” (p.35). Hence, Ben and Mark reaped social payoffs for taking part in research, and I was gaining academic ones. Given the opposing readerly-writerly ethics undergirding our work (i.e., wanting social and academic payoffs while also exploring what it means to co-plan, -teach and -reflect), each of us experienced ethical tensions as emotional, relational ones, especially when time ran short.

In the above interactions, Ben and Mark worked against the readerly undertones of my words and gestures. Bakhtin (1981) emphasized that when a person speaks the truth, the meaning of his/her intentions is often clarified ironically by his/her struggles to locate the right words. Hence, my verbal fillers, throat-clearing and statements about my discomfort were evidence that I found it hard to articulate my expectations for our work together. On one level, I was using my social power to push Ben (and Mark) to follow my writerly rules of expecting to work in “jointly participative” (Gutiérrez et al., 1995) ways as co-planners and -teachers of comics writing lessons. While most teachers would agree that it is necessary to plan before they teach, there was more than a “time” problem stopping weekly planning. I think it was an ethical problem of breaking highly privatized ways of working associated with the readerly transcendent script (Gutiérrez et al., 1995) operating at their school. Ben illuminated my point by

indicating that he and Mark planned to prepare the next lesson together, which was not their regular routine.

Ben then quickly overturned the seriousness of the moment (i.e., the ethical tensions felt as emotional, relational ones) by holding up Mark's color-coded paper clips and joking about his organizational habits. Ben's gesture and words "play[ed] with the boundaries of speech types, language and belief systems...one of the most fundamental aspects of the comic style" (Bakhtin, 1981, p.308). He refracted the weightiness of my writerly research intentions and readerly top-down pressure to conform because he was, by his admission and his principals' comments as discussed in chapter five, committed to participating in action research for personal gains. I am not claiming that he was uninterested in learning in writerly ways but that his reasons for participating were dual-sided. Ben's joking around about Mark's paperclips was both a diversion from and a simultaneous pointing to the truth undergirding our conversation—we were attempting to work in writerly ways within a readerly system, which required each of us to improvise (Holland et al., 1998) our conflicting identities as teachers and learners. In a way, Ben's good sense of humor opened up a social space, where such improvisational identity work was made possible.

Similarly, Mark began on a serious note, where he informed me of his real reason for not planning with Ben (i.e., that he had not yet developed his own way to think through comics writing). Such an honest conversational opening illuminated how Mark and I worked, in part, from a readerly stance, where we needed to feel some control over knowledge and skills before planning with others; however, it also showed our differences as writing teachers. I had used McCloud's book to try on the identity of a comics composer, but Mark re-presented the information in McCloud's (2006) *Making Comics* in a Notebook file to avoid sketching comics stories. Also, Mark's file was from the lesson that he had planned but asked me to teach because he couldn't bring himself to draw in front of students. It seems that Mark's deficit view of himself as a comics writing teacher emanated from his readerly worldview, where writing teachers are judged negatively if they don't meet a certain level of competency. Also, such a readerly

stance created an emotional, relational tension that inhibited him from working in writerly ways on his own or with Ben.

During our debriefing, Mark appeared to process tension by joking and cursing as though he was a different person who was feeling absolutely confident about his comics practices. This verbal and nonverbal inverting of his identity prompted both of us to laugh because we knew that his extreme attempt to poke fun at himself was proportional to his fear of carrying through with a writerly approach to comics writing. When the principals appeared, we laughed even harder because they represented the readerly chronotope of which Mark was a part—the administrative team that had heavily endorsed the research on Mark’s prompting. Finally, Mark’s *special* file folder represented the double-sidedness of his situation; it revoiced his *real* thinking about engaging in comics writing and collaborative action research: “to do, to postpone, to avoid entirely.” Plus, he titled the folder with my name, not the lesson topic, which highlighted his concern with the person, not the ideas driving the research.

I contend that Mark and I used laughter to mediate our learning through collaborative action research. Our willingness to laugh, joke, and “pretend” curse shaped his office into an unofficial social space. This was one of many interactions where we worked against Mark’s negative feelings evoked by his readerly stance by rewriting ourselves into a writerly chronotope. The power of such social pivoting resided in our creation of a carnivalesque timespace that distorted school world rules (Bakhtin, 1984). We “worked the dialectic” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle 2009) by overturning social norms associated with professional learning meetings in an administrator’s office: appropriate language, a tone of seriousness and respect for hierarchy. In so doing, we equalized the power relations between us because as much as I had social power, Mark turned the tables on me through his “tactical” (de Certeau, 1984) invention of artifacts and practices that illuminated the readerly ethics underneath the writerly relationships I envisioned. Such a tactical move was a covert form of underwriting readerly identities rather than explicitly exposing and working against the ideologies underneath them.

“Look, Master, a pretty button”

On Tuesday, March 9, 2010, Mark and Ben taught a lesson by using Mark’s plan. Mark first set criteria with students about what made a good story and then had students revise a comic story that Ben composed. During criteria-setting, students debated the language used to talk about stories:

Sounds like a Soap Opera to Me

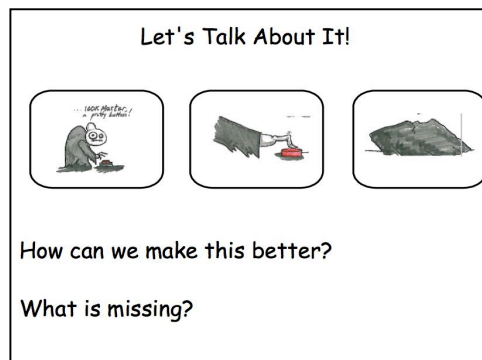
Mark stated, “Okay the problem, so what makes a story problem?”, and Jane responded, “The problem has to be between characters or whatever.” After some other students got sidetracked on how many events it takes to solve a problem, Jane listened to the debate and weighed in, “It could have more than 3 or 4 events.” Mark asked her why and Jane said that the “focus” of the problem or conflict, not the number of events, determines whether or not it carries the reader’s interest. Later, Sophie thought that a good conflict happens when one or more characters “want” something, and Darin questioned her, “What if they don’t want anything?” After some debate about whether or not story problems are pointing to a character’s wants, Darin gave an example about parents not wanting their child to use needles [drugs]. Eventually several students said, “They want not to want.” Sophie finally ended the debate by saying, “wanting, not wanting//Sounds like a soap opera to me!”

Students’ debates revealed how talking *about* stories without actually writing one takes on an abstractness that makes criteria-setting all about tripping over each other’s words. Just as the word “caucus-race” was endlessly debated in *Alice in Wonderland* until the Dodo finally said that they had to engage in a caucus-race to understand it, Sophie (who was not a Dodo) recognized the need to stop the cacophony about story problems.

Mark wrapped up, “[Ben] has created a wordless story (figure 12) for you and your task will be to make it better using the criteria that we made today. You will only have 15 minutes” (Transcript, March 9, 2010). Ben introduced his three-panel strip, “I’ve created this little character [points to first panel, figure 12], and I’m like, ‘He needs to have something happen to him. What could it be?’ Well, let’s see what I have him saying in the first panel, ‘Look, Master, a pretty button,’” (Transcript, March 9, 2010). Several students pretended to almost touch a button, and Ben played into their “participant stance” (Britton, 1970) by acting it out with them. He said, “Yes, so, you get it, that’s his problem, it’s, well, he just

needs to hit that button even though he knows that he isn't supposed to" (Transcript, March 9, 2010). Jane interrupted, "See, that's what I said before; it's the character's focus," and Sophie added, "A problem is like fighting with your wants" (Transcript, March 9, 2010). Ben confirmed, "Yes, so, you can see what I was thinking, 'I'm pressing the button,' so I have him pressing the button in panel two and then what do you think happened here? [points to the third panel]" (Transcript, March 9, 2010). One student answered, "Um, he sees the button, presses it and the rock falls on him" (Transcript, March 9, 2010).

Figure 12: SMART board slide. The first panel says, "Look, Master, a pretty button!"



Mark re-displayed the story map slide that had Beginning, Middle, End on it, and he set the SMART board digital clock to 15:00 minutes and reminded students to watch the time and criteria. As students began revising, Ben stopped them, "Sorry to stop you, but how many of you are planning using *just* pictures? (10 students)...pictures and words? (9 students)," and we noticed that for the six students who thought they used words only, they had combined both words and pictures to remind themselves not only what their story was about, but also what to draw. The bell rang just as students were sharing their compositions.

Mark and Ben debriefing

I started, "What did you notice that was like an 'ah-ha' for you today?" (Transcript, March 9, 2010). Ben said, "I know that my wife always says, 'I don't understand your cartoons,' [laughs] because they get too complicated, so Mark's plan made me focus in and I could use my little character" (Transcript, March 9,

2010). Mark responded, “I learned how much students draw as they plan because, well, we counted, right, but then even for the students who made notes, they had notes about what pictures to draw” (Transcript, March 9, 2010). Mark added, “I think because Ben told them what he was thinking as he made the little character talk, so they just picked up on, ‘Oh, well I have to think like my character’ ” (Transcript, March 9, 2010). As we walked down the hall, Ben commented, “I can’t get over how Jane is part of class discussion, and did you hear Darin compliment her on her ideas?” (Research journal, March 9, 2010). Mark agreed, “There were few kids off-task during the 15 minutes and they were talking, but it was on-topic talk, and no one was left out” (Research journal, March 9, 2010).

Interweaving texts and timespaces. Ben embodied a creative attitude towards comics writing by re-entering his home writing timespace as he talked with students about his examples. Because Ben wasn’t actually writing the story with students, their joint re-enactment of his writing timespace seemed to be a way for them to use his drawing to mediate their interactions and to resurrect his practices. Hence, the students and Ben imagined what Ben went through as a comics composer, a heterochronotopic pivoting between the character’s and author’s (Ben’s) worlds (Bakhtin, 1981). Such pivoting shaped the classroom into a writerly social space that permitted access to the aesthetic process of creating comics (Craft, 2000; Grainger, Gooch & Lambirth, 2005). When Jane and Sophie made spontaneous intertextual connections between Ben’s comic and the criteria-setting discussion, they reinforced the necessity of making links between writing artifacts and practices.

Mark’s change from a lesson-splitting to lesson-sharing way of planning and teaching with Ben created a location for them and for us to be more “jointly participative” (Gutiérrez et al., 1999). Mark had planned the lesson and asked Ben to create the comic strips, so this lesson represented the first time that Ben and Mark co-planned and -taught a comics lesson. Also, Ben, Mark and I stayed in the classroom and debriefed afterwards, which meant that we did not separate lesson reifications and practices; instead, we negotiated ways to interweave them.

Mark and Ben reviewing transcripts of student interviews

Ben and Mark met with me separately to talk about their transcripts of their student interviews. I gave Ben four transcripts (3 pages) and suggested that he read them to identify anything he found interesting about teaching and learning comics writing (f1,1-2). Ben read them in class during independent reading time, while I worked with students. When he was done, Ben and I had a two-minute debriefing about Marie's transcript because she was an avid writer at home who claimed to "hate" writing at school.

Ben shared two insights from reading Marie's transcripts. First, Marie struggled to write at school but not at home because she writes about vampires at home (f1, 5-9). Ben uncovered Marie's assumption that vampires was a taboo topic at school, "So I told her that she could write about vampires here, and I guess it's just important to think about why there is a difference for her between home and school..." (f1, 10-12). Ben described how Marie liked comics writing but "isn't too crazy about drawing"; she told him, "It's easier to sketch out [her ideas] than writing a whole bunch of pages" (f1, 16-17). Ben concluded that Marie didn't associate comics writing with story writing because "she is writing more, but I think she thinks she is just drawing" (f1, 19). Ben concluded, "I think the other thing is that Marie thinks she's a good comics writer, so she is thinking of herself as a good writer" (Research journal, March 11, 2010).

Mark reviewed his transcript of an interview with Aiden. Throughout the interview, Aiden referred to story writing as "hurting his hand," and he talked about his comics story writing habits by interchanging the words, drawing and writing. Mark said, "My biggest insight is that most students [including Aiden] have a hard time talking about comics story writing, and they associate school story writing with their hand hurting" (f1, 1-3). I read aloud a part where Aiden jumps back and forth between how he draws and writes to get story ideas. Mark had asked him, "Drawing aside, I mean, what's the hardest part about writing the story?" (f1, 10). I asked Mark what he was trying to get at with his question, and Mark noted, "Well, I mean write it out and then draw it out, like put the ideas together, right" (f1, 19). As we reflected, I offered another way to think about

Aiden's response, "...He talks on and off about drawing and writing as though they happen for him in a back-and-forth way//he interchanges them" (f1, 22-25). Mark concluded, "So maybe it's both, hmm, that's interesting" (f1, 26). I agreed and referred to Ben's and the students' tendency to jump into and out of his drawings to understand the comics composing process, which prompted Mark to recall that Aiden continually referred back to one of his comics stories to answer his questions. "That's true, like he was struggling to talk to me about comics because he needed to put himself into thinking like writing through his characters..." (f1, 31-33). Finally, Mark reconsidered why students associated writing with their hands hurting, "Ah, like years of non-stop getting it down kind of stuff" (f1, 36).

Negotiating intertextual connections. When Mark and Ben reviewed their transcripts and we co-reflected on them afterwards, we drew connections between various texts—students' home-writing habits and at-school perceptions of story writing, and the differences between adults' and students' perceptions of writing and comics writing.

Ben realized that Marie didn't think she could write about vampires at school and that she associated "regular school" story writing with "writing a whole bunch of pages" and comics writing with drawing ideas. Ben recognized that he hadn't anticipated what students assumed were "taboo" school writing topics, and he found that Marie associated comics writing with drawing even though he knew that it was about creating story ideas through drawing and writing. Through conducting the interview, thinking about his interview experience and following up with the student, and individually reading and then jointly reflecting on transcripts with me, Ben enacted a writerly stance towards teaching writing. This process of interweaving texts surfaced boundary objects (Wenger, 1998) for teacher-student and researcher-teacher negotiations about meanings of differences.

Similarly, through our reflection on Aiden's interview, Mark illuminated his assumptions about comics writing as being primarily about drawing. Also, in our Tuesday lesson, Mark noticed that every student thought about drawing even in

their writing— “...even for the students who made notes, they had notes about what pictures to draw” (Transcript, March 9, 2010). Mark’s reflection reminded me of Ben’s think aloud process, which then spurred Mark to recall Aiden’s transcript (i.e., that Aiden referred to his comics to answer Mark’s questions). Such insights came from interweaving our joint reflections about student interview transcripts. Even though Mark and I brought two diverse chronotopes to our debriefing, by using Aiden’s and Ben’s texts to help us sort through our dissimilar understandings of comics composing, we unearthed assumptions about teaching and learning that might have gone unscrutinized. Just as Ben and I reflected on multiple texts to mediate our critically reflective process, Mark and I required the same intertextual connections to open up difference as a location for ideological puzzling.

Away space meeting

Our whole group met at a building used mostly for staff development. On the first floor, there is a library and cafeteria, and, on the second floor, there are meeting rooms. I typically arrived early to set out professional books, comics texts and extra materials. Most days, teachers entered our meeting room at staggered times, began with a drink and muffin, and socialized before we began our day (9:00-3:13 or 3:35 p.m.). In this section, I describe and analyze three social space narratives from our first meeting (March 12, 2010): our interview-style reflections (37 minutes); our discussion about our case study students (42 minutes); and our planning session (75 minutes).

Personal and collaborative reflecting

I began our morning by providing teachers with options for reflecting on their individual experiences exploring comics writing and collaborative action research over the last six weeks:

...I was thinking that you might want to privately reflect on what the most memorable moments have been over the last six weeks of planning, teaching, and reflecting on this comics writing exploration so far. There

are no rules... You might want to do a visual map, where you use pictures, words or maybe you prefer to just write (Transcript, March 12, 2010).

After everyone completed their written and/or visual reflections, each pair or threesome recorded their verbal reflections on digital audiorecorders.

Reflecting on differences. The two groups (Samantha and Ben; and Carmen, Kate and Mark) critically analyzed each other's assumptions about teaching and learning and such analyses were prompted by their different perspectives on issues.

When talking with Ben about possibilities for inquiring into students' responses to comics writing, Samantha questioned her understanding of the relationship between a teacher's and students' self-efficacy. She considered self-efficacy to mean that an individual's belief in his/her capacity to perform at a certain level as a comics writer influenced his/her actual performance:

But it's almost like I wonder, my self-efficacy is probably not in a great place, so I start asking myself, 'How can I build those up [supports to boost students' self-efficacy] and tear those down [barriers to students' self-efficacy]?...like if they see me as confident, then it will help build them up, right? And if they see me as not confident then it will tear it down, at least I imagine it would? (Transcript, March 12, 2010).

Ben responded by telling Samantha about his classroom experiences, where he indicated that his students really opened up when they watched me compose a comics story because I admitted that I wasn't a confident artist (f2, 12-13). Ben's story triggered Samantha's memory of two boys easily sharing their drawings with her and telling her that she was doing a good job on her drawing, which she felt showed that students were less worried about being good artists than she had thought (f2, 17-19). Ben concluded, "So you have your answer" (f2, 21), and Samantha responded, "Ya, I know" (f2, 22).

Kate listened to Carmen tell about feeling nervous while driving home after the information day session (f5, 6-11): "So I went home and I read a little bit of the comic book [McCloud's (2006) *Making Comics*], and I started like doodling some techniques in the book, trying them in my journal, and it was

fun...” (f5, 8-9). Because Kate admitted that she had worried on her drive home but didn’t handle it by reading or drawing at home, she questioned Carmen’s motivation for handling her feelings this way (f4, 14-15). Carmen provided three reasons: to see how far she could push herself, to deal with her nervousness about not being able to help a student who asked a specific question, and to prepare for our planning meeting (f5, 16-20). A few hours later, Kate compared Carmen’s willingness to “dive into her nervousness, her fear” to the courage she mustered to climb Mount Kilimanjaro:

When Carmen just dove into her nervousness, her fear, it reminded me of when my husband and I climbed Mount Kilimanjaro because there were some people who began and turned back, and, gosh, I still remember this one girl who got very sick...and those who barely made it. And all of the time I just kept thinking, ‘It’s about challenging yourself’ and this is the kind of thing that got me through it, well, plus, my husband, too...(Transcript, March 12, 2010).

Ben noted, “It’s a good way to think of learning because I think of it as in hockey..., where you have fun, but there’s that competition, too, that personal challenge” (Transcript, March 12, 2010). Mark added, “...We don’t walk around climbing mountains (laughing), but when we try drawing or just anything that’s a personal goal, it’s like [pretending to look up a mountain] saying, ‘I’ve just got to do this, right’ ” (Transcript, March 12, 2010).

During Carmen, Kate and Mark’s reflecting, Carmen wondered why grades 3-6 teachers seemed to be reluctant to have students draw stories (f7, 1-4). Mark surmised that it was probably connected to slipping into print-based ways of thinking about story writing (f7, 5-8). Kate confirmed that she had only recently moved away from print-based story writing practices. Kate and Mark reflected on how hard it is to resist such practices because their filing cabinets are stuffed with test-driven artifacts and Mark concluded, “So it’s really all about philosophy” (f7, 24), which travels along quietly with the everyday artifacts and practices.

Exchanging reflections to mediate identity work. Teacher participants exchanged reflections on their experiences of collaborative action research to act as social

pivots to mediate reconfigurations of their identities and practices (Holland et al., 1998).

When Samantha invited Ben to reflect on her hypothesis that her students' confidence about comics writing was dependent on her drawing ability, Ben offered a "counterscript" (Gutiérrez et al., 1995). Hence, he resisted Samantha's assumption that comics writing teachers have to be good artists. Samantha then recalled her own classroom experiences that affirmed Ben's pedagogical stance. It seems that Samantha's willingness to question her assumptions in front of Ben allowed him to create a meditational device for both of them to jointly puzzle the ethics beneath diverse readerly-writerly stances towards teaching comics writing. Such a quick but powerful reflective moment was important because throughout that day and later at school Samantha reiterated her worry about having the time to honor her commitment to the research and being capable of perfecting quickly enough her comics practices. At one point, she stated, "I feel like my brain is going to explode" (Transcript, March 12, 2010). Hence, Samantha worked from a readerly chronotope, where she held herself to a very high standard as a learner and teacher and was, by her admission, experiencing emotional turmoil, about the possibility of failing to perform well. Therefore, her willingness to overwrite her readerly ideology, even temporarily, appeared to create an opening for her to see her situation and herself through writerly lenses.

When our Parker Elementary group debriefed with Samantha about her fear of drawing in front of students, my reflections about how I worked through my fear of not meeting my standards for my academic writing did not work as a meditational device. Instead, she turned my stories back onto the readerly ideology that interlaced them and held steadfast to her emotional tension. Part of Samantha's fear of not measuring up when debriefing at the school likely related to her identity as a respected teacher leader in that social space (Leander, 1999). From a readerly stance, which was the transcendent script (Gutiérrez et al., 1995) at her school, it was easier for her to reject rather than accept my reflections as an identity pivot because to accept them would have required her to show vulnerability or weakness.

As I described in chapter five, Samantha saw herself as someone who had garnered her colleagues' and the parent community's respect and that if parents tried to challenge her, "they wouldn't win." Her portrayal of her school world is one of battlefield ethics and tactics, where she has accumulated "social capital" (Bourdieu, 1977) as social artillery. Therefore, showing vulnerability in front of school-based individuals is not a good idea. Perhaps Samantha was willing to reflect with Ben about her pedagogical stance in this away timespace because it was shaped and shaped us in ways that were unlike her school. It seems that such an informal social space made it possible for Samantha to use Ben's insights to shift from a readerly to a writerly stance because she was immersed in *diversity*: a new location, new mixtures of people and artifacts, and new reflective practices. Such diverse conditions appeared to open up potential for altering sociopolitical dynamics that constrained options for change at her school.

Similarly, when Kate recognized that Carmen worked through her nervousness about comics writing by engaging in it at home, she treated such a difference between her approach and Carmen's as a place for self-critical reflection. Kate's external puzzling eventually became internal processing that led to a personal critical insight; she paralleled the inspiration she mustered to climb Mt. Kilimanjaro—"It's overcoming the fear of challenging yourself"—to what pushed herself as a comics writing teacher. Therefore, Kate used Carmen's reflections to mediate her self-critical reflective practices that she had not attempted openly or transparently during school debriefings. Part of the reason why Kate did not have similar opportunities at school is because Carmen was usually quiet during our meetings, and both Kate and Carmen retreated to their journals when Samantha and I negotiated different perspectives on issues. Thus, the diverse conditions of the away timespace seemed to topple readerly school ethics that pushed individuals' counterscripts into clandestine social spaces (Sterponi, 2007).

Holland et al. (1998) found that group practices of sharing personal reflections on what worked to change habits increased participants' chances of *overwriting* internalized scripts that were an inextricable part of their identities.

Kate and Samantha used personal reflections on their experiences to participate as writerly learners in this away timespace. Kate overwrote her fear-based script that dominated her early school-based planning and debriefing sessions and surfaced what was a clandestine counterscript at her school. Ben and Mark used Kate's Kilimanjaro recollection to consider what it means to accept personal learning challenges. Carmen questioned printcentric traditions of teaching writing, and Mark's and Kate's self-critical insights about their own tendencies to hang on to test-based artifacts and practices illuminated the need to reconsider the transmission-oriented ideologies underneath them. Thus, collectively reflecting on our experiences of our first six weeks changing teaching and learning practices supported us to create safe social spaces to critically reflect on reasons why habits persist and to imagine other possible routes for identity transformations.

Talking about case study students

I started our discussion about inquiry-based professional learning, "Okay, some of you have already found it hard to know what questions you have about students' responses to comics writing" (Transcript, March 12, 2010). I noted, "The point of talking about your possible inquiry students is to see what we're noticing and to see what to collect to help us to think more about our questions" (Transcript, March 12, 2010). Each teacher presented data (i.e., students' comics writing, reflections, and surveys) for three or four students, and we listened and talked about possible questions to guide individual inquiries and information to collect to learn more about those students.

Samantha described her inquiry about her whole class, "I have individual students to watch, but my inquiry is really about tracking the self-efficacy of my whole class" (Transcript, March 12, 2010). Samantha shared an example of one pre-assessment, and explained, "Rhonda and I noticed that students' comfort level is probably what makes them really get into comics writing or kind of stops them" (Transcript, March 12, 2010). She described our reading of Pajares' (2003) article,

So basically he, well, Rhonda made it, but he, um, asks students to judge how confident they are about doing a task. [holds up pre-assessment sheet] We break down the task into goal statements... and then they circle 1, 2, 3 or 4 and then afterwards, they write a reflection about what helped them to do the tasks that day and what they learned about themselves as comics writers (Transcript, March 12, 2010).

Samantha continued, "I'm tracking these three students, like one I know is usually a high performer, and then there's a middle and low one for story writing, and I'm also interviewing them and seeing what makes them more comfortable or not" (Transcript, March 12, 2010). Carmen, Kate and Samantha already used the pre-assessment tool, and Mark said, "It's just interesting to see, right," and Ben agreed, "I think that it would show me kids who might be worried and struggling and I haven't even noticed them as struggling" (Transcript, March 12, 2010).

Because we relied heavily on Bearne et al.'s (2007) book, we used their question frames, especially 'What is the impact of _____ on _____?', to support our shaping of possible questions. I emphasized, "We might create a question today that doesn't work after you collect more information, so the focus is really... 'What could this person collect to learn more about this issue?'" (Transcript, March 12, 2010). I summarized our inquiry discussion in a chart.

After that I asked whether it was helpful or not to focus on certain students and to look at different kinds of information. Ben spoke about the value of reflecting on conference transcripts, "At first, I didn't want to read myself [laughs] like my own words but once I got past that then it was like, when you pointed out some things about how she really got talking and I reflected, then it was powerful" (Transcript, March 12, 2010). Kate asked him why he didn't like reading his words, and Ben explained, "Because I don't always think on my feet...so in one part I could see that I was more focused on showing this student what I wanted him to draw, not what he was trying to say" (March 12, 2010).

Samantha stated, "And I think, I was saying to Rhonda that the little things they say are so good but I just forget, so now we've got recorders...plus, just comparing their before assessments and reflections has been a real eye-opener to

see, ‘This is what made her feel confident so I will do that again’” (Transcript, March 12, 2010). Samantha confirmed Ben’s point, “I’ve done this before with Rhonda, and I remember when she sent me my transcript and I started to read it and thought, ‘I sound like that?’// It’s hard to face that” (Transcript, March 12, 2010). She added, “I think it’s because real conversations are broken up and sometimes it’s also how it is typed. You want to just change it around to make it smooth” (Transcript, March 12, 2010). Mark admitted, “I was surprised that I was talking to a student about comics writing and telling him, ‘Drawing aside, what about your story?’ [shakes his head and everyone laughs], so it can be hard to sound like you’re not in the twenty-first century... to face your words, right, but it’s important” (Transcript, March 12, 2010). Carmen stated, “I have one student who was really weak and her mother said, ‘She just loves this,’ and I looked at her before assessments and they are going up so she’s actually thinking about...who she is as a writer” (Transcript, March 12, 2010). Kate concluded, “I can see what I didn’t notice before, like almost all of them have a character for their stories or they have favorite characters they kind of copy from” (Transcript, March 12, 2010). Kate added, “I think the hardest part about inquiry for me has been to look at myself, like comparing myself to you and Carmen and thinking, ‘They probably think I am such a bad L.A. teacher even though I know that’s not what you’re thinking’” (Transcript, March 12, 2010). Carmen agreed, “Okay, ya, that’s been hard for me, too, not that I compare but I think, ‘Oh God, what if I say something dumb in front of them? What will they think?’” (Transcript, March 12, 2010).

Surfacing vulnerability as a location for moral reasoning. Our conversation focused on students and student information, and teachers stated their critical insights about students *and* worried about what others thought of them as writing teachers.

Hoban and Hastings (2006) emphasized that it takes time for teachers to reflect on student information from a moral stance, where the main question on the teacher’s mind is, “How can I make teaching and learning better for students?” The teachers reframed students’ information into assessments of their

teaching and themselves as teachers. Kate and Carmen remembered lessons and worried that others evaluated them negatively. Ben, Samantha and Mark objectified their words in transcripts, where they became preoccupied with mentally revising their words and self-images to be more student-centered and reflective of contemporary practices.

Although I did not ask the teachers what they thought would help them to work through their insecurities, scholars (Elliott, 2007; Hoban & Hastings, 2006; Kemmis, 2010; Lytle et al., 2009; Wells, 1994, 2001, 2010) contend that taking a critical inquiry stance requires such a collective surfacing process. By working through emotional and relations tensions, groups learn how to raise larger questions about ideologies and traditions of education that push them towards moral reasoning or praxis and away from emotional toiling rooted in competitive self-comparisons (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, 2009; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005).

Shaping a carnivalesque timespace. I made a note in my journal before we began our collaborative planning: *I could have given less time for reflecting in the morning, which would have left time for professional reading and planning, but I didn't want to overload... It is important that we have "lingering lunches" because we are still getting to know each other* (Research journal, March 12, 2010). I recognized the need to work against readerly stances by shaping carnivalesque professional learning social spaces that flattened social hierarchies. Thus, we started our day later, ate snacks when we wanted, ate a catered lunch, and stopped to tell each other personal stories that had nothing to do with "professional" learning. Bakhtin (1986) argued that small gestures can be condensed reminders of value systems framing timespaces, so I worked against such small reminders (e.g., sticking to a strict work schedule) in an effort to collapse the ethics underneath them. I contend that the aforementioned examples of individuals developing self-critical insights are due, in part, to creating an away timespace that worked against the battlefield imagery at work in their schools.

Reading and lesson planning

I did an overview of three main concepts addressed in McCloud's *Making Comics* (2006) and *Understanding Comics* (1993) as starting points for planning. Kate and Carmen developed lesson ideas about balancing pictures and words; Mark and I focused on developing characters; and Ben and Samantha read and planned about exploring techniques to clarify and intensify story messages (e.g., enlarging a panel, changing the shape of a panel, breaking a panel). We spent 60 minutes planning in pairs and 15 minutes debriefing as a whole group.

Scaffolding stance shifting through collaborative planning. Each pair participated in talking-writing-drawing processes to scaffold (Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976) their shifting of stances towards teaching and learning.

Samantha kept Ben attending to practical aspects of planning, and Ben pushed Samantha to draw. For example, after reading a section about depth cues to clarify and intensify moments in stories, Ben drew one panel, where he sketched a person standing by some buildings and looking off into the distance, "Kay, so we could look at panel size because that's an easy way to show intensity," and he pointed to his drawing (f2, 2-3). As Samantha watched Ben sketch the next panel, where the person appeared to be coming closer to what were once far away buildings, she said, "Are you kidding me?! The whole thing just makes my head hurt" (f2, 14). Ben attempted to diffuse Samantha's nervousness, "That's why you should be drawing because it's pretty easy" (f2, 15). Eventually she and Ben worked side-by-side and Samantha talked herself through the drawing process by copying Ben's steps, "Okay, the line, the dot and the building right here. I did it! Hey..." (f2, 16). When others looked up to see what was going on, she noted, "He's showing me how to do it, so I can do this, I'll show you later" (Transcript, March 12, 2010).

Samantha then refocused Ben on practical or technical aspects of teaching comics writing techniques, "Okay, so now we have panel size, and I think we need to narrow it down to three [i.e., special techniques] to keep it manageable" (f2, 18-19). She also redirected Ben to the ultimate aim of comics writing planning, "I think we have to remember that we don't want kids getting caught up

like [smiles at Ben as if to say “you”] with drawing effects, so the focus is balancing clarity of message and intensity of parts of my story” (Transcript, March 12, 2010). As Ben reflected on Samantha’s statement, he uncovered a self-critical realization, “You know, I probably do exactly what McCloud says, “Too much intensity will kill a good story idea” [laughing] (March 12, 2010). Samantha also adopted a self-critical stance by stating something and then immediately questioning the validity her claim, “And kids start practicing their drawing techniques and they can forget about the message... You know what? I have seen mostly the opposite of that, come to think of it, but I did see it more before we got started” (Transcript, March, 12, 2010). Ben and Samantha scaffolded (Wood et al., 1976) each other’s learning to shift stances from episteme (reading to understand comics effects) and techne (creating comics panels) to praxis (considering what is best for students; uncovering self-critical insights). Kemmis (2010a) argued that praxis is about making the decision to be self-critical and to consider the wisest, most prudent actions that will make a situation better. In the above examples, it seems that Ben and Samantha scaffolded each other’s iterative stance shifting, which enabled them to enact a writerly ethics while co-planning.

Similarly, Carmen and Kate mediated each other’s shifting from episteme to techne to praxis stances during collaborative planning. For example, when Kate was confused about the difference between text-specific (i.e., the comics story relies mostly on the words to be understood) versus interdependent (i.e., the comics story relies equally on pictures and words), Carmen stopped to use her own example that she was creating from McCloud’s text to clarify the difference, “See like [points to her drawing] ‘I’m so happy for you’ [is what it says in words], but she’s crying” (f1, 17). When Kate thought that picture-specific comics would be the easiest for students to understand, Carmen used their prior discussion about prescriptive printcentric traditions dominating the teaching of story writing to argue that students would find text-based comics the easiest to understand. From a reader’s stance, Kate’s point is understandable because it is easy to understand a message from a picture, but Carmen was speaking from a writer’s stance, where students are assessing which kind of comic will be easiest for them to create.

Kate supported Carmen to think about how to turn control over to students by how they designed their lesson process. Kate stated that “modeling” shouldn’t become a lengthy teacher-directed session and made her point by using her grade 3 students, “We’ll only have the grade 3s’ attention for so long” (f1, 35-36). At the end, Carmen said, “I am really excited about this now,” and Kate agreed and asked her why, and she responded, “Because I think it gives them a new way to think about how to use more or less pictures or words. It opens up more choices for them” (Transcript, March 12, 2010). Thus, Kate and Carmen used their strengths as teachers and writers to cocreate a lesson that reflected their mutual appropriation of each other’s stances (episteme-rethinking what was written in McCloud’s books; techne-thinking about how to teach the concepts; and praxis, imagining the lesson process from students’ points of view).

Mark and I followed McCloud’s (1993, 2006) tips, where he sketched a caricature of himself that drew from a blend of his internal and external qualities. While Mark and I read and talked about how to represent McCloud’s ideas for a lesson, Mark created a four-square character sketch graphic organizer on his computer. I asked him to leave a place in the organizer for sketching a caricature (f3, 11-12). Mark wondered about the practicality of trying to draw on the SMART board, “So you’re trying to get me to draw on the SMART board?” (f3, 13). Although I admitted that writing on a SMART Board made me look like I had “Halloween writing,” I knew that students required us to engage in the risk-taking that we would be asking of them. Therefore, I did not let go of the need for us to draw in front of students and asked Mark to draw with me in my journal. As we tried different ways of representing ourselves by building little comics, where he drew one thing in a panel and then I drew another, Mark said, “You know what? I can just draw black curly hair and no face and you still know it’s me [smiles]” (Transcript, March 12, 2010). Eventually we decided to compose a short collaborative comic using our caricatures and print-based character sketches so that students could see three teachers (i.e., we planned to ask Ben to join us) enjoying collaboratively composing a comics story using themselves as characters and supporting each other to do it. Hence, Mark and I created lesson ideas and

artifacts that required us to move iteratively between stances (episteme, techne, praxis).

To conclude, each pair shared their lesson(s) and we each wrote notes in our journals as seed ideas for our own lessons. Mark showed everyone how to post their draft lessons on our blog, and he used their “Look, Master, pretty button” lesson to model how to do it. The teachers asked if they could use that lesson, and Ben and Mark agreed and walked us through their lesson steps. Before we left, we scheduled our lesson postings (i.e., Kate and Carmen (March 16th); Samantha and Ben (March 17th), and Mark and I (March 25).

Parker Elementary

In this section, I report classroom lessons and debriefing sessions at Parker Elementary from March 15-Spring Break (Mar. 26/10- Apr.5/10). On Monday, March 15, 2010, just after our whole group meeting, Carmen and Kate used Ben and Mark’s SMART board lesson, “Look, Master, a pretty button,” and they created a pre-assessment and used Ben’s seven panel comic (i.e., not the three panel version that Ben and Mark had used) for the students’ revision task. Samantha also created a pre-assessment, but she and I talked through the SMART board lesson before school began on March 15, 2010, and she then used the three panel strip for students’ revision task.

Kate and Carmen’s version of ‘Look, Master, a pretty button’

The grade three and six students gathered in Carmen’s room and Kate began the lesson by walking through the pre-assessment statements: I can tell you the ingredients of a good beginning, middle and end; I can look at a three panel comics story and tell you what’s wrong with it and how to fix it; I can improve the comics story using pictures and words. Then, much like Mark had done, Carmen reviewed story criteria through a twenty minute whole class discussion, where she wrote on the SMART board as students offered answers. She reminded students, “Okay, I want you to think about comics story writing as we do this” (Transcript,

March 15, 2010). Students got stuck when they tried to sort out the difference between beginnings and middles of comics stories:

Don't Get Twisted Already!

When Carmen asked, “So what’s the middle of a story?” one grade six student immediately answered, “events” and Carmen confirmed that he was correct (f1, 1-3). As the students offered more answers (e.g., expressions, speech bubbles), Carmen noted that thinking about comics story writing is different from thinking about written stories (f1, 9-10). Eventually, one student, Erin, suggested that a comics story writer’s main job is to hold the reader’s interest by building suspense (f1, 22). Carmen agreed, but she questioned Erin, “Okay, but the middle events are not consequences of actions, right? What are they?” (f1, 23). Erin responded, “Um, they solve the problem?” (f1, 24) and Carmen asked, “So does building suspense belong in the middle or in the beginning?” (f1, 25). Erin got confused, “Middle, no begin//, middle” (f1, 26) and finally Ivan, one of Erin’s friends, said, “It’s the middle” (f1,28), and Erin smiled and pushed him on the shoulder in a joking manner, “Okay, don’t get twisted already!” (f1,29).

After criteria-setting, Kate introduced students to the three panel version of “Look, Master, a pretty button” (figure 12). Kate began, “I think there are some really cool things about this comic strip. I think the author was able to create a little bit of a message and mood, but I don’t think he did a really great job on it” (Transcript, March 15, 2010). Carmen added, “Ya, like what’s the button going to do?” (Transcript, March 15, 2010). Kate followed up, “I don’t really know what the problem is, ‘Sure a pretty button’ and maybe the fact that it says “Master” I thought created a bit of mood because obviously he’s the head honcho guy, but what else is missing?” (Transcript, March 15, 2010). The students offered ideas, “We don’t know why the rock falls on him,” and “I think we need to know what he’s thinking, like why is that button so important?” (Transcript, March 15, 2010). Kate and Carmen co-led this part of the lesson for fifteen minutes and discussed with students how to improve Ben’s five and seven panel stories. Before students began their revision task, Carmen asked them how they could fix the seven panel strip. Students offered high-level responses such as “I think moment-to-moment transitions, like you could really stretch out the rock falling and even show his thinking getting like the opposite, like bigger and bigger letters because he’s like so scared” (Transcript, March 15, 2010). Students had fifteen minutes to revise

the seven panel comic, and they gathered for the last ten minutes to review their compositions.

Samantha's version of 'Look, Master, a pretty button'

Samantha began by asking students whether or not they found doing the pre-assessment to be helpful. One student said, "I find it really helpful... Well, like, if you're not good at a certain thing then it's your focus" (Transcript, March 15, 2010). Samantha reflected, "Okay, so it makes you set a goal. Is that what you're saying?" [student nods], and she added, "I never thought of it that way; that's true..." (Transcript, March 15, 2010). In fifteen minutes, Samantha reviewed story criteria, "You know, I am really proud of you because you are making the switch over to comics story thinking so fast" (Transcript, March 15, 2010). Samantha's students had little difficulty fleshing out story beginning criteria, but they debated about story middles:

It Could be the Worst Story Ever!

Samantha asked students about the middle, and Jack said, "You need panels and speech bubbles, like make sure like they flow, like they run smoothly" (f2, 2). Students debated how many events it takes for a comics story to "flow," and Samantha stopped the debate, "So let's take the number out of it because I've read stories with 900 events" (f2,8), and one student responded, "What?!" (f2, 9). The class realized that the number of events had little to do with the quality of a well developed comics story because several students smiled and agreed that a story with 900 events was probably good, while Pat stated emphatically, "It could be the worst story ever!" (f2, 12). Eventually the students offered ideas for developing a comics story and settled on a key criterion, "Check with your reader to see whether or not the ideas are coming across through pictures and words" (f2, 16).

Samantha presented Ben's three panel comics story (figure 12), and she commented, "Okay, you noticed the problem right away, like he wants to push the button, so what would you like to see as a reader that you could tell the writer, like what would make this story flow better?" (Transcript, March 15, 2010).

Students suggested stretching the moment by redrawing the first panel to show the character bringing his finger down slowly. After a few suggestions, Samantha said, "Okay, we want you to come up with these ideas so we don't want to give

them all up now” (Transcript, March 15, 2010). When students completed their compositions, the whole class shared their ideas by using the document camera to walk us through their comics stories.

Carmen, Kate and Samantha’s debriefing

When we sat down for our debriefing, Carmen was writing in her journal:

Brainstorming about what makes a good beginning, middle and end—very prescriptive...I was amazed at how they were all able to rearrange the panels to make many versions of the story...Today’s lesson went quite well but I think it showed me that I have to rethink the approach to the middle— It’s not 3 events but ACTIONS that lead to an ending. I thought that maybe we shouldn’t have given the complete story with all the panels. Many students just recopied the same panels that were on the screen...I was surprised that many students had brainstormed strategies of pull-back-reveal and moment-to-moment but did not use them (Carmen’s journal, March 15, 2010).

When I asked Carmen about her insights, she said, “I’m just not sure that I’m using ‘events’ right for the middle, and Samantha and I talked afterwards and I wish that I had used the three panel story” (Transcript, March 15, 2010). I added, “You know, I had talked with Samantha before the day began like just five minutes, but she made quite a few changes to her lesson so, ya, so the talking through is key” (Transcript, March 15, 2010). Our group looked at Samantha, but she didn’t say anything.

Kate complimented Carmen for inspiring critical insights about their lesson, “[W]e had seven panels and then we said, ‘Can you make it better?’ It was too much, like it would have been better with three or five panels” (f1, 4-5). Carmen added, “What I think was happening was that we took a lot of time to say, ‘Okay, does this make sense?’ What do we know is happening?’ so in their minds it was already a complete story” (f1, 6-7). Carmen also noticed that all of that conversation before students engaged in revision didn’t matter because the students came up with their own ways to make the story “bigger” that did not draw from the class discussion.

I mentioned that separating lesson processes from artifacts can be too abstract, “I find that I get caught up in top-down talking mode when I’m talking

about comics, not working *with* them” (f1, 16-17). Samantha wondered whether we needed to split the large group, and I noted that it might help, but I underlined that we needed to create more opportunities for engaging in comics writing with students. Kate felt that taking another person’s lesson was the crux of the issue, “I think it’s that we haven’t actually sat down together and planned until Friday so this lesson was not ours, like we didn’t know how the process went...” (f1, 18-20). Carmen extended Kate’s point, “And I think the kids didn’t really get the connection between beginning, middle and ends, so maybe we should have had them work on improving the story beginning and then talk about criteria” (f1, 21-23). I suggested that setting criteria while composing a comics story as a class would be good, and Carmen, too, thought that students would more easily make connections (f1, 21-22) and avoid “language tangles” (f1, 24).

Our group talked about story writing language that was used in the lessons and traced such language back to my consulting work in the district. Samantha commented that she used words like “problem” and “motivation” because of me (f1, 35), and I acknowledged that when I listened to her lesson it was like an echo of my 2004 consultant voice (f1, 36-37). Kate added, “Ya, that’s right, and wasn’t it you who taught us about cause and effect ?” (f1, 38), and Carmen confirmed, “Exactly, because I thought I was wrong, like actions are not events?” (f1, 39). I agreed that over the years, we have accumulated a lot of story language that requires reexamination in a comics context. I used an example of a self-critical insight that I had uncovered while working with a student, and my point was, “So stories and story language expands and changes” (f1, 47). Samantha turned to Carmen and said, “Ya, so you’re not wrong, Carmen, because words change and the words we use to explain things to different age groups changes, too” (f1, 48-49). Carmen ended by saying, “I’m not so sure because I’ve been using ‘events’ but now I think I’m wrong and I should use ‘actions’” (f1, 50).

Shifting chronotopes and disrupting the sociopolitical practice architecture.

Carmen’s journal entry opened up a “Thirdspace” (Soja, 1996), where Carmen, Kate and I worked against a readerly teaching stance and imagined new ways of approaching comics writing. However, Samantha stood on the periphery, which I

understood as a form of participation related to a disruption of the sociopolitical practice architecture at their school.

From a cultural/discursive stance, Carmen, Kate and I opened up a “Thirdspace” (Soja, 1996) by questioning the problems associated with dividing comics writing artifacts from practices. Our conversation started with Carmen’s journal entry, where she assessed her language use (i.e., events and actions) and her after-class discussion with Samantha, where she decided that it would have been better to use Ben and Mark’s lesson differently. I followed up by sharing that I found it difficult to use another teacher’s lesson without “talking through” the lesson artifact beforehand as Samantha and I had done. Carmen agreed that because she hadn’t gone through the lesson process extensively beforehand that she uncovered retrospectively that she was doing too much “teacher talking” that didn’t translate into students’ practices. First, she noted that the talking before the students got down to revising the seven panel comic was relatively ineffectual because “few of the students used the strategies.” Second, she highlighted how the criteria-setting was too prescriptive. She pondered my suggestion of creating a comics story while setting of criteria so that the story language has a process to ground it. Both Kate and Carmen regretted using the seven panel story for the revising task because it left little writerly work for students to do. Kate concluded that their phone call was insufficient planning, which contributed to their overreliance on the lesson artifacts to guide teaching decisions instead of making them beforehand. Through such joint puzzling, we drew from our shared classroom experience (perceived space) and our thoughts about it being too artifact- and teacher-driven (conceived space), which opened up possibilities for us to envision a need for a changed way of planning together in the future (Thirdspace). The puzzling was self-critical moral reasoning, where we thought about what might constitute a wiser, more prudent way of working given our observations of students’ responses.

From a sociopolitical stance, Samantha stayed on the perimeter of our Thirdspace (Soja, 1996). The only question she asked was, “Do you think the groups should be split?” and when I said that I thought the size of the group

wasn't the main issue, she listened but let Carmen, Kate and I do the talking. Even though I mentioned that the key difference between Carmen and Kate's and Samantha's lesson was the talk time that Samantha and I had had previously, Samantha did not comment. Her silence may have been intended to give Carmen and Kate a chance to reflect on their own, but it was also providing Samantha with a chance to observe our ways of relating.

I referenced Bakhtin (1970/71) in chapter six to make the same point that I underline here: "The event that has an observer, however distant, closed and passive he may be, is already a different event" (p.136). Samantha's silence was important because everyone in our group was accustomed to hearing her opinions and we valued them. When Samantha didn't comment, she raised a question mark for me and potentially for others about what she really thought about the need for pre-lesson processing and ultimately changing current ways of leaving weekly planning to private routines or last minute phone calls and quick morning reviews. Also, this relatively new way of relating in their school meant that the grade level partnerships were no longer the only ones driving staff learning; hence, Carmen and Kate were partners, but Samantha did not join them or invite me to work with her so she did not have a partner. Because Samantha had just been at a whole group meeting, where she admitted that her main worry was "Can I do enough to do justice to this project?" and "Do I have enough time?", it is possible that she said nothing because regardless of the value of "talking through lessons," she didn't want to commit to more meeting time. It is also possible that she didn't see our collaborative processing of lesson artifacts as necessary, although she did say that morning, "I can see that I should have come in on Sunday to look at my colleagues' lesson" (Research journal, March 15, 2010).

Carmen raised her concern about her story language, and I highlighted the slippery nature of words and meanings. When I emphasized that our use of words and meanings changes as we learn through comics writing with students, Samantha agreed and used my message to ease Carmen's worry about her "misuse" of words. However, Carmen said to me afterwards that she didn't feel confident talking with students about story events and actions. When I asked

Carmen where she got her definitions of story actions and events, she said, “It’s on our story planning sheets, and actions are at the start, events come later [pointed]” (Research journal, March 15, 2010). Kate did not contribute to this part of the conversation except to say that it made her nervous when she realized that she and Carmen used words differently. Hence, difference became a location for individual comparisons, self-doubt and looking for ways to rationalize actions. It is possible that because we had Ben and Mark’s lesson artifacts to mediate our discussion about students’ responses to the lesson process (i.e., criteria-setting, revision task) that Carmen and Kate found it easy to open up a “Thirdspace” (Soja, 1996) through joint puzzling about such artifacts (i.e., such puzzling was a reflection of other teachers, not of them). However, our conversation about story language revolved around our opinions about story artifacts that were not at the table and some of them were from memories that spanned the last decade, so such puzzling brushed individuals’ pedagogies up against one another and relational friction resulted, a tension that brewed as internal turmoil for Carmen.

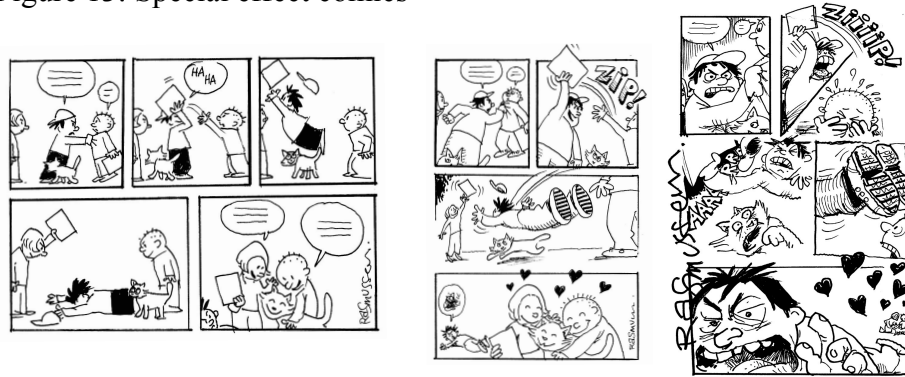
Setting the context for lessons and debriefings

Although Kate and Carmen were going to prepare the next lesson for the whole group, Samantha chose to get her lesson ready first, which involved a lot of drawing practice and lesson material preparation. Because this was “Demonstration of Learning” week, where parents meet with teachers and students to celebrate reporting period two, the teachers had a busier schedule than usual. Carmen, Kate, Samantha and I agreed that it was good week to book the local artist to teach their art classes. I booked him to teach for 65-75 minutes in Kate and Samantha’s classes on Tuesday, March 16, 2010, and Carmen’s class on Wednesday, March 17, 2010. He also stayed with all three teachers for an hour after school on Wednesday to help them with the special effects lesson that Samantha had created as a Notebook lesson that they reviewed after school.

On Monday, March 15, 2010, Samantha called me at 4:45 p.m. because when she reviewed her lesson materials from the special effects lesson that she and Ben had planned, she said, “There are guns in the comic and [the principal]

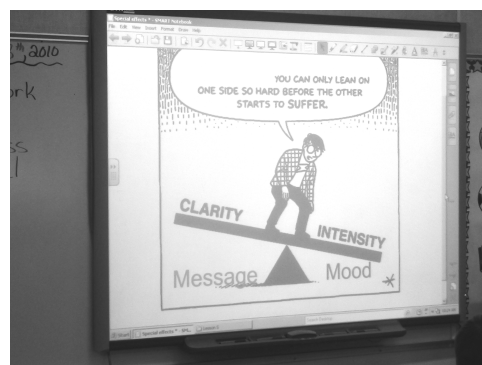
doesn't want me to use it. I don't want Ben to get caught on this with his students" (Research journal, March 15, 2010). I called Ben on Samantha's behalf, and let him know that I would see whether the cartoonist could draw something to replace the comics for their lesson. The cartoonist came over to my house and drew the needed lesson materials (figure 13). I called Samantha and Ben to let them know that I would scan and send the lesson materials to them that night, which I did at 8:00 p.m. He created three comic strips, one that underused special effects (left image), another that used them to emphasize parts of the message (middle image), and finally, a third, where he overused effects to clutter the story message (right image).

Figure 13: Special effect comics



On Wednesday, March 17, 2010, Carmen and Kate taught their special effects lesson using Samantha's Notebook slides, and Samantha used the same Notebook file to teach her lesson on Thursday, March 18, 2010; the lessons were practically the same. I will provide a brief outline: First, students were asked whether they could identify a comic story message and determine whether it was clear or not. Second, students were shown a slide with Scott McCloud (figure 14):

Figure 14: Clarity and intensity slide



Finally, the teachers modeled one special effect at a time and had students explore them between modeling sessions (figures 15, 16). The special effects were: panel size and shape, creating depth cues and exaggerated poses for their characters. We debriefed between the lessons. Samantha arrived late because she had been working with her student teacher. Because it was St. Patrick's Day the principal was making teachers specialty coffees, so we had an informal conversation, and when Samantha arrived, Carmen and Kate reassured her that her lesson slides worked really well and nothing needed to change.

Figure 15: Examples of Samantha's special effects lesson

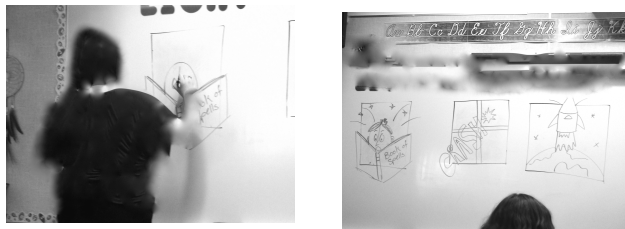
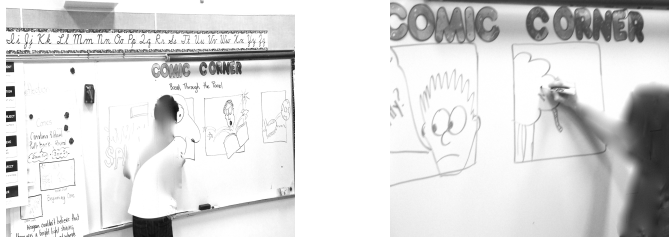


Figure 16: Examples from Carmen and Kate's special effects lesson



Earlier that morning, Carmen asked me to separate Kate and Carmen's classes, and she wrote in her journal:

I am not sure how I am enjoying teaching and planning with the grade three teacher, I feel that I am planning everything and she is coasting through. I am also wondering how this is going to affect my perception of the project because I feel kind of ripped off. I think a split would be beneficial for both of us. I am a bit nervous to talk to Rhonda about it, but I think in the best interests of the children and myself, it needs to be done.

Carmen, Kate and Samantha's debriefing

At lunchtime on March 17, 2010, we met to have the conversation about separating the grades three and six classes, and I agreed to use some other reason to suggest the split. Although I regretted agreeing to be the broker of this conversation because I felt that such negotiations were best done privately between the two teachers, I had said I would do it and proceeded. I had spent the morning copying students' comics to get a sense of what they had been doing and realized that many grade three students had not completed many of the in-class exercises and that the grade six students hadn't finished their surveys as well as numerous exercises. I used that as my reason for recommending the split and both teachers agreed to it.

After that I asked about Kate and Carmen's balancing words and pictures lesson and whether or not they required help with it. Carmen said, "No, I think we just need to do the scanning and get some comic samples and we're good" (Transcript, March 17, 2010). I offered to meet with them after school, and Samantha said, "They don't have time after school and tomorrow is staff meeting and we have a funeral on Friday so you're going to have to do it. When are they going to have the time?" (Transcript, March 17, 2010). I suggested, "Well, maybe you could do it for//", but was cut off by Samantha, "I am serious, they *don't* have the time" (Transcript, March 17, 2010).

I stopped to talk with the principal after our meeting to let him know that I was going to have a conversation with Samantha about opting out because I felt that she was under too much pressure to proceed with the research. I mentioned that I would have the same conversation with each teacher participant, and I highlighted that he needed to support their decisions and not attempt to change their minds. Before I left that day, Carmen stopped by the workroom, "We have the lesson ready so I can teach it if you want me to," but I said, "I really don't know what I think right now. I will teach this lesson but just think about what will help you to feel comfortable planning and teaching with me (Research journal, March 17, 2010).

Choosing to stay

The next day, I reminded them individually of their right to opt out with no repercussions. Given the supports I had provided (i.e., my teaching, the whole day meetings, booking the artist, offering to arrange job-embedded planning time), I felt that the research had become forced inquiry (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2007). I offered to continue to support them and the students to finish in some way that worked according to their schedules but to stop the whole group meetings, debriefings and anything tied to my PhD. Samantha said, “No, I don’t want that because I can’t do it on my own. I know because when I show [my grade level partner], she can’t make it work as well in her room so we need the full day time” (Research journal, March 18, 2010). Carmen said, “No, we’ve committed to this and we have to stick to it” (Research journal, March 18, 2010). Kate was surprised that I was reminding her of her right to opt out, “Oh, no, have I done something to make you think that I don’t like this? I feel like I’m just getting into it” (Research journal, March 18, 2010). On my way out, the principal asked me how it went, and I told him that each teacher had decided to stick with it but that it was essential that he not mention anything to them because they had to feel that they could change their minds. He agreed and said, “Your admin experience has really helped you [smiled]” (Research journal, March 18, 2010).

Rhonda teaching

On Monday, March 22, 2010, I created my version of Carmen and Kate’s lesson and used notes and transcripts from March 12, 200 to shape my process. Each teacher wanted more qualitative ways to document student progress, so I created questions that matched the pre-assessment statements and listed them on the side of the students’ task sheets to provide space for student reflections and for teacher-student conversations (appendix, chapter 7, figure 10). Teachers wanted to “track” pre-assessments, so I brought class lists to record students’ pre-assessment scores. Before each teacher’s class, I asked that we try these tools out to see if they provide useful information regarding their case study students. I also gave each teacher a typewritten chart of notes on their inquiry students.

The lesson for each class was similar, so I will outline it here. First, I gave students a pre-assessment, where I asked them if they could decide whether a comics writer relies more on pictures, words or both to tell their stories. I also asked whether the students were confident that they could create pictures for a comics story script. Second, I presented one page from a comics story and asked students to look at it to see what they think is going on in the story. After some discussion, the class realized that some comics writers rely on mostly pictures, mostly words or a combination of both. Third, I presented a comics story that had a text already written in the panels but no pictures (See appendix, chapter 7, figure 10). I asked the students to help me to make it a text-specific story, where I didn't need to use highly detailed pictures and could rely on synecdoche, where a part of an object implies the whole scene. I engaged in this drawing process on the SMART board for two-three panels and students felt that they could easily create their own comics stories. Each teacher and I used the conference checklist and recorded students' pre-assessment scores as we talked with them about what criteria helped them to complete the task. In each classroom, we used the class list to divide students for conferencing purposes, and Kate asked me to focus on one of her inquiry students. I gave each teacher their own digital audiorecorder so that they could record their conferences.

During Carmen's class, we did one conference together. The student was one of her inquiry students who did not like to draw. She began, "So what are you thinking for the first panel?" (Transcript, March 22, 2010), and he said, "I can't draw" (Transcript, March 22, 2010). She responded, "So what could you draw that would be easy and show a part of the message?", and he said, "A big boot [laughs]" and we both looked at each other and smiled. Carmen noticed that Carter was surprised at our reaction, and she said, "That's exactly what a word-specific comic allows you to do, so you've got it [smiles, excited tone]" (Transcript, March 22, 1010).

In Samantha's class, we divided the students and then talked about what we were finding out. She said, "They're so quick to be creative, like look at this one. Sorry, Pat, could you show Miss Nixon?" Pat had drawn an upside down

boot with water dripping out for the first panel, “I crossed the street to the convenience store. The rain soaked into my boots” (Transcript, March 22, 2010). I noted, “How clever. You’re thinking just like the character,” and he said, “I am the character [grins and points to the next panel]” (Transcript, March 22, 2010). I asked Samantha, “Why do you think they’re so quick to integrate so many strategies in this task?”, and she said, “I don’t know, but I know that it eases my feelings about doing comics, like it’s a perfect way for those who don’t want to draw too much” (Transcript, March 22, 2010). Samantha also mentioned, “I love the criteria on the side and the record sheet because we can record and then it’s done, so it cuts down workload” (Transcript, March 22, 2010).

Kate’s class happened after our debriefing. Kate was interested in how to help her Autistic boy who had decided that the boxes were too small. She brought me over to see how he was drawing in his visual journal, “This is big, that he solved that [box size problem] on his own. I think it’s because he has an idea and really wants to communicate it” (Transcript, March 22, 2010). Kate showed me her new note-taking system, where she had put each child’s name into an enlarged chart and used it to write jot notes—“See, and you can use it, too, because I will leave it on the corner of my desk” (Transcript, March 22, 2010). She mentioned, “I think that they can all do this, which I am so happy about because I was worried when we split the classes because so many students were not finishing their work” (Transcript, March 22, 2010).

Carmen, Kate and Samantha’s debriefing

I asked, “So, how was that today?” (f1,1), and Samantha was looking through the students’ self-efficacy scores and was pleasantly surprised because every student had circled 3 or 4 for every statement, which was the first time that most students were confident beforehand (f1, 2-6). When I asked, “What do those numbers tell us? Do they help us?” (f1, 10), Samantha stated, “They tell me that students are comfortable, and that’s what I was saying, too, that it took me until today to feel comfortable” (f1, 11-12). Carmen looked through her students’ comics and turned to Carter’s sheet and said, “Even Carter who doesn’t like to

draw was willing to draw a big boot, so we both...almost jumped up, and he looked at us like, 'Huh?' but it was so good to see him doing something without complaining..." (f1, 15-16). When I asked whether or not it helped to record students' responses using different tools (i.e., audiorecorder, the criteria, self-efficacy record sheet), Carmen and Samantha stayed focused on the lesson process. Carmen said, "I think it's really good to get into the process of drawing, like you actually drew on the SMART board and...I think it worked because you just took their suggestion and drew like raindrops and a store edge and an edge of a boot so it was quite simple" (f1, 20-24). Samantha added, "Ya, so they liked the idea of thinking about the words, and just even zooming in one part of the message, like the boot or the rain because it was all about the character feeling drenched..." (f1, 27-29).

I asked, "How did we help students, like make it better or not to write stories?" (f1, 31). Kate, who had not yet taken part in the lesson offered, "Well it sounds like even the teachers felt like super-energized by the whole process, so now I can hardly wait [looks at Carmen], I didn't know our lesson was so powerful," and everyone laughed (f1, 32-34). Carmen agreed, "Ya, I thought, 'I should have done this because you pretty much followed what we had'" (f1, 35-36). Carmen added, "I was thinking, 'This is so important to do right away [the different types of comics storytelling approaches with balancing pictures and words] because it was obvious that there were like key ways to make it more about story writing and not all about, 'Can I draw?'" (f1, 38). Samantha asked, "Did it follow what you had?" (f1, 39), and Carmen confirmed, 'Ya, she even used my drawings and scanned them in" (f1, 40).

Kate reflected on how difficult it is for her to recall what we did at the away space, which was ten days ago:

You know what? I have a hard time remembering exactly what we did. It's like I get so relaxed when I'm away from school that I think I just kind of forget. When I saw those notes from our inquiry, I thought, 'Oh, ya, this is easy but I had wiped it out my head somehow (f1, 41-44).

Samantha agreed and thought that the tendency to erase the away space work is partly because teachers rarely get a chance to sit and think without distractions (f1, 45-46). She also mentioned that because we meet on Fridays, when she gets into her car, she worries for a little while and then she slides into her weekend timespace, where she gives herself permission to take a break from school (f1, 47-49). Carmen underscored the car timespace as a worry zone, “I know, I get into my car and think, ‘What did I agree to do?’ but then I am working...and I just forget so this was good to have these reminders [points to sheets from lesson and inquiry notes] (f1, 50-51).

When I wondered about whether I should change the day, Samantha said that it wasn’t because it was Friday; it was because it was a time for re-energizing (f1, 55-56). I mentioned how Gordon Wells (2009) suggested that each of us take on the agenda, and Kate argued that because I sought each person’s input that I had taken their needs into consideration (f1, 57-58). Everyone laughed because when Kate tried to give me an example of how I took everyone’s input into consideration, she couldn’t remember one (f1, 59-60). I ended by asking if there was some way that I could use away timespace differently to help make the transference easier, and Samantha said, “You did just by giving us notes from what we said, but I think our point, or at least my thing is that there is so much so it is really important to have away time” (f1, 54-55). Based on everyone’s input, I agreed to book another half day for planning the first week back after Spring Break, but I also emphasized that weekly planning time has to be part of Thursday time or by their request (f1, 69-71).

Shifting into a writerly chronotope. Kate observed that Carmen and Samantha seemed to be “energized” by the lesson process, where they were very focused on attending to what students could do as comics writers. Carmen and Kate brought artifacts from the classroom to talk about students’ experiences drawing (i.e., Samantha brought her score sheet with the three sets of self-efficacy scores and students’ sheets from that lesson; Carmen looked at Carter’s work and reflected back on our conference with him). Such artifacts and stories about them were

interwoven boundary objects (Wenger, 1998), where our group negotiated the meaning of students' comics writing experiences.

Samantha assumed that consistently high self-efficacy scores meant that students were like her because they just needed time to get through the discomfort of having to draw. I posit that because Samantha had success drawing with Ben on March 12, 2010, with the local artist on March 16, and then during her lesson on March 17, 2010, she had a "personal breakthrough" of some kind, where she was no longer afraid to draw in front of students. She associated students' scores with a similar "breakthrough" for them. Carmen attributed Carter's more positive comics writing experience to the lesson process, where students worked with me to explore how pictures and words worked together. Carmen said, "It wasn't about, 'Can I draw?'" She also highlighted that using an imperfect technology for drawing (i.e., the SMART board) illuminated how I was not concerned about the quality of my drawing; I was mainly concerned about communicating ideas. Hence, Samantha and Carmen treated lesson artifacts as places for joint puzzling, where they were focused on comics writing as storying-drawing-writing processes rather than a separate drawing and writing process. I posit that Kate noticed the energizing impact of Carmen and Samantha coming to such an understanding of comics writing as an aesthetic process (McCloud, 1993, 2006).

Using car timespaces to slip from writerly to readerly timespaces. Kate was the first one to notice that she had forgotten a lot of the lesson artifacts created in the away space. She commented that being relaxed made it so nice to be away that when she got into her car and headed home that she eventually erased what she was supposed to do or bring back because she headed into her busy weekend. Samantha and Carmen confirmed that they worried initially when they got into their cars, but they started driving and heading into work and home life activities, where they gave themselves permission to let go of school obligations. When I asked whether or not I should I change the day of our sessions, Samantha thought that the lack of transference was probably more related to the relaxed mode of engaging in work away from school than it was about the particular day that we worked in the away space.

I think that because Parker Elementary ran according to readerly top-down professional learning scripts, where someone directs, monitors and reminds teachers of their jobs, including their professional learning tasks, that, in the away space, we toppled those readerly rules. In the away space, each person was expected to take responsibility for her/his own inquiry and to shape comics writing lesson ideas according to his/her ideologies and ways of working in their classrooms. Such a toppling was briefly recognized when the teacher participants got into their cars and wondered what they had agreed to do but was quickly left behind when the artifacts of their own lives became salient.

As I stated in the section about the away space setting, it became a carnivalesque professional learning social space. Although we accomplished a lot and adopted various stances (episteme, techne, praxis), none of the stances took on meaning once teachers re-entered their *real* life social spaces of cars, homes and schools. Schools that operate according to readerly professional learning scripts require professional learning leaders to bring back artifacts and make people responsible for them. Logically, from that ideology, I was the most responsible for bringing back and monitoring the completion of agreed upon tasks. On March 17, 2010, I was reminded of that ethics when Samantha repositioned me to take responsibility for Carmen and Kate's lesson. Carmen met me in a liminal space (the workroom) to offer to teach the lesson, which I contend was another "counterscript" (Gutiérrez et al., 1995) to the dominant script that was at work in the meeting. In the meeting, both Kate and Carmen were silent, and their silence underscored who had the most social power in that situation. It was also tactical (de Certeau, 1984), because by saying nothing, I was forced to challenge such repositioning and the person doing it, not them.

Later, when Samantha pressed Carmen about whether my lesson was closely aligned with Kate and Carmen's March 12th lesson, she uncovered that they had completed most of their lesson preparation in that space. Thus, there was little rationale to support making me responsible for their lesson (even on readerly terms, it was clear that this was unfair). However, from a readerly stance, it is likely that Samantha felt that I should ensure a balanced workload and she had

prepared an incredibly complex lesson that week and walked Kate and Carmen through it, so she was likely fearing the time involved in sitting with them to prepare another lesson. Given her time pressures, she may have felt she had no other choice but to reposition me and to risk our good working relationship and friendship because to reposition them to take responsibility would threaten school-based collegial relationships. To conclude, once we left the away space, competitive, privatized ideologies took hold in car, home and school timespaces, and such ideologies were energetically protected and enforced by those ascribed with social power to do so.

Winding down for Spring Break

At the end of our debriefing on March 22, 2010, we set a schedule for the next lessons. Samantha, Kate and Carmen agreed to have students do a “mini-comic,” where we see whether or not the students could explore comics story writing, and we would conference with them throughout the process. We also agreed that we wouldn’t start our lessons until a couple of days into the week following Spring Break to give each teacher an opportunity to get back to their routines. I said, “Mark and I are meeting on Thursday, and we will post something to do with our lesson on Friday. If you want to talk with me about when you’re back from Las Vegas, call me, email me or use the blog” (Transcript, March 22, 2010). Kate asked, “So we do that lesson on Wednesday then? ”, and I responded, “You should plan something that you feel comfortable with, but please call me when you’re back if you would like to talk through an idea. I should say, too, there is no reason that everyone has to do the same end project or finish date” (Transcript, March 22, 2010).

Jackson Elementary

After the whole group meeting on March 12, 2010, I worked with Ben on March 16, 2010 and March 23, 2010, and with Ben and Mark on March 18, 2010 and March 25, 2010. I gave each teacher a digital audiorecorder. In this section, I describe and analyze lessons and lesson debriefings before Spring Break.

Ben and Rhonda teaching special effects

Ben and I had spoken on the phone on Monday, March 15, 2010 after Samantha had called to ask me to let Ben know about the inappropriate nature of the comic strips that they had intended to use for their lesson. It was fortunate that the local artist was able to create new comics because Ben said, “Oh, it’s good you called because I’m doing that lesson tomorrow” (Research journal, March 15, 2010). When I called Ben to confirm that the artist would create materials that night and that I would send them by email as soon as possible, I also asked Ben whether he required support or wanted to “talk through” the lesson, and he said, “No, I’m good with this one because it’s basically the drawing stuff we did” (Research journal, March 15, 2010). I said that I would be there early to help out, and Ben asked that I send the lesson materials to Mark so that he could put them into a Notebook file. I also asked Ben if he wanted me to book the artist to teach his art classes as discussed on March 12, 2010, but he said, “No, our report cards are two weeks later than Parker Elementary, and Mark gave an extension so mine are pretty much ready to go” (Research journal, March 15, 2010).

When I arrived that morning, Ben entered the classroom and said, “Okay, let’s go over this because I couldn’t find my notes or my *Making Comics* (2006) book, so I can’t remember what we did” (Research journal, March 16, 2010). Ben and I scrambled to get ready with only ten minutes before class. We reviewed my journal notes from Samantha’s lesson, and he said, “Okay, so basically I model a technique and then they try it” (Research journal, March 16, 2010). I recall thinking that I should have recommended that we meet after school, but I went along with Ben’s suggestion. While Ben got ready for the first class, I went to Mark to get him to download the comics into a Notebook file.

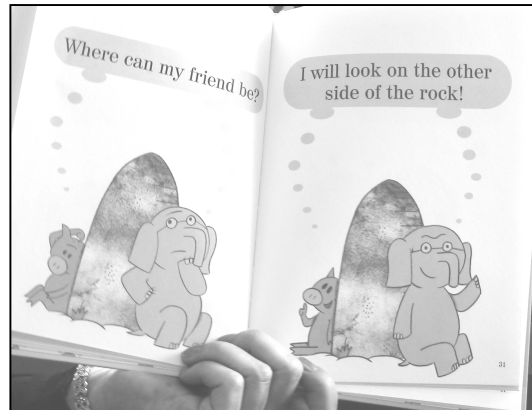
During independent reading time, Ben reviewed our notes and I suggested that I do a quick read aloud to discuss key comics effects in a Mo Willems’ picture book, *I Will Surprise My Friend!* (2008), which I had in my bag from my work at Parker Elementary. I gathered the students at the reading corner, “Comics stories come in so many different types of books [held up examples]” (Transcript, March 16, 2010). I turned towards the classroom criteria chart, “And you have

created two key questions to guide your thinking as comics story writers [read from chart] 1) *Message*: What am I trying to say to readers? 2) *Effect/Mood*: How do I use comics techniques to make my message effective for my readers?, and I was thinking that we might add to your chart today by reading a picture book” (Transcript, March 16, 2010). I introduced Mo Willems as one of my favorite comics writers, and I explained, “You might think, ‘Why would she show us an easy reader?’ but the thing is I used this book just the other day with a grade 6 student to get ideas for writing his story” (Transcript, March 16, 2010). I described how I wanted us to read and think together as comics writers, where we asked ourselves, “What does Mo teach us about writing comics stories? What can I use for my stories?” (Transcript, March 16, 2010). Throughout the reading, we stopped to talk about what message the comics writer intended and what techniques he used to enhance his message.

One of the key insights that we uncovered in this ten minute introduction was the value of making reading-writing connections as comics writers. Chris named mentor texts (pages used in comics texts for writing ideas), power pages: “There are... power pages, where we would...just copy them to remember, you know?” (Transcript, March 15, 2010). Chris chose one such power page, which had one thought balloon for two characters and color-coded speech and thought balloons to match particular characters (Research journal, March 15, 2010). Another student called power pages “page stoppers” to draw an analogy with “Show Stoppers” on the “The Price is Right” television game show. Students took pictures of the “page stoppers” or “power pages” so that we could print them for their writing conference folders. For example, while we read the Mo Willems’ picture book, Steven took a close-up of the double-page spread in figure 17. Everyone noticed how intent he was on getting his shot just right, and Jayden claimed, “That *is* a pretty good page...I hadn’t thought about using the same drawing and just changing expressions, like almost everything’s the same” (Transcript, March 15, 2010). Sara grabbed a felt, “Can I add that to our techniques chart? [she wrote ‘use double picture spreads’]” (Transcript, March 15, 2010). Ben joined us and asked, “What do you notice about the thought

balloons?” Nolan stated, “It shows how close of friends they are because it’s like me and James, like we think practically the same way all the time” (Transcript, March 15, 2010).

Figure 17: Steven’s power page



Ben gathered students at the SMART board and introduced the three comics, but he stopped briefly and said, “You know what? I’ve forgotten what was on that balance beam?” (Transcript, March 15, 2010). I held up my drawing of the “Clarity/Intensity” balance beam from McCloud’s *Making Comics* (2006) that I had in my research journal notes from Samantha’s lesson, and Ben asked me to talk to students about it. I used Mo Willems’ book, “Okay, Mo writes his stories by thinking, “What is my message? [points to one side of balance beam], and then he thinks [points to other side of the balance beam], ‘What are my tools for making my message powerful or intense?’ ” (Transcript, March 15, 2010). Mark walked in at that point and asked students to define “intense,” and they responded, “expressions, close-ups, zooming in, moment-to-moment stretching” (Transcript, March 15, 2010).

Ben showed the three comics (figure 13), “If you had to choose only one of these comics stories that you thought did the best job at balancing a clear message but also emphasized parts of the message...which one would you pick?” After some debate, the class agreed on the first one (left image) or the middle image because they felt that the artist lost them when he used too many effects (right image). Jenna underlined, “It’s like he took all of our techniques and just tried to use them all at once without asking, ‘What will this do to my reader?’”

(Transcript, March 15, 2010). Ben clapped, “Yes, exactly, that’s just perfect” (Transcript, March 15, 2010) and, at that point, students returned to their desks and practiced the special effects that Ben had modeled on the white board. While he was up there, he said, “You know what, I’m forgetting which special effects we agreed to show them” (Transcript, March 15, 2010), and we reviewed my notes. Ben added “emanata” (Eisner, 2008) to our list (depth cues, exaggerated poses, breaking the fourth panel), and he referred students back to a “power page” from our read aloud, where little lines were drawn around an elephant’s head to show his surprise and confusion about not knowing where his friend, Piggie, was.

Ben and Mark debriefing

During our quick (3.5 minute) debriefing, I asked, “So are you two ready or do you want help to get ready for Thursday’s lesson?” (Transcript, March 16, 2010). Mark laughed and said, “What lesson?”, and Ben said, ‘Ya, what lesson?’ (Transcript, March 16, 2010). Given how busy it was in the school that week, I noted, “You know we made it through today//”, and Ben interjected, “Wasn’t it good? I have to get some Mo Willems’ books” (Transcript, March 16, 2010). I suggested, “The thing is, I know how busy it is, and it’s all right that we had to pull this one together quickly, but, honestly, it would be not so hectic if we just had a wee bit more time in the morning or by arranging for time on Thursday” (Transcript, March 16, 2010). As we walked to the staffroom, Mark mentioned that they would use the lesson that I posted on the blog for the “balancing pictures and words” lesson, and I described how I drew on the SMART board to carry out most of the shared drawing and writing, and Mark made a joke, “So you were brave enough to write *and* draw on the SMART board” (Transcript, March 16, 2010).

Mark, Ben and Rhonda teaching

When I arrived on Friday, March 19, 2010, Mark was busy fixing the lesson materials because I had inadvertently posted inappropriate lesson materials on the blog (i.e., for the ice-cream comic story in appendix, chapter 7, figure 10), I had

not noticed that McCloud (1993) used very mature wording for one panel. Ben and Mark were laughing, and Mark said, “We came in early and then as we’re going through this, we see that line [read aloud], ‘The clerk tried to pick me up. I said, ‘No thanks.’ He gave me this creepy look,’ and we thought, ‘Now these comics *will* be interesting!’ [laughing]” (Research journal, March 19, 2010).

Ben and I started independent reading time, and he said, “I’ve got my journal because you sent me those notes on my students, so thanks because I forgot about that” (Transcript, March 19, 2010). I followed up, “Ya, it’s interesting because I was wondering whether you found it helpful to meet for a full day. It seemed like it helped at the time but what do you think as far as bringing lesson ideas back?” (Transcript, March 19, 2010). Ben said, “It’s not that it wasn’t great because...I just like getting up later, not having to make lunch and just, you know, like slow down a bit, but it’s like everything gets piled somewhere over the weekend, so” (Transcript, March 19, 2010).

Mark started the lesson, “Okay, so there are three types of comics, ones that rely mostly on pictures, mostly on words, and then on both pictures and words (Transcript, March 19, 2010). He turned to the ice-cream comic (appendix, chapter 7, figure 10) and asked me to join in and decide with him what to draw. Mark stated, “The task is for us to create pictures for this comic, where the words carry the message and the pictures are used for just giving added effect” (Transcript, March 19, 2010). As we worked together, students suggested ideas for drawings, and I invited students to draw with us. Mark provided students with 15 minutes to get started on the task, and Ben led the whole class feedback.

Ben started, “So remember how we do this; we say the person’s name and identify one thing that we noticed that worked really well and possibly a question or suggestion for improvement” (Transcript, March 19, 2010). Every student had marked 3s and 4s on their pre-assessment, and I asked, “What made this so easy for you?”, and Jayden said, “I just found it so, well, creative” (Transcript, March 19, 2010). Dan, the principal, entered the classroom and said, “Oh, that is such a good word. What makes it creative?”, and Jayden said, “I don’t know, maybe it’s thinking like, ‘How do I draw just a little part that I want to draw because the

words are there, so like there's less, um//", and Sara ended her sentence, "pressure" (Transcript, March 19, 2010). After several students shared, Mark said, "Now, is there anything we could add to this chart [criteria chart]?" (Transcript, March 19, 2010). The students listed "synecdoche, repeated images, zooming in, zooming out, and emanata."

Ben and Mark debriefing

We stayed for a few minutes (4.5 minutes) after class, and I asked, "Can you think of what students need to do next based on what we've done so far?" (f1, 1). Mark suggested that students create a one-page comic story using their characters in their visual journals (f1, 2-3). Ben agreed, "Ya, I was amazed how many of them are writing comics on their own, like those kids who don't always get into it as much, so they can write a comics story" (f1, 4-5). I confirmed Ben's point by highlighting how many of them see themselves as characters in their comics (f1, 6-7). Mark concluded that it would be a nice way to end the week before Spring Break, to have them complete a short one-page comic story using the criteria. I agreed to create a criteria checklist based on the chart, and Ben said that he would draw a sample one-page comics story (f1, 22).

Negotiating slippery artifacts. After the debriefing session, I wrote about an image that came to mind when I thought about what it felt like to work at Jackson Elementary:

Every time I leave this school I feel like I've entered a funhouse, where I am walking into endless openings that always lead me into something interesting, distorted, unexpected, even magical. Perhaps this feeling is the main difference between being a researcher working with teachers who are taking on the role of collaborative action researcher rather than being an outside researcher observing what is happening (Research journal, March 19, 2010).

After the whole group meeting on March 12, 2010, I expected that the day of planning and reflecting would re-center us collectively and individually by providing us with jointly created artifacts (notes, lessons) that would bootstrap our learning as collaborative action researchers. However, I found that artifacts created during that time left little physical, social and intellectual residue for each

of us to work with once we returned to the school. Ben, Mark and I negotiated such slippery boundary artifacts (Wenger, 1998) by quickly combining our memories of the day (i.e., lesson ideas and artifacts) to cocreate temporary footholds just in the nick of time to carry us forward as comics writing teachers. Throughout our lesson, we often stopped to clarify or check these temporary footholds and to help each other remember what comes next.

Ben had talked to me the night before his special effects lesson, but after that phone call, he couldn't find the artifacts from the away space meeting (McCloud's *Making Comics* (2006), his journal notes) so he did not prepare anything of his own. The result of such an absence of artifacts sent each of us scrambling to use the artifacts we did have to create a unified lesson (i.e., my picture book, the local artist's drawings, Mark's Notebook file, my notes, and Ben's review of our notes as I did a read aloud). When Ben forgot some aspects of the lesson, he was transparent about it and we solved it together by using my research journal notes, the picture book lesson to elaborate on a point made and each other's ideas for strengthening lesson delivery. Ben's willingness to be honest about what he did and didn't have ready opened up the classroom as a social space, where students, teachers and researchers improvised collaboratively to make teaching and learning a rich experience.

Following that lesson, when Ben and Mark were recreating a lesson artifact that was inappropriate for students, they negotiated moral and intellectual questions: How should we change the wording? What is or isn't appropriate? Will this change the intent of the task? Each question had to be dealt with quickly and efficiently, so each of us jumped in to get the lesson ready in time (i.e., I picked up copies and hole-punched them; Ben went to the classroom to greet students; Mark finished fixing the Notebook file using new wording). The momentum of having so many openings to negotiate collectively and simultaneously created an emotional, social pressure that was relieved by humor and laughter, which helped each of to be honest with each other. I posit that our collective willingness to be honest reshaped the office and classroom spaces into ones that worked according to a writerly ethics.

Within such openings, where we collectively improvised, we often illuminated creative teaching learning moments with students and each other. The most obvious example of that in these last social space narratives was the students' comics vocabulary development during the read aloud of Mo Willems' book. Chris came up with a brilliant idea— to use “page stoppers” or “power pages” as writing folder reference material by taking pictures of them. Also, Ben added to the original list of special effects by adding “emanata,” which happened because of the serendipitous read aloud. Such unexpected creative intertextual weavings in our lesson happened because of the joint, albeit overly quick, puzzling, joking and laughing that flattened social hierarchies and enabled everyone to contribute meaningfully to our lessons.

After Spring Break

During Spring Break, Carmen, Kate, Samantha and Mark had gone to Las Vegas (Mark went with his family, not Parker Elementary), and Ben enjoyed time at home relaxing, so we re-entered our comics writing on Wednesday, April 7, 2010 at Parker Elementary (which gave everyone there a day to settle back into school routines). Because Mark and I had sent our character sketch lesson to everyone by email on the Thursday before Spring Break, teachers knew that they could use it or not. When I entered Jackson Elementary on Tuesday, April 6, 2010, Ben admitted that he wasn't sure what he was going to do that morning, so Mark suggested that he and I work together during independent reading time to get our lesson ready and to involve Ben in the three-person comics writing portion. The lesson went well and afterwards Mark and Ben agreed that they would like a half-day for planning on Friday, April 9, 2010. Following that lesson, I let Dan know that although we had a good lesson that I was worried that Ben felt pressured to continue with the research and I was obliged to remind him of his right to opt out. Dan agreed and provided Mark with the option of taking extra time to work with Ben in the classroom. Ben was surprised that I reminded him of his right to opt out, and he said, “No, I like working with you and Mark, so it's good” (Research journal, April 6, 2010).

On April 7, 2010, when I started the day at Parker Elementary, Carmen said, “I thought you were teaching,” and Kate said, “I made a lesson of my own, but I’m not sure about it” (Research journal, April 7, 2010). As we walked through the character sketch lesson, we negotiated how to co-teach the lesson in each of their classrooms. We debriefed at lunch, and Samantha stated, “I knew that we were teaching this week, but it’s easier for me to pull things together because I always go last” (Transcript, April 7, 2010). Although our lessons went fairly smoothly, Carmen, Kate and Samantha agreed that they wanted the Friday, April 9th date for planning in the morning, and they asked if I could book the local artist for their afternoon art classes.

At the end of the debriefing, Kate stayed behind to talk with me. She started to cry and explained, “I feel so bad because I should have called when I was stressed but you could tell me a thousand times to call you and I wouldn’t” (Research journal, April 7, 2010). When I asked her why, she said, “Because I might work with you some day as a grade level partner or administrator and I don’t want you to see that my lesson didn’t work. Plus, I just thought the lesson you and Carmen were talking about was better” (Research journal, April 7, 2010). I told Kate that Mark and I talked through lessons over the phone because it was quicker than face-to-face and didn’t require upfront scheduling. Kate agreed that she would try that if needed.

Away Space Meeting

The focus of our away space meeting was to reflect on how to continue to plan and teach comics writing and how each teacher was experiencing collaborative learning through action research. In preparation for the meeting, teachers agreed to bring any materials that they thought would help them with planning, including McCloud’s *Making Comics* (2006). I agreed to call Printing Services to find out the cost of printing comic books because I knew that the ultimate goal was to put students’ finished comics into a book that was affordable for students.

Collaborative planning

We discussed what makes comics writing lessons beneficial for students and teachers. The teachers outlined the importance of lessons that included modeling, pre-assessments, mini-lessons, and conferencing with individual students using criteria checklists. Ben started off, “Modeling is key” (f1,6), and Carmen and Ben shared examples of how students need to see teachers struggle and how they get through those struggles by talking as they write and draw (f1, 14-19, 29-31). Carmen added, “I think sometimes when we’re drawing, we’ve already practiced it so it’s not really having to think about it so we aren’t showing our process” (f1,18-19). When I asked her whether she thought we should avoid over-planning/practicing, Carmen and Samantha worried about letting go of such intensive routines because they otherwise over relied on artifacts (i.e., stopping class to look at their books or turning to words for drawings that were too difficult) (f1, 21-22). Mark and I wondered whether students benefit from seeing teachers use books and words as strategies that help out comics writers (f1, 24, 26-28). Ben confirmed that when he can’t draw something, he leaves a small note to come back to the sketch to improve it later, which he sees as a necessary strategy for students to witness (f1, 29-31).

Carmen posited that mini-lessons are essential, especially as we enter into the comics writing phases, where students will be drafting, revising and editing their stories for publication (f2, 5, 7-9). Samantha liked the idea of continuing with pre-assessments for mini-lesson work because her students treated them as personal goal sheets, and Samantha read aloud curricular outcomes that reinforced the need for teachers to develop ways for students to engage in goal-setting (f2, 10-13). Mark stated, “That’s differentiation, too, because it’s not like your class will have the same things [goals] as my class...” (f2, 14). Ben liked the idea of using the pre-assessment to guide blog reflections, and Kate felt that creating those little pre-assessment sheets were like visual criteria that were “right there” for students’ and teachers’ constant reference (f2, 17-22).

Finally, everyone agreed that writing conferences using criteria checklists were essential for guiding the teacher. I asked whether the checklists that I had

made for our mini-comics lessons before Spring Break were becoming too predictable and treated as “checklists to get through rather than prompts for authentic conversations about students’ writing,” and Carmen said, “The opposite. I use it to ask the student to tell me what they see//where their message is coming through and where they don’t [see it coming through] “ (f3,10-11). Ben confirmed, “I love it. I couldn’t conference without it. I need it so I don’t run off in some other direction like drawing cool stuff because that is a problem, too” (f3, 18-21). Mark ended, “And it’s good for report cards because we should be reporting, like documenting the formative before our summative right?...” (f3, 22-23).

After this criteria-setting discussion, we planned how to start our comics book writing with students. Samantha began, “I still like the ideas of social responsiveness, where the students have to think about their own lives” (Transcript, April 9, 2010). Mark added, “Maybe we want to work around the district theme, still, too” (Transcript, April 9, 2010). The district theme, “What breaks your heart?” was the focus of a whole district professional development day, and Ben stated, “I think with Haiti and the ongoing problems with war and natural disasters in the world that this theme opens that up, like gets kids thinking that comics do not have to be ‘funny’” (Transcript, April 9, 2010). I pointed to examples of comics texts that I had brought that day (e.g., *Sir Winston Churchill* (Okimoto, 2007) about saving polar bears in Northern Manitoba; *Nobody Particular* (Bang, 2005) about one woman’s fight to stop water pollution in Texan bays).

Carmen wondered, “What if we started with just a whole bunch of pictures of things that make our hearts break and get kids to gather pictures of what makes their hearts break?” (Transcript, April 9, 2010). Kate asked, “Do you think everyone will find something that they want to write about?” (Transcript, April 9, 2010), and Samantha said, “I think it’s wide open, so they should and they are pretty focused on what to do to help others, which is why we are a [religious] school district” (Transcript, April 9, 2010). The group decided to create a collage with students about what makes their hearts break and to have students create

their own collages that represent possible writing topics based on social issues of importance to them.

Carmen suggested, “I think it’s important that we write with them, too, because we can sit beside a student but if we don’t write comics then it’s harder to relate to the problems they’re having” (Transcript, April 9, 2010). Mark extended her point, “It also gives us an idea of how long it takes to draft an idea... because I’m not sure how big these should be” (Transcript, April 9, 2010). Carmen stated, “I think they should make them as long as they want,” and I shared what I found out about the cost of producing comic books. Mark said, “I think we should produce them in color, right?” (Transcript, April 9, 2010). I confirmed the costs that I had been quoted and suggested, “If we want to keep costs reasonable and give students time for revision, then probably 3-4 pages is enough” (Transcript, April 9 2010). Carmen worried that some students would finish too fast, “I have some who will go home and do the whole thing so it can’t be too short. I have others who will only do the minimum, too” (Transcript, April 9, 2010). Hence, everyone agreed to create their own comics alongside students as an approach to lesson development and to set their own limits for their classes in terms of comics criteria (e.g., length, topic).

Shifting between readerly-writerly chronotopes. The teachers uncovered the need to connect comics writing processes to artifacts. For example, Carmen stated that when we practiced ahead to prepare for a lesson, it was good because it gave each of us a sense of comfort; however, she, Mark, Ben and I noted that it was negative if it took away opportunities to talk about legitimate strategies that teachers used to work through their comics writing problems. Hence, our group illuminated how writerly ways of teaching writing mean that we necessarily have to let go of our readerly belief that we have to produce technically perfect comics to “model” comics writing; instead, we have to redefine modeling as flattening teacher-as-expert conceptions of ourselves as writing teachers to work alongside students to talk about our real processes as writers (McClay & Mackey, 2009).

Although there was agreement about the importance of using criteria checklists to guide teacher-student conferences, I raised a concern about the

checklists being detached from students' writing issues. Although Carmen felt that they helped her to raise good questions and Ben posited that they kept him focused, Samantha and Kate were relatively silent about their uses of them. I had typed criteria checklists based on Mark and Ben's criteria chart in their classroom, which was not something that had become a constant at Parker Elementary. Because of the successful lesson Ben and I had had with students when they discovered "page stoppers," where students suggested adding to their classroom criteria, I created student checklists, which were mini-versions of students' running lists of what to watch for as comics writers. The problem was that I had shared the criteria checklist with Parker Elementary teachers, and I wasn't sure that students in their classrooms would connect with it in the same way without a fair amount of discussion during conferences. When Ben stated, "I love them. I couldn't conference without them," I worried that the list rather than the teacher led writing conferences. Thus, while writing conference criteria lists seemed to lead writerly work between teachers and students, there was also reason to attend to whether and how they turned such conversations into readerly work of "going through the checklist."

Reflecting on collaboration

Taking multiple stances as collaborators. Each person drew pictures and/or words on unlined white 8 1/2 by 14" paper about what it means to collaborate. Samantha presented a "co-participant" (Gutiérrez et al., 1999) view of collaboration, where individuals combine their ideas through the artifacts they share, but they don't routinely jointly puzzle their meaning: "[T]he things I get from Ben or Mark, I take what suits me and I take out what I don't need" (f3, 51-52), and "That's the nice thing, it just gives you a skeleton, and you don't have to follow rules to collaborate. It just gives you a direction, a kind of vision..." (f3, 54-55). Samantha also talked about the necessity of reserving paid days away for collaboration because of the fast pace and many demands at school (f3, 2-8). She valued debriefing time at school with Carmen, Kate and me because she could gather ideas for her lessons based on what worked or didn't work for others,

especially because she usually taught certain concepts after Carmen and Kate (f3, 2-4, 14-15).

Conversely, Kate presented a “joint participation” (Gutiérrez et al., 1999) view of collaboration, where participants establish a routine, where they negotiate the meaning of teaching and learning artifacts, practices and pedagogies:

It’s generating ideas, bouncing ideas off of each other and I feel like if I start a conversation with Carmen about what we’re going to do the next day but I don’t really finish it, and I kind of go back and I start generating my own ideas then I’m sort of unclear on what my purpose is because I feel like I don’t know because we were sort of going that direction and now I’m heading in this direction now, so but maybe that’s just me (f3, 22-28).

Kate discussed how communicating ideas by email was problematic even when they are clearly laid out because there is no way of accessing the process behind the artifacts (f3, 42-49). Mark agreed and admitted that she made him rethink how much he expects people to communicate with him by email (f3, 75-81). Later, when we left the building, Mark said, “I think what Kate said is really true, right, because when people take lessons from email, they just apply their own vision so what’s the learning in that? There is little challenging of one’s thinking, so maybe I have to rethink that” (Research journal, April 9, 2010).

Mark was divided about whether he thought collaboration was “joint participation” or “co-participation” (Gutiérrez, et al., 1999). He said, “When you talked about those two artists working by email and fax, I thought, ‘Maybe it’s true that collaboration is changing because of technology’” (Transcript, April 9, 2010). He acknowledged the importance of technology, but, as described above, he wondered about the nature of mediated learning for professional purposes. He was focused on relationships and trust as the key to collaboration as “joint participation” because he felt that the only way to truly process real thoughts and feelings with another person is if you trust him/her (f3, 72-81). I asked Mark whether he felt collaboration can happen between people who are willing to work together but who don’t know each other, and he said, “I would have said ‘Yes,’ but I don’t think so because even in this thing [research], it just takes time to learn

about the other person, even the people in your own building ” (Transcript, April 9, 2010).

Ben presented a view of collaboration as “flow,” where people uncover ways of working, where they jump into and out of the lesson process and cocreate it while it’s in motion (f3, 82-88). He said, “It’s also about relationships, too, because I wasn’t feeling good before; now, we have this thing moving, so it works” (f3, 87-88). Ben elaborated, “I’m pretty easy-going, but I have worked with people who just can’t jump in and they are so worried about what the other person thinks and that doesn’t work for me” (Transcript, April 9, 2010). When I asked Ben for an example, he said, “Like the other day, we just went smoothly through the lesson but I couldn’t do that the first day because it was like I felt ‘off,’ and you have to get a sense of how to work with someone” (Transcript, April 9, 2010). I understand Ben’s point to be that he aimed to collaborate by cocognizing on an intuitive level, as a kind of embodied flow or what Polanyi (1968) calls “in-dwelling,” where individuals get a sense of how they feel a process should go and they follow that internal guide.

From a readerly professional learning stance, where individuals value privatization, competition and power, it makes sense to collaborate as “co-participants,” where each person shares ideas in mutually beneficial, proportionate and efficient ways. Hence, Samantha’s view fits that perspective. From a writerly professional learning stance, individuals search to question ambiguities and to puzzle through whether and how their individual ways of thinking generate an ideology that they agree with. Kate fits into this stance, and Mark, by his admission, sits between them. Ben works from a readerly-writerly stance, where he referred to our lesson, where we worked smoothly given the short timeframe within which we had to plan and make decisions. Hence, we worked according to intuition because of the pace more so than a conscious choice, so I contend that we worked in writerly and jointly participative ways, but we also divided up tasks out of sheer necessity to get what was needed done. Hence, I contend that planning is more than putting artifacts together; it is about understanding the process behind them. Therefore, Ben required that few minutes during class to

gather his thoughts and I happened to have a picture book in my bag, which made things “flow.”

Parker Elementary

During the week of April 12-16, 2010, Carmen, Kate and Samantha had students complete unfinished comics assignments (partner comics, mini-comics stories), and they introduced students to their final comic book project using the collage idea from our whole group meeting on April 9, 2010. In addition to April 9, 2010, our whole group met twice more, April 22, 2010 for a half-day and all day on April 23, 2010 to plan and reflect at the away space. I focus in this section on one classroom lesson for each teacher that is an example of our ways of working together, where we cocreated classrooms as social spaces, where praxis was evident from April 9, 2010 until the students completed their comics for printing, which was a different end date for each class. Although each of us experienced numerous challenges when we attempted to shift into a praxis stance, I choose not to focus on those moments of mostly relational tensions here because I have already discussed them at length throughout chapters six and seven.

Carmen

On April 12, 2010, Carmen and I were talking in her classroom as she got ready for class, and she disclosed how students were harder to manage as Spring approached. In addition, Carmen emphasized how the Spring Concert was fast approaching and she had responsibilities associated with that as well as participating in extra-curricular events. It was therefore more difficult for us to create job-embedded opportunities for planning and debriefing, so we struggled to develop a way of working that enacted our whole group’s criteria for comics writing lessons. Carmen’s lessons, other than April 14, 2010 lesson, which was the one planned at the away space, were devoted to large blocks of independent writing time with a short introduction by her in the form of a “to do” list of what to work on for that block. She and I held individual writing conferences with students during the independent writing time. Because we had gone from very highly structured lessons, where teachers modeled and students practiced a

strategy and had set times for completing tasks (usually 15-30 minutes) to a relatively limited structure (i.e., lesson introduction and then 55- 65 minutes of independent work time), most students didn't maintain writing stamina and turned to off-task behaviors. During our lesson on April 12, 2010, Carmen and I stopped after a few writing conferences and we both agreed that, even after conferences, most students were off-task. I suggested changing the seating plan and returning to a lesson structure that offered more variety, not just conferencing. After that discussion, I brought picture books along in case there was a need for changing the pace of a lesson, and on more than one occasion when class noise levels were quite high, I indicated to Carmen that a whole class debriefing or feedback session or read aloud might be a good idea.

Although Carmen never said it to me at those times, she saw my suggestions as negative judgments of her teaching. For example, Carmen wrote in her journal, "I don't think Rhonda was happy about my lesson today" (April 19, 2010). The following day after reading this entry, I went to Carmen and said, "I see us as equals who are working together, so when you and I stop to talk about ways to make things better, I offered ideas but maybe I shouldn't have" (Research journal, April 20, 2010). She responded, "I see you as our teacher and I look to you for how I am doing, so I read into what you do because you don't usually say whether I did a good job or not" (Research journal, April 20, 2010). In her final interview, Carmen reflected, "I was just so sensitive because I was alone and I always worried about what you were seeing in other classes, so I judged myself because the class was getting out of control. It was just where I was at" (Transcript, May 14, 2010).

In this section, I focus on a lesson that spilled out into debriefings in the staffroom and elsewhere and proliferated other lessons. It was an example of how Carmen and I located ways of creating conditions for praxis after our debriefing on April 20, 2010, even though we didn't manage to maintain this way of working on a consistent basis to the end of the study.

On April 21, 2010, Carmen began the lesson with a pre-assessment sheet, which asked students to rate their belief in themselves to do the following:

1. I can create a comic story beginning that has a clear message and mood; 2. I can create a story PLAN for my comic book; 3. I can create 2 beginnings, and pick the best one. I can give a reason for why it is the best. Carmen and I recorded and compared students' numbers on this pre-assessment, and we noticed that many were concerned about planning (14/19 students had circled 2s and 3s for statement 2). Carmen said, "This just confirms what I'm worried about because I marked their practice tests this weekend and many of them had sketchy plans and they had missing events and details" (Transcript, April 21, 2010). I responded, "I wonder whether they are much better at details in their comics drafts?" (Transcript, April 21, 2010). Just then, Ivan, who was a high-achiever, spontaneously joined our conversation to revoice Carmen's concerns, "How can we make our stories better for like the PAT [provincial achievement test]?" (Transcript, April 21, 2010). I suggested to Carmen and Ivan, that we should conference with students to find out whether or not they are developing their comics stories using details and other techniques that could help their regular stories. "Maybe we could stop after a couple [conferences]...like a half-way point, and see what mini-lesson would help and I don't mind booking extra time to help out. I did that for Ben...that's why I'm going there this afternoon" (Transcript, April 21, 2010).

In this section, I recount what Carmen and I did as we held "individual" student conferences because our conferences influenced what we did together later in the lesson. Carmen began her discussion with Betty, "Okay, so walk me through your story" (f1, 1). Betty described her idea, "There's this boy and he has a friend who steals and his mom told him to stay away from him, but he's allowed to go to the corner gas station" (f1, 2-3). Carmen looked at the drawing and noticed that it was very similar to our ice-cream task, an earlier lesson where the students and I had drawn a store front (f2, 4). Betty wasn't sure whether or not she got the idea from that lesson, but she had looked through her own comics for story ideas, and when she started drawing a gas station she knew that somehow she would connect it with her story conflict (f1, 5-7). Throughout their conversation, Ivan, one student in the pod of four desks, where I was, listened in on Betty and

Carmen's conference and periodically offered his insights. For example, when he noticed that Betty used previous drawings to get ideas for her current story, he said, "See that's kind of how I do it, like I got my plan from Marcus's' Narwhal [Marcus had drawn his Narwhal character in Ivan's visual journal]" (f1,8). Betty observed Carmen reading her comics story, and when Carmen looked pensive, Betty stated that she was planning to write some words, "I was thinking of writing, [reads from her script, which was part of her loosely written point-form plan that was beside her sketches], 'A young boy is walking to a gas station near his house'" (f1, 11) for the first panel of her comics story, and, during the conference, Betty revised her comic to include those words.

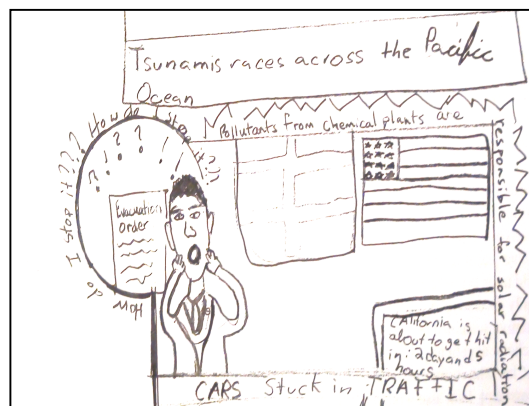
Carmen later showed me Betty's comic and said, "Now, that's good she can see how to add those missing details when she writes comics" (Transcript, April 21, 2010). I wondered, "Do you think it was also because she was observing you read her story? I know that I can miss details that I see when I step away from a draft and then read it again, especially if I'm giving it to someone else" (Transcript, April 2, 2010). Carmen posited, "Yes, but how do we help them do that on written stories because I can sit there and reread it and they don't seem to know that anything is missing?" (Transcript, April 21, 2010). After that brief interchange, Carmen and I continued with our individual writing conferences.

Ivan was sitting beside Ray, who was the student I was talking with, and Ivan joined into our conversation and even drew for Ray and got us books. I started my conference, "Would you like to walk me through your story so far?" (f2, 1). Ray explained that his story was premised on Americans polluting the nation to the point where Obama has to call an evacuation of certain States. He said, "If Americans and Canadians keep this up, we could have like a D-Day, you know what I mean?" (f2, 4). He was struggling to show Obama ordering an evacuation so that the panel reflected the seriousness of the event (f2, 5-6). Ray had already had a conference with the student teacher about this comics story, and he let me know that he rented the movie "D-Day" on the advice of the student teacher and that he was confident that polluting the environment could lead to a D-Day, "I think we could have like a world ending like this if we keep polluting

our planet, so I'm using that word [D-Day]" (Transcript, April 21, 2010). Because Ray was attempting to write facts about natural disasters as well as tell his story about Obama, I asked, "Is there a comics writer who has written about social action or has used a technique to tell a real and fictional story together?" (f2, 7-9).

Ivan interjected, "I know just how to do this" (f2, 10), and he started to draw an iris that showed a close-up of Obama (figure 18). Eventually, as we continued talking, where both Ray and Ivan were drawing and writing on Ray's comic draft, Ivan recalled a book that had a parallel plot line to answer the question that I had asked Ray. After we each considered books that had parallel plot lines, Ivan brought a few books back to Ray's desk. As Ray continued working, Ivan, Carmen and I had our own conference.

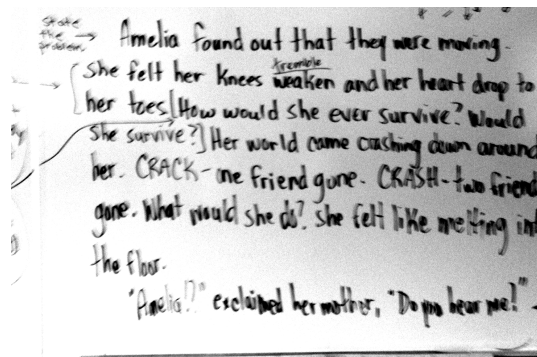
Figure 18: Ray's comic panel with the iris, emanata and parallel plot line



Ivan explained his comics story, "Okay, her son is going to Afghanistan, and she's worried..." (f3, 2-3). Ivan made an error and meant to say that her husband was going to Afghanistan and that she was worried about telling her son. As his retelling became convoluted, Carmen interjected and looked at me, "See that's what I mean" and I asked Ivan, "Ivan, do you see our problem as readers? What can you do to help us to know that [points to later panel] that this is her husband and that is her son?" (f3, 9-10). Ivan described how he would use the mother's thoughts to show what she is thinking and feeling in the first panel. Later, in the same conversation with Ivan, Carmen turned to me again, "They can draw details to fill in the gaps but how does that translate, like even his comic with the thought balloon?" (f3, 21-22).

I discussed Barry Lane's (1999) idea of "thought shots," where a character's thoughts are written as part of the story and "heart shots," where a writer uses words to describe gestures of the face and body. Carmen and I were just about to schedule a time for me to come into class to work on that mini-lesson and Ivan asked, "Could you show me now? I want to know how to make it translate" (f3, 29). I used a page from *Amelia Rules!* (Gownley, 2009) (See figure 1, p.41), one that Ivan and I had used to create a bomb explosion scene in his comics story, and I had him work with Carmen and me to do a shared writing of the page (figure 19) using words. Then Ivan labeled where the thought shots and heart shots were, and we labeled other story language (i.e., problem, character development).

Figure 19: See figure 1 on p. 41 for the page from the comics image used to write this white board story beginning.



Debriefing in the hallway

Carmen said, "I am so inspired!" (Transcript, April 21, 2010). As Carmen and I walked into the staff room, she told numerous people about her 'ah-ha' that day, "I can see exactly how this translates and I'm going to work on having them rewrite their comics into stories. They can hardly wait to write stories" (Research journal, April 21, 2010). Kate ran to her classroom to get her journal to write the idea down. When the recess bell rang, Carmen and I walked back to her classroom, and she asked me to review Barry Lane's (1999) "heart shots" lesson idea. We booked extra time to work together on integrating comics and print-based story writing strategies the following week. Before we finished, Jane, who was the student who preferred print-based versus comics writing at the start of the project, stopped us to tell us her new insights:

I drew this lamppost because I was fascinated by it [pointed to it because it was visible from the classroom window], and it's the first time that I was convinced that drawing and writing go together...mmm...//there are just some things that you cannot communicate with a very articulate word (Transcript, May 5, 2010).

Students mediate teacher-researcher learning. Students' texts were a location for Carmen and I to coinquire as equal knowers and to engage in praxis. When Carmen had marked students' PAT [provincial achievement test] practice tests and noticed a lack of story development, she raised a legitimate concern for joint puzzling by the adults and students in her classroom. To back up briefly, the PAT tests were scheduled for May, but the teachers participated in a whole school plan to administer a practice test and then to mark it alone and collaboratively with other staff members as a professional development exercise. Ivan revoiced Carmen's concern and throughout the lesson we coinquired into it.

I argue that Carmen's inquiry, "How can we make comics writing translate into good grades on PAT stories?" arose because of her marking on the weekend and because students were talking that week about where they might go to junior high. One preferred junior high school had an International Baccalaureate program and was regularly recognized in the local newspaper for top scores on PAT tests. Carmen emphasized that students and their parents were focused on academics and there was considerable pressure on her to make sure that every student had an opportunity to thrive in such a test-based context. I posit that the classroom became a community of writers, where voices intermeshed (teacher, researcher, student) and one voice was not more important than another because everyone cared about creating conditions for students to do well on the upcoming writing exams. In essence, our collective actions were praxis because we were morally committed to students, and we transformed our practices on various levels: *cultural/discursive* (i.e., new ways of talking and thinking together) and *material/economic* (i.e., using time the way that students felt was most helpful). In my view, such changes depended on our flattening of the double hierarchy of researcher-teacher and teacher-student that normally outlined ways of relating

(sociopolitical practices) in the classroom. Carmen stated that she felt “re-energized” as she talked about her insights with other staff, which had never happened in front of me before. I knew that Carmen, Kate and Samantha had talked at staff meetings about their experiences with comics writing, but I had little idea of what those conversations were and when I asked, I didn’t typically get a detailed description.

Although we did not work against the testing culture itself (i.e., take on a critical stance), we aimed to make students’ lives better through our comics writing practices. It turned out that students were so successful on the PAT test that Carmen brought examples of their writing to read aloud at an end-of-the-year staff meeting. Also, in one student’s case, the student’s mother told Carmen that she was so happy with her daughter’s excitement about writing that she would support comics-based writing programs in any way possible.

Kate

Kate admitted, “I think I’m in a different head space because I know that I am leaving...I realized that the other day when [one of my students] asked me, ‘When do we get to write the PATs?’, and I thought, ‘Normally, I’ve had several conversations about that’” (Transcript, April 12, 2010). She went on, “I was tracking the self-efficacy scores, but they just looked like a bunch of numbers and I think that my new running notes are better” (Transcript, April 12, 2010). Kate decided, “I am going to begin each class with a short introduction, where I am writing my own comic like we talked about, but I am kind of forgetting what else we said” (Transcript, April 12, 2010). I responded, “We just talked about some things that have been working, so it’s not important to follow any specifics. I’ve noticed...that when I move from highly structured lessons to very little structure that the change can cause students problems because they don’t have the ability to adjust to the sudden increase in independent writing time” (Transcript, April 12, 2010). I indicated that I had done a read aloud in Ben’s class and in Carmen’s class, which helped to have students think like readers of their own comics, and that we had explored mini-lessons to address students’ writing problems. Kate

said, “Ya, when I tried to move away from more teacher-led lessons, some students found the change to be hard” (Transcript, April 12, 2010).

In this section, I will describe one lesson done on April 21, 2010, where Kate uncovered her own assumptions about comics writing that she shared with the class, and, together, we reshaped the classroom into a social space where collective praxis was evident.

On April 14, 2010 Kate showed me the little pink hearts that the students and parents completed about the theme, “What breaks YOUR heart?” She had sent home the hearts and her instructions to parents were: “In the space below, help your child write 3 or 4 things that speak to him. What pulls at his heartstrings? Makes him sad? Wishes he could change? Students and parents completed the hearts with many ideas, including: “When my dog had to be put to sleep because he was sick. I wish I could change that but I also know he is in heaven so I want to help other children know that it is okay to be sad and how to pray about it. My mom says that would really help even adults.” Kate said, “I’ve taken all of their ideas and made slides of them so that we can see everyone’s possible story ideas about the theme” (Research journal, April 14, 2010).

During the April 14th lesson, after Kate shared the slides and her collage, students were busy completing their collages, and Kate and I quickly debriefed about our noticings with respect to students’ abilities to develop their collages of images and words for possible story ideas. Kate said, “I am thrilled with how focused they are on talking about their own lives, but I am also nervous because I’m not sure if they can pull it off” (Transcript, April 14, 2010). After the next lesson on April 19th, where Kate had students begin drafting their comics stories, she used a story planner that she found to be successful when she had practiced for PAT writing, but she returned the next day and showed me their beginning drafts, “I am not sure what most of these [comics story drafts] mean. I took notes like, ‘Basic-story has gaps between events and pictures have few details’ ” (Transcript, April 21, 2010). I asked her whether it was their plan and/or comics drafts that were problematic, and she showed me how there was a disconnection between the written plans and comics drafts so it was hard for her to know what

their comics drafts (i.e., few of them used words) were about (Kate's copies of lessons, April 21, 2010). I wondered, "Maybe when we conference with a few of them, we will figure out why there is a difference" (Transcript, April 21, 2010).

On April 21st, Kate started her lesson with an example of a comic that she created out of stick people and asked students to help her to make it better so that they could more easily read it without depending on her to tell them what it was about. The students suggested: "Put hair on them but make them different colors so we don't mix them up"; "Write a panel before to let us know what kind of friends they are, like school friends or what" (Transcript, April 21, 2010). Such comments continued and Kate made on-the-spot revisions and had some students help out with drawing, and she eventually turned to their classroom criteria for writing stories (on a chart) and mentioned:

Do you think we should add 'Readers need to understand my message and mood'? because I find that when I took your comics home that I wanted to call you up and say, 'Hey, so could you tell me the story as I look at it' (Transcript, April 21, 2010).

Kate used her own story plan for another comics story and asked students to help her review her plan and to give her ideas for revising it. Her story plan was about Rhonda, based on her teacher assistant, "an energetic grade four student who loves attention and competition and really wants to be the 'red robin' in the upcoming school play" (Kate's plan, April 21, 2010). The problem is that she wants to play this role, but, according to Kate's plan, in event #1, she discovers that Molly got the part. In event #2, "Mrs. Smith [the teacher who was managing the play] asked her [Rhonda] to be the understudy" (Kate's plan, April 21, 2010). By the end, "Rhonda couldn't believe it, but she felt happy and proud of herself even though she didn't get to be the robin after all" (Kate's notes, April 21, 2010). After students gave her suggestions for how to draw her story and Kate tried their ideas, she stopped part-way through and said, "Okay, so you know that I want you to go back to your plans and your comics and see how you can help me understand what's going on. Remember all of the things we discussed [pointed to

chart], where she listed “use narration, thought balloons, speech bubbles” as some examples.

Before Kate and I held conferences with students, she mentioned, “I am really worried about a couple of girls who wrote the same story and neither story made sense. I am also worried about the ‘Star Wars’ stories that these three boys are writing, and they are my inquiry kids//” (Transcript, April 21, 2010). When I asked Kate what worried her about the ‘Star Wars’ stories she said, “They get drawing pictures that don’t match their plans and it is almost impossible to follow their stories...they are violent, too, like heads getting chopped off” (Transcript, April 21, 2010). During the lesson, Kate joined me on a writing conference with Darrin, who had originally written about Star Wars in his written story outline and then changed his mind.

Darrin had drawn very tiny pictures in nine panels, and he had a written story plan that was about West Edmonton Mall, which had little to do with his sketched comics story. When I asked Darrin to walk me through his story, he wasn’t sure which one I meant and Kate noted, “I think he means his plan and his comics story because he didn’t follow his plan” (f1,4). When I asked Darrin which one he preferred, he pointed to his comics story and shared a fairly coherent futuristic tale about “The Maker of Planet 4” who created coffee and sugar after they had been deemed to be “bad” substances from the past. When “The Maker” brought these substances back, people on the planet “went crazy” and he needed to locate “Super Snake” to solve the problem (f1, 8, 15-17). Kate asked him what he could do to make it better (f19). She asked him to tell her what the class found to be easier to understand about her second comic (after revision), and Darrin was quick to say that he required words and “moment-to-moment” transitions (f1, 23, 30). Sabina, another student who was listening in, told him to use narration [pointed to her comic, which had strips of text at the top] and that she would help him [held up her ruler] (f1, 31). She also mentioned that she could help create moment-to-moment panels like hers.

Once the bell rang and Kate and I were looking at Darrin’s comic (which was much improved), I asked Kate, “Why do you think he didn’t use his plan?”

Kate wondered, “You know, the story plan helped some students to write it out but many of them needed to draw and write so maybe for him it didn’t work ” (Transcript, April 21, 2010). She said, “We’ve used this for so long and I’m comfortable with it, and I don’t think I’ve ever thought that it wasn’t necessary, but maybe that’s part of why this group of boys never finishes their plans” (Transcript, April 21, 2010). As we were tidying up, each of us picked up two comics drafts on the floor and the plans accompanying these drafts were almost blank. Kate laughed because she pointed to her comment written on both papers— “Please finish.” “Look, they pretty much have their comics drafts beginnings and middle events” (Transcript, April 21, 2010).

Kate questioned, “You know what? I have to ask why this is something I haven’t thought about before. I’m pretty sure I just thought it was that some kids can’t do it, not that it was a problem with the plan” (Transcript, April 21, 2010). I mentioned that I have learned a lot from teaching comics writing that has helped me to see and overturn some of my assumptions. Kate concluded, “This is why I did this [the research] because sometimes we need to push ourselves out of what we do day-to-day to see what we do, you know ?” (Transcript, April 21, 2010). As I was leaving that day, Kate spontaneously said, “I meant what I said at our meeting the other day, I am finally feeling good about what we’re doing [smiled]” (Research journal, April 21, 2010). When I got into my car, I wrote, *Maybe it just takes time to reposition ourselves as two teachers rather than teacher-researcher* (Research journal, April 21, 2010).

Questioning texts. Kate and I had developed a habit of questioning our assumptions about students’ comics writing needs. Similar to Carmen, Kate’s self-critical reflective process began when she noticed a difference between what she expected students to do when they planned and what they did. Kate’s willingness to share her dissonance with me allowed us to coinquire into Kate’s inquiry.

From a cultural/discursive stance, we talked and thought alongside students who pushed us to see how they interconnected texts from prior lessons, their visual journals, and other students’ suggestions to work through their comics

composing issues. They did not typically turn back to their written plans. Kate admitted that she had not thought about the planning approach as problematic until the research, and I acknowledged how participating in the research made me see my own teaching practices from a self-critical stance. Our focus throughout such collective reflections was on students and how our actions helped them or not to progress as story writers. Hence, through our joint questioning of students' responses to our teaching decisions, we used those texts as locations to question whether or not practices enacted our ideologies about what makes students' experiences "better" (Lytle, 2008).

From a sociopolitical stance, Kate and I had shaped a way of working like two teachers rather than a teacher and researcher. I suspect that focusing on students' texts and not teachers' or researchers' texts was what enabled us to relate by questioning and thinking together to solve Kate's questions, but I also posit that such a transition simply took time and required separation from the sociopolitical practice architectures of the subgroup timespaces in that school.

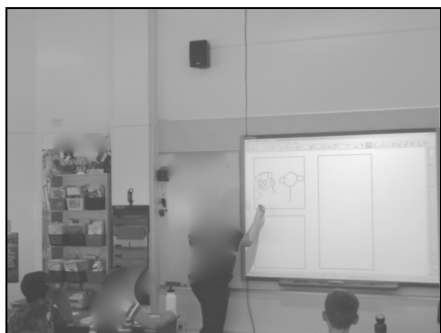
Samantha

Samantha started on April 14th by saying, "It will be interesting to see what they say during our introduction of "What breaks your heart?" because many of them have had some hard things happen to them this year" (Research journal, April 14, 2010). Samantha went on to describe how having many of the same students for two years in a row has made it possible for them to open up to her personally (e.g., she even attended one student's hockey game), and she thought, "I wonder whether they will find it easy or not to write about this theme?" (Research journals, April 14, 2010). As the lesson unfolded, Samantha tried to type their ideas into "Wordle" but the computer froze and she lost their key ideas. We reflected afterwards and found that many students had talked about "divorce, death, hunger, bullying, drug use."

As she began her lesson on April 19, 2010, she said, "Okay, many of you have story ideas already, but how are you going to plan your stories?" As the students offered ideas, Samantha turned to her SMART board slide (figure 20),

and the students described planning routines that supported them to get their story ideas down on paper: “drawing panels and writing notes beside them; listing ideas for how to begin and then sketching them; sketching; using a beginning-middle-end story plan” (Transcript, April 19, 2010). Samantha commented, “Okay, so there are many ways to get story ideas, and one way is to sketch first (Transcript, April 19, 2010). She created a new slide in her Notebook file (figure 20) and started to draw some panels for a story idea that she had and she talked as she composed the first panel and then stopped, “Oh, as I’m doing this, I realized something...when you’re sketching-to-plan, you can’t worry about your drawings. You don’t have time for that because it will wreck your train of thought” (Transcript, April 19, 2010).

Figure 20



While Samantha drew her comic, two students whispered, “She’s drawing” (Transcript, April 19, 2010). Samantha overheard them and said, “I told you I would grow as a comics person [smiles]” (Transcript, April 19, 2010). After the planning discussion, she stated, “After 30 minutes, I expect you to share your plans and how your story is going, *caspiche*?” (Transcript, April 19, 2010).

Samantha and I stopped to talk about how we would conference with students, and she suggested that we use the criteria checklists from Ben’s class, which were close to what we had been talking about in her class. As we engaged in individual conferences, Samantha and I each held our own conference with one of her second language students, Sherman, and then Samantha and I had an informal conversation with him that provided new insights into his planning approach.

Samantha came over to Sherman and me during our conference when she overheard him saying that he got his story idea “from his teacher” (f1, 6). Samantha revoiced what she thought Sherman had said to her earlier, which was that he got “bean bag man” from the local artist’s lesson, and he knew that he wanted to use him for his story character (f1, 7-8). Samantha also stated that she thought Sherman also got his comics idea from a personal story that I had shared about not wanting to go to school when I was in grade two because I hated Math (f1, 10-12). Sherman nodded his head, and when Samantha asked him what made comics writing easier or harder than normal story writing, Sherman said, “I like it better” (f1, 22). Later, when we looked again at his notebook, Sherman had done two types of planning. He had sketched beanbag man playing a video game, and he had written inside panels, but his writing took the form of instructions to himself about what to draw for each panel as well story ideas for each panel.

Samantha, Kate and Carmen debrief in hallway

As the bell rang, Samantha wondered why Sherman wrote his instructions inside panels for his story plan, and she said, “I think that has been my biggest question in this comics writing process, ‘Why do they plan so differently?’, and you can see that he couldn’t really tell us why, but he did kind of a combination of drawing and writing and grabbing a story idea from several places and changing it” (Transcript, April 19, 2010). I responded, “You know it seems like the students, including Sherman, are more willing to explore different kinds of planning compared to my experiences teaching for PAT types of story writing” (Research journal, April 19, 2010). Samantha felt that it might be that it was a new approach, “It was almost like they had the paparazzi watching everything they did, so they felt like celebrities” (Research journal, April 19, 2010). I was shocked by Samantha’s analogy, so I asked her why she compared research-based teaching and learning to working as paparazzi, and she emphasized, “It’s like we’re making a fuss over them, taking pictures, recording some of their reflections and they see me leave with their books to go to PD, and that’s not normal so I’m sure they feel important” (Research journal, April 19, 2010).

As we met up with Carmen and Kate in the hallway, Samantha mentioned, “I couldn’t believe how Sherman was writing so much and then when we talked to him, he was using ideas from a whole bunch of sources and that was a surprise” (Research journal, April 19, 2010). Carmen agreed, “For me, too, because they have these characters that they work on that always appear in their stories” (Research journal, April 19, 2010). Kate felt that she had noticed some changes and worried that she had to rethink story planning. Samantha suggested that they plan to share this insight at their upcoming staff meeting (i.e., to consider using comics story writing to begin the year) because she said, “I think it will help them [other teachers] to break free from the one-way kind of planning and writing that they’ve been trained to do” (Research journal, April 19, 2010).

Learning how to be paparazzi of students’ learning. The abovementioned lesson, where Samantha and I held joint writing conferences with students and debriefed about them, was rare from April 12, 2010 until May 13, 2010 because Samantha usually held individual student conferences in an enclosed area on the opposite side of the classroom from me in the interests of not bothering students with ongoing conversations. We also divided the students between us because she had 28 students and it was difficult to work with everyone if we constantly stopped to share our conferences. From a material/economic point of view, it made practical sense to use our time efficiently. However, from a sociopolitical stance, our independent approach made it very difficult to locate moments in transcripts where we talked with students and coinquered into their learning. I posit that because we did not change our privatized ways of relating as teacher and outside researcher, it was impossible to know whether and how we were changing our practices or pedagogies (cultural/discursive aspects of practices) in the classroom.

Because we did not cultivate conditions for collaborative reflection very often within the classroom, this particular lesson and hallway debriefing are especially instructive. Several aspects of this lesson outline how the classroom and hallway spaces became writerly social spaces, where everyone’s verbal, nonverbal and material texts were noticed. When Samantha and I treated such texts as locations for paying particularly close attention, just as paparazzi

documents interesting tidbits of everyday life, we opened up opportunities for joint puzzling that seemed to be somewhat quick and spontaneous.

For example, when two students noticed that Samantha was comfortably drawing on the SMART board and they whispered, “She’s drawing”, Samantha smiled and said that she had grown as “comics person,” which illuminated that ability for teachers, researchers and students to treat even quiet remarks as worth noticing. Similarly, when Samantha overheard Sherman say to me that he got his story ideas from “his teacher,” she joined our conference and inquired into his thinking as a comics writer. Arguably, Samantha’s overhearing triggered her quick decision to join Sherman’s and my writing conference, which eventually led to Samantha puzzling about Sherman’s words and her thoughts about his comics writing into the hallway as a location for further conversation.

I argue that Samantha’s analogy between our classroom collaborative action research and paparazzi is an excellent way to think about how she and I, and she and Carmen, Kate and I reconfigured social spaces within their school for individual and collective praxis through our serendipitous seizing of interesting texts for noticing, documenting and questioning. In her final interview, Samantha stated, “One thing I’ve changed is how much I pay attention to each student through writing conferences” (Transcript, May 14, 2010). Samantha commented that although she had always engaged in one-on-one writing conferences, it was easier with a second person in the room because she could spend more time with each student, which influenced her teaching of comics because she built from students’ suggestions and needs as writers. For example, in the April 19th lesson, one student had suggested planning comics stories by using sketches, so Samantha tried it and uncovered the need to keep sketches flowing and not stopping to perfect them. When I asked Samantha why she felt that this insight was so important, she said:

It’s just everything is so busy so I don’t pay attention like so closely or maybe it’s not closely, but, but I think searching for an inquiry, I think...I looked at students more than before or maybe I stopped to think how I looked at them, and that just doesn’t happen enough on a day-to-day level.

I think, too, that you kept asking ‘How have they changed?’ and I kept thinking, ‘They haven’t’...I don’t think I thought about how students’ feelings changed about writing because it’s just not something that I focus on as much normally (Transcript, May 14, 2010).

I argue that Samantha engaged in moral reasoning about her classroom practices like the excerpt above, because, as she stated, she located the value and purpose in her day-to-day practices to think about how her actions influenced students’ feelings about writing and their performance as writers.

Jackson Elementary

From April 12 to May 23, 2010, Mark and Ben developed their lesson-splitting, lesson-sharing routine, where Mark set the vision for each lesson and Ben composed comics to talk about his process and how he engaged in revision of his story. Mark and I talked about four-five times/week about his lesson plans as well as his ideas for other writing approaches. Mark, Ben and I felt comfortable to jump into and out of lessons, where one of us was the lead, and we took up each other’s suggestions as lessons unfolded and made changes as we saw fit.

In this section, I report on a lesson and lesson debriefing on May 3, 2010, where Ben, Mark and I cotaught and worked with students in individual writing conferences. Although we established a closer way of working throughout April and May, Ben underlined the large number of interruptions that made it challenging for him to maintain a focus on any classroom routines:

It’s those last minute things, where you’re asked to draw Canadian flags and tell Canadian athletes why you’re proud of them, and you don’t want to be the grade six teacher who is known as the ‘party pooper’ but it’s hard, too, because we have to get them ready for exams (Transcript, April 13, 2010).

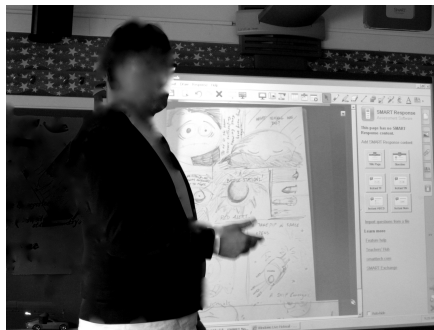
Ben noted, “This research has been great. I mean I think we each have a good sense of humor, which makes learning better for the students. I like that we can have fun together” (Transcript, April 13, 2010). Mark added, “I feel like it’s just getting going and now it has to end, so that’s too bad, right, but it’s, we knew it

would be hard to get momentum in the second half of the year” (Transcript, April 13, 2010). When I asked Ben and Mark what brought us together and made each of them feel more comfortable about comics writing, they both said the transcripts from writing conferences and our way of sharing during some conferences created locations for beneficial problem-solving amongst the students and ourselves.

Ben and Mark

On May 3, 2010, Ben gathered the whole class at the SMART board, where he used the document camera to project his comic story (figure 21).

Figure 21: Ben teaching using his comics story



“Some of you might remember a comics story that I showed you last day, where I had aliens landing on earth, and I tried to make the evil guys look like innocent creatures” (Transcript, May 3, 2010). He described his wife’s reaction to it, “You know how we say that your message has to be clear to another reader? Well, I gave my comic to my wife and she shook her head and said, ‘It’s way too complicated. I don’t get it’” (Transcript, May 3, 2010). Ben shared tips for simplifying and clarifying comics stories: make characters two distinct shapes and sizes; use distinctive features and colors for certain scenes. Also, “I turned to my good friend, ‘words’ because I like words and there is no reason to rely on drawing everything” (Transcript, May 3, 2010).

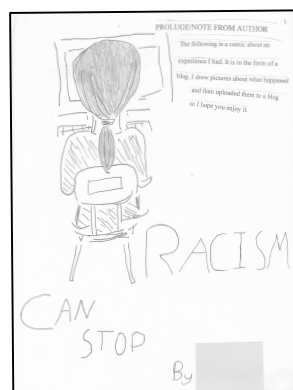
Several students commented on how much better his newest revision was, and Ben said, “Yes, and I’m glad to hear you say that, and you need to carry that same attitude towards revision today to make your comics better” (Transcript, May 3, 2010). Students returned to their desks and, Ben, Mark and I conducted

individual conferences. Near the end of class, Ben joined my conference with Maryanne and Mark listened in near the end of it.

Maryanne wanted to write a story about something that happened to her when she helped a new student acclimatize to their school at the start of the year, but she worried about how to tell that story without stirring bad feelings amongst classmates who might disagree with her version of events (f1, 2-4). Maryanne told me that Ben suggested making her characters into animals and to change the setting, but Maryanne felt that she couldn't empathize with her characters after she reformed them as animals, and she wasn't sure why it was difficult (f1, 7-9). Ben joined our conversation. I suggested that Irvine, another student, had a similar problem that he solved by making himself into a character that sat on the top of his panels to talk directly to readers about his characters that looked like aliens (f1, 18-19). Ben urged Irvine to join us, and Irvine said, "I had like two teams at school and they don't get along and you know how that happens in here, so I just changed the names to Jedi Con and Avatar" (f1, 21).

Maryanne asked Irvine, "So why do you have your character sitting on the panel like that?" (f1, 24). Irvine responded, "It's so I can talk directly to the audience and the kids [characters inside the comic] don't hear it. It's a way to keep the story focus and the kids can look like aliens [even though they were based on actual students in their class]" (f1, 25-26). When I asked Maryanne if thinking about Irvine's objective narrator gave her ideas, she wondered about writing her story as a blog (f1, 28). She made her story by actually typing blog entries and inserting them into her comics story, where she included hand-drawn pictures of herself (figure 22), and protected student identities using pseudonyms.

Figure 22: Maryanne's blog comics story cover



Ben and Mark's debriefing

As we looked at Maryanne's comic, Mark said, "It's interesting because she would never, never have tried something like that in regular writing, I don't think anyway" (Transcript, May 3, 2010). Ben elaborated, "That's the thing I wanted to say is that the biggest effect of comics writing is on students' willingness to try creative forms like a blog story. I mean, it's just brilliant, and I can see it on PAT, too" (Transcript, May 3, 2010). Mark suggested that students try to write their comics using just words to see whether they would translate, and I told Mark and Ben about my experience working in Carmen's room with Ivan and using *Amelia Rules* (Gownley, 2009) to help students to see how to use their comics to write stories. "I noticed that they used their comics stories as guides for what to write, so their written stories had many new ideas; they were not one-to-one translations" (Transcript, May 3, 2010). Ben was very enthused, "That's exactly it! I've been thinking that any one of these stories would get like 3s to 5s for content and the students will see it if they write it" (Transcript, May 3, 2010). Jayden, who happened to be inside for recess, looked up from her comics story and said, "It's like the only thing I can stand to do in here" (Transcript, May 3, 2010). We laughed and I asked her whether she thought it was a good idea to write a part of their story in words, and she said, "Of course it will work!" (Transcript, May 3, 2010). Ben asked her, "Do you think the PAT will be easier now or... the practice test with the picture prompt?" (Transcript, May 3, 2010). She said, "Well, ya, because I just sketch it out and then use the details to write it. That's how I made my plan in the first place" (Transcript, May 3, 2010).

During Mark's and Ben's final interviews, they each commented on the value of conferencing. Ben stated, "I learned a lot about what kinds of prompts open a student up or are like 'go-for-the-throat'...and I know, too, how to stay focused whereas before I wandered in too many directions" (Transcript, May 14, 2010). Ben also stated, "We got that kind of flow, like I still remember the look on Curtis' face when you pulled out that transcript from my conference with him and he didn't have his writing done, but we had talked about it" (Transcript, May 14, 2010). When I asked him why he thought that was important, Ben

commented, “Because he knew that we were really serious about his comic and *that* isn’t normal so, it’s like ‘I better focus now’ ...I think, too, that somehow there was like this thing that we all care a lot about their writing and that’s like we care about them” (Transcript, May 14, 2010). Ben laughed and added, “Do you know what else isn’t normal? It’s neat to hear them [the students] use words like ‘meta-fictive device’ ...they sound like little PhDs, but seriously, I’ve picked up language from them, you, Mark//” (Transcript, May 14, 2010).

Mark compared our way of working to a really good filing system, “You know how you have those stray files on your desktop when you’re busy. That’s kind of how it [the research] started and then we got in sync, right. The kids knew it, too” (Transcript, May 3, 2010). Mark went on about why conferences mattered, “I had to think a lot more because I realized that more was going on than I thought, right? So I had to rethink how to ask about content and organization because in a way it’s the same, but it’s different ” (Transcript, May 14, 2010). ***Getting ‘in sync’ with writing conferences.*** Ben, Mark and I were not shy about walking into and out of each other’s writing conferences with students, and we shared transcripts from each other’s conferences so that we understood what had been said to a certain student. The students, like Maryanne, came to know that we were aware of their prior conferences and they were expected to show us how they addressed what they had agreed to do with the last teacher. Such an intertextual way of working between students-teachers-outside researcher is what I think Marc described as getting ‘in sync’ with each other through our writing conferences.

From a sociocultural stance, I posit that we developed our “in sync’ ways of talking and thinking by developing solidarity (Edward-Groves et al., 2010; Kemmis, 2010b). Ben and Mark outlined that our use of humor and willingness to spontaneously support each other to plan, teach and reflect during and after lessons created a sense of flow or togetherness that was foundational to our success by the end of the project. Ben’s students’ interest in learning comics language was also connected to their close relationship with him, where he shared his hobbies with them (e.g., his sketchbooks filled with cartoons).

Mark, Ben and I developed solidarity with students by making explicit connections between students' upcoming writing exam and comics writing. Although we remained interested in developing students' creative stance as writers by giving them more control over writing topics, planning approaches and ways of composing their comics, we also uncovered ways to "translate" such writing control into test-based strategies near the end of the research. Ultimately, our focus was on students and what was in their best interests throughout the research, which is why our writing conferences were evidence of collective praxis.

Last Day

On Friday, May 21, 2010, students from Jackson and Parker Elementary got together for a final celebration in the Parker Elementary gym. I had organized groups of students to present their gift books for teachers at the celebration as well as a twenty minute video of their two-school journey as comics writers. Local artists came to meet with students in small groups of 8-10 students to give them writing feedback. After the celebration, we met as a whole group for our last away space meeting.

Away space meeting

We ate lunch together and then wrote metaphors for how we imagined ourselves as collaborative learners. We spent approximately one hour reflecting collaboratively in one whole group open discussion about each other's metaphors and images of collaborative professional learning through action research.

Metaphors for collaborative learning

Each of us read aloud our poem twice and others commented or asked questions following the readings. Carmen began our sharing:

*As a collaborator, I am a Palm Tree...
Leaves shadowing thoughts and branching out new ideas.
Roots that anchor my beliefs and values as an educator.
A trunk that grows and strengthens with my progress as an educator.
Coconuts that hold my ideas and passions that fall and are passed on to my
colleagues and students.
I accept and listen to others' ideas and together create an exciting new leaf.*

Samantha commented, “I think the part about the roots is really important because if we don’t know what grounds you and what you are then you can’t contribute to a group” (Transcript, May 21, 2010). I noted, “It’s powerful,” and Kate said, “I thought so, it was very poetic” (Transcript, May 21, 2010). Carmen questioned, “What makes it poetic?”, and Mark jumped in with a silly smile, “I don’t know. Can I see it?” (Transcript, May 21, 2010). Carmen looked surprised, “You want to see it?” (Transcript, May 21, 2010). She handed it to Mark and said, “It doesn’t sound poetic,” and I asked whether I could comment while he looked at it. Mark jumped back in, “Are you going to mark it?” and everyone laughed. I followed up:

No, no he’s not [shaking head at Mark who is laughing so hard he almost leaves the room]. I, I really liked how you said, ‘The coconuts were passions’ because I think passions can both lead us somewhere and sometimes they just fall and...and sometimes they ignite someone else (Transcript, May 21, 2010)

Samantha followed Carmen and shared her poem:

*As a collaborator...
I am a traffic light.
I recognize the need to get things moving, slow them down when necessary,
or bring them to a halt when they have lost direction.
I am willing to take control (and often do), but I am also an object of change.
I recognize that I am a small part of a larger process but that my role is
important.
I respond well to purpose, direction, order and process, and work to ensure their
presence.
I can lead or follow and have light to share.*

Mark began, “Hmm, I liked your introduction, right?” (f1, 1), and he continued, “How you can go and slow it down or bring it to a halt” (f1, 3). Kate agreed that partners need to be able to “switch gears” (f1, 6), but she underlined that, unlike Samantha, she found it very difficult to “be willing to take control” (f1, 11). When I asked Samantha whether there was a part of the poem that made her think about her learning in our research, she said, “The beginning part really...there were

times, where I needed to, because of other things, like slow down or stop things or get things moving...you have to just kind of work with your pacing and your priorities” (Transcript, May 21, 2010). Ben responded, “I really liked having ideas that// struggling to cope with stuff” (f1,18).

Ben read his poem:

*As a collaborator, I am like
a tree
Absorbing ideas like a tree pulls in water
Creating an umbrella to shelter students and colleagues alike, like a tree’s canopy
of leaves shelters people around it
Bending to others’ ideas like A TREE BENDS BUT DOES NOT BREAK IN THE
WIND.
Sending out ideas and creations like a tree gives of itself and has things built from
it.*

Samantha commented that she liked the “bending without breaking” and that she found the image of the umbrella to resonate for her because she saw the umbrella as “power because sometimes we put responsibility on ourselves to be like the protection of all people we are around...” (f2, 5-7). When I asked Ben if there was a part of the research that connected with any of his images, he talked about “absorbing ideas,” “sheltering, protecting and guiding his students,” and “bending when you take ideas,” and “not breaking” (f2, 12-19).

Mark followed Ben and read aloud his poem:

*As a collaborator, I am a tree.
At times I can stand firm in my beliefs and practices but am also able to
use my branches to support and encourage others.
I am flexible and sway easily in the breeze.
I can listen and be reflective.
When the time comes, I can shed my leaves.
I am always yearning for a new set of leaves to bring new ideas and
continued growth.
As a collaborator, I am like a tree: I grow, I support, I change over time.*

Ben jokingly whispered, “Why are you trying to show me up?” (f3, 1). Carmen liked the imagery of swaying, and Samantha noted that the cyclical image of learning was interesting (f3, 2-3). Kate focused on the “yearning” for new leaves or ideas” (f3, 4). Samantha, again, centered on images of power:

And branches of support is a power image, too, right, because sometimes that happens when you collaborate, right? Sometimes it is not always an equal partnership, like in this, it has been, but like there—I am sure we have all had experiences where you are the branch that holds it together and then everybody else is kind of swaying more than they should (f3, 6-10).

Ben followed Samantha by saying that Mark had been very supportive and that he felt that support every day (f3, 11-12). I twisted the serious mood with my sarcasm, “[smiles and looks at Mark] I have a question. Is there a reason you copied Ben?” (f3, 13). Mark returned my joke with his own, “I could do my dissertation paper about teacher groups and stuff” (f3, 16), and eventually we ended with Mark sharing the parts of his metaphor that connected to his experience with research. He stated that he spent much of the research rethinking his usual ways of collaborating (f3, 21-26). As Mark continued, he raised a question:

Yes, we have worked together but we have also been able to take it back and do our own thing, right? Ben and I, we had planned together, we have also had to split up classes where I did my own planning...accepting new ways to do things, right? (f3, 22-25).

Kate ended our metaphor session. Before she began her poem, she said that she regretted not having a “prettier” or more “poetic” image and stated that the idea of a spring came to her right away:

*As a collaborator, I am a coiled spring.....
flexible with my ideas, especially when engaged with others.
Like a spring, I can be tense if I'm not confident with a task but
over time I loosen up and relax. Like the swirls on a coil, my head often
seems to spin with ideas when I collaborate and I don't always know
which ideas to keep.
Like a spring, holding things together, I sometimes cling to others for support and
hope that I can offer it to others.*

Samantha liked the part about tension (f4, 5), and Kate elaborated on her own image moving from a very “blah-blah, blah” rhetoric of collaboration to a more complex image, where tension played a key role. “So now I see it as...it’s bouncy

like a spring, you get all these ideas, but it can also be tense, like hard to work with” (f4, 8-14). Kate wondered whether there was a way to put the tree and slinky together, and Mark talked about Kate’s image as a kind of “loosening up over time” (f4, 14). As he searched for a word, I said, “Like a slinky” (f4, 16), and Kate asked me whether I had ever played with a slinky (f4, 20), and when I asked whether other people had played with slinkies, Samantha said, “These questions are private, Rhonda” [everyone laughed] (f4, 19). Kate said that she had thought of using the slinky but abandoned it because it was “even less poetic” than a plain spring (f4, 21). I ended by saying that a spring is a strong image because of its connection to mobility and simple everyday objects like pens (f4, 22-23).

Samantha agreed that springs hold things together (f4, 24).

Facing the tension of working the dialectic. Lakoff and Johnson (2003) indicated that metaphors hide as much as they highlight about an experience. In the metaphors above, some of them highlight the positive side of collaboration and are silent about the tensions, while others attended to both. Because the process of creating the metaphors was done on our last day in the away space as collaborative action researchers, our interactions around each other’s poems illuminated as much as the poems did about how we constructed and were constructed by this social space.

Carmen’s metaphor represented her experience of collaborative learning through action research as a positive growth trajectory, where she grew and shared the fruits of her growth with others. While such a transformative image is part of Carmen’s experience of collaborative action research, she also endured emotional and relational tensions outlined earlier in this thesis, and the readerly ideology at work to stir up such tensions was evident in the group’s interactions when Carmen read her poem aloud. Following her reading Kate complimented her for being “poetic,” and Carmen stepped back to take a “spectator’s view” (Britton, 1970) of her written artifact and didn’t see it as poetic. Although there wasn’t a lot of relational tension between Kate and Carmen, Mark rekeyed the situation when he requested to see Carmen’s writing and jokingly turned my request to comment on Carmen’s poem into an assessment, “Are you going to

mark it?” I posit that Mark’s actions and words were funny because of the double-sidedness of our experiences of collaborative action research in a readerly context.

In a readerly professional learning culture, where individuals protect what they know and what they don’t know to avoid comparison and judgment, when I asked teachers to write a metaphor for who they were as collaborators, I was asking them to step into a writerly stance, where they openly wrote and talked about their real thoughts and feelings. However, at the same time, they also knew that I was transcribing my audiorecording of our interactions, which I intended to interpret and write about in this thesis and that I had asked for copies of their writing. Therefore, it is likely that Carmen’s growth image represented what she wanted the group and others who read this thesis to know about her experiences as a collaborative action researcher. Mark’s rekeying of our situation surfaced the double-sided ethical commitments at work in this timespace, which was a readerly-writerly ethics. Hence, as Lakoff and Johnson (2003) stated, metaphors highlight and hide aspects of lived experiences. If Carmen wrote a growth metaphor to show only the positive side of collaboration, then I would consider her move to be a tactical (de Certeau, 1984) way of working against the readerly ethics at work in the research.

Samantha’s metaphor, a traffic light, is an image that provided her with a way to talk about her need to be “tactical” (de Certeau, 1984) while working the readerly-writerly dialectic. Samantha chose when to slow down, halt or move things forward as a participant in collaborative action research because of her priorities and other demands on her time. Later in the discussion, when I asked Samantha why she took on the research when she had other heavy commitments (i.e., AISI Inquiry project, Technology Committee), she explained her perspective on PD: “Okay, I took on the tech committee because I can handle myself well with technology, but I am ...by no means an expert. So that’s a good opportunity to say, ‘Okay, well, some tech PDs are going to come up, and I may be selected to go” (Transcript, May 21, 2010). She went on, “I take these things on because it’s easy to sit back and say, ‘Oh God, technology and be intimidated and not grow;

whereas, if you throw yourself into it, you're forced to learn it" (Transcript, May 21, 2010). Samantha reiterated that she joined the research for the same reason, because "How do I get L.A. PD, right? because the sessions offered once a month aren't going to do it, so I took this on and I know that it was an overload, but it's the only way to get PD" (Transcript, May 21, 2010). When I asked her in what ways it became an overload, she said, "It's the requirements to collaborate, to prepare to share out that adds the work, but that's why I push it back, too, like I don't always do what I'm told or I question it" (Transcript, May 21, 2010).

In other words, Samantha wanted to learn in writerly ways, where she could work with others who were interested in challenging themselves, but she was also aware that the price tag was the readerly work at the school level (e.g., sharing with staff), and she resisted when it became "too much." Such resistance was tactical and a means of working against administrators who asked for too many staff PDs, staff who didn't participate in the PD that she prepared or, in my case, me as an outside researcher, when she felt that she wanted to make the research co-participative rather than "jointly participative" (Gutiérrez et al., 1995).

Ben was the last person to comment on Samantha's poem by pointing out that collaborating by "struggling to cope with stuff" was an image that caught his attention. In Ben's own poem, he capitalized that as a collaborator, he was a "TREE [WHO] BENDS BUT DOES NOT BREAK IN THE WIND." Samantha voiced the image of sociopolitical dynamics that she saw as central to Ben's image of collaborative professional learning, where the learner has to "put responsibility on themselves to be like the protector of all people around." I posit that Ben's image is all about negotiating power relationships because he capitalized the part of his image that revealed that his growth was about his capacity to adapt to and resist unavoidable pressures in his context (i.e., wind).

Because Ben had substantial social pressure to participate in research, it seemed that administrators (including his grade level partner) and me, as an outside researcher, were the "wind" in his experience of collaborative action research. He participated in the research by constantly searching for a "flow," almost an intuitive way of working with others who were unavoidably in his

context but who were not part of him or his growth as a tree (i.e., he sees himself as “sending out ideas” and that “things” are “built from it”). Although I know that Ben indicated that he grew to enjoy working with Mark and me, it was clear that his image of seeing himself as separate from us and working with what came at him or what he was asked to give/send out corresponds to what actually happened in the research.

At the start of the study, I underscored that my high level of responsibility when working with Ben constantly surprised me (i.e., I was expected to have lesson plans in my head, be ready to teach on a moment’s notice, to take over classroom discipline). As the research progressed, Ben admitted that he struggled to keep track of artifacts and lesson ideas from whole day meetings and to create his own vision for lessons. Although he did not take me up on my offer to organize weekly planning time, he jokingly stated on many occasions that he had a “fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants” style.

I posit that his metaphor of seeing himself as a tree that did not have another choice but to deal with the wind that came at him is likely a large part of the reason that he did not take control of collaborative action research (planning, teaching, reflecting). I am not suggesting that Ben wasn’t a willing participant when asked to be good-natured about rolling with ideas as they came at him, but I am stating that he did not see himself as the seed of vision-setting for what was supposed to be *his* action research. My claim that he had limited ownership reverts back to social pressure or wind that suddenly appeared one day in January to ask him to take part in research that was enthusiastically taken up by his administrators and students and, eventually, the school’s parent council. With such powerful social momentum, it is not unreasonable for Ben to feel as though he was a tree who grew despite such strong social forces.

Mark used the tree image to paint a picture of himself as someone who “yearns” for new leaves and seeks to grow through change. My rekeying of Mark’s metaphor happened because I had developed a close working relationship with Mark and knew how challenging the growth had been for him. Mark quickly repositioned himself into the researcher’s shoes by claiming that he could write a

dissertation about teacher groups because he, too, knew that I hadn't found working as a researcher easy. Such humor pointed at the readerly truth underneath his experience with "shedding" his leaves throughout the study and my experience of having to push people through certain aspects of collaborative research. Mark began as a peripheral member who eventually increased his participation at a mid-point (just after Spring Break) when I suggested that it might be too much (i.e., I had gone to Ben and Mark and reminded them of their right to opt out). These conversations resulted in Mark investing consistently more time in Ben's classroom and taking a more active role in setting vision for comics writing and lesson-sharing and lesson-splitting with Ben.

Samantha highlighted the power image in Mark's metaphor as one where "branches of support" can mean that a tree holds others up. Immediately following Samantha's comment, Ben highlighted that Mark had supported him in a significant way throughout the study. Mark remained confused about collaboration and whether it meant that people could self-organize by using the same vision and dividing up tasks. Although he did not resolve his puzzling during his reflecting at this meeting, he searched for a way to articulate what collaboration looks like in readerly world, where individuals agree to take part in something without really having a choice. As I stated earlier, although I wasn't completely clear about it at the time of the research, I argue that in a hierarchical school and school district, where Ben hoped to advance in leadership, he had considerable social, political pressure to take part regardless of his personal and professional interest in learning through collaborative action research.

Kate transformed her image of herself as a collaborator from the usual "blah-blah-blah" of the overly positive rhetoric of collaboration to one that was a more balanced view of the affordances and constraints of collaboration by using a tension-filled spring. Kate defined tension as multidimensional, where she saw herself as being "flexible" with ideas and energized by group situations where ideas were swirling around, but she also recognized that such a social, intellectual momentum pressured her to retract into a repressed emotional coil. She felt that time was what helped her to "loosen up" when she felt too tense and that such a

“letting go” felt, at times, carnivalesque, where so much was swirling socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically that she could lose sight without the support of others to slow down and see where she was going.

Kate had a way, even in this sharing of her metaphor, to engage in the readerly-writerly experience of taking part in collaborative action research. Just as she started the sharing by worrying about whether her metaphor was pretty or poetic enough, Kate worried throughout the research about the image that others and I composed of her as a teacher and professional learner. Such a readerly stance is what made her tense at times, but, like her metaphor, she could let go of the tension and take on a writerly stance, where she was “jointly participative” (Gutiérrez et al., 1995) and worked against the dialectic of readerly stances. Thus, Kate changed her view of collaboration and her understanding of herself as a collaborator by facing the relational, emotional tensions inherent in such readerly-writerly work by engaging in the shifting between such conflicting ideologies.

To conclude, each teacher raised the readerly-writerly tensions inherent in collaborative action research from their individual stances. Kate openly worried about her poem being “pretty” and “poetic,” and Mark poked fun at the relational tension between Carmen and Kate that surfaced when Kate described Carmen’s writing as “poetic.” Carmen said very little throughout the discussion, and Samantha said very little about her poem, but she highlighted the connection between collaborative professional learning as inextricably connected to sociopolitical dynamics of hierarchical power relationships and tactics used to deal with unequal workloads, freeloading, and administrative pressure to work too much. Ben capitalized on feelings of bending and not breaking under the pressure of heavily endorsed collaborative relationships. Finally, Mark and I used humor to overturn the seriousness of moments or the rhetoric that was overly focused on the comfortable aspects of collaboration that disguised the tensions underneath it.

Final thoughts about inquiry

When I engaged in final interviews with each teacher participant, I asked them to bring any information to our interview that would help them to discuss their inquiry students. I also asked the teachers what helped them or not to inquire into students' learning and what they learned about themselves by trying to shape an inquiry. In this section, I review and interpret their responses.

Ben

“You know that it was difficult for me to keep track of student work so it was really good when Mark developed the color-coded file folder system because then I could find their work, and we could get writing conferences flowing” (Transcript, May 14, 2010). Ben went on, “I didn't really keep track of marks and I couldn't find my sheet because it's just how the classroom is. They lose things and we move on to the next thing, so I think this was good for me in that way because, honestly, it's a strength of Mark and, well, you, too” (Transcript, May 14, 2010). I asked him what helped him to inquire into students' learning, and Ben said, “It was definitely the writing conferences because just watching how Mark does a conference and how you do it and then standing there with you and students and sorting through their questions was amazing” (Transcript, May 14, 2010). Ben stated, “My inquiry was really about myself because I couldn't keep focused on certain students. I think my inquiry was about how to help students by learning how to listen to them and what to write down and that sort of thing” (Transcript, May 14, 2010). I asked Ben, “So if you had to say what your inquiry was, could you frame it in some way?” (Transcript, May 14, 2010). “Yes, it's, um, ‘How do I focus more on conferences?... what a student needs like when we learned about that strategy that didn't work then//how come?’ ” (Transcript, May 14, 2010).

Mark

“Okay, here's where it's bad, right, because I'm quickly interviewing my inquiry students and they haven't really changed very much in terms of their

ability to revise, to keep a focus” (Transcript, May 14, 2010). I asked Mark whether he felt that he had a genuine inquiry or not, and he admitted,

I guess I didn't because I was too caught up in how to keep students organized...and to keep working at my conferencing. I think I learned the most about what it means to look at students' responses and my responses and to think that “Hmm, maybe I haven't always really listened to them, right?” I mean it sounds so simple or, well, embarrassing, right, but I learned a lot when we talked about Aiden's transcript. It's not so much whether this kid improved like this much, right. It was that question of ‘How can I ask this student a question to get at what they mean?’ was my inquiry.

Mark went on, “My real inquiry... was about collaboration, too, right? because I've always considered myself to be a good collaborator but you made me stop and really think about who I am, like who others are as collaborators and it really helped me a lot to think about those questions” (Transcript, May 14, 2010).

Samantha

“I think I learned that students can plan out their story ideas like a movie, like it was natural and I kept asking myself, ‘What would happen if I started with this next year [instead of print-based writing]?’” When I asked her whether she maintained a focus on her inquiry students or class' self-efficacy, she said, “Well, my high ones stayed high and my low ones stayed low, but, honestly, it's just hard with 28 ” (Transcript, May 14, 2010). Samantha described how she got students to complete a final survey, “I think it surprised me how much they changed their responses to whether or not they liked to write because they see drawing as writing and I think that was the biggest insight for them and me, too” (Transcript, May 14, 2010). Samantha added, “I think it was good to take on comics writing but it was hard, too, because it was way out of my comfort zone” (Transcript, May 14, 2010).

I asked her why she didn't consider changing the focus, “Oh, no, well I had already mentioned it to them and they were excited so you can't back out

after that or it would be like letting them down” (Transcript, May 14, 2010). When I asked Samantha whether or not she felt she had shaped a question of genuine concern, she said, “I struggled with that because I started, but then I just kind of stopped trying to do that and just wanted to get through the learning part because I was busy with my student teacher, and...you know” (Transcript, May 14, 2010). Samantha finished, “I’m glad that I tried to shape an inquiry...because I know what you mean, like to focus on students and ask, ‘What could we do to make their situation better?’ and that helped me. Plus I had you, too, another adult to work with 28 children...I think, too, I wasn’t expecting to do this for so long because that isn’t normal for me to do one project for so long” (Transcript, May 14, 2010). Samantha shared some insights about her case study students, but she stated, “Honestly, I had more insights about myself and how I ask questions when we looked at transcripts but maybe it’s just that I was more caught up with my learning because this was new, too” (Transcript, May 14, 2010).

Kate

“My inquiry students were what kept me looking at my notes [holds up typed and written notes] because each one of them improved and you saw it, too. Ben, Michael, and Samuel had turned their characters from Star Wars figures into their own characters from our writing conferences and from [the artist’s] tips, and they got past ‘This happened, then that happened’ kind of thing.”(Transcript, May 14, 2010). Kate held up before and after stories for each of the three boys and for her Autistic child, she said, “Look at how you can actually read this comics story and it makes sense. That is amazing. His T.A. said that his IPP has changed so much that we have to maybe put a sample in it from this” (Transcript, May 14, 2010). Kate described how each of the boys who had worried her before because they had turned off of writing were creating their own characters that worked for their picture prompt analysis for practice tests,

The biggest thing was that day when you asked me to video tape students and get them talking about what made them better writers. Do you know what? It’s interesting because each of them had developed characters that

they could imagine in the picture as like one scene in their comics story (Transcript, May 14, 2010).

When I asked Kate what made her inquiry focus on these students work for her, she shared a surprising insight,

It was so hard because at first comics writing made me worry about drawing and then teaching with Carmen, even though I loved that, made me worry about what she thought and then you are like this guru so//it took me a long time to focus on students (Transcript May 14, 2010).

Kate described the comics focus as a good thing in the end, but she wondered whether it is a better idea to avoid one project, “I think I’ve said this already, but I felt like I didn’t want to do something different from the group because I didn’t know what that would be. Plus, who wants to be different and have no one to plan with, to work with?” (Transcript, May 14, 2010). Just before we ended the interview, Kate asked if she could say one more thing about inquiry:

You know what, it was easier when you were honest with me that day. Remember? When I saw how you were frustrated that we treated you like our, well, our teacher, even though I still see you as my teacher [laughs]...and just working more with you alone, too. It was good to know that you were feeling frustrated like me (Transcript, May 14, 2010).

Carmen

“I think my inquiry kids kept me focused for awhile and it helped me to learn how to think about what to take down, like notes in my journal and when I showed you my panel-by-panel feedback that came from working with especially some students” (Transcript, May 14, 2010). Carmen admitted that she lost interest in focusing on certain students because multiple students turned out to do unexpected things: “I would say that my biggest surprise was how they cared so much about translating their comics writing into their PAT writing because that was my worry but several of them took it on” (Transcript, May 14, 2010). She described her inquiry as emerging at the end of the study, “My inquiry was about how to make this translate and they listened in on our conversations// I found out

that I was mostly interested in just learning what to look for to see growth” (Transcript, May 14, 2010).

When I asked Carmen if she could tell me what helped her to uncover her inquiry, she said, “I was too preoccupied before just worrying about what I was doing and what you were thinking so it was hard to focus on students, too, and emotions got in the way” (Transcript, May 14, 2010). When I asked Carmen what helped her to work through the emotional tension, she said, “Well, I’m not sure that I did until just near the end because I could see their writing improving and I forgot about my, like, myself, you know what I mean?” (Transcript, May 14, 2010). Carmen concluded, “I’m glad that I did it, but my inquiry was really more about me and how to collaborate and it was way more about that than it was about students so, it was like two things” (Transcript, May 14, 2010).

Inquiring as identity work. The teachers inquired into their pedagogies and identities as writing teachers and collaborators while also attending to and reflecting on student learning. Although I had thought that focusing on student learning would help us to uncover inquiries about students, Mark clarified that he was really asking, “Who am I as a collaborator?” Kate acknowledged that she was overly focused on what her colleagues thought of her to refocus on students. Ben underscored his need to develop organizational skills in order to keep students’ work in order so that we could conference with them because a writer’s workshop approach is dependent on strong classroom management skills. Samantha found that the large number of students made it more difficult for her to focus on particular students, but she also thought that she kept, like Carmen stated, a dual focus on her own responses to students in transcripts and her own learning as a comics writing teacher.

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993, 2009), Kemmis (2006) and Kemmis and Smith (2008a, 2008b) argued for shifting stances towards students and their learning to engage in praxis. Because teachers worked from a readerly ethic, it was challenging for them to refocus on students while also keeping the whole class, classroom management and their own teaching in view. That said, each teacher felt that it was necessary to develop ways to collect and analyze student

information to develop inquiry questions. Our persistence with student data collection and analysis eventually supported each teacher to develop more student-centered teaching approaches.

In Carmen's case, she developed another inquiry from comparing the assessing of comics drafts that she did at the away space with her own marking of students' practice exams. She highlighted how such an inquiry question motivated students to care about classroom lessons, having writing conferences with her and me, and to help each other out during writing conferences instead of fooling around. I contend that although Carmen's question appeared to be a technically oriented inquiry, it was rooted in her care and concern for students because she knew that students and their parents felt a lot of pressure to achieve certain levels of performance to get into particular junior programs. Kate, too, found that when we talked about student planning in front of students, that everyone really focused on helping each other out and using or changing their plans as they drafted their comics stories. Thus, I posited that flattening the adult-student and teacher-researcher hierarchy happened when teachers were open about their genuine questions, which pushed everyone to look more closely at students' learning. Samantha described it as developing ways to be like paparazzi of student learning, where students feel that their voices matter as much, if not more, than adults' voices in the classroom. Edwards-Groves et al. (2010) theorized that the sociopolitical or relational practice architecture matters most when moving from top-down hierarchical stances to equitable orientations that promote solidarity. The teachers' and my experiences confirm their claim: we required time to develop ways of collecting and reflecting on student data and to develop honest ways of relating with each other to work through emotional, relational tensions rooted in ethical ones that got in the way of praxis.

In the next chapter, I synthesize findings and implications from chapters five-seven, and I conclude with final reflections about my experiences of collaborative action research with teachers who were new to it.

Chapter 8: Writing in Liminal Spaces



“Wake up, Alice dear!” said her sister. “Why, what a long sleep you’ve had!”

“Oh, I’ve had such a curious dream!” said Alice. And she told her sister, as well as she could remember them, all these strange adventures of hers that you have just been reading about; and, when she had finished, her sister kissed her, and said, “It *was* a curious dream, dear, certainly; but now run in to your tea: it’s getting late.” So Alice got up and ran off, thinking while she ran, as well she might, what a wonderful dream it had been (Carroll, 2006, p.148).

Waking up and looking back

At the end of *Alice in Wonderland*, Alice slipped from her imagined to her real timespace by recognizing that the playing cards were no longer creatures in an underground world. Hence, artifacts that once confused Alice now made sense again because she “worked the dialectic” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) between her real and imagined worlds, and inexperienced and mature selves. Over five months, the teachers and I went through dynamic transformations of our professional practices and identities within and across our communities of practice as we engaged in collaborative action research. In this chapter, I report on findings and implications of such transformations to answer my research questions: How is professional learning experienced by teachers participating in collaborative action research?, and What is the role of tension in critical, collaborative inquiry communities?, and I conclude with my final reflections about my experiences participating in collaborative action research.

Underwriting, overwriting and cowriting identities

Our practices and identities changed and stabilized depending on how we shaped and were shaped by social spaces (Leander, 1999) within and across school and away space settings. I refer to such identity transformations as underwriting, overwriting and cowriting identities. By *underwriting*, I mean teacher participants' or my "counterscripts" (Gutiérrez et al., 1995) developed through our non-participation in collaborative action research activities that took various clandestine forms (e.g., silence, journal writing, teaching before I arrive or down the hall, not planning for class, losing lesson artifacts, etc.). By *overwriting*, I refer to participants' and my practices that were overtly aimed to reposition individuals into a particular ethical orientation (e.g., I request that teachers plan with me if they expect to co-teach). Finally, by *cowriting*, I refer to those moments when participants and I genuinely listened to each other and cultivated "Thirdspaces" (Soja, 1996), where diverse perspectives were heard, contemplated and created new visions of teaching writing and learning through critical, collaborative inquiry-based learning.

Even though I see planning, teaching, observing and reflecting as interconnected and iterative collaborative action research processes, I talk about them separately in the next section to highlight how such processes were experienced by teacher participants in certain social spaces. I also speak to participants' experiences of recruitment, which were central, in my view, to how our collaborative action research journey unfolded within and across settings.

Participant recruitment experiences

What were the teachers' experiences of the recruitment phase of collaborative action research? What was the role of tension in the recruitment phase of collaborative action research? In this section, I report on one finding:

- While teacher participants stated that they participated voluntarily, they experienced social pressure and/or enticements to take part in research, which created ethical tensions for them and me.

As described in chapters one and five, principals and assistant principals were well-intentioned, but they enthusiastically supported my invitation to participate in research and used administrative “strategies” (de Certeau, 1984) with prospective teacher participants to entice them to take part and to continue with research (i.e., by telling them it would enhance their leadership opportunities; by underlining the importance of taking part to make the school look good to parents, administrators, etc.). Because I had been a consultant in the school district, it’s possible that principals couldn’t see me as a researcher who aimed to work *with* teachers, where teachers, not me as an outside expert, drove the learning agenda. It is also likely that because our school district had hired academics (Michael Fullan, Anne Davies, Barry Bennett, Carol Rolhesier, Rick Dufour, Rick Stiggins, Richard Allington, etc.) to do large-scale, top-down professional learning that was tightly mapped out that they saw consultants and researchers as being similar readerly professional developers. In other words, the principals and assistant principals may have a view that any professional learning invitation requires their strategic (de Certeau, 1984) support to gently push teachers to take part in a plan that will move teaching and learning forward.

It seems that most teacher participants felt this push. Ben compared his collaborative experience to being like a tree “who did not break, but who learned how to bend.” Ben also highlighted that he took part because he wanted to learn and that it would be good for his leadership aspirations. Mark didn’t say that he participated to get support for his leadership application, but I was a reference for him. Also, Mark knew that he had excitedly supported Ben to be a participant so he could not easily back away once I asked him to be Ben’s “buddy.” Hence, Ben and Mark experienced social pressure to agree to take part in research.

Samantha did not seem to take part initially because of social pressure, but she continued because of it. She chose not to opt out of the research later even though she was very short of time because she felt that participating without going to debriefings and away space meetings would threaten the quality of comics writing in her classroom and jeopardize her students’ experience of it, so, on one level, she felt the social pressure of not letting her students (and parents) down.

Samantha acknowledged that she benefitted from taking part in extra PD because she kept up with new learning that she would otherwise miss out, and, in a readerly system, her participation translated into social power. Hence, she had access to knowledge that others didn't have and was called on to offer updates and highlights in front of peers at staff meetings. Therefore, to opt out of the research would have meant letting go of social capital (Bourdieu, 1977).

Carmen, too, did not agree to take part in research because of social pressure; however, I think she continued because of self-imposed pressure to maintain a reputation of sticking to her commitments. She emphasized that she had "committed" to the research, so she would stick with it even though she was challenged to plan and prepare given other constraints (i.e., her participation was a duty to be fulfilled). Contrarily, Kate was well positioned to take part in research because she had reduced her staff commitments for that year and had planned to be off the following year. She repeatedly stated that she chose to take part in research to push herself and to help a select group of boys in her class to become reenergized about narrative writing, so she had genuine personal, professional reasons to take part in research. Thus, it seemed that although Samantha and Carmen did not feel pressured into research, they proceeded with it to meet social obligations.

The purpose of the information day was for participants to learn about what was involved in participating in collaborative action research that was writerly work, but it was more about hammering out the details of an "inquiry project." For example, Ben later described that he came to the sessions ready to sway the group to take on comics writing. The group quickly ran with Ben's idea because Ben presented convincing evidence that reinforced a comics writing direction (i.e., teachers were impressed by the quality of his students' work). Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) and Kemmis and McTaggart (2005) contend that a "critical" inquiry stance is about teachers focusing on developing ways to shape inquiries to make students' lives better, not about focusing on developing "inquiry projects" aimed at exploring and perfecting teaching approaches. Regardless of my writerly purpose that day, it was quickly reshaped into a readerly technical

inquiry project. In many ways, as Kate had indicated, we eventually did take inquiry stances towards students and each other because comics writing was so new for everyone. However, the information day was not a place to contemplate what the research invitation meant even though I had constructed it with that intent; instead, teachers came to the day assuming that they were participating and they wanted to get down to the business of what we were going to focus on and how we would organize our time.

Given that most teacher participants felt social pressure and/or enticements to take part in the research, I realize now that phoning principals, holding brief meetings with teachers prior to the information day and one information day was not sufficient to ensure that teacher participants experienced recruitment as an invitation, not an obligation to take part in collaborative action research. Because teacher participants are immersed in a readerly world with no previous background in a writerly one, they found it impossible to identify with my activities, examples and descriptions of what it would be like to learn together as collaborative action researchers without taking part in it. Also, because teacher participants stayed in the research out of a sense of social obligation, the stated right to opt out without repercussions was insufficient to ensure that they genuinely felt that they could exercise this right. That said, they did have the right to opt out without repercussions so I am not claiming that their participation was unethical, only that there were ethical tensions that made it challenging for teachers to exercise their rights.

Collaborative planning experiences

What were the teachers' experiences of planning through collaborative action research? What were the tensions involved in planning through collaborative action research? In this section, I report on one finding about collaborative planning:

- All teacher participants found it difficult to collaboratively plan using comics texts because they had to move away from readerly towards

writerly practices and identities, which involved working through emotional, relational, ethical and material/economic tensions.

Collaborative planning happened throughout the research in various forms: one 90 minute session at a ski hill with Parker Elementary; an after-school material preparation session with Ben at Jackson Elementary; last minute morning prep sessions at both schools; partner and threesome reading and co-constructing of lessons in the away space; teachers planning with each other at school and at home (i.e., through phone calls, emails). Mark was the only teacher participant who planned consistently with me by phone and email. I was the only one who consistently used the blog as a location for sharing planning ideas and materials, so it became a repository, not a collaborative dialogue about planning with comics texts.

From a material/economic stance, I noted throughout chapters six and seven that it was possible to arrange for weekly job-embedded planning time, but I asked teachers to let me know if they wanted me to negotiate that time with principals and no one took me up on my invitations or pursued it themselves. It may be that it was difficult to involve me because time is always scarce and participants had a lot to do during weekly PD and/or prep time. However, as Kate had explained, “You could have asked me a thousand times to plan with you, and I wouldn’t have because I worried about what you would think of me” (Research journal, April 7, 2010). Hence, there were sociopolitical reasons for not taking me up on my offer. In addition to feeling intimidated to plan with me, it may have been hard to take me up on my offer because other staff would have construed extra job-embedded time for teacher participants as “preferential” treatment by the principal that would have been resented (i.e., a social price tag for taking part in research). Therefore, the sociopolitical and material/economic tensions getting in the way of teachers initiating collaborative planning with me made it difficult for us to work together once the research got rolling.

In addition to the tensions discussed, there may have also been confusions amongst teachers about what I would “really” do as a collaborative action researcher working alongside them to coplan comics lessons. As I described in

chapter five, teachers' experiences of district- and school-level staff development about teaching writing were rooted in readerly ideologies. Professional developers, of whom I was one, delivered writing staff development in mostly top-down ways, where we told principals at principal meetings and teachers at mandated in-services to invest in particular professional resources and approaches and to purchase specific student materials to support such pedagogical orientations. Thus, given my previous consultant role in the school district, teacher participants, especially Mark, Ben and Samantha, who knew me in that role, saw me as the leader of district-level writing staff development that had influenced their teaching approaches and resource collections. Hence, I was part of the readerly professional development hierarchy that I attempted to overturn through my writerly collaborative action research with them.

Not only was my previous role problematic, the resources we used to coplan comics lessons contrasted with usual professional development resources used to plan and teach writing. When we planned using Scott McCloud's *Making Comics* (2006), most teachers' responses to it were tension-filled. Although we explored other texts, such resources resembled worksheet-like activity booklets (i.e., *The Comic Book Project* (Bitz, 2004) photocopiable student materials) or scholarly articles that did not provide in-depth descriptions of methods of teaching comics writing. Therefore, we stayed with McCloud's texts, the one cited above, and *Understanding Comics* (1993), and I brought Will Eisner's books (e.g., 2008, Eisner) to whole group meetings. Such comics texts were different from usual professional development resources because they were not written specifically for teachers. McCloud wrote his book by making himself a highly interactive narrator who spoke directly to his readers and asked them to explore comics storytelling strategies that he discussed theoretically and practically. Thus, the reader was positioned to be a comics writer who has to do the writerly work of envisioning how to relate such strategies to elementary students and curriculum. Most teacher participants' professional development texts, as described in chapter five, were written specifically for elementary teachers (even for particular grade levels), which were prescriptive and therefore left little room for teachers to do writerly

work. Thus, participants went from selecting and revising artifacts of teaching narrative writing as a familiar planning practice to creating them from “scratch” as Samantha had described it.

The material/economic, sociopolitical tensions around collaborative planning with comics texts were interconnected with emotional and ethical tensions. When Carmen, Kate, Samantha and I planned at the ski hill, Kate and Samantha treated the difference between readerly and writerly professional texts as problematic. Kate looked at my sketches and her written notes and absence of sketches as an indicator that she hadn’t prepared properly and that she wasn’t a good enough artist to teach comics writing. Samantha stated that she had looked at the book and predicted that she didn’t have enough time to invest in planning with it. Carmen remained silent, but indicated that she found it easy to work with McCloud’s text. I posited earlier that Kate and Samantha worked from a readerly stance, where privatization, competition and efficient product-oriented values and beliefs about teaching and learning heightened their fear of failure when looking at McCloud’s artifacts, which did not follow the highly prescriptive approach to teaching comics writing that was commonplace in their familiar professional learning texts. While Kate admitted that she looked at the step-by-step format in *The Comic Book Project* (Bitz, 2004) notes, she also stated that they seemed too narrow and the teaching steps and theory of comics writing was missing. Kate and Samantha’s fear of not knowing how to prepare or being able to do it well enough in manageable timeframes was further exacerbated by my planning practices as a writerly reader of McCloud’s text, which cast me as an “outside researcher,” not the readerly consultant I once was, in especially Samantha’s eyes.

Such an open learning structure and unfamiliar comics texts stirred feelings of anxiety for some teachers more than others. Because differences between our planning approaches were viewed as disadvantageous according to the readerly chronotope, which was the transcendent script (Gutiérrez et al., 1995) at Parker Elementary, I found that emotional tensions for some participants became relational tensions for all of us. As Carmen, Kate and Samantha proceeded to work together from a privatized, competitive stance, there were

times when Kate and Carmen retreated to their journals or to the background of group conversations (i.e., silence) as counterscripts (Gutiérrez et al., 1995). Such introspective retreats are forms of *underwriting* Samantha's readerly script and my writerly script that sometimes competed with each other. Such competing scripts were associated with the individuals who held tightly to them, so competing scripts were really power struggles between Samantha and me. Hence, even though Carmen seemed to come from a writerly orientation towards planning on her own with McCloud's text, once our subgroup planned together, the dominant readerly ethical orientation seemed to reposition Carmen to take a clandestine way of working alongside Kate.

Such relational tensions sometimes reified into moments of identity overwriting, where one participant would not let go of a particular stance. Such moments had the potential to constrain praxis. For example, when I tried to get Samantha to listen to my stories of overcoming fear of negative evaluations of my writing as a new doctoral student and of my teaching in front of other teachers as a consultant, she couldn't reposition herself to think from a diverse stance in front of her peers at school. However, when she worked with Ben (who was not from her school) in an away space, she more easily used Ben's stories as tools to engage in self-critical reflective thinking. It is likely that the readerly ethics at work in her school constrained Samantha from participating in moral reasoning with me because to do so would have threatened her professional identity. Ultimately, our community of practice at Parker Elementary experienced collaborative planning as identity work, where some teachers engaged in quiet identity underwriting in their journals and through silence, and others participated in such work as overwriting each other's opposing ethical orientations.

Another example of how we worked through relational and ethical tensions was when Kate and Carmen debriefed about their experience using Mark and Ben's "Look, Master, what a pretty button" lesson. They realized that lesson artifacts drove their teaching and concluded that they required more collaborative planning time. Samantha remained silent during this conversation, and I assumed that Samantha's silence was partly due to her fear of having to invest personal

weekly time into collaborative planning. Later that same week, Samantha invested considerable time into preparing a special effects lesson that she had planned with Ben in the away space, and after such preparation, she then “rehearsed” it with Carmen and Kate for what seemed to be an intensive and lengthy time after school. Therefore, Samantha’s fear about spending more personal time on collaborative planning was well founded based on the readerly “teacher leader” collaborative planning and learning stance that she took in her school.

Such a “teacher leader” approach to collaborative staff development was the transcendent script (Gutiérrez et al., 1995) at their school, which worked according to readerly ethics. Because Samantha was a teacher leader in her school, I assert that Kate and Carmen were appreciative of Samantha’s “training,” but I also think that Samantha was concerned that she would have remained the most responsible for such training if the pattern that already existed at their school persisted in comics writing through collaborative action research. Later that same week, Samantha requested that I teach Kate and Carmen’s lesson that they had prepared in the away space. Although I had said that supporting them was a better idea than doing it on their behalf, Samantha persisted and overwrote my writerly script with her readerly one. Regardless of whether Kate and Carmen would have expected to be led by Samantha or me, Samantha worried about that kind of workload inequity developing, and she worked against it by positioning me into the teacher leader role for their group. Such a co-participative (Gutiérrez et al., 1999) way of collaborating at their school necessarily evoked relational tensions that worked against praxis. Because Kate and Carmen remained silent, I was the only one who appeared to hold a different ethical stance, so if I had gone against Samantha’s request, I anticipate that I would have threatened my good working relationship with her and that group by threatening their social hierarchy.

At Jackson Elementary, the same tensions existed, but we worked through them differently than at Parker Elementary. Initially, because Mark was sporadically involved in planning and teaching comics writing, Ben turned to me to set the lesson vision for our way of working together. Because Mark and Ben, by their admission, co-participated (Gutiérrez et al., 1999) in lesson planning,

where Mark set the vision for writing lessons and Ben melded into such a vision, it was natural for such an approach to collaborative professional learning to continue when I entered their school. Thus, Ben worked on his own and did not collaborate with a grade level partner or with Mark in jointly participative ways (Gutiérrez, et al., 1999). When I arrived and expected to work together in writerly ways, I think that Mark interpreted me as their new leader and responded with a “hands-off” approach to all decision-making. Similarly, Ben, too, surprised me with the level of responsibility he positioned me to take when I didn’t realize that I was expected to lead in every respect at every moment. When I finally put a stop to such positioning, I necessarily took a readerly stance, which ironically overwrote and undermined the writerly ethics that I had hoped to cultivate with Ben and Mark.

I argue that Mark experienced emotional tension when he felt “forced” into taking on responsibility for leading their coparticipative planning approach (Gutiérrez et al., 1999) that was impossible for me to overturn through my invitations to organize weekly job-embedded planning. Mark had reneged on teaching one comics lesson because he couldn’t bring himself to draw in front of students. Because that was the opposite of Mark’s personality (i.e., highly organized and responsible), I maintain that Mark was struggling to plan with McCloud’s (2006) *Making Comics* and to take on the writerly work of visioning comics writing and how to teach it. Hence, when I forced both Ben and Mark to take on the teaching, Mark worked through such emotional, relational tension by turning his office into a carnivalesque timespace. It became one where he laughed, joked, and cursed as away of working through his fear and our power struggle. Ultimately, he used humor in a clandestine way to illuminate my readerly script underneath my writerly one and to find a way of working according to contradictory ideologies.

Mark eventually resumed the readerly leadership stance with respect to lesson visioning and lesson splitting with Ben, where Mark planned alone and then negotiated with Ben which parts Ben would take on. There were times when Ben, Mark and I worked quickly to creatively compose a lesson in the morning

when Mark did not take on his visioning role or Ben was to plan and teach a comics writing lesson prepared in the away space. Such an improvisational way of working was “forced” writerly work that happened because away space planning did not translate into lesson preparation at the school. In such situations, Mark, Ben and I scrambled to use whatever artifacts we could pull together to teach a concept studied in the away space. Hence, Ben and Mark’s usual way of engaging in professional learning as readerly work, where Mark set the direction (or I was positioned to set it when Mark was away) and Ben followed it was the chronotope that drove our way of working from the beginning to the end of the research.

To conclude, most teachers struggled to plan with comics texts, and all teachers were challenged to plan in jointly participative ways even though it was necessary to do so in order to shift from printcentric to multimodal planning and teaching approaches. The struggle was related to sociopolitical and material/economic aspects of planning practice architectures. From a sociopolitical stance, writerly ways of planning altered the usual ways of planning independently or planning as artifact-sharing, where a teacher leader framed what to do with lesson artifacts. Such a shift in practices involved a disruption of emotional stasis for individuals and groups because some members feared that they planned inadequately or feared that they couldn’t draw so planning would be an incredibly time-consuming task. Others were used to collaborative planning, where one person set the vision and another helped to carry it out.

From a material/economic stance, no one took me up on arranging for job-embedded time for collaborative planning unless it was paid time away from school. The problem was that it was inappropriate to pull teachers from their classrooms for an extra half-day per week in addition to Thursday afternoons. Also, away space planning time did not necessarily help Ben (he often couldn’t find artifacts), and Carmen or Kate (they had artifacts but lacked time and were told not to make time) to translate such plans into lessons at school. Even though some planning did result in teaching lessons at school, such planning was either intensive whole group planning of one lesson (e.g., ski hill planning) or took the form of rehearsal- or improvisational-style planning led by a broker who helped to

bridge forgetting, lost artifacts, etc., at the school. Hence, emotional, relational, ethical and material/economic tensions were intertwined and made it difficult for teachers to plan with comics texts alone and/or with others.

Collaborative observing and reflecting experiences

What were teacher participants' experiences observing and reflecting through collaborative action research? What were the tensions involved in observing and reflecting through collaborative action research? There are three findings about collaborative observing and reflecting experiences at schools:

- When the teachers and I didn't rely on students' artifacts to mediate collaboratively reflecting, we stabilized identities or shifted between readerly-writerly identities.
- When we relied on students' artifacts to mediate reflecting practices, we more often engaged in praxis.
- When teachers used lesson artifacts that they didn't create or cocreate, the artifacts sometimes distorted collaborative reflecting about students' responses to comics writing.

Finally, there was one finding about our away space collaborative reflecting:

- Some teachers more often engaged in praxis in away spaces with teachers who were not from their schools than with teachers at their schools.

Collaboratively observing and reflecting took various forms at and away from schools. At Parker Elementary, I usually met with Kate, Carmen and Samantha at recess or lunch; however, we also met as teacher-outside researcher dyads inside and outside of classrooms. At Jackson Elementary, I met with Ben and Mark separately initially and more often together near the end of the research. I met with all teachers within their classrooms to debrief about some noticing that often resulted in changing lesson direction or future planning and teaching and/or reflecting with other teacher participants at their schools. In the away space, we met as pairs and threesomes of individuals who were either not from our schools (Ben and Samantha) or who were intermixed groups (Kate, Carmen and Mark).

I report on the first finding about school-based collaborative reflecting experiences. At Parker Elementary, we met routinely to debrief about our lessons. When Samantha and I met on our own and when the four of us met without students' artifacts to mediate our diverse understandings of students' responses to comics lesson, we experienced underwriting and overwriting of each others' identities. For example, Samantha and I told each other stories about our own fears of singing in front of others and compared such adult fear of performance to what we imagined were students' fears of comics writing. However, students' responses to Samantha's first comics writing lesson did not indicate that they were worried about drawing. Hence, Samantha and I stabilized our readily ideologies because we did not use students' artifacts to mediate our reflecting.

Similarly, when Kate, Samantha, Carmen and I negotiated the meaning of students' responses to my teaching based on their observations of what happened without lesson artifacts, teachers were too polite to be "critical" of my lesson. However, as I stated earlier, when I looked back at my own lesson charts, I felt that my modeled writing was suspect because I had developed similar stories between the two classrooms. I also thought that I had introduced students to too many comics transitions, but without actually talking about lesson charts and students' reflections and comics drafts in our collaborative reflection process, Samantha cultivated a readerly stance towards my lesson, and Carmen and Kate took readerly-writerly stances.

For the second finding—when Carmen, Kate, Samantha and I negotiated the meaning and value of pre-assessments, where we used students' pre-assessments and reflections to delve into students' responses, we stopped to listen to each other's stances and to consider what would make students' situations better. Thus, when Kate, Samantha and Carmen observed students' responses to a tool such as the pre-assessment, our reflections about the tool and students' responses to it were mediated by the tool itself and prevented our reflections from bumping against different individuals' stances and identities.

At Jackson Elementary, Ben and Mark confirmed that collaboratively reflecting on students' surveys and transcripts from interviews mediated praxis.

Through our collaborative reflections about Aiden's responses to Mark's questions about his comics draft, Mark and I uncovered alternative ways of thinking about Aiden's answers. Mark used his critical reflections from our debriefing about these writing interview transcripts in his discussion with Kate and Carmen in the away space, so such school-based reflecting about students' artifacts mediated critical reflections at and beyond the school. Ben transformed his thinking about a student's responses to the survey questions about writing when he realized that she associated school writing with particular topics that were not related to her "real" home-based writing topics (e.g., vampires). Ben noted in his final interview, "I think just realizing that by interviewing [her] and then talking with you about it, we made it possible for her to like school writing, that was *phenomenal*" (Transcript, May 14, 2010). Hence, Ben, like Mark, felt that collaboratively reflecting on students' transcripts and even engaging in the process of interviewing students was one of the most professionally transformative aspects of taking on the role of collaborative action researcher as an approach to professional learning.

I discuss the third finding about collaboratively reflecting in school: When teachers used artifacts that they didn't create or cocreate, the artifacts sometimes distorted collaborative reflecting about students' responses to comics writing. When Samantha compared one student's survey results to her pre-assessment results and written reflections about comics writing, she made a false comparison between them because she used the students' thoughts about comics writing based on Ben's and my survey question about drawing and writing. Because Ben and I had asked a question about what students liked about drawing and writing and not about comics writing, we didn't give students a chance to talk about how they see themselves as comics writers who use drawing and writing together. Hence, the passing along of teaching artifacts between schools with little discussion about the meaning of such artifacts distorted our subgroup's collaborative reflection on students' responses to comics writing in this situation.

Finally, I write about the one finding about collaboratively reflecting in an away space: Some teachers more often engaged in praxis in away spaces with

teachers who were not from their schools than with teachers at their schools. Samantha found it easier to self-critically reflect with Ben about her inquiry into self-efficacy in the away space than she did at school. In the away space, Samantha treated Ben's story about seeing me teach comics writing without being overly worried about drawing as a tool for telling her own classroom stories to prove that Ben's ideology was likely correct. Similarly, Kate uncovered a difference between her way of handling fear by fretting and procrastinating and Carmen's way of doing what she worried about (i.e., reading McCloud's texts and sketching). She treated this difference as a location for internal puzzling and eventually collective puzzling at the end of our collaborative reflecting session at the away space on March 12, 2010, where individuals compared cultivating the inner courage to climb Mount Kilimanjaro to what it felt like to take on multimodal writing practices with students.

Carmen wondered about whether or not Kate and Mark noticed that there seemed to be a tradition amongst division two teachers of belittling drawing to be "baby" writing when it should be seen as another mode of storytelling. Kate and Mark used her wondering as a pivot to surface their self-critical insights about how they had been locked into printcentric thinking for many years because of the culture of teaching story writing to pass tests that was part of school and school district PD and artifacts.

Thus, teachers from Parker Elementary especially found it easier to work through emotional tensions associated with shifting from a readerly to writerly scripts when collaboratively reflecting with diverse mixtures of individuals who did not spark the sociopolitical dynamics at work in their schools. Also, there were more carnivalesque, non-school rules or ways of relating (i.e., lingering lunches, late starts and relaxed professional development conventions) in the away space, which seemed to cultivate conditions for new ways of relating in away versus school social spaces.

Collaborative teaching experiences

What were teacher participants' experiences of teaching through collaborative action research? What were the tensions in teaching through collaborative action research? There is one finding about collaboratively teaching in classrooms:

- Most teachers found it difficult to implement planning from the away space to the school space without a broker.

Collaborative teaching took various forms in both schools, and some lessons involved more than one of the following forms of interaction: teachers participate in a back-and-forth style of carrying out a collaboratively planned and prepared lesson; one teacher/outside researcher sets the lesson vision and other teachers/outside researcher shares lesson tasks; teachers recreate others' lesson artifacts by talking with the researcher or each other before teaching; teachers and/or the outside researcher rush to put together lessons and take on lesson tasks in an improvisational way.

Because I worked at two schools, where teachers explored similar lesson ideas, I was in the unique position of seeing what worked and didn't work at each school, which made it natural for me to be a broker of such information for all teacher participants. For example, Samantha and I had quick talks before two different lessons, and such talks brokered her memory of the pedagogy shared (and not shared) in the away space behind the artifacts and supported her to teach it comfortably. When Samantha came in Monday after the Friday when Ben and Mark had quickly talked us through their "Look, Master, what a pretty button" lesson, she stated that she probably should have reviewed it on the weekend. However, as she showed each slide, I talked with her about what Ben and Mark had done and why they had done it in a particular way, and such a five minute review was enough for her to confirm what to do and why with such lesson artifacts. Second, in the case of the character development lesson that Mark had sent by email before Spring Break, I talked with Carmen and Kate, and Samantha prior to their lessons, and we co-taught the lesson, which required helping each other to develop each other's visual and print character sketches and to do a

partner comic by spontaneously using pictures and/or words to add to each panel to co-compose a comics story that made sense.

When Kate and Carmen attempted to teach with Ben and Mark's lesson shared on March 12th at the away space, they recognized that without more discussion or brokering by the lesson creators or by me, the lesson artifacts drove their teaching and it left them feeling unsatisfied with students' responses. When I taught the lesson that Kate and Carmen had planned in the away space using their lesson ideas and artifacts (i.e., Carmen's sketches, a photocopiable page from McCloud's text, 3 sample comics), they realized that it was relatively easy to teach the lesson as they had planned it and both of them acknowledged that they could have easily taught without excessive lesson preparation. Therefore, watching me mediated such a realization that lesson rehearsal and perfection isn't necessary to be a comics writing teacher.

At Jackson Elementary, I often brokered Ben's remembering, finding and recreating of lesson artifacts from co-planning sessions at the away space. After Ben planned a special effects lesson with Samantha and talked with me the evening before he intended to teach the lesson, Ben arrived at school on the morning of the lesson and explained that he couldn't find his notes or McCloud's book. I used my journal notes from my observations of Samantha's and Carmen and Kate's lessons and Ben took notes on what to do. I offered to read aloud a comics text that I happened to have with me so that Ben had time to get his head around the lesson that he and I taught through such a lesson splitting process. After Spring Break, Mark and I got lesson materials ready for the character development lesson, and we walked Ben through the lesson and then we co-taught in an improvisational way to implement our brief lesson plan. Thus, Mark and I acted as brokers at Jackson Elementary to engage in collective remembering with Ben about what was required to implement lesson plans made in an away space.

The tensions that resulted from such brokering were usually material/economic (i.e., time and material artifacts) and relational. Hence, I was often quickly telling individuals what I knew and getting some artifact from my bag or taking over a lesson introduction. Such brokering work was, as Wenger

(1998) indicated, seemingly unnoticed by some teachers who likely didn't realize that I had to expect to have extra artifacts ready or have lesson ideas in the back of my mind. While brokering was more commonplace for some teachers than others, it created a relational hierarchy of outside researcher-as-leader and teacher-as-follower, so material/economic tensions intertwined with relational ones.

Forgetting, erasing and toiling in liminal spaces

What were teachers' experiences of transporting collaborative action research professional learning experiences from away spaces to school spaces? What were the tensions of carrying collaborative action research learning experiences from away spaces to school spaces? Part of the reason that brokering was necessary in schools was related to this finding:

- Teachers found it difficult to transfer away space ideas to school spaces because of the carnivalesque nature of away space social spaces and because of liminal spaces (i.e., car, home).

Kate noticed that because we often met on a Friday and cultivated ways of being in the away space that operated according to relaxed rules (i.e., late start times, lingering lunches, personal storytelling, joking and laughing) that were dissimilar to the pressure-filled nature of school spaces that she forgot what we did and what she was supposed to bring back to the school (i.e., when she got into her car, she found it difficult to keep track of the "to-do" list resulting from that meeting time because she was heading into her "weekend" timespace; she worried on Sunday nights but didn't want to call anyone for help). When I asked whether I should change the day that we met, Samantha didn't think it would matter because it was more about the shift from the away space to car and home spaces that was the issue. She claimed that she gave herself permission to stop worrying about what she had to do once she got into her car, where music and other artifacts (i.e., cell phones) and thinking about home duties took over. Ben wasn't sure why he found it difficult to make the transference from the away space to school, but he did say that he lost artifacts once they were at home, in the car or moved from school. Mark didn't struggle to locate artifacts, but he found that the artifacts

made him anxious because he remained nervous about drawing throughout the research.

To conclude, there were material/economic (i.e., losing and forgetting artifacts), emotional (i.e., worrying about how to implement to-do lists on one's own at home), and sociopolitical (i.e., not wanting to phone me or others to get help) tensions that were challenging for teacher participants to work through on their own and with others in liminal spaces (cars, homes).

Collaborative inquiry experiences

What were teachers' experiences of inquiring into their learning through collaborative action research? What were the tensions of inquiring into learning through collaborative action research learning experiences from away spaces to school spaces? There is one finding:

- Teachers who are immersed in readerly contexts require time to develop ways with researchers to cocollect and coanalyze student information and to shape genuine inquiries and thus develop more writerly spaces for developing their practices, their understandings and their situations.

Given that inquiries take time to develop and depend on the systematic collection and analysis of student information (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, 2009; Hoban & Hastings, 2006; Wells, 1994, 2001, 2009), we were only beginning to develop ways of consistently collecting student information in the last six weeks of the study in all classrooms in both schools. It is not surprising that every teacher stated that they were initially focused on their own actions and others' views of them, which created emotional and relational tensions that constrained jointly participative ways of working together.

As we persisted in collecting and reflecting on student information (i.e., transcripts from writing conferences, students' comics drafts, students' surveys), teachers developed a different stance towards their work with students and me as an outsider-insider researcher. Carmen, Kate and Ben found that they liked to share conferences with each other and me to talk with students about their learning. Mark and Ben took a particular interest in talking about transcripts of

student learning to see how to develop new ways of listening to students and asking them open questions. Samantha had the image of the two of us acting as paparazzi of student learning, which allowed students to be the focus of our attention. Such a shift towards student-centered discussions between teachers and researchers led to inquiry questions for Carmen and Kate that shaped ways of working with students.

Implications

My experience in this doctoral study has provided me with a clearer view of how to imagine shaping future collaborative action research with teachers, especially those who are new to critical, collaborative inquiry-based ways of learning.

Designing a pilot phase

Because my invitation to participate in collaborative action research opposed the readerly scripts in participants' schools and school district, it was impossible to "explain" my invitation to engage in writerly professional learning on the phone or through a one-day information session. The implication is that a more in-depth introduction to collaborative action research is required. I recommend that such an invitation take the form of a pilot phase, where teachers, principals and the researcher work together to engage in and reflect on what it means to learn in writerly versus readerly ways. Because sociopolitical arrangements at one school made it challenging for teacher participants to shift from readerly to writerly stances, I suggest that researchers develop diverse communities of practice for teachers to participate in (i.e., dyads, subgroups at schools, diverse groups at schools, groups in away spaces with teachers who are not from the same schools) during and after the pilot phase. Given that researchers work in highly participative ways with teachers and need to adapt to teachers' needs and schedules, I would limit the number of participants to 2-3 teachers from two school sites because five teacher participants required me to be available five days a week most mornings and some afternoons.

Working the dialectic. I would begin the pilot phase with an information day, where participants learn about collaborative action research through in-depth examples, where diverse orientations (episteme, techne, praxis, criticality) towards professional learning are discussed as being part of such learning together inside and outside of schools. I would also engage in reflective activities that involve participants in comparing and contrasting what it means to work with an outside researcher in readerly versus writerly ways focused on developing individual and collective praxis (morally-committed action). To cultivate conditions for praxis, I would emphasize the need for teachers, administrators and researchers to “work the dialectic” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) of expert researcher-novice teacher, administrator-teacher and teacher leaders-teacher followers to disrupt such practices and ideologies by aiming to shift stances between a readerly-writerly ethics. Such stance-shifting or identity work is the learning involved in “critical” versus technical or practical collaborative action research (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009), and such work involves working through intellectual, emotional, relational and material/economic tensions to develop honest, open and transparent ways of working that are generative of strong working relationships in flattened hierarchies. Even though teachers in Alberta are working within readerly systems and ethics, I am making the claim that taking this time in a pilot phase to disrupt that ideology will, at minimum, provide teachers and the researcher with an opportunity to see ways to “work the dialectic” for what may become a longer research study.

Given the emotional nature of praxis-oriented learning, I would ease teachers into what it means to embrace such tensions as locations for generative learning by involving very few coparticipants (i.e., other teachers, literacy coaches, administrators, grade level partners) in classroom and debriefing sessions during the pilot phase. Waters-Adams (1994) found that school-based communities of practice had pre-established power relationships that constrained teachers’ abilities to be honest and transparent and that it was therefore better for teachers to work with researchers alone to engage in critical collaborative action

research. Based on the teacher participants' and my experiences, I agree with Waters-Adams that developing teacher-researcher dyadic relationships is a good first step to engage in critical collaborative inquiry-based learning; however, I disagree that school-based communities should be sidelined as he suggests. The whole point of taking a "critical" inquiry stance, in my view, is dependent on directly and thoughtfully working through relational tensions in school-based communities. After all, the most credible professional learning approaches inside and outside of schools are thought to be collaborative, so if relational tensions are getting in the way of quality collaborative learning in schools then it is necessary to investigate what it means to work successfully in such communities of practice (Dooner, Mandzuk & Clifton, 2008; Hargreaves, Lieberman, Fullan & Lipton, 2010; Levine & Marcus, 2009; Seidel Horn, 2010).

Establishing weekly collaborative planning routines. When teachers were left with the decision to choose to have weekly job-embedded planning time, they did not arrange for more time and as a result, different individuals faced the following material/economic, emotional and relational tensions that constrained praxis: worrying about not having enough time for planning, procrastinating and feeling bad about not planning, fearing planning, over relying on artifacts of others, not knowing how to plan in writerly ways and saying nothing, using tactical moves to unfairly position others to teach when planning was not done, engaging in last minute planning as a routine because of not planning independently, and losing track of artifacts required for planning. The implication is that teachers and researchers require weekly time for collaborative planning. Such time has to be scheduled upfront and not left to teachers to negotiate with principals and/or a researcher.

Establishing student data collection and analysis routines. Teachers found that reflecting on students' artifacts lead to genuine inquiries and to critical analyses of students' learning and their teaching. The implication is that it is necessary to establish routines for teachers and researchers to share observing and documenting roles within classroom and school schedules. Because such sharing routines can quickly turn into a researcher-teacher dichotomization of roles, where

the teacher teaches and researcher collects data (Cochran-Smith, 1993, 2009; Elliott, 2007; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005), teachers and researchers need to negotiate balanced ways of working against positioning one person to take on only some roles (Elliot, 2007; Hoban & Hastings, 2006; Wells, 1994, 2001, 2009). As I highlighted in chapter one, sharing roles and tasks is about working against established dichotomized roles of researcher and teacher.

Carmen and Kate used their observational roles as time for journal writing and close analyses of students and students' work, and Ben's and Mark's numerous short observational opportunities (i.e., reading transcripts from writing conferences, reviewing students' surveys, taking notes on case study students) and then debriefing about such observations afterwards led to critical insights that were an important part of what changed Ben's and Mark's understandings of traditions of teaching writing and how to change their practices as writing teachers. Samantha, too, learned a lot from having her journal handy and from reflecting on transcripts, and from taking notes when I was teaching. She initially found it hard not to get caught up in her own worries about drawing publically, but she later brought students' work and pre-assessments to our debriefings when she had chances to observe and not be the lead teacher. Finally, when teachers interviewed students, they learned more than when they administered a survey that they didn't create because the thinking behind the survey was not their own and they didn't question the thinking behind artifacts passed along because such artifacts were vetted by teachers and me whom they trusted. The implication is that teachers require time to observe students and to develop ways of note-taking, designing surveys and interview questions (as examples) and experiencing what it means to collect data in their own way by not using another person's artifacts without questioning the thinking behind them.

Engaging in focal interaction analysis. Kemmis (2006) highlighted the need for more research on what it means to participate in self-critical dialogical, reflective processes. I argue that focal interaction analysis holds promise as a collective reflective process to mediate critical reflection with teacher-researcher groups. Although it would take time to get transcribing done, the transcripts themselves

are very short and filled with verbal, nonverbal and material artifacts that make them rich locations for analysis. I am not advocating that focal interaction analysis be a “method” that is used to the exclusion of other dialogical processes, but I am suggesting that future researchers further explore it.

To conclude, there is a need to investigate what it means to engage in participant recruitment with school principals and teacher participants who are new to critical collaborative inquiry approaches to professional learning. A pilot phase as described above would be one way to provide prospective teacher participants, administrators and researchers with a direct experience of what it means to take part in collaborative action research.

Presently, cautionary tales about engaging in critical collaborative action research (Jones & Stanley, 2010; Waters-Adams, 1994) focus on the results of such professional learning journeys (Butler, Novak-Lauscher, Jarvis & Buckingham, 2004; Evans & Esposito-Winters, 2010; Goodnough, 2008; Weaver-Hightower, 2010). Also, such cautionary tales focus on collaborative action research as dividing up roles and tasks and avoiding negative emotional, relational tensions. Hence, there is a need for more detailed investigations of what it means to initiate this kind of learning with teachers and administrators who have had a steady diet of top down professional learning approaches.

Changing collaborative professional learning in schools and school districts

The collaborative professional development models operating in the participants’ schools and school district made some teachers more responsible than others for professional learning done in away spaces. From a district stance, some teachers who attended away space PD were held more accountable than others to share their learning depending on their school principals’ approaches to staff development. I argue that such a teacher leader model nurtures unhealthy power hierarchies within and between schools. The reason is that teachers who accept PD leadership duties gain knowledge and social power but are also saddled with immense responsibility and workloads for bringing along others who may choose to be followers or resisters of professional learning. As well, some schools

led by principals who do not make job-embedded time for teacher leader staff development become known by teachers (and others) in the school district as places to “hide” from ongoing professional learning. Thus, a district-level teacher leader model of PD perpetuates a hierarchical way of divvying up social power and responsibility for professional learning amongst teachers within a school and principals across a school district.

At Parker Elementary, there was a routine of the less confident teacher participants stepping back (often out of respect) to learn the “best” way to do things as comics writing teachers by relying on Samantha and me who became key brokers between away space and school-based learning. Although it eventually changed when I refused to teach with teachers who did not first plan with me, such a repositioning also meant that I established boundaries. These boundaries, in turn, reified a more traditional researcher-teacher role towards the end of the research at Parker Elementary because teacher participants did not plan with me unless I booked away space time, and this dichotomization made it difficult to work in jointly participative (Gutiérrez et al., 1999) ways in classrooms. At Jackson Elementary, Mark and I were positioned to be brokers between away space and school-based learning and Ben was a willing participant who followed a vision established by others.

I also argue that social hierarchies and levels of agency and responsibility become practice architectures in schools that are broken apart when teachers from one school engage in professional learning with an outside researcher and teachers from another school. For example, teacher participants from Parker Elementary found away space learning especially important for reflecting with diverse individuals, where they could be honest and transparent about their thoughts and feelings, which created conditions for praxis. However, even though critical reflection happened in such social spaces, most participants found liminal spaces (cars, home, weekends) erased the artifacts and commitments made in such away timespaces regarding planning and teaching lessons, and collecting and organizing student information. Teachers also experienced emotional toiling (i.e., fretting on Sunday nights and not wanting to call me or others for help).

Therefore, I acted as a broker at the schools to bridge the forgetting and emotional struggles that happened between away and school space planning and teaching, and I worked through emotional, relational, and material/economic tensions with teachers at schools. The implication is that collaborative action research as an approach to professional learning disrupts potentially unhealthy power hierarchies of professional learning in schools and introduces ways to flatten such relationships, where some teachers have more power and responsibility for professional learning than others.

While establishing routines for weekly planning and coteaching, coobserving and coreflecting in a pilot phase will support teachers to share agency for teaching and learning with an outside researcher, collaboratively reflecting with diverse groups of teachers (not just researcher-teacher dyads) cultivates conditions for praxis. While Samantha and I found that we stabilized our readerly stances by coreflecting without Kate and Carmen, when I reflected with Kate and Carmen without Samantha, we engaged in praxis more easily. Hence, changing school-based collaborative reflecting routines (i.e., the people involved) necessarily changed whether and how we transformed practices and identities by engaging in praxis.

The use of away space time has interesting implications for school- and district-based administrators and professional developers as well Education Ministry staff. Collaborative reflecting as a whole group in away spaces allowed teacher participants from Parker Elementary especially to cultivate praxis with other teachers more easily than they did with me. Therefore, the implication is that critical collaborative action research requires diverse participants to seek to “work the dialectic” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) and flatten social hierarchies and to surface local, diverse knowledges as sources for change and growth of communities. In contrast, away space time for coplanning, which is something that teachers really liked, was not as productive unless teacher leaders, including me in my role as outside researcher, took on more responsibility and agency for brokering transference of planning back to the schools. I underline this implication of my work because it surprised me. Because school districts invest

most of their monies for professional development in away space meetings, I am suggesting that more research is required to see whether and how planning in particular social spaces makes a difference in classroom practices.

School-based professional development is vital and nurtures or not what happens in away space PD. Teachers, researchers and administrators who get together for school staff development designed around teachers sharing and reflecting on student information are more likely to encourage teacher ownership over their learning because reflecting on student information mediates individual and collective inquiry development. Hoban and Hastings (2006) recommended that because reflecting on student data is personally confronting identity work, that researchers, school administrators and district staff developers explore more general ways of collectively reflecting on student information before introducing highly specific and personal data sources for self-critical reflection. Because so little research has been done with teachers who are new to such approaches, it is necessary for future researchers to investigate what kinds of individual and collective reflecting dialogical processes are effective to cultivate conditions for praxis.

As professional learning resources are continually reduced in Alberta and elsewhere (i.e., AISI money was cut in half in 2011), I contend that Education Ministries and school districts rethink a teacher leader model of staff development. Such a hierarchical model enables some principals to gain social power and responsibility for having “beacon schools” of professional learning while others become known as “safe haven schools” that protect teachers from district initiatives and professional learning. Instead, I advocate for collaborative action research as a professional learning approach in schools and school districts. Such a change would return agency and responsibility to all principals and teachers for their professional learning and cultivate conditions for praxis— “action that is morally-committed and oriented by traditions in the field” (Kemmis & Smith, 2008a, p.4) in schools and school districts.

Final reflection: Through the looking-glass



“Oh Kitty, how nice it would be if we could only get through the Looking-glass House! I’m sure it’s got, oh, such beautiful things in it! Let’s pretend there’s a way of getting through it, somehow, Kitty. Let’s pretend the glass has got all soft like gauze, so that we can get through. Why, it’s turning into a sort of a mist, now, I declare! It’ll be easy enough to get through—” She was up on the chimney-piece while she said this, though she hardly knew how she got there (Carroll, 2006, p.173).

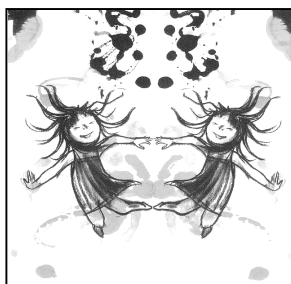
Alice transformed her sense of self especially by the second time she chose to embark on an imagined journey in “Through the Looking-glass,” and I, too, expect that my next collaborative action research venture will bear similarities to this one and many differences because of how much I have changed through the dissertation writing process. I engaged in writing-as-inquiry, where I “worked the dialectic” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) to compose this thesis using commonplace text practices of selecting and arranging texts that represented the teachers’ and my experiences in the most coherent, detailed and credible way possible and then rereading them to create insights or interpretations of them based on my dynamic understanding of theories of professional practice and learning. My revision method involved collecting the margin notes and emails about developing chapters written by supervisory committee members and my notes from my conversations with my supervisor about my ongoing revisions. Such a layering of texts became what is now a complex weaving of my growing intertextual or liminal understandings of the constructs: collaboration, professional learning and practice, and tension. Therefore, my thesis is an example of a commonplace text process and artifact. For that reason, I know that

for my readers and me, it will be subject to critical readings and rereadings of what could have been said that will be part of a larger research conversation about what it means to work as a researcher with teachers to engage in critical, collaborative inquiry or collaborative action research as an approach to professional learning.

I began this thesis by standing back to re-see my life as an educator by holding up my life story, which were my little stories or representations of who I knew myself to be and then working against my assumptions. Through such a process, I subjected my innermost beliefs and values to a new, even an inverted way of seeing who I was as though I was looking through another person's eyes and such a "working against" old ways of seeing was dizzying. It was dizzying or almost sickening because I felt that I was talking about a life that was not mine, one that was contorted and distorted from who I had thought I was. For example, when my supervisor reinforced the importance of me not stepping into the consultant role while engaging in research, part of me thought she was mistaken about who I was and had been as a consultant. The best way to describe the mismatch of my supervisor's and my image is to refer to the wordless picture book by Suzy Lee, *Mirror* (2003) that Mark had given me at the end of the research.

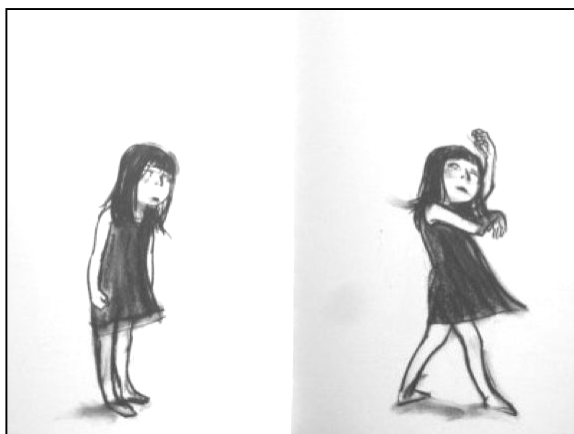
Mark gave me this book and said, "This is how I see you in this research because it is kind of like the process, right" (Research journal, July 18, 2010). Mark did not elaborate but as I continued to write this thesis, I knew that there was something resonant about it that related to my experience of collaborative action research. I will provide a brief overview of the story. The book begins with a little girl who imagines that she has a friend who shares a symbiotic bond with her and does everything that she does (figure 23).

Figure 23



Their energy is so powerful that it is otherworldly, where the little girl loses herself into a white double-page spread, the equivalent of “fade-to-white” in film, where there is something angelic about what is experienced. However, the internal conflict occurs when the little girl notices that as she comes back down to Earth, she sees that her friend is no longer a reflection of her. Instead, this friend is a defiant self-image (figure 24). Eventually she locates the mirror, which was the “friend” that simply reflected to her what she had wanted to hear, see, think and feel about herself and, by the end, the mirror shatters. Such a metaphorical self-shattering sends the little girl into a private retreat, where she returns to the fetal position to recreate who she will become.

Figure 24



The comparison between my experiences and Suzy Lee’s book begins when I couldn’t really understand what my supervisor meant by warning me about the consultant-teacher dichotomy. Instead, I was much like the little girl who had thought that the teachers in my school district and I had an equal, even symbiotic relationship, where what we had was a writerly understanding of each other. From such a starting point in my mind, I left my supervisor’s office thinking, ‘I can hardly wait to jump down that collaborative action research hole!’ Although I took seriously my supervisor’s warnings, I don’t think I really understood what such a “taking seriously” would look like or feel like once I was in my research role.

I had assumed that simply meeting with interested teacher participants would rekindle the good energy I knew I had had with many teachers in the district. However, it didn't take long for me to uncover inversions, contortions and self-deceptions about who I had thought teachers understood me to be as a consultant (and now researcher) and who I had thought I was in that role and the researcher role. Just as Alice assumed that Wonderland or the Looking-glass House would be fantastic, I was excited to enter into collaborative action research as a new timespace, one where the five teachers and I would cultivate new ways of relating that overturned a consultant-teacher dichotomy. I had thought the teachers in my school district saw me in the writerly image that I upheld of myself and that we could work together as "equals," but, as soon as we began, teacher participants positioned me into a readerly professional developer role. Even the teachers who had not known me as a consultant still saw me as being the researcher-as-expert or consultant-like leader.

Interestingly, the Greek word for thesis is "position," and as I stated at the start of this thesis, I saw the image of taking stances as central to what my experience was of engaging in this work. It took me several months of working within and between theoretical stances and talking with preeminent action researchers in my concurrent interview research about examples of tension-filled moments in this dissertation research to understand my experience of collaborative action research as identity wrestling. It was akin to the little girl in *Mirror* (2003) discovering who she was not in order to uncover who she might become or Alice in *Alice and in Wonderland* or *Through the Looking-glass* (2006), where she searches to transform her identity. Although it was not my intention to share scenarios from my research with interviewee participants, the participants often asked me what I was working on in my thesis, so I found that we created locations for such identity work through our conversations. Because each of them came from a critical theory, feminist and/or sociocultural, historical stance, their scholarship focused on such constructs and questions and they graciously indulged my sincere state of perplexity.

During one of my first interviews, which happened to be with Dr. Stephen Kemmis, I described my confusion about whether or not the teachers and I had engaged in praxis or critical reasoning because I felt that we had become too mired in technical reasoning. Dr. Kemmis claimed that it is difficult not to get caught up with technical reasoning because it is so ingrained in us (especially in the Western world) and that practical reasoning/praxis is easy to miss because we do it all of the time and don't think much about its value:

How do we get out of this technical thing? It's so profoundly in us and yet we're doing practical reasoning every day, all of the time, you know, huge amounts of it, but we don't know how to properly value that thinking.

'Should I go out for coffee now or should I stay and do some more work? Should I write this paper or should I work on that task? We're doing practical reasoning all the time, you know, and teachers do it, too.

'Is that kid in the back of the classroom really making so much fuss that I need to say something about it or should I let that go on for a little while?' ...And so, it's trying to find ways to inhabit that space that is the thing – the space for practical reasoning. I want to be able to ask about how things come to be so I can think about how I should act in the interests of each person and the good for humankind (S. Kemmis, personal communication, June 4, 2010).

Conversations like the one above with Dr. Kemmis prompted me to ask whether and how the teachers I cultivated social spaces (Leander, 1999) of praxis. I searched for points of tension or negotiation in transcripts to see whether and how the teacher participants and I engaged in moral reasoning, where we asked ourselves what we should do or not based on the issue or person in question and by considering the tradition or history within which that person or issue was located.

For several months after this conversation, I searched for such moments of everyday practical reasoning in my data and as I started to uncover some, I realized that the problem with noticing them was that the teachers and I engaged in everyday practices at an enormously quick pace. I think that the pace of

practical reasoning in classrooms and schools disguises the complexity and significance of a few minutes of interaction here and there as examples of praxis. However, I also realized that such moments were fleeting because neither the teachers nor I really valued them as social spaces, where we cultivated praxis. Elliott (2006) argued that teachers engage in praxis as a natural part of what they do, in an almost effortless way, and while I agree that the teachers and I participated in moral reasoning throughout our everyday practices, I do not think we knew it was so important until we reflected on it in away spaces and other places to think more about why such moments of moral reasoning and/or action mattered.

For example, when Ben realized that his student had misunderstood school versus home writing topics, he later uncovered the importance of this insight by stating that the student saw herself as a writer because of his interview with her and that too often teachers neglect to check what students think they know about writing rules. Mark, too, reflected several times about his realization that comics writing was storying through drawing and writing and that he had held printcentric views of teaching and learning about story writing. I think that Ben's and Mark's return to insights gained through moral reasoning is what illuminated the importance of not only the insights but the reasoning process that led to them. Thus, I realized that it wasn't really effortless to learn how to value the insights as forms of moral reasoning because, for the most part, at both schools, I brokered the stopping (i.e., debriefing sessions) and reorienting of our stances to look again at student information. I am not saying that I caused reflection or always came with a plan in mind for how to reflect together, but I did request that the teachers and I debrief regularly. In other words, phronesis and praxis didn't just happen without intention to cultivate it.

I suspect that Elliott (2005, 2006) would agree with my last statement, but he is hesitant and even cautionary to say that teachers and researchers require critical theoretical stances to cultivate moral reasoning (phronesis) and/or moral action (praxis). Even though I'm at the end of this thesis, I remain a bit stumped on this point. While I don't think that the teachers and I required particular

theoretical lenses to stop and reflect on our work together in order to engage in moral reasoning, I do think we needed to conscientiously “work the dialectic” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009), which required us to take reflective stances about our own practices to surface and assess ideologies underneath them. How do we do this surfacing without understanding and applying the epistemology behind “working the dialectic”, which depends on critical theorists and their theories?

I remain stumped because on the one hand, I agree that the teachers and I engaged in moral reasoning and actions every day, but on the other hand, I think if we had reflected on whether and how we had engaged in praxis, that it is more likely that we would have developed such stances earlier and in more definitive and sustained ways. Because I understand Kemmis’s’ (2008, 2010a) and Kemmis and Smith’s (2008a) praxis to align with Cochran-Smith and Lytle’s (2009) inquiry as stance, I think that such stances are about cultivating conditions for identity work. The writing of this dissertation was my opportunity to take such a stance and to do such identity wrestling. I spent considerable time feeling like the tensions in the teachers’ and my learning were negative, and I stood at the shattered mirror of my data staring back at me as a defiant self-image.

Given that it took me many months of writing, reading, thinking and talking with a community of scholars internationally about tension for me to look again at the shards of data as focal interactions or micro-examples of praxis, one might argue that the teachers would not have seen such moments as praxis unless they, too, had engaged in focal interaction analysis with me. Therefore, praxis, in my view, is cultivated collectively and individually, where individuals set out to challenge their assumptions and ideologies or stances, which are handed down from practice traditions (Carr, 2004).

I had entered into collaborative action research expecting a relatively smooth transition into writerly ways of working together, but I learned that such assumptions rested with my misunderstanding of praxis. Thus, the teacher participants came from a readerly world of which I had been an integral part. Although I had thought of myself as working as equals with teachers in my past as a consultant, I had power over them because of my position that made it

impossible for us to work together on teachers' terms without district ways of working creeping into the mix through my readerly professional learning practices. However, because I held a writerly image of myself as a consultant, I did not analyze the ideologies that drove the teachers' and my ways of talking, thinking, acting and relating prior to or during the first part of the research. Instead, I avoided moral reasoning and individual praxis.

Such an avoidance caught up with me and arguably shattered my writerly self-image about three-quarters of the way through this study. For example, prior to the end of April, I struggled considerably with the emotional and relational tensions associated with the teachers' and my unequal relationships by writing 600 pages of journal entries that were like this one: *It seems strange that people continually tell me how much they respect me and then tell me what to do, forget what happened in sessions, refuse to ask for help... I have to wonder whether the good relationships that I thought I had as a consultant were false* (Research journal, April 6, 2010). Thus, I assessed teachers' practices and ways of relating to me as evidence of personal relationships that I had valued in the past but were seemingly "shams," and I felt that if I had used different methods of collaborative action research that I may have been better off. In other words, if I had had better friendships with some of them, they wouldn't have let me down and if I had only used particular methods of planning, teaching, and reflecting, then everything would have been better. Such thinking is rooted in the readerly stance that I was supposed to be working against.

Hence, exploring tension in collaborative action research is not what I had imagined writing about in this thesis, and for many months, I was mystified by the constructs of power, tension and ethics. I judged myself harshly because I believed that if I had only said or done something differently that I could have turned the teachers' and my professional learning around to be more obviously transformative, and I still recall sitting with Dr. Susan Lytle in her office and she said, "I hope you aren't upset with your work. It's about the struggle of locating what is generative in the larger tensions in today's very challenging educational context" (Research journal, October 25, 2010). At the time, I knew that she was

right, but when I turned to Elliot (2007), Goodough (2008), Waters-Adams (1994) and Wells (1994, 2001, 2009), I still felt that if I had found the right methods for data analysis with teachers that they would have uncovered genuine inquiries faster and more easily and been more oriented to reason morally and critically, not just technically.

Perhaps the most valuable insights I gained from this thesis and my concurrent research is that I no longer view it as helpful to examine my methods as an outside researcher as though they can be extricated (along with tensions associated with them) from my interactions with teachers. Hence, looking to blame one party or another for tensions in professional learning contradicts my ontological and epistemological commitments about what it means to engage in praxis, and it is this kind of flawed thinking that I argue is responsible for some of what is involved in the epistemological-methodological divide in current scholarship about critical collaborative research. Instead, in this thesis, I set out to illuminate what it meant to me to locate generative tensions in the complex of tensions that are interwoven within critical collaborative inquiry as “vulnerable research work” (personal communication, G. Campano, October 25, 2010), and I found the dissertation process one where I shattered my prior self-images to make room for new identities~ who I am becoming and will become.

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APPENDIX

CHAPTER TWO

Figure 1: Elliott's (2007) thirteen hypotheses about teachers' self-monitoring capacities:

1. The less teachers' personal identity is an inextricable part of their professional role in the classroom, the greater their ability to tolerate losses of self-esteem that tend to accompany self-monitoring...
2. The less financial status and rewards in schools are primarily related to administrative and pastoral roles, the more teachers are able to tolerate losses of self-esteem with respect to classroom practice...secondary teachers are increasingly committed to administrative and pastoral functions that are only indirectly connected with classrooms...
3. The more teachers value themselves as potential researchers, the greater their ability to tolerate losses of self-esteem...
4. The more teachers perceive classroom observers as researchers rather than evaluators, the greater their ability to tolerate losses in their self-esteem...
5. The more access teachers have to other teachers' classroom problems, the greater their ability to tolerate losses in self-esteem...
6. The more teachers are able to tolerate losses in self-esteem, the more open they are to student feedback. Many teachers claimed that student feedback was the most threatening kind of feedback that they could have...
7. The more teachers are able to tolerate losses in self-esteem, the more open they are to observer feedback...
8. The more teachers are able to tolerate losses in self-esteem, the more willing they are to give other teachers access to their classroom problems...
9. The more open teachers are to student feedback, the greater their ability to self-monitor in their classroom practice...
10. The more open teachers are to observer feedback, the greater their ability to self-monitor in their classroom practice...
11. The more open teachers are to feedback from other teachers, the greater their ability to self-monitor in their classroom practice...
12. The greater teachers' ability to self-monitor in their classroom practice, the more they experience conflict between their accountability as educators for how students learn (process) and their accountability to society for what they learn (in terms of knowledge outcomes)...
13. The more able teachers are at self-monitoring in their classroom practice, the more likely they are to bring about fundamental changes in it... (p.58).

CHAPTER FOUR

Figure 2: Interview Questions for Teachers

Planning, teaching, assessing writing:

1. What have you learned from working with students and documenting their learning (i.e. through individual conferences, reviewing transcripts and/or anecdotal records, marking and writing feedback) about writing stories in comic form?
2. How has this experience influenced the way that you will plan, teach and assess writing, especially story writing, in the future?
3. What professional resources and experiences have shaped how you have taught story writing prior to this project? How do you normally teach story writing?
4. How was the way you taught comics writing the same or different from how you would normally teach story writing?
5. What advice would you give to another teacher about what makes a good writing program now that you have been a part of this project? How has your advice changed from what you might have said prior to this project?

Collaborating and learning through action research:

1. What was your most memorable experience from working on this collaborative project?
2. Tell me about how collaborative action research is the same or different from engaging in other types of professional development?
3. What was easy and not so easy about shaping the inquiry or focus of the writing project for your class?
4. What surprised you about the process of collaborating with teachers on an inquiry or an action research project?
5. Tell me about a time a collaborative project wasn't working and what you did.
6. What makes collaborative inquiry successful? What makes it fall apart?
7. What do you most appreciate in people you collaborate with (i.e. characteristics, skills, knowledge)?
8. What advice would you give to another teacher who was considering participating in a collaborative action research project?
9. What have you learned about yourself from engaging in collaborative research?
10. What do you think is most important to document while engaged in a collaborative teacher research study?
11. Tell me about a time during this study when you reflected upon your practice. What made this moment memorable?
12. What advice would you give to future researchers who are considering engaging in collaborative teacher research?

Figure 3: Interview Questions for Principals

1. How would you define quality professional learning? What have you noticed makes professional learning work well in your school?
2. What makes collaborative teacher learning experiences work well? What makes them fall apart?
3. How did having a research project in your school influence the context (daily interactions, professional development, conversations) in the school?
4. What observations did you make about each teacher's learning over the time of the project? What was the same or different about how each teacher interacted with you and others over the time of the project?
5. What did you do differently because there was a research project in your school?
6. Tell me about how collaborative action research is the same or different from engaging in other types of professional development?
7. What was valuable about having a research project in your school?
8. What was challenging about having a research project in your school?
9. What advice would you give to another principal when selecting participants for a research study? Would you select the same or different participants for this study now that you have been through this research experience?
10. What advice would you give to future researchers who are considering engaging in collaborative teacher research.

CHAPTER FIVE

Chart 1: Sample of Sterling's (2004) analytic approach for determining what and how something was said.

Subtopics	Discourse Strategy	Excerpt
P.D. improves test results	Appeal to norm, ideal, authority	Well in this school one of the areas we've been working on, we've worked on re, ah, reading for a long time 'cause we have literacy person and we have tremendous results in that reading.
P.D. relevance	Self-assessment/ Inference about others' experiences	However, in writing, it hasn't been a focus, it's been a focus, but going back to question one, if the teachers were to engage and see the relevance, then the writing PD we've been doing sometimes has lacked relevance...And therefore it hasn't come home.
P.D. as pedagogy P.D. and results	Reported Speech	So what we did was we actually had [a consultant] come in and we said, 'Listen, let's take a step back. Instead of learning more 'tricks of the trade', let's look at what we're doing for writing.' 'Well, why are we doing this? Well, it's not PD because I'm following up and checking on you,' and we had to have a big discussion about why I'm asking this, it's because we need to look at why our kids all pass the writing, but they don't excel.

Figure 4: Transcript Conventions

- | short pause
- || long pause
- I* emphasized
- *pitch or style or voice change
- [] nonverbal behaviour described
- '...' quoting self to show what was said or might be said
- “ ” quoting another person
- ▲ increase in pitch
- ▼ fall in pitch
- XX unintelligible speech
- ...omit words

CHAPTER SIX

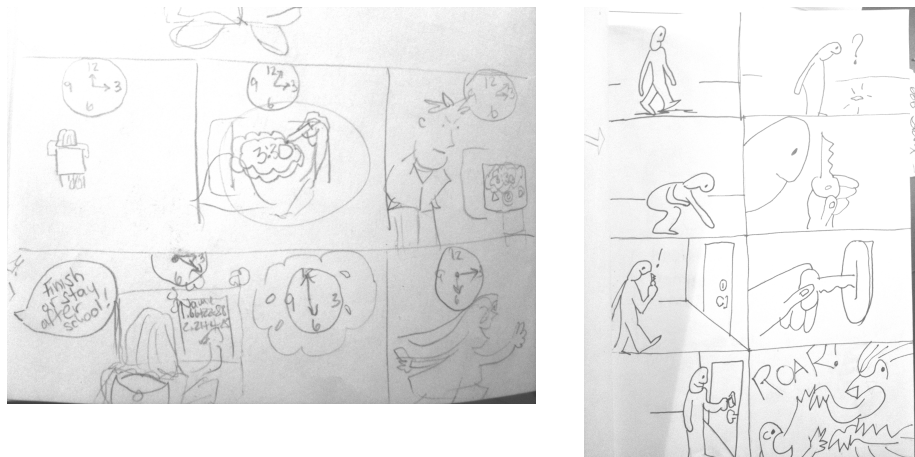
Figure 5: Parker Elementary Lesson One Summary

1. Teacher introduces students to comics writing as a new way to write stories.
2. Researcher introduces video clip to show how students around the world enjoy composing stories in comics form and that the researcher wants to take part in the students' comics writing journey.
3. The teacher introduces the question, What are comics?, and students offer ideas.
4. The teacher puts up the t-chart: Comics are... and Comics are not... and uses a text to show students how to look closely at examples and nonexamples of comics already placed in baskets for their groups. Students draw their own t-charts into their visual journals.
4. Students work in groups to talk about the varied texts in their baskets and to complete their t-charts.
5. Whole class shares their t-charts and teacher records students' ideas on SMART board t-chart.
5. Students write their own definition of comics (grade 3/6). Students write a self-reflection (grade 4)

Figure 6: Writing, Drawing and Blogging Student Questionnaire/Survey

1. What do you like most about writing?
2. How do you know if a piece of writing is good?
3. What do you like the least about writing?
4. How do you know if a piece of writing is poor?
5. What could make you like writing more?
6. Do you think you are good at writing? Why?
7. Do you like to draw? What is it about drawing that you like/don't like?
8. What do you know about blogging?

Figure 7: Rhonda's sketches for ski hill planning meeting



Planning at the Ski Hill

Focal Interaction 1: Ski hill, Questioning research and McCloud's book, Feb. 16/10		
Line	Speaker	Message Unit
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Samantha	I will have to watch what I say now
2	Rhonda	No, you don't.
3	Samantha	[makes her voice sound like an announcer] *Since the tape recorder is on,
4		I would like to take this opportunity to complain about the complexity
5		research [looks at McCloud's book]...No, no (laughing).
Interaction Unit 2		
6	Kate	You're crazy organized [raised eyebrows and pointing to my journal notes
7		sketches and looking back at her notes/no sketches]. I could never do that.
8	Samantha	[whispers] She's an over-achiever—shhhh.
Interaction Unit 3		
9	Kate	When I looked at this [McCloud's book], I thought, 'I don't know,' [and I read
10		this [Bitz's web materials]. This is better because it's more broken down, I
11		guess [Kate flipped through the reproducible handouts]. My excitement is huge
12		but my nervousness is more.
13	Samantha	I was overwhelmed. I didn't even take the string off [pointed to the
14		McCloud's book and Bitz's materials].
Interaction Unit 4		
15	Rhonda	//I think this is just new for everyone because we have a few resources so we just
16		have to try ideas out.
17	Kate	That's what I'm worried about because I worry about modeling for the kids
18		when I can't do it.
19	Rhonda	[referred to my sketches] When I drew this, look, I couldn't draw the feet
20		or the hands, so I just drew blobs because our focus is on storytelling, not
21		Drawing
22	Samantha	It's better than I could do.
23	Rhonda	Why do you think that?
24	Samantha	You plan with <i>those</i> books all the time, but we don't. I have no comfort
25		working from scratch about something that I know nothing about. It's now what
26		<i>we</i> do.

Focal Interaction 2: Ski hill, Defining comics, Feb.16/10		
Line	Speaker	Message Unit
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Samantha	Can you clarify the definition of graphic novel compared to comics?
2		I am wondering if I explained it correctly to my class.
3	Rhonda	Oh, don't worry. I think we need to build the definition [Opens to
4		first page of McCloud's Understanding Comics(1993)and reads
5		'Comics are juxtaposed sequential static images in a deliberate
6		sequence'
7	Samantha	Oh, so graphic novels are like a complete long comics
8	Rhonda	Hmm, I think that sounds right because he has all kinds of comics here
9		[points to a page]. But you raise a good question because he says it's a language.
Interaction Unit 2		
10	Carmen	Hey, I drew that [points to my sketch of the lion comic from
11		McCloud's Making Comics (2006)], but I didn't bring it.
12	Rhonda	Oh, the lion comic? Ya, I was trying it because he said to introduce
13		comics stories with pictures only so I wasn't sure

14		Maybe students could brainstorm possible definitions and then try
15	Carmen	Ya, try it.
16	Rhonda	On a chart or SMART board, get them to put them in their own order
17	Samantha	Write the story?
18	Rhonda	Oh, that's good, too. I guess I was just thinking put the individual panels together in an
19		order that makes sense and tell it? Like put the panels in an envelope
20	Carmen	Ya, because then they make the definition by doing it
21	Rhonda	Ya, and we could be creative and say add a panel or take as many away
22		as you can and see if it's still a story

Focal Interaction 3: Ski hill, Report cards & subject integration, Feb. 16/10		
Line	Speaker	Message Unit
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Samantha	I almost like introducing it outside of Health and Religion and just
2		say that it is about like about social responsiveness or...because isn't that
3		what we came up with or not even social justice//I kind of want to/well, we use social
4		justice for March for like charity...
5	Carmen	Ya, you're right.
6	Samantha	I don't want the kids to think that we are going to sell these to get money
7		Ya, like maybe social leadership, citizenship
Interaction Unit 2		
8	Rhonda	Hey, that would be really good because we are going to need to talk to them about
9		digital citizenship.
10	Kate	Ya
11	Rhonda	So, do you mean that we think other teachers would really
12		like to have comic books to introduce these topics, like maybe even
13		leadership?
Interaction Unit 3		
14	Samantha/ Carmen	Would that tie into your Social Studies?
15	Kate	Ya, I think that it would fit my Social Studies descriptors. I worked on them yesterday.
16		I worked on them yesterday. [She reads one outcome]
17		'Expressing themselves and letting others know how individuals can
18		contribute to positive change in the world.'
19	Carmen	One project for three subjects...
20	Samantha	Ya, I like that.

Focal Interaction 4: Ski hill, Attitude Surveys/Reasons for Comics, Feb. 16/10		
Line	Speaker	Message Unit
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Rhonda	Do we, maybe we need to return to why we are doing comics writing in the first place. If
2		it is to inspire students to take control, an interest in story writing, then what do we
3		have to do?
4	Samantha	I think just doing comics because it's their world. It's not our world, at least not my
5		world. I didn't grow up with comics, so it's a chance to do what's not a normal school
6		project.
Interaction Unit 2		
7	Carmen	Ya, I agree. It's opening up so many ways to show themselves that it will just be so new
8	Kate	That's what I'm worried about, but you're probably right, that it's just me [laughs].
9		They'll love it.
Interaction Unit 3		
10	Rhonda	So should we collect some kind of reflections before we start to check what they think
11		is in school and out of school writing? I hear you saying that we want to empower
12		them to bring into school what is their ways of storytelling and maybe their topics, too?
13	Carmen	Ya, I would want to ask them about their attitudes because if I just ask them to reflect
14		then they'll tell me what I want to hear
15	Rhonda	What do you mean?
16	Carmen	They do reflections in school all of the time, like what to get better, so I want to know
17		whether their attitude changed about story writing
18	Rhonda	Hey, that's <i>good</i> , really good thinking. Can you make one up from the book version?
19	Samantha	Maybe before and after attitude surveys because I can tell you right now that I might
20		have parents who wonder why we're getting their children to read and write comics

21		so if we can show them that motivation is half the writing battle, they'll get why.
22	Carmen	Ya, I agree.

Focal Interaction 5: Ski hill, Reading-writing connections, Feb. 16/10		
Line	Speaker	Message Unit
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Kate	It is reading comprehension? So is there research about how comics affects reading
2		comprehension?
3	Rhonda	[nods head]
4	Carmen	Ya?
5	Rhonda	Yeah, I can't quote any right now, but let's look at what a reader does from here to
6		here. It's the gutter space. [point to gutter space in own sketch] See Figure
7	Carmen	So the water can is thinking, 'My work paid off!' [laughs]
8	Rhonda	Ya [smiles]
9	Carmen	Ya, it's the expression on the can that is the message or the words
10	Kate	So that's reading comprehension?
11	Rhonda	Ya, because the gap filling is thinking, which is inferencing
Interaction Unit 2		
12	Samantha	[Smiles] Slow down, Charlie! I've gotta draw this [All teachers draw the plant cartoon]
13	Rhonda	Why do you need to draw this? Look, you could just have a kid pick up any comic and ask them
14		to fill in a thought balloon in between two panels where he had to make a thought.
15	Carmen	Should we introduce that as well in the beginning or do you think that is too much?
16	Rhonda	I think that is a good question.
17	Samantha	Didn't you say in the first week, we would have to have two lessons, one with you
18		and one without?
19	Rhonda	Ya, and I think if you could invite me to the second one it would be good.
Interaction Unit 3		
20	Samantha	I even think that we could do this in your independent reading and give everyone
21		time and say, 'Do this.'
22	Rhonda	Ya, that would be a good reader response. We did that last year, but we gave choices
23		like in file folders. We just bought this chart holder that held file folders and added
24		reader response ideas.
25	Carmen	I like that.
26	Rhonda	It's just as easy to teach comics as anything as long as it's connected to your/ what
27		you do
28	Carmen	Ya, because it adds more meaning
29	Rhonda	You could even do it in Social
30	Samantha	Give them two pictures and ask them, "What are you thinking?" You could even have
31		political cartoons in the paper and photocopy them and see what are you thinking?

Focal Interaction 6: Ski hill, How to collaboratively plan and teach/Inquiry, Feb. 16/10		
Line	Speaker	Message Unit
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Rhonda	Well, we're going to be developing this as we go and I think the other thing is that I
2		didn't want to take over
3	Samantha	I prefer it if you take over [smiles]
4	Everyone	[laughs]
5	Rhonda	But I need to let you be creative, too, and so I don't mean to take over in the way that it
6		is delivered and if you do want me to do one example, then I will.
7	Carmen	But I think it is good if you have an example and I have an example.
8	Kate	So do I
9	Carmen	The drawings are going to be different of her story will be different from my story, but
10		It is still the same like the idea is still there but it is a completely different styles, but I
11		think that is what they need to see as well that there is no right or wrong or one way to
12		do something
Interaction Unit 2		
13	Rhonda	It is important to think about the nature of inquiry. The reason that we are taking this on
14		Is because we don't know. If we knew how to teach this, why would we take it on?
15	Samantha	Ya
16	Kate	I guess so
17	Rhonda	When we ask students to inquire, think about that. We are asking them to take on
18		something they don't understand and we wonder sometimes why
19	Samantha	All the time, though, in every subject
20	Rhonda	And think about how we're feeling right now and how we put them in this position

21	Samantha	All day lone, every day.
22	Carmen	We really do, so it's not a bad thing for us to be a little uncomfortable sometimes.
23		I find that it just shows that, myself, that I kind of like, well, I have to grow, too.
24	Kate	Ya
25	Samantha	And it keeps you driven
26	Kate	Ya
27	Samantha	And that's a challenge
Interaction Unit 3		
27	Rhonda	And, also, we can get help from that, well, [a local cartoonist] and from the guy at [local comic store]. Okay, I have become an underground comics, well, cartoonist collector
28		
29	Everyone	[laughs]
30	Rhonda	So we don't have to do this alone.

Focal Interaction 7: Ski hill, Stories, Anxieties, Assessment, Feb. 16/10		
Line	Speaker	Message Unit
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Rhonda	[puts comics on table] So take a look at some of the comics I got from [a local comic store] actually, when I left there, I felt like my whole idea of story was blown up
2		
3		I admit that I felt a bit, well, it was too much or something
Interaction Unit 2		
4	Samantha	You felt overwhelmed. That's how I felt the first day we met
5	Rhonda	Really?
6	Samantha	Well, no, no, I'm good now [waves hand as if to say, 'Don't worry']
7	Rhonda	[smiles] I like Amelia Rules. Those stories don't overwhelm me [smiles]
Interaction Unit 3		
8	Carmen	[Looking at Amelia Rules] They have the panels crumbling, her whole world is falling apart because she's moving
9		
10	Rhonda	Ya, and the chalk for the dream world
11	Carmen	Two stories at once
12	Rhonda	Hey, that reminds me of "Nobody in Particular," where the author tells her story in comics form and uses color for facts about the tuna problem
13		
14	Kate	So all of these are comics stories?
Interaction Unit 4		
15	Rhonda	Ya, so it kind of opens up what counts as a story.
16	Carmen	Maybe they could do a reflection about what they found out about what a comics story is.
17		
18	Rhonda	Good idea. That's the guiding question for us and for them, I think
19	Samantha	So for assessment, then, we can have our story rubric, well, basically
20	Rhonda	Maybe a blank one that we build with them, like the first day, we could see if they can pick what has to be there to say something is a comics story. Well, like we said before message and mood is probably what they'll say, but maybe not.
21		
22		
23	Carmen	Ya, because they will have so many to think about so it will be interesting if they can see the similarities and differences
24		
Interaction Unit 5		
25	Rhonda	I guess some things I've seen teachers do with narratives would work, like set up-mix up-fix up [points to "Nobody in Particular" pages to follow the logic]
26		
27	Everyone	Chants—"set up—mix up—fix up"
28	Samantha	Say it again [smiles]
29	Rhonda	Set up
30	Samantha	Set up
31	Rhonda	Mix up
32	Samantha	Mix up
33	Rhonda	Fix up
34	Samantha	Fix up
35	Kate	Very catchy! [laughs]
36	Carmen	Set up...mix up...fix up... [chants and does a little hand dance]
37	Rhonda	I'm glad that you like that, but I wasn't trying to teach like quick tricks, [laughs]
38	Kate	I liked it, but not as much as Carmen, apparently [laughs]
39	Samantha	How can I even try? I wish you could just come in and take over. One day I want to be just like you when I grow
40		

Focal Interaction 8: Ski hill, McCloud's Book, CBP Materials, Scheduling, Feb. 16/10		
Lines	Speaker	Message Units
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Rhonda	Ya, and do you think these two will work? Are you excited?
2	Carmen	I am. I read the book this weekend.
3	Rhonda	That's great that you did.
4	Carmen	It was a relaxed read, not like one of those books you open up and say, 'I don't
5		understand anything that's going on...I don't understand what are my expectations.
6		But this was so like easy and it was fun because you got like pictures in the
7		Background.
Interaction Unit 2		
8	Kate	I'll be honest. I just looked at the package. There were a lot of cool tips.
9	Rhonda	Ya, I did that, too, but as I was reading, I realized that it was kind of lame.
10	Kate	[She showed how she had highlighted some ideas] Ya, I agree.
Interaction Unit 3		
11	Carmen	When I got to the little man. This part here [points to the first few pages where the
12		author presents himself as a caricature] and I thought, 'Oh, ya, this is going to be
13		good. I could see it playing out in my mind and I thought I have got to get the kids to
14		do this [points to lion comic on following page]
15	Rhonda	You did, hey?
16	Carmen	Ya [smiles]
Interaction Unit 4		
17	Samantha	We have to go to Chapters. [another teacher's] got this one [looking through
18		examples of comics]. If at all possible, Thursdays work the best for me just because
19		I have an hour and a half of natural scheduled language arts there and I have so
20		many other people in my room. I have another teacher coming in for Social.
21		I have a gym teacher and it's really difficult. I don't have beg and borrow time.

Carmen and Kate's First Lesson

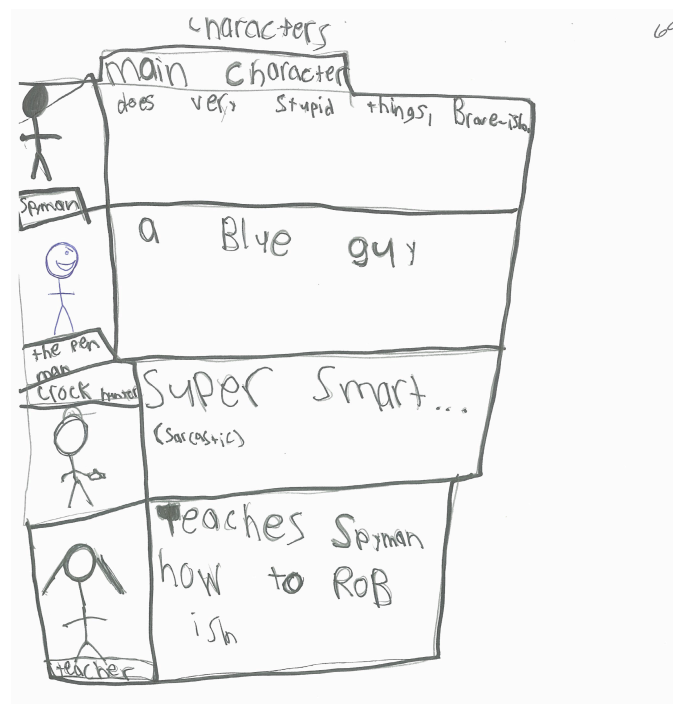
Focal Interaction 1: Carmen and Kate's First Comics Lesson (Mar. 3/10, 74 minutes) (first 10 minutes)		
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Carmen	Just out of curiosity, what do we already know about comic books?
2	Student 1 (Grade 6 boy)	They are funny
3	Carmen	Yes
4	Student 2 (Grade 3 boy)	Some of them are action and some are like fiction and nonfiction
5	Carmen	Good, some are fiction and some are nonfiction. Some could be action, some could be scary. Student 3?
Interaction Unit 2		
6	Student 3 (Grade 3 girl)	You don't have to be good at drawing?
7	Kate	[laughs] You got that from me because I said that I wasn't very good at drawing.
8	Carmen	[laughs] Good, that's very good. You don't have to be good at drawing. What else do you know about comic books?
9	Student 4 (Grade 6 boy)	Some of them have morals. Good. What else?
10	Student 3 (Grade 3 girl)	Some of them have characters you have never seen before
11	Carmen	Good, new characters. Do some of them have superheroes?
12	All students	[unison response] Yes
13	Carmen	No, good. Do all of them have colored pictures?
14	All students	[unison, but more drawn out] *No
Interaction Unit 3		
15	Carmen	Do all of them have words?
16	Students	[confused looks, turning to each other]*Yes. No.
17	Carmen	How many of you say, 'Yes' [waits and very few students raise their hands], 'No?' [about 70%
18		raise their hands]
19	Student 5	[Looking through a basket to get Shaun Tan's <i>Arriva!</i> and he holds it up] It's a wordless

	Grade 6 boy	picture book
20	Student 6 Grade 6 boy	Yes, but it's a comic
21	Carmen	Oh, good. What's the difference, then, between a wordless picture book and a comic?
22	Student 6	[looks confused and doesn't answer]
23	Student 7 (Gr 6 boy)	A picture book has a story
24	Student 6 (Gr 6 boy)	[says quietly] So do comics
25	Carmen	Yes, a picture book tells a story but does a comic book tell a story?
26	All students	Yes. No [many talking at the same time]
27	Carmen	Okay, so what's the difference?
28	Student 8 (Gr 6 boy)	They are using speech bubbles so you know who's talking
29	Carmen	So there could be speech bubbles in comics, but does there have to be?
30	Many students	No
31	Carmen	So, what's the difference?
32	Student 9 (Gr. 6 boy)	Oh, comic books have panels
33	Carmen	Okay, look at <i>The Arrival</i> , was there panels in <i>The Arrival</i> ?
34	Student 9	I'll go get it
35	Student 10	Lot's of picture books have panels
36	Researcher	You have a really good eye for details
37	Carmen	Okay, so what's the difference between a wordless picture book and a comic?
38	Student 11 (Gr. 6 girl)	A comic actually shows what they are saying
39	Carmen.	Kay. Yes?
40	Student 11 (Gr. 6 girl)	Comics show a completely different scene [points with her finger to follow from panel to panel in <i>Amelia Rules</i>] and then it goes to a completely different one [points to next panel]
41	Carmen	Okay, that's part of it.
42	Student 12 (Gr. 6 boy)	Not all of them

Focal Interaction 2: Kate and Carmen's class, So is this a comic?, Mar. 3/10		
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Rhonda	Hey, that's what they're talking about, so let's listen in
2	Student	[holding <i>Alice in Wonderland</i> , movie version] Comics are movies
3	Student 2	That doesn't make sense [looks over at graphic novel movie version]. A comics isn't <i>a movie</i>
4	Student 1	Okay, it's a book of a movie
5	Kate	Can it be both?
6	Students 1 & 2	//nod heads
7	Student 1	So what do we write on the chart? Comics [spelling out] are movie books
8	Student 2	[writing by following along] No, wait, 'Comics are...' No, um, A comic can be
9		pictures and words that tell a
10	Student 1	story of
11	Students 1 & 2	[jointly defining it before writing it down] a story of a movie that was a book
12	Kate	[watching and smiling] Wow! I hadn't thought about like that, but it works
Interaction Unit 2		
13	Carmen	[watching two students who are looking through <i>Garfield's Treasury</i>] So what is it
14		that makes a book different from the rest of the comics [points to others' texts]?
15	Student 3	I don't think I have a comic book because it's little skits, not stories, so it's on the 'Comics are not' side
16	Carmen	Can comics be little skits?
17	Student 3	They are like little skits but they don't go together, so it's not a story.
Interaction Unit 3		
18	Student 1	[now holding <i>Alice in Wonderland</i> , classic edition] Ya, but chapters are little stories.
19	Student 3	Not like these, though, because they don't go together// I guess they kinds do have little topics

Focal Interaction 3: Spy Man Debate in Carmen and Kate's First Comics Class, Mar. 3/10		
Interaction Unit 1		
Line	Speaker	Message Unit
1	Dean	Ya, so he like looks at a key and then wham, he meets lion
Interaction Unit 2		
2	Jane	*You can't do that, that's just, that's [shook her head, expression of disbelief, put hands on her head]
3	Jason	Yes, he can, it's like Spyman
4	Grade 3 boys	[Three grade boys chant]* It's like Spyman, Spy man.' [Dean smiles and nods at grade 3 boys]
Interaction Unit 3		
5	Carmen	Wait, can he do that? Is it a comic story?
6	Eric	Ya, because it's like we know it's Spyman [Dean's character that he draws regularly as part of a small comics writing group in the class who share their comics]
7		and Spyman always does things like that
8	Carmen	How do we know it's Spyman? This is just some character that Scott McCloud made
9		up.
10	Eric	Because we know Dean
11	Many students	[laugh]
Interaction Unit 4		
12	Jane	My point exactly, and we shouldn't have to know Dean to read his comic
13	Carmen	Are you saying that a comic should make sense on its own?
14	Jane	Ya
15	Carmen	If I read this, I am thinking, 'A guy is looking at a key, here [points] and then
Interaction Unit 5		
16	Group of boys	He opened the door and 'Wham!'
17	Carmen	Where do you see that he opened the door?
18	Dean	I don't know.
19	Carmen	What about in the space from here to here [points from panel one to two] is like an inference box,
20		where we do our thinking, but is it too, like
21	Kate	Too big?

Figure 8: Dean's Spyman characters



Samantha's First Lesson

Focal Interaction 1: Samantha's class, Worrying, Mar. 4/10, (First 10 minutes)		
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Samantha	Is there anything else you've been thinking about? Is anybody worried about
2		anything?
3	Student 1	No
4	Student 2	No
5	Samantha	Anybody? A little bit? What are you worried about?
6	Student 3	What if somebody's not a good drawer so then at the beginning of the book [i.e.,
7		comic book] they have like a stick man and then at the end of the book, they don't.
8	Samantha	And that's something we're going to work through together. Right. That's why we
9		have an artist coming
10	Student 4	And
11	Samantha	Sorry, Student 4?
12	Student 4	And that's why we're making the comic book at the end of the project.
13		That's right. That's why we're not digging in today and starting our comic book. The comic book is our final project. The rest of it is the learning process and how we're getting there
Interaction Unit 2		
14	Student 5	Pretty much every day I write comics like there is an app on an Ipad or something where you can make comics
15	Samantha	On an Ipad?
16	Researcher	Oh, ya, right there is.
Interaction Unit 3		
17	Samantha	Oh, that's cool, so you said that you're excited about this? That's great. How many of
18		you are feeling kind of excited about this? Sometimes nervous excited is a choice,
19		too, and that's kind of where I fit in I'm nervous excited. I am excited to see how this
20		works, but nervous because, 'Oh, my drawing [makes a funny face with a smile], but
21		I am excited to get better at it.

Focal Interaction 2: Samantha's Class, 'Get back to work! They're coming! (Small group), Mar. 4/10		
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Student 1	Okay, everyone get your books.
2	Student 2	I don't want to do this
3	Student 3	Oh, well.
Interaction Unit 2		
4	Student 1	[laughs at picture] Look at that! [points to wolverine blankets]
5		This was... is about wolverine blankets?
6	Student 2	I don't know which one to read?
7	Student 1	I know one thing comics are not . They are not just words; they have to be pictures or else they're not
8		comics [writing on t-chart]
9	Student 3	No
10	Student 2	Yaaa! This can be a comic [holds up <i>Owly</i> , a wordless comic series]
11	Student 4	That's what I said. I said, 'It can't just have words in it; it has to have pictures in it or else it's not a comic'
Interaction Unit 3		
12	Student 3	Okay, whatever [still reading Iron Man]
Interaction Unit 4		
13	Student 1	You have to write that down. Everyone should write this down now [waves finger as though a teacher]
14	Everyone	laughs
Interaction Unit 4		
15	Rhonda	Okay, so what were some of the things that you were noticing?
16	Student 1	I notice that in this one that I picked up, the cover is usually in color, but this one is black and white
17	Rhonda	Great, so what could you write down from what she said? [waked away]
18	Student 1	Get back to work, they're coming! [looking at Samantha and student teacher]
Interaction Unit 5		
19	Samantha	[looking at one student's t-chart] They're not pictureless. Okay, that's good. I notice
20		that student 1 has a lot of writing on her page. I notice that she has more than the rest
21		of you, so would you like to share some of these with your group?

Researcher teaching

Focal Interaction 1: Carmen's class, Researcher introduces attitude survey, Mar. 8/10		
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Rhonda	When Carmen said on the ski hill day, 'We should try looking at students' attitudes,' I
2		(Pajares, 2003) and you can read it, too, if you want, where he says to assess students'
3		got read an article performance, we need to look at the beliefs that they have about
4		their abilities because those beliefs have more to do with how students perform then
5		what they could do if they were really positive about themselves
6	Carmen	Cool, so they do it before?
Interaction Unit 2		
7	Rhonda	Ya, like I'm not sure exactly how they will take it, so could you think about it and talk
8		to them about it
Interaction Unit 3		
9	Samantha	Do you give one after?
10	Rhonda	Ya, but I was thinking that maybe they could just write it like all of you had them do
11		so I'll try that
12	Kate	What do you want us to ask them?
13	Rhonda	Oh, gee, like just maybe what they believe they can do as they're working or, I'm not
14		too sure because it's open
15	Samantha	Ya, like just talk and see how they're doing and check on their feelings about
16		themselves doing the steps
17	Rhonda	Ya, because this is just a trial or a wait-and-see kind of a thing
18	Everyone	Laughs

Parker Elementary Debriefing

Focal Interaction 1: Parker Elementary Debriefing, Value of pre-assessment for Students, Mar. 8/10		
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Rhonda	I'm just interested in hearing your debriefing, whatever your reflections are
2	Samantha	I thought it was most helpful to do the assessment at the beginning
3	Rhonda	Oh, you did?
4	Samantha	I thought it was, like I don't think I do that enough 'cause that was a real eye opener for me to
5		see, 'Okay, well, they're not comfortable with this, but I'm going to tell you that I'm not good
6		with this. Now, I've owned that.
Interaction Unit 2		
7	Rhonda	Ya, I wondered whether kids who/I really didn't get a chance to focus on, like were there kids
8		with lower scores?
9	Carmen	Ya, I commented on that, too.
10	Rhonda	Oh?
11	Samantha	Actually, I think you picked up that Sandra//You said to her, 'Oh, look, you were worried about
12		nothing, but it was funny because last week, when we did the first lesson, she said, 'Oh,
13		I'm a great artist. I can draw, I can draw, and her survey/questionnaire, she said, 'I can draw,' but
14		then when you asked them about their ability to draw, she gave herself 2s . Like on that, I
15		Thought that's really interesting 'cause she felt confident but now that she actually has to do
16		it, she has a different view

Focal Interaction 2: Parker Elementary Debriefing, pre-assessment tool, Mar. 8/10		
Interaction 1		
1	Samantha	And I thought it was pretty powerful to get them to do that self-assessment because for me that
2		would be the hardest thing for me to do is tell you that I'm not good at something, and now
3		you're going to ask me to do the thing I'm not good at
4	Rhonda	Ya, I worried about that actually. Do you think it's a good thing to do?
5	Kate	I think as someone who was always the cautious child, I think you almost want to scream loudly,
6		'Look, I can't do this!' like sp you know I'm one of those ones who can't do this so you don't
7		Have those expectations of me and so that you'll come and help me
8	Samantha	Which is what I think you did. I actually wrote it down. I put [reading from her journal] 'It's so
9		important to share fears and create a safe environment when they're doing something new
10		especially because I don't Think a lot didn't want to tell you that they weren't scared when you
11		said, 'I'm terrified. I'm really scared. Who else feels this way? and all those hands shot up. So I
12		thought it was really interesting that you created safety, like we'll all be scared together.
Interaction Unit 2		
13	Rhonda	Oh, that's good. Did I say I was terrified?
14	Samantha	Because we lose sight of that too because we get so busy with everything else that you forget to

		do those
15		little things
Interaction Unit 3		
15	Rhonda	One thing I wondered is whether they believed me because sometimes teachers just say stuff
16	Samantha	I think they believed you
17	Rhonda	They believed it because I couldn't quite pull it off. If I was really strong, I wouldn't have
18		trouble drawing what I was trying to draw, but...
19	Samantha	Well for a second, I thought Parker was going to call your bluff because he saw your journal and
20		He was like, 'I saw this picture in your book but then it was a bit different, a different story but
21		Then you said, 'I was practicing last night because I was nervous about today, and they're like,
22		'Oh, that makes sense.'

Focal Interaction 3: Parker Elementary Debriefing, Observer's role, Mar. 8/10		
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Rhonda	I wrote in my journal, ya, here [reads] 'It's funny how when we have a chance to teach things
2		twice, I mean pacing was better than with Ben's class. I'm not sure why. It could be confidence
3		in getting to know the students, the teachers better
4	Samantha	I'm glad you said it's a confidence thing because I drew a huge thought bubble [reads] 'I'm
5		really glad that Rhonda taught this lesson.'
6	Rhonda	But not, it's more about not knowing students, I think. I got stumped drawing, too, but it wasn't
7		my first//
8	Samantha	But it's, as I watched the lesson unfold, it's your background knowledge that made the lesson
9		much more effective and timely. If I had done the same thing, I could have but I would have had
10		to break it up
Interaction Unit 2		
11	Rhonda	But I didn't teach very long, like maybe a total of 20 minutes or something or am I wrong? Did I
12		become a talking head?
13	Samantha	No, but I would have had to break it up into mini-lessons
14	Rhonda	So, like how would you?
15	Samantha	To suit my comfort level
16	Rhonda	Hmmm. That's interesting
17	Samantha	I would have done like 3 panels one day and then maybe taught the transitions because I don't
18		know that I would have been able to get past the drawing because I can't get past the drawing.
19		You said to the kids, 'I just get over myself' because I have to look past my drawing,' but I just
20		can't
21	Rhonda	Hmmm, I don't know if I know because even in my writing I've learned how much
22		I don't know and I just say, "Oh well, I will eventually learn how to use 'therefore' and my
23		supervisor will do a little dance [i.e., does a little finger dance in the air] for me then
24	Everyone	Laughs
25	Rhonda	So seriously then, what is it that allowed me to let go do you think when I used to care so much?
26	Kate	Maybe you care less about what your supervisor thinks, I mean not in a bad way
27	Samantha	But it's not that I'm worried about what other people will think as much as I feel like bad that
28		I'm not doing justice to a lesson
29	Rhonda	But, okay, I used to worry about 'doing justice' in my role as a teacher and administrator last
30		year, and I realized that all I could do was my best in the circumstances. So I didn't always do
31		every request in a timely way or answer email or plan a lesson as well as I could, but I had to let
32		go of impossible standards. Don't you think it's the same with a new kind of writing like comics.
33		We just have to accept that we learn what it's all about as we do it and let the standards//
34	Samantha	No, but it's hard to let go of those standards, and I think we have to aim high, and anyways,
35		you're missing that part about high expectations of parents in our school on top of administrators,
36		so it's standards that I feel I have to meet
37	Rhonda	I hear you saying that it's hard to disappoint others but teaching comics writing does not have
38		some kind of criteria that we can say, 'Look, if we do this and this, then it's right,' so we are
39		learning
40	Samantha	I know, but it's still hard and you know because you have always worked way harder than other
41		consultants and you made a difference so it's not like you would do that and let go of your high
42		standards
43	Rhonda	I know, I know it's hard to let go, but what I'm saying is that in my new role as a university
44		student I have learned that there were times when I worked extremely hard to meet some kind of
45		level of 'perfection' and I didn't hit the mark I mean, just ask my supervisor [laughs] because she
46		has worked hard to help me to look again at my writing and say, 'What am I doing to help my
47		reader?' and still, I do the same things and have to stop myself from personal lashings
48	Samantha	No, because maybe your supervisor does enough of that? [laughs] I'm just kidding.
49	Everyone	laughing
Interaction Unit 3		
50	Rhonda	No, she's good, but let's get back to what you guys were thinking, so the lesson

51	Kate	Ya, well, um, I was saying the same thing to Carmen. I said, I'm glad she's teaching because it
52		just seemed
53	Samantha	So I might actually do this next year, like introduce it as a genre to teach a part of my teaching. I
54		think I would still have to break it up
Interaction Unit 4		
55	Rhonda	Do you think it would be better broken up?
56	Samantha	No
57	Rhonda	I know that you're not evaluating me, so please, do you think the lesson would be better, more
58		powerful separated?
59	Samantha	Well, I don't think so, no
60	Carmen	No
61	Samantha	Because I think they needed to know, 'This is my 3 panel story' so that they could see it in their
62		minds, it's fresh so I think it would lose something to break it up. Do you know what I mean?
63	Carmen	I agree
Interaction Unit 5		
64	Rhonda	[turns to Carmen] Do you think it would be better broken up a bit?
65	Carmen	Well, I think I might have to
66	Rhonda	But you can see that I can't really draw [looks at chart]
67	Samantha	But you can draw more than I can and you understand how comics work better
68	Carmen	But I wouldn't even say it was the drawing
69	Samantha	It's the knowledge
70	Carmen	No, it was just too much information for me to keep in my head at once. I would have to know it
71		really well, all aspects and then deliver it clearly
Interaction Unit 6		
72	Samantha	Confidently, right?
73	Rhonda	Well, really, I knew that I wanted to stretch a 3 panel story into more panels and I played with an
74		idea, but I'm not so sure that I didn't just teach bravely or maybe trusting myself to work with
75		what I knew
76	Samantha	No, it's more like anticipating their questions, like about transitions and not knowing how to
77		answer them
78	Rhonda	Did that actually happen? I don't know the transitions very well and I focused on moment-to-
79		moment mostly but maybe you see something I don't get about myself. I can tell you that I
80		always teach with some nervous energy but I have had to look fear in the face so many times as
81		a consultant.

Jackson Elementary

First Meeting with Ben

Focal Interaction 1: Jackson Elementary, Inquiry and Creativity, Feb. 18/10		
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Rhonda	I want to hear your thoughts about what you hope your students will learn from us
2		working together on teaching story writing in a new way, through comics
3	Ben	I would hope that it is to their enjoyment of creating
4	Rhonda	Right
5	Ben	And I think for a kid, that's their being able to look back on what they create//I still
6		look back on stuff I created when I was a ten year old. Why not? It's awesome. I love
7		I love going back so//
Interaction Unit 2		
8	Rhonda	You made me think. I have a card. My mom says that I cartooned it, and she said she
9		wasn't even 40, so I must have copied it from somewhere, but anyways, I drew her
10		with all of these grocery bags and stuff and said, 'Now that you are in your forties'
11		She said, 'I was in my twenties, but you just loved the cartoons you made' [laughs]
12	Ben	Laughs
13	Rhonda	I still remember doing it, so I see what you mean by it's composing in words and
14		pictures and actually remembering the process of making that card that was special.
Interaction Unit 3		
15	Ben	It's those things that always draw you back, and I would love it if one of the kids came
16		back with a fire burning in their belly to, 'I want to do this on my own. I want to make
17		this kind of stuff. I want to do this. I think that means we've changed, like we've
18		achieved something. And it's been a really long time since// Well, I can't recall
19		liked story writing. It's a killer at grade six because they've either
20		learned to love it or hate and there's not a lot of in between
21	Rhonda	Why do you think that happens?
22	Ben	Because so much of what happens with story writing is like, do this, then this and

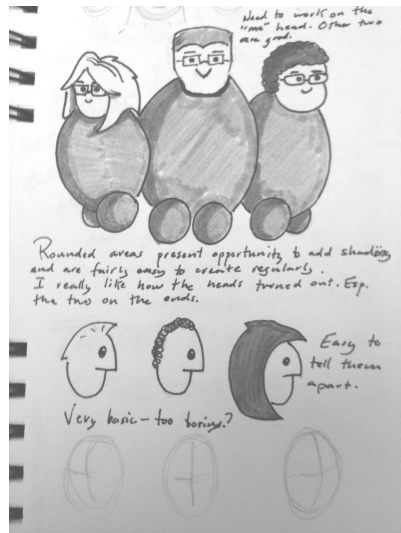
23		where's the creativity?
24	Rhonda	Is that what you have happen, even today, I mean after your years of experience?
25	Ben	Yes, because I'm, not sure whether I just assume it's going to be like that or maybe I
26		save the good writing projects for like novel study, but story writing is, well, it's cast
27		with the shadow of tests so I mean don' get me wrong. , you will see, that I have
28		students who would write stories all day long and I mean they create novels

Focal Interaction 2: Jackson Elementary, Parents and comics Feb. 18/10		
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Rhonda	So, last day you mentioned a parent who said, 'My son doesn't need to learn
2		conventions remember that, but I was thinking that parents are a big part of our work
3		with students when we teach writing, so what would you hope your parents would
4		start noticing from our work with students in comics writing?
5	Ben	Well, I think for the most part, most of them will really like the project. I think some
6		of them will struggle with, 'How is this language arts?' but I think once we show them
7		the quality of writing that is coming out and we explain to them how it is tied across
8		the curriculum, hitting on Religion and Social Studies, it all has its place, and it's a
9		viable learning tool.
10	Rhonda	Ya
Interaction Unit 2		
11	Ben	Why not? If the kids love it, I can see some parents saying that ' I didn't even have to
12		ask my kid to do homework tonight, right?
13	Rhonda	Oh, that would be the best
14	Ben	And how cool would that be, like my kid is just working non-stop and after we have
15		those artists coming in, then it will be awesome

Focal Interaction 3: Jackson Elementary, Blow apart Feb. 18/10		
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Rhonda	What are hoping your administrators notice? How do you see comics writing and your inquiry
2		branching out and touching them ?
3	Ben	Oh, ya, I mean Dan and Kathy do their walk-throughs and their visits and Mark's, of course, the
4		VP, so he's going to always be involved with it. For them, just to come in, and I know Dan just
5		likes to walk and wander through the class as I'm talking to see what the kids are doing, that kind
6		of thing. For him to stop and, like, for some of our more troubled kids like the little girl
7		I was telling you about I can picture Her, like asking her through her comics
Interaction Unit 2		
8	Rhonda	Did you say that was the little girl how likes to draw?
9	Ben	Ya, she does. She draws these freaky little bears. That's her thing, right?
10		Okay so she'll draw those but gives up very easily on her drawing but the kid
11		will write literally pages and pages and pages, and she will go on and on. She loves to write, not
12		necessarily great writing, but she loves to write
13	Rhonda	Is she part of why you like the comics focus?
14	Ben	Ya, but also just to rock them out of this thing we call story writing for tests, to just blow it up
15		into something else, something where everyone has to start over and just think, 'Well, I have to
16		write <i>and draw</i> so now what does that mean?'

Focal Interaction 4: Jackson Elementary, Feb. 18, 2010, Ben and Inquiry		
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Rhonda	So for you personally, you're trying a new approach to professional learning through
2		collaborative inquiry and I wondered what made you want to do it, and what are you
3		hoping to get out of it?
4	Ben	Well, I love comics and drawing and that kind of stuff, so, uh, I would love to walk out of this
5		with a massive portfolio of examples, of ideas, to teach grade six students some writing skills
6		and drawing
7		Skills that touch on all the different, like you can go back in years to come and say, 'This is a fun
8		Project and this little kid, you will get a lot out of it. A new tool in the arsenal, right?
9	Rhonda	And as far as fitting with your language arts program, how do you see it fitting in this term?
10	Ben	Well, Mark and I have been talking about revising with the kids this year, and if this project got
11		even a couple of the boys who have a perfect 100% paper every single time and 'Do you want
12		to check it over/?' and they say, 'No, it's perfect.'

Figure 9: Ben's sketches (February 22, 2010)



Rhonda teaching

Focal Interaction 1: Jackson Elementary, What is a comics story? Feb. 22/10		
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Rhonda	I am wondering what a comics story is? Turn to your partner and tell them what
2		comics stories you read and what they are Okay, now, sorry, could I
3		have you share some of your thoughts
4	M. student	It's when you have characters who are the same and you get to know their stories
5	F. student	Archie, it's like Veronica and Betty are always competing for Archie in high school and there the geeks
6	Rhonda	So comics stories have characters who we get to know and care about? [write down]
7		What else?
8	M. student	It can be like little stories, so there's Garfield and he's a lazy cat and you know whatever happens is about well, I'm not sure
9	Rhonda	Can anyone help him out?
10	F. student	Comics can be in the newspaper and they have like characters we know and they do different
11		things each week
12	Rhonda	Ok, and other kinds of comics?
13	M. student	Naruto, he fights enemies and it's like ongoing kind of a series of graphic novels and webisodes
Interaction Unit 2		
14	Rhonda	That's really good because you have shared how comics stories must have good
15		characters who want things, who do things. Okay, well today I would like your help to
16		write a story in comics form using me as a character, but I can only have three panels
17		and they need to communicate some kind of message. So, I want my character, me,
18		to be in a school setting and I'm thinking, 'What does a character in school
19		want or wish for?
20	F. student	Like good grades
21	M student	Phys Ed
22	Everyone	Laughs
23	M. student	Recess
24	Rhonda	That's good, now good grades, well, yes, I cared about getting good grades and I think I cared
25		a lot about them in math because I struggled in math. I wasn't big on Phys.Ed., but I looked
26		forward to swimming. After school every day. I just loved it could hardly wait for
27		3:30 so I could go swimming. [turns towards chart]. I'm going to think aloud and tell
28		you my thoughts as I draw my character in the first panel wishing to get free to go
29		swimming. Now, I need your help to keep my story flowing
30		so please just jump in with your ideas without putting up your hand. Before we start, I
31		need to tell you that I am focused on my story, not my drawings, so I just want to get
32		the idea across. I am nervous about my drawings because I practiced
33		see[holds up notebook], but I am brave today and know that I can
34		Trust you to help me. I can always work on making my sketches better later.

Ben and Rhonda Debriefing during class

Focal Interaction 2: Ben and Rhonda Debriefing in Class, Feb. 22/10		
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Ben	See what I mean, I'm not sure whether she would be a good case study. She is, well, she
2		struggles with writing. That's more than she would normally do, but the content [worried]
3	Rhonda	The content was actually pretty close to what we hear in the news, though
4	Ben	Well//it's, but it doesn't really make sense so she's got a TNT guy who blows up the prisoner?
5	Rhonda	Ya, I wasn't sure who was the pilot was, but maybe ask her a few questions to get her to give
6		some missing details
Interaction Unit 2		
7	Ben	Kerry, tell me about your story now
8	Kerry	[points to the first three panels as though they are self-explanatory] TNT blew himself up and the Al Quaida
9		guy was blown to smithereens!
10	Ben	Why is there another plane here?
11	Kerry	Oh, that President Obama sending out a plane to congratulate the CEO of Cyclops Corp.
12	Rhonda	[laughs] You've got it about right, I think.
13	Ben	laughs
14	Kerry	laughs
Interaction Unit 3		
15	Rhonda	Okay, but I was wondering if you noticed that you talked us through some panels and not others.
16	Kerry	Ya,
17	Ben	She means that we need your words to help us so what could you do about that?
18	Kerry	Are we allowed to have words?
19	Everyone	[to teachers nodding] laughs

Mark's debriefing

Focal Interaction 1 Debriefing Mark, Feb. 23/10		
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Rhonda	So when I got together with Ben, I asked him what he hoped our work together would do for
2		students, um, how it would make a difference, what you hoped to see?
3	Mark	Narrowing it on a specific thing, right? On being focused in their writing and understanding what
4		their exact purpose is and realizing that especially with comic books and stuff that they need to get
5		the main idea, right?
6	Rhonda	Has it been a problem for students to get across a story conflict or theme when they write?
7	Mark	Well, yeah, but I think it can be harder when you add in the drawing, right? Because they can get
8		caught up With the drawing and forget about what they need to communicate.
9	Rhonda	Hmm, that's an interesting observation. Have you seen that happen, I mean do your students draw a
10		lot?
11	Mark	They, um, some do, we have a couple who do, but it's the same thing when they get carried away
12		with like a vampire theme, they can get so that it's all about vampires and lose their story
Interaction Unit 2		
13	Rhonda	Okay, so what about for you and the Dan and Kathy, what do you hope to see from that
14		perspective?
15	Mark	With other teachers, I hope it would make a difference in terms of what other forms of writing and
16		work develops because sometimes I think we get comfortable with 'This is what I've done
17		and it's always worked.'
18		Right? And why not? It is to engage students in a new form of writing and work develops their
19		ideas and hopefully will get them questioning, 'Well, how did it go?', and I guess just sharing with
20		them, too, right? Just to get them going, right?
Interaction Unit 3		
21	Rhonda	Okay, and for you, do you have a way of inquiring into students' writing that you can share right
22		now? Maybe think about why you took this on.
23	Mark	To learn, ya, to learn, and again to see the whole aspect of it, right, collaboration with other
24		teachers and myself, for me, it was to learn what happened in comic book writing so I am excited
25		about it because it's an approach I have never taken and moreso because me being
26		uncomfortable with drawing, right. I don't draw.
27		It's not, so it's a challenge and I think it's good that we challenge ourselves in different ways and
28		monitor and adjust

CHAPTER SEVEN

Mark's debriefing

Focal Interaction 1: Debriefing Mark I really don't give a ***** Mar. 5/10		
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Rhonda	Okay, so we talked about the need to be there when we're teaching and also to plan together if we
2		are sharing lessons. I said that we could use Thursday time, too, so things went well.
3	Mark	You know, I think I will plan on my own and then approach Ben with an idea [for the next lesson]
4		because I can't process very well with others [laughs]
5	Rhonda	[laughs]
6	Mark	What I mean is that I need time to just process, right, so I have never been good at planning with
7		others until I've planned on my own, right?
8	Rhonda	That's funny, you know, I'm the same way, but sometimes people don't like it
Interaction Unit 2		
9	Mark	I really don't care what anyone thinks of me or my planning// [dead serious look on face]
10	Rhonda	// [smiles]
11	Mark	I mean it, I don't really give a **** [dead serious look on his face]
12	R & M	Laughing uncontrollably
Interaction Unit 3		
13	Dan	[stand at office door] it's way too much fun to study comics [smiles]
14	Kathy	[smiles]
15	Mark	Oh, <i>sooo</i> fun [sarcastic]
16	Everyone	Laughs

Reviewing student transcripts

Focal Interaction 1: Ben reviews student transcripts, Mar. 11/10		
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Rhonda	So maybe just see where you think something interesting happened, where the student and you
2		learned something important about writing stories in comics form or just other noticings
3	Ben	Kay
4	Rhonda	I'll focus on students for now, so if you want to leave for ten minutes, that would be all right
Interaction Unit 2		
5	Ben	Well, with Marie, she doesn't write very much and she really struggles to write so when I
6		interviewed her I found out that she liked to write about vampires and then says,
7		'I like to write about them because they're
8		violent,' and the thing is that she never writes about vampires so then I asked her later, like it's
9		Not in here, but she said she writes about them at home so why not here? So that was just one thing I
10		noticed.
11	Rhonda	What insights did you gain from that?
12	Ben	Oh, ya, so I told her that she could writing about vampires here, and I guess it was important to think
13		about Why there is a difference for her between home and here because
14		I've never said what they couldn't write about except for maybe on an individual basis.
15		But then the other thing is that she loves this comics writing and
16		She isn't so crazy about drawing but she says she is, like she says, 'Because it's easier to sketch out
17		than writing a whole bunch of pages, so I asked her,
18		'Have you ever heard the saying, 'A picture is worth a thousand words,
19		And she laughed and it's true because she is writing more but I think she thinks she is just drawing
Interaction Unit 3		
20	Rhonda	Oh, how powerful was that, hey? Do you think you could share this insight tomorrow? I mean about
21	Ben	Like my insights or hers?
22	Rhonda	Well, both because you learned something but she did, too, especially because you share your
23		insights with her
24	Ben	Okay, and it's good to have a few minutes to just look back on these

Focal Interaction 2: Mark reviews transcript, Mar. 11/10		
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Mark	My biggest insight is that most students have a hard time talking about comics story
2		writing and when they talk about writing, they think it's
3		[points to discussion about regular writing] about their hand hurting
4	Rhonda	So do you want to just talk about one student's answers and then tell me more about what
5		you mean?
6	Mark	Okay, Aiden, he kept talking about drawing, but I was asking him about what he hopes he
7		will learning about
8		comics story writing, right?
9	Rhonda	[reads part he references] So you asked him, What the hardest part about comics up with

10		ideas? And he says, 'drawing,' and you say, 'Drawing aside I mean what's
11		the hardest part about writing the story?' and then he
12		Talks beginning, middle end stuff. Okay, so what does that tell you about your ideas about
13		aside and to talk about comics writing?
14	Mark	My ideas?
15	Rhonda	Well, I mean what assumptions are you making when you tell him to put the drawing
16		writing the comics story?
17	Mark	Well, I want him to think about writing the story
18	Rhonda	So what does it mean to write a comics story?
19	Mark	Well, to write it out and then draw it out, like put the ideas together, right.
Interaction Unit 2		
20	Rhonda	Have you ever tried composing a comics story? Like from scratch
21	Mark	No, not really, so//
22	Rhonda	Well, I'm thinking that it's hard for Aiden to talk to you about drawing and writing
23		separately because he says 'I use the pictures and get the ideas in my mind and then put
24		them on the page,' and then he talks on and off about drawing and writing as though they
25		happen for him in a back-and-forth way//he interchanges them
26	Mark	So, maybe it's both, hmm, that's interesting
27	Rhonda	I think it is both and the process is very connected and that's why you noticed Ben
28		thinking aloud on Tuesday by moving back and forth from his mentally leaping
29		into his character's head and body because comics writing requires that absolute
30		immersion with the drawing as the character moving along
31	Mark	That's true, like he was struggling to talk to me about comics stories because he needed to
32		put himself into thinking like writing through his characters because he kept referring to
33		the boat and the bear
34	Rhonda	Ya, so when you think about why he associated regular writing with his hand hurting, it
35		kind of makes sense, no?
36	Mark	Ah, like years of non-stop getting it down kind of stuff, ya.
37	Rhonda	Ya, like it becomes more about the physical act of getting the story done, not the process
38		of connecting with characters and the process of creating ideas, new story worlds

Away Space Focal Interactions, March 12, 2010

Morning reflections about starting out as collaborative action researchers

Focal Interaction 1: Samantha on Beginnings, Mar.12/10		
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Samantha	[using her visual map] After a brief conversation with her and she explained what she
2		was trying to do, I was interested. My immediate response was, well,
3		'Yeah, of course!' Like I worked with her in the past, I would
4		love to work with you, so I would love to work with you. And I didn't really think about
5		it too much, just that It's going to be fun. And then when I stepped aside
6		and went to work the next day and thought about it and
7		,you know, I had going on, and I realized, 'Okay, I've got a looked at my planning,
8		looked at everything, the student teacher and all of this'
9	Ben	Yeah
10	Samantha	Projects, science fair coming up and AISI
11	Ben	When's your student teacher done?
12	Samantha	In April, I think
13	Ben	In April, so you still have her for awhile yet
Interaction Unit 2		
14	Samantha	And then the panic set in and I thought, 'Oh, my God, am I going to be able to devote
15		enough time to this to make it work? Is it going to be?
16		Am I going to provide anything that is going to be of any use to Rhonda, and
17		I'm not the only one, too, so I felt like my brain was going to explode
18	Ben	Yeah
Interaction 3		
19	Samantha	And so then when we had our first planning meeting at [the ski hill], which was kind of a
20		blessing in disguise I didn't, you know, it was kind of a crazy environment
21		to have a planning meeting, but at the same time it was a time-saver

Focal Interaction 2: Samantha Questions Her Own Self-efficacy, Mar.12/10		
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Samantha	The last thing for me is do I have a clear focus? Can I find my inquiry? So I am thinking of looking
2		what contributes to students' self-efficacy, like their belief in themselves about whether or not
3		they can do story
4		Writing through comics, and I know Rhonda says I don't need to know right now, but I need to so
5		that I can know what to look at, like to grow
6	Ben	Ya
7	Samantha	But it's almost like I wonder my self-efficacy is probably not in a great place so I can I look at
8		theirs? I start asking myself how can I build those up or tear those down, like if they see me as
9		confident then it will
10		Help them build up, right? But if they see me as not confident then it will tear it down for them, so I
11		imagine it would ?
12	Ben	Well, I can comment from watching Rhonda teach. She let the kids know that she wasn't a
13		comfortable artist and the kids know that I am quite confident, so
14	Samantha	Ya, absolutely
15	Ben	So they're thinking, 'I'm going to draw now because finally there's someone here who is like me,
16		not well. Not that she isn't good, but that she doesn't feel that she is, so now 'I'm going to do it, too.
17	Samantha	Ya, it's cute actually. One of the little boys came up to me yesterday because they were drawing. I
18		tried to draw, too, and he came up just to show me, 'I am learning with you' and another little boy
19		'came up and said, That's pretty goo, Miss S.' [laughs]
20		[laughs]
21	Ben	So you have your answer
22	Samantha	Ya, I know, I know, they need me to just let down my guard.

Focal Interaction 3: Ben and the Beginnings, Mar.12/10		
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Ben	Okay, well your first planning meeting was at the ski hill, but ours was at the school and all hell
2		broke loose that day and Mark was in and out so Rhonda and I pretty much did it on our own,
3		so, and the next day
4		I was excited but nervous and the fact that I left my notes at home didn't help
5	Samantha	So you taught together, okay, sorry, go on
6	Ben	Ya, so we got started and then it just felt like, I looked around and all I could see were these adults in
7		my room,
8	Samantha	Was there, who was in your room?
9	Ben	Well, it felt like there was like 6 adults in my room, like, at one point, the two principals and then
10		Mark and Rhonda, and then later my student teacher, so
11	Samantha	Sorry to interrupt, that's understandable, a lot of people
12	Ben	Ya, so, I just felt 'flat' like off so I went home and wrote in my journal and my wife talked to me
13		and I just thought it made me nervous because I wasn't used to it. Maybe if we had introduced like
14		one small concept
15	Samantha	Well, also, if you're going to flop, you kind want to do that in private
16	Ben	Ya, so, then afterwards, Rhonda was teaching a lesson, and the Mark was teaching a lesson, and then
17		we all
Interaction Unit 2		
18		started teaching different parts and it really started to pick up, and before that, we decided to start the
19		blog thing. Mark and Rhonda hadn't just gotten the blog done, and so I brought the kids to the
20		computer lab didn't send notes home. I just jumped right in, didn't send notes home, and
21		[cough, cough]. The next day we got notes and parents calling saying, 'There are predators after my
22		kids so we had to settle that ear down, but so
23		so then we sent notes home and now the kids are really excited because they really want to do it. But
24		it was so strange because it started out as a learning journal and they went home or to the library that
25		night and turned into, 'Hey, what are you having for supper?'' and so it turned into something else
26	Samantha	They used as chat, like social media, ya
27	Ben	So we hadn't taught them about this medium and they used it the best that they could but now we've
28		had 3 or 4 really good lessons, where they've learned how to construct a blog entry, and they're
29		creating like comic with beginning, middles and ends, so it is becoming this really rich thing

Focal Interaction 4: Kate on Beginnings, Mar.12/10		
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Kate	So I started off where Rhonda stopped by the school, and I wrote a lot that day, so I'll share it with you
2		[reads from her journal] I don't know why, but I feel like this is going to be a huge chance for me,
3		not so much for the kids, but I think that changed, too,
4		Because learning happened for me and the kids... I wrote down that I felt quite unsure because I didn't
5		know what the project entailed and I felt like really nervous because In looked at her as this
6		writing guru person that knows everything about writing.
7		And it seemed at the same time like perfect timing because I fell like, as a teacher, writing has become
8		a really big focus in our school and I fell like we're striving to get better and better; yet, it's to the point
9		that we're overdoing it, and we're not even, we're not approaching it in the way that I think, that I feel
10		is a good approach to teaching writing, but I can't back it up with
11		data, but you know, I've been teaching seven years, so that's what I know about teaching writing, so I
12		thought it would be a chance to improve, but at the same time, 'What is I suck at it and she sees me?'
13		After I went to the first meeting, I felt really excited because I thought, 'This is really going to target
14		those boys, which is one of my specific area that I was really
15		passionate about, but I was still nervous.
Interaction Unit 2		
16		In lesson, I was insanely nervous. I was coming in to see Carmen the day before and
17		going, 'Like how do I know when you're going to talk, and when I'm going to talk?' And I think by the
18		end of the lesson. What I was really worried about was a little bit of judgment from Carmen and
19		Rhonda, even though there's no reason, like it was ll in my head. But I think because I don't
20		have nay knowledge about comics so I felt like there's two people who know more than me so the
21		second lesson was a big breakthrough for me because Rhonda taught, and I just got to sit back and I
22		could think and observe and sort of breathe. By then I was starting to wrap my whole brain around this
23		whole comic thing, and I think that's when the learning started for me, and for the students.
24		By lesson three, I really think it was the best so far because my observations about students are much,
25		much deeper and I actually started to ask questions, real questions about how they
26		Are doing and that kind of made me feel like I knew that I wanted to talk more with them. I was feeling
27		like there was, it was meaningful, deeper, more relaxed, sincere

Focal Interaction 5: Carmen on beginnings/ Kate inquiring into Carmen's planning, Mar.12/10		
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Carmen	I remember Matthew coming in an saying, "I've got a phone call, would you like to participate in a
2		writing project? I said, 'Sure, why not?' Like, sure, why not, so Well, just cause I like language
3		arts, but it's just at our school, we have this huge pressure, so it's just like this one more skill
4		that I'll have will work out well, and working with Rhonda because, you know, she's got knowledge
5		,so, ya, like I said, 'For sure' After the first meeting day, I had all of these great ideas and I was excited
6		when I left. Then you start driving how
7		and you start thinking about everything that we're going to have to do, and I was like, 'Oh, no.' Like, I
8		was getting that sense of overwhelming, so I went home and I read a little bit of the comic book, and I
9		started like doodling some of the techniques in the book, trying them in my journal, and it was fun, but
10		It's also like, 'What if I can't draw this' Like what if some kid comes up and says, 'okay, let's draw
11		This together, and I'm like, 'I don't know how?'
Interaction Unit 2		
12	Kate	Is that what motivated you to [go home and draw] cause you were practicing in your journal
13	Carmen	Ya
14	Kate	Were you motivated to practice because you were nervous or because you wanted to see what you
15		could or what?
16	Carmen	I think it was a little bit of both, just to know like how far I could push myself, how far I actually can
17		do this on my own, and just to be prepared, just in case you have that one kid who was going to be like
18		'we want to see you do this and then lesson one happened and that was one of the powerful
19		lesson by far because they were willing to think and when they started debating about whether
20		they could pull panels out, it was like 'Wow!'
21	Kate	Ya, I totally agree

Focal Interaction 6: Mark on Beginnings, Mar.12/10		
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Mark	Well, again, going back to the first day when Rhonda came in, right, and it was sot of really supposed
2		to with Ben, but then after
3		I'm in his class on Tuesday and Thursdays, right, so I teach with Ben, right? I'm part of his language
4		arts program, so I thought I've always learned something when I've worked with Rhonda so I knew
5		this would be another learning challenge for me, right.
6		And then the day when we met at [the away space], it was just exciting, right. Again, my comfort level
7		with drawing and stuff
8		Is really bad so I mean this has been a real challenge for me. so it was the same thing [looks at Carmen]
9		like if a kid comes up to
10		You and asks, 'How do you do this, right?' But I guess I know the biggest thing is that we do our best
11		because that's what we
12		Expect from kids. You're best doesn't have to be an amazing piece of art work as long as it's your best
13		writing and you've put effort into it.
Interaction Unit 2		
14		But I'll go back to the fist planning day. It was a crazy day at the school. We had all of these phone
15		calls from parents and I missed our planning meeting.
16		It was really a choppy start, right? So I sat down with Ben and he said
17		that they wanted kids to know comics of all types, like withy more words, less words, so I kind of got it
18		Then I started to read through the kids' responses and I'm thinking they think writing is bad because
19		their hands hurt?
20	Kate	That was my biggest response, too [laughs]

Focal Interaction 7: Carmen, Kate and Mark "It's about Philosophy", Mar.12/10		
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Carmen	I think it's interesting that when I taught grade one, I read them picture books all the time and most of
2		the story is told through pictures and you have to also read words but pictures have messages
3		and now we ask them to write stories for the PATS and we take away a big for them to tell their
4		messages and I think that's why my students are, well, for the most part, really eating this up
Interaction Unit 2		
5	Mark	I, well I interviewed this boy and it was kind of funny because I found out that I was asking him
6		'Okay, so tell me how you get ideas for your comics stories?'
7		and he tells me about the drawings and I say, 'No, no
8		forget about the drawing, tell me how you write the story, right?' [laughing]
9	Everyone	Laughing
10		And then Rhonda has me read my own words, and it's good she can't hear me say this but it's right
11		there like in
12		the transcript that I'm doing this. It was like, 'Oh my God, how embarrassing, right' and at first I felt
13		Like
14		'How could we talk like this?' right, but then I realized that she it's like just so much a part of how
15		we've taught
16		Writing so it's not just me. It's years and years of making kids write and now draw
Interaction Unit 3		
17	Kate	Ya, I agree because, well when I started teaching grade three, my philosophy was very much a
18		Prescription I tried to teach writing in their very set way, where it was like, 'Okay, here's the plan,
19		now you copy it onto your page and I tried the totally opposite approach for the last two years,
20		and now the third year, well, the scores totally flipped and I think it was just a more positive
21		experience for them, so this project, when you say, like drawing and writing will open up another
22		path, then I agree because it works to give them even just let them draw to get ideas and I wouldn't
23		have said that before
24	Mark	So it's really about all, it's about philosophy

Reading and lesson planning

Focal Interaction 1: Carmen and Kate planning, March 12, 2010 (first 11 minutes)		
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Kate	So the picture is like, they'll get this, so we won't need to start with the interdependent one
2	Carmen	Do you know what? Let me read, '...illustrate aspects of the scene being described, words and pictures
3		combine,"
4		so word-specific means that the words are telling the story, so that's when you can get away with like
5		just drawing a quick happy face or sad eyes
6	Kate	So it would almost be better to have examples and hold them up and see if they can get the story, like
7		we could
8		Even have them draw a picture and hold them up and say, 'Ya, I know what your picture means or
9		' No, I don't know what it means'
10	Carmen	I think modeling is key because if you give them too much then they won't get it
Interaction Unit 2		
11	Kate	But I think we want to start with the easy one, like picture-specific?
12	Carmen	Really, I think word-specific is easiest?
13	Kate	Why? Oh, well
14	Carmen	Because some kids who can't draw well will say, 'I can't create comics story that is picture-
15		dependent, but they all know what it means to write regular written stories
16	Kate	Oh ya, because interdependent doesn't mean both together
17	Carmen	Yes, it does, and so does word dependent. It's that words drive it when it's word-dependent
18	Kate	[looks at Carmen's drawings] Oh, right, I get it now that I see it, yes, sorry about that
19	Carmen	See, like 'I'm so happy for you, but she's crying,' so if you didn't have the words
20	Kate	You might think she'd just sad
Interaction Unit 3		
21	Carmen	Okay, so let's figure it out step-by-step [starts writing a list]
22	Kate	Okay, we can model. Well, let's just back up before, okay? Because I think it's really important that
23		the students have processing time with some structure but not like where all of the teaching happens
24		and then we send them off
25	Carmen	Ya, but we have to model, so first we show them examples
26	Kate	That's good and we can use these from the book
27	Carmen	Ya, I've been drawing them so we can just scan them
28	Kate	Oh, that's why you're drawing them, I'm with you [laughs] Okay, so we introduce each one with a
29		definition
30	Carmen	Or, I'm not sure if this will work, but we could just put up a comic and ask them what they notice
31	Kate	There are words, there are pictures
32	Carmen	So what do the words tell you and what do the pictures tell you, like that?
33	Kate	You mean after we introduce each one?
34	Carmen	No, I mean like we put on up and then ask them what tells the story, what's needed.
Interaction Unit 4		
35	Kate	Like multiple-choice, that's one good, ya, that will work, but we'll only have grade3s' attention for so
36		long, so
37	Carmen	No, I know, so not too long, but we still need debate
38	Kate	Maybe we can turn it over to partners to debate so it's not so teacher focused
Interaction Unit 5		
39	Carmen	And then we can just use his exercise, like this one, where they create words for us to understand the
40		story
41	Kate	So dialogue?
42	Carmen	Ya, but like any words, like thought bubbles or just writing a strip of words so that they have to try
43		different ways
44	Kate	Oh, ya, because they will end up different, like with different stories
45	Carmen	That would be like one lesson and then the next one could be, "Okay, now here are words, you make
46		an interdependent comic

Focal Interaction 2: Ben and Samantha Planning, Mar. 12/10 (first 9 minutes)		
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Samantha	Ok, so we should just read and see what it's about
Interaction Unit 2		
2	Ben	You ready? Kay, so we could look at panel size because that's an easy way to show intensity, like
3		even stretching it to double-size, like here, you can that the message is like a big exclamation
4		Point
5	Samantha	Okay, I could show that, but like this one is punching through with a leg, and, well I wouldn't be
6		able to model that
7	Ben	Have you ever done that 3-dimensional art project with the kids, because it's the same thing.
8		Okay [sketches] In university, they teach point on horizon so just draw a line and put a dot right
9	Samantha	Kay
10	Ben	No, you do it, too [laughs]
11	Samantha	I was going to, but like after so just let me get the idea
12	Ben	Okay so you draw a building and it's close, and then you could even have a person looking off
13		into the distance here
14	Samantha	Are you kidding me?! The whole thing just makes my head hurt
15	Ben	That's why you should be drawing because it's pretty easy
16	Samantha	Okay, so I draw the line, the dot and the building right here. I did it! Hey
17	Ben	Okay so it's probably easier to draw it from this perspective then
Interaction 3		
18	Samantha	Okay, so now we have panel size and I think we need to narrow it down to three or something to
19		keep it manageable, so let's make a list
20	Ben	Right, Okay, so panel size, and even like how we're going to introduce it
21	Samantha	Oh, that's cool, I like that idea [Ben is drawing one picture with an increasing panel size]
22		Ok, so that is a good way to introduce the panel size. Now, I'm reading this one, and it's like we
23		could just give them the three comics, and ask them which one is clear, and unclear
24	Ben	Ya, so we could start with that because all of the effects are used in there and they can see how too
25		many effects ruins the message
26	Samantha	Ya, so after that we can model some effects for intensity, like panel size, exaggerated poses,
27		maybe?
28	Ben	Ya, I can show you that, too, so let's just use Scott McCloud. Well, he tells you right here, so we
29		could even
30	Samantha	Scan it in and then copy and they copy so it reduces the pressure to come up with your own
31		Character

Focal Interaction 3: Mark and Rhonda planning, Mar.12/10 (First 8 minutes)		
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Mark	[working on Notebook slide] We were reading for 4 minutes
2	Rhonda	Oh, wow, so do you have an idea now? You're like super reader
3	Mark	[laughs] I was thinking we could do it as we go
Interaction Unit 2		
4	Rhonda	Okay, so characters, so what did you think of his thing about making yourself a character?
5	Mark	I don't like [laughs] No, okay, we could, ya
6	Rhonda	Should we try his idea here?
7	Mark	What idea?
8	Rhonda	Well, he says how he made himself into a character by picking his key like internal and external
9		Features
10	Mark	So a character sketch [makes box]
11	Rhonda	Ya, but I think he means that he also kind used the lightening bolt here in his drawing to show his
12		Personality, so maybe this box needs room for a picture
Interaction Unit 3		
13	Mark	So you're trying to get me to draw on the SMART board? Have you ever tried that?
14	Rhonda	Oh, ya, last day it was like I had Halloween writing because it kind of makes you look like a 2 year
15		old so we could us the white board and the SMART board
16		But it's like on the other side of the room, so
17	Mark	Okay, well maybe a chart paper? Or we could do one part and ten shift the kids or
18	Rhonda	Kay
19	Rhonda	Should we try it just on paper and do it as co-lesson, where you create my character and I create
20		yours. The Kids would like to see us interact like that and then they could work in pairs to try it
21		Maybe

Parker Elementary, March 15-Spring Break

Focal Interaction 1: Carmen and Kate's class, Don't get twisted already!, Mar. 15/10		
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Carmen	First of all, what is the middle of a story?
2	Gr. 6	It's the events
3	Carmen	The events, right. So if the middle is our events, then what makes a good middle?
4	Gr. 3 St	Events
5	Carmen	Okay [calls on next student]
6	Gr. 6 St	You could use expressions
7	Carmen	Okay, I put expressions but you mean to carry out the mood, right?
8	Gr. 6 St.	I mean the details
Interaction Unit 2		
9	Carmen	Now, here's one of those things that is different between writing and comics. In writing stories,
10		where do details come from?
11	Gr. 3 St.	Word choices
12	Carmen	What about in comics?
13	Gr. 6 St.	Speech bubbles?
14	Gr. 6 St.	Settings
15	Carmen	Okay, so what makes a good comics story middle?
16	Gr. 6 St.	The panels
17	Carmen	Okay, but what's in the panels?
18	Gr. 3 St	Pictures
19	Carmen	Okay, but I mean what does a story middle do? What do you have to do with those panels?
20	Gr. 6 St	Makes it interesting and build suspense
Interaction Unit 3		
21	Carmen	Well, is that what the main is that happens in the middle?
22	Erin	No, well, ya, you get the reader's interest, right?
23	Carmen	Okay, but the middle events are not consequences of actions, right? What are they?
24	Erin	Um, they solve the problem?
25	Carmen	Yes, that's right, they solve the problem, so does building suspense belong in the middle or
26		beginning?
27	Erin	Middle, not begin/, middle
27	Mostly Gr. 3s	laughing
28	Ivan	It's the middle
29	Erin	Okay, don't get twisted already!

Focal Interaction 2: Samantha's Class, It Could Be the Worst Story Ever!, Mar. 15/10		
1	Samantha	Okay, the middle
2	Jack	You need panels and speech bubbles, like make sure like they flow, like they run smoothly
3	Samantha	What do you mean, run smoothly?
4	Jack	That they build up like events
5	Elisa	You have to have three events
6	Samantha	Really? You have to three events?
7	Elisa	No, they can be more if you want
8		So let's take the number out of it because I've read stories that have 900 events
9	Pat	What?!
10	Samantha	But does that make it a good story?
11	Many students	Yeah [many smiles as though they know that is the wrong answer]
12	Pat	It could be the worst story ever!
13	Samantha	What would make it the worst?
14	Pat	Well, like this happened, then that happened
15	Samantha	Exactly, so what makes a comics story work in the middle?
16	Kathryn	I think you need your reader to know like what you're talking about

Carmen, Kate and Samantha's Debriefing, March 15, 2010

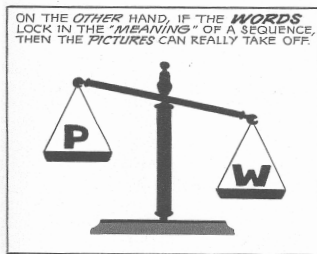
Focal Interaction 1: Untangling story language, Mar. 15/10		
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Kate	I think Carmen, you are really good at, um, being able to guide them further in conversation, but
2		one thing both Carmen and I noticed afterwards was that, actually Carmen you thought
3		of it first and then I just thought it was a really good idea is that we had seven panels and then we
4		said, 'Can you make it better?' I think it was too much, like it would have been better with 3 or 5
5		panels. It was really long.
6	Carmen	What I think was happening was that we took a lot of time to say, 'Okay, does this make sense?
7		What do we know is happening?' so in their minds, it was already a complete story.
8	Kate	Hmmm
9	Carmen	And so, when we brought them back to say, 'Okay, elaborate on it, even after talking about 'pull-
10		back-reveal' And moment-to-moment, not very many of them used those strategies.
Interaction Unit 2		
11	Kate	Ya, and I liked your suggestion of turn-and-talk kind of thing [turns towards me]
12	Rhonda	Oh, my suggestion, Samantha, was that we tend to have this feeling that we have to teach and then
13		students get down to their own work, but it seems like the size of the group or possibly
14		it's just a routine maybe that we need to get students more actively involved
15	Samantha	Do you think the group should be split?
16	Rhonda	I don't know. I think it is a teaching approach that can be explored. I find I get caught into the
17		top-down talking mode when I'm talking about comics, not working with them
Interaction Unit 3		
18	Kate	I think it's that we haven't actually sat together and planned until Friday so this lesson was not
19		ours, like we didn't know how the process went and we called each other yesterday and talked on
20		the phone
21	Carmen	And I think the kids didn't really get the connection between the beginning, middle and ends, so
22		maybe we should have had them work on improving the story beginning and then talk about
23		Criteria
24	Rhonda	Yes, like work through the process and then ask them what they noticed they did?
25	Carmen	Oh, that's good, actually I was thinking like work through the beginning criteria and then have
26		them apply it
27	Rhonda	The thing is that they get caught up in language tangles with words that belong to traditional story
28		Writing
Interaction Unit 4		
30	Carmen	Ya, I know, I was thinking that because I was really worried when you said that an event could be
31		at the beginning
32	Kate	I was nervous at that part
33	Rhonda	Oh, that's what I mean, like Samantha might use a word like "motivation" and you use "problem"
34		but I
35	Samantha	Sorry to interrupt, but I used that right from one of your charts, the word 'motivation'
36	Rhonda	Oh, no, I know because when you used the example of a story problem doesn't have to be bad; it
37		can be about winning \$1000, I heard my own consultant voice from my work here in 2004
38	Kate	Ya, that's right and wasn't it you who taught us about cause and effect for middles, too
39	Carmen	Exactly, because I thought I was wrong like actions are not events, right?
40	Rhonda	Okay, I lost track of what I've said over the years, but I guess this is my point. The language we
41		use with regular story writing will work and will fall apart with comics stories because you saw
42		how the one student created two stories at once by putting herself on top of the panel and
43		narrating the story from outside of it
44	Kate	Ya, that was Jackie, her dad has his own comic strip about a duck
45	Rhonda	Okay, so the narrator was telling us what the character was thinking while we watched the plot
46		unfold So it would be touch to use the idea of one event building into another when the building
47		actually being done from the narrator, too, so stories and story language expand and change
48	Samantha	Ya, so you're not wrong, Carmen, because words change and the words we use to explain things
49		to different age groups change, too
50	Carmen	I'm not so sure because I've been using events but now I think I'm wrong. I should use "actions"
51	Rhonda	Honestly, I think you could interchange those two words as long as the students know what you
52		mean So it's like less about the words and more about connecting words to actual lived examples

Figure 10: Adapted version of McCloud's (1993) ice-cream comic story below

MAKING A WORD-SPECIFIC COMIC

Name: _____ Grade: _____ Date: _____

<p>I CROSSED THE STREET TO THE CONVENIENCE STORE. THE RAIN SOAKED INTO MY BOOTS.</p>	<p>I FOUND THE LAST PINT OF CHOCOLATE CHOCOLATE CHIP IN THE FREEZER.</p>	<p>Criteria</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do my pictures show only what they need to show? 2. Do the words tell most of the story? 3. Do I use some of the special effects that I have learned? <p>○ _____</p> <p>○ _____</p> <p>○ _____</p> <p>○ _____</p> <p>○ _____</p> <p>○ _____</p>
	<p>THE CLERK TREID TO CHEER ME UP. I THOUGHT HE WAS CREEPY.</p>	
<p>I WENT BACK TO THE APARTMENT--</p>	<p>--AND FINISHED IT ALL IN AN HOUR.</p>	
	<p>ALONE AT LAST.</p>	



<p>I CROSSED THE STREET TO THE CONVENIENCE STORE. THE RAIN SOAKED INTO MY BOOTS.</p>	<p>I FOUND THE LAST PINT OF CHOCOLATE CHOCOLATE CHIP IN THE FREEZER.</p>
	<p>THE CLERK TRIED TO PICK ME UP. I SAID <i>NO THANKS</i>. HE GAVE ME THIS CREEPY LOOK...</p>
<p>I WENT BACK TO THE APARTMENT--</p>	<p>--AND FINISHED IT ALL IN AN HOUR.</p>
	<p>ALONE AT LAST.</p>

Carmen, Kate and Samantha's debriefing

Focal Interaction 1: Away space gets erased, Mar.22/10		
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Rhonda	So, how was that today? [coughing] Sorry about that [coughing]
2	Samantha	Ya, I recorded a couple and what I thought was good was that everyone could do the task
3		and some made it into a challenge to draw as little as possible and still communicate a
4		message. I told Rhonda, 'It gives me courage to draw comics'. [As she leafed through the pre-
5		assessment scores, this was the first assignment, where every student circled a 3 or 4, so they were
7		confident that they could do the task. She smiled and raised her eyebrows as though pleasantly
8		pleasantly surprised]
9	Kate	[leaned over] So this was a good task, then, hey
10	Rhonda	What do these numbers tell us, like do they help us?
11	Samantha	Thy tell me that students are comfortable, and that's what I was saying, too, that it took
12		me until today to feel comfortable
13	Rhonda	Hmm
14	Carmen	Even [my student] who doesn't like to draw was willing to draw a big boot, so we both
15		like almost jumped up and he looked at us like, 'Huh,' but it was so good to see him do
16		something without complaining so long
Interaction Unit 2		
17	Rhonda	Do you think it helped to use the sheets and recorder for thinking more about your
18		inquiry students?
19	Kate	What did they use, oh, I see
20	Carmen	I think it's really good to get into the process of drawing, like you actually drew in the
21		SMART board And I know you said, 'My Halloween writing will be like Halloween
22		writing,' but I think it worked because
23		You just took a suggestion and drew like rain drops and a store edge and the edge of a
24		boot, so it was so simple
25	Samantha	I noticed that I could see how creative they were with what was it you called, sint-ekke
26	Rhonda	Synecdoche?
27	Samantha	Ya, so they liked the idea of thinking about the words, and just even zooming in on one
28		part of the message, like the boot or the rain because it was all about the character feeling
29		drenched but really wanting to go to the store so it gave them so much to focus in on
30		and still get the message across
Interaction Unit 3		
31	Rhonda	How did we help students, like make it better or not to write stories?
32	Kate	Well, it sounds like even the teachers felt like super energized by the whole process, so
33		now I can hardly wait [looked at Carmen] I didn't think our lesson was so powerful
34		[laughs]
35	Carmen	Ya, I thought, 'I should have just done it because you pretty much followed what we
36		had' I was thinking, 'This was so important to do right away, too'
37		because it was obvious that these wee like
38		key ways to make it more about story writing and not all about, 'Can I draw?'
39	Samantha	Did it follow what you had?
40	Carmen	Ya, she even used my drawings and scanned them in
41	Kate	You know what, I have a hard time remembering exactly what we did. It's like I get so
42		relaxed when I am away from school that I think I just kind of forget.
43		When I saw these notes from our inquiry, I thought, 'oh, ya
44		This is easy, but I had wiped it out of my head somehow
45	Samantha	I think it's because we never get a chance to just sit and think a without so many things
46		coming at us.
47		I also think that it's on a Friday and then I get in my car and think, "What do I need to
48		do?" and then I get stressed, but then once I'm home, it's like.
49		Well, you need a break on the weekend. People need that.
50	Carmen	I know, I get into my car an think, "What did I agree to do?" but then I am working and busy [
51		non-school work] and I just forget so this was good to have these reminders
Interaction Unit 4		
52	Rhonda	Maybe I should change the day?
53	Samantha	No because it would be the same even if it was a different day. I mean you could change
54		it, but I think it's
55		Just so important to have time away like that. I felt like energized by it, so, no, it's not
56		bad to have it on Fridays
57	Rhonda	Gordon Wells said that it's best if we share the agenda because I'm really not trying to
58		lead the thing

59	Kate	But we did lead it because you asked us before, right? And you started by saying you
60		asked me about this, I'm not remembering what it was exactly
61	Everyone	laughs
62	Kate	But you asked and then you gave answers and time.
Interaction Unit 5		
63	Rhonda	Is there some way that I can help you to bring ideas back ?
64		You did today just by giving us these notes form what we said, but I think our point, ar at
65		least my thing is that
66		There is so much so it is really important to have that away time
67	Rhonda	Would you like me to book another half day our first week back maybe?
68	Everyone	[Nods]Yes
69	Rhonda	I will do that, but I still think that if you're having time planning, then we need to
70		negotiate what that weekly
71		time could look like because it isn't good to pull you out of class too much

Jackson Elementary

Mark and Ben debriefing, March 19, 2010

Focal Interaction 1: Planning, Mar.19/10		
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Rhonda	Can you think of what students need to do next based on what we've done so far?
2	Mark	I want them using the criteria with their own writing because they are really using the
3		chart, so we should push that now
4	Ben	Ya, I was amazed at how many of them are writing comics on their own, like those kids
5		who didn't always get into it as much, so they can write a comics story
6	Rhonda	I totally agree because most of them were using their own characters and did you notice
7		that some of them assume that they are one or parts of different characters like Jordyn's
8		little Goth girl is actually her
9	Mark	So then we could wrap up with asking them to complete a one-page comic before they
10		leave for Spring Break
11	Rhonda	Hmm
Interaction Unit 2		
12	Ben	Ya, like just set the timer because it works pretty well
13	Rhonda	I noticed that they are developing greater writing stamina, but I agree that we want to cut
14		them a bit short and gather to share their progress so that it doesn't get
15		out of control because they stop focusing. Because after I quieted down the class
16		the other day, I just realized, 'No, no, I don't want to take that role on because it's
17		overstepping, so//
Interaction Unit 3		
18	Mark	So they can do a one-page comic?
19	Ben	Ya, that would work
20	Rhonda	Okay, so maybe some kind of introduction, where they see how the process unfolds or
21		maybe an example?
22	Ben	Sure, I'll draw an example
23	Rhonda	You know, I can put a criteria checklists together, so for Tuesday, do you want to meet a
24		but earlier then or not?
25	Ben	I think we're good

Away Space Meeting, April 9, 2010

Focal Interaction 1: Making comics lesson work (Modeling), Apr. 9/10		
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Rhonda	So we have outcomes for story writing here, and we have ideas about how o take next steps, but
2		maybe we should talk about, um, what makes a comics lesson work?
3		Or maybe 'what have we learned through this
4		Project that makes a lesson work because comics writing is quite different [ready to write notes on
5		chart]
6	Ben	Modeling is key. It's intimidating for some kids, and I especially noticed it when you said, 'I can't
7		do this. I am not good at this,' and you were on the white board walking while you were
8		drawing and even erasing to say, 'Oops, not quite like that,' and the kids were like, 'Wow!
9		And they dove in, they're all, 'No problem'''
10	Rhonda	What is modeling, because it isn't just showing//
11	Carmen	Think aloud
12	Rhonda	Thinking aloud while drawing and writing...I find that really hard to do while drawing

13	Samantha	Ummhmm, me too.
Interaction Unit 2		
14	Carmen	But I think it's powerful when you're drawing because when I did my four panels I as struggling,
15		and I don't know why, but I think it was powerful for especially the kids like Warren who says,
16		I 'I can't draw' because even if he can't draw a thing, there are still ways of showing
17		your frustration but also how you overcome it.
18		I think sometimes when we're drawing, we've already practiced it so it's not really having to think
19		about so we aren't showing our process
20	Rhonda	So maybe we should plan, but not over plan
21	Carmen	But I started to panic, like where's my book. I need the book.
22	Samantha	Me, too.
Interaction Unit 3		
23	Rhonda	Did it matter that you had to look at the book? Isn't that what kids need to see?
24	Mark	It's what modeling is
25	Samantha	Well, no, but did you notice I had to compensate by using wordy speech bubbles
26	Rhonda	I want to take away the word, 'wordy' and say you compensated by doing a text-specific comic
27		because it's you still had pictures but the whole point of that test-specific comics
28		is that they rely primarily on words
29	Ben	I find that when I do that and later I wish, 'I want that to have better pictures,' then I just go back
30		and work on them to mke better pictures but it stops the flow of the story if you always stop
31		to get your drawing right
32	Samantha	But you have more skill to begin with
33	Ben	Well, maybe, but my comics are sometimes worse because I over rely on drawing and I think I'm
34		clear but the whole thing gets to be too special, like too many special effects
Interaction Unit 4		
35	Mark	But I think w need modeling, right. It's like when we did the comic strip the other day, and it was thr
36		first time all three of us were actually making up a story by adding to each panel,
37		and the kids did a really good job
38	Samantha	On their partner comics [looks at Mark] Ya [nods]
39	Mark	So we need to do the process in front of them and go through it the way it is, like the hard parts
40	Ben	Ya, I can say, too, that it's nice to have other people to lean on when you're going through the
41		process, too, and even when Rhonda read a Mo Willems' book and then I could add some new ideas
42		to our lesson
43	Samantha	You added to your lesson?
44	Ben	Like, ya, emanata because it was for the special effects
45	Samantha	Oh, ya, you showed us that, so, ya that's good [looked at me]

Focal Interaction 2: Pre-assessments and mini-lessons, Apr.9/10		
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Rhonda	So we agree that we need to model the process and use resources that kids will use and to help each
2		other out. Now, what can you think about when we move forward and kids have an idea
3		for their comic book, and they're spending more time writing and drawing, like what will
4		help them to maintain focus to keep energized to revise and edit?
5	Carmen	I think short lessons to show them how to do something they have trouble with
6	Rhonda	Okay, so need to have mini-lessons?
7	Carmen	Ya, like we notice a few kids can't use thought bubbles very well and so we do a lesson to remind
8		them on how adding a thought bubble can help
9		That's good, so do I want to just write use mini-lessons throughout to target areas of need?
Interaction Unit 2		
10	Samantha	Ya, and I think we should use the before assessments because one of my students treats it as his goal
11		sheet and for our revising outcomes it says, 'Discuss areas of personal accomplishment'
12		and 'Share own writing with others' and I think we make those goals and we use them to point out
13		some of those mini-lesson goals. It will keep us focused, too.
14	Mark	That's differentiation, too, right because it's not like your class will have the same things as my
15		class, so then when we get together we see what kinds of targeted lessons are improving
16		different aspects, right?
17	Ben	We could even have it on the blog, so like, 'I worked on this goal today and I found out' so
18		that we share them.
19	Kate	I know for me, I really like those goals on little sheets and put boxes for them to look back and
20		check, like 'How I am doing on that goal I was worried about? Did I even remember to think about
21		it?' Some of my kids asked me to make those little before sheets for other subjects, too, and I just
22		think it makes so much sense

Focal Interaction 3: Conferencing and Criteria Checklists, Apr.9/10		
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Samantha	Well, I just think the student sharing is going really well [points to conferencing criteria checklists that were sitting in the middle from different teachers' classrooms]
2		
3		because I was sitting with Allan, 'I just think
4		For that mini-comic, right now I would give you a proficient, but if you do this' and then he came
5		back, and it wasn't even the same comic strip after that
6	Kate	You have right there in front of you, too
7	Carmen	You know exactly what you have to do and then they do it
8	Rhonda	The only thing I worried about// Is it becoming too predictable? Do you find the conversation is too
9		focused on the list and not the student?
10	Carmen	The opposite, I use it to ask the student to tell me what they see//where their message is coming
11		through and where they don't
12	Rhonda	And why does this matter?
13	Carmen	Because the student can see what they do wrong and what they need to fix.
14	Rhonda	Does it help you in any way?
15	Carmen	It does if I know how to help them fix it [laughs]
16	Rhonda	Does it help with your inquiries about students ?
17		Just to help them become better writers, drawers
Interaction Unit 2		
18	Ben	I love it. I couldn't conference without it. I need it so I don't run off in some other direction like
19		drawing cool
20		stuff because that is a problem, too. It is fun for me to draw and then I get going and it might not be
21		for the student, so it keeps me looking at the writing and the words
Interaction Unit 3		
22	Mark	And it's good for report cards because we should be recording the formative before our summative,
23		Right. Because sometimes they make it worse
Focal Interaction 3: Collaboration, Apr.9/10		
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Rhonda	What is collaboration based on our experiences in this research so far?
2	Samantha	I think a few of us drew clocks and the reason is that there's so much going on so to be able to
3		actually have time where you don't have to feel guilty that you're focusing on this because
4		the time is allotted for this and that's awesome. Like I have also put a speech balloon and thought
5		bubble and that's for us being here
6		Like talking, getting ideas. So important to meet, share, explore ideas, too. I think it does lessen the
7		load even though sometimes it takes time to mesh plans or I drew two arrows, to show the
8		meeting of the minds
9	Rhonda	Okay// I had some of those ideas, too, and I guess I wondered if you find collaborating with others
10		and me in the research the same or different than school?
11	Samantha	I prefer to come here
12	Everyone	Laughs
13	Rhonda	You do?
14	Samantha	Ya, I mean when I'm at school, I have like everything around me that reminds me of what other
15		things I could be doing so I am more , I don't know. Just, I can't think and focus in on one thing
16	Rhonda	But you know, I've found some of our most powerful debriefings have been at school
17	Samantha	Oh, sorry, ya, I thought you meant with like staff meetings. No, no, I like that because I am lucky to
18		go last so I can hear how everyone else has worked out glitches and if someone
19		noticed a better way to do some-
20		thing, then I can just soak it in and make those changes so our little meetings, ya. I mean tech
21		committee and AISI planning for staff meetings. Now, that's a whole different story [smiles]
Interaction Unit 2		
22	Kate	Okay, I had generating ideas, bouncing ideas off of each other and I feel like if I start a conversation
23		with Carmen about what we're going to do the next day, but I don't really finish it,
24		and I kind of go back and start
25		generating my own ideas then I'm sort of unclear on what my purpose is because I fell like I don't
26		know because we sort of get going in that direction and, but now I'm heading
27		in this direction now, so but, maybe
28		That's just me. it could just be my personality
29	Mark	No, I know what you mean because I find that when I plan, I was telling Rhonda this, I like to think
30		about things first and then kind of work through it with another person so if
31		I start sharing before I'm ready then I kind of shut down because I need to process, right?
32		But then I go home or I'm driving in my car and I'm thinking, 'I'm not sure what direction we're
33		headed in so I should have talked more about that before leaving
34		And then I call Rhonda, right. Like she gets calls from me where I'm not making sense, right
35		because sometimes you need to figure direction out together
36	Carmen	I do that, too, where I need to talk something through but that's where it can be hard if you don't

37		have a grade partner you're close to
38	Ben	Or you don't have a grade level partner at all
39	Mark	[snide look]
40	Everyone	Laughs
41	Ben	Okay, ya [looks at Mark as if to say 'Okay, you're my grade level partner but you're also an AP]
Interaction Unit 3		
42	Kate	You know one thing I've found with this is that I've found it hard to collaborate by email than by
43		person. Like you and Mark sent an email and you were so clear.
44		You said step-by-step, do this and then do that and you
45		Even attached the Notebook file, and I still couldn't wrap my brain around it.
46		So that could totally just be me.
47		Like did you guys, well, we don't send you anything, and, so, I just, I don't know.
48		I've found that I was really worried and you [looked at Ben and Mark]
49		said it went well and I wanted to do it, but I wasn't, I'm not sure
50	Mark	No, I think that makes sense
51	Samantha	I think the things I've been getting from Ben or Mark, I take what suits me and I take out what I
52		don't need
53	Kate	You modify it
54	Samantha	That's the nice thing about it is that it just gives you a skeleton, and you don't have to follow rules to
55		collaborate. It just gives you a direction and a kind of vision and from there, you make it yours.
56	Kate	I think that I felt I was doing it wrong, that I wouldn't be on the same page so I had the wrong
57		impression, I
58		guess. I think you're right that when we're collaborating that we don't have to be doing the same
59		thing.
Interaction Unit 4		
60	Carmen	If you said before, 'How do you collaborate?' I would have said, 'I don't know', so this has been
61		good for me Because now I know what collaboration is about. It's working together as a team,
62		thinking together as a group, bouncing ideas off of one another because sometimes
63		I'll totally oversee something and they'll ask, 'What about this?' and you'll think, 'Oh, yeah, right'
64		so it just kind of stops the panic moments when you're
65		Like, 'Oh, man. Like I forgot that' and just new ideas flow out so I need to talk to someone.
66		I haven't had a grade level partner for more than two years in a row
67		and I haven't had one who really wants to think through lessons. Mostly I am given things and I give
68		things but that's about it, so I don't know what it's like to work so
69		Closely
70	Samantha	Because it makes it easier if you have that, but we haven't always had that
71	Carmen	No, I know, but I don't think I knew what it was like
Interaction Unit 5		
72	Mark	I think collaboration is about building relationships because I'm not going to tell someone things if I
73		don't trust them, right? So I call you because I trust that you will help
74		me and listen to me but I wouldn't call you if I didn't feel that way.
75		I also think it's about finding the right fit because you said that your two artists friends
76		Work mostly by technologies, like phone, email, and I can see that because you can get a lot done
77		that way but then when Kate was talking, I think you can't get some things done
78		that way, so I'm still thinking about that, right. I also think collaborative learning is about
79		the other person and what they can do so I know Ben can draw and he likes to draw, so when we
80		plan I get him to more of those parts. It's about
81		flexibility but also about working to make things fit together, I guess
82	Ben	I'm nodding because I totally agree that it has been so good to work people who just jump in and out
83		of a lesson, like Rhonda read a book and I joined them a bit later
84		but then I used some of that lesson when I did my special effects and the other day, we all drew a
85		comic together and it was awesome and the kids expect us to joke around and to work that way,
86		so I think collaboration is about letting each person just jump in and out, but
87		It's also about I think it's relationships, too, because I wasn't feeling as good before. Now we have
88		this thing moving, so it works

Parker Elementary

Carmen's Class

Focal Interaction 1: Carmen talks to Betty, Apr.21/10		
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Carmen	Okay, so walk me through your story
2	Betty	There's this boy and he has a friend who steals and his mom told him to stay away from him but he's
3		allowed to go to the like the corner gas station
4	Carmen	Did you get that idea from our ice-cream story?

5	Betty	I guess so because I got my idea from going back over my comics and I saw the panel and I just s
6		started drawing it but I changed it from a store to a gas station and I knew that I wanted it to be about
7		Stealing but I was sketching and then I had an idea for why he's going to the gas station
Interaction Unit 2		
8	Ivan	See, that's kind of how I do it, like I got my plan, too from Marcus' idea of the Narwhal
9	Carmen	Okay, so, I like how you used beanbag man, too, because I can see he's walking and you don't need
10		to say it
11	Betty	I was thinking of writing "A young boy is walking to a gas station near a his house"
12	Carmen	Oh, because, ya, it gives different information
Interaction Unit 3		
13	Ivan	It's interdependent
14	Carmen	Okay, so why is he going to the gas station?
15	Betty	He's just thinking, 'Hmm, what do I want?', and I think I'll have him run into his friend who steals
16		Because he's not supposed to hang around him, right, so maybe in the next panel
17	Carmen	Oh, so the problem is that he gets caught up in stealing?
18	Betty	I'm not sure yet
19	Carmen	Okay, good, keep going. That's really good.
Interaction Unit 4		
20	Carmen	[turns to me] So I wrote down that she connects each panel with visuals and words
21	Rhonda	Ya, that's perfect, and if you notice what she struggled to do, you could also put that on a different
22		list

Focal Interaction 2: Rhonda works with Ray and Ivan, Apr.21/10		
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Rhonda	Would you like to walk me through your story so far
2	Ray	The people have abused the air by polluting it with these factories [points to an article] and it causes
3		chemical smog...and when that happens it is serious so like the government would have to evacuate.
4		If Americans and Canadians keep this up, we could have like D-Day, you know what I mean?...I
5		don't know how to show like that Obama has ordered the evacuation in this panel because the CEOs
6		have ignored the guidelines
7	Rhonda	Hmm, well, let's think. Is there a comics writer who has written about social action, or has used a
9		technique to tell a real and fictional story together?
10	Ivan	[sits beside Ray in a pod of four desks] I know just do this [He draws an iris]. Remember? We just saw it
Interaction Unit 2		
11	Rhonda	I think it's in the other room
12	Ivan	[He gets up to get "Nothing Particular" by Molly Bang]
13	Rhonda	A parallel plot line? It's like the mouse one in
14	Ivan	Yeah "Something From Nothing" [he saw me talking to another student that morning about 'parallel
15		plot lines' and recalled the book]
16	Rhonda	Oh, yeah, it's there, too [I had shown "The Mitten" by Jan Brett, not "Something from Nothing"]
17	Ray	A parallel plot line because look it's like the real story and the fake one.
18	Rhonda	Ya, do you remember when we talked about this book? It's where the lady uses color pictures behind
19		and black and white to tell the story about pollution killing the shrimp ?
20	Ray	Oh, so I could tell it in here [points to narration] and
Interaction Unit 3		
21	Ivan	I just told you that so you didn't even need to draw Obama because it's like Betty's, well your is
22		more What's that called, oh ya, text focused

Focal Interaction 3: Carmen and Rhonda and Ivan, Apr.21/10		
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Rhonda	[Student is talking about later panels] How about you start from the beginning
2	Ivan	Okay, her son is going to Afghanistan and she's worried but she knows he has to fight because he
3		needs to protect the country, but then I switch and we are there in Afghanistan and her realizes that this
4		officer [points] is corrupt but it's too late because just when he figures it out, the war supplies building is blown apart
5	Rhonda	Okay, your story idea is really good and I love how you provide us with two perspectives, like two
6		narrators, so how can you show that this is one place and this another because
7	Ivan	No, that's her son [points to the first panel] and she's telling him about his dad having to go to
		Afghanistan
Interaction Unit 2		
8	Carmen	See, that's what I mean [looks at me]

9	Rhonda	Ivan, do you see our problem as readers? What can you do to help us to know that [points to later panel] is her husband and that's [points to first panel] is her son
10		
11	Ivan	I'll just write it as narration
12	Carmen	Okay, what will you write?
13	Ivan	Her thoughts, like having trouble saying that his dad went away
14	Carmen	So a thought balloon?
15	Ivan	Ya
16	Rhonda	I just learned a trick for that, draw the thought balloon first and then draw the mother because you won't run out of space
17		
Interaction Unit 3		
18	Carmen	[Reads as he writes] 'How do I tell him that his dad is going ' Okay, that helps.
19	Rhonda	[turns to Carmen] I have for my list that students can walk me through as long as I ask questions
20		I get confused and they create visuals first and add words later so their visuals are carrying the story
21	Carmen	I had that they can draw details to fill in gaps, but then how does that translate, like even his comic with the thought balloon
22		
23	Rhonda	[Walks over to white board] If we had him take his comic and write it in words, we would see thought balloons become what Barry Lane (1999) calls "thought shots" and when we look at his characters and described what they are doing with their faces and bodies,
24		
25		Barry Lane calls those "heart shots"
26		
27	Carmen	Could we try that in another lesson then?
28	Rhonda	Ya, sure, I am happy to book extra time if you want
29	Ivan	Could you show me now? I want to know how to make it translate.

Kate's class

Focal Interaction 1: Conference with Darrin, Apr.21/10		
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Rhonda	Okay, so walk me through your story so far
2	Darrin	Which one?
3	Rhonda	Oh, you have more than one?
Interaction Unit 2		
4	Kate	I think he means his plan and his comics story because he didn't follow his plan.
5	Rhonda	Oh, well, which one do you like better?
6	Darrin	[points to his comics story, which was composed using tiny pictures and now words] So there are these people from the future are scared of the maker because he brought back like things that are bad for us
7		
8		
9	Rhonda	Oh, what things did he bring back?
10	Darrin	Coffee and sugar
11	Kate	[Laughing] I know because I can't have caffeine
12	Rhonda	[laughing] I might not survive without espresso
13	Darrin	What's espresso?
14	Rhonda	It's like really strong coffee. Sorry, go ahead
15	Darrin	So like they are afraid of the maker of Planet 4 so they drank the coffee and they go crazy and the Maker can't supervise them because they try to overtake the plane/world, I mean they try to overtake the planet and then he gets scared so he brings in Supersnake
16		
17		
18	Rhonda	Okay, Darrin, I really understand your story when I have you right here to tell me, but I wasn't sure when I looked at your words
19		
Interaction Unit 3		
20	Kate	Ya, and it reminded me of one my comics [points to SMART to figures]. Which one do you think?
21	Darrin	[went up to the SMART board and pointed to the stick man comic]
22	Kate	Okay, so what did we have to do to make it better?
23	Darrin	Add words
24	Kate	Well, I guess I didn't really add words, but maybe you are comparing the two comics, so what helps me to communicate better in the second one? What did I do differently?
25		
26	Darrin	Maybe I need to make my panels bigger
27	Kate	I think so, and what will that do?
28	Darrin	I can go slower
29	Kate	What do you mean?
30	Darrin	Points to moment-to-moment transition
31	Sabina	Plus, you could use narration [she offers to show him how with her ruler]

Samantha's Class

Focal Interaction 1: Three-way conference, Samantha's class, Apr. 22/10		
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Rhonda	So what is your story ideas so far?
2	Sherman	[points to first panel] He's playing video games.
3	Rhonda	Tell me about what happens next.
4	Sherman	Joe is playing video games and he didn't want to go to school.
5	Rhonda	What gave you that ideas?
6	Sherman	My teacher [Samantha walks over to join us]
Interaction Unit 2		
7	Samantha	Sherman and I had a little discussion because he knew exactly what he wanted his character to be,
8		'Beanbag Man' right?
9	Sherman	[Nodded]
10	Samantha	I don't know if it happened consciously but he is drawing from all of the things we've done. He got
11		Beanbag Man from the artist and his character does not want to school, which comes from Miss
12		Nixon's story, I think? Am I right, Sherman?
13	Sherman	I made him [his character] watch video games to change it, but I used bean bag man
Interaction Unit 3		
14	Rhonda	Do you prefer to use pictures or words because I see mostly words.
15	Sherman	[points to his story panels written in words]
16	Samantha	That was a surprise. I didn't expect them to do that [points to his visual journal]
Interaction Unit 4		
17	Rhonda	So do you think that comics writing has changed the way that Sherman and others plan and get story
18		Ideas?
19	Samantha	I think it's made a huge difference because before he would just sit there, right Sherman? And I
20		know what that's like because I was ESL, too, right, so for him to use the boxes to plan but
21		to write in them//Sherman, do you think comics writing is easier
21		or harder for you tan normal story writing?
22	Sherman	I like it better.
23	Rhonda	Really?
24	Samantha	Ya, hmm. So why is it better, Sherman?
25	Sherman	I like it better.

Jackson Elementary

Ben and Mark's Classroom Lessons/Conferences

Focal Interaction 1: Conference with MaryAnne		
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Rhonda	So what's the problem you told me about?
2	MaryAnne	I'm trying to tell my real story about helping a new person fit into school, but I'm worried about
3		using real things, like things that happened because some people might read this and then tease her
4		again
5	Rhonda	Hmm. That is tricky but you have an important idea here about helping new kids fit in because I
6		think that's a big worry
Interaction Unit 2		
7	MaryAnne	I was thinking maybe I could change it like Mr. T told me to just make them into little animals and I
8		tried that but it felt like I don't know, too silly or, well, maybe just I couldn't tell it that way
9	Rhonda	Have you tried to write it using the real people?
	MaryAnne	Ya, like I've sketched it out and planned, so I have these four friends, Kat, Jessica, Julie and Storm
10		and me, so five friends and they have spent the summer together and it's been really fun and
11		they don't want to get up for , her name is Cassy around, but my school.
12		When I get to school, then the teacher asks me to show a new girl. Four friends wish that she would
13		go away and they don't want her to join our group so that's it so far
Interaction Unit 3		
14	Rhonda	I see you have a sketch here about Cassandra asking you a question
15	MaryAnne	Ya, but I'm not sure what that will be yet
Interaction Unit 4		
16	Ben	So she's stuck on the real versus story thing, so did the animals work?
17	MaryAnne	No, I couldn't make it work out because it seemed too hard to think up a whole new bunch of
18	Ben	characters
18	Ben	So what do you think? [turns to me]
19	Rhonda	Well, Irvine had a similar problem about trying to say things to the audience about a real story, so
20		maybe that would be good for you too see

21	Ben	Irvine, could you bring your comic over here for a minute, Just share it so far, if you wouldn't mind
22	Irvine	Ya, um, okay so I had like two teams at school and they don't get along and you know how that
23		happens In here, so I just changed the names to Jedi Con and Avatar
24	MaryAnne	So why do you have you, like your character sitting on the panel like that?
Interaction Unit 5		
25	Irvine	It's so that I can talk just to the audience and the kids don't hear it, it's a way to like keep the story
26		focus and I can make my characters look like aliens
27	Rhonda	So does that give you an idea for how to make your characters less realistic so that their identities are protected?
28	MaryAnne	[Looks at Ben] Could I use the computer and make it like kind a story that is on a computer?
29	Ben	What do you mean?
30	MaryAnne	Like the thingy we do
31	Mark	The blog?
32	Ben	Oh, you mean make it a blog story?
33	MaryAnne	Ya, because then I can just type it and talk to you as the narrator
34	Rhonda	Ohh, that's a really, really good idea. How clever, and you could use animated looking characters,
35		too, in you blog as little avatar guys, do you know what I mean?
36	Irvine	I know, because you've seen my characters, right, so you could use them because they are little space creatures
37	Ben	Ya, like my little creatures are kind of like that

Away Space, Last Day (May 21, 2010)

Focal Interaction 1: Samantha's Metaphor, May 21/10		
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Mark	Hmmm.I liked your introduction, right
2	Kate	Me, too
3	Mark	How you can go and slow it down or bring it to a halt.
4	Samantha	The direction part, ya.
5	Mark	As a partner we need to know when to stop and keep going, right?
6	Kate	Switch gears.
7	Mark	It's very good.
Interaction Unit 2		
8	Kate	I like how you said, 'I have a role even though I am part of a bigger thing.'
9	Carmen	[We turned towards her because she sounded like she as about to say something] They said all my ideas
10		
11	Kate	When you said, 'I am willing to take control' – that is the part I struggle with. So it's interesting.
Interaction Unit 3		
12	Rhonda	[talking to Samantha] When you think about our group, what part resonated for you, um, with our work?
13		
14	Samantha	I think the beginning part really, like, there were times where I needed to because of other things,
15		like slow things down or stop things or get things moving, like, you just have to kind
16		of work with your pacing and your priorities.
17	Rhonda	Thanks for sharing that
Interaction Unit 4		
18	Ben	I really liked having ideas that// struggling to cope with stuff.

Focal Interaction 2: Ben's Metaphor, May 21/10		
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Rhonda	Powerful.
2	Samantha	I like the bending but it doesn't break.
3	Mark	Hmm mmm.
4	Kate	Me too.
5	Samantha	I like the image of the umbrella, kind of like it's your, like the power, also because sometimes we
6		put that responsibility on ourselves to be like the protection of all the people we are around
7		like our staff members and our kids – which is kind of an interesting image
Interaction Unit 2		
8	Rhonda	I just want to ask you something, um, for this project was there a particular part of that that connected for you?
9		
10	Ben	My images?
11	Rhonda	Yes, from your images.
12	Ben	The absorbing ideas I thought that when we were in here collaborating and, and people have great ideas and and I was - grabbed all those and used them in the classroom um
13		sheltering students and I always find that is
14		how I feel when I am in the classroom – sheltering, protecting, guiding, that kind of stuff, um,
15		

16		bending when you take ideas and you may not always want to DO exactly that but you take your
17		stuff and you
18		bend with it do try things that people want to try and that kind of stuff, but the idea of not
19		breaking...
20	Rhonda	Yes, you had two of us in your room so you certainly had to bendable, so that is a powerful image
21		for me.

Focal Interaction 3: Mark's poem, May 21/10		
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Ben	[whispers, laughing] Why are you trying to show me up?
2	Carmen	I like the swaying
3	Samantha	I like the leaves falling and then coming back.
4	Kate	And the yearning for new leaves – always yearning for learning
5	Mark	For new sets of leaves, yes, for new ideas
Interaction Unit 2		
6	Samantha	And the branches of supports is a power image too, right, because sometimes that happens when you
7		collaborate, right? Sometimes it is not always an equal partnership. Like in this it has been but like
8		there – I am sure we have all had experiences where you are the branch
9		that holds it together and then everybody else is kind
10		of like swaying more than they should.
11	Ben	And knowing Marcel, like working with him all the time I can really see that very supportive person
12		and that's neat that you said that, because I feel that every day since
Interaction Unit 3		
13	Rhonda	[smiles] I have a question. Is there a reason you copied Ben?
14	Everyone	laughs
15	Rhonda	No I am just kidding
16	Mark	I could do my dissertation paper about teacher groups and stuff [laughing]
17	Rhonda	No, you wouldn't pass ethics [laughing]
18	Mark	I have people so who needs ethics?
Interaction Unit 4		
19	Rhonda	[laughing] Is there – I will ask you the same thing and I, and I – just is there some piece of that that
20		resonates for this project?
21	Mark	I think just, I guess, journey for new leaves and stuff, just looking at the whole thing about what
22		collaboration is because – yes, we have worked together here but we have also been able to take it
23		back and do our own thing but I still consider this to be a collaborative project, right?
24		Brad and I we had planned together, we have also split up classes where I did my own planning
25		or Brad did his own planning but still had the same focus so, I mean, it just goes for different ways,
26		accepting new ways to do things, right?
27	Rhonda	Hmm mm. Branching out....
28	Mark	[nods]

Focal Interaction 4: Kate's metaphor, May 21/10		
Interaction Unit 1		
1	Kate	My, um, I just went with the first image but now that I hear all this beautiful tree talk and stuff I am
2		jealous that I didn't go with something pretty because, um, but I just literally thought collaboration
3		and the first thing that popped into my head was a spring which is, like, not very poetic or pretty but
4		I pictured kind of slinky or tight-coiled spring
Interaction Unit 2		
5	Samantha	It is really good especially the part about the tension in the//
6	Everyone	Several people talking
Interaction Unit 2		
8	Kate	I saw, cause I remember when we did that collage with pastels and we did collaboration and I
9		and I was all, like, working together and blah blah blah and over time through the project my image
10		of collaboration changed and so now I see and so now I see it as, like, this really good thing-it's
11		bouncy like a spring you get all these ideas but it can also be tense, like hard to work with so kind
12		of – that's why I pictured the spring. But I liked the tree part where you talked about growth and
14		yearning for ideas and new life so we should put them together somehow.
Interaction Unit 3		
15	Mark	But I think in your spring thing you talk about loosening up over time, right, like, you know
16	Rhonda	Like a slinky?
17	Kate	Did you ever play with a slinky?
18	Rhonda	Ya, like down the stairs. What about you?
19	Samantha	[jokes] Those questions are private, Rhonda
20	Everyone	laughs

21	Kate	I did think of slinky but it didn't sound right and it was even less poetic
22	Rhonda	But coils are used to create mobility, they are used in a lot of things to keep things together like
23		pens, and they are used in a lot of ways so I think that imagery.....
24	Samantha	Holding things together