

University of Alberta

Imagined Stories Interrupted: A narrative inquiry into the experiences of teachers
who do not teach.

by

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*This book is dedicated to all those who dream of a life that they do not live and
somehow find a way to live a life they never dreamed of.*

*To my family for supporting me and showing me how to live a life I didn't
imagine.*

Abstract

This two year long narrative inquiry, part of a larger study, inquires into experiences of teachers who have graduated but not assumed classroom teaching positions. The work draws on the conceptual framework of early landscapes, imagined stories, forward looking stories, and stories to live by. Field texts included transcripts of conversations, artifacts, and annals. This work includes three narrative accounts with an opening and closing chapter. The study highlights the importance of early landscapes in composing imagined stories, experiences when imagined stories are interrupted, and forward looking stories that are congruent with stories to live by. The study illuminates how forward looking stories are composed after the imagined story of teaching is interrupted.

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Chapter 1: Coming to the Research

Introduction

My whole life I had dreams of being a teacher. At times that dream was mixed with others but teaching was always the dream that transcended. My parents were university professors and our family lived an intellectual's way of being. I wanted to live a schoolteacher's life and help others to find the greatness in their own lives. I had seen how this could happen. School was where I found myself and I watched as school impacted the lives of my friends and family. There was never a point at which I thought I would not be a teacher. I imagined that if I did not teach it would be because I was offered a job and, for whatever reason, I turned it down. It seems obvious, or it should be, that everyone who plans on being a teacher doesn't end up teaching. I never thought about this until I was not teaching. It wasn't until I was not offered a teaching position that I began to think about the experiences of others.

It seemed as though everyone around me, when hearing that I did not get a job, told me a story of someone who also wanted to be a teacher and was not offered a position. It did not make me feel better to be counted among the other teachers who had been discarded but I began to awaken to the fact that my story was not so unique. Mine was one of many stories that were never talked about openly. I wondered what other peoples' experiences were and how they lived through their experiences of not being teachers?

I wondered what I could do to begin to move forward once again and decided that I would go on to graduate school after spending almost two years out

of school and only “teaching” in childcare settings. This was what my family did and it made sense to me. In school I could work toward something, I could have purpose and direction. At university I could become whole again as my parents were in the university setting. I still wondered about the experiences of others who wanted to be teachers and who, like me, were not able to be the teachers they had dreamt of and trained for. I wondered how I could study experience. How could I study something that could not be evaluated with a checklist or analyzed with numbers? Was it really research to listen to the experiences of people and think about them?

When I applied and prepared to come to the University of Alberta, I set aside any thoughts about research topics or methodologies. I was filled with the hope that I would be able to regain some of my story and be able to live my stories to live by (Connelly and Clandinin, 1999). I knew that I was joining a team that had already made decisions about methodologies, topics, and other parts of research that I didn’t know yet. I didn’t know exactly what I would be studying but I knew that it had to do with teachers. It wasn’t until my first meeting with the team with whom I would be working that I found out that I would be studying the experiences of teachers through the context of this study. I wondered how the team would qualify experiences, if it would be like the way I saw them, or if the word experiences meant something different in this context. I went to Canada and the University of Alberta unaware that I would be able to explore these questions I was having about teachers’ experiences and how to

study them. I found that one of the parts the study would be to study experiences that were similar to my own.

Coming to narrative inquiry and my growing understanding.

As I write, I am at the end of my masters' program. It has been nearly two years since I began this journey and I can hardly believe that it has been that long and yet feel as though I am in my first semester. When I first came to the University of Alberta I only had vague questions about what had happened to me, why I was not teaching, not getting the teaching job I had imagined I would get after graduating. I was still in the midst and just coming to a point where I could look back. I had not fully dealt with what had happened and could not then imagine how to move into a new story. I wondered about what others who might be in similar situations were going through and how they navigated these experiences. I wondered how learning about the experiences of others could be research as most of the images I had of researchers were of people in labs or with clipboards and only concerned with "results". I did not expect that it would be in my first course that I would begin to find the answers to these barely formed questions and learn this new story of researcher.

One of my first courses was a seminar titled "Life in the Elementary Classroom" taught by Dr. Jean Clandinin. It was here that I began to understand why experience, and retelling and reliving experiences, is so important. Not just important for me to make meaning but for others as well. It was here that I began to look at my early landscapes and inquire into how they have affected my past and present as well as how retelling them, that is, narratively inquiring into them

(Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), would impact my future. While this was not a class on narrative inquiry, I was able to learn about artifacts such as photographs, memory boxes, and annals. Engaging with these artifacts within the relational space of the class helped me to see that not only was sharing these stories helpful to the way that I was making meaning of my life but listening to the experiences of others helped me to realize how telling stories is important in understanding my experiences. It was in this class that I realized that not only was studying experience research but that studying experience is vital in understanding how they affect individual's stories to live by.

Narrative Inquiry and Terms

People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experiences. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular view of experience under study (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p.375).

I have loved this quote from the first time that I read it. It resonated with me as something that I have believed but did not have the words to say in this way. Connelly and Clandinin remind me that it is not just the study of experience

but the total embodiment and way of thinking about experience that distinguishes this methodology. It is the embodiment that makes it more than a list of steps to be followed or procedures to be done but a way of attending to the world and who I am in it. As I became awake to my own “lived and told” stories, as well as to the stories of participants I engaged in the research, I was guided by the metaphorical three dimensional inquiry space, with dimensions of temporality, sociality, and place (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). I thought, when I started learning about narrative inquiry, that I knew what these words meant. I knew about time, that it passes and the longer it does the more is forgotten and distorted in memory. I had always been social and so I thought sociality meant how I was affected or engaged with other people. Place, of course, meant a geographical location in which events might be given reference. Because I had known these words for many years I thought I knew what they meant. I learned that in narrative inquiry these words take on much more significant meanings.

Thinking temporally means that as a researcher I am “not only concerned with life as it is experienced in the here and now but also with life as it is experienced on a continuum—people’s lives, institutional lives, lives of things” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 19). This reminds me that to understand the impact of time I must see it as continually unfolding and constantly changing what and how I perceive the experiences of my life (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This has brought me to think about time, not as a linear thing, (Huber, Murphy, & Clandinin, 2003) that people live through but as something more fluid, able to exist simultaneously in the past, present, and impact the future.

Sociality helps me attend in both the inner and outer directions. Attending to the inner means to be aware of thoughts, emotions, and the moral responses I have. This can sometimes be difficult. At times I have disregarded and even tried to bury these inner dimensions because of the pain that they can remind me of. I had to learn that being attentive to these inner thoughts and emotions and responses did not mean that I had to wallow in them. I also had to have the same understanding considering the outer directions. To look outward means to look at events and actions of not only myself but of others within my stories (Clandinin & Caine, 2011), trying to understand what role they play and what their influences are on my story and how I understand it. Considering all the aspects of sociality I must also pay attention to the backward and forward directions, the temporal of past, present, and future (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Place has always had a significant meaning for me. Places like my grandmother's house, the desert where my family camped, and my first apartment when I lived on my own are places that hold meaning for me. They remind me of who I was when I was there and the people I knew. In narrative inquiry, place refers to the "places where lives were lived as well as to the places where inquiry events occur" (Clandinin & Caine, 2011, p. 3). It is the boundaries of the physical and topological places of the inquiry landscapes that also must be considered, as well as those elements of sociality and temporality that combine to make experience. Considering place brings with it memories of time and sociality and help to give each context and depth. I cannot think of any place that I do not then

remember the significance of that place over time, the people that helped to make it special and who I was in that place.

It is clear the more that I work within this three-dimensional narrative inquiry space that I am not alone within it. I cannot be removed from it just as all those who are on the landscape, researchers, participants, etc., cannot be removed from the space. The space moves and embraces to incorporate all those with whom we work (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). It is relational which is central to the understanding of narrative inquiry. It is the space between researcher and participant as well as the relationships developed by both as a way of composing and making sense of the texts and aspects of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Caine, 2011, p. 3).

I have been taught in all my years of school that research is based on identifying a problem and determining a solution for that problem. In other methodologies the statement around which a study is envisioned is called a research problem or statement, which is specific and narrow. In narrative inquiry the words, research problem and statement, would misrepresent what we believe, as problems and statements are clearly defined with an expectation of a solution. What happens when we study lives that are messy and ever changing? Narrative inquirers use research puzzles, which imply a sense of searching and searching again. Puzzles are in continual formation (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Literature (or lack thereof)

There is a saying when doing research in the education field that every topic has been researched and so you can always find literature on the topic. I

believed this statement to be true until we, as part of the Early Career Teacher Attrition Project (Clandinin, et al., 2012), began to search out and read the research concerning teachers who have graduated from an accredited institution but have not moved into a classroom teaching position. A search for research on Early Career Teacher Attrition and Retention was done (Long, et al., 2012) and I hoped that, while there was no stand alone research on teachers who did not enter the classroom that it would be embedded within the teacher attrition research. Much of the research came from the United States as well as some from Britain, Australia, and New Zealand. There was very little Canadian research in this area. I wondered how there could be so many teachers who graduated with teaching credentials and who did not enter into classroom teaching and no research.

The team did a review of the literature around the issues of teacher attrition and retention to find what others said about this topic (Long, et al., 2012). I wondered if issues such as burnout, resilience, personal and contextual factors would be referenced as affecting those teachers who never entered K-12 teaching positions. I thought about how these issues had been considered for teachers in the profession, and pre-service teachers, but not for those who did not assume K-12 teaching positions.

A leader in research on the phenomena of burnout, Maslach (1978, 1982), defined professional burnout as a syndrome of bodily and mental exhaustion, in which the worker becomes negative towards those they work with and develops a negative sense of self worth. I wondered if this might happen to graduates of teacher education programs before they even entered the profession. I had come

into the education program having worked with children in different settings for over six years. I had worked toward becoming a teacher for most of my life and, at times, I wondered if I had become “burnt out”. I had felt silly thinking about being “burnt out” when I had not yet entered the profession of teaching. There was nothing in the research around burnout to suggest that “burnout” might be occurring in teachers before they assumed K-12 teaching positions.

Much of the research suggested that when teachers are referred to as being resilient it points toward their ability to cope with stressors that may impact them as teachers once they enter the field but was not mentioned before they take on that full position. In the beginning teacher attrition literature, resiliency and commitment are terms often associated with one another. Many researchers (Freedman & Appleman, 2009; Gehrke & McCoy’s, 2006; Haun & Martin, 2004) have conducted studies trying to explain the impact of resiliency on teachers’ ability to stay in the profession as well as how resiliency might be developed. I wondered about the required resiliency that many of these teachers have to sustain them as they are not living out their imagined teaching stories.

There are a variety of reasons given for why beginning teachers leave the profession. These reasons are diverse and the research often focuses on the aspects directly related to teaching. Teachers, however, exist within and outside of school and are, therefore, influenced by factors off the school landscape. Ingersoll reminds us that “personal reasons, such as departures for pregnancy, child rearing, health problems, and family moves, are more often reported as reasons for turnover than either retirement or staffing actions” (2001, p. 522).

While researchers like Billingsley (2004), Macdonald (1999), and Borman and Dowling (2008) explain the many reasons why teachers might leave the profession, there is no mention of how or if these factors might also play a role in teachers not entering the profession. Experiences of teachers reflecting on their pre-service teaching were explored as part of contextual factors in teachers leaving the profession (Ewart, 2009; Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Kutcy and Schulz, 2006; Flores & Day, 2006; Flores, 2006).

The team and I read 65 articles and found no mention of those teachers who have graduated with a teaching degree but who did not hold continuing contracts with a school district. I wondered about this large gap in the research literature. A friend and colleague at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah told me about how half of her students didn't end up teaching. While these numbers cannot be confirmed, it is clear that there are significant numbers of teachers being trained but not teaching in K-12 schools.

Framing my Research Puzzle

It was when I realized that I would not live out my imagined story of teaching that I began thinking about what happens when the imagined story is interrupted by not getting a teaching position that fits with an individual's stories to live by? It was this wonder that became my research puzzle. I wondered what were the stories that shaped teachers' imagined stories? How were these stories composed? How do we move on from imagined stories to imagining new forward looking stories? I joined a team that was also interested in looking into researching these, and other, experiences lived by teachers.

Meeting the Research Participants

The participants for the study were located through a Facebook site, posters, and emails that were sent to several colleagues who mentioned knowing others who might fit the parameters of the study. Because the teachers I was interested in talking to were not teaching, they could not be contacted through agencies like the Alberta Teachers Association, educational institutions, or school districts. One criteria for selecting participants was that they graduated within the last two to five years. I thought about this with my story, thinking how I told my story would have been different if I were still actively trying to get a teaching job, if I were in the middle of my story of teacher being interrupted. The most helpful form of recruitment came from “word-of-mouth” through friends and relatives referring possible participants to the project email address. I selected two participants, Sam and Audrey Jayne. Times and dates were arranged to meet. Locations for meeting were in coffee shops, restaurants, homes, and at the University of Alberta. I engaged in conversation with participants. Engaging relationally with participants is vital in Narrative Inquiry in order to make sense of the contextual and temporal aspects of individual’s experience (Clandinin & Caine, 2011; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Because my experiences were resonant with participants, it was important for it not to be an interview where I would sit as researcher, knower and investigator. We traveled in the midst of this research together. Participants and researchers co-compose conversations in Narrative Inquiry, as they are not conducted by predetermined questions. They

are also not done with the intention to solve issues or to answer problems (Clandinin & Caine, 2011; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

From Field to Field Texts to Interim and Final Research Texts

Each conversation was recorded and transcribed. A transcriptionist transcribed the recordings of the conversations. I could see the impact of the words of these participants as I read and reread the transcripts while listening to the participants' voices on the recording and feeling the emotion that accompanied the words. During each conversation I also composed field notes, which were "experiential, intersubjective texts rather than objective texts" (Clandinin & Caine, 2011, p. 2). These field notes included pictures, drawings, annals, and my observations (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Once all the conversations were completed with each participant, I read and re-read the transcripts along with the field texts I had collected. At times I resonated with something in the transcripts. I noticed recurring topics in the conversations and marked them. I also identified significant words and/or phrases that seemed to represent threads throughout each participant's life. At this point the first negotiation took place with participants to see if what I was noticing was resonant with each participant. Negotiations involve "continuous dialogue, in which both participants and researchers are equally engaged and that is reflected in the conversations, actions and commitments to the ongoing relationship" (Clandinin & Caine, 2011, p. 2). Once these initial threads were negotiated, I arranged them in a more chronological order that represented these threads woven into each participant's stories to live by.

Choosing a form in which to represent each account was difficult as each needed to portray the essence of what and how information was shared and the relationship developed between the researcher and participant (Ely, 2007). I chose to write Sam's account in the form of word images that I had taken from the transcripts of our conversations. With Audrey Jayne a dramatization seemed most appropriate to show the passion and voice Audrey Jayne expressed when we talked about her life experiences. My own account was formed as vignettes symbolized as stones. Reading Sam's and Audrey Jayne's transcripts and composing the narrative accounts for each of them, certain stories of mine resonated with their stories and were written as vignettes. After writing a draft of each participant's account, the second negotiation took place. More clarifications were made and we identified places where names, places, and information would need to be changed in order to make participants less identifiable. After details were changed and necessary changes were made, the final narrative account was e-mailed to each participant for a final read-through. These final narrative accounts are found in chapters two, three, and four.

Chapters Two through Five

Chapter two includes my narrative account. I explore how coming from a family of teachers impacted the way that I see the world. It was these early landscapes where I learned what was important and that shaped in my stories to live by. I was the daughter of teachers. I was the granddaughter of a teacher. I was going to be a teacher and live a teacher's life. After graduation that imagined

life was taken away as a possibility. It all came crashing down and I tried to compose a different story, to move on.

Chapter three is the narrative account of Audrey Jayne whose family came from Iran. They left a world of power, prestige, and comfort to come to Canada. This was where they showed Audrey Jayne what it meant to work and how important it is to be part of a community. Audrey Jayne tells how losing her imagined story of teacher meant the loss of more than just a profession. Teaching was how she would support herself. Teaching was how she would be part of, and give back to, a community. Teaching would allow her to fall in love, get married, and have children. She tells how hard it was when all of that was taken away and how she worked to live out her imagined story off a school landscape.

Chapter four is the account of Sam represented in the form of word images about his experiences. Sam's family immigrated to Canada from India. His parents needed to provide for their family and so took jobs in order to support themselves. This became the principle around which everything would be composed. Sam needed to be good in school in order to get into university. In university, he needed to pick a career that was "practical", something Sam could get a job in and be stable. But Sam also wanted to make a difference. After going into business Sam realized that he needed more. Teaching was the perfect combination of practicality and his desire to do something important. Teaching was the way Sam could do everything until his first assignment showed him that he would not be able to live out the story he had imagined. These times were hard for him and he now reflects back on them as he tries to live out another story.

It is in chapter five that I look across all three narrative accounts to see how the threads from each account resonate across all three accounts. I attempt to answer the question of so what and describe what has been gained through this study. It is here that I provide wonderings and ideas about what happens when a teacher's imagined story is interrupted by not getting a teaching position that fits with the stories to live by. In so doing I provide a space for the voices of those teachers who have been silenced and forgotten.

Chapter 2: My Story

Coming to Write About Me

It was my first graduate level course. I had few ideas of what I expected. All I knew was that it would be different than the work I did in my undergraduate program. I was not very surprised when Dr. Jean Clandinin, who taught the course and who I knew a little about from her work as a narrative inquirer (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin, 2007), asked us to each write a story about an experience in school as a student or a teacher for the next class. The course was called “Life in the Elementary Classroom” after all. This was where I started to think about my stories in a different way. As the course progressed, I wrote more stories about myself inside and out of schools, across time, all while thinking about the relationships I had with different people.

I can’t remember the story that I wrote for that first class; but I am fairly sure that I wrote about an event: telling the details and chronology of what happened. I am sure I added some emotions and thoughts that I had. I imagine I completed this story in a very short time thinking, at most, it was a get-to-know-you activity. When I brought my story, I imagined that we would share each story. I had no idea what would come from sharing that one small, and quickly written, story.

I soon realized this was not an activity for a first class in order to “get to know” everyone in the course. I did get to know those who were in the class through the stories that they shared and brought each week, but more importantly I began to awaken to my stories. I became aware of their importance in the way

that I lived my life, how I understood my life, and how I imagined my life going forward. Some of this growing awareness was from reading the works of Epstein & Oyler (2008), Andy Hargreaves (2005), Michalinos Zembylas (2003), and others while some was from writing stories of my experiences.

Over the three month course I wrote many stories. Most were for class and fulfilled course assignments. But, I also wrote other stories outside of class, because I was flooded with memories of my life. People, places, feelings, thoughts, histories, and wishes that I had embodied and carried with me (Neumann, 1997) that led me to sit in this course as this person that I understood myself to be filled my thoughts.

Long after the course ended, I continued to write stories. I wrote my stories over the course of a year and a half. I wanted to know how each of these experiences not only impacted my life at the time that they happened, but how they continued to live within me, influencing my present and my future and my understanding of the past to understanding (Clandinin & Connelly, 2006; Dewey, 1922, 1934, 1938). I became more and more aware, through sharing these stories, that I was unique. My stories resonated with the stories of others.

In the summer of 2011 I was part of another course called “Toward a Curriculum of Community” taught by Dr. Janice Huber and Dr. Shaun Murphy. Everyday for two weeks we met as a class after reading certain articles and having written pieces for a final project. Each time we met to talk about what we had read and written, we were given stones. Sometimes we would get one stone, sometimes two, depending on how much time we had to contribute to the

discussion. Stones were put into the circle to represent each person and what he/she resonated with, connections they made, or a significant thread they noticed. When reading Maria Lugones's (1987) article on *Playfulness, "World"- Travelling, and Loving Perception* each class member came with different experiences and thoughts. One class member began by putting her stone into the center of the circle, and then recalled a memory or experience that this article reminded her of and how Lugones's use of "world" had changed her thinking. When she had finished I placed my stone in the center indicating that I had something to share. I too had thoughts about the word "world" which were evoked by the first woman's comments. They caused each of us to think in new ways. Each class member continued to build on the comments and ideas of others and provided a more in depth discussion.

After gathering the stories I had written over more than a year, I began thinking about how to arrange them into this narrative account. I thought about the stories I told, and the stories told to me by the participants, and I began to wonder how they could be metaphorically laid side by side in order to contribute to each other. I imagined my stories to be like the stones from the summer course, being placed in relation to the stories of Audrey Jayne and Sam.

Stone One: Early Landscapes

Growing up I had lots of examples of what a teacher was. My mother was a teacher in secondary education and then taught and continues to teach at a university. My father also taught and currently teaches at a university and,

briefly, taught at a prison. My maternal grandmother taught at Dixie State College. I was also aware growing up that my ancestors on my mother's side built, ran, and founded Dixie State College. My mother's sister is an elementary teacher in Southern Utah. Many of my family's dear friends are also teachers. Each showed and taught me different things about being a teacher and what a teacher's life was.

My father, the teacher

My dad was always a graduate student and loved learning outside of school. He often taught while he was a graduate student, and also taught outside of the k-12 or university school setting. I remember him in his office at home, surrounded by paper, grading things, writing on the computer, and looking serious. When he and my mother sat at the dinner table to eat, the conversation was often about classes they were teaching, encounters with parents, problems with students, and filled with what I saw, through my child's vantage point, deep theoretical understandings and perceptions.

I have a photograph of my father's convocation for his doctorate degree. In the photograph I am with my grandmother and she is holding me up as his name is being read and I am waving and screaming. I recollect the event. I was not sure what this event was for at the time but I knew that my dad was a sensational teacher and thought it wonderful that something special was happening to him. Years later I can remember finding an interview tape he made for a teaching job. I was fascinated by what he was saying and how he seemed like the smartest person in creation. He was serious but engaging. He knew what

he was talking about. Later he told me that tape was for a job teaching in the prison system and I thought that it was so remarkable that he did that.

He was a serious teacher but he knew how much gesticulating and telling good stories could impact students' experiences. I remember one time for Halloween my mother gave my dad a glove that looked like snakes were coming out of each finger. He told my brother and me how he went to class with that in his pocket. During class he snuck his hand into the glove and, while being very serious, the glove emerged and tried to choke him. He finally pinned it and crushed the evil hand after a mighty struggle. I learned there was time to be serious but there was always time to have fun in teaching.

As I became awake to my father as a teacher, I saw him at home in his home office because that was where I saw him most days by the time I came home from school, sitting amongst his papers and books marking and thinking how best to teach. I also saw him as a teacher in the front of classes because I visited him when he was teaching at the university. I watched as rows and rows of students listened to him as he wrote on the board and answered questions. I saw him in church doing the same thing. When he taught the younger classes, I saw him do more projects and engage the children in more playful and "silly" ways and yet they were similar in the way that he pushed and engaged the children to think more deeply. I always loved listening to my dad talk because of the big words he used, "conehead" talk my brother called it, the gesticulating, and the energy that made it clear that he loved what he was doing and what he was talking about. Teaching was not just something he did but something he

embodied. It was fundamentally a part of him. This was his element. I could see that this was the space that he came alive, where he embodied teaching and learning in its multiple contexts and lived as teacher.

I always felt my father was present. He was alert, aware and receptive. He attended to my mental, emotional, and physical states. He had the ability to respond compassionately (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006). He was there and easily accessible and willing to be part of my life. I came home from school wanting to talk or complain or boast. When I went downstairs to his home office, he asked me if this were a story that he needed to help me with or one where he was to just listen. If he listened, he listened wholly. I felt heard and understood. I then went on to do whatever it was I had on my list of things to do for the day and he returned to his work. I saw him as the best kind of teacher, but I realized, later in life that, for my father, this was not what he imagined as being a “real” teacher. Despite him not always living out the story of teacher he wanted, he never gave up. He moved ahead and always came back to teaching.

My mother as teacher

From the time I was little I knew my mother was a teacher and a professor but it almost seemed like an honorary title to me. I did not realize all of the work she did. I saw her reading and sometimes writing, but mostly she was gone. I loved, however, to go to her office while she taught and roam the campus and college bookstore. I felt independent and grown-up. We joke in my family that I was born 25 years old and have been waiting for everyone else to realize my age. In my mother’s office I was grown up.

I knew my mother was a teacher also when she talked to my schoolteachers. If my teacher was good, then the conversation between them and my mother was good. If I was sent out of the room it was usually because my mother stopped being a mother and became a teacher educator. This was when I saw and began to understand that being knowledgeable gave power to control circumstances and situations. Being knowledgeable allowed me not to be a victim of circumstance but someone who could be in charge and make choices about how my life would be lived. I wouldn't have to take the word of other people about what I needed to do; I could make my own decisions.

University was a place that gave my mother a chance to be her whole self but I also saw it as a place that took her away from some of the things she loved like family, friends, and herself. I still struggle with this notion because as my mother moved from teacher to student to professor, she was still my mother but I realized there were others who needed her to be their "mother" in an academic setting. I saw this as almost religious service partially because Brigham Young University (BYU) is a religious institution, and we, being Mormons, believe in selfless sacrifice and service. Because of this, I could not complain about it. The work my mother did was, and is, important to so many people. Several of these people have been adopted, of sorts, into our family and continue to be a second set of children and siblings to my family. At the same time I saw this place taking away my mother. If I needed her, she was "working on something for her school". If I tried to talk to her while she was doing this, she tried to be part of the conversation but was often not really present, not being aware of me, or

anything outside of the work she was doing (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006).

Often we had students of my parents over and my mother gave them the kind of attention and direction that I sometimes wished for. Still, I saw what my mother did as important and wonderful.

Perhaps because of the interactions I had with my parents and the friends we had, I felt that the conversation that I had with those in my own age range was insignificant. With my mother, in her academic world, with her academic grown-up friends (and mine) I could have deep conversations about things that really mattered.

My Grandma as teacher

When I was young my family visited my grandma Esplin. She told me stories about her life. She asked me about my life and then told me a story. My grandma Esplin was a successful costume designer. When her children were grown, she went back to school and became a teacher at the college. Often when I was in college, we sat and I told her about the things I was doing or learning how to do in my education classes, which involved technology. She told me that her biggest regret from teaching was not learning the computer when she was given the chance. She told how it was a matter of pride that she didn't need technology to be a good teacher, or that she was simply not interested in learning something new. She was right of course; she didn't need technology to be a good teacher. I sometimes complained that I didn't want to learn one more thing that my school was offering to teach me and she immediately pounced and told me

about her regret. “Take whatever learning you can,” she said, reminding me of what a missed opportunity could look like.

Stone Two: Exploring and Forming a Teacher Identity

I always knew that I wanted to be a teacher. I started my self-training in babysitting and learning what it was like to be with children. When I got to High School and found classes designed to prepare “Future Teachers”, I immediately signed up. This was where I thought the serious people who wanted to be teachers went. I was among like-minded individuals. I started in the day-care class that was a prerequisite for the next course and learned all about ratios of teachers to children, the regulation of outside play equipment, and development of age ranges. I loved this class. I loved the people in the class. I loved that the things we were talking about were taken as serious knowledge. We were not just talking about games and art projects but ways to help children move through life. This was where I started to be aware that I was not being my “whole” self when I had to choose between being smart, or funny, or serious, or wild. In this class I could be all of those things.

After completing the day-care class I moved into the “Future Teachers” class that focused on elementary, junior high, and high school settings. The first semester was much like the day-care class but was focused on school age children. This prepared me to go into a classroom in the second semester. I worked hard and prepared. Finally the time came and I was placed in a nearby school with fourth graders and a male teacher. I was not given a lot of

responsibility but I did filing and watched the students as they progressed. During recess, the teacher sat and talked with me about what was going on in the class. I built up relationships with students. I took copious mental notes about what things I wanted to incorporate into my own teaching and things that I wanted to leave out.

At the end of my time in the class each child wrote me a card to say thank you for being part of the class. I kept them. It was the first time I got cards from students saying thank you and I felt as though I could matter and make some kind of impact on the lives of children. It was here that I saw my teacher education as having started.

Stone Three: Ike

I have had those children that, no matter what I do, no matter what a good person I am, no matter how hard I try, I will never be able to handle. Ike was that child for most other teachers. The children that sent most teachers up the wall seemed to be the children I develop the biggest connection with.

Ike had not been able to make any decisions; other people and circumstances decided his whole life. Ike was a child that was difficult and I understood why. I never could figure out who his parents were or how he ended up where he was. He was always causing problems for the other children. He took joy in doing the thing I wished he wouldn't do. I watched him in my class for days, and weeks, and I noticed something about this little 4 year old. Ike had never, that I could see, been touched in love or kindness from any of the adults in

his worlds. He was not hit or abused, that I saw, but he was not hugged or patted softly or led kindly by the hand. His life was not his own and I knew how that felt. He was lost; trying to find out who he was and how he fit in the life he was living.

One day when Ike was out of control, I decided to pick him up and hold him much like I would with a baby. I held him close to me but still allowed his arms and legs freedom. I whispered that he would be ok and rocked back and forth while he screamed. He was not screaming at me, or another child, but at life - at his complete inability to be in control of anything, even his own emotions. After a few minutes he stopped screaming and relaxed in my arms. We sat together for a while longer and I thought about the life this child had ahead of him. I thought about times when I was just as lost as Ike.

Stone Four: The Interruption

I had been sitting on that couch all day. I had just quit my job at the day-care where I had been working off and on for six years. I had left before, but this was different. I was not off to school, or off to other employment as a regular teacher, or using my degree. I had no job to go to. I felt my whole life was one giant failure. I was a teacher who was not teaching! I was depressed and angry. I was a good teacher. I didn't deserve this life. I had been a "Teacher" at the day-care but that too filled me with fury. I loved working with the children; it was the closest I could get to being a regular teacher. The thing that made me angry was that I had a degree in Elementary Education. I was the most educated person in

the whole day-care (including the director and owner). However, the other day-care teachers seemed to look down on me. They had mini conferences on lesson planning, discipline, assessment, and every other aspect of teaching but always asked someone else to teach those lessons as if I knew nothing helpful. The other staff members came to me with their questions. They often brought me their “discipline problem” children handing them off to me because I could get through to them. But publically no one acknowledged that I knew anything! So after a year I’d had it and I quit and, with nothing else to do, I was on this couch watching the History channel with my dad. I was caught in this liminal moment, standing at a threshold between what had been my life and my knowing and the uncertainty of what would come next. I had nowhere to go, no stories that were forward looking. I was stuck in this unknown liminal space between what had been and not knowing what might be (Huber, Murphy, & Clandinin, 2003).

While enrolled in the course *Life in the Elementary Classroom*, I went home for Thanksgiving in 2011. I walked my dog using a route that took me by churches, old friends’ houses, parks, and the elementary school that I went to as a child. As I walked, I realized I was looking backward at the time I had spent there and forward in the role that place would play in my ongoing story, inward to the feelings and memories I had as well as outward to the people and outside elements that played a part in my experiences there (Clandinin & Connelly 2000). It was in my third grade class with one of my favorite teachers that the decision was made and would never again be changed that I was going to be a teacher. From that year on I gave up any other dreams of being a singer, a scientist, an

artist, or one of the X-Men. I was going to be a teacher. When I graduated and moved back home, I filled out an application for several jobs at that school. I thought that because I was a former graduate of the school, was still really good friends with several current teachers and the past principal, knowing the secretary from church, that I would get a job, or at least an interview, at the school. With so many advantages I thought someone would fight for me. No calls or interviews were made. I never heard anything. The rejection was devastating but I had all but forgotten the pain that I had felt until, while walking my dog, I saw the school.

Standing on that corner across from the school that now represented the end of so many dreams, all of those feelings came flooding back. The pain and sadness was almost overwhelming. That was where I thought my life had taken me but instead teaching was not going to be my story for now and it hurt. I had gotten over it and loved my life now as a graduate student. I wondered if I would always have that pain every time I saw that school.

Stone Five: Looking Forward...Building a Story Canada

“Karion. That’s how I say it in my head.”

“It’s pronounced Cheirôn.”

“Yah, well in my head I say Karion.”

“Yes but its pronounced Cheirôn.”

Even though we were having this simple argument to pronounce the name of an ancient Greek centaur I had not been this happy for over a year. I had wondered if I would ever be happy again let alone ever want to teach or be around children after I left the daycare. I had a call from a friend of mine to see if I would like to go with her family, including two children, a little girl, Esther, who was eight, and a boy, Steven, who was two, to Hong Kong, China for two and a half months. I had already quit my job and had no prospects to look forward to so I said yes! Every day in Hong Kong my friend, her children, and I would get up, have a little breakfast from a local bakery, decide what activity we wanted to do, go and explore, then come home in the middle of the day to take a nap and wait out the heat. We would play on the roof, and then when the dad would get home we would eat dinner and go out again for another adventure. There was not much to do in our small apartment so each of us read a lot of books. I loved talking to Esther about what she was reading, how she felt about what was happening, the things she would change, and the things she might have done herself.

Strange people, a strange place, and a strange language surrounded me, but talking about books made me feel like I was home. I was happy. I wanted to know what these small children thought and how they were experiencing this new place. I remembered why I had loved being around children and I began to believe that if I could just build a relationship with students, I would enjoy teaching again.

Culture, food, experiences, customs, and the pace of life excited me. At every turn I had something to explore. I called home when I could and,

occasionally, I talked about going back to look for a job. I didn't know if I wanted to go through the pain of trying to find a teaching job and taking up that story, or not getting a teaching position and giving up that story again but I loved what I was doing. I loved being with these children and helping them discover new ideas and new experiences that I knew we would all draw on for years to come.

In the middle of this trip I became aware of a possible place for me at the University of Alberta in Canada. I had already applied to two masters programs in the United States and, although I did not accept either of those positions, I was glad to have my application ready to submit. I coordinated with my parents back in the States and got my application off to Canada. I was so excited when I got in. I had a plan again! I was going to do something. I was going to explore and learn and one day I knew that I would be able to pass what I did onto others. I was excited by that prospect. I started to once again build a forward-looking story. I began to become whole once more. I was able to do all the things that I love and live them fully with people who also loved the same things. I was able to do the kind of teaching that I have always loved without any restrictions of time, relationship, or pre-approved standards. I did love teaching. I could live this kind of story again. I would find a way to continue it in Canada.

The Looking Back Stone

As I came to the end of writing the stories that I would use as stones, I was faced with the question that follows everything I write. What to leave in and what

to leave out. I asked myself again if these were the stories that needed to be told? Were these the stories that represented me the way that I wanted to be represented? Had I written these stories in the correct way? I am still unsure as these stories shift and move with each new experience I have, every moment that I walk through, and with each person that changes my outlook on my past, present, and future (Carr, 1986). Writing the stories down has changed them and changed me because of it and thus the questions I have about them go unanswered because the answer continues to change.

After deciding what stories I would use I began to see how I had chosen stories that reminded me in some way of the stories that I had heard from others. I started to see the intersections that connected me to Audrey Jayne and Sam and the ways that my story was different.

I came from a family of teachers but did not decide to be a teacher based on tradition. I saw how the life of a teacher could be very different depending on the way I chose to live that story. I saw from my father how humor was an important part of his relationship with his students. My mother showed me how devoting myself to teaching could dictate what happened in my life. Education could give me power and it could take me away from my family. I was always grateful to see my grandmother as an example of what this life looked like at the end. She showed me what was truly important because those were the stories that she recounted and those were the lessons that she made sure I learned.

I see how it was the people, the relationships that I had, that drove me. These were what motivated me to be a teacher and then to just engage in the

world again. It was especially those relationships that I had with children that showed me why I chose to continually try. They reminded me of what I had gained from teachers and the experiences that had shaped who I was and where I was.

It was also relationships that let me down. I thought, because I knew people in schools that they would help me, guide me, acknowledge me. I was crushed when I realized that I would not be a classroom teacher, but more it was that I would never be the teacher that I had envisioned. I desperately tried to maintain some parts of my story through being a “teacher” at a daycare. That lasted a little over a year before I could no longer tell myself that I was living a story of teaching. I left, wondering if I would ever enjoy teaching again or being around children. I wondered who I would become when I could no longer say that I was a teacher. I had forgotten, or stopped believing in, the relationships that I had with children. I forgot what it was like to be inspired and to feel that sense of power over my own life, the power to change others.

I gave up my story of classroom teacher applying to masters programs in the United States in other areas but decided that was not what I should do. I went to Hong Kong and found the answer to my unspoken question. I started to rebuild my relationships with children and found my inspiration and love of teaching. I tentatively began to believe and rebuild by story of teacher, this time outside of the classroom. I began to see how the title of teacher was something that transcended the classroom, something that I had been shown by my father but had

forgotten. I started to imagine how I to live out my imagined story of teacher without being bound by the physical space of a classroom.

I am now at the end of my Masters program at the University of Alberta. I still wonder if I will ever again enter the K-12 classroom and I wonder what it might be like in a university classroom. I still struggle to live my imagined story of teacher and wonder if I can truly call myself teacher or if I have become something more outside of the bonds of that label. As I look forward to what my story might include I see more graduate school in the form of a PhD. I look to the possibility of teaching in other forms and to exploring that which lead me to teaching in the first place.

As I think about what has been and what might be I realize that I am continuing in a constant state of transition, to and from places, here and there with people, now and then in time. It constantly changes. My story constantly changes as I am constantly changing. I know that change will continue as I imagine new ways of being and new ways of living my stories to live by.

Chapter 3: Audrey Jayne

Narrative Account for Audrey Jayne – Eliza Pinnegar

Meeting Audrey Jayne: A Beginning

As I sat in my Wednesday morning meetings, I felt increasingly nervous. I had arranged to meet Audrey Jayne mid-afternoon. As I studied the Google-map for the location of the coffee shop where she and I would meet, I realized I could reach it in 15 minutes by public transportation. I left an hour and a half before the agreed upon time to ensure I would not be late. I followed the labyrinth of underground passageways and found the downtown cafe.

As I surveyed the café, I carefully selected what I thought would be the quietest place to sit, without direct sunlight, and away from the foot traffic. I wondered how bothersome it would be. Would Audrey Jayne feel comfortable talking to me with the possibility of others overhearing us?

As I waited for Audrey Jayne, I thought of how I wanted to live a different story with this participant; that is, I wanted the participant's voice to be heard. I knew very little about Audrey Jayne except that she came from a Persian heritage and had learned about the study through an aunt. I watched people, wondering which one was Audrey Jayne. I realized that I had a picture in my mind of what Audrey Jayne would look like. Because of her cultural background, I pictured her with olive skin, dark hair, and exotic eyes. As soon as I realized what I was

thinking, I dismissed my preconceived pictures. I began to look at **every** woman and wondered, is this Audrey Jayne?

She arrived right at the agreed upon meeting time. She saw my binder with the University of Alberta insignia on it and came over and introduced herself. I was glad that I had banished the stereotypical picture of Audrey Jayne before meeting her. Her skin was light, and her hair was blond. We went over the consent papers and the information letter. We started the conversation, talking about how Audrey Jayne came to stop teaching in a K-12 classroom situation, about her family, and about experiences in her life. Working within the three-dimensional inquiry space (temporality, sociality, and place), I was interested in hearing about the places that were important, and the people who influenced Audrey Jayne over time.

After talking for over an hour, we came to the end of our first conversation, and we agreed to meet again in three weeks. We met a total of three times over the next four weeks. Each conversation lasted from an hour to an hour and a half. We continued to meet at the same coffee shop; it was easy for each of us to get to and we both felt comfortable there. Each conversation was recorded and transcribed. From the transcripts and field notes, I read and identified common threads. After reorganizing the pieces together I wrote and created a dramatization of the conversations Audrey Jayne and I had had. Audrey Jayne and I met two more times in addition to the three previous conversations to read and negotiate the dramatization and final account. This dramatic form allowed

Audrey Jayne and me to represent our research relationship and what we noticed in her experiences of becoming a teacher and of leaving teaching.

The dramatization is set in the coffee shop where Audrey Jayne and I met for our conversations. The text is an interpretive construction from the transcripts of the conversations between Audrey Jayne and me.

Setting

Two women dressed in casual business attire sit across from each other in a coffee shop. Each has a beverage. A table separates them and a recording device is placed on it. Throughout the conversation coffee machines and blenders whirl and people move about, talking and placing orders.

(Lights come up)

Eliza – Could you tell me the story of how you came to not be teaching?

Audrey Jayne – Well, it was definitely not my first choice. Right from the get-go

I always thought I would be a teacher. That’s how I identified myself. To me it seemed like if I wasn’t teaching I must have **failed**. Actually, because I wasn’t able to have that permanent teaching job like I planned on, I actually fell into a depression, and I had to get help for it because I felt like I had **failed** at life somewhere.

(Eliza tries not to look shocked at the bluntness with which Audrey Jayne shares with her these struggles. Lights fade out.)

(Curtain up and lights come on)

Act 1: Early Landscapes

Eliza – Can you tell me about your family?

Audrey Jayne – My parents were well-known in town. My mom is a nurse at the hospital. My dad was part of what made the town run. We were a strong family. We are very highly regarded. People didn't know me as "Audrey Jayne," it was "That's Jason's kid," or "That's Paul's sister." You always have that connection. Everybody knows everybody. I like the way that I was raised and the way that I grew up. I don't know anything different. It felt safe, and I think it instilled in me a lot of values that I don't see in many kids today. I was raised to be very responsible and to be self-sufficient. I worked hard for what I wanted. I'm the youngest of three kids. I got a job, and I started saving for my education because I knew I didn't want to get trapped, pregnant in this small town. I wanted to make something of myself, and I knew that that was really important to my parents as well as my grandparents.

Eliza – What are your family's stories of you; how do they see you?

Audrey Jayne - I think my family sees me as very capable and very independent, very strong-willed. I'm very stubborn. My parents believe I'm the more mature of my siblings, and so a lot of things rest upon my shoulders to make right or to forgive, so I feel that pressure a lot. I think my parents would say that I'm very hardworking. I know they're very proud of me,

especially with the volunteer work that I do, and that they do see me as somebody very mature. My grandparents: a few visits ago I went home and my grandpa told me that he is 100% certain I will be the next prime minister of Canada, and I'm like, "Oh, OK. Well, I'm going to need more than my Bachelor of Education, but sure, thanks." But I was thinking no. I mean there have always been high expectations of me.

Eliza – Tell me about your grandparents. Was it them who moved to Canada?

Audrey Jayne – Yeah. They moved here in 1979. They've always lived two blocks away from us. I spent the majority of my time at their house. I almost lived at grandma and grandpa's. I had my space away from my brothers, which was nice. It was like my little refuge. My grandparents were very wealthy, very well known in Iran. My grandpa worked for the Shah of Iran when they were there, so they had a very interesting lifestyle. They had chauffeurs, and they had kitchen help, and they had gardeners, and my grandma would go day tripping with the wives and it was very lavish. And then the regime was overthrown. Because my grandpa worked for the Shah and for the government, he was immediately placed on the hit list. They wanted him dead, so they packed two suitcases, took whatever money they had on hand, and left in the middle of the night and came to Canada, where my mom and dad had already moved.

Eliza – Have they been back to Iran since?

Audrey Jayne – My grandpa has not returned since. My grandma has been back a few times, but it's not quite the same, and they basically went from having

everything to having nothing. In Canada they lived in the basement of an elderly woman's home and my grandpa sorted bottles to make a living, and then when he was in his 50s he went to NAIT to become a mechanic so that he could provide a better life for my grandma. Out of everything that's happened, all the turmoil, all the hardships and everything that's happened to him, he does not carry a grudge. He does not have a chip on his shoulder, and he just loves life and it's inspiring. And so when we grew up we spent a lot of time with my grandparents because my mom worked shift work. She was a nurse and dad worked 6 a.m. 'til 5 p.m., and he was busy in the evenings, too. So we'd often go to my grandparents, and they were the ones who really brought the culture to us because they continued with their lives. We see all the historical pieces and cultural pieces in their house and things like that, so we grew up there speaking Persian and English at the same time 'cause my grandparents. My grandpa spoke English. He picked it up, but my grandma didn't, so we'd have to speak Persian with her. We got accustomed to the food because I'd eat dinner there almost every night. We ate Iranian meals. That's comfort food for me. And they would have Iranian children's books that would try and teach me some of the cultural stories, and my grandma would teach me the little songs in the kids' nursery rhymes. We'd cook together and have our meal, and we'd always have tea, oh my goodness we drink so much tea in my family. My grandma would, they're called like "little coffees," I guess would be the direct translation, so it's

almost like an espresso type thing, but then you'd flip it over and let the grounds dry and then she'd read the coffee grounds. She'd always read your future in your coffee, so that was something we'd always do.

Eliza – Do you have other traditions that you celebrate?

Audrey Jayne – Yah. So we did that and then March 21st, or the first day of spring, is always the New Year, so we'd have our New Year's celebration. There's a big table with different items on it so things like money to bring a prosperous year, and you would have eggs for a fertile year, and you would have a goldfish to bring you life, and you would have a mirror to bring you beauty and all of these different things. They'd always be all set out. We'd have a big traditional dinner. We'd grow these herbs for the whole month, and then after New Year's you take them and you throw them out, you have to chuck them out the window kind of thing. Out with the old and in with the new. Another part of the culture for us is the closeness of family members. I know my mom really struggled with that because my dad wasn't very close with his siblings and we're not really close with our cousins and that just makes no sense to her because her side of the family, everybody's so close.

Eliza – Really? In what way?

Audrey Jayne – For my mom it's like what's going on, our families are supposed to spend every moment together. But still, I can't even count the amount of times that I brought my grandpa for show and tell and for guest speaker and whenever we'd have cultural day that was awesome 'because I could

bring my mom, and grandma could cook, so it was accepted and it was known. So I am close to family, just not all my extended family. It was good; it was just me. I was one of a kind.

Eliza – Are you still close to your grandparents?

Audrey Jayne – Yes. We're still really close, and I'm really thankful for that.

That's something that I guess is abnormal for a lot of people. I talk to my grandparents every day, and I talk to my parents, probably 10 times a day. Some times before we go out I would say, "I need to call my grandpa. I need to tell him this," and people think it is too weird. But I love it.

Eliza – What about your parents?

Audrey Jayne – My parents were fairly strict when I was growing up, and I think maybe they saw that because I was very sociable and very out there that I could easily have fallen off the track and gotten side stepped. I knew that my parents expected a lot from me, so that's hard to do, that's really hard. I really struggled with that when I was looking for work and things like just the thought of waitressing and stuff like that like I felt I was letting my parents down because people would say "oh well, where's Audrey Jayne?" and that couldn't have been an easy thing for my parents to say.

(Curtain falls as Narrator comes out)

Narrator – Audrey Jayne's family plays a major role in the way that she lives her life. Her parents and grandparents instilled in her stories to live by of culture as well as values of responsibility and self-sufficiency. Her grandparents were able to be positive and build a life after great tragedy. I

wonder how this story impacts Audrey Jayne as she strives to “make something” of herself, and I wonder if perhaps this is because she sees that the members of her family have been able to do that in their own lives.

(Narrator exits as the curtain comes up)

Act 2: The Interweaving of the Cultural, Personal, and Professional

Eliza – I wonder if you can you tell me more about your culture and how it impacted you growing up.

Audrey Jayne – I feel very connected to my Persian side even though I’ve never been to Iran, and I really just look like an average Caucasian Canadian kid, so I don’t know why I’m so close to that side but I am proud of my heritage. In our town growing up we were the only Iranian family, so that was very bizarre. When people would hear us speaking Persian to each other that was out of the ordinary. We would celebrate some of our customs, holidays and traditions. It was always like, “oh, silly them”.

Eliza – I have to admit that I am completely ignorant of this culture.

Audrey Jayne – Every year for New Year’s I make the big traditional Iranian meal and I have everybody over even though they kind of think it’s a little bit weird and funny but they all still gladly participate. A lot of people, when they find out about my culture, they are very interested, they’re very almost in awe. All that is hidden behind what you just see, so I know a lot of times that that goes into my identity on how people maybe associate me. Like this is the Iranian princess or something like that, lots of people always want to hear me speak Persian.

Eliza – I am wondering if it was any different when you were teaching?

Audrey Jayne – When I was teaching in Red Deer, there was a strong Persian culture in the school, so once the kids found out that I could speak Persian, then that was all the rave, they just wanted to talk to me in Persian all the time. They would say, “Let’s start a Persian Club”, and “Let’s go do this and that”. It is a part of my story. I think if I maybe looked a little bit more Persian I think it would have been a stronger part of my story and not so hidden, because now sometimes people don’t really take you seriously because they go, “yeah you have blue eyes and blonde hair, what are you talking about”, and “I’m like, no, really, I am Persian”. So I don’t know.

Eliza – And with the kids you taught? How was it with them?

Audrey Jayne – I have this favourite moment when I was teaching in Red Deer and I had two Afghani boys in my class, one knew that I spoke Persian and one didn’t, and the one who didn’t he kept kicking a soccer ball against the wall and I said, “hey cut it out, stop it”. I turned around and he fires it at the wall again. I turned around and he’s like, “it wasn’t me, somebody else did it”. Then to his friend in Persian he said, “she’d never figure it out, she’s just a woman, and she’s too stupid”. I turned around and I gave him a tongue lashing in Persian. He was shocked. And his buddy says “told you she can talk”, like he’s not even fazed and from that day on anytime this kid would see me he would literally stop and put his head down and go, ma’am, and let me pass and say, “sorry Miss”, and he

was so sheepish after that. He had such respect because he knew I could call home and talk to his parents, because before, mom and dad don't speak English, no one can call home so he got away with everything at school. It's kind of a winning moment when you can call somebody about it. It's my secret weapon.

(Curtain falls as Narrator comes out)

Narrator – Culture was important to Audrey Jayne growing up. Now, as an adult, her culture plays an important part of her personal landscape, as well as on her professional landscape. Because she does not look stereotypically Persian, many people are unaware of her connection to her culture until she shares that part of her self. I wonder how her stories would be different had her ethnicity been immediately visible.

(Narrator exits as the curtain comes up)

Act 3: Becoming a Teacher

Eliza – You went from a small town to a larger city to do your schooling. Can you tell me about that?

Audrey Jayne – I did 2 years at a small college and then 2 years at a large university with the transfer program. I found if I went the smaller college route, it was a little bit cheaper, it was an easier transition for me because I was a small town girl, and I could start my program first. The work that I did went directly towards my degree and I did a lot of my extra stuff at college. Then I get to university and it was like, class size 472. “What? What do you mean? How is that possible?” And I know that going to a

smaller place like the college is probably what saved me. It's severe culture shock to come from a town of 900 your whole life, now you're in the big city, you can't keep up and oh my goodness. I wish I could have stayed at the small college. So it was interesting I guess, this gradual step down in humbling yourself, because coming out from high school I was very highly regarded in our community and so I had a very strong self-esteem and I felt like I could take on the world. Then I went to college where it was like "OK I'm a little bit of a smaller fish in the sea but that's OK", like there's still opportunities, like there's still something that I can jump in on. And then you go to the larger university where you're just completely knocked down. It was like "I don't care who you were or where you came from, give me all your money and I'm going to give you this little piece of paper in return, OK? Good doing business with you" and then that's like the end of the day so it was just the gradual steps down. You really seem to not matter when you're in a place that big and coming from a place where you did matter and you mattered hugely, it was a big shift, a definite shift.

Eliza – Now I know that volunteer work is big in your family and that you continued to do it through school. Can you tell me more about that?

Audrey Jayne – I've always had something that I volunteer for, so in university I volunteered at the seniors' home down the street. In high school I volunteered at the hospital in the long term care and I helped to feed supper to the patients there and just go visit, which really stood out as to

what my true character was. Every year when I was in university my friends and I would get together and for our Christmas presents to each other we'd spend the day baking and we'd make little packages and we'd give them to the homeless people, then of course with my non-profit organization work I volunteer a lot with that and do various things.

Eliza – And throughout these experiences you continued to want to be a teacher?

Audrey Jayne – Yeah, but it was interesting because I originally wanted to be a police officer, which is funny because I now work in that area so it kind of came full circle. The day I told my mom when I was younger, I said “mom I want to be a police officer”, I didn't realize that my older brother had told her that exact same thing that day so she's like “oh you're cute. You're doing it with your brother” and I went OK “I'm going to be a teacher”. My mom said “oh awesome,” and I said I wanted to be a teacher so I became a teacher and then I loved it. School has always been very important.

Eliza – Your mother's a nurse and your father works for the town they live in.

What does the rest of your family do?

Audrey Jayne – They're like engineers, civil architects, biologists and I was like yeah I'm a teacher so I felt inadequate. But then my grandparents never made me feel that way and even now my grandpa always tells me, maybe he's just saying it, he's like “you're the most educated one in our family. You're going to do real well”.

Eliza – And what was the imagined story you had about teaching when you started?

Audrey Jayne – I truly believed that I was going to meet the love of my life in university and that we would finish university and I would be a teacher and that we would get married. Then I would have a teaching job and 2 years later I would have my permanent contract, I would be pregnant with my first baby and then I would go back to teaching, then I would have another baby and then my life would be good. So then when you think about it and I go “oh my goodness I was supposed to do all that at 21 to 25 and I’m now 26, not married, no kids, no contract, no mat leave coverage if I want it” and I go “hmm. Something got screwed up along the way”. I really thought in my heart of hearts that my toughest time, biggest struggle would be university and then I’d finish, get a job, part of that is maybe that hopefulness that I would get a job out of my practicum.

Eliza – Did you have anyone to show you how to be on this professional landscape while doing things like volunteering and attending to other personal things that you enjoyed?

Audrey Jayne – I had one mentor teacher. I and another student teacher had to share him. This student teacher and I are now very good friends. The school was self-directed learning so there’s no formal teaching, it’s just kids have manuals and that’s it, so my job, the mentor teacher taught English and drama, the other student teacher was the drama minor so she did all the drama, I was the English minor so I did all the English. My job

consisted of sitting at a desk on a floor in the English wing all day long, and I didn't do anything unless kids had questions, and then they'd come up and I'd answer their questions. That's all it was, like I felt like I didn't do anything so I still worked and I still maintained my life somehow and it was awesome. And then I did my second practicum at a junior high school, and I decided not to work during that time and I was glad that I didn't because the mentor teacher at that placement, she was very involved, she was very thorough, and she had very high expectations and it kicked my butt. I learned what true teaching is through that one, it was very different, so I worked a lot longer hours, I took work home, and it was the real deal basically.

(Curtain falls as Narrator comes out)

Narrator – While moving from high school to college or university is often hard, it seemed particularly hard for Audrey Jayne. She had to re-imagine how to compose her life so that she could honour and live out the small town life style of volunteering and being involved in the community, which was a part of her story to live by, on the new large city landscape. I wonder about the way that she came to decide teaching was the path she wanted. How would her story to live by change had she become a police officer instead of a teacher. I also find it interesting that while she was able to be fulfilled on the personal and professional landscapes during her first placement, Audrey Jayne identified the second placement, in which she

worked long hours and took work home, as “true” teaching and embraced this as a way of composing a life.

(Narrator exits as the curtain comes up)

Act 4: Imagined Life Story Interrupted

Audrey Jayne - We were often told in university that if you do a really great job chances are that they're going to just keep you on and hire you right from your practicum. So I went in with that expectation and then they wanted to hire me out of my last practicum but then the school board stepped in and said “she hasn't completed the 6 months administrative paper process, so sorry”. The school said “we're really in need of a teacher and she's the one we want” and they said “yeah well she didn't fill out these papers in time” so I didn't get it. It went to somebody else. You go “oh my goodness”, I really thought that I'd be there forever and ever amen, but I wasn't. It's been interesting in that I never imagined that my education would dictate my life because I can't get married because I don't have the financial stability. My significant other, who is a teacher, and I haven't been able to save money. We can't buy a home because we have nothing more than a 1 year contract. We have no proof of stable income; no bank will give us a loan so we have had struggles financially that way. We have tried to go and get money; they won't give us more than a thousand dollars because we can only guarantee that we're going to make payments for a year. I can't have kids because I can't go on a mat leave because I would have no income and no guarantee of a job when I'm out, when I'm

done my mat leave. I always thought I would choose the time and place, when, where, why and how. I never thought teaching would dictate my life for me.

Eliza – So how was it not getting the position you wanted after graduating?

Audrey Jayne – I was able to get temporary placements and so I did end up teaching in a classroom for a fair amount of the time since I graduated. But it was always 4 months at a time. Then I was out looking for work again. They would tell me, “oh you’re doing a really great job, but we have nothing for you because so and so is going to get the job”, or that kind of situation. I had no debt in university, and I was doing really well. 4 years after being a teacher I have more debt than I can ever imagine, I don’t know how I **can’t** get a job here.

Eliza – How did you make that decision to leave teaching?

Audrey Jayne – It came down to I had to do basically what was right for me to be able to survive, to be able to put food on the table and then just to be able to move ahead in life. I thought, “oh my goodness I’m 26 and I’m still renting a basement because I can’t afford a house”. I’ve been with my significant other for about 3 years, and we can’t get married because we don’t have money. I asked myself “**Is this the life that I want**”?

Eliza – Do you have the same view now?

Audrey Jayne – I really truly believe that it actually took me physically stepping out of the situation to just kind of shake my head free of, whoa you were way too involved, you were way too consumed by the job, I think I

probably would have either been burnt out or would be single on my own and that's it and just work, work, work, and that would have been it. So I think as much as I'd love to do it, I think it was good for me to step back to go no it's OK to say no to some things and it's OK to tone it down a little, you don't have to be gung ho every day, you can be gung ho half the time and it would still be effective.

Eliza – Your significant other is a teacher isn't he? Is he a "Die Hard" teacher?

Audrey Jayne – Yeah and it was frustrating for me to see my boyfriend, he enjoys teaching, he is a good teacher, he does love it, but I wouldn't go so far as to say he's passionate about it. So to see someone who isn't passionate about something that I was die hard passionate about, and to go "what are you doing"? It killed me, absolutely killed me. It was really difficult. It was an every day struggle and wanting to get in there and do it for him and have that piece of it, to take hold of that. I have to let that go because it was driving me nuts, I'd be up all night going "what do you mean? You've got this project tomorrow" and he's not working on it, "you could be doing so many cool things with that" and trying to get in and then realizing no, it's a different way to work, a different style and that's OK. I think it made it more difficult because I would be very excited about different things I would do.

(Curtain falls as Narrator comes out)

Narrator – Audrey Jayne had an imagined story of how she would live as a teacher. It included getting a job right out of her practicum. She planned

to fall in love and get married, have children, and return to teaching between each child. She planned to be that “die hard” teacher that makes each student feel like they are the most special. This imagined story was interrupted when Audrey Jayne was unable to get the teaching job she wanted, despite her being that “die hard” teacher that she thought was so important. I am amazed that Audrey Jayne is able to be so open with this story. I feel her disappointment and how hard this tension is as her imagined story bumps up with the story she is composing now. I wonder how this will change her stories to live by.

(Narrator exits as the curtain comes up)

Act 5: In the Midst of Trying to Teach

Eliza – I am wondering about other jobs you have had. Can you tell me more about them?

Audrey Jayne – For a year I did the kindergarten program. I worked in a clothing store. I did some marketing jobs, waitressed, kind of like just that and anything that I could. I was kind of all over the place. I’d be really excited about my job, but at the end of the day we’d come home and he’d talk about school and then I would crash. And it would be really hard to get up. I had jobs that I’d just get so bitter with. I would get a new job but nothing would be fulfilling.

Eliza – And within teaching?

Audrey Jayne – I did 2 years of grade 9 to 11 in Red Deer. From there I went to a high school for 4 months and did one semester. At the end of the semester

I was told no more work for you, sorry with budget cuts. So that's when I received this job in law enforcement and within probably about a month of me getting the job, I got all these phone calls saying we want you back, we can afford you now. So it always seemed like it was a step too late. Same with Red Deer. I left and a month after I left, then all of a sudden they had an opening for me, but at the time they didn't. So it always seemed like, and maybe that was my own downfall, that I wasn't patient enough, but I couldn't handle not knowing where my next pay check was coming from, not knowing if I could pay those bills because I used all my savings, I had nothing. I couldn't take that chance. The impression they left me with is that I wasn't good enough to fight for, but when they really needed somebody I was worth it. But they never wanted to budge when I needed the help. And also it was very much the experience that both my partner and I experienced was, it's not so much what you can do but who you know.

Eliza – Can you tell me more about that?

Audrey Jayne – Yah, we saw a lot of things, like oh this person graduated high school from here and yeah all of a sudden they have a job or this person can coach sports, now they've got a job and this person is so and so's daughter or son, they have a job and it was very much favouritism is what we found. Being that we weren't well-known around here, we felt like we were needles in a haystack.

Eliza – Can you tell me more about the experience of leaving a position and them calling you back?

Audrey Jayne – I went into my principal’s office and I said here’s my situation: my family’s asking me to come home, if there is a job I will stay, this is what I want to do. If there’s nothing whatsoever that you can do for me then I guess this is my notice and I’ll be moving in a month at the end of the school year. He was adamant “no there would be nothing, sorry”. So sure enough I picked up and moved and probably within 2 weeks into the school year I got the phone call, “oh, we have a position available here”. And I said “Well, I just spent every last dime moving myself here”. I went in and talked to him probably on four or five separate occasions, “are you sure there’s not even a .2, there’s not even an anything”. He said, “No. I don’t have anything.” I just went “OK, this is it then” and his response to me was “yeah, let me know if you need me to call anyone for you”, like don’t let the door hit you on the ass on the way out kind of thing. So I left and then I could have died when they called, like come back.

Eliza – Wow. That has got to be hard.

Audrey Jayne – And it’s kind of like the thing I hear over and over, like “oh you’re such a good teacher, they shouldn’t have let you go” and “this is your passion. You have to be teaching” but then I’m going “well then it doesn’t make sense ‘cause if I’m so wonderful and so great, and if you see

these qualities in me then why aren't you giving me a job? Why are you letting me go? Why are you kicking me out the door?"?

Eliza – And your family during this time? How were they?

Audrey Jayne – Yeah, it was things like Christmas holidays. It would drive my family nuts, we'd all go home for Christmas break but they'd be sitting in the living room and I'd have an entire kitchen table full of papers as I'm trying to get caught up on marking. "Well why don't you come join us and watch the movie", "yeah I'll watch from here, you guys go ahead", like got to mark and it would drive my family nuts because they would never have my attention because I was always marking, marking, marking. I'm sure that they paid a dear price, I'm sure it was hard on them and of course them to see me working so much and then you don't get paid for your overtime or anything and so I think that was very hard for them too to see that.

(Curtain falls as Narrator comes out)

Narrator – I can feel the pain in Audrey Jayne's voice as she tells about wanting to teach, but at every turn she is denied the opportunity to continue teaching at a school in a more permanent position. I imagine her feeling alone as she tries to get any kind of position, even a .2 and how difficult it must be to believe that teaching is what she is supposed to do and not being able to live that out. Even with the short term positions I can feel the tension of Audrey Jayne trying to balance her image of being a die

hard teacher, and her family and personal life. I wonder how her family tells the story of this time in Audrey Jayne's life.

(Narrator exits as the curtain comes up)

Act 6: Composing a Life Out of Teaching (Professional)

Eliza – And now you are in a different position with a new job. Can you tell me about it?

Audrey Jayne – Well now I have a position as a curriculum designer. I'm still using my Ed degree but not teaching per se. More the behind the scenes planning type of stuff and it's taken until now, this job which I've only had for 3 months but it was almost like I had my blinders on. I saw a Bachelor of Education that can only be used in a classroom and now I'm finally at a place where I guess I'm OK with not being a teacher. I've accepted this as not a sign of failure but embracing it to see where it takes me rather than, well I guess I'm back at square one, ready to just give up kind of thing. But it's been a conscious effort every day. Even things like when my boyfriend and I are out and we run into some of his students and I go "yeah I really miss that". That was a really cool part of my day and now I don't get that 'cause I sit in front of the monitor for 90% of my day, so it has its shortcomings but at the same time it's still finding that value. I'm on a temporary contract during a mat leave so we're not quite out of the woods yet. I've been given the impression that I'm not leaving anytime soon and when my contract is up that it will be renewed and maybe made permanent. Again I have heard that time and again so I'm

just going to wait it out, but for the time, I just thought oh that's 1 year, its guaranteed income for a year. I'm really hoping. I'm tired of looking for a job, trying to find what I'm supposed to be doing. I'm tired of being the new kid and learning and learning, new job, new job. I want that comfortable marry up so I'm hoping that this is it. I really love this job, I'd be happy to stay there for a while.

Eliza – It sounds like your outlook and view have changed a little bit.

Audrey Jayne – I'm starting to see the future and my career not as a black hole, grim, but rather opportunity. I know that has been a very new outlook and new step in my perspective, in that I'm starting to see change of good, not change of bad.

Eliza – So do you see your self going back into the classroom at some point?

Audrey Jayne – I imagine that I will not step foot in a classroom again, I really truly do and I'm OK with it. I imagine that I will continue in the position that I'm at, doing curriculum design, and I will give this a go for the next 2 years. I get a permanent position that is and then looking forward to the future I think different options where I can go as an independent design consultant and do the same work that I do now just of my own free will, or I'm going to open up a bakery and I'm going to go with something totally different. But I'm feeling good about that, I think I really love teaching, I think I got burnt by teaching, and I think that with my personality I don't think, now that I kind of step outside the circle I'm not sure that teaching is the best career for my personality because I have that tendency to get

too far involved and too consumed by it that I don't, I think it would cause me problems in the future.

(Curtain falls as Narrator comes out)

Narrator –Audrey Jayne feels hope once again. As she is able to remove her “blindness” and see teaching beyond the walls of a classroom in front of children, she has begun to live out her imagined story of living a teaching life on a different landscape. She talks about how she needed to step outside of the life she was living in order to see how to live the way that would allow her to honour her life on a personal landscape while enjoying her work on her professional landscape.

(Narrator exits as the curtain comes up)

Act 7: Composing a Life (Personal)

Eliza – And through all of this your significant other has been with you and now you have this new view of what might happen. Can you tell me more about that?

Audrey Jayne – We've been together 3 years, but we've never lived together; so now we're going to live together and I think a great deal of what pushed that forward is because I'm happy with where I am in my professional life, that it has brought positive, happiness into the personal life and so we are able to move forward as a result of me letting go of what happened with teaching and moving forward with my own life in my career. We're going to rent a place. Us renting together will allow us both the opportunity to save a little money each month where we can put that towards then getting

married, kind of that stuff, if we can play nice then we'll get married.

Yeah that's a really endearing thing too when you look and you go wow we kind of made it through all that, like I'm pretty sure there's not a lot else that we couldn't handle but no, it's good. I think it's an open book. I'm not, I don't want to write my pages before I get there and I think that that's so much of my personality is to have my life story written before I even get there and what I need to do to really work on writing it after, I've been there and to just let it go because I see so much in all different kinds of situations and scenarios, where I get it so in my mind that this is what it's going to look like and this is how it's going to play out and this is everything that I just end up getting so disappointed and so frustrated and so upset and then it's well now that's a disaster. Whereas if I just didn't envision everything and have to have it all set out and know the course that I'm on, if I could just step back and say you know what, I'm going to go with it as it comes and I'm going to see how it is, I think that that would have such a difference on my quality of life and my nerves and my stress.

(Curtain falls as Narrator comes out)

Narrator – Audrey Jayne has started to compose a forward looking story as she starts to see her life as full of opportunities and not failures. She has started to make plans to move in with her significant other and to move forward in her personal life. I wonder how this new outlook will shape her stories to live by in the future.

(Curtain falls and lights fade to black)

Negotiating the Narrative Account

As our conversations turned to negotiating the text, we arranged when and how to meet to co-compose Audrey Jayne's narrative account. We met in person once and then a week later to negotiate the text that had been created for a total of two face to face negotiations. Many of Audrey Jayne's stories resonated with me even though we come from different backgrounds. As she shared her stories, the emotion she felt resonated with me as she told me about them. I was grateful that she was so open about the pain she felt and the relationships and memories that continue to keep her going. As I read and re-read Audrey Jayne's words with Audrey Jayne, we both noticed the impact of certain stories that are important to Audrey Jayne's story to live by.

My own grandparents lived far away from me as I was growing up but were vital to the composition of who I am as well as the way I move through life. I can see how Audrey Jayne is rooted in her culture by her grandparents. It is this relationship that has shown her how to be proud of her culture as well as what it means to work hard and be part of a community. At times this comes with tensions of living up to high expectations, but it is the encouragement and the pride of her parents and grandparents that helps sustain her, especially now, in creating a forward looking story.

Audrey Jayne grew up in a small town in Alberta where her family was well known and she was respected. She learned the importance of being involved

in the community and volunteering. These were important things to Audrey Jayne as she moved from the small towns to larger city areas. This also caused some tension for her. It is amazing to me how she has found ways to honour the aspects of living in a small town while living in a large city by becoming respected in a new community as well as allowing time for the volunteer work that is so important to her.

Much like living a small town life style on a large city landscape, Audrey Jayne shows how she had to live in tension within teaching. Her significant other is a teacher, which meant that Audrey Jayne had to deal with seeing someone else live the story she wanted to live. She described how she was passionate and “diehard” while her significant other did not do things the way she would have. I could tell how hard it was for her accept that she was not teaching and that someone else had a different way of teaching. I was touched as Audrey Jayne shared with me the depression that she was dealing with during that time. I could see how hard it had been to give up the story of teaching in a K-12 setting and yet how necessary it was for her and her relationships with her significant other and her family.

In many ways, Audrey Jayne giving up the story of classroom teacher and being happy with her significant other living a teaching life is because she has been able to live out a different story of teaching on a new landscape. Working with the education of law enforcement allows her to feel that what she does matters, that she is using her education degree, that it is not wasted as she helps to impact the communities and lives she cares so much about. She has been able to

continue with her volunteer work and honour those parts of her story that are most important to her well being. Most importantly, she is able to live out a more balanced life that she feels comfortable with.

As Audrey Jayne looks forward she cannot see herself back in a classroom setting, yet she is happy for the time she was able to have there. She looks forward to living out her imagined story of falling in love, getting married, having children, and participating within a community. It is interesting to Audrey Jayne and I that she had to leave teaching in order to live out this imagined story. I can see the hope, the strength, and the pride of her family and community in Audrey Jayne as she tells her story to me and as she moves beyond the imagined story she held to new experiences.

Chapter 4: Sam

A Narrative Account of Sam – Eliza Pinnegar

First time coming

I was apprehensive as I sat in my car looking at the section of homes where Sam lived. One house seemed much the same as the next. They were close together with white façades. Each house had a bit of grass with a path that led up to the front door. I was early and so waited in my car. It was a bright September afternoon. As I waited I looked closely at every person who passed and wondered, “is that Sam? Is it someone Sam knows? Are they wondering who I am? Do they know I don’t belong to their community”?

Finally I saw someone walking up to the house I thought was Sam’s. I got out of my car and walked toward him. He noticed me and asked if I was Eliza from the research project. As he spoke, I wondered “what is it that identifies me as a researcher?”

We walked together into his house. As we entered, I noticed I could see into the kitchen, the living room, and a small place to eat meals. I knew there was a second floor because of the stairs. Sam directed me to the only table in the rooms downstairs. It was small and glass. I could see through it. Nothing could be hidden. That was when I noticed the other furniture. The couch was black and looked like leather. I could not see many personal touches to the rooms. There were not many pictures, or what I imagined could be cultural signifiers. There was nothing on display that suggested his South Asian cultural background. I

could see no photos of family members and loved ones. He was married but I saw little of the partner.

I could have placed many people I knew into that space, and they would have fit. I realized that I had had a picture in my mind of what I thought his house would look like. This was not it. We sat at the table and spoke of the weather and whether I had difficulties finding my way to his house. He poured glasses of water for each of us, and I tried to remember the saying I had learned from my parents, and then in my Teacher Education Program, “Fake it till you make it”. I tried to “fake” knowing what to do to begin to build a research relationship. I had not done this before. I worried about whether I would be able to hear him as we sat at the small glass table.

We went over the consent documents to be signed. I was amazed by how quickly this process was done. I wondered, “Do you not get what I am going to be asking you to do”? I was relieved that he was so quick to sign a paper agreeing without discussion. There was no talk of pseudonyms or anonymity at this moment, only conversation about where I came from and what I was doing in Canada. I finally redirected the conversation and asked Sam to draw a timeline of his life. I worried this was a mistake because our conversation ended as he drew.

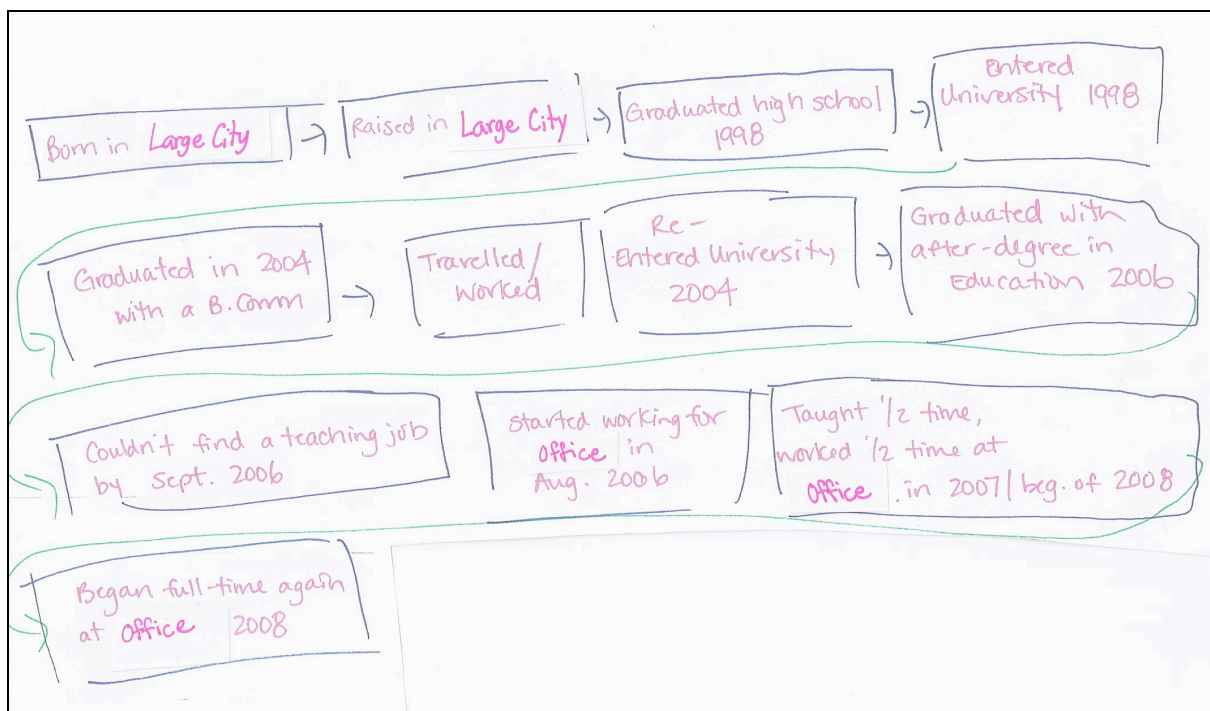


Fig. 1 Timeline Created by Sam

We were plunged into silence as Sam thought about how to represent his life on paper, deciding what to put on and what to leave out. Perhaps he was wondering what I wanted from him? What parts of his story? What would be relevant? All of these thoughts flashed through my mind as I sat awkwardly as he slowly began to draw. He started with where he was born, and jumped to High School Graduation, and on to degrees, and finally to work experience, and then ended. We talked as he described what he had created. I thought about all of the things that were not on the paper. Suddenly I felt nervous about asking any questions about what was not on the timeline. How would he understand what I was doing? What would he think? Would asking questions about what he left out be too presumptuous? Would I phrase my questions in ways that were safe for Sam to answer? I wondered about the places he had been, the people who were important to him, and the experiences that shaped him. I wondered about

how he made sense of the life he was now living, and the person he was now becoming. Our conversation lasted for an hour and a half. As we left, I told him I would meet him again in few weeks and we negotiated our next meeting.

Sam and I met three more times to have conversations over five months. Subsequent conversations occurred in coffee shops and offices and lasted from between an hour and an hour and a half. I made field notes during the conversations but I also recorded the conversations. Using my field notes, and the transcriptions of our conversations, I constructed this narrative account using our words and phrases from the conversations to form word images which are words or phrases that were, in this case, spoken in conversation and arranged in order to provide a depiction and concise representation Sam's stories that he shared. I used word images in order to give a sense of the co-construction of this narrative account and to represent who he is and who he is becoming. As Sam and I sat together to read the bits of transcript that I selected and sequence them to form the word images, we noticed themes of practicality and a desire to make a difference were seen throughout his stories.

Family - An Immigrant story

Living at home with my parents

Stay close to home

Didn't make sense to go anywhere else

Moved out at 26

Stay close to home

More **practical**

I was surprised at what Sam was telling me, and at how open he was with this story. Where I grew up, staying at home past 18 would have been seen as less than desirable and even a source of some shame. I soon learned this was a thread that ran through his stories to live by. Sam's decisions were made on a different basis, one of practicality. As we moved back through time I came to understand this more.

Mom always said

Make sure you're ok in math

Math is very big

Brother went into sciences

My parents

Please do something **practical**

Business - a **practical** thing to do

Brother, graduating with a psychology degree

What the hell is he going to do

With a psychology degree?

OK

Do something **useful**

Went into the business program

General degree

Marketing

It wasn't like any love or passion, anything like that

Have in your **back pocket**

Practicality reasons

As long as you're **working**

This struck me as a very strong narrative thread woven through his stories to live by, who he was, and was becoming. I noticed how many times in that first, and subsequent, conversations Sam used the word “practical”. I wondered how he felt about doing everything for practical reasons, instead of passion or interest. I wondered if I would hear stories of resentment, as I have always felt when making decisions on any other basis than desire. As Sam spoke, I learned that his family did not have much to say about his change in careers because, as they saw it, as long as he could get a job it didn't matter what he did. I felt a little sad that he was not able to feel connected to his decision of going into business. As he talked about his family, he became more engaged in what he said.

My grandma lived with us

For a while

Took care of my brother and I

Spent a lot of time with her

She didn't speak a lick of English

Watched Indian soap operas
Went down to Little India
Perms with grandma
We were old enough to be on our own
She moved back to India

Later in our conversations I realized how important Sam's grandmother was to him. His grandmother was part of an arranged marriage. She was unable to become literate, and was unable to do many things because of sacrifices she made for her family. Sam told me how he saw how being dependent on another person dictated his Grandmother's life. I wondered if, for Sam, this increased the importance of obtaining an education, so he could have a job, and be independent from another person.

Meaningful to Make a Difference

I want to **make a difference** in the world
Do something **meaningful** and **different**
Didn't even think of education
I should have
Don't want to work in an office
Maybe Education's the path I want to take
I thought then
This is better than any day in an office

Oh my god

Can't believe this is going to be my career

Express an interest

In doing something **meaningful**

Social studies

This is great

Better than any day I've ever had working in an office

Wanted to do something **meaningful**

Something **different**

I'm going to be in there

Make a **difference** for these kids

I was struck with the many times Sam used words like “difference” and “meaningful”. I wondered if the desire to do something meaningful bumped up against the need to do something practical. Perhaps teaching was the perfect marriage between practicality and passion.

Tensions-Childhood (Public or Catholic)

Elementary

Went to a Catholic school

Motivated and pretty independent

Mom said

We should make sure you're ok in math

Math is very big
I hate math
Math was hard
I'm very bad at science
Really difficult
My dad saying
You should really get outside
Get some sunshine
Go out and play
Go ride your bike
I was shy
I liked to read a lot

As Sam told his stories, I saw how there were tensions between what he should do and what he wanted to do. Sam was excited to go into first grade because it was there he would learn to read. He spoke of this as his joy, being able to enter the worlds and lives of others in different situations and places. This was also reflected when he told how he would sit and read the newspaper with his father at the table in the morning. He also told of watching National Geographic, the history channel, and the biography channel with him. I wondered how this connected with his decision to enter social sciences as a major for his teaching degree. Perhaps it was here, with his father, that the seeds of learning about the world, and of being interested in the events of people and countries, were planted.

However, it was also important to be able to gain the skills that resulted in a good job.

Junior high

All my friends went to

Catholic junior high feeder

Decided to go to the public school

That was closest to home

After a month

Think I made the wrong choice

Begging my parents

Can I go to the Catholic junior high

Happy as a clown

Sam decided to go to a different junior high and was disappointed. He couldn't believe the way the students acted. He had been a good student, and his classmates at the Catholic school were not disrespectful of their teacher. After a short time he asked if he could return to the Catholic system. I wondered how Sam perceived the students in the public school system as distinct from those in the Catholic system. I wondered if they were that different or whether it was more that Sam was experiencing discontinuity in the new environment.

As we spoke more, I learned that Sam was unable to teach in the Catholic system when he graduated, as he was not Catholic. I wondered how his memories

of his experiences in the public district as a student influenced his perception of teaching, as he searched for a teaching position in the public district.

Tensions-Business or Education

University

Had no idea what I wanted to do

Was always really good at keyboarding

Just go into Arts first

Figure out what I want to do later

Friends went into business

Me - went into business

Thought I wanted to work in an office

Didn't really know what I wanted to do

Decided not to work in an office

Not what I want for my life

I thought

Education would be a good thing

Rewards are so different

It was too late by then

Already three quarters done

Finished in business

Did Education After Degree

I was surprised at his switch from the Faculty of Business to the Faculty of Education. I wondered how Sam shifted from thinking of business for his career to teaching for his career. How did he go from a program like marketing to education? Sam explained that as he didn't know what he wanted to do in university, he explored many different options. Even as he was in the business program, he explored different options within business, and outside. By the time he decided he wanted to be in education, he had nearly completed his business degree. The practical thing was to finish the business degree before starting one in Education. Completing his business degree gave him what he called a back up plan, as well as a way to pay for his schooling, while in the education program.

So different than business

Everyone is so friendly

Loved my classes

Really interesting

Business is dog eat dog

Education – totally opposite

Loved my practicums

So different from business

Sam smiled as he told me how he enjoyed his education program. He began to dream what his classroom would look like. “Ideally in my head you have one vision of how you would have loved to have had your classroom and

then reality sets in”. It was clear that he had an image of what it would look like to be a teacher. I asked him what he had imagined himself to be as a teacher while still in the program. He described himself as imagining being with students in a room with desks and chairs, the traditional image that had been reinforced by his own experiences in school. He also described a conflicting view of having places for dance and exploration and technology but as these were not practical they were never embraced as part of his imaginings. I wondered, once again, how his experiences in school as a student as well as in university shaped his idea of what it would be like to teach. Sam, after waiting for a year, received a call in mid-September asking him to accept a position in an English program that also included teaching Foods in a high school.

Tensions-Teach science or not

Hired at a high school

I’m a CTS minor, business and marketing

Major was social studies

Teaching half-time

English program

Foods

They thought, oh because I student taught in Foods

Here take two Foods classes

Almost like an aide but not

Was teaching the class

But not a teacher
Kind of strange
It wasn't my class
I was doing a lot of the work

Sam is still not completely clear on what his position was. I can see the puzzlement and frustration on his face as he tries to explain how he was teaching, but was not really the teacher. I puzzled over his perceptions of his status as a teacher, and his identity in that position. He explains that while there were tensions being in this position, he felt comfortable and confident teaching in these areas. He was competent in English, and he had some experience with Foods. Most of all he liked being able to explore the world, and bring new perspectives to his students. This made him feel like a teacher. He moved on quickly as he was only in that position for a short time. The principal had over budgeted and Sam was given a choice to accept another position, or to have his position drastically cut. He moved on.

Principal
We got a science 20-class opening up
Thought - I'm very bad at science
Said – Ok, I'll take science
Why am I in this?
It was awful

I didn't want to be stuck on a sub list

I have no background

Whatever

What am I doing this for?

You take whatever assignment they're willing to give you

I pulled out my high school notes

Hadn't taken science since high school

Nights - I cried the first week

I have to deal with this

Felt totally overwhelmed

Taught half-time

Worked half-time

I felt bad 'cause

Always dealing with the discipline problems

Not a good experience

I'm doing such a **disservice** to them

It's **not fair** to the kids

I **hated** it

I'm making – maybe – small

Slight difference

In that kid's life for 10 minutes out of the day

Right?

Felt so bad

Felt like I was neglecting them
Not knowing what I'm teaching
This isn't worth it to me
Decided to go back full-time
At Government office

Sam does not see himself as having taught. I was surprised to learn of the position he held as a teacher. To me this meant he had taught, but he did not feel he had. I wondered what it would take for him to identify himself as having taught? Sam tells me how when he first was offered the position he had just bought a house, and so accepted the science 20 class. His body became tense as he told me the turmoil he faced while teaching the class. What he most regrets was not being able to teach the students the way they deserved. His face was filled with sadness as he thought about the students who would soon enter into university without the knowledge or passion for science that they deserved, or that he was able to give them. After hearing this story and feeling the pain that Sam felt during this time, I wondered if he would ever choose to leave his position at the ministry to try teaching again?

Tensions-Work in office or try again

If I were to go back into teaching
You don't even have time to pee
When you're in the classroom

I was at the school sometimes 'til six or seven

It left a bad taste

I'm not really a teacher

I think I've **spent more time** doing **business** stuff

Saw the principal in his van drive by

Evokes that little stab of the heart and the twist

I have just as much to offer as they do

They just have the connection to get in

Different my life would be

If I had gotten a job

Didn't really pan out

You don't realize it

There's a lot more that goes on

Not just in the classroom with the kids

Now I leave at the end of the day

I'm not satisfied

I'm in an office still

It sucks

I have applied overseas

See what happens...

It happened briefly as Sam reflected on the times when he was confronted with the life he wanted. It was only at our last conversation that his thoughts turned back to the classroom with him as the teacher. I am surprised and excited. I wonder where he will teach and what content. He doesn't seem very hopeful but there was a spark as he contemplated the possibility of him in a classroom again.

The Journey is not over...

I struggled to hear Sam tell his story. He talked of policy and structures but did not delve deeply into his feelings or thoughts. I thought I would have told the story of my life so differently. I imagined he would have included snippets of "him" in the details of what high school science 20 was. Was this because I was from the United States and he thought I would not know what science 20 was.

Sam and I negotiated what would be written in this narrative account by reflecting on our conversations, reviewing transcripts and field notes, and clarifying details. From these negotiations I understood more about Sam but also was confronted with more wonders.

It was not until later; when I read the transcripts that I noticed how often he had used the word "practical". Sam told me, when I pointed this out to him, that it was how his family was. He spoke of his grandmother as he explained. His grandmother had married his grandfather in India. The marriage was an arranged one. His grandmother took care of the family and made sacrifices in order to provide a better life. This was where Sam's parents met and were married. Like

his maternal grandparents, Sam's parents moved to Canada in order to provide more opportunities.

I was confused when Sam told me this story. It seemed this was not a story of practicality but of hope, faith, and adventure. It would have been practical to stay in India where they already had a steady business. I realized that the practicality came in around the move to a different country. Sam wondered about his parents and grandparents relationships. Did they stay together because of the love and happiness they shared, or was it because at this point it made more sense to just stay together? This causes me to reflect on the relationships in my family, if the reasons they stayed together were love or because if one became ill, no one was financially able to survive without the other, or if it were just easier to stay with someone you liked okay. I wonder if these stories serve to reinforce the practicality of making decisions.

Sam became somber as he told another story about his father who, although smart enough to go to university, was unable to increase his education because he needed to provide for his growing family. He got a job with a railway company. His mother worked at a post-secondary institution in order to provide for the family.

Sam wanted to make a difference in the world, but always had to consider if what he wanted would provide a way for him to support himself. This has been a constant tension for him as he is able to provide for himself, but is unsatisfied in his job in an office even though it involves producing education materials. But this is not enough to sustain him.

Tensions show up throughout Sam's story as he describes himself as a shy child. The image his parents had of what children should be like (good in math and playing outside) was not the way Sam was constructing his stories to live by. This was once again evident when Sam chose to go to the public junior high school. The way he was not congruent with the way the other students behaved, and so, after only a short time, Sam decided to go back to the system he was familiar with and with the people he knew.

When Sam went to university with no idea of what would be practical as well as allow him to make a difference, he followed the example of some of his friends and went into a general degree within the Business program. Still searching for what would fulfill him, Sam took a variety of courses within and outside of business to find out what he might have a passion for. When he decided that teaching was something that was the perfect combination of practicality and passion, he was $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way through his business program. He decided to finish this degree and later used it to become a CTS minor as well as provide a "Plan B" should he ever need it.

The opportunity came sooner than Sam expected. He was glad he had a back up plan. All through his schooling he was least successful in math and science. As luck would have it, he was offered to teach a Science 20 course. He described this as a horrific experience. The semester after teaching this Science 20 course, Sam was offered another position in the same area. I could tell from Sam's body language and expressions that he felt sad, and felt he had done such a disservice to the students he taught. He turned down the position. He was sad to leave

teaching. He felt that he had not really been a teacher as he was not able to live out his imagined story of teaching during the short time he spent in the classroom.

As he continues to work for the Government, in an office, I wonder if he will ever again look to teaching in a classroom. At our last conversation, almost at the end, I could tell that he had news as he sat up straighter and life flooded into his face. He tells me that he has begun applying for teaching positions overseas. He tells me it is a long shot but I can sense that he hopes he will be accepted somewhere.

He wants me to know that the journey is not over. He is not done with teaching, merely out of teaching for now. Sam seems hopeful as he looks to the future and sees himself, once again, in the classroom.

Chapter 5: Imagining Together Across All Three

Imagined stories

Stories are lived and told (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin & Connelly, 1999). There are also stories of lives that are imagined. Sarbin (2004) writes, “imaginings are storied constructions” (p.11). By looking at the past I am able to imagine forward looking stories that are composed out of past experiences, and that allow the possibility of moving forward (Carr, 1986). These forward looking stories that push me to see beyond the story I am living now become the stories that I plan to live out or, in some cases, live up to. They shape my horizons (Greene, 1995) and allow me to tell self-defining stories which are composed by “reviewing [my] personal history, weighing the particulars of [my] past in terms of more general moral values (Nelson, 1995, p.27) in which I live my stories to live by.

Looking across the three narrative accounts it is clear that each of us had some kind of imagined story that we had composed. I draw on Sarbin’s (2004) concept of imagination as, “embodiments [that] become a part of the total context from which persons decide how to live their lives” (Sarbin, p17). We imagined what importance our lives would have to other people and children. We imagined what our lives would look like at home, with families and friends. We imagined how we would feel living out these imagined stories. It is from these imaginings that we build forward looking stories that gave us a way of moving into the future. They gave us ways “to create identity in the light of what might be” (Sartre as

cited in Greene, 1995, p.77). As I threaded Audrey Jayne's, Sam's, and my stories together, I show how important these imagined stories are in the way we are composing how lives are lived out and how we move forward in our lives.

In each narrative accounts, chapters two, three and four, I showed that the stories told of a life, and the threads that run through the life, to make a whole life, "even if [an] unfinished whole" (Greene, 1995, p.75). I showed how these threads run through each life from past to present and shaped how each of us experienced moving into teaching. To compose this chapter, I metaphorically laid the three narrative accounts side by side to see the resonances across our experiences. I identified four such resonant threads.

Thread One: Family influence

One of the threads that resonated across all three narrative accounts was how our families influenced how we imagined our forward looking stories. The way I see the world and walk in it has a lot to do with my family, the places we lived, the way we talk, and the things we choose as important. I come from a family of teachers. This is not the reason I began composing an imagined story of teacher early in my life but it did allow me to see how my family lived stories of teaching. My father taught me that while teaching was a serious business, there must be fun and humor. He showed me that teaching is not only done within the walls of a traditional K-12 or university classroom. For him teaching and being a teacher is a way of being and so teaching can be done anywhere and in many ways.

My mother showed me that having knowledge, being knowledgeable in an area, means having the power to do things to change circumstances and lives. She also showed me how life can be when teaching dominates the whole life as it, at times, did in our family. My parents placed great importance in learning and passing that learning onto others so that they could navigate their own lives better.

For me, it was these multiple stories of teaching that were lived in my family that taught me about what was important in the world. I knew early in my life that I would be a teacher and my family showed me many ways to live that story. Everything revolved around our lives as teachers and so, as I began to see the world and how I might be in it and what was important as part of the world, teaching was always at the center.

Audrey Jayne's family emigrated from Iran where they were socially important and wealthy. Her grandfather worked for the Shah in Iran. When her grandparents came to Canada they worked at menial jobs in order to provide a life for themselves. They built lives and reputations and became part of a community. Being part of a community meant doing things that would be to the benefit of the community. Audrey Jayne's family volunteer as a way to give back to the community. Stories of giving back are strong familial stories for them. This also allows them to feel like what they do is important. Audrey Jayne, having seen the importance of this from her family, continues to live in this way in her adult life. Supporting herself and being part of a community are important to Audrey Jayne. When Audrey Jayne decided to be a teacher she saw it as the perfect way to fit what was important in life, that is, belonging to a community, giving back to a

community, and being self sufficient, with a profession that would allow her to do those other things. For me in my family, teaching was the center; it was a way of living. For Audrey Jayne teaching was a way to do all the other things that were important in a life.

Sam's family, like Audrey Jayne's, immigrated to Canada. This meant that his father couldn't go to school and gain advancement for his family through higher education. Sam's parents had to work in order to maintain their family's life. Sam's mother worked for a post secondary institution and his father worked for the rail. Above everything else Sam's parents stressed the importance of "doing something practical" so that circumstances will not control Sam. As a child he sat with his father and learned the importance of learning about the world, of exploring different cultures. However, there was always the mandate that no matter what, he must do something practical in order to be able to provide for himself.

The influence of the family for Sam was different than for either Audrey Jayne or I. For Sam it was the need to do something "practical" that determined the career. It was the need to be able to provide for himself that first lead Sam to take up work in business as a way to provide for a life. Eventually Sam realized he also wanted to make a difference in the world. As he awakened to this aspect of his stories to live by, he drew forward the early experiences in his family about learning about other places and peoples. Teaching became a possible option. Teaching was a practical profession and was also a way to change lives and making a difference.

Summary

For Audrey Jayne, Sam, and I, our families played an important part in the way that we envisioned our lives, including our lives as teachers. Teaching meant different things in our life compositions but what resonated throughout each of our narrative accounts was how teaching allowed each of us to live the aspects of life that were most important as taught by our families. My family showed me how to be a teacher and live a teacher's life. For Audrey Jayne, teaching was a way to be part of a community and to give back while being self sufficient. It was those things that were important to her family. It was practicality and being able to provide for himself that Sam's family saw as important. Teaching fulfilled that requirement while allowing Sam to do something meaningful. How we imagined ourselves into teaching also shaped how we navigated through not living the lives we imagined we would. Our families shaped what we saw as important in life, and in teaching, but, when our stories were interrupted, our family stories also shaped our forward looking stories.

Thread Two: The Interruption, A process not an event

When I tell the story of not teaching in a classroom I sometimes talk as if it were an event, something that happened in one moment that I had to deal with. However, I see it was not an event but a process that happened over time. Understanding lives narratively means we understand lives as temporal and unfolding and, thus, experiences are not simply contained unto themselves in one moment in time but are the result of many experiences and relationships over time

that affect experiences and relationships into the future (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Through choices that I made and choices made by others my imagined story as a classroom teacher was interrupted.

I always believed I would be a teacher. All through school and college I only imagined myself being a teacher in a K-12 classroom. This was reinforced when during my teacher education I was continually told I would get a teaching job after graduation. When I graduated, jobs became scarce and I was not offered a position. After applying and not getting any offers for teaching positions after several months I eventually took a job at a daycare where I tried to live my imagined story of teaching. I did, after all, have the title of “teacher”, a “classroom”, and children that I was responsible for. I ran my “classroom” the way I would if I had been teaching in a regular K-12 situation with some exceptions, as I did not have a prescribed curriculum or any assessments I had to adhere to. It was not what I had imagined but it was close enough that I could live this story of being with children and helping them enact stories to live by while being in the world. It was outside of my “classroom”, with staff and administrators where I could not continue to live a story of being dismissed as someone important to the culture and disregarded as having any knowledge about anything.

Teaching was how I saw everything, with my teacher’s eyes; I interacted with people as a teacher; I was one of the teachers in my family of teachers; and I was not “teaching” in the ways I had imagined. I left the daycare unable to live even that story of teacher any longer. I was not teaching in a K-12 setting and

now I was not even teaching in a daycare setting. With my story of teacher shattered, I looked to education once more and imagined a forward looking story where I was a student once again.

Audrey Jayne was a wonderful teacher. She went the extra mile and did anything and everything she could for her students. Through this she was able to be part of the community and give back. Despite her willingness to stay in each position she had, she was only ever offered temporary positions. Each lasted up to 4 months. When each position drew to a close, Audrey Jayne would ask her principal if there was any way of being retained. She would have accepted anything to be able to stay and build upon the relationships and the connections she had made in the communities. At each instance the response was that there was nothing that could be done for her. It was not just that there was no position; it was the way she felt she was rebuffed. It was the way she was spoken to, as though she did not matter. The school did not need her; there were other teachers who would accept a position the moment a principal had one to fill.

Audrey Jayne could not wait. She could not sit around for weeks and weeks and hope that the school would have something for her, or be left without any way of supporting herself if they never called. Each time she packed up her life and used all of her resources to relocate for the next temporary position, to build temporary connections with another community and hope to be able to give back to that community. Each time she hoped this would be when things would change and she would be able to truly become part of a community. Each time happened the way it had before. With each rejection her strength to live a story of

teacher was chipped away. More than once after a relocation, the principal from a former school called to offer her a position. By that time, however, she had made a commitment, moved to a new position, and drained her resources. She had to turn down the position, hoping in this new place that she would be able to live the life that was so important to her.

For two years she continued to try and live her imagined story of teacher, becoming a member in a community, and able to be of benefit to that community by being involved while having a way to support herself and one day to have a family. After two years she could no longer reconcile her imagined story with the one she was living, unable to be truly part of a community and grow a family. She sought employment outside of classroom teaching.

Sam started his career in business before going back to an After Degree program in teaching. He was happiest imagining himself helping students explore the world and opening them to new ways of seeing life while having a career that was practical. When Sam graduated with his B.Ed., he was offered a position. It was not the position he had been trained for or imagined but he accepted it in the hope that it would lead to a position in the Social Studies area. However, not far into the school year the position became redundant. He principal gave him a choice. Sam could choose to take a new temporary position teaching Science 20 or to end his relationship with that school. Sam never imagined teaching science; it was one of his poorest subjects in school. However, the position was only for a short time. Sam decided he could live this practical story, this story where he was doing a disservice to students, because it would soon end. He could then live a

practical story that would also be meaningful by teaching in the area of Social Studies. Each day in Science 20 wore down Sam's ability to live that story. Like water that erodes a rock, each day eroded the story of teacher that Sam was able to live. It was practical, Sam had a job, and was able to support himself even if he could not feel good about the work that he was doing. It could not be meaningful or make a difference because Sam was not knowledgeable in the sciences. He could not make a difference because he was not proficient enough in the subject area and he was not happy with the work he did.

Another choice came before the start of a new term. Just as before, Sam's principal offered him a choice to accept a more stable position teaching in another science course. If Sam chose not to accept that position, there would be no place for him after his current contract ended. He was faced with the same choice that faced him before. This time, however, Sam could not imagine living this story again. Too much had been eroded away and Sam could no longer live this story of teacher where he was not proficient in the subject matter area and was not doing meaningful work. He turned down the offer in order to take a position producing education materials. It was here that he was able to live a story of competency and where his work, while being practical in supporting himself, was seen as meaningful in some way.

Summary

Interruptions are difficult but allow a space for examining our pasts and reimagining the stories we might choose to live (Carr, 1986). For me learning and passing learning on were vital to the way that I was in the world. A teacher was

who I was, it was the way I moved, saw, and spoke. Who then was I when that story of teacher was interrupted, when I could no longer tell myself that I was a teacher?

Being part of a community, building family, giving back, being self sufficient, this was what life was about for Audrey Jayne and teaching was the way to do those things that were important to living a life. For two years she struggled to keep that story of teacher as a way to do those important things, having mini interruptions, until she could, finally, no longer live the story of teacher. As Audrey Jayne saw it, it was this story of teacher and the way that she had been living that story that had kept her from building connections in the community and kept her from starting a family and providing for herself that she could no longer live.

Sam was always able to provide for himself and was always offered positions but none of them were guaranteed to last. Sam's story of teaching was eroded away by having to teach in a subject matter in which he was not confident or knowledgeable. This kind of teaching was not meaningful nor did it make a difference in children's lives and Sam could no longer live this story. Practicality dictated that he must be able to do something in order to provide a life for himself and so Sam went back to using his business degree and working in an office. He did not feel like he could call himself a teacher because that story had never really been lived the way he had imagined. It was practicality that allowed him to leave that story for a time because Sam could provide for himself without being a teacher.

Thread Three: Making sense of the interruption

For each of us the interruption of our imagined teacher stories was a moment of questioning, of wondering about what came next in our stories, and about who we were if we could not call ourselves classroom teachers. For me, this interruption of my teacher story caused me to question who I was and what to do next in my life. For weeks I sank into a depression, unable to reconcile the life I was living with the one I had imagined for myself. I decided that I would go back to school. School was where I felt my life was on track. School was where I lived the most parts of my stories to live by. Perhaps it would be in school that I would find out who I was again. It was a safe story that I could tell myself. It was a story that was acceptable, that I could tell others, that I could tell myself, and speak out loud (Carr, 1986). Going back to school was a plotline that was acceptable (Carr, 1986). It was one I had imagined, just not in this way or this soon. That was not the way my story was supposed to go. The story of not teaching was “okay” because I was going on to graduate school. I could tell my story as though I had chosen a part of it. I was going back to school and I truly believed that it would be there that I would find my place again and would be able to live out my stories to live by. I had had a plan B of going to graduate school in either Education or Psychology. My parents both had their doctorates and that was definitely part of our family story. That created a space for a story I could safely live out when my imagined story of classroom teaching ceased to be a possibility.

Audrey Jayne wanted to be a teacher so that she could build a family and have connections to a community to which she could contribute. The interruption of that story meant that she would not be able to live the life that a teaching life would allow her. When it seemed she would never be the teacher she wanted to be, she fell into a depression. She describes this as some of the hardest times in her life. Being a teacher was the perfect way to live the vital values of service, community, family, and of being able to support herself and her family. Her stories to live by were composed around three threads. When she had to give up the possibility of teaching, she had to re-examine who she was and how she would live her life. She had a back up plan of being in law enforcement that she had given up when she believed she would be teaching for the rest of her life. When it became clear that she might not to teach as she had imagined, she worked hard to recompose ways of being in the world that would allow her to live those threads of giving back and being part of a community, of having a family, and of being able to support herself. She looked for other ways to compose a life, in other areas. She found herself thinking once again of doing something in law enforcement. She says it took a long time to be happy about her life. She could not imagine what her life would to look like if she were not teaching. Eventually she found a place outside the classroom. While still using the knowledge and skills she had acquired to live a teaching life she began a position as curriculum designer for a law enforcement agency. This story has become a safe one to tell as well as a safe story to live.

For Sam, when he could no longer live the story of being the teacher he imagined, he went back to something he knew, something that was safe and in which he felt confident and could support himself. He went back to work in an office. He was glad that he had something practical to fall back on when teaching was no longer an option. Sam did not speak of being depressed or of having a crisis of identity because he always was able to live the thread of doing something practical in order to support himself. Instead he spoke of how no longer teaching affected his ability to make a difference in the world and, at times, he felt that loss. By not teaching he did not know what else he could do that would provide him that sense of meaning and practicality that teaching had provided. While he did find some comfort in the knowledge that the work he did in his office benefited others, he felt it was a poor substitute to the impact that teaching had. Sam still looks to the possibility of teaching and hopes that soon he will be able to fully realize the life of a teacher that he had imagined.

Summary

My family had a story of earning graduate degrees. Once I left my imagined story of teaching I could safely live out a story of attending graduate school. I could begin to imagine a life that allowed for learning and sharing that learning with others. This meant that I could imagine a way forward in a story outside of the K-12 classroom.

For Audrey Jayne being able to find a place off the school landscape as curriculum designer for a law enforcement agency allowed her to reimagine and live out the threads that she had felt teaching would have allowed her to live.

Threads of service and giving back to a community, of having a family, and of supporting herself and that family, and being a member of a community were all possible. This new story became a way of moving forward and imagining a new story that allows her to live out these threads.

Sam was always able to live out the thread of doing something practical. It was this ability to have something to fall back on that made it safe for Sam to leave the classroom. He had a safe story to tell and was able to live the thread of practicality but felt the loss of doing something that would make a difference. He was able to tell himself that what he did in his office work make a difference and was meaningful to those who benefited from the materials his office produces. However, he felt as though this was small and insignificant compared to the difference he could make as a teacher. Teaching was where Sam would be able to live the thread of doing something practical, of having a way of supporting himself, while filling the need to do something that held meaning and that made a difference in the world. This is why, while Sam works in an office he begins to reimagine how he might live out the story of teaching in more coherent ways.

Sam, Audrey Jayne and I are still in the process of moving from the imagined story we had of being teachers to new stories. Each of us is at a different place in this journey. For me it is clear some days are better than others and sometimes the pain I thought had healed strikes me unexpectedly. Just as each of us imagined what our lives would be like as teachers, we have to once again reimagine what our lives will look like as we imagine something outside of the classroom.

Thread Four: Imagining a forward looking story

In narrative inquiry we understand that time is unfolding and ever changing (Carr, 1986). It is the stories that we look to that provide ideas of possible or paths to follow. It is the story that we imagine and construct that we look forward to (Bateson, 2001; Bateson, 2011) that provides hope, possibility and purpose. We compose forward looking stories out of those stories we have already lived and the experiences that continue to shape how we see ourselves in the world and shape what we hold as important and vital with our stories to live by. We imagine these stories based on the stories that we have seen lived out by our families. We imagine them because of the experiences that have shaped our past stories, and continue to shape the stories we currently live as we become the stories we can imagine for ourselves as we look to what might be.

How forward looking stories are shaped

When I started imagining myself back in school, going to graduate school, I began to imagine what possible lives I might live (Nelson, 1995; Greene, 1995). I knew how my parents and even my grandmother continued to live stories of teacher even when they were not in K-12 classroom settings. With each new experience I began to recompose my stories to live by, which influenced my possible forward stories. It was being in university classrooms with other teachers, telling my stories and listening to the stories of others that I became awake to the ways that I was living out my story of teacher outside of the imagined context of a K-12 school. I began to imagine a life of teaching that was

broader than the K-12 classroom. I imagined being back at a daycare, or in a K-12 classroom, or at the university. I imagined teaching in church, or in the community, or with my family. I imagined and recomposed a story of teacher that I could look to, and work towards.

For Audrey Jayne it was not until she had been in the position of curriculum designer that she was able to once again compose a forward looking story. She saw how her grandparents had worked in jobs that they had not imagined for themselves as a way to live the values that they held as important. She began to imagine other professions that would allow her to live the threads of service, family, and community. Opening a bakery was one possible story she could live. However, when she had been curriculum designer for a few months she began to actively compose a new forward looking story. This was a place where she could have a family, could support herself and a family, build a place in a community, and do work of benefit to her community. It was here that she began to reimagine what her life could look like, living out these threads outside of teaching.

For Sam, his forward looking story is much the same as it was. He still imagines himself working in a K-12 classroom setting, able to support himself while doing work that he enjoys, and is competent at, but above all makes a difference. The story has changed in where he imagines living it out. Sam looks to teaching overseas as a way of living out this imagined story. Sam's family has not had this luxury of imagining new forward looking stories because of the circumstances in which they live so he moves cautiously, always aware of the

need to support himself with stable employment no matter what profession it is. Despite this, Sam continues to work toward his forward looking story and to the day when he will be able to have stable employment as a teacher and be allowed to make a difference and feel like the work he does is able to be meaningful.

What we hold onto from our teacher story to compose a forward looking one

Part of my ability to compose a forward looking story comes in finding ways to hold onto my teacher identity. For several teachers, the identity that is constructed around being a teacher is something that transcends just the profession. For me it is a way of being. At the daycare, I had tried to hold onto my identity as teacher by treating my daycare classroom as I would if I were teaching in a K-12 setting. I tried to continue living that story because it was so closely tied to my identity. When I began the journey into graduate school I found ways to continue to hold onto that identity by living the threads that were so important to my story to live by. In graduate school I was able to learn and share my learning with those around me. I could explore ideas and ways of seeing the world. Once I was able to see how I could hold onto those threads of my identity as teacher, I began to see how I could compose a forward looking story that did not feel like a betrayal of the past imagined stories.

Audrey Jayne tried to hold onto the story of teacher that allowed her to live out the threads of service, of being part of a community, of having a place to build a family, and of being able to support a life for herself. When she couldn't do that by teaching she attempted to live those threads through another profession. It was in the position as curriculum designer that she was able to honor her

teacher identity that had become a part of her as she tried to live that story, as well as live out those threads that teaching had not allowed. While Audrey Jayne felt relieved that she was able to move beyond her imagined story of teaching to build a new forward looking story it was clear that she was glad of the ability to use part of that identity of teacher in a way that still allowed her to move forward and live the threads of service, family, and community.

Sam, like Audrey Jayne, was able to honor his teacher identity while continuing to do something practical and while he is unhappy with where he is and looks to teaching as his forward looking story he feels glad that he is still in proximity to education. This is how Sam is able to move forward, by holding onto these threads that tie him back to teaching, he is able to hold on a little bit longer. He tells me it will not last much longer as he makes plans to live out his imagined teaching story through his forward looking story.

Summary

The forward looking story I composed clearly shows the influence of my family and the identity of teacher that has become inseparable from who I am. It is not the K-12 classroom that influences this story where I am able to learn and share that learning to help others, but is the way that I live and breath. By working to hold onto these parts of my imagined teacher story and my teacher identity I have composed my forward looking story that allows me to once again imagine a way to live and honor all parts of myself and my story.

Audrey Jayne was able to build her forward looking story after she had found the safety of a place that would allow her to imagine what that story might

look like, honoring those threads that are integral to her story to live by. It is as curriculum designer for a law enforcement agency that allows her to hold onto those parts of her teacher training where she is able to see the way forward to a story that will allow her to live out the threads of providing for herself, being part of a community, and doing something that gives back and contributes to that community. She now is actively looking to growing a family and living out that thread of her story to live by.

While Sam's forward looking story is much like his imagined teaching story that was interrupted, Sam is reimagining what that story will look like in another geographical and cultural environment. It is this forward looking story that allows him to hold onto the threads of practicality and making a difference in his current job producing education materials. It is this forward looking story, however, that also propels him to look beyond the safety of his current position to teaching in a setting that will provide him with a way of supporting himself as well as doing something that will make a difference and be meaningful that he can feel confident in.

When thinking about these forward looking stories that each of us have composed I see how the threads that were part of our family stories have influenced how we understand our past and present events. Thinking back on these allows us to use these threads to imagine new stories, stories we look forward to. These forward looking stories allow us to hold onto threads and those parts of our teaching stories that have become important to how we understand, imagine, and live out our stories to live by.

Discussion

Each of the threads in Audrey Jayne's, Sam's, and my narrative accounts are rooted in those things that we see as important to our stories to live by which were composed by what our families taught us and showed us. These threads move and flex to the ways that each of us change and reimagine what is possible in our lives. These stories are not fixed, preserved and captured in moments of time but are fluid and ever changing (Greene, 1995). It is only as we become aware of how our stories change and how the threads in our stories to live by shift that we can see a way to look to new horizons, new possibilities, and new meanings (Greene, 1995).

In retelling and reliving the stories of how our families influenced how we constructed our own stories to live by we must "take account of our original landscapes if we are to be truly present to ourselves" (Greene, 1995, p. 75). We must be aware of how these stories change over time and with each new influence and experience to create new outcomes and new possibilities and change the ways we view our own pasts (Carr, 1986).

One of the final things that Sam told me in our conversations was that the story is not over. I am sure that Audrey Jayne, and certainly I do, would agree that these narrative accounts are incomplete. In the time since I began to write this thesis to the time I have printed it out, my story has changed and new stories have been added which impact the stories I have told and the stories I will live. It is only through examining our stories and how we present them, knowing that

they are fluidly living throughout time, that we are able to understand where it is we have come from and where we might imagine ourselves going.

This is not just a collection of stories that gives me an excuse to think about my own situation, dreams, and stories. The ministry of Alberta Education suggests that 25% of those who train to be teachers never end up in a K-12 classroom. While this number is unconfirmed it is clear that there are many who go into teacher education programs and not all of them move into K-12 classrooms but there is no way for them to give voice to their experiences. There is no one to explore what happens when their stories as teacher are interrupted by not getting positions that fit with their stories to live by. For Sam, Audrey Jayne and I we have only begun to explore how we have moved past the imagined stories we held to living stories that fit with our stories to live by. There is research on those who are in teacher education programs. There is research on most if not all facets and aspects of teachers once they are in the profession. Those who are in between are forgotten. They have no space to speak because no one keeps track of them. Universities and colleges send these newly graduated teachers out into the world and, without a school district to pick them up, to claim them, they are disregarded.

It is unclear the implications that learning these stories will have for university programs and school districts. As I think about the implications it has for me and the way that I think about, not only these teachers who are not in K-12 classrooms but those teachers who are building their own stories of themselves as teachers, I wonder who will be there to listen as they navigate these transitions

and uncertain places. I wonder how they will make sense when their imagined story of teacher is interrupted. How will they tell that story and how will they build a forward looking story that will fit with their stories to live by? Audrey Jayne, Sam, and I have drawn on the threads and family stories that have helped us compose our stories to live by in order to make sense of the interruptions in our teacher stories. I also wonder at the unimagined possibilities that might come from further studies that also seek to make spaces for the voices of this neglected group and what richness that might bring to how we imagine teacher education as well as the profession of teaching in the coming years.

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