University of Alberta

Shifting from Stories to Live By to Stories to Leave By: Conceptualizing Early Career Teacher Attrition as a Question of Shifting Identities

By

Lee Mason Schaefer

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DEDICATION

To my beautiful wife, and best friend, Laura for your unconditional understanding and support throughout this entire journey. Thank you for not only supporting this work, but for your constant encouragement and belief in me. To my beautiful daughter Everlee. You contributed to this work in ways you will never know. Your curiosity towards the world inspires me to imagine how things might always be otherwise. Thank you my little heart

ABSTRACT

Up to 40 per cent of early career teachers in Alberta, Canada, and elsewhere, leave teaching in Kindergarten to Grade 12 schools in their first five years of teaching. My research puzzle was shaped by wonders about the experiences of 3 early career teacher leavers. I engaged with the participants over a six-month time span. As we engaged in a series of one-on-one conversations we explored their stories of who they imagined they would be as teachers before they began teaching, as they entered teaching, and as they left teaching. The field texts co-composed with participants were transcripts of conversations, annals, and stories composed around memory box artifacts. I inquired into their stories of teaching and was attentive to how their stories to live by, a narrative concept of identity, eventually shifted to what Clandinin, Downey and Huber (2010) call 'stories to leave by.' As I engaged with participants, I attended to how the shift from stories to live by to stories to leave by, that is, the fluid negotiation of teacher identity making, is a way to narratively understand the experiences of early career teacher leavers. It became apparent that their leaving was not an event or a moment, but a constant unfolding negotiation of their stories to live by as their embodied narrative threads, and imagined stories of teaching, intermingled with the contextual landscapes within which they lived. Being attentive to the unfolding of early career teachers' lives allowed me to make visible, and to disrupt, the dominant stories around retaining early career teachers. I found that as they left K-12 classrooms to enter other professions, they were able to improvise ways to

continue to live out their imagined stories of teaching, and were, in a sense, still teaching. This study provides insights into how we might think differently about pre-service teacher education and working with teachers within school landscapes.

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Chapter 1

Shifting Stories to Live By[1]: Transitions

The familiar ping that signifies I've got mail stops me as I sit working on a paper in a local coffee shop. It is 10 am on a Tuesday and the coffee shop is almost empty except for the baristas and me. I am attempting to get some writing done prior to heading to the university for a weekly Research Issues group in the Centre For Research For Teacher Education and Development (CRTED). Although I am focused on writing, I am curious about the latest email. As I double click the mail icon, I see that it is from a friend of mine with whom I graduated from teacher education. He is coming to town, and wonders about my weekend. As an after thought, he adds, "what are you doing now?" I hastily begin to write back, but as I try to respond to his post scriptum I stop.

Ryan...it is great to hear from you. Unfortunately my wife and I are headed to the mountains for the weekend. I am sorry we will not be able to touch base. It would have been great to see you. I am currently working on my PhD at the University of Alberta. I am teaching a little bit, taking courses, and working on a research project that pertains to beginning teacher attrition.

As I wrote my response, I felt a pang of anxiety. Am I a beginning teacher who has left the K-12 classroom? As I inquired into this email I realized I wrote I was

[1] This phrase 'stories to live by' "is given meaning by the narrative understandings of knowledge and context. Stories to live by are shaped by such matters as secret teachers' stories, sacred stories of schooling, and teachers' cover stories" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1999, p. 4).

teaching a little bit, but did not make it clear that I was teaching at the university. For some reason I did not want to tell him I had left the classroom. Why did I respond this way? I wonder now, if I am not a K-12 teacher, who am I? If I have no intention of going back to a public school classroom, am I still a teacher? Even as I pondered these questions, I felt apprehensive about writing them. I am in the midst of negotiating, what feels like, uncertain stories. Who I am, that is, my stories to live by, are shifting.

I feel the shift happening as I move farther from teaching in a school gymnasium and classroom. I feel the shift happening as I interact with colleagues at the university about socio-cultural changes that I feel need to occur within schools surrounding physical education and other marginalized subject areas[2]. I especially feel the shift as I talk to colleagues who teach within K-12 schools. I feel disconnected from the pragmatics of a hectic school day, from the parent phone calls, the staff meetings, and building rapport with students.

As I turn backwards[3], I remember a similar point in my life as I moved from *being a hockey player* to *being a teacher.* I had been a hockey player, and storied myself as a hockey player for 20 years. I was one of the hockey players in the family; my grandparents referred to me as their grandson, the hockey player. In my last year of playing university hockey, I was completing the practicum in my teacher education

[2] Macdonald (1999) noted that along with physical education, music, and drama are also marginalized subject areas.

[3] Moving backward and forward points us "to temporality—past, present, and future" (Clandinin, & Connelly, 2000, p. 50).

program and I can remember a shift happening as teaching became more important than hockey. As I began to teach, I vividly remember a feeling of grabbing tight to this teaching identity. I began to identify myself as a teacher, a physical educator, and, as I felt my identity as a hockey player dissipating, I attempted to immerse myself deeply into this new story of who I was, who I was becoming.

At first, I saw this shift as an event, a moment, as a single experience or a transition. Transition is defined as "a passage from one stage, subject, or place to another.[4]" This was how, at the time, I would have defined this move from hockey to teaching, as a transition, a moving from one place, or stage, to another. I felt as though I was leaving one identity behind to embrace another. Now, thinking narratively, I believe that I have never stopped being a hockey player. It will always be a part of who I am. In turning backwards, I see the transition to teacher as being a process that began far earlier in my academic career, perhaps in my childhood, and as a process still in the midst, and still being negotiated.

These transitions, in a metaphorical way, are similar to the transitions I make as a hockey player on the ice. As I skate, my eyes are, at times, focused on the puck, but they are on a swivel and are constantly scanning the peripheries to stay attentive to all areas of the ice. As the puck moves, and other players move, I make, what might be called, transitions. Although to the observer the transition may look like it occurs in a split second, the transition is not just a moment; it is a fluid movement

[4] Transition. 2012. Online Merriam-Webster Dictionary. Retrieved February 19, 2012. From // www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/transition

that happens temporally. Sociality comes into play as I think about changing directions, or moving to a different part of the ice. As I do this, my center of gravity shifts, and my knees bend as my hips move closer to the ice. My center of gravity shifts again and weight is transferred to my outside foot. As my outside foot turns, the weight shifts back to my inside foot as it too begins to move in a new direction. At this point, the change of direction could still be negated, and I could keep moving in the same direction, even though I am in transition. If I commit to changing directions, my eyes turn toward a different part of the ice, my body moves to follow the eyes, and the change of direction is made, but the transition is not over. Throughout this change of direction, the momentum from the previous direction is used to move through the transition, and it stays with me as I shift, and move to a different part of the ice.

Place becomes important during this transition as different movements can be used on different parts of the ice. The processes vary depending on the place, and proximity to other skaters. On open ice while defending, a quick backwards to forwards turn[5] may be used. In the corners crossovers[6] may be more useful as they allow a more gradual and controlled transition. Prior to thinking about transitions narratively, I saw my transition from hockey to teaching as a quick backwards to forwards turn, one that started and ended in a single split second, in a moment.

[5] A turn used to move quickly from backwards skating to forwards skating.

[6] A crossover is a more gradual turn where the player crosses his/her feet over to transition into another direction.

However, I now realize that all transitions, backwards to forwards, crossovers, and quick turns happen temporally; there is a past, a present and a future.

Thinking narratively about transitions in this way (Clandinin, 2011) helps me to think about shifting from hockey player to teacher. Today I am in the midst of another transition from being a K-12 classroom teacher, which I grabbed on to so tightly just a few years ago, to a teacher educator, something different, something unknown, and something uncertain. Although this shifting and shaping is uncertain and creates anxiety, being attentive to this shift is helpful as I re-think the past experiences that have shaped my experience of leaving the K-12 classroom. Being attentive to these past experiences, as well as my experiences of leaving, created wonders that shaped the research puzzle of my doctoral research.

One Research Puzzle Opens into Another Related Puzzle: From Master's Research to Doctoral Research

My master's research puzzle (Schaefer, 2010) focused on the experiences that sustained beginning physical education teachers; that is, experiences that did not interrupt or disrupt, but, rather, sustained their stories to live by, their identities. My doctoral work is also focused on early career teachers' stories to live by; however, in this study, I attended to the experiences of those individuals who left the K-12 classroom in their first five years of teaching. I inquired into their lived and told stories as they began teaching and attended to how their stories eventually shifted to what Clandinin, Downey and Huber (2010) call, 'stories to leave by.' Being attentive to transitions, lead me to questions that surround *how* stories to live by, teacher

identity making and shifting, is a way to narratively understand the experiences of early career teachers who leave the K-12 classroom. As I inquired into early career teachers' stories to leave by, I also became interested in how they composed a life after leaving the K-12 classroom.

Seeing this research puzzle narratively requires attentiveness to temporality, place and sociality within the metaphorical three-dimensional narrative inquiry space (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). A wonder that arose from my master's research surrounded the continuity and interaction (Dewey, 1938) between the personal and professional landscapes of beginning teachers. As I read through the literature on early career teacher attrition, I felt that it tended to discount experiences in the personal landscape due to the messiness of these experiences. In my master's study, it became apparent that treating these two landscapes, personal and professional, dichotomously is problematic. Our personal landscapes shape our identities in our professional landscapes and similarly our professional landscapes shape our identities in our personal landscapes (Schaefer & Clandinin, 2011; Schaefer, in press). Therefore attentiveness to people's lives on two interrelated landscapes is an important part of my doctoral research.

While inquiring into each person's life in these two landscapes was important, the interaction between the stories to live by of the participants and the shifting contextual personal and professional landscapes was also imperative. In my doctoral work I attended to the emotions involved within participants' experiences on these landscapes in order to provide field texts that would show something of the

complexity involved as each individual negotiated his/her way out of teaching in a K-12 classroom. Along with the personal and social dimensions, the larger cultural and institutional narratives also became aspects of inquiry in this study. In the following autobiographical story, I illustrate the importance of each of these aspects to my research puzzle.

Autobiographical Story Fragment: Don't Worry About Re-Inventing the Wheel

> *It was early September, in my first year of teaching. During my first few days I attended many, what seemed to be, all day meetings that pertained to the year start up. I had little to contribute. However, I was excited when I got an email about an upcoming physical education meeting. I readied my unit plans for activities I thought we might implement, and activities I thought other physical education teachers might be interested in. I had created a Tawkra unit, an Eastern sport that includes aspects of volleyball, and aspects of hacky sack, as well as ultimate Frisbee. I took these two units to the meeting with a confidence I did not have in the other meetings. We gathered in the department head's office, and sat down in a circle of chairs that had been set up for us. I waited for the perfect time to introduce my units. Near the end of the meeting the PE department head asked if there were other questions or concerns. I commented that I had two units I had taught in the past and that I did not see them on the yearly plan. I suggested the ultimate Frisbee unit might fit nicely in to the fitness unit planned for September. Before I finished my final sentence, another colleague stopped me. "It's your first year here.*

Don't worry about re-inventing the wheel. You need to keep your head above the water and try to survive." "Oh," I thought, as I sat back quietly. No one seemed to be aware that I had gone silent. I began to understand where I fit, in this place.

Inquiring into the Story Fragment Through Narrative Inquiry

> Narrative inquiry[…]begins with a pragmatic ontology that treats lived experience as both the beginning and ending points of inquiry. Various social and cultural influences may come into play during the inquiry… In a narrative inquiry, these social and cultural influences are not treated only as the occasions for critical exposure. They are treated as resources to be used in pursuit of always tentative and partial ameliorations of experience. (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 55)

Working with Clandinin and Rosiek's narrative inquiry lens to inquire into the above story fragment, I attended to social and cultural narratives that became visible as I inquired into my lived experiences. I did not understand this experience as a means to an end, but as the focus of the inquiry. To inquire into lived experience, I used the metaphorical three-dimensional narrative inquiry space with dimensions of place, sociality and temporality.

I looked temporally and inwardly to attend to the excitement and confidence I carried with me into the meeting. It was a meeting where I finally felt I could contribute. My past experiences as an undergraduate student had given me the skills and confidence needed to incorporate new activities, activities that broadened the

scope of physical education, into my practice. In other meetings where the topics were imbued with policy and school decisions, I knew I was not yet able to make recommendations without contextual information about the school stories that shaped the professional knowledge landscape.

The excitement that I felt when the physical education meeting was called was one that came from feeling as though I was going to be able to show that I did have knowledge. I was also excited to show that I was ready to be engaged in the school and to help wherever it was needed. When the comment was made that *I needed to worry about surviving* something clicked internally. While this could have been interpreted as a colleague trying to support me, I felt that the knowledge I embodied was not seen as important to these more experienced teachers. My past experience, everything that I had learned and lived up to this point, was dismissed. It was at this point that I realized my knowledge was not valued. I was storied as a "not knower[7]" in this landscape; my personal practical knowledge was discounted.

> Knowledge in the phrase "personal practical knowledge" is meant that body of convictions, conscious or unconscious, which have arisen from experience, intimate, social, and traditional, and which are expressed in a person's actions. "Personal practical knowledge" is knowledge which is imbued with all the experiences that make up a person's being. Its meaning is derived from, and understood in terms of, a person's experiential history, both professional and personal. (Clandinin, 1985, p. 362)

[7] Being storied as a not knower was coined by: Belenky, M., Clinchy, B., Goldberger, N. & Tarule, J. (1986). *Women's Ways of Knowing.* New York: Basic Books.

As I narratively inquired into my experience of that moment, I found that my past experiences in teacher education, as an outdoor education consultant, as a student leader with PHE (Canadian Association of Physical and Health Education), and as a leader on elite level hockey teams, were, in a sense, erased. What the other teachers expressed was their knowing of me as a beginning teacher and, in their construction of me, I was someone who lacked knowledge in the school landscape. They assumed that I had only theoretical knowledge from university and that was not valued in the *real world.*

As a narrative inquirer I made connections between my personal experiences and the experiences of participants in Rippon and Martin's (2006) research study. Rippon and Martin examined the processes whereby beginning teachers negotiated their identities as teachers within schools. Their study emphasized that the emotional need for beginning teachers to belong and to be seen as a 'teacher' by colleagues was *as important* as professional development. Participants found barriers to *fitting in* where school cultures were individualistic and beginners were labeled as probationary. The beginning teachers were left out of future-directed professional work in the school, which created further tension for them around fitting in. Like Rippon and Martin's participants, I wanted to be a part of the school, and a part of the decision making process, especially in the areas about which I was passionate. I was frustrated, and wondered regularly when my personal practical knowledge would be acknowledged in the school landscape.

As a narrative inquirer I was attentive to the metaphorical three dimensional

narrative inquiry space as well as the school stories, cultural stories, political stories, and the grand narratives that shaped the school landscape. These narratives become visible to me through attending to my experiences. As I narratively inquired into my experiences, I asked questions around the bumping of imagined stories with school stories to make visible how the school stories shaped my experiences and, perhaps, began to shape my stories to live by. I also explored the ideas of cover stories and counter stories that could be created on professional landscapes (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Through this excerpt from an autobiographical narrative inquiry into one story fragment, I wanted to portray how engaging in narrative inquiry could help me better understand my experiences and, in turn, help me better understand the lives of early career teachers who are working within the midst of ongoing cultural and school stories. Looking back at Clandinin and Rosiek's quotation, which attends to narrative inquiry's commitment to seeing experience as both beginning and end points of inquiry, allows a glimpse into the ontological commitments of narrative inquiry. This ontological commitment to experience is important to understanding the work of narrative inquirers.

Research Puzzle: Shifting From Stories to Live By to Stories to Leave By

Connelly and Clandinin (1999) refer to teachers' identities using the phrase *stories to live by*, a phrase "given meaning by the narrative understandings of knowledge and context. Stories to live by are shaped by such matters as secret teachers' stories, sacred stories of schooling, and teachers' cover stories" (p. 4). Although individuals' stories to live by are shaped by cultural, social, familial, and

institutional narratives, individuals' stories to live by also shape the landscapes within which they live. These interwoven personal and professional landscapes in which individuals live are complex and continually shifting.

> A landscape metaphor is particularly well suited to our purpose. It allows us to talk about space, place, and time. Furthermore, it has a sense of expansiveness and the possibility of being filled with diverse people, things, and events in different relationships. Understanding professional knowledge as comprising a landscape calls for a notion of professional knowledge as composed of a wide variety of components and influenced by a wide variety of people, places and things. Because we see the professional knowledge landscape as composed of relationships among people, places and things, we see it as both an intellectual and moral landscape. (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p.4-5)

Seeing the professional knowledge landscape of schools as a diverse, moral and intellectual space, which includes a variety of relationships, reminds me that school landscapes are complex and shifting spaces. Individuals with multiple life experiences live within these diverse school landscapes. The landscapes shape the lives of those who live in them, just as people shape the landscapes as they live in them.

In order to think narratively about a person's experience, that is, in order to think narratively about a research puzzle, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) note that it is necessary "to think of the continuity and wholeness of an individual's life experience" (p. 17). Temporality, which is taken from continuity in Dewey's (1938)

terms, of an individual's life experience is an important aspect of my research puzzle. Although we may never be able to fully understand the whole of an individual's experience, when thinking about my experience above, and beginning teachers' experiences of leaving K-12 teaching, I am reminded that each beginning teacher brings his/her life experiences composed over time to his/her current experiences.

As I inquired into my experiences as a beginning teacher in the story fragment, I was reminded of the different philosophies and foundational commitments of peers who graduated from the same teacher education program as I did. We asked different questions and responded to students, administrators and parents in different ways. As I reflected on this diversity of experiences, I wondered if lumping beginning teachers into one category was justified. Schaefer and Clandinin (2011) showed how distinct each beginning teacher's experiences are within his/her new professional landscapes. They showed the diversity of experiences that beginning teachers bring to K-12 classrooms. If the life experiences that bring beginning teachers to teaching are different, their philosophical commitments are different, and the landscapes they work in are different, then how can individuals looking to support beginning teachers, see them as the same, that is, as only beginning teachers?

Thinking about my stories to live by, as they were visible in the story fragment that spoke to my first days of teaching, reminds me of how I felt during this experience. I am also reminded of my undergraduate teacher education program, how it helped shape my stories to live by, and how those experiences shaped how I

responded to my colleagues. I am reminded of my imagined stories (Schaefer, & Clandinin, 2011) of who I would be as a teacher and my imagined stories of what my life would look like on and off the professional landscape. As my stories to live by shifted to stories to leave by, these experiences in my teacher education program and my imagined stories were all implicated.

As I moved further into my doctoral research, I wondered about how I might understand the lived and told stories of early career teachers, including teachers of physical education, and other subject areas, who left. My research puzzle began to take shape around wonders such as, how did their stories to live by, their identities, shift as they moved out of teaching in K-12 classrooms. How did the professional knowledge landscapes they worked and lived within shape their leaving? What were their imagined stories of who they would be as they left teaching in the K-12 classroom? How did their personal landscapes shape their leaving? How did their imagined stories of teaching, who they would be as teachers, change as they began teaching? What created these shifts? Can we understand early career teachers' experiences as they move out of teaching in K-12 classrooms as transitions? What do we mean by naming them as transitions? These questions, and many more, lived within my research puzzle as I tried to understand how three particular individuals' stories to live by shifted as they left K-12 teaching. Being attentive to the leaving as a process and not a particular event was a way to think temporally, over places and relationships, and was part of the research puzzle.

Narrative Inquiry into My Research Puzzle

Coles (1989) helps me to think about how important it is to be awake to the stories people live and tell. "Their story, yours, mine—it's what we all carry with us on this trip we take, and we owe it to each other to respect our stories and learn from them" (p. 30). Some research methodologies appear to consider the participant as a means to an end. Participants are a source of data, and are not seen as an active part of the research. In recognizing "teachers as knowledgeable and knowing persons" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1988, p. 25), participants are seen as having

> feelings, values, needs and purposes which condition his/her participation in the research, and which can enrich and validate the study which elicits them as much as it can sabotage the study which ignores or suppresses them. (Clandinin & Connelly, 1988, p. 272)

As a narrative inquirer I recognize teachers as holders of knowledge, and the need to live in relation with participants as active co-researchers.

Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) inquired into borderlands between narrative inquiry and other methodologies. Although other methodologies have provided rich inquiry possibilities into the phenomenon of early career teacher attrition, the ontological commitments of narrative inquirers resonated strongly with the purpose of my research. Narrative inquirers begin their research puzzles with the participants' experiences in mind and attempt to stay away from specific outcomes. Making an ontological commitment to experience allows researchers to go where the lives of participants take them.

In allowing the stories of participants to take me to places I did not expect, I, in turn, expected to go to places where research has not yet been. By entering the research project without a specific outcome in mind, I wanted to stay open to the participants' experiences. Drawing on Bateson's (1994) work I wanted to view lives, and research puzzles, with peripheral vision: a vision that extends outside and beyond what is seen as taken for granted. In this way I wanted to move away from grand narratives, dominant stories, to the peripheries, to stories which run counter to the dominant stories. In this next section, I explain who was involved in my study, as well as how my study was a part of a larger study.

Nested Within a Larger Study

In April 2010, we (Clandinin, Schaefer, & Long) received a grant from Alberta Education to inquire into the topic of beginning teacher attrition in Alberta. In our proposal we outlined three studies to be completed by April 2012. The first study, using a methodology of narrative inquiry, sought to understand the experiences of individuals who graduated from Alberta teacher education programs, but who did not take up teaching positions in K-12 schools in Alberta. We, and the funders at Alberta Education, were interested in the lives of these teachers because 25% of teachers who graduate from Alberta teacher education programs never go on to teach in Alberta schools.[8] Our second study involved 40 second- and third-year teachers who graduated from Alberta teacher education programs and were currently teaching in Alberta. Our interest was to better understand the future intentions of teachers in their

[8] Alberta Education provided these statistics.

second and third years of teaching because there is a sharp increase in beginning teacher attrition between years three and four of teaching.

The final study, of which my doctoral research is part, sought to understand the lived experiences of those teachers who left the profession. Participants were individuals who left teaching within their first five years of teaching in K-12 schools. The selection criteria for participants were graduation from Alberta teacher education programs and the ability to read, write and speak English. As part of the larger study, we designed digital and hard copy posters and distributed them throughout the province, as well as set up a Facebook, and email account, to recruit participants. The teachers' association included a recruitment advertisement in their newsletter. Participants for my study were difficult to locate. The three participants with whom I worked were located through contact with colleagues who were in relation with the participants. I worked with two individuals who considered themselves physical education teachers, and one individual who considered herself a generalist teacher. These three individuals are the participants in my doctoral research.

From Field to Field Texts

Composing field texts.

"When narrative inquirers are in the field, they are never there as disembodied recorders of someone else's experience. They too are having an experience, the experience of the inquiry that entails the experience they set out to explore" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 81). As I inquired into the lives of the three participants, three early career teacher leavers, we became part of one another's lives

and experiences. I was in relation with my three participants. The choice of field texts was decided with the participants', and my, interests in mind.

The participants and I met in mutually agreeable locations. Conversations took place in coffee shops, university offices, participant homes, and agreed upon restaurants to create a more comfortable environment. I negotiated conversation times agreeable to them. I met with each participant five to six times over six months. The conversations ranged between 1.5 and 2 hours in length. Each participant initially agreed to be involved in 15-20 hours of conversation.

Four different types of field texts were composed. Each type is attentive to the metaphorical three-dimensional inquiry space. (1) Autobiographical writing, which I used briefly at the beginning of this piece and continued to use throughout the study. (2) Transcripts of researcher-participant conversations, (3) conversations (and their transcripts) about memory boxes, artifacts, and stories in relation to those items, and (4) annals or participant timelines.

Autobiographical field texts, as used earlier to inquire into the story fragment, locate the inquirer in the inquiry. Through these field texts I came to understand my relationship with the phenomenon under study. "The writer can turn back upon her own texts and see there her own processes and biases of selection at work" (Grumet, 1980, p. 155). Through the writings of my early beginnings, I began to understand what brought me to my research puzzle which allowed me to situate myself within the research puzzle.

Transcripts of researcher-participant conversations were the second type of field text. A common question that arises with narrative inquiry is, what is the difference between a conversation and an interview? "Research interviews normally have an inequality about them. The direction of the interview, along with its specific questions, are governed by the interviewer" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 110). To answer this question concerning the difference between conversations and interviews, I looked at the history of the two words. Interview historically means "to see each other, visit each other, get a glimpse of.[9]" Alternatively, conversation historically means "the act of living with" or "to turn about with.[10]" As my intention was to better understand the lives of those teachers who left K-12 teaching in their first five years, a glimpse was not enough. Often, interviews are presided over by the researcher, specific questions are created with specific answers in mind and a formal, hierarchical feeling pervades (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Thinking about the historical meaning of conversation, *the act of living with*[11], helped me be awake to the living alongside that is imperative when involved in relational research such as narrative inquiry.

Initially I had a layout of the broad topic of each conversation. However, if I committed to *turning about* with participants, I did not want to enter as the *expert*

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[9] Interview. *2011. Online Etymological Dictionary.* Retrieved April 19, 2011 from http:// www.etymonline.com /index.php?search= interview & searchmode=none

[10] Conversation. *2011. Online Etymological Dictionary.* Retrieved April 19, 2011 fromhttp://www.etymonline.com/index.php?search=conversation&searchmode=none

[11] At times throughout the dissertation I use italics to draw attention to a word or phrase

researcher. Lugones's (1987) notion of perceived arrogance resonated as I imagined the conversations. If I entered with a perceived arrogance, I entered with preconceived notions of an individual's lived experience. Their stories of experience would become a means to an end if I sanded away their lived experiences and shaped their stories to fit into boxes that were already created (Schaefer & Clandinin, 2011). Although entering into these conversations without a definitive *plan* created, for me, a lack of certainty and feelings of anxiety, Bateson's (2001) metaphor of life as an improvised meal helped me to feel at ease: "The improvised meal will be different from the planned meal, and certainly riskier, but rich with the possibility of delicious surprise" (p. 4). Because a conversation is a co-composition, participants and I shaped the conversations. I remained attentive to the metaphorical three-dimensional inquiry space as I engaged in the conversations.

The conversations about artifacts were the third type of field text. I asked participants to bring artifacts that resonated with their experiences as a teacher to the conversations. I let each participant know that I understood these artifacts as representations of past experiences, present experiences or future experiences. Had I been a participant, one artifact that I might have brought to a conversation would be a symbol that represents The Game of Life by Milton Bradley.

The Game of Life is a board game in which participants work their way around the board by rolling dice. The winner has the most money at the end. This artifact brought back memories of the many hours spent playing this game with my grandmother. I do not remember anything about the game other than the career

squares. When players landed on a career square they got to choose a card from the career deck. There were many careers ranging from doctor to lawyer to trade jobs to teacher. Even though certain careers allotted more money, I always kept choosing cards until I got the teacher card and I can remember my Grandma telling me that some day I would make a great teacher.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) note that memory boxes filled with artifacts are "collections of items that trigger memories of important times, people and events" (p. 114). The "Game of Life" opened up conversations about why and how I became a teacher. Thinking about this game also opened up conversations about my Grandmother who has now passed away, and my Mother who has also passed away; both of these individuals have been pivotal in my life. These are conversations that may never surface without this particular artifact. As I designed the study I hoped participants' artifacts would open up conversations about their experiences with coming to teaching, teaching, and leaving teaching.

For the fourth type of field text I drew on Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) method of creating annals to enable research participants to think about previous experiences and "to construct the outlines of a personal narrative" (p. 112). I used the annals to record the life events of each participant in both their personal and professional landscapes. Like the memory boxes, I hoped that the annals could be used to inquire temporally into participants' experiences.

Moving from field texts to interim and final research texts (analysis and representation of data).

"As we move from field texts to research texts, our field texts are the texts of which we ask questions of meaning and social significance" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 130). It was important to weave the autobiographical texts, stories of artifacts and conversational texts together through the narrative inquiry processes to make meaning of participants' experiences. I asked myself questions of social significance, and moved beyond *what I found interesting* to compose a text that hopefully creates meaning for the participants and for others who read the work. Because I wanted the final research text to be a relational co-composition between the participants and researcher, I composed the ways I moved from field texts to research texts in order to allow for this.

Interim research texts were written and shared with the participants toward the end of our work together. I composed narrative accounts in which I pulled out what seemed to be resonant threads that represented the stories each participant shared with me and wrote a narrative account for each participant. On the surface, it may seem to be a type of member check that allows the participant to confirm the information written with the researcher. However writing and sharing research interim texts through a narrative account was a way to allow each participant to co-compose the research texts. Through this co-composition the interim texts and the narrative accounts significantly shifted as participants provided feedback, and added to the text.

Throughout the entire process from engaging in conversations, composing field texts, to interim texts, to composing final research texts, I was attentive to the metaphorical three-dimensional space. As a narrative inquirer, my gaze shifted from (inward) personal feelings, hopes and dispositions, to (outward) existential conditions, sociality, to temporality (backward and forward), and finally, to a consideration of place "which attends to the specific concrete physical and topological boundaries of inquiry landscapes" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 51). These three dimensions constituted a metaphorical inquiry space within which I worked with participants. This space allowed a theoretical framework in which to both compose and analyze field texts, as I moved from field texts, to interim texts, to final research texts. The analysis, interpretation, and representation within the metaphorical three-dimensional space allowed me to work with participants to make meaning of our experiences throughout the process.

This process of inquiry allowed me to delve deeply into each participant's experiences during conversations, as well as during the move from field texts to final research texts. In doing so, a deeper understanding of each individual's experience over time, in place(s), and within the sociality dimension was formed.

I envisioned the research text as a weaving together of the field texts I composed and co-composed, including my autobiographical stories, with the literature and current conceptualizations of beginning teacher attrition and retention. Although current conceptualizations will be important in this work, it is my hope that inquiring into the lived experiences of individuals who have left the profession early

will enable other imaginative ways of thinking about beginning teacher attrition. "To call for imaginative capacity is to work for the ability to look at things as if they could be otherwise" (Greene, 1995, p. 19). This work bumps with the most frequently told stories around beginning teacher attrition; stories with plotlines of sinking and not swimming, getting rid of the deadweight and survival. I hoped to honor the experiences of the teachers who have left the classroom. Through honoring the knowledge and stories of these individuals, I hope that, in some ways, the work will be meaningful to the participants I worked alongside, as well as to those who read the work.

Ethical Considerations

There was limited personal risk involved for the participants. All three participants taught in the same province and there was a possibility that all three participants graduated from the same teacher education program and may even have taught in the same school division. Every measure possible was taken to ensure anonymity of the participants. The field texts were kept between the individual participant, the transcriber and myself. The transcriber filled out a confidentiality agreement that ensured anonymity. All field texts are stored in a computer that is password protected and hard copies are stored in locked filing cabinets located in the Centre for Research for Teacher Education and Development. Pseudonyms were used for the participants, schools, districts, cities or towns and teacher education programs.

The participants signed an informed consent (see Appendix A)[12] form that outlined they understood the purpose of the study. The consent form also included detailed information about participant requirements and expectations for the study. Prior to the beginning of the study, participants were made aware that their participation was entirely voluntary.

Relational Ethics

Although ethical considerations are considered and taken into account at the beginning of every study, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) note that the ethical responsibilities in relational research, such as narrative inquiry, are ongoing. Conversations surrounding moves into and out of teaching in the K-12 classroom were difficult at times. Personally, there were tensions that arose as I thought about leaving. Although I could not predict how participants would respond to our conversations beforehand, I was awake to the fact that, at times, these conversations could be emotionally charged. Providing empathetic listening and understanding was important to reduce the risk of any harm. I know from my master's work that when these conversations become emotional, relational ethics become particularly important.

Being an early career teacher who left the K-12 classroom shaped how I was situated within this study and shaped how I was situated with the participants. As participants spoke about their experiences or imagined stories that shifted their stories to live by, their stories resonated with me. I kept particular questions in mind as I

[12] Consent forms are included as Appendix A.

moved forward with the study. How many of my experiences will I share with the individuals with whom I am working? At times I know I felt the need to respond to their experiences by sharing my own. When a teacher was speaking about a great relationship with a student, I sometimes felt the need to share similar experiences. Sometimes I wondered how much of my story should be shared. Would sharing my own stories shift their responses? If it did, would this be ethical? These questions created a constant tension throughout the study.

There are no concrete answers formulated to respond to these tensions that arose. Within relational research, one of the beautiful, and, at times, stressful things, is unpredictability. There was no way for me to know what types of conversations, issues, or tensions would surface. However, in being attentive and awake to these ethical considerations, I felt that I negotiated the difficult conversations that sometimes arose.

So What?

So What? I cannot count the number of times this question has been asked of me as a researcher. What will your research do? Why is it important? Will it inform policy? Will it change curriculum documents? What are the implications of your future research? Why do early career teachers leave?

> The problem is that research tends to end with an answer. Hello? Of course, I am not saying researchers should not try to answer questions. The problem is ending with answers—being unaware of or uninterested in the ethical questions generated or avoided. The "answers" to research questions do not

> end things but offer new circumstances for exploring the persistent question of what is good for people. (Hostetler, 2010, p. 21)

Hostetler's words were helpful as I thought about 'what might come' of this research. From a broad perspective, the hopes that fostered my passion for this research lie within the well being of beginning teachers. In some way, maybe this research will help to inform, thinking again about Hostetler's words above, 'what is good for beginning teachers.'

More specifically, I envision the multiple ways this research could shape the teaching profession. Understanding the experiences early career teachers go through as they enter and leave the K-12 classroom can inform policy that will help to create spaces on school, and school district, landscapes to support shifting stories to live by. This work will add to the small, but growing, body of work surrounding early career teacher attrition in Canada. Framing early career teacher attrition as an unfolding of someone's life within her/his personal and professional landscapes**,** rather than simply individual and contextual framings,

> directs our attention away from what works and how it works and directs our attention toward noticing how much is at work and how necessary it is to pay careful, wide-awake attention to the shifting landscapes and to the lives being composed within it. (Clandinin, Downey & Huber, 2009, p. 11)

Being attentive in this way, policy makers, administrators and teacher educators can create communities in which early career teachers can live and tell their stories of who they are, and are becoming, as teachers, with hopes that the forward looking

stories they tell include them teaching in a K-12 classroom.

Of course, these are my imagined notions of the implications my research might have. As a narrative inquirer, I am not after certainty, as Hostetler alluded to in the quotation above. I am not after definitive answers. Maybe I am after more questions, or different questions from different vantage points and different perspectives. Research puzzles are unpredictable, and too often individuals get caught up in finding right answers. A research puzzle, like a transition, is not a moment; it is a process shaped by temporality, sociality and place. The past, the momentum of the skater, is imperative during a present transition, and, in some ways, shapes future transitions on the ice. The location on the ice of the skater, teammates and opponents, plays a part in an individual's transition. Like the hockey player, if I am too caught up in only looking at the puck, I risk missing out on everything around the puck. As I shaped this research puzzle I needed to be attentive to past experiences that have shaped, and continue to shape, my present and future experiences. Seeing early career teachers' stories to leave by as a process as opposed to an event conceptualizes their experiences of moving, like the skater's, in a temporal way.

I saw the response to my research puzzle as involving three tasks: (1) a literature review of early career teacher attrition literature, (2) an empirical narrative inquiry with three teachers who left teaching in K-12 classrooms, and (3) pulling out what I learned from the participants. These three tasks contributed to the writings of three manuscripts (chapters 2, 3, and 4). In chapter 5 I return to my research puzzle and look across the three manuscripts to show how I responded to my research

puzzle. I summarize each chapter below to help the reader understand the structure of this dissertation.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter 2 Summary

Questioning the research on early career teacher attrition and retention.

In this chapter,[13] we reviewed the scholarly work on early career teacher attrition and retention from 1999 to 2010. Much of the literature has framed attrition as either a problem associated with individual factors (e.g., burnout) or a problem associated with contextual factors (e.g., support and salary). Some recent conceptualizations consider early career teacher attrition as an identity-making process that involves a complex negotiation between individual and contextual factors. On the basis of our review, we suggested the need to shift the conversation from one focused only on retaining teachers toward a conversation about sustaining teachers. This shift offers the possibility of new insights about teacher education and about the kinds of spaces needed on school landscapes to sustain and retain beginning teachers.

[13] I use the term 'we' in chapter 2 as the review was undertaken by Dr. Clandinin, Dr. Long and myself. A version of this chapter can be found at: http://ajer.synergiesprairies.ca/ajer/index.php/ajer/article/view/980

Chapter 3 Summary

Shifting the discourse around early career teacher attrition: From questions of why to questions of how much is at work.

Drawing from the literature review, I noted that large-scale studies provided trends and tendencies around why teachers leave. Often times the experiences of individuals who left were lost within these trends. Few studies focused on the experiences of individuals who had left teaching in the K-12 classroom.

While it is important to better understand *why* early career teachers leave, I also attend to *how* they come to leave in chapter 3. Shifting the discourse from *why* teachers leave, to *how* they come to leave, signifies attentiveness towards the temporal unfolding of early career teachers' lives. Initially, I believed this shift in discourse from *why* to *how,* seeing early career leaving as a process that happened over time, would allow a better understanding of the shift from stories to live by to stories to leave by. Although attentiveness to the *how* illuminated the processes of leaving that unfolded over time in participants' professional landscapes, inquiring into *how* they left also offered glimpses into *how much was at work.* It became apparent that each participant's professional and personal stories to live by were intertwined within the contexts of their personal and professional landscapes. In this paper, I inquired into the participants' experiences as understood from within three different discourses. I looked first at the dominant way in which early career teacher attrition has been conceptualized, that is, *why* each individual left. I then shifted to look more at the processes that individuals went through within their professional

landscapes, or *how* they left. I began to realize that seeing early career teachers involved in a process of leaving was not a rigorous enough conceptualization to understand everything that was at work as they left the classroom. In the last section of this paper I shifted the discourse to *how much was at work* as each participants' personal and professional landscape contexts interacted with their imagined notions of composing lives as teachers, to eventually shift their stories to live by to stories to leave by.

Chapter 4 Summary

Composing a life after teaching.

My interest has been in disrupting the dominant stories and discourses around early career teacher attrition (Schaefer, & Clandinin, 2011; Schaefer, in press; Schaefer, in process). I conceptualized leaving as a process that unfolded over time and questioned *how* teachers leave, and *how much is at work* as they leave. Seeing early career teacher leavers as individuals in the midst of a complex identity transition that includes the interaction between their embodied stories to live by and the fluid contexts of their personal and professional landscapes, led me to questions surrounding, what happens next. How do early career leavers make sense of their experiences of teaching in K-12 classrooms after they have left? Buchanan's (2009) paper *Where Are They Now? Ex-teachers Tell Their Life-Work Stories,* offered insight into the lives of teachers who had left teaching. Specifically, Buchanan was interested in how their present work compared to teaching in terms of salary and workload. The study validated the experiences of those who had left, and utilized the

data to think about how teachers might be retained. My purpose was not to compare other professions to teaching as Buchanan did. I was interested in understanding how participants were composing their lives after K-12 teaching. I was also interested in how significant past experiences became "infused with meaning later on as subsequent events retroactively transfigure [them]" (Freeman, 2009, p. 9). My inquiry into their experiences with leaving led me to see that their imagined stories of teaching were being lived out within new personal and professional landscapes.

Chapter 5 Summary

Sliding backwards and forwards: Early career teacher attrition.

In the final chapter of this dissertation I turn backwards to my introductory chapter to think about what has brought me to wonder about early career teacher attrition. I then illustrate temporally how my research journey for this dissertation unfolded as the ways I framed early career teacher attrition and communicated about early career teacher attrition shifted. Thinking about the research process, I illustrate how each chapter responded to my research puzzle. This chapter provides a platform to look across the chapters to think about the resonant threads that I have become awake to. In the final portion of the chapter I think about the implications of these threads for my work as a teacher educator as well as for those who work within school landscapes. Lastly I wonder about future research puzzles that emerged from this work.

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Chapter 2

Questioning the Research on Early Career Teacher Attrition and Retention

Framing the Problem[14]

While there is some discrepancy about the actual percentage of early career teachers who leave teaching in their first five years (from 5% to 50%), U.S. researchers Guarino, Santibañez, and Daley (2006) maintain "one very stable finding is that attrition is high for young teachers" (p. 10). In the U.S., over two billion dollars are spent each year replacing teachers who leave the profession (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005, p. 2). While not only the result of early career teacher attrition, early leavers make up a significant number of teachers who leave teaching. The cost of early career teacher attrition is not only economic. The revolving door of frequent newcomers and leavers creates a non-cohesive environment that can be a major inhibitor to school efficiency in promoting student development and attainment (Macdonald, 1999). Researchers report that the *best and the brightest* among the newcomers appear to be those most likely to leave (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004), an important finding when "there is a growing consensus among researchers and educators that the single most important factor in determining student performance is the quality of his or her teachers" (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005, p. 1). We do not intend to imply that early career teacher attrition is a problem in all countries around the world (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2005).

[14] This literature review was funded through a grant from Alberta Education.

However, it is a concern in the U.S., Britain, Australia, and in Alberta, a Canadian province.

One could frame research into teacher attrition by thinking about the reasons teachers give for leaving teaching such as salary or family commitments. One might also attend to the social dimensions of attrition, for example, thinking about how school culture protects against, or contributes to, the loss of teachers. One could also look at attrition by examining who leaves teaching and when they leave, for example, by considering personal characteristics or demographics. In this literature review, we examine the issues of attrition and retention of early career teachers from these and other perspectives as we seek to develop a thorough understanding of how early career teacher attrition has been developed in the abundant scholarly literature. Some lines of research on early career teacher attrition are well established; others are nascent.

Defining the Terms

As we began this literature review we realized there were multiple terms used in the research literature around early career teacher attrition and retention.[15] For example, the categories used by the National Center for Educational Statistics in the United States adopted the following categories and definitions: a) *stayers* who remain in the same school from one year to the next; b) *movers* who leave their classrooms for another; and c) *leavers* who leave classroom teaching. Early career teacher

[15] Chapter published in collaboration with Dr. Julie Long and Dr. D. Jean Clandinin. http://ajer.synergiesprairies.ca/ajer/index.php/ajer/article/view/980

attrition is defined as those who leave teaching in the first five years of teaching. Freedman and Appleman (2009), in their study of beginning teachers, added a new category, *drifters*, for those who leave urban education but who stay in education. Olsen and Anderson (2007) found in their study of teacher intentions that teachers could be arranged in three groups: *stayers*, *uncertains* (still teaching but not sure if they would stay), and *leavers* (staying in teaching but leaving the classroom). The Freedman and Appleman (2009) category of *drifters* would fit into the Olsen and Anderson category of leavers.

As is made clear in these examples from the literature, the definitions are somewhat mixed, which makes doing a meta-analysis of the literature difficult. It is also not always clear in the literature what is meant by 'leaving teaching.' Sometimes teachers are defined as having left classroom teaching but remain in some form of educational work. Further, it is not always clear what happens when teachers leave states, provinces or countries. They are usually counted as leavers, however, they may still be teaching but in a different state, provincial, or national context.

Methodology

We worked with I. Scott in the Coutts Library, University of Alberta, to undertake an extensive literature review for the study. Using terms identified in key review articles (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Guarino, Santibañez, & Daley, 2006; Ingersoll, 2001), we used the following key terms for our search: New teacher* or novice teacher* or beginning teacher* or early career teacher*, attrition or retention,

or teacher socialization or teacher identity; teacher migration or teacher mobility or movers or leavers.

The key terms were always combined with the idea of new teacher* (identified in the first search line). We limited our search to articles that were peer reviewed/scholarly and published from 1999 to 2010. Databases searched were CBCA Education (Canadian Education Index), ProQuest Education, ERIC, and Education Research Complete.

The search terms that were used in Education Research Complete were:

*TEACHERS -- Recruiting

*EMPLOYEE retention

*TEACHERS -- Workload

*STUDENTS -- Attitudes

*QUALITY of work life

*JOB satisfaction

*TEACHERS -- Supply & demand

The following search terms were used:

Beginning teachers	Teacher identity	Teacher Leavers
Novice Teacher	Teacher attrition	Career change
Early career teacher	Teacher retention	Teacher competencies
Teacher recruitment	Labor turnover	Teacher attitudes
Teaching (occupation)	Teacher mobility	Teaching conditions
Teacher persistence	Faculty mobility	Teacher collaboration
Socialization	Movers	

Administrator

responsibility

Instructional leadership

Work environment

Job satisfaction

Quality of working life

Teacher supply

The articles that were found were put into REF Works. The research team reviewed all abstracts for the articles and selected 65 peer-reviewed articles that were most pertinent to the problem of early career teacher attrition and retention. We selected articles that were based on empirical studies, regardless of methodology. We read and wrote summaries of these articles. We summarized the articles using the following headings: theoretical frame, research problem, context and subject matter, methodology, and findings.

For the most part, the articles framed the problem of teacher attrition in two ways - those that focused early career teacher attrition as a problem mainly situated within the individual and those that focused on early career teacher attrition as a problem mainly situated within the context. This allowed us to sort most of the articles into two groups. We then identified articles for a third group, those with nascent framings of teacher attrition and retention such as articles focused around identity, policy contexts, sustaining teachers, and teachers' lives and careers.

Conceptualizations of Teacher Attrition/Retention

There have been a number of thorough meta-analyses of the research examining the problem of teacher attrition and retention since 1999. As noted, the research appears to identify the issue of early career teacher attrition as either a problem associated with individual factors or a problem associated with contextual or landscape factors. More recently researchers have begun to examine the interaction between individual factors and contextual factors in understanding early career teacher attrition and retention. Using these two

categories as a guide, we first summarize the literature that adopted a primary focus on individual factors and then the literature with a primary focus on contextual factors. We also include more recent research that examined the interaction between individual and contextual factors.

Individual Factors

Burn out.

Maslach (1978, 1982), a leader in burnout research, 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. A U.S. study conducted by Schlichte, Yssel, and Merbler (2005) noted that burnout may occur more commonly in teaching due to the isolation and alienation that occurs in the profession. Excessive paperwork, lack of administrative support, role conflict, and unclear expectations also contribute to the burnout of teachers. In Schlichte, Yssel, and Merbler's study with beginning special educators, they found that positive mentoring can help to alleviate beginning teacher burnout. Along with positive mentoring they also found that administrators who are aware of the many stressors beginning teachers encounter may help to combat beginning teacher burnout.

Resilience.

When teachers are referred to as being resilient it points toward their ability to cope with stressors that may impact them as teachers. In the beginning

teacher attrition literature, resiliency and commitment are terms often associated with one another. Freedman and Appleman (2009), in their U.S. study with beginning teachers in urban schools, found that beginning teachers who stayed in the profession (stayers) had a disposition for hard work. These stayers were also characterized as being persistent. Gehrke and McCoy's (2006) U.S. study on sustaining beginning special education teachers found that beginning teachers who were committed to being resourceful were more successful. Other U.S. research found that teachers who were committed to the profession of teaching in general were more likely to stay in the profession (Haun & Martin, 2004). In framing the problem of beginning teacher attrition in this individualistic way, there is a suggestion that beginning teachers who leave the profession are not resilient, are not resourceful enough, or are not committed enough to stay in the profession. Thus, those that leave are often seen as having deficits or as being deficit.

Personal demographic features (age, sex, ethnicity/race, etc.).

The beginning teacher attrition literature points to personal demographics as playing a role in whether or not an individual stays in, or leaves, teaching. When speaking about beginning teachers there is an assumption that beginning teachers are younger than more experienced teachers. While this is not always the case, as beginning teachers may be individuals who start teaching later in life, a number of U.S. and international studies showed that younger teachers are more likely to leave in their first five years (Billingsley, 2004; Borman &

Dowling, 2008; Guarino, Santibañez, & Daley, 2006; Macdonald[16], 1999). Ingersoll (2001) noted that the "relative odds of young teachers departing are 171% higher than for middle-aged teachers" (p. 518).

Ethnicity and gender also play a role in beginning teacher attrition. Studies that attended to ethnicity/race (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Guarino, Santibañez, & Daley, 2006) found that Caucasian teachers are more likely to leave the profession. Macdonald (1999), in her international review, also found that ethnicity plays a role in beginning teacher attrition. Other U.S. studies that attended to gender found that females leave the profession of teaching more often than males (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Guarino, Santibañez, & Daley, 2006).

Personal factors (family).

The variety of reasons given for why beginning teachers leave the profession are diverse and research often focuses on aspects that are directly related to teaching. However, the personal landscapes that teachers live on outside of schools also play a role in beginning teacher attrition. "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" (Ingersoll, 2001, p. 522). Decisions to leave the profession may also be attributed to personal finances or perceived opportunities

[16] Macdonald (1999) wrote a review that included both international empirical research, as well as reports prepared by international organizations, and government agencies.

outside of teaching (Billingsley, 2004). Living conditions and family responsibilities are also factors that may play a role in beginning teacher attrition (Macdonald, 1999). Borman and Dowling (2008) noted that, in the U.S., teacher attrition might be caused by any number of personal factors that may change across a lifespan.

Contextual Factors

Support of those on the landscape.

Lack of support on the professional landscape is an area often discussed when beginning teachers leave the profession of teaching. Algozzine, Gretes, Queen, and Cowan-Hathcock (2007) conducted a U.S. study that utilized a cross-sectional instrument to survey third-year teachers who had participated in induction programs. They found that mentoring by experienced teachers, release time for observing (both same field and variant field), common planning times, and creating networks of new and experienced teachers was found to help support beginning teachers better cope with entry into the profession.

Andrews, Gilbert, and Martin (2006) also found, in their U.S. study, that opportunities to work collaboratively with others teachers were highly valued by beginning teachers. However, a low percentage of teachers surveyed said this type of support was offered. This study also points to the discrepancies that may be apparent between what beginning teachers perceive as support and what administrators perceive as support.

Support for new teachers is generally associated with retention. Johnson and Birkeland (2003) found that the beginning teachers in the U.S. who were in integrated professional cultures (that encouraged collegial and collaborative relationships for all teachers) were more satisfied with their jobs, more likely to stay in the public education system and were more likely to stay at the same school. In a Canadian study of beginning teachers, Fantilli and McDougall (2009) found that support from experienced colleagues and having a principal who supported a collaborative school culture mitigated some of the challenges faced by beginning teachers. In Angelle's (2006) U.S. study of new middle school teachers, the role of the principal in creating a culture focused on students was central to beginning teachers' intentions to stay in the profession. In a U.S. study by Alkins, Banks-Santilli, Elliot, Guttenberg, and Kamii (2006), beginning teachers saw learning with, and from, others as central to their professional growth. Guarino, Santibañez, and Daley (2006) found, in their review of the literature, that mentoring and induction programs (collegial support) and more administrative support were associated with higher rates of retention of beginning teachers.

Yet the notion of establishing a culture of collaboration is problematic. Subject matter is one way to consider the complexities of collaboration. Banville and Rikard (2009), based on their U.S. study, call for multiple sources of support for physical education specialist teachers because of the circumstances of their professional practice (for example, involvement in extracurricular activities). One might also think of mentoring as an opportunity for collaboration. In their

study of nine beginning teachers in small urban schools in the U.S., Carter and Keiler (2009) found that the beginning teachers valued the opportunity to know their colleagues and administrators well, but that they had little curriculum support from administrators and haphazard mentorship experiences. Bullough and Draper (2004) explored the mentoring triad in one U.S. state between an intern teacher, a university facilitator, and a cooperating teacher. The researchers described the complexity of mentoring and questioned the portrayal of all mentoring as being good mentoring. Professional development sessions or orientations might also be considered a form of support. Gerke and McCoy (2006), in their U.S. study of special education teachers, found that the beginning teachers valued support that focused on problems of practice but were frustrated by *one size fits all* support such as district orientations.

Salary.

Higher salary is often held up as a solution to beginning teacher attrition. Guarino, Santibañez, and Daley (2006) found, in their review of the literature, that higher salary was associated with higher rates of retention in the United States. Hahs-Vaughn and Scherff (2008) explored U.S. beginning English teachers' attrition and found that only salary was statistically significantly related to increased odds of beginning English teachers' leaving the profession; those who earned less than $20 000 were more than eight times more likely to leave teaching. Imazeki (2004), looking at a U.S. teacher mobility and salary, noted that transfers were found to respond most strongly when district salaries were increased relative to nearby districts. Surprisingly, the study also found that

salary increases for more experienced teachers might also reduce exit attrition among newer female teachers. Inman and Marlow (2004) examined the conditions that kept U.S. teachers in the profession. They found that, of the external factors on their survey, beginning teachers identified only salary as a reason to stay in the profession.

As with other contextual factors, there are difficulties with seeing salary as an isolated factor in teacher attrition and retention. Buchanan (2009), in his Australian study, examined the reasons given by ex-teachers for leaving the profession. For some participants, salary was an important contributing factor that caused them to leave the profession. For others, salary was not a contributing factor. Even more broadly, Guarino, Santibañez, and Daley (2006) suggested that teachers look at overall compensation (comprising salary, benefits, working conditions, other rewards) in relation to alternative employment opportunities.

Professional development.

There is little research that focuses specifically on professional development with respect to beginning teacher attrition and retention, as professional development is often part of the research on induction, mentoring, and/or collaboration with colleagues. In one study about teacher mobility within the U.S. state of Washington, researchers examined the teachers' reasons to stay in or leave a school. Elfers, Plecki, and Knapp (2009) found that that support for professional learning through incentives and access to resources was particularly important in retaining teachers in schools with high rates of poverty.

Collaboration.

Teaching in schools involves working with colleagues and administrators. Collaboration among professionals can be a rewarding experience that influences the classroom. A lack of collaboration is one reason that beginning teachers in the U.S. give for leaving the profession (Scherff, 2008).

There may be an absence of collaboration for a variety of reasons. Kardos and Johnson (2007) explored how new teachers in four U.S. states experienced their work and their colleagues. They found that, in general, new teachers were solo practitioners. Many beginning teachers worked in cultures where collaborative work was not supported and where they felt they could not, or should not, ask for help from others.

The type of collaboration that happens in schools also varies. Johnson and Birkeland (2003) followed the career decisions of a diverse group of beginning teachers in the United States. The researchers distinguished between three types of professional culture: veteran-oriented, novice-oriented, and integrated. They found that beginning teachers were more likely to stay in teaching and be satisfied with their jobs if they were part of an integrated professional culture which encouraged all members to collaborate in a collegial atmosphere.

In addition to professional culture, other factors such as proximity to other teachers, the positioning of collaborative members, and the responsibilities of the group also affect collaboration. Griffin, Kilgore, Winn, Otis-Wilborn,

Hou, and Garvan (2009) explored the factors that support and constrain the work of first year special educators in the United States. They found that beginning special educators who saw themselves as successful collaborators were more likely teaching in, or near, a general education classroom. Bullough and Draper (2004) investigated a mentorship triad of a teaching intern, university supervisor, and mentor teacher in the United States. How the participants positioned themselves and the others in the triad affected what collaboration was possible. Haun and Martin (2004) administered a collaboration survey to beginning teachers and teachers who had left the profession with less than five years of teaching in the United States. Teachers were more likely to stay in the profession if they were part of a collaborative group responsible for a common group of students and if the collaborative group positively influenced their desire to continue teaching.

Nature of the context (high rates of poverty, rural, urban, suburban).

The demographic features of schools are also associated with varying degrees of attrition and retention. In his examination of SASS and TFS data[17] in the U.S., Ingersoll (2001) found that teacher turnover in urban, public schools with high rates of poverty was slightly higher than average and that the rate of turnover in small private schools was very high. Much of the turnover in the small private schools could be linked to low salary. Similarly in their review of

[17] The data from SASS (School And Staffing Survey) and TFS (Teacher Follow-up Survey) are part of an on-going, national, longitudinal survey in the United States.

the literature, Guarino, Santibañez, and Daley (2006) found that urban and private schools had higher rates of attrition than other schools. In yet another literature review, Borman and Dowling (2008) found that urban, suburban, private, and elementary schools all had higher rates of attrition.

Some recent studies have given attention to these demographic features. Carter and Keiler (2009) investigated the realities experienced by beginning teachers in small urban schools in the United States. They identified a rift between teachers' experiences and the tenets of the Small Schools' urban reform movement. Elfers, Plecki, and Knapp (2009) looked at teacher mobility patterns in the state of Washington. They noted that the geographic location of a school was one factor in teachers' decisions to stay or move.

More generally, Billingsley (2004) has described work environment as one of the themes in the literature around special educator attrition. Teachers who perceived the school as a good place to work were more likely to stay in the profession. The factors shaping school climate are myriad and cannot be limited to simple demographic characterizations.

Student issues.

Beginning teachers' experiences with students are often seen as one factor that influences beginning teacher attrition and retention. In most studies, this factor involves issues around classroom management.

Borman and Dowling (2008) and Guarino, Santibañez, and Daley (2006) noted that U.S. schools with a higher proportion of students from minority groups and students from low SES had higher rates of attrition. Elfers, Plecki

and Knapp (2009) found that attrition is related to student poverty; U.S. teachers are more likely to leave when schools are located in high poverty areas. Macdonald (1999), in her review, noted that student violence was associated with higher teacher attrition. Patterson, Roehrig and Luft (2003) also found that student issues were a factor in U.S. teachers' reasons for leaving.

One study on Manitoba French immersion programs (Ewart, 2009) showed that, while the overall attrition rates of beginning teachers was very low, the most common challenge was classroom management and evaluation of students. In another Canadian study, Fantilli and McDougall (2009) found that there were four components that had an effect on the challenges beginning teachers face in Ontario. Among those four components were special needs (meeting special needs and individual education plans) and classroom management/behaviour issues.

Brown and Wynn (2007), in their U.S. study, pointed out that higher levels of teacher retention have consistently been found in schools with fewer student discipline problems. Brown and Wynn (2007, 2009) found that schools grounded in philosophies such as, *it's all about the kids*, had lower levels of teacher attrition. Haun and Martin (2004) noted that beginning teachers in the U.S. who were part of a collaborative team focused on a common group of students were also more likely to continue in teaching. In Johnson and Birkeland's (2003) U.S. study, the participating beginning teachers (movers, leavers, and stayers) spoke of their desire to feel successful in the classroom.

Overall success for the beginning teachers meant relationship building, a sense that students were learning, and being valued as teachers.

Teacher education.

Not surprisingly, when teacher attrition problems are discussed in the literature, the structures, philosophies and practical applications of teacher education programs are often addressed. Duck's (2007) U.S. study inquired into foundations classes offered in a particular education program and found increasing the practicality of foundations courses may enable beginning teachers a smoother transition in to teaching. He also found a focus on self-awareness allows beginning teachers to better understand why they like or dislike certain things and why they respond the way they do to certain experiences. This focus on self-awareness enabled beginning teachers to understand there are a multiplicity of right answers about how to be a 'good' teacher.

Alkins, Banks-Santilli, Elliott, Guttenberg, and Kamii (2006), based on their U.S. study, suggested the need for more support from institutions of higher education for beginning teachers in three categories: instruction theory and practice; establishing a culture for learning; and teacher development/transformation.

Ewart (2009), in a study of new teachers in minority French and French immersion programs in Manitoba, found a very high retention rate and identified one of the factors for this high rate was the pre-service teacher education program which was closely aligned with the school practices where they would be hired. Fantilli and McDougall (2009), in their Ontario study, found that

graduates indicated supports that would have mitigated the challenges they faced included pre-service programs with more exposure to practical tasks. Kutcy and Schulz (2006), in their study of Canadian teachers, found that beginning teachers' frustrations included, among other factors, their frustrations with their pre-service programs. The authors noted the need for 'collaborative resonance' between teacher education programs and schools.

In the Flores and Day (2006) study of Portuguese teachers, the beginning teachers noted tensions between theory (what they learned at university) and practice (the complex realities of the classroom). Flores (2006) suggests that collaboration between the universities and schools is needed to enhance the potential of both institutions.

Freedman and Appleman (2008, 2009) followed a cohort of beginning teachers who had studied in a multicultural urban secondary English teacher education program in the U.S. for five years. They recorded a lower attrition rate and found the factors that contributed to this were: the cohort model in teacher education which provided ongoing support as they began to teach, a match between teacher education students' values and ideals with the program; and preparation for the micro politics in urban teaching settings. At the end of the 5-year study, the beginning teachers communicated that one reason for staying was their substantive preparation that included the practical, the academic, and harmony between the two. The teachers also felt the training that helped them to take a reflective stance was helpful.

Hunter Quartz and TEP Research Group (2003) found, in their follow-up to the graduates of the UCLA urban teacher education program, that the teacher education preparation was important in preparing the beginning teachers with understandings of how to build on the strengths of the urban communities. They found the program preparation was very important in contributing to low teacher attrition rates because graduates saw themselves as becoming change agents and saw themselves as joining a profession. Justice and Espinoza (2007), based on their U.S. study, found that allowing beginning teachers to become aware of the emotional skills needed to be a teacher might keep them in the profession longer.

Lovett and Davey (2009), in their New Zealand study, questioned the need for a *one size fits all* approach to teacher preparation. Schlichte, Yssel, and Merbler (2005), in their U.S. study with beginning special education teachers, noted the importance of teacher educators creating spaces in their classes to allow student teachers to collaborate and cooperate with one another.

Promising Recent Conceptualizations

Research on beginning teacher attrition, at times, seems to focus on providing correct answers, quick fixes, and de-contextualized data. By de-contextualizing the data, existing research presents narrow views of the trends and tendencies that are apparent in beginning teacher attrition. Often times the research focuses on the individual characteristics of teachers without taking into account the contextual factors that may be at play. At other times the individual factors are dismissed, and contextual factors are studied. Furthermore, beginning teacher attrition has also been characterized as a particular event; something that

happened at one moment or time. Few studies conceptualize early career teacher attrition as a process that is negotiated over time. In what follows, studies that have taken these concerns in to account are discussed.

Teacher Intentions

Clandinin, Downey, and Huber (2009), in their Canadian study, discussed the possibilities of conceptualizing teacher attrition as a process. Their metaphor of teachers standing at a bus stop waiting for their bus to come by and transition them away to a new place, offers a way to think about the intentions of beginning teachers. Other researchers are beginning to explore beginning teachers' intentions (Olsen & Anderson, 2007; Olsen, 2008; Smethem, 2007). Smethem, Olsen and Anderson, in their British study, found that beginning teachers' intentions to stay in or leave the profession varied when examined prior to teaching or at different points in the first five years. Olsen looked at U.S. beginning teachers' careers in a temporal manner by inquiring into their personal and professional histories to decipher if reasons for entry linked to their intentions to stay in, or leave, teaching. Although these studies were not able to follow the participants to see if they actually stayed in the profession, it is interesting to consider how beginning teachers' intentions, as they enter teaching, may shape their decisions to leave.

Interactions Between Individual and Contextual Factors

Rinke (2006), in an analysis of the research literature, spoke to the dichotomy apparent in beginning teacher attrition literature between locating the

problem of attrition within individuals (individualized conceptions such burnout) or within contexts (contextual conceptions such as support). Even though these areas have a close relational interaction, they are, at times, treated as separate. Rinke called for future research that inquires into both contextual conceptualizations and individual conceptualizations in a simultaneous way. Flores and Day (2006), in their Portuguese study, noted that the complex negotiation of identity includes both individual and contextual factors.

Integrated Cultures

Johnson and Birkeland's (2003) U.S. study looked at the types of cultures that can be created in schools and how they might shape beginning teachers' decisions to stay in the profession. They identified three types of professional cultures: veteran-oriented, novice-oriented, and integrated. An integrated culture is "organized to engage teachers of all experience levels in collegial and collaborative efforts" (p. 605). They found that teachers involved in the integrated culture were more satisfied with their jobs, were more likely to stay in the school system, and more likely to stay at the same school. Thinking about integrated cultures and how beginning teacher identities may be shaped in a relational and collegial way also could have implications for mentorship and induction.

Challenging 'One Size Fits All'

More recent research, in the U.S. and New Zealand, cautions against the *one size fits all* type of teacher education, mentorship, and induction programs

(Bieler & Thomas, 2009; Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2009; Lovett & Davey, 2009). Induction and mentorship programs are often seen as a way to *fix* the problem of attrition. However, if the purpose of induction and mentorship is simply to retain teachers, to keep teachers teaching, how does this define induction and mentorship roles? How the problem of induction is defined shapes the nature and duration of support offered and the programmatic tools and resources provided. Beginning teachers need mentors who are skilled in helping them learn in, and from, practice. Consequently induction policies need to focus attention equally on new teachers and on their mentors (Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2009).

Teacher Identity

One of the promising lines of inquiry into the problem of teacher attrition/retention is a focus on developing teacher identity. Much of the earlier research focused on learning a new role rather than an identity. One line of research focuses on the need to understand the process of becoming a teacher as processes of identity making.

Early work in this area began from a view of learning a new identity, that is, an identity as teacher rather than learner. This view was reflected in the early work of Lortie (1975) and has been picked up again in relation to the problem of early career teacher attrition. McNally, Blake, and Reid (2009), based on a study in Scotland, discussed identity negotiation as well, and pointed to the importance of being attentive to how beginning teachers' identities are negotiated within the relational dimensions of the school. Often times these relational dimensions were

situated within informal spaces; these informal spaces were important to identity negotiation and daily teaching life (Lovett & Davey, 2009; McNally, Blake, & Reid, 2009).

Flores and Day (2006) and Clandinin, Downey, and Huber (2009) have begun to study beginning teachers from this theoretical standpoint. Flores (2006) spoke to the challenges beginning teachers faced as they re-framed their identities within the cultures of their new school setting. Flores and Day (2006), in their study of teachers in Portugal, worked from a notion of identities as an ongoing and dynamic process that entails the making sense of, and reinterpretation of, one's own values and experiences. They identified three main shaping forces: prior influences, initial teacher training and school contexts. Clandinin, Downey, and Huber worked from a narrative view of teacher identity as *stories to live by* which links teacher knowledge and school contexts. In their work with the stories of teachers in Canada who had left teaching, they suggested teachers' stories to live by gradually shifted until they found they were no longer able to sustain who they were, and were becoming, within school landscapes.

This work on teacher identities offers a great deal of promise to ways we might come to understand beginning teacher attrition as a life-making process. Adopting such a view would offer insight into the life/career span of a teacher, with the temporal process of becoming a teacher as linked with the processes of leaving teaching.

Shifting the Conversation

The discourse around teacher attrition and retention has kept the focus on seeing the problem as one of only retaining teachers, rather than sustaining beginning teachers in a profession where they will feel fulfilled and see themselves as making a strong contribution. In recent work in Canada and the U.S., (Clandinin, Downey, & Huber; Young et al., 2010; Nelson, Antayá-Moore, Badley, & Coleman, 2010; Nieto, 2003) there are studies of what keeps teachers teaching or what sustains them. When we consider beginning teachers, we see possibility in adopting this discourse to try to understand not only what retains, but also what sustains, teachers in teaching.

Schaefer and Clandinin (2011) adopted this discourse in a study of two beginning teachers in order to try to understand what sustained them in their first year of teaching. Estola (2003) explored the place of hope in how student teachers in Finland constructed their teacher identities. In her work, she found, as did Schaefer and Clandinin, that there is negotiation between personal and professional identities. Both Schaefer and Clandinin (2011) and Estola (2003) worked from a view of teacher identity as a narrative process.

In much of the research on early career teacher attrition, the focus on individual factors and contextual factors had directed attention toward the *why* of leaving. In this generalized view, the experiences of the people involved may be stripped away, in the hopes of revealing a general solution to the perceived problem. The proposed solutions address individual or contextual factors in order to retain early career teachers.

We suggest the need to shift the conversation from one focused only on retaining teachers toward a conversation about sustaining teachers throughout their careers. Working alongside beginning teachers and working from a narrative conceptualization of identity and school contexts offers a promising way to understand what sustains beginning teachers and in this way may offer the possibility of new insights about teacher education and about the kinds of continuing spaces needed on school landscapes to sustain and retain beginning teachers.

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Chapter 3

Shifting the Discourse Around Early Career Teacher Attrition: From Questions of Why to Questions of How Much is at Work

> I'm going to change the world or I'm going to change the system or I'm going to change something. I'm going to change that one kid or whatever it is, and then you come up against this system that doesn't want to be changed, and how do you negotiate that? (Alis, 3-1-2, 657)[18]

> Every journey is cyclical, and so you always start out here, you know we think, okay, we're going from here to here and linearly it is two different places, but often we're coming back to where we started. But we are different. (Alis, 3-1-3, p.7)

These two quotations are from a teacher who left teaching within her first five years. If she were one of only a few teachers who left in their first five years this quote would be interesting, but not worthy of study; however, there are many who leave. While there is some discrepancy about the actual percentage of early career teachers who leave teaching in their first five years (from 5% to 50%), "one very stable finding is that attrition is high for young teachers" (Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006, p. 10). It is not that this phenomenon of early career teachers leaving the profession has not been studied. There are

[18] First number indicates study number in larger study. Second number indicates participant number. Third number indicates the number of the conversation. The last number indicates the line that the quotation came from.

several meta-analyses of research examining teacher attrition and retention since 1999 (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Guarino, Santibañez, & Daley, 2006; Macdonald, 1999). Some research appears to conceptualize early career teacher attrition as a problem associated with individual factors, such as personality traits (Freedman, & Appleman, 2009; Haun, & Martin, 2004) or personal demographics (Billingsley, 2004; Borman, & Dowling, 2008; Guarino, Santibañez, & Daley, 2006; Macdonald,[19] 1999). Other research appears to see it as a problem associated with contextual or landscape factors, such as collaboration and support (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005; Borman & Dowling, 2008; Guarino, Santibañez, & Daley, 2006; Ingersoll, 2001) or student demographics (Borman, & Dowling, 2008; Guarino, Santibañez, & Daley 2006; Ingersoll, 2001). Although these large-scale studies provide trends and tendencies around why teachers leave, often experiences of individuals who leave were lost within these trends. Few studies focus on hearing the experiences of individuals who left teaching in a K-12 classroom (Buchanan, 2009).

My inspiration for this study, that is the focus of this paper, stemmed from wondering about the lives of early career teachers. I wondered, how did their stories of becoming teachers shift so drastically that it eventually made sense to leave the K-12 classroom? I have seen many early career teachers, like Alis, enter the profession with a passion to make the world a better place. Their imagined stories of teaching and what it means to be a teacher, shaped by their

[19] Macdonald (1999) wrote a review that included both international empirical research, as well as reports prepared by international organizations, and government agencies.

past experiences, situated them in a profession they believed would allow them to impact students' lives in profound ways. Connelly and Clandinin (1999) use Geertz's (1995) metaphor of a parade to explain the shifting professional landscapes that teachers enter. As Alis entered her shifting professional landscape, her passionate stories to live by shifted to stories to leave by, as she found herself leaving the K-12 classroom. Alis's reference to her cyclical journey, in the opening quotation, reminds me of the importance of attending to the temporality, continuity and interaction of early career teachers' experiences as they negotiate their lives in both personal and professional landscapes (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Schaefer & Clandinin, 2011).

Conceptual Frame: Defining the Terms

I adopted Clandinin and Connelly's narrative conceptual framework (1995, 1999) of identity as 'stories to live by,' a phrase that brings together teacher knowledge and teacher contexts. Teacher knowledge, conceptualized as personal practical knowledge, is knowledge "imbued with all the experiences that make up a person's being. Its meaning is derived from, and understood in terms of a person's experiential history, both professional and personal" (Clandinin, 1985, p. 362). School context is understood metaphorically as a professional knowledge landscape composed of relationships among people, places and things, and is both a moral and intellectual landscape (Clandinin, & Connelly, 1995). The professional knowledge landscape, like individuals' stories to live by, is always shifting and changing. Stories to live by, "a narrative way of

thinking about teacher identity speaks to the nexus of teachers' personal practical knowledge and the landscapes, past and present, on which teachers live and work" (Clandinin, Downey, & Huber, 2009, p. 141). The temporality of individuals' experiences combined with the contexts in which they have worked and lived, shape who they are, and are becoming. While Clandinin et al., draw attention to past and present experiences, they do not explicitly draw attention to the interconnectedness of the personal and professional landscapes within which individuals compose their lives, or how teachers' imagined identities, imagined stories to live by, may shape whether they stay in, or leave the profession.

From past work (Schaefer, & Clandinin, 2011) with early career teachers in their first year of teaching, I became awake to the complex identity negotiation that took place in both their personal and professional landscapes. These landscapes were so interconnected that, at moments, it was difficult to separate the two. The teachers' imagined stories of teaching, as well as their imagined stories of who they would be as teachers away from the school, created tensions within their stories to live by. Individuals enter teaching embodying stories to live by and, as part of their stories to live by, embody forward looking stories of who they will be as teachers and as people. These personal and professional imagined stories, when realized, provide sustaining experiences for early career teachers (Schaefer, in press).

Seeing teachers as needing to be sustained as people, as opposed to just professionals, troubles the notion of simply retaining teachers. *Retain*[20] can be defined as "to keep in possession or use." *Sustain*[21] is defined as "providing sustenance" which in turn allows individuals to be "supplied with the necessities of life." The word sustaining brings attention to the idea that teachers are people in the midst of composing lives. It shifts the focus away from simply retaining individuals in the professional landscape, and broadens the focus to include the nexus between the professional and personal landscapes within which teachers live, and their imagined stories of who they are, and are becoming. Thinking in this way, retaining individuals in K-12 classrooms may not be that important if people are not sustained.

Questions of Why, to Questions of How, to Questions of How Much

Early career teacher attrition is a concern in a number of countries across the globe (OECD, 2005). In a recent literature review (Schaefer, Long, & Clandinin, 2012), we noted that the focus on individual factors and contextual factors has directed attention toward the question of *why* early career teachers leave. In this view, it seemed teachers' experiences were stripped away, in the hopes of revealing a general solution to the perceived problem of early career teacher attrition. While it is important to better understand *why* early career

[20] Retain. 2012. Online Merriam-Webster Dictionary. Retrieved February January 20, 2012. From // www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/retain

[21] Sustain. 2012. Online Merriam-Webster Dictionary. Retrieved January 20 19, 2012. From // www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Sustain

teachers leave, in this study, I attend to *how* they leave. Shifting the discourse from *why* teachers leave, to *how* they leave, signifies attentiveness towards the temporal unfolding of early career teachers' lives. Initially, I believed this shift in discourse from *why* to *how,* seeing early career leaving as a process that happened over time, would allow a better understanding of the shift from stories to live by to stories to leave by. Although attentiveness to the *how* illuminated the processes of leaving that unfolded over time in their professional landscapes, inquiring into *how* they left, also offered glimpses into *how much was at work.* It became apparent that each participant's stories to live by were intertwined within the contexts of their personal and professional landscapes. In what follows, I inquire into the teachers' experiences as understood from within three different discourses, but I first explain the methodological implications of engaging in a narrative inquiry.

Methodology

Using a methodology of narrative inquiry, I inquired into the experiences of three teachers in Alberta who had left the profession of K-12 teaching in their first five years. I chose narrative inquiry because,

> Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular view of experience as phenomenon under study. (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 375)

In hoping to understand the experiences of individuals who left K-12 teaching in their first five years, narrative inquiry's attentiveness to the continuity and interaction of individuals' lived experiences provided a strong methodological foundation. Through narrative inquiry, experience is studied through explorations of the personal/social, temporality, and place. For example, as I engaged with participants' stories, I asked questions which explored their (personal) feelings, hopes, and dispositions, the social, that is, what was happening around them, temporality, that is, how their experiences were bound in time, and finally, place(s) "which attends to the specific concrete physical and topological boundaries of inquiry landscapes" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 51).

Participants

As part of a larger study (Clandinin, Schaefer, Long, et al., Alberta Education Report), we designed a series of digital and hard copy posters and distributed them throughout the province, as well as set up a Facebook page, and email account to recruit participants. The provincial teachers' association included a recruitment advertisement in their newsletter. Participants were difficult to locate. They were eventually located through contact with colleagues who were in relation with them.

Each participant taught in an Alberta school for less than five years and graduated with a B.Ed. from a university in the province of Alberta. I worked

with three participants with different backgrounds; Dan[22] (secondary physical education, urban), Reid[23] (secondary physical education, rural), and Alis[24] (elementary and secondary, rural and urban).

From Field to Field Texts to Interim and Final Research Texts

Throughout the inquiry process from design to composing final research texts, I was attentive to the metaphorical three-dimensional narrative inquiry space. I had five to six 1.5 to 2 hour conversations with each participant, in places where participants felt most comfortable. Confidentiality and anonymity were promised. I discussed the information letter and consent form with participants before beginning conversations and sought their consent. I recorded each conversation and had the conversations transcribed. Field texts were composed in four different ways: autobiographical inquiry, sharing artifacts and stories of the artifacts, composing annals, and engaging in conversations.

Working from the field texts, a narrative account was created for each participant. Narrative accounts are interpretive constructions of individual experiences attentive to the metaphorical three-dimensional inquiry space. These accounts were composed around what I identified as narrative threads (Clandinin, Huber, Huber, et al., 2006) across each participant's life. The draft narrative accounts were negotiated with each participant in order to deepen

[22] Dan's narrative account is Appendix B.

[23] Reid's narrative account is Appendix C.

[24] Alis's narrative account is Appendix D.

understanding about the participant's experiences, and to continue to co-compose the narrative account. Once the three narrative accounts were negotiated, I pulled forward resonant narrative threads, that is, threads that ran across, and through, each of the narrative accounts.

Shifting Discourses

The dominant way early career teacher attrition is conceptualized revolves around leaving K-12 teaching as an event, defining why teachers leave, and thinking about how we might retain them. In this section I first analyze the participants' narrative accounts through the dominant lens of 'why.' I then shift the discourse, to a vantage point that sees early career teacher attrition as a process, that is, to how they left. I analyze the narrative accounts looking at 'how' they left. Finally, I shift the discourse further to think about why teachers leave, how they leave, and analyze the narrative accounts looking at *how much is at work* as they leave.

Discourse One: The Why

Why Alis left.

As I entered into my first conversation with Alis, I wondered if she would be interested in the study. The first five minutes of the conversation with Alis alleviated my worries. She was excited to be there, passionate about teaching, and reflective. She spoke of how she could not be the teacher she wanted to be.

> So I have two choices as a new person. I can either play that game and move up here, or I can say no to your game and leave. When people choose to leave, things don't get better. I am conflicted by having to leave the system. It really wears on me. It's just not easy to leave because I know the system is not going to change. (Alis, 3-1-2, 671)

By game, Alis was referring to the systemic micro-political ideologies that she encountered in all of the teaching positions she left. She named this as a *game to be played* a number of times. However, she refused to participate in the political games that she saw needing to be played to move up the school ladder. Although she felt confident that if she had participated in the game she could have been *successful*, she questioned if she could have lived with herself if she conformed to what was expected of her. This was not what she saw herself doing as a teacher, and in our conversations she noted that conforming to the system was bad for students. She left.

Why Dan left.

Dan, in contrast to Alis, was very quiet, and reserved. He answered questions, but did not elaborate on them. Initially in our conversations, although he had read the contact letter, I wondered if he regretted signing up for such an intense study. However, as our conversations continued, I began to see how passionate Dan was about teaching. The story fragment below was shared early on, but he referred back to it often over our hours together.

> I started the next year and after a month or so there was a guy…who was on stress leave who, whatever happened, happened and he left, [but then he] was placed [at our school]. With his seniority [he] bumped me out because I didn't have a continuing contract….He lasted a few months and then went on stress leave again, and then left, so I came back and taught for a bit, and then said, "thank you very much I'm going to be doing my pre-requisite courses for physical therapy school. (Dan, 3-3-1, 35)

Dan, from his perspective, had a very successful first year teaching. Although at times he struggled with student discipline issues in the gymnasium, he saw himself as an effective teacher. The story fragment above speaks to how Dan was *bumped* out of his teaching position. He was not on a permanent contract and someone with more seniority returned from a stress leave and took the position. Dan, feeling slighted by the system, applied to a master's program in physical therapy. He left.

Why Reid left.

Reid's smile very seldom came off his face. His demeanor made our conversations easy. We had a lot in common. Reid spoke openly about his passion for making a difference in students' lives, and how much he enjoyed teaching. But something was missing.

> The big detriment to me, which you know about, was there was no one there, I won't say romantically, but you know what I mean. There was nothing that really made me want to stay. I mean relationship is a big part

about where you are and there was nothing even close to that there, just because it's a very transient town. (Reid, 3-2-1, 153)

Reid, after university graduation, took a job in a small northern Alberta city. He had grown up in this small city, so the demographics, size, and lifestyle were no surprise. He described himself as successful in his first years of teaching. He was not overwhelmed by his work, although he did put in long hours. He coached a number of teams, and found fulfillment in building a strong rapport with students and staff. However, the small city life did not align with how Reid saw himself living his life. He wanted to meet someone "[he] wouldn't say romantically, but you know what [he] means." He wanted to travel, and he wanted to move back to a larger city. He left.

The Whys of Leaving

Each participant, Alis, Dan, and Reid, left for different reasons. Alis did not want to play the *game*. Dan was *bumped*. Reid could not imagine living his life, as a teacher, in a small city. These are the reasons, the whys of their leaving. For Alis, working within the micro-politics was difficult. Negotiating the power relationships between different individuals working in the professional landscape is something with which many beginning teachers struggle (Kelchtermans, & Ballet, 2002). Dan, without a permanent contract, shared that he was seeking something more stable. In many countries around the world beginning teachers endure probationary periods of teaching in which their jobs are unstable. Often times a successful probation period does not ensure a permanent position, there

must be a vacancy (OECD, 2005). Dan shared that this probationary limbo made him feel devalued, and uncertain, which made planning his life difficult. For Reid, living in a small city was difficult, especially after spending five years in a large city, at a large university, with opportunities for relationships. Reid felt like he was missing out on relationships that he could have found in a larger city.

In thinking about why Dan, Reid and Alis left, from within the dominant discourse of why, the problems would be fairly easily solved. If Alis had been more prepared for the micro-politics of teaching, she would have expected it, and been able to negotiate the game. Perhaps she would have stayed. If Dan had been given a full-time permanent contract, perhaps he would have stayed. If Reid had found a teaching job in a large city, perhaps he would have stayed. These solutions could then be generalized to early career teachers. Create micro-political courses in teacher education programs; give early career teachers full-time permanent contracts; place early career teachers in places they want to live. It all seems very straightforward.

Except, when I asked the participants if they would have stayed if these conditions had been in place, their replies were uncertain. Their uncertainties were expressed around the sustainability of the work, around family, and around flexibility. As I returned to the narrative accounts to further inquire into their stories to live by, I noted a process was underway as each participant left. They were seemingly in a process of moving out while they were still teaching.

Discourse Two: A Shift From Why to How

The research on early career teachers is often concerned with analyzing teachers' professional lives and professional identities. Day and Gu (2010) use what they call *work lines* to display critical experiences in early career teachers' professional lives. Through the analysis of work lines, they gained a sense of how documented critical experiences shared by teachers at different points of the year shaped participants' perceptions of their effectiveness as teachers. Their study provides findings that enable better understandings of how early career teachers make sense of their lives as professionals, and how this meaning making shapes a variety of aspects in their professional landscapes. Thinking about Day and Gu's use of work lines I drew on the three participants' narrative accounts in this study, to create the following annals[25]. I inquired into Alis, Dan and Reid's lives in their professional landscapes to attempt to understand the process they went through as they left.

How Alis left.

Alis starts her first high school teaching position----due to her workload she makes the decision to move to part time at the same school ---she leaves her first teaching position ---begins her second teaching job in a rural elementary school---leaves her second teaching position to find something different---begins her third teaching position---quits her third

[25] I am using the term annals to illustrate a linear timeline of important events that I identified. The term annals, a "list of dates, memories, events, stories," is borrowed from Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p. 112).

teaching position---moves into a master's program in counseling psychology.

Alis experienced a number of shifts on the professional landscapes she lived in as she moved out of teaching in K-12 schools. She shifted schools, subject areas, and grade levels. Each of these shifts is part of the process that Alis went through as she attempted to create meaningful experiences for herself and her students. These shifts illustrate the process in which Alis was involved in as she moved out of the teaching profession. The *whys* of Alis's leaving were at work within this process as Alis challenged the game in which she felt she needed to play in order to teach within each particular landscape.

How Dan left.

Dan is hired two days before he begins his first teaching position----at the beginning of his second year he is bumped from his first teaching position---this bump encourages Dan to apply to a master's degree program in physical therapy---during his second year he applies for the substitute list, is accepted, and begins subbing---in the second half of his third year he takes a maternity leave position---at the end of his third year, the maternity leave ends---Dan goes back to subbing again---is accepted into a master's degree program in physical therapy---leaves subbing.

Dan's shifts also included different grade levels, subject areas, and schools. It is apparent from Dan's stories that being *bumped* from his first

teaching position was an experience that stayed with him. While in early conversations Dan talked indifferently about being bumped, the profound influence on him only became visible in later conversations. Dan did not leave teaching when he was first *bumped,* his process of leaving unfolded over time. He took substitute assignments, and held temporary positions before being accepted to a master's program. It could be argued that Dan began the process of leaving after being bumped from his first teaching position; however, in the third year of his undergraduate degree he had looked at the physical therapy program, but decided to stick with the education degree. While in his pre-service practicum teaching experiences he said, "teaching has been good to me and I like it" (Dan, 3-3-1, 235). Perhaps being bumped from his first teaching position was the push that he needed to move into physical therapy. Perhaps his process of leaving began before he ever started teaching.

How Reid left.

Reid starts teaching---almost resigns after first year---debates other professions during summer---puts in resignation at school at end of 2nd year---leaves to go travel.

As I attempted to record Reid's annals in his professional landscape, I realized he had not shared any. He did not shift schools, subject areas, grade levels, or cities. His position as a teacher was stable; he enjoyed teaching and was successful. But Reid's process of leaving was still underway; it was just

unfolding in a different landscape, that is, in his personal landscape, which shaped his life in the professional landscape.

One way to think about Reid's stories is with the typologies that Smethem (2007) brought forward to conceptualize early career teacher intentions. She noted three types of early career teachers: career teachers, classroom teachers, and portfolio teachers. While career teachers and classroom teachers saw themselves as teaching for an extended period of time, portfolio teachers saw teaching as temporary. One of Smethem's portfolio participants noted, "it's not my life you know, I work to live, I don't live to work" (p. 470). I wondered if Smethem's participant's story was similar to Reid's story. It seemed Reid was always on his way somewhere else. His classroom experiences were positive, there seemed to be little tension in his professional landscape. Perhaps, he, too, worked to live in his personal landscape. His stories to live by bumped with the place he taught. His imagined stories to live by included him as a person, composing a life off the school landscape.

Reid's stories provoked me to move beyond the process of *how* each individual left the professional landscape to inquire into the participants' experiences with attentiveness to their personal landscapes. As I did this, it became evident that their personal lives and professional lives intermingled and shaped their leaving of the K-12 classroom. Similar to Rinke's (2008) findings, it was also apparent that the contexts within which they worked and lived shaped their careers. Other studies attentive to the lives of teachers showed that teachers' stories to live by are shaped over time by their experiences in their personal and

professional landscapes (Clandinin, Huber, & Downey, 2009; Clandinin et al., 2012; Long, et al., 2011; Schaefer & Clandinin, 2011; Schaefer, Long, & Clandinin, 2012; Schaefer, in press). The participants' stories, and the words of Clandinin, Huber, and Downey (2009), awakened me to just how much was at work in these individuals' stories as they moved out of K-12 teaching.

Discourse Three: How Much Was at Work

As I moved back again to the narrative accounts, I became more aware of how much was at work as the participants negotiated their identities, their stories to live by. Other researchers have looked at how teachers' professional identities shape their experiences. Keltchermans (1993) studied how teachers' professional development opportunities shaped their professional identities. Hong (2010) specifically looked at how early career teachers' professional identities shaped their decisions to leave the profession. While these studies focused on the participants' professional identities, experiences with the participants in this study provoked me to inquire into their stories to live by, as shaped by and expressed in, both professional and personal landscapes.

Each individual's stories to live by were different, and shaped differently by his or her experiences. "Important to this way of thinking is an understanding of the multiplicity of each of our lives-lives composed around multiple plot lines" (Clandinin, Downey, & Huber, 2009, p. 142). I read Clandinin, Downey, and Huber's words to mean that narrative threads are shifting within the person, but also within, the landscapes in which they are living. Each participant's

stories to live by interacted with his/her professional and personal landscapes (Clandinin, & Schaefer, 2011, Schaefer, in press) to create *multiple plot lines.* These plot lines included past, present, and future stories of who they were, and who they were becoming, that is, stories to live by.

Thinking about Reid's life as a puzzle, I wondered how his experience might help me to think differently about sustaining early career teachers. From Reid's stories, it seems that mentorship, a positive teaching environment, success, rapport with colleagues, support, and enjoyment could not compensate for the imagined stories that could not be lived out in his personal landscape. His stories to live by and imagined stories, shaped by his past, present and future experiences, were interacting with his personal and professional landscapes as he attempted to compose a life.

Reid's stories provoked further inquiry into all three narrative accounts in order to try to understand the interactions of their personal and professional landscapes and their stories to live by. In the remainder of this paper, I refer to only Alis's stories. However, similar patterns were apparent in both Reid and Dan's stories. I use Alis's story fragments to illustrate the shifting of her stories to live by within her personal and professional landscapes. Within these shifts the *why* and *how* she left are apparent, as well as her experiences of bumping and struggle as she negotiated other ways of living, other ways of imagining her life, that did not include teaching in the K-12 classroom.

Shifting to Stories to Leave By: Alis's Story.

Alis's stories to live by.

> My mom kept a book called School Days… it has your school picture and your report card in it. On the back page it was always like when I grow up I want to be a …And up until probably grade 8, teacher was always what I had written in there. It was probably in part 'cause my dad was a teacher and part because I was good at school. (Alis, 3-1-1, 713)

Alis's stories of her early experiences allowed me to see that, in a way, she was storied into teaching. Becoming a teacher has been a part of her imagined story since she was a young child. Her mom portrayed, by having her fill out a *School Days* book, the importance that was put on school in her family stories. Alis's dad, whom she often talked about as a role model, was a well-respected teacher. In the last sentence of the story fragment, I see Alis's connection to school as a student; within the walls of the classroom she was successful.

Composing a life of changing the world.

> We were sort of a family that watched the news, my brother being 5 years older than me and 6 years ahead of me in school was learning about current events and stuff in social studies and so, the conversations around the dinner table would often be about what the major world events were…so I had the sense that there were people in the world that were suffering and that were unhappy and that I needed to do something about it. (Alis, 3-1-2, 531)

Alis's stories to live by were filled with threads of social justice. From this story fragment, I learned that it was also an important family thread. Alis described how part of their family budget was set aside to donate to, what they saw as, worthy causes. As Alis got older, she began to see herself as a change agent, and although her own stories and family stories of being a teacher still existed, other opportunities presented themselves.

> So I took a couple of years off and I travelled and I did all kinds of cool exchanges and other things and then I came back. And I thought, I'm going to be a political science student, yeah that's what I want to be, International relations, woo hoo. Then by October of that year of political science I was like, I am so not a political scientist…but it's too late to drop [courses] and three of five courses were all year courses…I'm in it for the long haul…well I now have 6 months to figure out what else I could do next year. I considered every possibility and finally I was like, well I always thought I was going to do a degree in something and then a B.Ed. After Degree, well if I know about the education part why don't I just do that? (Alis, 3-1-1, 261)

As Alis negotiated her story of who she was going to be, narrative threads woven through her stories to live by and embodied within her were pulling her in different directions. In the midst of attempting to imagine what her life might look like in the future, a social activist thread continued to reverberate in her stories. "I'm going to change the world or I'm going to change the system or I'm going to change something" (Alis, 3-1-2, 657). As the threads of making a

difference tightened, Alis contemplated different career paths and eventually moved into her B.Ed.

> Of course I'm going to be a teacher, how could I have waited this many years before I finally went into education" (Alis, 3-1-1, 797). Although Alis moved into a B.Ed. program, she, like Smethem's (2007) portfolio teachers, did not see teaching for an extended term. "I had always said I'm going to teach for two years and then I'm going to do my Masters in counseling" (Alis, 3-1-1, 389).

Thinking about leaving, the unfolding of experiences is interesting in Alis's story. The thread of becoming a teacher was pervasive in her stories to live by, yet her move into a teaching degree seemed riddled with tension. As I move backwards and forwards temporally with Alis's stories, I am struck by the importance of her past and imagined stories. Past threads of changing the world intermingled with forward looking stories of changing the world, and stories of being in a profession that she envisioned as enabling this to happen.

The crashing of imagined stories of change: You can't do that here.

> I'm going to change the world or I'm going to change the system or I'm going to change something. I'm going to change that one kid or whatever it is, and then you come up against this system that doesn't want to be changed, and how do you negotiate that? But what I think is frustrating about systems in general is that in order to be promoted, in order to succeed, you have to go, to some extent at least, you have play by the

> rules. You have to at least know what the rules are, and you have to demonstrate that you care about the rules, and as a general rule then the people who promote you are the system. (Alis, 3-1-2, 657)

As Alis moved from job to job, from place to place, she realized that, as a teacher, she would not be able to provide students with what she thought they deserved; this created tension for Alis. "Playing by the rules, it genuinely scares me. What am I allowing to happen that should never happen, if I play by the rules" (Alis, interim text negotiation, April 2012)?

In a conversation with Alis I said, "so your story of what you thought was important bumped with the system's story of what was important." She replied, "bumped, no bump seems too soft, too easy. Can we change the word bump to crash? The word crash, I think, depicts my experience in a more real way. Bump is just not the right word" (Alis, interim text negotiation, April 2012). Alis's stories to live by had been shaped by her experiences as a child, adolescent, and adult. Being storied into teaching, her dad's influence as a teacher, and her family's stories of social justice shaped Alis's imagined stories of who she would be as a teacher and a person. These experiences helped to shape her stories to live by that crashed hard with the school stories, the stories she was living on her professional landscapes, as she moved through multiple teaching positions.

As Alis attempted to negotiate her stories to live by in multiple professional landscapes, this negotiation also shaped experiences in her personal

landscape. She struggled to balance who she was as a beginning teacher, and a mother, friend, wife, and daughter.

> I think it is impossible, I genuinely think it is impossible to be a high school teacher and to be decent at your job, and have a healthy home life. I really do think it's impossible. Either you're kind of a mediocre teacher and really on top of your family life, or you're a good teacher, or a great teacher, but your family is suffering in some way. (Alis, 3-1-5, 353)

In Alis's story, I hear her struggle to compose stories to live by in her personal and professional landscapes. It becomes apparent there was dissonance between the teacher she imagined being and the person she imagined being. It seems she cannot live both imagined stories at the same time. She had to give up one. The temporality of her experiences is important as she negotiated her stories to live by, in both her personal and professional landscapes. She was also in the midst of trying to compose a life in both her personal and professional landscapes that would sustain her as a person. For Alis it was not only about being sustained as a teacher, it was about being sustained as a person. Being attentive to the negotiation of stories to live by, and how much is at work in Alis's life, shifts attention from *retaining teachers* in professional landscapes, to thinking about sustaining *people who teach* in their lives.

Stories to leave by: Wrought with tension.

> I feel like if I am not teaching I should at least be trying to improve the school system from the outside. And if I am in it, I should probably be

> trying too, either way I feel like you shouldn't just sit there and participate in this broken system. Because how long can you really stay in the system? (Alis, 3-1-1, 1228)

Thinking about leaving as an unfolding of experiences, rather than a singular event, illustrates how much is at work in the lives of individuals' stories to live by as they shift to stories to leave by. Alis's past, present, and future stories became intermingled as Alis left the K-12 classroom. From Alis's words, I sensed that she is still enveloped in shifting as she composes her life outside of the classroom. Leaving teaching created tension as Alis abandoned her forward looking stories of changing students' lives through her work as a teacher. However, seeing leaving as an unfolding of a life that is never complete leaves the door open and reiterates Greene's (1995) notion of always being in the midst of becoming.

> Maybe I'll go back into the school system and do my original plan, which is teach a little and counsel a lot. Maybe I'll do that, maybe I will just turn my tutoring business into a fulltime endeavor and really make it a big deal…maybe I'll have another kid and just be a stay at home mom until my kids are in Elementary. I don't know, I know what I'm doing this year and then we'll see, one year at a time. That's the path. (Alis, 3-1-1, 619)

As Alis moves forward with a master's degree in counseling, there is uncertainty in her forward looking stories. This uncertainty is illustrated in her

words as she attempts to negotiate her future stories to live by in both her personal and professional landscapes. As her personal and professional landscapes shift and change, so, too, do her forward looking stories of who she is, and is becoming.

How Much is at Work: Pushing and Pulling Embodied Narrative Threads

> […]our transformative pedagogies must relate both to existing conditions and to something we are trying to bring into being, something that goes beyond the present situation. (Greene, 1995, p. 7)

Thinking about Greene's notion of transformation reminds me how important it is to think about moving *beyond the present situation.* Thinking about the dominant discourses around early career teacher attrition, and how we might imagine them differently, allows for possibilities beyond what is now taken-for-granted.

At the outset of this study, I clung to the notion of shifting the focus from *why* early career teachers leave to *how* they leave. My hope was that in shifting from *why* to *how* I would see identities shifting, as early career teachers negotiated their way out of teaching. However, as I inquired into their experiences, *the how,* and thought about their processes of leaving, I began to wonder if asking the question of *how* they left was a robust enough way to think about early career teacher attrition. As each of the participants moved into, and out of, K-12 teaching, there was much at work in their attempt to preserve the narrative threads that brought them to teaching.

"The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (Lakoff, & Johnson, 1980, p. 5). Understanding early career teachers' stories to live by, and stories to leave by, metaphorically as a multitude of embodied narrative threads within each person being pulled and pushed in different directions by different storied plotlines in personal and professional landscapes, provides an image of a complex and fluid negotiation. This moves beyond thinking about leaving as simply a process that happens in the professional landscape, and beyond thinking about leaving as a variety of procedural steps. From a narrative point of view, I understand that each individual is an embodiment of narrative threads. These embodied threads are shaped by, expressed, and lived out, in storied contexts. As the storied contexts shift and change, so too do the embodied threads of each individual living within that landscape.

For the participants I worked alongside, within this fluid and complex negotiation, came a transition out of teaching in a K-12 classroom. Transition[26] is defined as the "passage from one state, stage, subject or place to another." It could be said that Alis, Dan, and Reid experienced a transition out of teaching using this definition. Each of them changed places, moved from being a teacher in a K-12 classroom to not being a teacher in a K-12 classroom, shifted from one stage in their lives to another. Using the word transition in this way seems neat,

[26] Transition. 2012. Merriam-Webster online dictionary. Retrieved January 9, 2012. From //www.merriam-webster.com/medical/transition

tidy, and almost sanitized. It does not take into account how much was at work as each participant left.

Alis, Dan, and Reid, helped me see transition in the lives of early career teachers who leave teaching in a K-12 classroom as a much more complex phenomenon. As Alis, Dan, and Reid lived through different experiences, their embodied narrative threads and the stories of their lives shifted and changed. Although some narrative threads may have become stronger as others became weaker, past narrative threads were never lost. These past threads interacted with present and future threads to shape their stories to leave by. "Who people are [and are becoming] is intricately interwoven with the lives they live, and with the contexts in which they compose them" (Clandinin & Huber, 1995, p. 44). As these threads were shaped and lived out within their personal and professional landscapes, their stories to live by, who they were becoming, shifted. One way to name this is to see it as a transition. Seeing a transition as an event, as someone switching jobs or leaving teaching, discounts the constant transition and negotiation that is underway as early career teachers compose their lives.

For individuals in the midst of becoming, in the midst of multiple transitions, a variety of threads may or may not be visible to them. An awakening to certain threads became illuminated for them when a thread became too taut, as one thread overlapped another thread, as the tension awakened them.

Alis, Reid, and Dan struggled for narrative coherence (Carr, 1989) between their imagined stories of composing a life, and the stories they were

living out in both their personal and professional landscapes. Moment to moment their stories seemed to include continuity, but as their stories shifted, they awakened to how narratively incoherent their imagined stories were with the lives they were living in their shifting landscapes. In Alis's case, she awakened when she realized that the narrative threads being brought forward in her professional landscape were writing over her embodied narrative threads of social justice, shaped by her past experiences and family experiences. As Alis's embodied thread of becoming a mother strengthened, her professional thread of being a teacher weakened. Her embodied threads, and the threads of the stories in both her personal and professional landscape pushed and pulled as she negotiated her stories to live by as a teacher and moved out of K-12 teaching.

Possibilities of New Imagined Future Stories

> It is not so much that teachers and researchers, professionals on the landscape, need new identities, new stories to live by. They need shifting, changing identities; shifting, changing stories to live by as the parade offers up new possibilities and cancels out others (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p. 131).

As early career teachers enter this parade, the shifting professional landscape, they are in the midst of composing their lives. As their stories to live by are expressed and lived out within shifting landscape stories, new possibilities are opened up and others are taken away. An attentiveness to the ever shifting professional and personal landscapes of beginning teachers, as well as how these

shifting landscapes intermingle with their embodied stories, opens up possibilities to imagine otherwise (Greene, 1995). As one imagined story becomes *cancelled out*, a new imagined story becomes possible. Which embodied threads will be called forward, and which will be pushed aside, may well depend on how each individual's temporal experiences interact within their shifting landscapes.

In returning to where I began in this paper, I am struck by how complex the phenomenon of early career teacher attrition seems at this point. Moving into, within, and out of the K-12 classroom is uncertain. An improvisatory future story is always unfolding as each individual composes a life within a complex parade. If I once saw early career teacher attrition as a problem to be solved with silver bullets, something to be solved with certainty, I no longer do. However, I do leave this study with excitement for the future. Drawing on Greene's (1995) words again, the potentials and possibilities of thinking about moving beyond the present situation, creates new wonders around how I might think differently about not only retaining teachers in schools, but sustaining them in their lives.

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Chapter 4

Composing a Life After Teaching

> I'd say 85% of our job and that maybe is not generous enough, but 85% of our job is the curriculum, the classroom management, all of that, and then this little 15% could be dedicated to relationship building and whatever else. Whereas in counselling 95% of my job is relationship building and 5% is paperwork. So in terms of that piece of me that I was hoping to apply and that thing that's really important to me about being useful, and serving others and social justice, and all of that is just like jumping up and down for joy because it's like oh yay, I finally get to really do this. (Alis, 3-1-5, 566)[27]

Introduction: Autobiographical Revisions

Alis, an early career teacher leaver, was a participant with whom I worked closely in a narrative inquiry over the past six months. Her last statement, *I finally get to really do this,* reflects her excitement at being able to catch a glimpse of the possibility of living out her imagined stories of teaching. In order for Alis to have the possibility of living out her imagined stories of teaching, she had to leave the K-12 classroom. One way of understanding Alis's

[27] First number indicates study number in larger study. Second number represents the participant. Third number indicates the conversation and the last number indicates the line that the quotation came from.

experiences of teaching in the K-12 classroom is in terms of her stories to live by[28] (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) bumping up against the stories shaping the professional landscape in which she lived and, in so doing, creating a lack of narrative coherence. In this paper I draw on Carr's (1986) narrative conceptualization of identity making in which he sees individuals as making meaning in their lives by searching for narrative coherence, a process in which "we are composing and constantly revising our autobiographies as we go along" (p. 76). For Carr, narrative "coherence seems to be a need imposed on us whether we seek it or not" (p. 97), and that need for coherence is a constant struggle as we try to make sense of our stories. "What we are doing is telling and retelling, to ourselves and to others, the story of what we are about and what we are" (p. 97).

Following from Carr's (1986) work, I understand that Alis could not achieve narrative coherence in her stories to live by when she was unable to live out her imagined stories of creating classrooms attentive to social justice. She also struggled for coherence when she realized she did not have enough time in the day to be the teacher she wanted to be. From Alis's early beginnings and her imagined stories around teaching, she envisioned being able to create relationships with students, as well as to create socially just environments. As she awakened to being unable to achieve narrative coherence in her stories to

[28] This phrase 'stories to live by' "is given meaning by the narrative understandings of knowledge and context. Stories to live by are shaped by such matters as secret teachers' stories, sacred stories of schooling and teachers' cover stories" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p. 4).

live by, she necessarily engaged in *autobiographical revisions*, that is, to recompose who she was becoming. Awakening to the lack of narrative coherence between her imagined stories of teaching and the life she was living in her personal and professional landscapes, she began to recompose her life in ways that did not include teaching in the K-12 classroom. Within this re-composition, her stories to live by as a teacher, shifted to stories to leave by (Clandinin, Downey, & Huber, 2009).

Clandinin and Connelly (1988) help me to think about how Alis's lack of narrative coherence led to an awakening.

> We imagined that it is through a felt moment of awareness with the way we are making sense of our world, of how we are living and telling our stories, that lead us to what we call here awakenings. This felt moment of awareness may not be one moment in time but may be more of an ongoing sense of unease, a sense of unease as we recognize that our way of living and telling our stories is not the best way or a sense of unease as we recognize that others have other ways of living and telling their stories, stories that might be possibilities for our lives. (p. 7)

Alis's ongoing sense of unease with her stories to live by created an awakening and she began to imagine that there might be other possible ways to compose her life (Bateson, 1990). Clandinin, Downey, and Huber, (2009) use the metaphor of a bus station as a way to open up, to inquire into, the experiences of early career teachers. They see early career teacher leavers as waiting at a

metaphoric bus station. Each bus that arrives and leaves represents possible opportunities away from teaching in the classroom. Perhaps early career teachers are searching for a metaphoric bus that might allow them ways to restore their narrative coherence, and to create the possibility of living out their imagined stories of teaching. Getting on the metaphoric bus may happen "gradually, or by fits and starts, or much to their own surprise, or all of a sudden – but in any case, essentially on their own" (Coles, 1989, p. 67). In this way, early career teachers may leave K-12 teaching in their search, their struggle, to achieve narrative coherence. Drawing from Clandinin and Connelly (1988) and Schaefer and Clandinin (2011), narrative coherence is not only a struggle for coherence within each individual's stories, but also for coherence between their individual stories and the situations that become present in their shifting personal and professional landscapes. As Clandinin et al. (2009) wrote, leavers' stories were "not stories of sudden departure, of metaphorically being 'shot down in flames' (p. 148); their leaving was *gradual* and undertaken *essentially on their own.*

Storyless **Spaces**

As teachers waited at the metaphoric bus station, each alone, they could not be sure which bus would allow her/him to compose experiences in which they could restore or re-story narrative coherence. Although leaving teaching provides opportunities to re-compose a new life, new possibilities, in both personal and professional landscapes, from my experiences as an early career teacher leaver and research with early career leavers (Schaefer, & Clandinin, 2011; Schaefer, in press), this space also includes uncertainty and could be

described as storyless. I use the term storyless to denote that an individual may not have stories of how to live within the space, but I also use the term in the sense that the space is not filled with the stories that structure the professional knowledge landscape. It is storyless in the sense that moving away from K-12 teaching does not fit with their imagined stories of what they were going to do. Their stories of becoming teachers followed a plotline of teaching in a K-12 classroom.

One way of thinking about storyless spaces is to see them as liminal spaces in the ways that Heilbrun (1999) does. She sees individuals in this liminal space as "always on the threshold, always betwixt and between" (p. 38). Individuals within this space are between stories of who they have always been and who they are becoming, in a storyless space of the unknown.

Limina, in Latin, refers to the notion of a threshold, or a sill; something between.[29] Understanding storyless spaces as liminal spaces (Heilbrun, 1999) is helpful as I imagine the experiences of early career teachers as they step off the threshold into uncertainty. Perhaps this is an experience akin to stepping on to the metaphoric bus. Once on the bus, early career teacher leavers may be in a storyless space between teaching and a kind of emptiness, a sense of not knowing what will come next. In the midst of this storyless space there is risk. Financial loss, perceptions of failure, family criticism, unemployment, uncertainty, and wasted post-secondary education are aspects which can become

[29] Liminal. *2011. Online Etymological Dictionary.* Retrieved July 7, 2012 from http:// www.etymonline.com /index.php?search= liminal & searchmode=none

present in the storyless space as an early career teacher leaver steps off the threshold. As I reflect on my own stories of leaving, it seemed the risk was worth it in order to possibly restore narrative coherence in my imagined stories.

Research Puzzle

While there is some discrepancy about the actual percentage of early career teachers who leave teaching in the K – 12 classroom in their first five years (from 10% to 50%),"one very stable finding is that attrition is high for young teachers" (Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006, p. 10). Literature reviews in the area of early career teacher attrition tended to focus on *why* teachers left. Many of these studies highlighted trends and tendencies. Therefore, in earlier work I intended to disrupt the dominant stories and discourses around early career teacher attrition that focused on the *why* of leaving (Schaefer, in process). I conceptualized leaving as a process that unfolded over time and questioned *how* teachers leave, and *how much is at work* as they leave. Understanding early career teacher leavers as individuals in the midst of complex identity transitions that include the interactions between their embodied stories and the fluid contexts of their personal and professional landscapes, led me to questions about their further experiences? How do early career teacher leavers make sense of their experiences of K-12 teaching, and of leaving the K-12 classroom? In order to respond to this question, I engaged in a narrative inquiry with three early career teacher leavers that temporally moved from present stories to past stories to future stories.

Freeman's (2009) concept of *hindsight* is the "process of looking backward over the terrain of the past from the standpoint of the present and either seeing things anew or drawing connections (p. 9). Using Freeman's notion of hindsight allowed me to inquire into Alis's words at the beginning of this paper in order to see her excitement as she sensed ways to restore her narrative coherence, to make sense of her life as lived. In a retrospective way, she is able to look back at her experiences of entering teaching, teaching, and of leaving teaching and to draw connections that she may not have made as she lived her experiences. Inquiring into teachers' stories who have left K-12 classrooms provides a lens that allows a retrospective look at their pasts, and how they have come to their present situations.

In *Where are they now? Ex-teachers tell their life-work stories,* Buchanan (2009) offered insight into the lives of teachers who had left teaching in a K-12 classroom. Specifically, Buchanan was interested in how ex-teachers' present work compared to teaching in terms of salary and workload. Buchanan used his data to think about how teachers might be retained in the profession. My interest was not to compare ex-teachers' experiences in other professions to the profession of teaching. I was interested in understanding how early career teachers' search for narrative coherence in their stories to live by is implicated in their leaving the K-12 classroom. I was also interested in how re-composing a life outside of the K-12 classroom might allow for experiences that allowed them to create narrative coherence that was lacking in the K-12 classroom. This interest was fostered by noticing that my stories to live by, and stories to leave

by, resonate strongly with the life I am composing outside of the K-12 classroom.

Boarding the Metaphoric Bus: An Autobiographical Inquiry

The small class size, far smaller than I had expected, created very little room to 'blend' in. As each person around the table introduced themselves I quickly learned that my curriculum vitae was not as broad as others. Many of them spoke about their past master's work, and PhD questions. I had no idea how to introduce myself in this graduate student space. I was a teacher, not a researcher. Maybe this was a bad idea after all. The first readings were difficult, and I poured over them a number of times just to get a sense of the topics. Although I found it difficult, there was something about this challenge that was lacking in my school landscape. As I became more comfortable, the dialogue around the articles became more interesting. Although balancing full-time teaching and a night class was difficult as a beginning teacher, it seemed that students in the course were passionate about the same things I was. I had assumed this would be the case in the school landscape; however, I had not experienced this. I found the graduate course atmosphere invigorating, the colleagues around the table pushed me to think hard about what had brought me to teaching, and what I was doing in the classroom. I enjoyed this. After my second course I decided to move from being a full-time teacher to being a full-time master's student.

Hindsight has changed how I make meaning of this story fragment. I now have language and theoretical knowledge that I would not have had at the time I

lived this experience. At the time I would not have spoken of my struggle for narrative coherence. I now understand that my search for something different was fostered by the bumping of my imagined stories of teaching with the storied professional and personal landscapes within which I lived. Although this bumping took me to the metaphoric bus station, I had no intention of leaving the K-12 classroom at that time. *I was a teacher, not a researcher.* However, on the K-12 school landscape, I heard more experienced teachers speak about regrets and feeling as if they were *stuck.* Looking back, I realize I was afraid of getting stuck. I saw getting a master's degree as an opportunity to open doors. These doors, at the time, included leadership positions in the K-12 school landscape, potential teaching opportunities at the university, or work with the provincial teachers' association.

As I took my leave from the K-12 classroom I stepped on to a metaphoric bus bound for nowhere. I had no idea where it was going, where it would take me. I experienced leaving as filled with tension and uncertainty as I stepped off the threshold. *You won't find a job with a PhD. You haven't taught long enough to be in teacher education. What about your pension plan? You had great benefits. You won't be able to go back to your past teaching position. What a waste of money. Do you realize you are giving up years on the pay scale?* These comments and questions from colleagues on the K-12 school landscape, and from friends, concerned me. Had I made a mistake? What if things didn't work out? Yet, like Alis, Dan, and Reid, I was willing to take the risk to see the river

card.[30] Somehow the struggle to achieve narrative coherence made the risk worth it.

Although it did not happen immediately, I began to envision real possibilities of otherwise (Greene, 1995). My wife Laura was in the midst of completing her graduate work in physical therapy, doors opened for her; flexibility and career versatility that seemed to be lacking on the K-12 school landscape for me, appeared for her. As I spent more time on the university landscape the relationships I fostered with colleagues provided snap shots of what it might be like to be a professor. I began to imagine another forward looking story. The stories of the K-12 classroom still pulled strongly. I missed the students, and carried a strong story of classroom teacher. But slowly the university landscape stories overlapped my imagined stories of teaching in the classroom. Who I was becoming began to shift. I began to sense the possibility of achieving narrative coherence as I began to re-compose a story of what teaching looked like in my life. Along with beginning to achieve narrative coherence in the professional landscape, my stories to live by in my personal landscape also began to make more sense. The birth of our daughter intermingled with the perceived flexibility of working on the university landscape, strengthened my imagined story of teaching as a professor. Experiences of travelling around the world, meeting colleagues interested in the same things, working with passionate pre-service teachers, and gaining autonomy that was

[30] The river card is a reference to poker. The river is the last card flipped and often decides the winner of the hand. If you stay in for the river card you are usually heavily invested in the pot. It is a risk/reward situation.

lacking in my K-12 landscape, also shaped who I was becoming. Although I still thought I might return to the K-12 classroom, the possibilities of composing a story of professor became more real.

Lurking in the back of my mind were the possibilities of no job at the end of my doctoral work. What if I had committed time and money, and ended up back in the K-12 classroom? What would the individuals who questioned me say if this happened? I decided to continue to be on leave from the school district, just in case. Being out of teaching and not in anything else, I was betwixt (Heilbrun, 2009). I still felt uncertain. I still struggled for narrative coherence and often felt like I was making up who I was becoming as I went. Using a metaphor of renovating a house, Bateson (2012) helped me think about the uncertainty that was ever present as I attempted to add stories that made sense.

> The first thing you will discover when you "add" a room to a house is that add is generally the wrong word, because the way you use all the rest of the house, the way you live and organize your time and even your relationships, will be affected by the change. Existing rooms will be used differently, sounds will echo in new ways[…]gaps will open where familiar items have been shifted to the new space and new acquisitions will fill them. The new room is not simply tacked on to the east or west side of the house, it represents a new configuration of the entire building and the lives it shelters. (Bateson, 2012, p. 11)

Bateson's analogy of renovation resonates with the ways I think about early career teacher leavers' transitions out of the K-12 classroom. As early career teachers leave the classroom, they *add* new forward looking stories to their stories to live by. As Bateson wrote by adding that metaphoric room, everything shifts. The renovation shifted how Alis and I were living out our lives; it shifted our landscapes and relationships and added new forward looking stories. For Alis, *adding* the possibility of being able to focus on building strong relationships resonated with her imagined stories of teaching and allowed her to regain a narrative coherence that had gone missing in the K-12 classroom. As I *added* the possibilities of teaching pre-service teachers and researching topics of interest, I began to re-imagine, re-compose, who I was becoming in ways that allowed me to regain narrative coherence in my stories to live by. Just as new acquisitions fill in the new room, as we re-composed our lives, new stories were added that intermingled with old stories to create new forward looking stories. Although we always have imagined stories of how adding a room might shift how we live in that space, it is not possible to know what adding a new room might change. Just as when we re-compose our imagined stories, step off the threshold and board the metaphoric bus, we can never know how these imagined stories will be lived out, which stories will become more prominent as other stories become overlapped.

In the next section I outline the methodology of narrative inquiry. Following this description I move onto the experiences of Dan and Reid as they came to, and left, the K-12 classroom.

Methodology

Using a methodology of narrative inquiry, I explored the experiences of three teachers in Alberta who left K-12 teaching in their first five years.

> Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular view of experience as phenomenon under study (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 375).

My research puzzle was to understand the temporal experiences of three individuals who had left teaching. Narrative inquiry allows attentiveness to the continuity and interaction of individuals' lived experiences (Schaefer, Long, & Clandinin, 2012; Schaefer, & Clandinin, 2011). Through narrative inquiry, experience is studied through a metaphorical three-dimensional space including personal/social, temporal, and place dimensions. For example, in Alis's stories I inquired into her feelings, hopes, and dispositions (personal), into what was happening around her (social), temporally to her experiences over time (temporality), and attended place, that is, "to the specific concrete, physical, and topological boundaries of inquiry landscapes" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 51).

Freeman's (2009) concept of hindsight, introduced earlier, resonates with Clandinin and Connelly's understanding that stories are lived, told, retold, and relived. Hindsight provides a way for individuals to tell and then, through the

relational inquiry, to retell their stories of experience. Through hindsight, the participants and I explored how they came to K-12 teaching, taught, left K-12 teaching, and came to their present professions.

Participants

Each participant taught in an Alberta school for less than five years and graduated with a Bachelor of Education from an Alberta university. The three participants had different teaching backgrounds: Dan (secondary physical education, urban), Reid (secondary physical education, rural), and Alis (elementary & secondary, rural & urban).

As part of a larger study (Clandinin, Schaefer, Long, et al., 2012), we designed a series of digital and hard copy posters and distributed them throughout the province, as well as set up a Facebook page and email account to recruit participants. The provincial teachers' association included a recruitment advertisement in their newsletter. Participants were eventually located through contact with colleagues who were in relation with participants.

From Field Texts to Research Texts

Throughout the inquiry process, from design to composing final research texts, I was attentive to the metaphorical three-dimensional narrative inquiry space. I had five 1.5 to 2 hour conversations with each participant, in places where participants felt most comfortable. Confidentiality and anonymity were promised. I discussed the information letter and consent form with participants before beginning conversations and sought their consent. I recorded each

conversation and had them transcribed. Field text compositions included autobiographical narrative inquiry, sharing artifacts, composing annals, and engaging in conversations.

Working from the field texts, a narrative account was created for each participant. Narrative accounts are interpretive constructions of individual experiences attentive to the three-dimensional inquiry space. These accounts were composed around what I identified as narrative threads across each participant's life. The draft narrative accounts were negotiated with each participant in order to deepen understanding about the participant's experiences, as well as to continue to co-compose the narrative account. Once the three narrative accounts were negotiated, I pulled forward resonant narrative threads (Clandinin, Huber, Huber, et, al., 2006), that is, threads that ran across, and through, each of the narrative accounts.

In what follows, I draw primarily on the experiences of two participants, Dan and Reid, as they came to teaching in K-12 classrooms, taught in K-12 classrooms, left K-12 classrooms and as they have begun to recompose their lives outside of K-12 classrooms. Even as I write this I realize that I am segmenting their lives into categories that are fixed. However, I see lives as fluid, overlapping, and always in process. While each participant's experiences, and my experiences, were different in a variety of ways, I also found threads that resonated across our stories. Within these threads the interaction between our stories to live by, imagined stories, and stories to leave by became intertwined within our shifting personal and professional landscapes. In some ways, as they

left teaching in the K-12 classroom in search of narrative coherence, they found this coherence in teaching outside of K-12 classrooms.

Searching For Narrative Coherence: Shifting From Stories to Live By to Stories to Leave by to Future Stories

Dan

Coming to teaching.

"My dad was a role model and he taught Phys. Ed. for 20 some years, got his summers off, coached a ton of sports, played a ton of sports, so I thought it would be a good career choice" (Dan, 3-3-1, 233). Along with his dad, Dan also had other family members involved in education. Dan played a number of sports and was heavily involved in physical activity just like his dad. Sport and activity were a large part of who he was. He spoke of providing experiences for others that would allow them to participate in sport and activity[31] the way that he had. Dan's imagined stories of teaching physical education allowed him to achieve narrative coherence in his stories to live by, that is, it made sense for him to become involved in education.

Having said this, Dan's path into K-12 teaching was not without bumping points. Dan saw architecture as a real possibility. However, after completing high school, he could not imagine 6 more years of school. He also experienced

[31] Although Dan used the terms sport and activity interchangeably, I see them as being separate entities that carry with them different meanings and different discourses.

bumping on the university landscape and, after his third year, began looking into physical therapy. As a pre-service teacher, he decided to stick with education for the time being and mentioned, "teaching has been good to me and I like it" (Dan, 3-3-1, 235).

K-12 teaching.

> When you get good classes where you started with some sort of warm up activity, everybody is on task doing their thing. You switch and you do a couple little skill things whether it's kicking a soccer ball, you know, running with a soccer ball, whatever, you do some sort of mini game where they're using those skills to transfer it into a different type of setting…that was the best. (Dan, 3-3-2, 733)

Dan told stories in which he achieved narrative coherence as a teacher on a number of occasions. His words illustrate part of his imagined story of teaching physical education. Seeing students learn, and knowing that he was doing a good job, was important to him. If students learned, they might be able to enjoy and gain positive experiences from sport and activity as Dan had. Dan also saw this learning as a result of his pedagogy. He was able to see learning taking place and knew he played a role in it. Although these experiences seemed to allow Dan to create narrative coherence, they also created tension for him. Measuring student learning in a concrete way was difficult. "I mean you can have a class full of geniuses that get great marks on all their exams and their achievement tests, but have you taught them more?" (Dan, 3-3-3, 627)

When learning happened, and Dan was able to see it, it became apparent that he felt he was doing something important. "When whatever moons aligned that every kid in my class was into it, you know those were great ones because when you feel like you're doing something, you're achieving something, you're getting that physical education out of them, right?" (Dan, 3-3-2, 720) *Getting that physical education out of them* seemed to allow Dan to create a narrative coherence in his stories to live by. It was what he imagined he would be doing as a physical education teacher.

Bumping into the stories in the landscape.

> The principal was in my class when, um, the dance unit in December. If I am a brand new teacher, why are you checking up in December? Just no face time, as long as no kids were getting hit in the head with a dodge ball, you're okay. (Dan, negotiation of interim text, April 2012)

Dan, who was passionate about physical education, thought of it as an important subject.[32] His words illustrate the school story that surrounded physical education.

> I had my principal come sit in on my classes twice maybe, whereas other new teachers around the school teaching core classes, he was sitting in on their class once every 2 weeks or something like that…so you could tell

[32] Although Dan saw physical education as important he did not refer to it as a core subject. However, in Alberta within curriculum documents it is considered a core subject.

> what [was important], and that's what the school division looks at right? Core marks. (Dan, 3-3-3, 375)

Dan felt this not only from administration, but also from students who found physical education to be an unimportant subject.

> Not taking it seriously bugged me, poor athletes or gifted athletes that don't give a damn. That's what bugged me. I don't care how good you are, just give an effort and try. At least if you're trying you are going to learn something, a skill or a strategy or something. As long as you're participating. (Dan, negotiation of interim text, April 2012)

The importance to Dan that students were *learning* was prominent again in this story fragment. Dan's imagined story of who he would be as a physical education teacher, bumped with the stories that he was living in the professional landscape. His imagined stories also bumped with how others storied physical education in the professional landscape. For Dan this bumping created a struggle for narrative coherence. His passion for physical education was, at times, not validated by students or administration. These experiences seemed to add to Dan's struggle to make meaning of his life, and to his struggle for narrative coherence that Carr (1986) sees as a process that is always under revision.

Although I would not say that the school story around physical education was *why* Dan left, I sensed that the unimportance of physical education in his professional landscape was a part of Dan's unfolding stories to leave by. Dan was hired as a beginning teacher two days after the school year started. This

meant that he was on a non-continuing contract. At the beginning of his second year, another teacher, who had been on a stress leave, took over Dan's position. Dan was removed from his teaching position and applied for the substitute[33] list. He didn't mind subbing, and was able to substitute often at the school he had initially worked at. However, this bump also seemed to be a part of Dan's unfolding experiences of leaving the profession as subbing provided him the flexibility needed to begin taking courses towards his physical therapy master's degree.

Although Dan seemed to enjoy subbing, I wondered how this temporary, uncertain type of work, shaped his personal landscape? I asked him if this uncertainty played a role as he left the K-12 classroom. "Yeah I think part of the life being in kind of flux kind of here, there, whatever, not being totally nailed down played a role in it" (Dan, 3-3-3, 216). Dan wanted certainty, not only in his assessment, but in his life. He also wanted his work and the subject area in which he taught to matter. Dan's words describe life being in flux, being uncertain, even as he was teaching in the K-12 classroom. Perhaps this made it easier for him to catch a bus at that metaphoric bus station that might take him away from the K-12 classroom and allow him to find situations in which he could restore narrative coherence in his stories to live by.

[33] Substitute teachers provide coverage for teachers who are sick or away from the classroom. They often cover a variety of subject areas and often substitute at a number of different schools.

Composing a life after teaching.

> I spent enough time in this physical therapy clinic growing up. I was an athlete, and it was a career option… I think it's a good profession where you use your mind to figure things out, what's going on, what's happening, help people, help fix them, get them better. I enjoy it. (Dan, 3-3-3, 327)

Growing up an athlete provided Dan a number of experiences with physical therapists and physical therapy clinics. Like being a physical educator, he saw this as a career that would allow him to help individuals to be active. Dan also looked into this profession during his education degree. I also see this as a career that would allow Dan to create narrative coherence, it makes sense given Dan's background with sport and activity and imagined stories of teaching physical education. In hindsight, Dan sees that being a physical therapist allows an achievement of narrative coherence that teaching physical education could not.

> I think it would be taking the problem presented to me, whatever the physical ailment is and assessing it, analyzing it and developing a plan to fix it and then fix it. That'd probably be the biggest thing that I like about physical therapy. (Dan, 3-3-3, 615)

This was Dan's response to my question "what is your favourite part of being a physical therapist?" As Dan spoke these words, a smile came across my face. I was immediately reminded of his favourite part of teaching. Being able to *see* the students learning. Although at times in teaching this was difficult for Dan, as a

physical therapist he is able to assess, prescribe, and fix his patients. Being able to *see* patients improve is important for Dan. Recomposing his life has allowed him to feel like he is doing something meaningful and his struggle for narrative coherence seems more manageable.

> Outpatients, I'm booking clients coming to see me to get physical therapy to get better and I'm the sole provider. I'm treating them, they have whatever physical ailment and I'm fixing that. Whereas inpatients are a little bit different, and especially right now in medicine, there's a big team aspect to it, doctors, outpatients, there are dieticians, social workers, everybody working together to help whatever the person is in the hospital for…I plan out my day as I see who I think needs to be seen that day and for whatever reason whereas you don't have that option as much in teaching. You don't have student A is doing fine in this course, student C is really struggling, I can't just say I'm not going to see student A at all, I'm going to see student C for everything. Where in physical therapy you can do that. (Dan, 3-3-3, 519)

In this story fragment there are a number of aspects that resonate with Dan's stories of teaching. Dan is able to see that he is helping people get better. He is teaching exercises to his patients that allow them to fix themselves. He is working in both outpatient and inpatient situations, which provides him with two different aspects of care. The inpatient work allows him to work with team members who rely on his expertise. It also allows him to work in collaboration with a number of other professionals who are trying to help patients become

well. The outpatient work provides Dan with an autonomy that was not apparent in his teaching. He can decide how many clients he wants to book, how long he wants to spend with them, and who should get care first. In his words, he describes how this honouring of his knowledge and expertise that is apparent as a physical therapist was not apparent as a physical educator. Dan's retrospective reflection on teaching, illustrates similarities in what he imagined doing as a teacher, and what he is able to do as a physical therapist.

Dan had notions of teaching individuals about physical education to help them to be active, to gain positive experiences from being active. It could be argued that Dan's goals now, as a physical therapist, are similar. He is still teaching individuals to be active. His imagined stories of teaching physical education were included being someone passionate about sports and activity, someone who would be able to provide instruction that might help others experience the positive aspects of physical activity that he did. Although K-12 teaching may not have allowed him to do this, now Dan sees himself as engaged in meaningful ways in the lives of the individuals he helps. Without him, perhaps they could not walk, run, or participate in sport and activity. With teaching in the K-12 classroom Dan experienced difficulty in seeing the impact of his teaching, but in physical therapy he is able to measure how successful he is in more exact ways. Dan's teaching as a physical therapist matters now, to him, to his patients, and to the health care team.

Reid

Coming to teaching.

> I had two awesome phys. ed. teachers in high school. Both these two guys were just awesome role models. I always enjoyed phys. ed. more than just because I got to play hockey, and football, and soccer, and all those games, but more [because] I could attach myself with these guys. (Reid, 3-2-1, 244)

Reid had positive experiences with sport, activity, and physical education growing up. He saw it as an important part of his life, and, like Dan, wanted to help young people see the benefits of being involved in physical activity. He also, like his past physical education teachers, wanted to build relationships with students that allowed him to be a positive role model. It made sense that Reid became involved in physical education, given his early beginnings.

Having said that, Reid's path into his education degree was not without tension.

> I went to university thinking that I was going to be in business…I was planning to do a business communication degree. First year I took all the general courses… After second year I was a history major in the Arts program. Then that summer I applied for education just simply because I started looking at it from the outside, and where am I going to go with a history major. (Reid, 3-2-1, 249)

I wonder what he meant when he referred to *looking at it from the outside,* and I also wonder how others' stories in his personal and professional landscapes shaped his decisions to move into education. Perhaps as he began to think about his forward looking stories, he began to imagine a life that made sense for him in both his personal and professional landscapes.

Teaching.

"My favourite part about teaching was really building the relationship with kids and getting that rapport and then working from there" (Reid, 3-2-4, 87). Reid often talked about relationships with the students as the most important part of his work. His imagined stories of becoming a role model for students from his earlier stories allowed for narrative coherence. Teaching was important to Reid, he wanted to see the students learn, but was more concerned with connecting with them. He was able to do this in the classroom, but found coaching to be a great way to further this connection. "I was probably firing off 80 to 85 hours a week at the school but I loved the coaching…It was basically every weekend, three times a week practices, so my time commitment had gone up 30 hours a week" (Reid, 3-2-1, 495). Reid did not see coaching as an add-on to his job; he considered it part of being a physical educator within his school. Although coaching took up a great deal of time, Reid spoke of these extra hours as being great opportunities to connect with students on different levels. This was what he saw as being important, and it made sense in his stories to live by.

Bumping into the stories on the landscape.

> I never felt guilty being away from home and being at the school because I really had nothing else to do except for teaching and coaching which made it maybe easier for me. (Reid 3-2-1, 524)

Although Reid grew up in this small city, his family had moved away. Many of his friends had also moved to larger urban cities. *Never feeling guilty* may be seen as a positive aspect, however, his reasons for not feeling guilty, no family, no friends, and no significant other to attend to, left Reid struggling for narrative coherence. Although Reid's life in his professional landscape made sense to him, Reid's story of what he was and was about (Carr, 1986) included family, friends and a significant other. The small city atmosphere, the place he was living, seemed to create bumping places with his imagined stories of how he would compose his life.

> So there's still zero anonymity in this city place, so you go shopping, you see parents or kids, you go to the movies, you see parents or kids…. but one movie theatre, one hockey rink, one workout place, so I mean you could be seeing your 18 year old kids if you go for a workout, and oh Reid's here, great, let's go talk to him, or let's go bug him, or let's watch him workout, or something, it's different…There's not a whole lot to do social-wise. (Reid, 3-2-2, 997)

This story fragment, also speaks to the personal landscape that Reid lived within while teaching. He was too far away from family and friends to socialize with

them on a regular basis and the lack of anonymity and social opportunities deterred Reid from building meaningful relationships off the school landscape.

> The big detriment to me, which you know about, was there was no one there, I won't say romantically, but you know what I mean. There was nothing that really made me want to stay. I mean relationship is a big part about where you are and there was nothing even close to that there, just because its a very transient town. (Reid, 3-2-1, 153)

The thread of relationships with students allowed Reid to create narrative coherence in his professional landscape, but he felt the lack of personal relationships off the school landscape. A search for narrative coherence that made sense in his life, not only in his teaching, shaped an autobiographical revision (Carr, 1986) that took Reid away from K-12 teaching in this small city.

> **Composing a future life after leaving K-12 teaching.**
>
> I did hope to get back to the large urban city cause that is where my family is and that's where I'm familiar with. A bunch of my buddies have moved down there, so great idea to head back down there now…I kind of like the bigger city atmosphere. (Reid, 3-2-1, 120)

As Reid recomposed his life, the stories of relationships, family and place helped to shape his stories to leave by. For Reid, the actual teaching had little to do with him leaving the K-12 classroom. However, in his words below, it becomes apparent that a shift in professions, and place, enabled him to create experiences

that allow him to create narrative coherence that teaching in a K – 12 classroom in a small city could not.

"I'd say the rapport thing and the relationship building is still kind of at the forefront of why I really enjoy [my new work]" (Reid, 3-2-4, 87). Reid, who is now working with a professional sports team in the public relations area, and volunteering as a youth hockey coach, is still able to live out his imagined stories of building relationships. "I was really missing working with kids, but the coaching is helping with that" (Reid, negotiation of interim text, April 2, 2012). Reid has taken on a volunteer hockey coach position, and seems to be able to live out his stories of role model, and shaping youth in a positive way. Although these relationships are not being built with K-12 students who are in his classrooms, they are an important part of his stories to live by.

"I feel like I'm just more at ease now. It kind of gives me the ability to do what I'd like to do when I'd like to do it, and maybe that's a bit selfish but it's something I had the ability to do, so why not do it" (Reid, 3-2-4, 1017). In his professional landscape he is living out his imagined stories of building relationships through public relations work and coaching. Experiences in his personal landscape now include large city amenities, flexibility, friends, family, and possibilities of romance. Perhaps the *ease* that Reid now feels is a realignment of his stories to live by, a re-storied narrative coherence in the life he is composing.

Like Dan, it seems that as Reid has recomposed a life out of the K-12 classroom, he has managed to create experiences that allow for narrative coherence with his imagined stories of teaching. His work revolves around relationships; he is a role model as a coach on the ice, and as a coach, is able to continue to work with youth in a physically active environment. Reid's re-composition of his life through shifting places and professional landscapes, allowed for narrative coherence that still includes his imagined stories of teaching; perhaps Reid has not left teaching after all.

Imagined Stories of Teaching Recomposed

Within this paper, I conceptualized the movement away from the K-12 classroom as being partly shaped by each teacher's struggle for narrative coherence in their lives. Alis, Reid, Dan, and my imagined stories of teaching in the K-12 landscape no longer made sense to each of us. We became awake to the "ongoing sense of unease… as we recognize[d] that our way of living and telling our stories [might not have been] the best way" (Clandinin, & Connelly, 1988, p. 7). Moving out of the K-12 classroom materialized when the *ongoing sense of unease,* the struggle for narrative coherence, became too overwhelming.

As I discuss the phenomenon of early career teacher attrition with colleagues, it seems that this struggle for narrative coherence is often dismissed by statements about the lack of adequate preparation of early career teachers, about their idealistic notions of teaching, or about their lack of knowing what to expect. While each of these issues might provide insight into the bumping that occurred for Alis, Dan, and Reid as they moved into teaching, there was much

more at work than idealistic notions or unpreparedness as they left teaching. As their stories to live by shifted to stories to leave by, they struggled through autobiographical revisions (Carr, 1986), as they composed lives that had the possibility of narrative coherence.

While leaving teaching is often characterized as an event, I have come to see leaving as a transition that involves early career teachers' embodied stories intermingling with the complex and shifting landscapes within which they live. The experience of leaving then is imbued with the negotiation of imagined stories, stories to live by, and forward looking stories. Within this negotiation is a struggle for narrative coherence, a struggle to compose a life that is meaningful and makes sense to each individual (Carr, 1986). What makes this more complex is that *what makes sense* shifts along with each person's stories to live by, and the shifting landscapes within which each person lives. This became apparent as Dan, Alis, and Reid, in research conversations with me, reflected, in hindsight, on their experiences. Viewing their experience in hindsight allowed them to see how connected their stories to leave by are to their forward looking stories. "It was not as if a story was being imposed on or invented for events that originally had none; rather events that were lived in terms of one story, are now seen as part of another" (Carr, 1986, p. 76).

Reid sees his stories to leave by as being a part of his stories to live by as a public relations representative for a professional sports team. Shifting from a small city to a larger city, into a position with more flexibility, and the opportunity to build relationships, in hindsight, makes explicit his struggle for

narrative coherence as a teacher. He now sees his past stories of teaching in a K-12 classroom as part of his present stories. Similarly, in hindsight, Dan was able to see how his imagined stories of teaching in a K-12 classroom have become a part of his stories to live by as a physical therapist. He imagined as a teacher he would be a role model, help people enjoy physical activity, and be able to use his pedagogy to help students learn. Each of these stories has become a part of Dan's recomposing of a life that no longer includes the K-12 classroom. Like Dan and Reid, Alis has also recomposed her life in ways that have allowed her stories to live by to align with what she had imagined as a teacher. In some way, each of them had to re-imagine forward looking stories that would allow them to achieve narrative coherence.

"One of the reasons I have come to concentrate on imagination […] is because, of all our cognitive capacities, imagination is the one that permits us to give credence to alternative realities" (Greene, 1995, p. 3). As Alis, Dan, and Reid's stories to live by shifted to stories to leave by they imagined how they might compose their lives in different, alternative ways, with ongoing imaginative possibilities. Bateson (1990) speaks to the risk involved with the improvised meal, but also to the delicious surprise that comes from forgoing the certainty that comes with the planned meal. Heilbrun (1999) also maintains that these liminal spaces, that include risk, also include viable alternatives to the ways we might recompose our lives. Uncertain spaces, spaces that are unexpected or do not fit with our imagined stories, are filled with anxiety and risk, yet they are also filled with the possibility of imagining new forward

looking stories. Alis, Dan, and Reid's stories illustrate how they recomposed their lives from within this liminal space, and imagined new forward looking stories.

At the time of leaving teaching in the K-12 classroom, the time of boarding the metaphoric bus, they could never have known how things would play out. The threshold they crossed took them into storyless spaces. Dan undertook another 2 ½ years of school with no certainty of a job in the city where he wanted to live. Alis is in the midst of completing a master's degree in counselling with no guarantee of a position in the place she now calls home. Reid left without having any kind of back up plan as he travelled the world. Although things have worked out for him, he, at times, questioned whether he made the right decision. In our last conversation as we completed the co-composition of the narrative account, he stood up and said, "I don't know, I just don't know. After reading this, it reminds me how much I loved teaching, maybe I will go back, I just don't know" (Reid, negotiation of interim text, April 12, 2012).

As I complete my work with Dan, Reid, and Alis, Reid's words remind me that we are always in the midst of being, and becoming. Experiences of leaving teaching are riddled with shifting contextual stories as each individual can no longer make sense of their lives as K-12 classroom teachers. Dan, Alis and Reid, for the time being, have recomposed their lives, away from the K-12 classroom, in a way that has allowed for narrative coherence . I too have recomposed mine. Yet I cannot help but be intrigued by how a retrospective

frame allowed “one story to become part of another” (Carr, 1986, p. 76). It allowed me to see the inclusion of their/our imagined stories as teachers becoming part of, connecting to, their/our forward looking stories being lived out in their/our professional and personal landscapes away from the K-12 classroom landscape. Which leaves me with the question, have we left teaching?

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Chapter 5

Sliding Backwards and Forwards: Shifting stories to live by

Sliding backwards in time, as I look at this study in hindsight (Freeman, 2009), it seems that just yesterday I was saying goodbye to my colleagues at my first teaching position to begin my master's degree full-time. At the moment it was a goodbye 'for now.' As I began this work I was in no way certain that I would leave teaching in the K-12 classroom. As I wrote the candidacy paper for this dissertation, I was still not certain that I would not be returning to the K-12 classroom. The opportunity to now move backwards, that is, to think with hindsight about this project and my life provides insight into the process and brings significance to a number of touchstones. As Jean, Julie, and I sat down at the Centre for Research for Teacher Education and Development (CRTED) table in April 2010, we could not have known how the research project would shape our stories to live by. For me, I could not have known how significant that moment was in achieving narrative coherence (Carr, 1989) in the stories I was composing. I could also not have known how my master's work would influence this dissertation, or how each paper in my dissertation would allow me to respond to my research puzzle.

My master's work focused on the experiences of early career physical education teachers. Working with two individuals in their first years of teaching allowed me to gain insight into experiences that sustained them in their personal and professional landscapes. Their experiences in their landscapes that resonated

with their imagined stories of teaching, were, for them, sustaining experiences. At times, in order to be sustained, their stories to live by, that is who they were and were becoming, shifted in both their personal and professional landscapes. At moments these landscapes seemed so connected that it was difficult to discern which landscape caused shifting in their stories to live by.

As I completed my master's degree, with the experiences of the participants fresh in my mind, I continued to read literature around the area of early career teachers. My research puzzle began to take shape around wonders about how early career teachers' stories to live by, their identities, shifted as they moved out of the profession. I wondered about how the professional knowledge landscapes they worked and lived within shaped their leaving. What were their imagined stories of who they would be as they left teaching in the K-12 classroom? Did their imagined stories of teaching, who they would be as teachers, change as they began teaching? What created these shifts? Can we understand early career teachers' experiences as they move out of teaching in K-12 classrooms as transitions? What do we mean by naming them as transitions? These questions, and many more, lived within my research puzzle as I composed the papers for his dissertation and responded to the puzzle in different ways.

A Response to the Puzzle

In chapter two, a paper in which Jean, Julie and I reviewed the scholarly work on early career teacher attrition and retention, it became evident there were dominant ways to think about early career teacher attrition. Firstly, leaving was

often seen as an event. Secondly, understanding *why* teachers leave was often the study focus. The reasons why teachers leave were well documented in large empirical studies. The reasons often seemed to be framed around two broad conceptualizations, individual conceptualizations around factors such as personality, age, or burnout; and contextual conceptualizations around factors such as work place, lack of support, or student discipline. Although we (Schaefer, Long, & Clandinin, 2012) found these conceptualizations important in thinking about early career teacher attrition, we were more interested in the experiences of early career teacher leavers. We suggested the need to shift the conversation from one focused only on retaining teachers, toward a conversation focused on sustaining teachers. By making this shift we hoped to create wakefulness to how early career teachers might be sustained in their lives, instead of simply being retained in teaching.

I realized from the literature review that as researchers were looking at why teachers leave, they were not talking with teachers who had left K-12 teaching. As an early career teacher leaver myself, I felt that my stories of leaving were important to think about as I continued to compose my life in the university landscape. The absence of voices of teachers who had left the profession, and my interest in the stories of individuals who moved from the K-12 classroom, led me to work with Alis, Dan and Reid, three individuals who left K-12 teaching in their first five years.

Clandinin, Downey, and Huber (2009) conceptualized leaving as a process, instead of an event. In chapter 3, I framed my argument around thinking

about leaving as a process and moved beyond questions of why teachers leave to how they leave. However, I realized that the question of how, that is thinking about the processes of leaving the professional landscape, was not a robust enough way to think about Alis, Dan, and Reid's experiences. I shifted the discourse from how to how much was at work as they came to teaching, taught, and left the K-12 classroom. From a narrative point of view, I came to understand that each individual is an embodiment of narrative threads. As the storied contexts they live in shift and change, so too do the embodied threads of each individual living within those contexts. Thinking about understanding early career teachers' stories to live by, and stories to leave by, as a multitude of narrative threads being pulled and pushed in different directions, provided an image of a complex and fluid negotiation.

A wakefulness to the complex fluid negotiation of Alis, Dan and Reid's stories to live by inspired chapter four, which opened up conversations around how early career teachers stories to leave by help them to compose a life after leaving the K-12 classroom. As Alis, Dan and Reid transitioned out of teaching in the K-12 classroom, I drew on Clandinin, Downey and Huber's (2009) metaphor that positioned them at a metaphoric bus station waiting for a bus to take them away from the K-12 classroom.

Insights from chapter three around Alis, Dan, and Reid's struggles for narrative coherence between their imagined stories of teaching and their lived stories of teaching, provided a conceptual frame to think about the participants' experiences of leaving the K-12 classroom, as well as how they composed their

lives within the liminal space between teaching and other. Freeman's (2009) notion of hindsight provided a methodological platform for me to gain insight into how their transitions out of the classroom came to be, and how their stories of leaving were connected to the ways they were composing their present lives in their personal and professional landscapes. It became apparent that their imagined stories of teaching, that they were unable to live out in the K-12 classroom, are, in some ways, being lived out in new personal and professional landscapes. Conceptualizing leaving as a "matter of discovering a vision of wholeness" (Greene, 2001), as a search for narrative coherence between their embodied threads and their personal and professional landscapes, attends to the complex negotiation of early career teachers' stories to live by. Within this negotiation is a struggle for narrative coherence as they attempt to compose forward looking stories that make sense in their lives.

Sliding forwards: Teacher Education and Future Research

> The problem is that research tends to end with an answer. Hello? Of course, I am not saying researchers should not try to answer questions. The problem is ending with answers—being unaware of or uninterested in the ethical questions generated or avoided. The "answers" to research questions do not end things but offer new circumstances for exploring the persistent question of what is good for people. (Hostetler, 2010, p. 21)

As I move forward from my dissertation work, I return to Hostetler's words as a reminder that although this project may not have resulted in silver

bullets, or concrete answers to the questions around early career teacher attrition and retention, it has brought about a number of questions surrounding *what is good for people,* particularly, what is good for early career teachers. I use the term good here, as Hostetler did, in the ethical sense, that is, not in the sense of what is good for one early career teacher must be good for all others.

> The contribution of a narrative inquiry is more often intended to be the creation of a new sense of meaning and significance with respect to the research topic, than it is to yield a set of knowledge claims that might incrementally add to the knowledge in the field. The narrative inquirer does not prescribe general applications and uses but rather creates texts that, when well done, offer readers a place to imagine their own uses and applications. (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 42)

Clandinin and Connelly remind me of my purpose as a researcher, that is, my purpose is to offer places for readers to imagine their own applications. As Greene (2001) reiterates, "We are interested in openings, in the unexplored possibilities, not in the predictable or the quantifiable" (p. 7).

For me, this work has opened possibilities about discourse shifts, new conceptualizations, and openings that will help educational researchers, policy makers and administrators move beyond the taken for granted understandings about early career teacher attrition. Thinking about sustaining teachers, as distinct from retaining them, recognizes that early career teachers are in the midst of composing complex lives in personal and professional landscapes, as

well as in the spaces between the personal and professional. How might we create spaces for this to happen in less isolated and isolating ways? What might help beginning teachers to achieve narrative coherence, at least some of the time and in some ways, without having to leave the classroom?

For Alis, Dan and Reid, their struggle to achieve narrative coherence revolved around *the teacher in mind;* their imagined stories of who they would be in both their personal and professional landscapes. The *teacher in mind* included making a difference in students' lives, watching students learn, building a family, and living what they saw as a balanced life style. They expected to be busy, this was part of their imagined stories of teaching in a K-12 classroom. Alis knew she would be swamped with marking English papers. Dan and Reid knew they would spend many hours a week coaching and have to balance this with teaching loads, and personal lives. The things often characterized as being hard were, it seemed, not so hard for them. What was hard was not being able to live out stories of the teacher they had in mind. When changing the world, being a role model, and living a balanced lifestyle had to be sacrificed, they had to settle to become *a teacher* instead of *the teacher.* For Alis, Dan and Reid, being *a teacher,* did not make sense in their lives. The sacrifices, made in both personal and professional landscapes, created a struggle to achieve narrative coherence in their stories to live by, and became a part of their shifting stories to leave by.

As Alis, Dan, and Reid boarded that metaphoric bus that would take them away from teaching in the classroom, they were in search of something different. Yet, as they moved into new careers it seemed their imagined stories of teaching

were, in some way, being lived out in new landscapes. The lives they are living now, which are providing continuity in their stories, leads me to wonder if indeed they have left teaching. Certainly they have left K-12 teaching as it is most often conceptualized, that is, teaching with a group of students in the classroom. However, shifting to pluralistic notions of teaching might provide a lens, which allows teaching to be seen as more than in one way. It might include Reid being a role model to the hockey players on the team he volunteers to coach. It might include Dan diagnosing a knee injury, prescribing exercises, teaching exercises, and assessing progress. It might include Alis building relationships with clients as a way to get to know them, and to help them live better lives. From a vantage point that sees teaching in a pluralistic way, it would be difficult to argue that they are not teaching.

If we begin to see teaching as happening in a number of different landscapes, and the pre-service teachers in university classes as having intentions of not necessarily teaching in K-12 classrooms, how does this shift teacher education programs? What does teacher education for the 21st century look like? Teacher educators could ignore that, in Alberta, 25% of B.Ed. graduates never actually teach in an Alberta classroom. But if teacher educators know that some individuals in our teacher education programs that teacher educators are preparing for the classroom never go to the classroom, we do need to think about teacher education in different ways. And if we add that almost half of the individuals who do graduate and take up K-12 teaching positions leave within

the first five years, how can teacher educators not begin to think about teacher education in a different way?

I wonder how practical experiences of teaching in a nursing setting, or teaching in a health care setting, or teaching in a business setting, might prepare pre-service teachers in different ways. How might valuing teaching as a pluralistic act allow early career teachers to compose lives that allow them to achieve narrative coherence, at least some of the time? Although this might be seen as an argument that would promote pathways away from K-12 teaching, disrupting the dominant stories of what teaching is might provide other ways to think about teaching. Perhaps pre-service teachers who see teaching as occurring in multiple places might come to K-12 teaching in more wide awake ways, understanding that families, hospitals, community groups and other places are also sites of teaching and learning. Perhaps they would be more able to see that they are part of multiple places where children learn. Preparing pre-service teachers, prior to entering the field, for the bumping between their imagined stories of teaching and their personal and professional landscapes, could allow them to begin to re-compose forward looking stories of teaching in K-12 classrooms in supportive environments. Perhaps creating safe collaborative spaces to re-compose who pre-service teachers are, and are becoming, would enable them, as they enter the classroom, to negotiate their imagined stories with forward looking stories that include them in K - 12 classrooms.

Future Work

As I move into an assistant professor position at a Canadian university, my wonders shift to how working alongside early career teachers, and early career teacher leavers, has shaped my pedagogy as a teacher educator. Being attentive to the parallels between my leaving of the K-12 classroom, and early career teachers' stories to leave by, shifts how I think about what I will be doing in the classroom. I am called in new ways to being attentive to lives in motion, to lives lived in transition, to lives of uncertainty in uncertain landscapes. Being attentive to pre-service teachers' imagined stories of teaching in both their personal and professional landscapes, and valuing these stories, has become far more important in my teaching. Thinking about how I might work alongside pre-service teachers to provide experiences that allow them to negotiate their struggle for narrative coherence and their forward looking stories provides a wakefulness to Bateson's (2010) notion of always being in the midst, and always composing a further life. I hope that I can live out these re-imagined, these retold stories in new ways as I teach pre-service teachers, as I sit in policy meetings and as I work alongside teachers in schools.

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Appendix A

Teacher Information and Consent Form

A Narrative Inquiry into Early Career Teacher Leavers' Stories to Live By

This consent form is an invitation to participate in the study entitled ***Early Career Teacher Attrition: Problems, Possibilities, Potentials*** that is being conducted by a research team from the University of Alberta, led by Dr. Jean Clandinin from the Centre for Research for Teacher Education and Development (jean.clandinin@ualberta.ca; (780) 492-7770), and funded by a grant from Alberta Education. You may contact Dr. Clandinin at any time if you have any questions.

Most research on early career teacher attrition focuses on leaving as a singular and significant event and looks to answer the question of *why* teachers leave. Our research frames leaving as a process that unfolds over time and we plan to study not only *why* but *how* teachers leave. Focusing on early career teacher leavers' stories to live by (a narrative conceptualization of identity), including the experiences that brought them to teaching as well as the experiences that shaped their leaving, will offer insights into the processes early career teachers experience as they begin teaching and leave teaching.

There will be a total of six audio-recorded conversations with each participant, and the first conversation will focus on the stories that brought them to teaching. The second conversation will focus more on their experiences in the schools and classrooms, as well as any mentoring or induction program they were involved in. The third conversation will deal with the tensions they experienced as beginning teachers. The fourth meeting will be a conversation that revolves around why they chose to leave the profession. The fifth discussion will delve into what they have done since leaving teaching. The last conversation will delve into questions that have arisen throughout our dialogue. After the conversations we will draft individual narrative accounts of each participant and will negotiate those accounts with the relevant participant. The expectations of each participant is that they would be willing to talk with a member of the research team for six individual 1.5- to 2-hour conversations and then read and respond to the narrative accounts.

Fortunately, there are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research. A potential benefit of your participation in this research is that you will be contributing to original research as well as expanding

current understandings of early career teacher attrition. You will also be privy to a supportive environment where you may share your stories and experiences on a regular basis. Your participation must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you should know that you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation, up until the final research texts are negotiated. If you do withdraw from the study, there will be no repercussions of any sort and your data will be removed from our study.

No one except members of the research team will ever know your responses. Moreover, you will never be referred to by name in any of the research publications or presentations. We will use a pseudonym for anonymity and confidentiality. Also, your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected. Only the University research team and an experienced transcriptionist will have access to the data. The transcriptionist will sign a confidentiality agreement. All data will also be safely locked in the Centre for Research for Teacher Education and Development will be destroyed after 5 years. Other planned uses and sharing of this data include a doctoral dissertation for one team member (Lee Schaefer), as well as possible publications and/or presentations in professional journals and conferences for the research team. You may also receive a final report of the study, at your request.

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education, Extension, Augustana and Campus Saint Jean Research Ethics Board (EEASJ REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EEASJ REB c/o (780) 492-2614.

I, _____, understand the above conditions of participation in this study and I have had the opportunity to have my questions answered a member of the research team. I consent to participate in the study ***Early Career Teacher Attrition: Problems, Possibilities, Potentials.***

_____	_____	_____
Name of Teacher	*Signature*	*Date*

Appendix B

Dan's Narrative Account

Introduction: Starting Cold

I told my wife I was not interested in attending the potluck at the hospital where she works.[34] However, our daughter was five months old, and her colleagues were throwing her a baby shower. As I sat in the busy staff room, numerous individuals asked to hold our daughter. As the room was filled with all females, I was cognizant of the fact that another male had come into the room; this was Dan. On the table sat a variety of different foods, and due to the small size of the staff room, and large group of people, we ate awkwardly with our plastic utensils and paper plates.

As there was nowhere to sit, Dan was standing beside me when our first conversation began. In a short amount of time I found out that Dan had a daughter about a year older than mine. I also found out that he was a physical therapist at the hospital. When he asked what I did, I reiterated my research study that was looking to inquire into beginning teachers' lives who had left the profession of teaching early in their careers; I let him know I was specifically interested in those teachers who had left that were physical education teachers. The conversation became really interesting when he let me know that he had been a physical education teacher, had taught for a few years, and moved on to do his physical therapy degree.

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[34] The narrative accounts were co-composed with each participant.

In a coincidental way, Dan's name had come up when another person from the project was talking to a contact at a different junior high school in the city. It was at this point that I decided to approach Dan to see if he would be interested in being involved in the study.

We did not begin our initial conversations until sometime after our first meeting, but when we did I was excited to be talking to a past physical education teacher who was now working in another profession.

Part of our large project with Alberta Education, is to work with 2nd and 3rd year teachers across the province of Alberta. Our inclination to work with these individuals is that the literature denotes an increase in attrition after year three. We were interested in why this influx of early career teacher leavers happened, and if the participants we talked to had intentions of leaving or staying in the profession. Although this study is different than my own study with beginning teachers who have left the profession after less than five years of teaching, I cannot help but think about the similarities between Dan's stories, and many of the 2nd and 3rd year teachers we have worked with. This particular story fragment below, mirrors many of the beginning teachers experiences we talked to.

> I was at the school board[35] interviewing for the sub list when the person interviewing me got a call from the person who would end up being my principal; he said he had hired somebody who quit on day 2. He's was

[35] Dan used specific school board but due to anonymity I will simply refer to the place in a broad fashion.

> like, I need a phys. Ed. teacher right now. And basically the guy walked out and talked to me, and said there's a job opportunity, do you want me to give the principal your number? Sure, great. So he called me that night, it was Friday, I interviewed on Saturday at the school, started on Monday. Cold, first teaching job, throw you in there. (Dan, 3-3-1, 10)

Dan, as he mentioned, was hired two days before he started his first teaching position. Unfortunately, because he was hired two days into the school year they were not able to offer him a full-time continuing contract. This meant that his teaching position was temporary. Prior to the negotiation of Dan's narrative account, I made the assumption that having a temporary contract must have been unstable, and uncertain. I made the assumption that it must have been difficult for Dan to be on this type of contract. However, as we negotiated his account he reiterated that this was not the case. He envisioned himself having to substitute teach for a while, so having a full time teaching position, although temporary, was a bonus for Dan. He did not see it as unstable, and was excited to be working as a teacher.

Coming to Teaching and Physical Education

Part of my interest with beginning physical education teachers, is how their past experiences as children, athletes and coaches shaped their decisions to choose physical education as a career. I knew early on in our conversations that Dan was a sports fan. When I entered his house for our evening conversations he always had the sports highlights on the television. When I asked about his

involvement in sports he noted “I did just about everything and then in high school I stopped and focused on hockey. I played hockey and did cross country running and I played ball in the summer, so that was my thing. Before I did soccer and track and volleyball and that sort of stuff” (Dan, 3-3-1, 216). Not unlike many physical education teachers, Dan had a strong background in sports. It was something he was passionate about, and in some way, may have motivated him to become a physical education teacher.

Using the methodology of narrative inquiry allows for a temporal lens, through which, I can view participants’ experiences. In thinking about why beginning teachers leave the profession, I am drawn to the importance of understanding what has brought them to the profession. In Dan’s case, although he did not say he was storied into teaching himself, I denote the number of people in his family that were involved in education. “My dad was a teacher. My grandpa was a superintendent, my uncle uncles a teacher, there is just tons” (Dan, 3-3-1, 226). Although having teachers in the family may have drawn Dan to teaching, I didn’t sense that he was pressured into it. Dan’s brother, at this time, was attending university to be an engineer, and Dan entertained notions of following a career path in architecture. However, as a grade 12 student, he could not imagine going to school for 8 more years.

From our conversation, it seemed that an education degree made sense for him. “My dad was a role model and he taught phys. Ed. for 20 some years, got his summers off, coached a ton of sports, played a ton of sports, so I thought it would be a good career choice” (Dan, 3-3-1, 233). As I think about Dan’s dad

being a role model for him, I wonder what Dan meant by this. In what ways was his dad a role model? In the quote above Dan referred to, the professional landscape, the teaching, and the personal landscape, summers off. I wonder what part of this was appealing to Dan. Was it the coaching, and summers off spent with him, or was it the teaching aspect of being a physical education teacher? Or both?

As Dan and I negotiated this account he spoke to these wonders. "Seeing my dad as a physical educator made me think it would be a good career choice (Dan, interim text negotiation, April 2012). He saw his father as a role model, and also saw his father as a role model to the students he taught, and the players he coached. His father was a competitive hockey player and played elite level hockey. This allowed him to become a well-respected coach and community member. "You know I saw my dad in the community, and how people responded to him as a teacher and I really aspired to be like that" (Dan, interim text negotiation, April, 2012).

As I think about Dan's experiences, I am drawn to my experiences with my father, and sport. He coached a number of the teams I played on; hockey, soccer, and baseball. I can remember him carting me from one soccer game to another because I was playing on two teams at the same time. I also remember being dragged out of bed on cold winter days to make an early morning hockey practice. My parents' willingness, and own passion for sport and physical activity allowed me the opportunity to be successful, and in some ways, shaped my path to becoming a physical education teacher. As Dan read about my

experiences with my father he nodded his head. This resonated strongly with his story, and he agreed that his father's passion for sport and movement were also an integral part of Dan becoming a physical education teacher.

As Dan graduated from high school he had opportunities with hockey in his hometown. His older brother was already at university, and Dan was able to get a glimpse of what it was like to be a university student. This glimpse seemed to be enough to help Dan make the decision to move away from home and begin his university degree.

The university that Dan went to offered a combined degree with physical education and education. His response to this program was, "get two degrees, have options with physical education to do other stuff if I don't like teaching" (Dan, 3-3-1, 235). In Dan's reference to his degrees, I note a sense of a contingency plan. If he did not like teaching, he would have another degree that might offer other opportunities. From my own knowledge, I know that this program that Dan entered has become very popular. In fact, it is one of the most difficult education programs to get into. As I think about Dan's contingency plan, I reflect on my own experience and believe I would have made the same decision.

It seems to me that Dan's first inkling to abandon teaching, and go into physical therapy, was in his third year of his university degree. He began looking at the physical therapy program, but decided to stick with the education degree at that time, due to the fact that, as he said, "teaching has been good to me and I

like it" (Dan, 3-3-1, 235). I wonder as I write this what Dan meant by saying "teaching has been good to me." I would assume that he meant he liked the courses, enjoyed the practical aspects, and in a temporal way, imagined himself as a teacher. When Dan graduated with his dual degree, he certainly had intentions of teaching, and decided to move back to his hometown to substitute teach for June and July. He later told me that he chose to do this because there was no way he could get on the sub list quick enough to actually teach in June and July in a larger city. In his hometown it took him two days to get on the sub list.

I asked Dan if he enjoy subbing there? Could he see himself teaching there in the future? He turned his head to the side and looked up at the ceiling. He leaned back and I could tell he was thinking. He responded, "I don't think I had any intention of staying in the small town I grew up in, at least not right away, I maybe saw myself moving back there later on" (Dan, interim text negotiation, 2012). Dan having grown up in a small-town felt the urge to stay in the larger city in which he had spent the past five years attending university. He had become connected to this place, and in some ways it became home.

Imagined stories

It turned out that Dan's first full time teaching position was at a Junior high school. Although he was hired hastily, the position fit his educational background in a way that is somewhat uncommon for beginning teachers. His teaching load consisted of all physical education classes, as well as a computer

class and a grade 8 elective called Enterprise and Innovation. One of the things that interests me about beginning physical educators is how their past experiences shape their imagined stories of who they will be as physical educators.

While in some ways beginning teachers' experiences are diverse and varied, as I mentioned earlier, my own experiences, which motivated me to become a physical educator, revolved around sports and athletics. This was also the case for Dan. However, Dan's path to teaching physical education and his imagined story were also shaped by his dad's work in the subject area. When I asked Dan about how having family members who were teachers shaped his ideas about teaching he responded, "Yeah, I had a pretty good idea 'cause I saw the prep work, I saw the marking, I saw the coaching. He [his dad] was a math, phys. Ed teacher forever" (Dan, 3-3-1, 260).

In writing this piece, I am struck by how I name myself as a physical education teacher. From my recollection, Dan did this as well; he called himself a physical education teacher. In fact, this is why I had asked Dan to be involved in the study; his background was physical education. However, Dan taught a number of other subjects in his teaching career. I also taught a variety of courses, which were not physical education. Yet in some way I hung on to this identity of physical education teacher. As I think about why I did this, I am reminded of my own imagined stories of teaching. My imagined stories involved teaching in the gymnasium, creating a quality daily physical education program, coaching and building relationships with students. The only aspect of this that actually

happened in my first year was building relationships with students, yet I called myself a physical educator. I wonder if Dan still considered himself a physical education teacher, or was he someone who taught physical education. In shifting the arrangement of the words, we shift the identity associated with the person. Dan responded to this during the negotiation of his narrative account. Proudly he noted, "oh ya, definitely I called myself a physical educator even though I taught other subjects" (Dan, interim text negotiation, April, 2012). Dan's story to live by was one that included him as a physical education teacher. Naming ourselves in certain ways not only identifies us to others, but also situates us within our own stories of who we are, and are becoming. If Dan had referred to himself as a teacher who taught physical education this would have situated him differently. I interpret the way Dan named himself as physical educator, as him being proud of his story to live by.

While many of the beginning teachers we have talked to in the larger study were/are overwhelmed with their workloads, this did not seem to be the case for Dan. Our conversations around the notion of being overwhelmed were brief, and I wonder if the nature of our conversations around this area stemmed from the fact that Dan's work schedule was what he expected.

> I would get there, I was a before school guy. I didn't like being there after school. So I would get there around eight o'clock. I can't even remember what time school started, quarter to nine maybe. And then I would be, I don't know, half an hour, 40 minutes after school…I was lucky teaching,

there wasn't a ton of work right? So most of my time that I was late at the school was report card time. (Dan, 3-3-2, 263)

When I asked him if he was overwhelmed by the planning, teaching and busyness, his response was, no. He was able to get done what he needed to in his prep time, and did not feel overwhelmed by his teaching load.

He noted "Like, I had enough phys.ed…background work, planning wise, for that, unit took an hour, right, to have the kind of structure. This is the progression from day one to then, and what we're doing and how I'm evaluating them and what's happening" (Dan, 3-3-2, 277). I wonder what Dan meant by phys. ed. background. He did note that he had a sports and athletics background, and was also teaching courses that were in his major area. "That definitely made the transition easier" (Dan, interim text negotiation, April 2012).

Coaching was an important part of Dan's imagined story of teaching, and he did spend many hours coaching, but this did not bother him. He saw it as a very important and enjoyable part of his job. Growing up with his dad as a physical education teacher and coach, may have allowed him to see that coaching would be expected of him as a physical education teacher. During our negotiation of the narrative account Dan responded to these questions "I never felt pressured, I not only saw it as part of my job, but I wanted to do it. I enjoyed it, and coaching was a big part of why I wanted to be a physical education teacher" (Dan, interim text negotiation, April 2012).

As a beginning teacher I struggled with managing my coaching time, teaching, and my personal landscape. I was prepared to coach. I wanted to coach, but as the year progressed, I found it taking time away from the things I felt needed to be done in the classroom. The long hours after school, and the weekend tournaments, impeded not only on my teaching, but also on my personal landscape, and I struggled to keep a balance. Interestingly, I felt as though I was more valued for my coaching than I was for teaching. Often other staff asked about how the basketball team was doing. They congratulated me on wins, and tentatively approached after a loss to soothe the disappointment. I wonder how this positions athletics on the school landscape, and as I think about sustaining beginning physical educators, I wonder if it provides meaning in a way teaching in the gym or classroom cannot.

Dan never mentioned that the coaching got in the way of his teaching, or in the way of his life, perhaps because he was doing something he enjoyed he did not see it as 'extra'. He gave the impression that he was good at balancing his time at school; it does not seem that workload or time created tension for Dan. When I asked him about his work life consuming him, he responded cheerfully, "no way, I was young and single and living the dream" (Dan, interim text negotiation, April 2012).

Dan's' words are telling. Although he made the comment in a joking manner, as we discussed this notion of not being in a committed relationship during his first years of teaching he began to wonder. "Ya I'm not sure, you know, now that I have a daughter and a wife, I would probably look at the after

school commitment and schedule differently" (Dan, interim text negotiation, April 2012). It is interesting to think about how connected our personal and professional lives really are. Dan speaks to this as he ponders how shifts on his personal landscape may have shaped his experiences on the professional landscape.

Although his imagined story of workload and teaching position seemed to come to fruition, there were areas that Dan noted did not align with his imagined story of teacher.

> I think it was a little bit different in terms of understanding kids. I think when you've grown up an athlete, I grew up around athletes, so when you get into teaching and relating to kids that [athletics] isn't their strong area. That was probably the biggest thing that I wasn't used to, or needed to learn more about. (Dan, 3-3-1, 283)

Dan spoke more to this during the negotiation of this narrative account:

> Not taking it seriously bugged me, poor athletes or gifted athletes that don't give a damn. That's what bugged me. I don't care how good you are, just give an effort and try. At least if you're trying you are going to learn something, a skill or a strategy or something. As long as you're participating. (Dan, interim text negotiation, April 2012)

Dan's frustrations and philosophy that become apparent above in the story fragment resonate with me as a physical education teacher. I grew up an athlete as well, and had imagined stories of teaching students that shared my

experiences with sport. However, it became clear throughout my B.Ed. program, there were many students that "athletics was not their strong area." This interrupted my story of who I would be as a physical educator, I wonder if this experience also interrupted Dan's story of how he would teach physical education.

When I think about Dan's experiences with physical education, I cannot help but wonder how his experiences with sports, shaped his perceptions of what to expect from students. Like myself, Dan noted difficulties with students that did not seem to take physical education seriously, or seemed to be disinterested in physical education.

Dan, prior to starting his first teaching job, expected there would be students who did not want to participate in physical education; however, his philosophy was influenced further as he was in the midst of teaching. "I saw it was a different experience for those students, and even though I knew it would be there, it definitely shifted the way I taught physical education (Dan, interim text negotiation, 2012). Dan's initial expectations shifted. He became more attentive to trying to include everyone in the class. Finding activities and teaching methods that differentiate learning to entire classes is difficult, but Dan saw this as an important part of his work as a physical education teacher.

From my own experiences, thinking about how students' perceptions may shape physical educators theories about the subject area is important. When talking to students, I often hear that they've had physical education classes taken

away for misbehaving in another subject area. Watching Elementary teachers' days unfold as a faculty advisor, I have become privy to the variety of subject areas they teach, and physical education, although a core subject in Alberta, is often given little or no preparation time.

In April (2012) I was facilitating a workshop to 30 teachers from across Alberta. After I had asked them to form small groups, I asked them to think about what was important in a quality daily physical education program. All groups mentioned fun, and one of the five mentioned learning outcomes. If teachers see physical education in this way, fun, how do students perceive physical education? If students entered Dan's physical education classes with the perception that learning does not fit into physical education, how did he negotiate this, especially as an individual who was passionate about physical education? How might this have shaped his own perceptions about physical education, and does this pressure from students, to have fun, shape our identities as physical education teachers?

Dan while nodding his head said, "yes kids' preconceived notions was an eye opener for me" (Dan, interim text negotiation, April 2012). Similarly to the variance of skill levels in the classroom, there was also a variance of students' imagined stories of physical education in Dan's classes. While some students saw it as important and a place to learn, others saw it as "lets play dodge ball everyday cause that's what physical education is, that is what I've done for the past 7 or 8 years, right" (Dan, interim text negotiation, April 2012)?

To further think about this, I defer to Dan's words in an attempt to show how he negotiated these tensions.

> The things I didn't like were…I guess the feeling of stress with classroom management within the gymnasium setting. So I could relate to kids that were good athletes and participated well. I could relate to kids that were bad asses and participated well. Relating to kids that felt like they were there to stir the pot was tough for me and controlling them and you know establishing that authoritative, dictatorship so to speak, to get that control was probably the toughest part for me. And part of it was because I was 21 years old and looked like I was 15…so that was the toughest part. (Dan, 3-3-2, 695)

Dan's story fragment allows me to gain a better sense of what was difficult for him in the gymnasium. The feeling of stress that came from trying to manage the gymnasium space resonates with my own story. I can remember, at times, hoping that no one came in to see that the class was in chaos. I am drawn to the words controlling, and authoritative, and wonder if Dan's imagined story of teaching included a well behaved class. I am also attentive to the notion that Dan, at times, may not have felt like the students saw him as a teacher. Dan during the negotiation of this narrative account spoke to this " I think they saw me as a teacher, and as a friend and less as an authority figure (Dan, interim text negotiation, April 2012). "I was 21 years old and looked like I was 15." I sensed that Dan had imagined his students seeing him as an authority figure and his

struggles with this struggle created a bumping between his imagined story and the stories he lived out in his professional landscapes.

If I turn to the personal dimension, I get a glimpse of Dan's philosophy; what he thought was important in physical education and what created tension for him. Although earlier he spoke to not being able to relate to non-athletes, as he continued to speak more about his experiences, it seems he had a more difficult time relating to students that "stir the pot." As long as students were participating, no matter their athletic ability or attitude, Dan seemed to be comfortable with this. I wonder if we could correlate participation to engagement, and engagement to enjoyment. If I continue on with this in mind, I am attentive to how Dan might have felt if students were not engaged in what he was teaching. For me, when students were not participating, I took it personally, like what I was teaching was not important. My feeling is that Dan thought participation was important, and that this allowed him to see that he was doing a good job.

> I loved when kids came and just wanted to participate and do something, work hard at whatever they're doing, regardless if it was wrestling or if it was you know badminton or it was games or if it was dance or if it was fitness…when whatever moons aligned that every kid in my class was into it, you know those were great ones because when you feel like your doing something, your achieving something, your getting that physical education out of them, right? (Dan, 3-3-2, 720)

Dan was passionate as he shared this story fragment. This was in our second conversation, and I could see that he was becoming a bit more comfortable with sharing his experiences as a teacher. I was curious about what Dan was referring to when he alluded to "getting that physical education out of them." During our final conversation he spoke more to this.

> Getting the PE out of them was almost participation. I knew I would get them learning and into what I was doing that's the buy in. You get the message across that whatever lesson you set out to teach they get it cause they were engaged. Don't get me wrong, it was not so much about them enjoying the class. It was about them being engaged. Engagement and fun are two different things. (Dan, interim text negotiation, April 2012)

The final lines of this story fragment are important in regards to Dan's philosophy of physical education. From my experience, *fun* is often the quintessential goal of physical educators. *Busy, happy, good.* For Dan this was not enough. Although enjoyment might have been a means for him to get students engaged, the most important thing for him was engagement – learning.

The other interesting part for me in Dan's story fragment is the "whatever moons aligned" statement. From this phrase, I get the impression that this, what I would call sustaining experience, did not happen very often. If "getting the physical education out of them" was indeed a way for Dan to see that he was "achieving" something, and it did not happen very often, I wonder how he

measured his success. In our last conversation I asked Dan if there were other things that he could correlate with doing a good job, or being a good teacher?

> Relationships with kids, that was the other way I measured my success. Kids from every level, every background, you can feel that buy in, or almost feel them being engaged. When the moon's aligned with all kids great. Just last year a kid looked me up on Facebook. I remember he was not a good athlete but tried his butt off. He got in touch with me, and let me know he really enjoyed my class. I guess that's maybe how you measure success. (Dan, interim text negotiation, April, 2012)

Dan has been out of the profession for over 7 years, and just last year a former student contacted him. What does this mean for beginning teachers if this is indeed a way to measure how successful they are? I wonder, if these types of experiences happened while Dan was still teaching, would he may have been more inclined to stay.

I am also intrigued with Dan's story because, in a way, I think Dan is disrupting a dominant story in physical education; the story that, as physical educators, we care about athletes, competition, high fitness levels, and winning. Dan's counter story is important.

> When you get good classes where, you started with some sort of warm up activity, everybody is on task doing their thing. You switch and you do a couple little skill things whether it's kicking a soccer ball, you know running with a soccer ball, whatever, you do some sort of mini game

> where they're using those skills to transfer it into a different type of setting…that was the best. (Dan, 3-3-2, 733)

Dan again speaks to the sustaining experiences for him teaching physical education. When Dan mentions, "using those skills to transfer into a different type of setting," from my interpretation, he is again speaking to watching students learn. There is no way, in the short amount of time he had with students, to teach each movement pattern or performance cue for each activity. Seeing his students transfer skills that were taught in different environments or activities to other activities must have been fulfilling. I would also like to point out, that the pedagogy he speaks to above, related warm up, skill teaching, and modified game with skills, is commonly taught in university pedagogy classes. These philosophical underpinnings of this pedagogy are attentive to students learning something, and transferring it into a modified activity, or different environment, to show their learning.

Again this, in a way, is a counter story to the dominant story of playing the sport with the *real* sport equipment and the *real* sport rules. Dan alluded to playing a modified activity in which the skills taught could be transferred. This modified activity, for me, presents Dan's philosophies of inclusion; through modifying activities he allowed more students to be included, and, perhaps, fostered learning.

Being that I have not seen Dan teach, I can only tell from his stories the type of teacher he was. The fragment above shows me that he was using

pedagogy that would be seen as effective. I feel the need to share this to help better understand the type of teacher Dan was. He clearly cared about physical education, and was passionate about getting students participating and learning in his classes.

Borderland Spaces

As a beginning physical education teacher, I often felt like I was living on the borderland as a person teaching in the physical education area. Although I taught a number of different subject areas, physical education was my passion, and as mentioned earlier, I still name myself as a physical educator. My background was in physical education, and as a teacher, it was the area that I felt most comfortable. Metaphorically this borderland space, which I felt I lived within, was created by trying to negotiate teaching in a subject area that I felt was seen as less than. Although throughout my undergraduate degree we often talked about the marginality of physical education, it was a different feeling to experience it first hand. I have delved into this topic in great length in my past work, but I feel it is important to lay this tension out here for two reasons. The first being that I feel the reader should know that I have had past experiences as a physical educator that shade the lens with which I view the professional landscape. Second, Dan's lived experiences as a physical education teacher resonate with mine, and it is important for me to keep in mind that others may interpret his experiences in different ways; I am attentive to this as I move forward.

I asked Dan outright if he felt like he worked within a marginalized area. He thought about it for a while before he responded.

> We still had enough facility wise. I think I was like you know you're teaching PE…but I had my principal come sit on my classes twice maybe, whereas other new teachers around the school teaching core classes, he was sitting in on their class once every 2 months or something like that…so you could tell what [was important], and that's what the school division looks at right? Core marks. (Dan, 3-3-3, 375)

Dan perceived his principal's lack of frequent evaluation in the gymnasium space as an explicit inference that physical education was not as important as what other teachers were teaching. One might also interpret this experience as the principal being more confident in Dan's teaching, therefore, less evaluation might be needed. However, it could also be construed as the principal not caring, or valuing what was going on in Dan's gymnasium space. I need to wonder more with Dan about when he woke up to this? Did he feel this as marginalization? Did the stories of his Dad shape the way that he perceived these interactions? Did Dan feel like the division, and principal, did not value what he was doing, or am I reading too much into this based on my own experiences.

Dan spoke to this during our final conversation "I think that I started two days after the school year started and the principal was in my class when, um, the dance unit in December, if I am a brand new teacher why are you checking up in

December. Just no face time, as long as no kids getting hit in the head with a dodge ball you're okay" (Dan, interim text negotiation, April 2012).

It seems that although "face time" with principals can create stress, Dan perceived the lack of face time as, in a way, marginalizing him, and the subject area he taught in. His words again resonate with the *busy, happy, good,* dominant story that precedes physical education. This not only shaped Dan's stories to live by as a physical educator and beginning teacher, but it also gives a glimpse into the hierarchical position of physical education in the professional landscape which he worked.

We know that the principal plays a very important role in supporting beginning teachers. As a beginning teacher, I taught a number of different courses. My principal evaluated me a number of times during social studies, and language arts lessons, but he did not enter the gymnasium space once to observe my teaching. I certainly cannot say that my principal was not supportive; I would say he was very attentive to the needs of all of the beginning teachers in the school. However, him not coming into the gymnasium sent a clear message to me about what was important to him. Unfortunately, what I felt was the most important part of my day, he did not value. Dan nodded his head during our final conversation, and commented, "I agree, I felt the same way" (Dan, interim text negotiation, April 2012).

Although the principal helps to shape the professional landscape, so do other individuals upon the landscape. Dan also had an opportunity to teach core subjects in his second year of teaching.

> It's different teaching…. I was teaching science, I wasn't trained with that, but part of it also was expectation you know? I mean the students can sense it when there is more importance placed on it by parents or by you know, within the school system, the schools teachers or principals, you know pushing those CORE courses. There wasn't any extra study time offered for phys. Ed. But there definitely was for CORE courses, right? So I mean they know and most of it is from their parents and knowing what marks are going to count the most for them. (Dan, 3-3-2, 611)

What counts? Dan, in the story fragment above, reiterates the importance put on core classes. Although in Alberta physical education is a core subject, it is often not treated as one. This devaluing of physical education has become a strong part of the dominant story of schools? So much so that, as Dan explains above, students even begin to see physical education as being unimportant, as a mark that is not needed, as a class that is meant to blow off steam. Dan notes, "there wasn't any extra study time for physical education." Why is this the case? How has the learning in other subject areas become what counts? Dan also alludes to the parents' perceptions of what counts. All of these phenomena are apparent in Dan's stories. Perhaps they are so visible to me, because my lived experiences as a beginning physical education teacher parallel Dan's. How has this become the

dominant story for physical education? How do these dominant stories shape beginning physical educators notions about what they do? How many times can you be called *just a gym teacher,* before you become, *just a gym teacher*?

As Dan read over the last paragraph he thought for a while and replied "Ya, but they can access what is perceived to be physical education outside of the school. Right like basketball. People have the opportunity to put their kids into that. Core they can't really unless they hire a tutor" (Dan, interim text negotiation, April 2012).

Perhaps the notion that sports and physical education are one in the same becomes apparent here. The perception that sport and physical education are synonymous is a discernment that we often try to disrupt in physical education teacher education programs. However, if societal views, as Dan alluded to, see their son's and daughter's getting what they deem as physical education outside of the school place, conceivably, this may attribute to some parents and students seeing physical education as not important in schools.

It has been some time since Dan left the classroom, but as our conversations around the perception of physical education came up he seemed to become more engaged. I noted this in his tone of voice, his body language, and the length of his responses. He drew parallels between his current work as a physical therapist and his past work as a physical educator.

> Even in physical therapy, my new career, we have people...they don't know how to coordinate a certain movement with a certain body part to

> do an exercise or to do a posture correction or to do whatever. They don't get it…what are the chances of them moving, and by moving I mean being active…or having the value to say hey, I'm going to take the steps instead of the elevator. (Dan, 3-3-2, 642)

Although Dan did mention that these might be things they would not necessarily learn in physical education, he denotes the importance of individuals having the knowledge, values and skills to be active individuals. This could be said to be the goal of physical education, yet Dan is now a physical therapist. I wonder if, in some sense, one could argue that physical therapists and physical educators have similar goals. A physical educator may be seen more as preventative, helping people learn how to become active for life, and a physical therapist helping individuals heal themselves so they can continue to move. So, although Dan has moved on to another career, in some ways, he sees a connection with what he does now to physical education.

> While being a physical education teacher requires a lot of general knowledge, physical therapy requires more specific knowledge. Physical education is a more broad focus in life while physical therapy is more specific. (Dan, interim text negotiation, April 2012)

Dan spoke to how being a PE teacher made him a better physical therapist.

> Well, building relationships is a great skill in itself, so having that background is valuable. And although there are certainly differences I am still helping people to be active, and helping them in other ways too.

> Outcome measures, we use those to evaluate progress, using designated tested outcome measures this balance test or this range of motion, a good physical therapist is always evaluating what they are doing to see what their progress is. A good physical education teacher does this as well. Evaluation is a use of your personal professional judgment, to see what is happening. Same as PE teachers, specific plan and unit and this is what is happening. The physical education teachers that are most successful re-evaluate and use that evaluation to guide their teaching in the future. In physical therapy if someone comes in with a bad knee and is not getting better, I need to re-evaluate what I am doing and try something different. Should be similar if you are a good physical education teacher. (Dan, interim text negotiation April 2012)

My wonders now turn to thinking about how an individual's identity shifts when he/she works in a landscape that devalues what he/she thinks is important. If they enter the profession believing that they are doing important work, might they leave at some point if they are not valued? Or might they try to move into other areas of teaching so that they are teaching in an area that is valued?

Stories to Leave By

Unfortunately, the questions I have written above are difficult to even attempt to answer from Dan's stories. Although he did share story fragments that speak to the liminal space in which some physical educators live within, his

experiences on a temporary contract also shaped his decision to leave the profession. As mentioned early in this narrative account, Dan was hired after the first semester started. What this means, in the district in which he worked, is that he had to be hired on a temporary contract. The context of this situation is important to help better understand Dan's story.

The term temporary contract speaks for itself in the sense that it is not permanent, not long term. This, in itself, can be somewhat problematic as there is no certainty to the position. Although, it is important to note that Dan did not see it as an uncertain position. Temporary contracts are given to teachers covering for a maternity leave or a sick leave, but they can also be distributed for positions when the hiring date is after the first day of school. Dan was hired two days after the September deadline, and therefore was assigned a temporary contract. He taught the whole year, and from the stories he shared with me he enjoyed it, and was successful. "I taught in a junior high….it was a good school, it was well run, reasonably good kids" (Dan, 3-3-1, 100). I asked him if he felt valued in his first year, he replied,

> Yeah. I think so. I mean it's like did I feel valued by the students? Yes definitely. Did I feel valued by co-workers, other teachers? Some, others probably not. It's probably that way whether your a 10-year veteran teacher going in there to a new school or whether you're a brand new teacher going into that school. I think that the administrative staff there was very fairly good about recognizing staff with different roles and different things that they're doing. (Dan, 3-3-3, 286)

It seems from his words that Dan was able to put things into perspective. Although it sounds like he may not have felt valued by some staff members, he did not see this as being attributed to his status as a first year teacher. Whether he "was a 10 year veteran" or a beginning teacher he felt there would always be staff that valued him, and others that did not. Dan was certain that the students valued him, and from the last line of the story fragment above, I get the sense that the administration also valued him. Although Dan felt he had a successful first year, things did not go as planned as he began his second year of teaching.

> I started the next year and after a month or so there was a guy…who was on stress leave who, whatever happened, happened and he left, was placed with his seniority, bumped me out because I didn't have a continuing contract….He lasted a few months and then went on stress leave again, and then left so I came back and taught for a bit, and then said thank you very much I'm going to be doing my pre-requisite courses for physical therapy school. (Dan, 3-3-1, 35)

Dan, after teaching over a year at the same school in the same position, was "bumped" out of his teaching position. This story came up in our first conversation during the first few minutes of us talking. It seems to be one of the experiences that shaped his decision to leave the profession. When I asked him about what might have happened if he would have had a full time contract he noted,

> Good question. I think I still would have been examining going back to university, but I may not have been looking at it that soon. But yeah I think part of the life being in kind of flux kind of here there whatever not being totally nailed down and played a role in it. (Dan, 3-3-3, 216)

As Dan explains above, physical therapy was on his mind before this had happened, but it seems this experience shaped Dan's decision to leave teaching. As I think about the situation Dan was put in, I wonder if his life being in "flux" allowed moving to physical therapy easier. Having a full time contract and being in a school he enjoyed may have made leaving much more difficult. Being "bumped" from his position almost made Dan's decision to leave teaching easier.

For me, even after hearing the contract stories of 2nd and 3rd year teachers across the province, Dan's story is unbelievable. He taught successfully for a year, came back to teach another year, and was "bumped" out of his position by someone who was on a stress leave. Not even someone from his school, someone who had taught somewhere else.

"And I met the guy, cause I started there and then all of a sudden I find out this guy is coming, and I'm going to be leaving. And I show him stuff about the school and this and that…it was tough, you go back after he was there and…the kids are like when you coming back" (Dan, 3-3-1, 155)? "Some kids were like did they fire you? No they wanted to keep me" (Dan, 3-3-1, 163). Not only was Dan "bumped" out of his position, he was expected to introduce the

person, who was taking over his position, to the school. As I sit and write this in a coffee shop, I am lost for words. I take my hands away from the keyboard, and replace them, but I can't seem to find any way to describe how something like this could possibly happen. The devaluing of Dan as a beginning teacher, person, and part of the school, is unequivocal. I am attentive to the fact that I need to stay with Dan's words to try to better understand how he negotiated this.

> Well there was not much I could do. They post positions, I couldn't apply for them because of my contract, and he gets hired back. I heard the guy's a lunatic, and he's going to teach in the school. It was unreal. They can't fire him, he's part of a union in a huge association, so what do you do. (Dan, interim text negotiation, April 2012)

From inquiring into Dan's words, a few things become enlightened. It must have been extremely difficult to train the person who was going to be taking over his job. To have to leave a position for no other reason than, we need to make a spot for this other person. Dan, in a sense, became collateral damage of the system. This was a situation that was completely out of Dan's control.

Having to describe this situation to the students as he came back to substitute teach was also complicated. Being that he could not, in a professional way, describe to students that someone from a stress leave situation had taken over his position. What could he really tell them? Having said that, one thing that stands out for me, is how concerned the students were. The students asking him

when he was coming back, and telling him they missed him, shows the level of respect they had for him.

Although years have passed since this experience, I expected Dan to be more upset about what happened to him; he wasn't. Dan seemed to story this as, just something that happens to people who are not on continuing contracts. He did not seem to blame the principal. He seemed understanding towards the principal's position.

> Part of it is that the administrators have to do it because they don't know what their funding or what their scheduling is going to be like next year…They can't offer people that [continuing contract] if they end up in a situation where they got too many teachers, not enough classes. (Dan, 3-3-1, 188)

Dan's story condoned this as just the way that things are. When I commented about how crazy it was that someone bumped him with more seniority, his response was "that's the way it works though" (Dan, 3-3-1, 69). I wonder if in some way Dan came to see this as "how it works" from his dad's stories of the system. How has this become the way that, this particular education system, does business? How does treating the least experienced among us in this way, shape beginning teachers' perceptions about the education system? Of course, I can only speak to Dan's experience in this narrative account, but for him it was enough to help him to create a story to leave by. Perhaps he sees it as meant to

be; he is now working in a profession that he had always had in the back of his mind.

Again, our narrative account negotiation became an opportunity for Dan to think more about his experiences. “My dad, he was not too phased. He was okay with me moving on. Both of my parents were really supportive of whatever I was doing, or would have done. I was like, you know, this is happening, I’m going to move on and try this. More of the outcry probably came from the teachers in the school. They were like, what! This is crazy (Dan, interim text negotiation, April 2012).

I am again drawn to Dan being respected by his colleagues. Their outcry portrays the positive ways in which Dan was storied in the landscape. Although Dan no doubt felt slighted, at the end of Dan’s second year, the year that he got bumped and was subbing, he was asked to take on another temporary position.

> They hired someone else for a maternity leave and the person lasted a week, the kids ran her out of the school. The principal approached me and said, look, you know the kids, they like you. So I taught 2 months of grade 7 sciences, I think I had one grade 9, science which had the achievement test class, which was fun and enjoyable, different. But that’s how I finished off my teaching career. After that I got into physical therapy school. (Dan, 3-3-1, 58)

As Dan finished off his second temporary contract, he was accepted into the physical therapy Master's Program and has not taught, in a K-12 classroom, since.

Physical Therapy and Physical Education

> I spent enough time in this physical therapy clinic growing up. I was an athlete, and it was a career option… I think it's a good profession where you use your mind to figure things out, what's going on, what's happening, help people, help fix them, get them better. I enjoy it. (Dan, 3-3-3, 327)

Dan, as an athlete growing up, spent many hours in the physical therapy clinic, and this line of work became appealing to him. Although I was interested in how Dan came to physical therapy, I was also interested in how he saw his job as a physical therapist as different than teaching.

> I'm in the hospital, I'm doing a couple different things like my outpatient role versus my inpatient role is completely different. Outpatients, I'm booking clients coming to see me to get physical therapy to get better and I'm the sole provider. I'm treating them, they have whatever physical ailment and I'm fixing that. Where as inpatients a little bit different, and especially right now in medicine there's a big team aspect to it, doctors, outpatients, there is dieticians, social work, everybody working together to help whatever the person is in the hospital for. Sometimes I have a bigger role in that, sometimes I have a smaller role in that, sometimes I

> don't have a role in that, so that changes. I guess day to day wise I manage my caseload and I plan out my day as I see who I think needs to be seen that day and for whatever reason whereas you don't have that option as much in teaching. You don't have student A is doing fine in this course, student C is really struggling, I can't just say I'm not going to see student A at all, I'm going to see student C for everything. Where in physical therapy you can do that. (Dan, 3-3-3, 519)

Dan's story about his physical therapy position work, as compared to teaching, is interesting. The first time I read the transcript, I keyed in on the notion of Dan as sole provider to his outpatients. They are coming to him, he is diagnosing what is wrong with them, treating them, and fixing them. "I think it would be taking the problem presented to me whatever the physical ailment is and assessing it, analyzing it and developing a plan to fix it and then fix it. That'd probably be the biggest thing that I like about physical therapy" (Dan, 3-3-3, 615).

Here in Dan's words, I can see that this is a very clear way to evaluate what he is doing, and, whether or not he is successful. In comparison to teaching, Dan seemed to struggle with *seeing* that he was doing a good job. "I mean you can have a class full of geniuses that get great marks on all their exams and their achievement tests, but have you taught them more?" (Dan, 3-3-3, 627) In physical therapy, individuals come in with a problem, and he fixes it. He is able to see this, in an almost explicit, objective way.

I am also attentive to the team aspect that Dan speaks about in the story fragment above. He was also part of a team while teaching, but he seems to be a contributing member of the team he mentions above. " I definitely feel valued for my knowledge, in fact at times I think I am counted on too much" (Dan, interim text negotiation, April 2012).

I am attentive to his ability to create his own case load, and to attend to the patients that he, as a professional, decides need the treatment most. He is able to "plan out his day" to focus his attention on something, or someone, that he sees as being important. He even notes that this is not the case in teaching, you cannot decide, "I can't just say I'm not going to see student A." The students, they all need to be attended to, and although you are attending to all of them, it may be difficult to measure how much of a difference you are really making. Dan spoke further about his perception of autonomy in teaching as compared to physical therapy.

> Yeah, and definitely not a professional decision option you have much of in teaching. I mean you have the option to provide whatever after school tutoring or this or that if you so feel like it. But I mean it's different it's not, it's above and beyond, right? I'm not a student, or patient X is not because they really, really need physical therapy and this and that, I'm not staying till 5 o'clock trying to fix them. That's not my role, my role is to do what I can during the working hours and based on the whole system it's often not as much as I want, but sometimes that's the way it is. (Dan, 3-3-3, 540)

Dan explicitly speaks to how he saw his role as a teacher, and how he now sees his role as a physical therapist. This is important in the sense that, as a physical therapist. "My role is to do what I can during the working hours." He does not need to go above and beyond to feel like he is doing a good job. In teaching, it is taken-for-granted that you spend hours before and after teaching tending to what you did not get done during that day. Dan did mention that at times he has to stay late to chart work with a patient, but on other days he is able to leave early; he sees this as a give and take, but ultimately his decision. He speaks below to the expectations involved with teaching.

> I think some of it is kind of expected, it's kind of thought of in the profession, and I guess I don't know if it's outside perception or outside perception from teachers that that's the way it should be. Probably a little bit of both, but I think that as a teacher I probably excepted it because my summers are pretty good, and as outside people they probably expected it because that's what teachers do. (Dan, 3-3-3, 571)

Dan again has a story for "what teachers do." My wonder is, why has this expectation become part of teaching? Dan expected this as part of teaching. It didn't surprise him, and from his stories, I would not say that he left teaching due to the after hours work that is expected.

As I end this piece, I still have many wonders. I wonder about the professional landscape that Dan began teaching on. I wonder about Dan's intentions as he entered teaching. He spoke early on in our conversations about

questioning other career options during his education degree. I also sensed, from our conversations, that moving into a physical therapy Master's Program was not un-expected. Yet, I can't help wonder what would have happened if Dan had not been "bumped" from his first teaching contract. As I think about the future of this work, I am reminded of Dr. Jerry Rosiek's comment "why is teacher attrition a bad thing." Perhaps when I think about Dan leaving I am caught up in the education field losing another good young teacher. If I frame Dan's decision from his own perspective, perhaps him leaving, was a very good decision. So although for some stake holders teacher attrition is a bad thing, for others, like Dan, perhaps teacher attrition is not all bad.

Appendix C

Reid's Narrative Account

Introduction

Imagined Places.

After I left my first conversation with Reid, I was struck by how important *place* seemed to his stories. On the drive home I was reminded of a conversation I had with an Elder a few months earlier. "We have an identification problem, the land does not recognize us" (Bob Cardinal, personal conversation, June 2011). Bob Cardinal is an Indigenous Elder that I have had the honor of working with over the past few years. Being around him is hard to put into words; it is, in a way, unexplainable. I would compare it, in some ways, to being connected to a place. Having a sense of place with a certain topographical location is unexplainable. It is hard to capture through words or writing. There is a feeling, a connection, a sense of belonging, a relationship. These thoughts, the relationships with place, with the land, consumed me after our conversation. When I arrived home it seemed the last half hour of my drive was a blur.

I wondered about his words " the land does not recognize us." Elder Bob's words speak to the relationship with the land that is often discounted by Western ways of thinking. From a Western perspective, the land is in animate, it is an object. You cannot have a relationship with something that is not alive, or *real.* But Bob says, "everything is animate, everything has spirit." Thinking in

this way allows for a relationship, and a connection to the land, and to place. I believe in what Bob says, because I can feel it. When I go back to our family's farm, a place in which I spent a lot of time as a child, I feel different. My memories of that place bring back a feeling of nostalgia, and a remembrance of my past experiences there. The first time I shot a pellet gun was in the large red barn that still stands there today. I killed my first, and last, bird there, and I remember the sick feeling I had in my stomach when I walked up to the lifeless carcass. My uncle's words "are you happy now?" still resonate with me today.

I have similar feelings that come about when I sit around a campfire, or stop in a quiet forest while cross-country skiing. What this feeling is, I am not sure. I do know it makes me feel good. It balances me, puts things into perspective, and washes out the remnants of everyday life. It's something I have come to need, or maybe have always needed.

In Reid's stories this sense of place includes rural places, urban places, outside places, inside places, imagined places, and real places. The time I have spent with Reid over the past few months reminded me of how important place is as we compose a life. Our stories for tomorrow often include places: places we might visit; places we might live; places we will raise our children; places we will work; places we may get married; places we may be buried. In some way, like my own connection to the land, people become connected to these places, have relationships with them, and they become a part of the life they are composing.

Narrative inquiry, as a methodology, recognizes how important place is to individuals as they compose their lives. From a narrative inquiry standpoint, similar to Bob's notion of place, the landscapes in which we live, work, and imagine, are fluid, ever changing, and living. These places are part of our stories, our identities, who we are, and who we are becoming. Place has been a resonant thread throughout my conversations with Reid. His stories to leave by, in his own words, were shaped by the landscapes on which he worked, and lived, and the imagined landscapes on which he hoped to live, and work.

Place is, of course, not the only phenomenon to think about as I inquire into Reid's lived experiences. Just as place cannot be separated from who we are, neither can the social environments in which we work, our personal feelings, or our past, present, and future experiences. As I move forward from here, I am attentive to these dimensions and how they played out in the stories that Reid shared with me.

Early Beginnings

Physical education, movement, and activity are threads of continuity throughout Reid's stories. Like many physical education teachers, Reid's childhood memories are filled with sports. Sports were a big part of his life growing up, and from the stories he shared, were influential in his becoming a physical education teacher. His experiences with activity were positive, and as a physical education teacher, I wonder if Reid felt that he could help others to experience the joy that he had gotten from sport and activity.

As I read over the transcripts of our conversations, his association to sport and movement jumped out at me. However, I began to think deeper about how Reid's experiences with sport had shaped him. What was illuminated as I thought in a different way about Reid's experiences with sport, and physical education, was that it was not only the act of participating that influenced Reid, but the relationships with the individuals he walked alongside as he participated. When I asked Reid what shaped his way into physical education, he initially talked about his passion for activity. I then shared a story of an experience I had with my grandmother playing the Game of Life. The Game of Life is a board game that allows you to choose a profession card if you land on certain squares. Invariably, I always chose the teacher card. My grandma would often mention that she thought I would be a good teacher. My story seemed to resonate with Reid as he reflected on his own stories.

> Something that just came to me, which I hadn't even thought about in the past, but what you had said about your grandma. My Uncle Mike is a phys. ed. teacher and he teaches junior high phys. ed. and he's been with Kitchener Catholic for I want to say 32 years now that he's been teaching phys. ed., religion, and history, but mostly phys. ed. He's been coaching football, wrestling, track, badminton. You name it, he's coached it, and he's taught it. And this is the kind of guy they've asked to be admin on a huge number of occasions, but every single time he's like no, that's not my place, that's not where I fit in. I love the teaching part…so from my earliest memories Uncle Mike was always one of my favorite uncles 'cause

> whenever you go to his house, you're throwing a ball, you got a football out, you got a baseball out…just always had that passion for sport and physical activity. So that was always similar to me, so I was always attached to Uncle Mike and knew he was a teacher. (Reid, 3-2-1, 239)

Reid was a bit taken aback as he shared that story fragment. I think the fact that he had not thought before about how influential his Uncle was, surprised him. I found it interesting how one simple story about my Grandmother's influence on me, allowed Reid to remember stories that he held about his uncle. I got the sense that Reid respects his Uncle for his involvement in activity, teaching and coaching. Reid never said that his Uncle was a role model, but I get the sense that he is. As Reid and I negotiated his narrative account he added more context to his relationship with his Uncle Mike.

> He was my favorite uncle, when we were around him there was always activity; no sitting around watching television. He was always pushing us kids to be active. I remember on Sunday's sometimes we would go visit Uncle Mike and he would open up the gym at the school he worked at. 11 years old go with cousins, free rein in the gym; that's a dream PE class. But I never saw him teach, but he was always the most understanding, and most patient. For gifts he always gave things that would attribute to activity, for example like he would give a Timex watch, staple for every PE teacher, or give you books. (Reid, interim text negotiation, April 2, 2012)

In later conversations Reid spoke about his teaching philosophy, which allows me to see the connection between him and his Uncle's philosophies. In the first part of the story fragment, Reid spoke to his Uncle turning down administration positions to continue to teach. His uncle would say, "I don't like educating adults, I like educating kids" (Reid, 3-2-1, 232). This resonates with Reid's passion for building relationships with students, and providing students with experiences that will shape them in educative ways; this was the most important part of teaching for Reid.

It is difficult in the story fragment above to discern what specifically it is about his Uncle that Reid respects. What I mean is, what aspects of Uncle Mike does Reid associate with being a physical education teacher? I wonder specifically about how Uncle Mike influenced Reid's imagined story surrounding physical education, and teaching. Did Reid see himself as a future physical educator because he liked that, when he was at Uncle Mike's house, he had the opportunity to be active? Or was it because Uncle Mike coached a variety of different sports? Both of his uncle's children are successful athletes. Perhaps Reid sees a connection between his uncle's teaching pedagogy, and how well his own children have done with sport. Maybe it is his Uncle's passion for movement, and sport, or possibly it was all of these things. While Reid's imagined stories around physical education were shaped by his relationship with his uncle; his uncle was not the only touchstone that Reid seemed to connect back to his pathway to physical education.

Reid's father worked in the oil industry until his recent retirement. For most of Reid's childhood and teenage years, Reid lived in a smaller northern Alberta city where Reid's father worked. Being in a smaller centre may have provided Reid with more opportunities to be actively involved.

> I played a lot of sports in high school…since I was younger, I've been coaching, playing, refereeing soccer and hockey. I've always tried to be in physically active environments whether it be sport or just any kind of physical activity. (Reid, 3-2-1, 247)

When I think about students' pre-dispositions to enjoying activity as they enter school environments, I attribute this in some way to their home environments. It's not surprising to me that both of Reid's parents were active individuals. "You and I both know that family is as important as being in a phys. ed. class…what you're doing out of school is 10 times more important" (Reid, 3-2-2, 481). Reid's mom enjoyed walking, biking, bowling, and softball, while his father played competitive soccer until he was 40, and was also heavily involved in golf, squash, and softball. Today they are both still involved in these activities.

Although Reid did not mention this, as I write I am drawn to the differences between the activities that Reid's parents participated in. His dad, a competitive person, was involved in activities that were less recreational, and more sport, or competition oriented. He also coached Reid and his sister's soccer teams when they were between the ages of 4 and 17. Reid's mom was more involved in recreational activities that allowed for movement and socialization as

opposed to sport and competition. She was an "ultimate hockey mom, always encouraging and supportive, financially and emotionally" (Reid, Text message, March 19). I wonder how these two different ways of being physically active shaped Reid's perceptions of movement, and activity? How did his home environment shape his decision to become a physical education teacher? Why was competition so important to Reid when involved in sport, but so unimportant in his physical education classes? Reid talked extensively about this in his physical education philosophy. I wonder how connected his philosophy is to his parents' beliefs about sport, and activity?

When Reid talked about other experiences that shaped his passion for physical activity he noted,

> Big things that I can really lean on, I had two awesome phys. ed. teachers in high school. Both these two guys were just awesome role models. I always enjoyed phys. ed. more than just because I got to play hockey, and football, and soccer, and all those games, but more though [because] I could attach myself with these guys. (Reid, 3-2-1, 244)

Reid speaks passionately about his high school physical education program. For Reid it was not just his success in the class that created a passion for physical education. It seems his ability to "attach" himself to his physical educators was the part of physical education that Reid remembered. His teachers, role models, created an environment in which Reid succeeded. His experiences in this environment created a connection, rapport, between his teachers and himself. He

looked up to them, and when I asked him about his imagined stories of who he would be as a physical educator, he replied

> basically a meld of characters who drove me to think about that teacher idea. So a mix of my two high school teachers, my practicum teachers, my favorite university profs kind of thing…I think I'd be mostly myself, but a mix of their attributes as well. (Reid, 3-2-1, 335)

Reid also spoke about how his teacher education program created interruptions in his story of physical education, and allowed for possible reconceptualizations. "…There is always that story that phys. ed. is not just floor hockey and dodge ball" (Reid, 3-2-1, 346). This notion that phys. ed. is not just floor hockey and dodge ball did not surface until Reid began taking physical education classes at the university. As he spoke, I thought about how similar his experience was to my experience with physical education. As he entered his program he was passionate about activity, competitive in sport, had coaching experiences, had two physical education teacher role models, and had success in physical education as a subject area. I am attentive to how Reid's past experiences shaped his perceptions about sport, and activity. I am also attentive to his emotional connection to being successful in physical education, and sport. The social environments in which he had success often included male role models such as his dad, Uncle Mike, and his physical education teachers. These environments were also infused with competition. My own influences were very similar to Reid's shaping influences.

It could be argued that, a male-dominated competitive sport-based environment is the dominant story in physical education. As I think about this dominant story, my thoughts shift to those individuals who do not fit into this dominant story: females, overweight individuals, un-athletic individuals, un-active individuals, those who do not enjoy competition, those who do not enjoy sports. A counter story to the dominant narrative includes competitive, and non competitive environments, a variety of activities that promote life long participation, inclusive physical education programs that offer differentiated learning opportunities for both athletes and non-athletes, a focus on education as opposed to simply playing and having fun. I wonder how difficult this counter story may be to write if the individuals moving into physical education programs have grown up in, and had success in, the dominant story of physical education. Yet what is surprising for me, given Reid's background, is that competition and sport were not dominant parts of his physical education program. Again, I wonder how his past experiences have shaped his philosophical underpinnings of what is important in physical education.

As I came to understand Reid's stories to live by, I became more attentive to the environments, or places, that shaped his story, as well as the individuals on those landscapes that helped to shape Reid's stories. As he put it "I could attach myself" to these individuals who had common interests, coached me, taught me, and mentored me. In a metaphorical way, perhaps it was less what was being taught, and more about how it was being taught, and who was

teaching it. As I move forward with Reid's narrative account, the centrality of relationships becomes a more resonant thread in his stories to live by.

Transitions

As Reid's family moved from the small northern town to a larger urban center, Reid decided to go to university. It might seem that Reid's past experiences with activity and sport would make physical education an obvious choice. However, as he started grade 10, his older sister was just starting university. His sister was in business, and I found out through our conversations that he saw his sister as a role model; especially academically. "She was totally the reason that when I started I went into business" (Reid, interim text negotiation, April 2012).

> I went to university thinking that I was going to be in business…I was planning to do a business communication degree. First year I took all the general courses, didn't do very well, focused more on the social side of university than the actual academic side. Scraped through, continued my second year, figured that business was probably, I didn't really enjoy the economics side, the management side, anything like that. Stats were not that good. Didn't like the maths. I was way bigger on the humanities. I liked the histories and liked the law classes. As much as I hated English in high school, it wasn't too bad. Anything I could do with writing, apart from a multiple-choice test, was always where I succeeded. After second year I was a history major in the Arts program. Then that summer I

> applied for education just simply because I started looking at it from the outside, and where am I going to go with a history major? So from there I applied to education. I was accepted into the history [education] program with a phys. ed. minor. (Reid, 3-2-1, 249)

The story fragment shows, like many beginning university students, Reid was uncertain about what he saw himself doing in the future. Although his past experiences with English in high school were not favorable, he became drawn to the humanities during his first years of university. His imagined story of the future, while enrolled as an Arts student and history major, did not seem to have a realistic path, and thus his transition into Education began. With an Education degree, it seemed that his enjoyment of history and English could lead to a future career. I wondered why the physical education minor? Why not physical education major? Reid responded, "lots of my history courses had already transferred over" (Reid, 3-2-1, 261). Reid's pre-requisite courses in history overlapped with the history courses in education, and provided a transition that allowed for an easy transfer. "If I would have gone back, I'd say that I would have majored in phys. ed. or done a phys. ed. degree. But in terms of timeline when I was in school, I just thought that was silly" (Reid, 3-2-1, 593).

Could this be conceptualized in a way that positions Education as a *backup* or *default?* From our conversations, I did not get the sense that Reid had always wanted to be a teacher. In his story above, it does seem that education was almost an afterthought, something that allowed him to use his university degree in a practical way. Reid's stories make me wonder about my conceptions

around who would make a good teacher? What intentions correlate to someone being an effective teacher, or staying in the profession? I was also a transfer student into Education. I remember writing my entrance essay, and thinking hard about what the gatekeepers might see as 'good' reasons for entering. I did not write my essay using an argument that I was not really sure about Education, but felt like I might get a job with a B.Ed. Such an essay may have resulted in a rejected application.

Are those who are storied into teaching, individuals who know they want to be teachers from as early as they can remember, better teachers? Do they stay in the profession longer? As I think about these questions, I am attentive to how important Reid's imagined stories were that brought him into the teacher education program. I wonder about how important these stories are to considering how we might sustain Reid, or how Reid might sustain himself, in teaching within K-12 schools.

Identity Negotiation

> My biggest thing after I got in to phys. ed. was the curriculum. And my biggest was always the [life long participation]. So if we could have a kid grasp any activity, whether it be organized team sport, or individual sport, or an individual activity that they could do well into their 50's, 60's, 70's, and be active three times a week, awesome. I could care less if they could make a layup. I could care less if they could hit that slap shot, anything like that. But going into it [the physical education program] yeah we are

> just going to run around and play some games for 45 minutes, and get some sweat burnt, and send these kids to math class. (Reid, 3-2-1, 361)

Reid's story fragment, for me, speaks to a shift in his identity from student to teacher. At this point, during his program, he began to think about the impact physical education might have on his students. Remarkably, he keys on the transfer of skills, and enjoyment into life. I find this remarkable given that his past experiences were filled with competition and sport. The above story dismisses these things as almost unimportant. He didn't care if "they could make a layup" or "hit that slap shot," he wanted them to transfer what they learned in his class to their everyday lives in a real way; he wanted them to be active into their "50's, 60's and 70's." Because Reid had experiences teaching students, and working with mentors and professors, these experiences may blur the temporality of when this transition began to happen. For example, was it a professor talking about curriculum that helped him to see physical education differently? Was it an experience with a mentor teacher? Was it his mother's recreational association with activity that created this imagined story for Reid? Given that he has taught physical education, did this notion of life long activity become stronger as he worked alongside students? These questions help me reflect on my pedagogy as a teacher educator. Reid's and my early experiences with sport and activity are very similar. My father competitively played softball, and coached a number of teams I played on. My mother was much more recreationally active, but very supportive of whatever activity I was involved in. I played competitive sports my whole life; competition was/is a large part of my

own stories to live by. My philosophies around physical education are so similar to Reid's.

Metaphorically, as I think about Reid's and my shifting identities, I think about a rainstorm. In the prairies I can see a rainstorm coming for hours. Yet it is difficult to decipher where the line of rain actually begins? For those who have ever watched a rainstorm approaching on the prairies, there is almost a line in the sky. As the storm gets closer, the line becomes blurrier, less defined? For Reid, perhaps that metaphoric line was first shaped when he saw his mom and dad as active individuals. Perhaps it began as he moved out of competitive sport, and found enjoyment in recreational sport. Perhaps it began as he became aware of the diversity of students in his classes. During the negotiation of Reid's narrative account he spoke more about the influence of his field experiences in shifting his stories of students. He began to ask himself, "what is the goal of PE here, fantastic athletes, or trying to get kids active for lifelong participation" (Reid, interim text negotiation, April 2, 2012)?

Perhaps, like a rainstorm, where it begins and ends is difficult to discern and maybe, un-important. What is important is that thinking about this shift as a rainstorm, allows it to be seen as a process similar to Reid's identity shifting. Like a rainstorm, although we cannot decipher when exactly it shifted, we know it shifted, and thinking about this shift in a temporal continuous way allows me to think about it as a process, a shift that is always in motion.

Professional landscape stories

> When I finished my Education degree, I worked for 6 months at the university. After that, about May…oh I'm sorry, February there was an Education career fair. I went in and talked to one of the guys from my old [high] school district. He said, are you interested in coming back? Do you have a job right now?" He was kind of going to hire me on the spot, but I had a contract with the campus recreation until June. So I got an e-mail from my old principal who was still the principal at my old high school. So he said, "I have a position opening up for September of next year." (Reid, 3-2-1, 94)

Although Reid was now comfortable with big city living, once he was done working at the university, he made the decision to take the teaching position in the town where he grew up. It was a full-time physical education position in a high school. These types of jobs are hard to come by directly out of university "I was thinking I'd do mostly social studies, mostly English with a bit of phys. ed. in the back. So in terms of dream position this was basically it, which was unreal" (Reid, 3-2-2, 266). Reid jumped at the opportunity. Along with the position, he noted that he knew a lot of the staff already and still had friends in town. "…It was just a really easy environment to ease my way into teaching" (Reid, 3-2-1, 104).

When I asked Reid about a typical day in his teaching position, he responded,

> I was probably firing off 80 to 85 hours a week at the school but I loved the coaching…It was basically every weekend, three times a week practices, so my time commitment had gone up 30 hours a week…I was kind of burnt out by the end of volleyball. (Reid, 3-2-1, 495)

Once Reid was done coaching volleyball his first year, he was asked to take on the duties of senior basketball coach. "I turned it down, off some advice from some other teachers saying you just have to relax and take some time to yourself…I'm really glad I did" (Reid, 3-2-1, 497).

I describe Reid as happy go lucky. Although he was working 85 hours a week, it did not seem to bother him. He seemed to enjoy the teaching aspect of his job, and it was almost like the coaching part of his job became something that did not seem like work to him. However, he knew when he had enough coaching. He, like many physical educators, spent multiple weekends a semester out of town. For smaller center schools, the travel is much more rigorous due to the increased distance between opponents.

There is also something about Reid's stories that struck me as different from my stories, and other stories I have heard from beginning teachers. I felt pressured at times to take on a plethora of extra-curricular activities. I did not have colleagues telling me "to relax;" I had colleagues and principals asking me to take on more duties. I took on these responsibilities with a smile thinking that saying no may jeopardize my teaching contract. Reid's refusal, when he was approached to coach basketball, creates a number of wonders for me. From his

stories, it becomes apparent that he was supported on his professional landscape. His colleagues told him to say no. Although this may seem like a small gesture, for me, as a beginning teacher, it was very difficult to say no. There also seems to be different expectations for physical education teachers in professional landscapes. As Reid said,

> It's funny. The expectation of staff is that A, new teachers take on the coaching, and B, if it's not new teachers, it's the phys. ed. staff. So seeing as I was both of those, I was kind of expected to do all this stuff. It was a good shift. It was nothing that blew me away. (Reid, 3-2-1, 500)

Although the coaching expectations may have surprised Reid, he continued to smile, and seemed to take the pressure to coach with a grain of salt. As I write this narrative account in a busy coffee shop, I am struck again by how intriguing it is that Reid responded this way. I wonder how Reid's past and future stories shaped his response.

Although Reid did not expect any payment for coaching, he found that in both implicit and explicit ways, those individuals who were involved heavily in extra-curricular activities had *perks.* Reid spoke to how his principal responded to those that were involved.

> You have lots of supervision, you're helping out coaching, and you're doing this, yeah for sure, you can go do that. If you come in and say I don't really want to teach this, I'd rather do something else…the principal will be like, yeah, for sure, your involved in all of that extra

> curricular stuff. You have that freedom, you have that flexibility because you have given so much to the school. (Reid, 3-2-1, 63)

Again, this gesture may seem small, but I am intrigued by the agency that Reid speaks to in this story fragment. His story of the principal was one that included the principal valuing him for the extra work he did. To take it one step further, spending extra hours with students provided him a flexibility and freedom that allowed him to have more power over decisions within the school; at least decisions regarding him, his teaching load, or his supervision. Reid noted that this was certainly not why he coached, but was a nice pat on the back for putting in extra time.

My wonders shift to Reid's imagined stories of teaching. It was apparent that Reid's imagined story of himself included coaching. "Coaching was definitely one of those things that really pushed me towards teaching, especially the phys. ed. side of it" (Reid, 3-2-1, 636). I wonder if this is partly why he was not surprised by the extra hours that were spent coaching. "…It's tough, people like you and I, enjoy coaching, and I love coaching. I didn't think I should be reimbursed for coaching. I didn't need an honorarium. As long as they were paying for my hotel room, I think that's fine" (Reid, 3-2-2, 42). It seems that, in a way, the coaching aspect of his job was sustaining for him. Perhaps it was sustaining given that he was able to choose when he would, and would not, coach. Coaching, on his terms, provided him opportunities to build stronger relationships with students; this was very important to Reid. It also allowed him

to gain more control over his professional landscape in a way that, from my experiences, is uncommon for beginning teachers.

Bumping stories

Past work I have done focused on the bumping of beginning teachers' imagined stories with the school landscape stories in which they work. As beginning teachers in my Master's work entered their first teacher positions they had strong ideas of how things would be. Often times, their stories did not align with the stories they lived out within their professional landscapes. As mentioned earlier, Reid seemed to have a good idea of what was going to happen as he began his first teaching position. Perhaps this is why his imagined professional landscape story only seemed to bump softly with the stories in the professional landscape. Having said that, in the story fragment below, Reid speaks to a bump between what he valued, and what the school system seemed to value.

> I mean this is not a performance-based position, profession even. You don't get rewarded for having 2 sub days in the whole year, you get rewarded for having your kids earn a 95 on their standardized tests and now we're talking standardized tests, what's that showing? Is it how effective a teacher I am? Am I really promoting creativity and new thought and sparking innovation, that kind of thing? Maybe. Probably I'm just teaching to the test, teaching what these kids need to know, but I think that's a tough part, same thing you can't qualify it, right? So how do you pat these teachers on the back other than saying good job? I mean

> it shouldn't be a completely extrinsic thing that you're working towards, but unfortunately lots of things are. (Reid, 3-2-3, 286)

He continued on:

> if teachers had more incentive, maybe it's incentive. But you look at these, like you said the new teachers that bend over backwards for a couple years, meanwhile the fourth and the fifth and the sixth year teachers, some of them might be still working really hard but you've seen just as many that are there at 8:30 and gone at 3:30, their lesson plans don't change, they don't do anything extracurricular, but they still expect the new teachers to do everything… So that'd be frustrating as a new teacher, be like why aren't they doing anything? But lots of these new teachers probably eventually turn into that as well, like I've put my time in and now it's somebody else's turn. (Reid, 3-2-3, 305)

Reid's words allude to the dominant story that seems to surround teaching, and beginning teachers. Beginning teachers are given, often, the less than desirable assignments. They are expected to take on a variety of extra-curricular activities, with little support. However, for Reid, this is not part of his story. He was teaching what he wanted to, and able to say no to coaching or extra-curricular obligations that he did not feel fit into his work load. When I asked him how he was able to be so involved at the school yet seem so balanced, he replied,

> Unlike you, it was a bit easier for me 'cause I didn't really have a family yet. So I wasn't in a committed relationship with anybody who was living

> with me. So that was better 'cause I didn't feel guilty. I'm not sure if that was ever something that came to you, but I never felt guilty being away from home and being at the school because I really had nothing else to do except for teaching and coaching which made it maybe easier for me. (Reid, 3-2-1, 524)

Reid's words articulate the relationship between his professional and personal landscapes. As he describes, he was able to focus on his professional landscape because his personal landscape was less demanding. I wonder what it would have been like if he had a girlfriend, wife and/or a family. Would this have made his heavy workload contentious. I am attentive to Reid's personal landscape, and how it provided, in a way, the space for him to become engrossed in teaching and coaching. Although living in a small town may have had less appeal than the large city, the lack of things to do outside of school seemed to allow Reid to be sustained by his work.

For some beginning teachers, the boundaries between their lives in their professional and personal landscapes often become blurry. In some ways work overtakes everything else. Although Reid's work did seem to overtake his personal landscape, he was okay with that. I asked Reid about his weekends when he was not coaching. I asked him if he had to work on the weekend. He said "Not really. Nice thing about phys. ed. is, I had some health, so I was planning for some health and marking some health stuff. But usually I have all of my stuff done during the week and weekends were pretty free for me" (Reid, 3-

2-2, 182). "…weekends were either heading to [large urban city] or just relaxing kind of" (Reid, 3-2-2, 176).

Although Reid attributed part of his free time to the lack of marking in physical education, it seems like Reid was able to put things into perspective, which allowed him to step away from teaching. "You need to know when you need to work, you need to know, OK, now its Reid time. And you just have to get away from the school and get away from the kids and focus on yourself" (Reid, 3-2-2, 290). It seems simple. Yet, I felt like my teacher's work was never done. For Reid, creating time for himself seemed to be something he saw as a priority, and he followed through with it.

How was Reid able to set boundaries between *school time* and *Reid time?* In a session for beginning teachers on wellness, I brought up the topic of balance; many of them laughed. The common retort was that everybody at the school tells them to have balance. But the beginning teachers they asked, "when are they supposed to get everything done." How could they not let their work consume them? Reid seemed to feel like he was able to live comfortably in both his personal and professional landscapes. Perhaps it was Reid's short term commitment to teaching in this small town that allowed him to take his busy schedule with a grain of salt.

Small Town Saturday Night

> It's a nice little town, my buddy just moved up there for an oil job, and he's from Edmonton, lived in Calgary, now he's going there. So he's

> same thing, he's terrified, he thinks it's going to be snowy fields and igloos and all that kind of stuff. So it's a nice little town, the lake is beautiful. In the summer it's the best place in the world, in the winter, but I mean when you're teaching, so if you have a family, it's a great place to have a family 'cause if you're there for the summers you'll love it. But I mean every summer I got 'out of dodge' and I headed down here to be with my buddies. 15,000 people. It's got all the amenities you need, it's got the hockey rinks, it's got a few different shopping centers, it's got Sportchek, it's got OJs now. (Reid, 3-2-3, 963)

In the small place where he grew up and where he taught, Reid was unable to get away from students and parents.

> So there's still zero anonymity in this city place, so you go shopping, you see parents or kids, you go to the movies, you see parents or kids…. but one movie theatre, one hockey rink, one workout place, so I mean you could be seeing your 18 year old kids if you go for a workout, and oh Reid's here, great, let's go talk to him, or let's go bug him, or let's watch him workout, or something, it's different…There's not a whole lot to do social-wise. (Reid, 3-2-2, 997)

He continued,

> Most teachers went for drinks on Friday at OJs, but after that go to a buddy's house 'cause there's no place to go out for drinks 'cause you'll see Grade 12 kids or parents, I'm not sure which is worse, maybe parents.

> So yeah you usually just hang out at buddies' houses more than going, there's no good restaurants to really go out to so you're not enjoying that side of things. You don't go to a movie 'cause you'll see a million kids. You especially don't take a date to the movies 'cause brutal, you don't go with another guy to movies 'cause now you're the gay teacher. Hey Reid who is your boyfriend? You're running laps in the morning kid. Yeah so I mean the anonymity thing was a bit of a pain for me. I didn't enjoy that, especially as a younger guy, 22 when I started, some of my students are 18 so I mean that's a bit fluffy. So that was a bit of a pain in the ass. (Reid, 3-3-2, 1014)

Thinking within the metaphorical three dimensional narrative inquiry space, I am attentive to a number of things that need unpacking in the story fragments above. Although Reid's imagined stories surrounding his professional landscape seemed to align with what he was actually doing, it seems that his imagined story on his personal landscape bumped against the stories he was living out in the small northern city.

As a 22 year old it was difficult to compose a life in this small city. As a teacher, I appreciate the need to get away from the school, the students, and the parents. Yet in this small city, as Reid explained, to get away he had to leave the city. Attending social functions at local establishments meant running into parents and students. Not only did this in some ways shape his identity, but it shaped his identity as perceived by others.

Reid seemed to be able to create boundaries between his professional work, and his personal life, but to be unable to create boundaries between teacher and person. Although he could leave his work at school, he did not seem able to leave being a teacher at school. For Reid, this created a bump in his personal landscape that did not allow him to compose a future life that seemed sustainable.

> The big detriment to me, which you know about, was there was no one there, I won't say romantically, but you know what I mean. There was nothing that really made me want to stay. I mean relationship is a big part about where you are and there was nothing even close to that there, just because its a very transient town. (Reid, 3-2-1, 153)

Reid, imagining his future, sees a relationship as important. For him, this small, as he called it, "transient town" did not allow him to compose a future life that would sustain him. It is interesting to think that mentorship and induction programs are all based, in a sense, on professional development. Yet Reid's stories show that it was in his personal landscape where he experienced more bumping with his imagined stories. I wonder what would have happened if Reid had met someone, and built a relationship. What if this someone lived in this town, and was unwilling to move, would Reid have stayed? After Reid read the last paragraph during the negotiation of the narrative account he looked surprised. It was as if he had not thought about this before. He responded, "Ya, I think I would still probably be up there" (Reid, interim text negotiation, April 2012).

Stories to Leave By

When I asked Reid about his intentions entering his teaching position, his response was not surprising.

> I'd say my plan was to teach for at least 2 years, maybe 3, get my permanent certificate. If I loved it, maybe I'd love it, I really had no pre-conceived notion. But it was, I'd say, a means to an end. I did hope to get back to the large urban city cause that is where my family is and that's where I'm familiar with. A bunch of my buddies have moved down there, so great idea to head back down there now…I kind of like the bigger city atmosphere. (Reid, 3-2-1, 120)

Reid's intentions for his first teaching position remind me how important it is to understand how beginning teachers imagine composing their lives as they enter their first teaching position. Reid's teaching position was, as he said, his dream job, but the place of his dream job did not align with his imagined story that he was in the midst of composing in his personal landscape. Although Reid's principal tried to keep him at the school, after his second year, he resigned from his contract and moved on to travel the world.

When I first asked Reid why he left his teaching position his immediate response was the city he was teaching in. When I asked him if he thinks he would have left if he would have been teaching in a larger city, his response was that he did not know. Certainly it would have made leaving more difficult if he was living in the location he wanted to. Yet, if he was teaching in a large urban

city, perhaps his teaching position would not have been as desirable. Once Reid returned from his travels he moved back to the large urban city. Although he did look for teaching jobs, nothing that appealed to him was available. When our conversations first began Reid was working as a wine representative. He is now working for a professional sports team in their marketing area.

Teaching vs……..

Part of my interest in working with teachers who were now in other professions was to better understand how, in retrospect, they thought about their new jobs. When Reid explained a regular day at his new job he spoke about setting up accounts, checking emails, and meeting clients. He also noted that "all the meeting times are made by me. I control when I have lunch, I control when I start, I control when I go home, all that kind of stuff" (Reid, 3-2-4, 67).

This control and flexibility over his schedule seemed to be very important to Reid. I asked Reid what the biggest difference was between his new job and teaching. He replied,

> I'd say this is more flexible, I'd also say it's a lot less rewarding. Rewarding in the sense, I'm sure there's a lot of salespeople who get really, really pumped when they make a big sale, that's what drives them, I get more pumped when I make a good relationship or when I can talk to somebody pretty openly and form a good relationship so similar to the teaching side. My favourite part about teaching was really building the relationship with kids and getting that rapport and then working from

> there, so I'd say the rapport thing and the relationship building is still kind of at the forefront of why I really enjoy doing it. (Reid, 3-2-4, 87)

Reid spoke often about how important relationships were to his teaching and to his life. The relational part of teaching for Reid was as important, or more important, than the subject areas he was teaching. For Reid his new position provides flexibility that teaching did not, and he is still able to focus on the aspect that he felt was the most important part of teaching, relationships.

I asked each participant if they felt they were healthier people since they had left teaching. Each replied with different answers, but each seemed to feel they were more healthy now that they were not teaching. Reid noted,

> I feel like I'm emotionally and socially healthier… Mentally yeah, I'm in a pretty good spot I think. I'm pretty happy with where I am, I don't feel like I'm missing out on something. I'm not stressed at all… I feel like I'm just more at ease now. It kind of gives me the ability to do what I'd like to do when I'd like to do it, and maybe that's a bit selfish but it's something I had the ability to do, so why not do it? (Reid, 3-2-4, 1017)

I wondered if Reid wished he was still teaching. I sensed that, his professional landscape position was okay, but that it might not sustain him for an extended period. I also sensed that Reid's personal landscape, at this point in his life, is more at the forefront than what he is doing professionally. When I asked Reid this question during the narrative account negotiation, he responded in a way that gave me the sense that he was very uncertain about what he is doing now, and

what he might be doing in the future. I am also attentive to the importance Reid has put on place. This is not to say that what he is doing professionally is not important, but Reid gave up his dream teaching position to live in the location that he can imagine composing a life.

I am reminded of Elder Bob Cardinal's words, "the land does not recognize us, we are disconnected from place." Although he may have been speaking more to the aspect of nature, Bob's words help me think about Reid's experiences with teaching in a place that did not allow him to imagine composing a future life; he was disconnected. Will Reid return to teaching? I think he might if his dream position came up in his dream location. However, as he negotiates his new professional landscapes and his personal landscape, it may become harder and harder to imagine giving up the flexibility he has now, to return to the classroom. For now, it seems that Reid is composing a life within which he can imagine a sustaining future. He is now voluntarily coaching a spring hockey team and finding that he is able to live out pieces of his imagined story of teaching. He noted that "he was really missing working with kids, but the coaching is helping with that" (Reid, interim text negotiation, April 2, 2012).

The ending of this account has shifted since Reid and I had the opportunity to negotiate it. When I finished reading the account, Reid leaned back in his chair, put his hands on his face, and said "I don't know, I just don't know. After reading this, it reminds me how much I loved teaching, maybe I will go back, I just don't know" (Reid, interim text negotiation, April 12, 2012). Although I sensed a tension with his leaving the profession before, this final

conversation laid the tension out explicitly. Reid is not sure what his future holds. For now, his personal life, and the place in which it is lived out, is most important. However, I am not sure, nor is Reid, what comes next. For now he has left.

Appendix D

Alis's Narrative Account

Introduction

Early Beginnings

As I coasted into Alis's hometown, I was struck by how different this small town felt than the large city I currently live in. I had many experiences with smaller towns in Saskatchewan, and Alis's place, the place she now calls home, brings back a nostalgic feeling. There is a main strip that includes hotels, truck stops and the stereotypical Chinese restaurant and it is winter. Although it is winter, I envision bikes sitting on the front lawns during the summer season as I meander into the residential areas. I imagine kids organizing themselves in the evening for a game of kick the can and not having to be home until the streetlights illuminate. In the winter I can see kids making their way to the outdoor rink to join a game of shinny, and having to be dragged off the ice for dinner. I picture neighbors turning their vehicles off in the middle of the road to have a quick conversation about the small town sports team, or the latest news in the paper. Neighbors waving to each other as they leave the house in the morning, and conversing as they mow the lawn or shovel the driveway. As a young girl Alis lived in a similar community, although she did not describe her small hometown in a nostalgic way.

Alis and I spent a good deal of time discussing both her home now, and the town that she grew up in. The ways our conversations have unfolded resonate

so strongly with Dewey's notions of experience. In a cyclical way each of the experiences she has shared are a part of her story to live by, and perhaps they are also a part of her 'story to leave by'. When I speak about 'stories to leave by' I am drawing on Clandinin, Huber and Downey's (2010) notion of early career teacher attrition being a process. Teachers are composing their lives prior to coming to live within the professional landscape, and as they leave the profession they are still in the midst of composing these lives.

Keeping this in mind as I poured through the transcripts from beginning to end was helpful for me. In prior attempts at writing Alis's narrative accounts I have tried to start with an experience that resonated with me. However, as I read through the transcripts again, I realized that the lived experiences of her early beginnings were an integral part of understanding both Alis's present and future story fragments. Alis's moving back and forth in time, in a way contextualizing her experiences, allowed the experiences that she shared to take on a different meaning. As I move forward with the narrative account, I feel that beginning in a linear way, with her experiences, as a child, may be a good place to start.

Pineview[36] was a small town in Alberta. It was the place that Alis's family, her mother, father and brother, called home. Alis notes, it "was a very Christian community and we weren't a particularly religious family, and so growing up I really felt that I did not fit in with the community around us" (Alis, 3-1-1, 258). Their spiritual preferences were not the only cause of Alis's feeling

[36] Pseudonym for the town Alis grew up in.

of isolation. “The girls were in dance, and all the guys were in hockey, and we didn’t do either of those…so I really grew up feeling very different from the people that I grew up with, and that was a big part of my childhood experience” (Alis, 3-1-3, 323). Alis also explained that if there was one word to describe her childhood it would be boredom. “I think it was this whole feeling of me just feeling very different, and very bored and like I just want to be somewhere other than here. So that was kind of the theme of my life (Alis, 3-1-3 328).

Alis had talked about her childhood in earlier conversations, but this was our third conversation and more personal information about Alis’s childhood gave a much richer contextual background to her ambition of creating a classroom environment that was attentive to diversity and difference. It seems that her experiences as a child had created a desire to help students to not feel like she did when she was in elementary school. “I was a very unhappy child because of this whole isolation aspect, and when I was teaching elementary, I found it very difficult because I really felt, like the kids that didn’t fit in, I really felt their pain ‘cause that was kind of where I was at…I had a really hard time emotionally teaching elementary” (Alis, 3-1-3, 347). Alis’s words portray, not only how painful the isolating experiences were for her, but also how strongly they shaped her identity, as a teacher, in a temporal way. Although Alis felt some tension working alongside the students on the margin, in some way her past experiences helped her to recognize these students. And to, in a sense, re-live her own experiences on the margins as an elementary school student.

A while later, in our third conversation, she added,

> So it was hard for me to, I don't know, and its hard to explain cause I don't think I've really processed necessarily that part of my life too much, but yeah to kind of be like, I just sort of felt awkward and part of it was, I guess because when I was at that age, I didn't know the solution, to how to make my life better, I was just unhappy…so then I would see kids in a similar situation and I didn't know what the solution was then, I don't really know what the solution is now, but I really felt for them in that, I know how much it hurts to be that outcast, and so I wanted to do something, but I didn't really know what to do. (Alis, 3-1-3, 378)

Alis, now that she has had more time with counseling, feels different about the story fragment above. She told a story about an individual who was going through a similar situation, and instead of feeling helpless, she was able to sit down and help him/her through the situation. In some way her counseling experiences have allowed her to re-shape her story to one that would now allow her to help these students on the margin.

Alis's words are insightful, and in some ways conflicted. I remember her being apologetic, and somewhat vulnerable. As I look through the transcript, I am taken back, in an emotional way, to this conversation. In a temporal way her words make me aware of how inextricably linked her stories of an elementary student are to her stories of teacher. Her isolation as an elementary school student shaped her personal and social experiences as she taught on the elementary landscape. They also shaped her challenges to create an environment

in an elementary setting that embraced belonging and respect created tension for her.

This tension, for me, depicts a bumping between Alis's imagined story of who she would be as a teacher and the teacher that she was actually able to live out on the professional landscape. This tension between the two stories created a feeling for Alis, a feeling that she struggled with. Thinking about this experience of struggle in a temporal way, I consider other experiences that Alis shared with me that may have helped to shape her identity as a beginning teacher. Of course, there is no possible way to unpack each experience she shared, but the creation of a positive and inclusive social environment was a strong and ever present thread throughout our conversations. As I move into reflecting on this notion of inclusive social environments and Alis's hope to create them, I move forwards and backwards in a temporal way in which I am attentive to the personal, social and topographical place, in which her experiences take place.

World Travelling

As Alis shared the two experiences below, which speak to her shifting perceptions, she became excited. Her voice is notably louder in the audio recording, and I remember the smile on her face as she spoke passionately about these experiences.

> The first time I really travelled…with my family, I was 14 and we went to Great Brittan and that was huge for me in a lot of ways. One of the ways was that my name, ironically means guardian of the sea, and I'm

> like, my parents gave me the name guardian of the sea, and I'm like landlocked, like what the heck? And it's a Welsh name and my mom's history was Welsh and so anyway, one of my key experiences of being in Wales was I finally got to be near the ocean, and this inspired the whole notion of needing to travel. (Alis, 3-1-3, 385)

Alis speaks to how important a shift in place was for her to begin to see the world in a different way. Also the temporality of her words above show the importance of not only her own history, but also her family history. Her mom's Welsh history was clearly a part of her name, and in some way her name created a desire to experience the ocean. The temporality of this experience shaped her future experiences with travel, and a desire to discover a different way to imagine the world, and perhaps her future.

> I read a lot as a kid, I still read a lot, and you know when you read novels and children's books…there is all these cool things that don't exist in middle class suburban North America. For example, keyholes are in children's literature everywhere. I peeked through the keyhole to check what was on the other side; I never understood that growing up as a kid. What do you mean you peeked through a keyhole? You can't see through a freakin' keyhole. And I went to England and my cousin's house had a keyhole that you could actually peek through, and I was like, oh my God, these things really exist, and it was like I discovered a whole bunch of these concepts almost that exist in, I don't know, the narrative that you

> grow up in reading as kids, but I never saw or experienced as a little person. (Alis, 3-1-3, 382)

Alis continued to talk, but as she finished the paragraph referring to the keyhole, I found my mind drifting. Not because I was bored, but because her comment caught me off guard. Often times in research interviews I find myself struggling to find reflective questions that may help the participant think about their lives, and respond in reflective ways. This was not the case with Alis, and the metaphor she describes above resonated strongly with me.

Alis's early beginnings speak to her experiences growing up in a homogenous town, where the dominant story was strong. As Alis and I negotiated her narrative account, she provided more contextual information that provided more meaning to the keyhole metaphor. Alis was not allowed to watch a lot of television growing up, life was boring, but what she was reading about was not always boring. The keyhole, for her, was symbol of leaving the boring place that she did not fit in, and discovering a place she had read about. "My imagined story was not, this is the way things are, it was from my own experience, other people in the world have much more interesting lives than I do. The keyhole signified that I was finally able to be one of the other people that gets to do interesting things" (Alis, interim text negotiation, April 2012).

As I write this now I think about Alis's experiences with teaching, and leaving teaching, I wonder how these experiences shaped her identity as a teacher. She speaks directly to how these experiences shaped her own

perceptions of herself, perhaps, her own perceptions about where she fit. Alis's early experiences with travel, created a passion for seeing the world, which inspired many more inter-cultural experiences. When I asked Alis what these experiences looked like in her classroom she stopped for a moment, she put her finger to her mouth and murmured, almost inaudibly, "hmmmm." "I brought a lot of what I learned from my travel and intercultural experiences into my classroom, and I tried to share consciously and [probably] subconsciously some of what I'd learned about diversity and intercultural communication and respect and all that. I tried to bring that into my classroom" (Alis, 3-1-3, 386). Of course, Alis's travel experiences were not the only aspect of her past life that shaped what she believed was important in the classroom.

Sacred Stories of Equality

> I've often though about where the hell did that come from? I think part of it I owe to my Mom and family meetings. So we would have family meetings, I don't know how often. They felt frequent when I was a kid, they might've been once a month…and one of the things that we would discuss at these family meetings was Mom, like a certain amount of the family budget was set aside to go to charity. And she would sort of say, OK, like as a family, what are we going to give money to? So I was reading about…learning about you know, water and building wells in Africa, and as a young kid we were hearing that at the dinner table. (Alis, 3-1-2, 521)

In the first line, when Alis refereed to *that*, she was speaking to the notion of social justice. Often the word social justice is used, and there are many different definitions that it seems to take on. I think it is important to give insight about how we used this term.

The word social justice, in Merriam-Webster, is defined as "a state or doctrine of egalitarianism.[37]" This definition seems simple, but what it does not take into account is that the social structures in which we live are in some ways based on class, race and gender. The scope of this paper is not to delve into the complexities of this term, or the various definitions that are often associated with the word. But, it is important, for me, to think hard about what Alis meant when she used this word. When Alis talked about social justice, from my interpretation, she was alluding to making the landscapes on which she worked better for all of the individuals involved but with attentiveness to those that were marginalized.

During the negotiation of the narrative account, Alis added more to my wonders around her idea of social justice. As she thought about her attentiveness to social justice she spoke to her conversion to Catholicism. For her, taking care of the marginalized is an important part of Catholicism. She talked about the attentiveness to people's ability to change, or to be helped, and sometimes their inability to change. Sometimes individuals cannot change, and should be supported whether they change or not.

[37] http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/social%20justice

Whether it be a classroom, an office or a movie store, it became quite clear that Alis was motivated, in someway, to create situations that made the places she was working better for the people on that landscape. Again in a temporal, personal and social way, I wonder how these values for making things better came to be. What types of experiences had Alis encountered that made equity so important. When I asked her this question, her response was interesting, and reflective as usual.

> We were sort of a family that watched the news, my brother being 5 years older than me and 6 years ahead of me in the school was learning about current events and stuff in social studies and so, the conversations around the dinner table would often be about what the major world events were…so I had the sense that there were people in the world that were suffering and that were unhappy and that I needed to do something about it. (Alis, 3-1-2, 531)

As I think about Alis as a young girl sitting down at a family meeting to discuss what social cause the family budget would go to, her reflective nature and need to make a difference makes more sense. In my own family, discussions around famine and human suffering were not the norm; I would have to say they very seldom happened. Alis's brother who was older, a role model, and studying global issues at school, allowed Alis to become involved in the complicated conversations that may sometimes be silenced. While these family meetings seemed to shape Alis's ideas about what was important in the world, they also seemed to allow Alis to dream big about how she would help to make the world

a better place. In one conversation she spoke to this, "I've got to do big, worldly, I've got to be an international aid worker, I've got to be a politician, I've got to, like on that big global level" (Alis, 3-1-2, 553). Making a difference on a global level in a humanitarian way is no small task. And although it may be said that many young people have inclinations to make the world a better place, it seems to me that this narrative thread is still apparent in Alis's story to live by.

After Alis graduated from high school she moved away from home to study at a college. It seems her college experiences continued to interact with her early landscape experiences and continued to strengthen her need to make a difference. She talked often about the impact that her college experiences had on her as a person and a teacher.

> I think my years spent at college, it didn't seem to matter what courses you were taking, whether you were taking History or Anthro or Economics or whatever, the teachers were all very good at showing you, I don't know, I just read so many examples and we discussed so many examples of this, times when people chose the system over the human, and I realized how easy it is to do…do you want to be the person that goes against the system, and says hey, I'm going to have a Jew hiding out in my basement? Or do you want to be the person that says I'm scared of the system…I'm going to follow along with what everybody else is doing. (Alis, 3-1-2, 482)

Alis's hope to make the world a better place, and on a smaller scale, hope to make the places she worked better for the individuals on that landscape, allowed her to see herself as a change agent. For Alis, a large part of being this change agent was modeling the values and ideals that she attempted to pass on to others. "Playing by the rules, it genuinely scares me. What am I allowing to happen that should never happen, if I play by the rules" (Alis, interim text negotiation, April 2012)? In the story fragment below, Alis again refers to her family upbringing as she discusses her attentiveness to follow through with her convictions, which she refers to as integrity.

> Integrity, I mean it describes both my parents but I think it describes my Dad more…he has a very strong sense of what is right, and possibly owing to his military background, he's willing to defend it, and really lives his life and always has by his principles…so for my Dad it was about no, you be a good person and you serve others and you demonstrate humanity and compassion. (Alis, 3-1-2, 473)

Although in the story fragment Alis is describing what she sees as her dad's principles, as I read through the fragment, I see Alis's way of being in the world described. I think Alis made a decision early on in her life that she wanted to be the person who chooses the human over the system. As a beginning teacher, it is often not easy to do what you think is right, as opposed to what the school story expects you to do. However, along with her sense of social justice that was a strong part of her story, there was a strong sense of integrity. Although integrity could be described as a number of things, the best description of integrity I have

been privy to came from Elder Bob. “Words, deeds, actions” (Bob, Personal conversation, July 21, 2011). I took this to mean that our words and promises are simply just words and promises if they are not followed through with actions. I feel this definition also resonates with Alis’s notions of integrity.

Alis’s convictions, shaped by both of her parents, are strong and have become a large part of her story to live by. During the negotiation of her narrative account, Alis referred to Micah 6:8; “To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your god.” She denoted that there was a strong connection between her spirituality and her desire to help others. Creating these types of environments in her life, and her classroom was and is very important to her. Humanity, integrity, and social justice were values that Alis felt strongly about, and felt strongly about portraying to her students. Instances that Alis was sustained showed me that she was able to see that she had reached her students in this way. They got it. They saw that integrity was an important value. They saw that Alis acted with integrity and treated her students in a human way. However, when Alis’s imagined story bumped with the school story it created tension.

A Path to Teaching: Imagined Stories

Alis is at a point in her life where she is not sure what next year holds, yet I sensed this has often been the case for her. As I think about the high rates of beginning teachers leaving the profession, I often wonder about how they came to education. As I have mentioned in other writing, how could we possibly understand how we might sustain teachers, if we don’t understand why, or how,

they have come to be teachers? As I entered into conversations with Alis, this temporal question was on my mind. Alis has now left three different teaching positions. Yet, from our conversations, I gather that in each of these positions, which she left, she had success. As she moves into her Master's in counseling, she is still not certain whether or not she will go back to teaching.

One of the strengths of narrative inquiry, from my perspective, is that research conversations happen over an extended period of time. I have had time to sit with transcripts, and to sit with Alis's words. Alis's ideas have shifted even since our conversations began. Her outlook on her future as a teacher, or counselor, or mother, has shifted as she has had the opportunity to participate in her first practicum as a counselor. As I wonder about what Alis's future holds, I am reminded of her early beginnings, and her imagined story of who she would be as a teacher.

> To give you the full picture, I had kind of always thought I was going to get a degree in something and then I would do an Ed. after degree, that was my thought. I did my first year as an arts student and I really liked that and I was like yay, arts, great, I have no idea what to major in. Then so I took a couple of years off and I travelled and I did all kinds of cool exchanges and other things and then I came back. And I thought, I'm going to be a political science student, yeah that's what I want to be, International relations, woohoo. The by October of that year of political science I was like I am so not a political scientist…but it's too late to drop and three of five courses were all year courses…I'm in it for the

> long haul…well I now have 6 months to figure out what else I could do next year. I considered every possibility and finally I was like, well I always thought I was going to do a degree in something and then Ed. After degree, well if I know about the education part why don't I just do that? (Alis, 3-1-1, 261)

Thinking about Alis's words, I wonder why there was such indecisiveness with the decision to go into education. I can remember back to my entrance into education, and I was the same way. I remember writing my application essay for the first time, and trying to think about how I could portray someone who was passionate about becoming a teacher, even though I did not apply my first year. I think there is an assumption that those individuals who know they want to be teachers, or are storied into teaching in their early beginnings, will make better teachers. In thinking about teacher attrition, there may be an assumption that those individuals who are the most passionate about teaching will stay in teaching. This is clearly an assumption, as research surrounding this phenomenon has not been undertaken. However, thinking about teachers' intentions as they enter teaching is important.

> My mom kept a book called School Days…and once a year it has your school picture and your report card in it. On the back page it was always like when I grow up I want to be a. And up until probably grade 8, teacher was always what I had written in there. It was probably in part 'cause my dad was a teacher and part because I was good at school. (3-1-1, 713)

Although Alis spoke in conversations about her struggles with elementary school, she was referring to the social interactions with other students. She was always a good student, and always strived to be at the top of the class. These places, positive classroom spaces, provided a feeling of success and an environment, which as a little girl, felt comfortable.

> As a little girl, I mean it's' interesting because, like one of the career paths that I was sort of on there for a while was in theatre, and when I think of how I perceived teaching as a young person, it was quite similar to theatre in a way 'cause I'm standing up in front of a group of people kind of performing the role of teacher. (Alis, 3-1-2, 126)

Temporally, I get a glimpse of Alis's imagined story of teaching when she was a young girl. Alis had been socialized as a student to see standing in front of the class, "performing the role of teacher," as what it would be like to be a teacher. Along with her experiences at school, Alis's dad played a role in her imagined story of teaching. When I asked Alis about her dad's influence on her becoming a teacher, I was intrigued by her metaphorical response. "When I was a young kid, I didn't even really understand the kind of teaching that my Dad did 'cause it was way different than what I was seeing as an elementary kid" (3-1-2, 99). Alis attributed this disconnection between what her father did, and her notions of teaching, to his work in industrial arts; to her, it did not resemble the teaching that she had experienced. Alis, as a young girl, saw teaching as "all your kids in these nice neat little rows and [she] would stand up at the

chalkboard with [her] ruler or whatever and do [her] little lesson…[her] as instructor" (3-1-2, 130).

As Alis's "universe began to expand" (3-1-2, 145), and she experienced the plethora of careers that were available to her as an academically successful individual, she began to think about different professions. She notes, I "was never really very much of a rebel, but as much as I had that teenage rebel phase, it was like oh, I can't be like my Dad. I don't want to have the same job as him…so part of it was that I have to be different than my family" (3-1-2, 153).

However, as Alis, in a sense tried to escape from teaching, it seems that the interaction of her past experiences continued to pull her back to the profession that, as a little girl, she had always imagined being involved in.

> I went to K-9 school…I could be helping kids in elementary 'cause there was that large range...Then when I got into high school, that's where things started to once again be like, hmmm, maybe I really should do it. In grade 9 this happened too, especially with math…I'm not really a math student, so for me to understand math I really have to break it down…. so I would explain a lot of stuff to my fellow students who didn't understand the teacher…And whole bunch of students were like, man I get it when you explain it, I get it, when other people explain it I don't. (3-1-1, 730)

Alis leaned in as she told the story about helping her fellow classmates. She was excited to share it, and it was, from my perspective, something that she was proud of. The experience affirmed not only her desire to be a teacher, but her

imagined success as a teacher and again, the classroom place as an environment where Alis felt comfortable. This experience happened with peers at an influential age, and perhaps Alis's respect for her peers' comments also made this experience more important in her path to becoming a teacher.

After Alis's first year of university she went to New Brunswick to help teach English in French classrooms. She was called a Language Monitor,

> Normally what a monitor would do is take a small group of students and work with them and do games and activities. But they very quickly were like, oh, you're really good at this stuff, so we'll just let you basically plan the English lesson and we'll just supervise. (3-1-1, 747)

Again in this experience, I am privy to Alis's feeling of success. Having an experienced teacher tell you that you are effective at what you are doing is a powerful event. She was successful in another classroom place, and enjoyed her experience working with grade 3-6 students in New Brunswick. These affirming experiences, in a temporal way, strengthened Alis's imagined story as a teacher.

While, from my perception, these experiences were shaping Alis's path into education, she still had not entirely decided that she wanted to be a teacher, and had not yet enrolled in the Education Faculty. "Technically on the books on the university's books I was a drama major…but I was like what the hell am I going to do with a drama degree" (3-1-1, 766)? After her first year of university, after travelling to a number of places around the world, Alis's social justice values encouraged her to enroll in political science. Although she liked the idea

of being involved in the political world, her experiences within her classes did not inspire her to continue along that path. She applied into the Education Faculty at this point and was accepted, however, she also applied into the stage management stream in fine arts, and was accepted. The stage management program was difficult to get in and they only accept a small portion of people who apply. People who graduate from this program are some "of the people who stage manage the Oscars" (Alis, 3-1-1, 788).

The summer between making the decision between stage management and education Alis traveled to France to be a tour guide at Vimy Ridge. "We got a lot of school groups while I was there. And it was just another one of these, hey I seem to be good at this and kids seemed to want to listen to me. I thought, maybe I should do this" (Alis, 3-1-1, 777). After sitting down to think about her past experiences, Alis finally decided to become an education student. "I've been on the teaching path for years. Of course I'm going to be a teacher, how could I have waited this many years before I finally went into education" (Alis, 3-1-1, 796).

Thinking narratively about Alis's experiences from the time she was a young child until she made the final decision to enter education is important. Of course, Alis did not share all of her experiences that brought her to teaching, but in our time spent she felt that the experiences shared above were pivotal glimpses, or moments of affirmation. If I think about the threads, using the metaphorical three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, running through the

stories that Alis shared with me pertaining to her path to education, I am intrigued by how similar the experiences are.

The places in which the experiences take place are geographically varied. They happened in small town classrooms, elementary schools, junior high schools, and historical sites. In a topographical sense, it could be argued that these places are different, and this may be true. However, I am drawn to the similar role that Alis played in each of the experiences. In each experience, from my perspective, Alis is seen as the knowledge holder, or expert. Sitting her bears in rows and instructing them, the way teachers do. Helping fellow classmates understand something that she can break down and explain to them. Teaching English in a French classroom, with French teachers to French students, in an environment that her knowledge was clearly valued. I see this extending to Vimy Ridge as well, although like the other experiences it did not happen in a classroom, Alis, as tour guide, was acting as expert to those individuals who wanted to learn from her.

I see the similarity in the way that Alis felt during these experiences. Alis reiterated how much this resonated with her during the negotiation of her narrative account. These experiences made her feel good. It was personally satisfying to help people learn things, which they did not know. From the experiences she shared, I am confident that she was good at helping these individuals learn something they did not know.

I wonder about the similarity of the social environment that was apparent in each of these experiences. For me, as an athlete and coach, I had a number of opportunities helping students or players learn something they were passionate about or needed to learn. They were there for a reason, and often times on their own terms. For me, like Alis, I experienced success in helping the students and players learn. As a beginning teacher, prior to my practicum experiences, I carried these experiences with me. However, as I entered the classroom, I experienced a much more complex, and different social environment. As I did not ask Alis this question, I wonder if she felt the same way as she entered her first professional teaching landscape. I also wonder how these preconceived notions of expert teacher bumped with the experiences of beginning teacher.

Again during the negotiation of Alis's narrative account she stopped to ask a question. She asked what bumping meant. As I explained the notion of bumping to her she asked if I could please use the word clashing instead. She felt the term bumping did not due justice to the level of tension she felt as she negotiated her stories to live by. She felt that clashing was a better descriptor to portray the tension that was present between her stories to live by and the professional landscape. Alis's attentiveness to this tension resonated with her stories, and I was appreciative that she pointed out how strong the tension was that she felt as she negotiated her future stories to live by.

Change agent through relationships

Alis's early beginnings denote an innate passion to make the world a better place, and to enable those individuals she is around to live out better lives. I would argue that this change couldn't happen outside of relationship. To illustrate this point, I shift to another conversation that Alis and I engaged in. An important part of narrative inquiry is to create spaces for conversation to spread to unknown places and an interesting way to disrupt the dominant story of *research interview* is to have participants bring in artifacts. During our second conversation I had Alis bring in artifacts that were meaningful to her as a teacher. One way to think about why Alis had left the profession of teaching is to inquire into experiences that sustained her while she was teaching. In gaining a better understanding of experiences that sustained Alis, I may be able to get a better sense of why these experiences were sustaining, and in turn, a better sense of why she left.

When I asked Alis to bring in artifacts that resonated with her teaching she chose to bring in a portfolio containing student letters. One student wrote, "a lot of teachers just want us to crank out papers. You really embrace teaching us the humanity of language. Journals help us be real. They make us feel connected somehow" (Alis, 3-1-2, 225). The student goes on to talk about how Alis was able to teach her the meaning of writing, as opposed to just the structure and grammar. Alis noted, "oh my God, that's what I have been trying to do. I've succeeded at least with one student" (Alis, 3-1-2, 229).

Alis's early beginnings and path to teaching bring context to this story fragment. The experience, which happened while she was teaching high school

English, resonates with her imagined stories of who she would be as a teacher. As Alis read the letter, she became emotional; it was easy for me to see that this was a sustaining experience. I am attentive to Alis's feelings of isolation as an elementary school student, and to how the students' words above illustrate a feeling of connection to the classroom community that Alis missed out on as a student at times. I am also attentive to other imagined stories of who Alis would be as a teacher. From the story she shared above, it becomes apparent that the community that Alis created not only helped students to feel safe, but also it allowed them to learn. This thread of learning is another resonant thread throughout our conversations.

Another letter Alis shared written by a student also spoke to her ability to create a safe learning environment "It's crazy how we are all so tight now. I feel like I can tell you anything without being judged. You're so open minded, open to criticism and open to difference and diversity…you have a very strong integrity and it is obvious in the way you lead your daily life" (Alis, 3-1-2, 228). After reading this letter Alis again became emotional and reiterated that these experiences resonated with her so strongly because this is what she was trying to do. The fact that her students were able to recognize that, and verbalize it, helped Alis to feel as if she was making a difference.

As I think about our conversation, it is not surprising that she shared these experiences with me, and spoke to how powerful they were for her as a teacher. They strongly resonated with her imagined story, of social justice and equality, of who she wanted to be as a teacher. Her innate focus on the relational

aspects of teaching resonates with both of these experiences. A student out of relationship with you would not respond in this way through their writing. She created an environment based on respect, equity, integrity and belonging. Within these environments Alis was able to see her students learn. It is in thinking about experiences that seemed to sustain Alis that help me to better understand the experiences that may have shifted her stories to live by to stories to leave by. What I mean is, in understanding what sustained Alis as a teacher, I may get a better understanding of the experiences that allowed Alis's stories to lead her out of the profession of teaching.

The Storm or the Shore?

> I'm going to change the world or I'm going to change the system or I'm going to change something. I'm going to change that one kid or whatever it is, and then you come up against this system that doesn't want to be changed, and how do you negotiate that? But what I think is frustrating about systems in general is that in order to be promoted, in order to succeed, you have to go, to some extent at least, you have play by the rules. You have to at least know what the rules are, and you have to demonstrate that you care about the rules, and as a general rule then the people who, promote you are the system. (Alis, 3-1-2, 657)

Alis's words above resonate strongly with my experiences as a beginning teacher. In fact, as I write this I wonder how my frame has been shaped by my own experiences. Similarly, as I tugged on threads from the transcripts, I was

careful to question if it was indeed a hanging thread, or a thread that I had kneaded loose. The best I can do is to be attentive to why I have chosen to share certain experiences, and why others will stay in the transcript.

I have chosen the story fragment above because I reiterated the same statement to a colleague of mine in my third year of teaching. I had resigned myself to the fact that if I wanted to make changes, in a broader fashion, I would have to be aware of who was making decisions, and how they were being made. Generally speaking, from my own perspective, those who make decisions have been successful within the systems they have worked in, thus they have in some way played by the rules that Alis refers to. This type of hierarchical shimmying is not only exclusive to schools, it could be argued that this political and cultural phenomenon happens in all systems. Thinking, in an epistemological way, like a critical theorist, I wonder how the system chooses the individuals who become powerful within the school systems. For example, are principals sometimes promoted on their ability to follow district policies rather than other, what some would say, more important criteria? Having said that, although I am interested in these school, cultural, and political stories, I am first interested, ontologically, in Alis's lived experiences as she negotiated these school stories. In a narrative framing of this wonder, I might think about how Alis's identity as a beginning teacher may have been shaped by the dominant stories of what counts in schools. I am interested first in Alis's experience, and then in the dominant stories on the school landscape.

Also in a narrative way, I wonder about Clandinin and Connelly's notion of the school landscape being, in a way, like a parade. As one enters the parade, they are unaware of what has happened prior to their entrance. As they spend more time within this metaphorical parade, they may begin to get a better understanding of the school stories that shape the particular landscapes they work in.. In retrospect, Alis eluded to rules that she felt needed to be followed for her to be successful. On a similar vein, maybe she is alluding to her ability to negotiate her own story within the school story; her imagined notion of who she would be as a teacher, and the teaching story she had to live out on the professional landscape.

The following quote speaks to Alis's broadened perception of the parade that she had entered:

> I think I can keep some of my vision and live in the real world and have a happy medium between, but I know some people that they're so far in the real world that they don't think that anything good is possible. Sometimes I think that those are the people who stay in teaching…I think almost to survive you kind of have to. If you accept the mediocrity you get OK with it and you can just keep going to work every day knowing that you're not really making a difference. (Alis, 3-1-1, 1114)

As Alis read through the quote above, she became uncomfortable. She sat back in her seat and cringed "I am more concerned about anonymity after that comment" (Alis, interim text negotiation, April 2012). Alis's words define the

disconnection, or clash, between her vision, imagined story, and the landscape in which she found herself teaching. At this point in our conversation she saw herself as being able to walk on, what Clandinin and Rosiek, (2007) call, a *borderland* between her imagined story and the real world. The term borderland, conceptualized by Anzaldua (1997) as a space that is tension filled, metaphorically speaks to the space between Alis's imagined story and the story she had to live out on the school landscape. This borderland space filled with struggle, (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007) is a space that becomes "blurred as regions overlap and come together" (p. 59). Negotiating this borderland could be metaphorically seen as the shifting and shaping of Alis's identity. Alis, in the midst of this negotiation, speaks to what she perceives happens to those who slip too far into the real world; they are able to survive. It is profound to think that, for a teacher to stay in the profession, they must give up their vision of what is important.

> I actually would love for the school system to give teachers more time to do a good job and to be the teachers they want to be…I feel like if I am not teaching I should at least be trying to improve the school system from the outside. And if I am in it, I should probably be trying too, either way I feel like you shouldn't just sit there and participate in this broken system. Because how long can you really stay in the system. (Alis, 3-1-1, 1228)

Alis spoke to the issue of time on a number of occasions. I am struck by how the lack of time created a barrier for her to actualize her imagined self as teacher. "I mean for me [that] was probably the biggest frustration was that I didn't have the

time to plan and prepare the way I wanted to, to teach the lesson that I, the students deserved to be taught" (Alis, 3-1-2, 765). I believe Alis, in essence, is struggling here with two different things. On one hand, she is traversing the borderland between real world and her imagined story, and on the other hand she is drawn to trying to help to create a system that is attentive that teachers are in limbo between these two worlds. In a practical way, she legitimately feels like the system needs to provide teachers with more time to do the job they want to do.

> They should be given the time to do their preparation work to do a good job; to be the teachers they aspire to be. If we had the time to be the actual teacher we wanted to be there would be less bumping between the imagined story and the teachers we are becoming. (Alis, Interim text negotiation, April 2012)

As I delved into the data during a recent teacher attrition project group meeting, I began to think deeply about questions surrounding teaching being hard. I am wondering more about what teachers mean when they say their jobs are hard. Of course, each teacher may use the term differently, but for Alis it seems hard for her was her inability to live out her imagined story. Yes she was busy, had few resources, and had a difficult time balancing her life, but from her words above, the tension stemmed from her inability to be *the teacher, instead of a teacher.* What I mean is that in striving to become *the teacher* she wanted to be, she realized that if she wanted to stay in the profession she would have to become *a teacher.*

Her question "how long can you really stay in the system" is the question which initially intrigued me with this research. Being an early career teacher leaver myself, I asked this question internally, and expressed it to colleagues. I also wondered, as Alis does in an implicit way, what makes some individuals stay and what allows others to go? Why do some conform, or in Alis's words, "slip into the real world" and why do others leave; Do those that leave refuse to slip into the real world of teaching?

> So I have two choices as a new person. I can either play that game and move up here, or I can say no to your game and leave. When people choose to leave things don't get better. I am conflicted by having to leave the system, it really wears on me. It's just not easy to leave because I know the system is not going to change. (Alis, 3-1-2, 671)

Alis later told me that by playing the game she meant working within the system the way that you are expected to work. Alis was emotional when speaking about the game. I could tell that the decision to leave was not easy; she felt like she was giving up. As Alis mentions, the system promotes those that are able to, or willing to play by the rules. I should not assume here that all individuals entering the system do not enjoy playing by the rules, or that playing by the rules means that you have to give up your imagined story of teaching. It should also be reiterated that it is never either or, and that this negotiation of identity is permeated by layers and complexity. Having said that, Alis's stories of teaching bumped with the schools story, and she had to make a decision.

Often after conversations with participants I will voice record the field notes that I have taken down while they are fresh in my mind. After this particular conversation I just wanted to listen to music on my drive home from Alis's small town. I hit the shuffle button and a song I had listened to a number of times began playing. The Stars, one of my favorite bands, song "Undertow" reverberated loudly in the truck. A line in the song resonated with me, and although I had heard it a number of times, today it was more meaningful. *You pick the storm or you pick the shore.* I pulled over the truck at the next available turn off and wrote, "from which vantage point can we evoke the most change?" Metaphorically, from inside the storm, there is so much chaos that it is difficult to get out. It is also difficult to know what is happening outside of the storm. From the shore, perhaps, we may have a better vantage point to understand the inner workings of the storm. We may also have more time, less chaos, and be able to watch the storm shift and change. However, can we ever really truly understand the inner workings of the storm from the shore? Alis also ponders this notion of inside or outside. "Do you stay inside and try to fix if from the inside or do you leave and say I am healthier as a person if I'm not in the system" (Alis, 3-1-2, 24). Alis has decided that she is a much healthier on the shore, when not working directly within "the broken system" (Alis, 3-1-1, 1228).

Moving Forward

Since Alis has left teaching in a K-12 classroom, she has become engaged in her Master's in psychology. Part of this Master's work includes a practicum portion. When Alis and I were engaged in conversation, she was in the

midst of one of her practicum portions. Part of my interest in working with individuals who had left teaching early in their careers, was to get a sense of where their lives had taken them since leaving. I wanted to gain a better understanding of how their identities had shifted since leaving teaching, how their current careers were different than teaching, and their retrospective notions on teaching. Looking at the temporality of Alis's lived experiences provides some interesting insights into why her current career may be more fulfilling than teaching was for her.

> As a teacher your primary function is to teach and so to transmit curriculum…it's about the intellect, it's about the brain, it's about that part of a person personality. Now do teachers do way more than that? Hell ya…but it's not in your job description…And when you get evaluated as an educator, nobody's evaluating your ability to do all those other things, right?...And now I feel like my job is all about relationships and not just about the brain, curriculum, the intellect part. (Alis, 3-1-3, 470)

It might be fair to say that Alis's imagined stories of teaching included building strong relationships with students, and that these relationships would allow her to help students learn and influence them in a positive way. What counted for Alis, did not count within the school system she was working within. This clash created a tension for Alis. Her early beginnings had created stories to live by that included making the landscapes she worked on better for the individuals there. It was important, maybe even imperative, that she make a difference in what she is

doing. Sticking to these convictions, integrity, was also a strong part of Alis's story to live by. From Alis's experiences I get the sense that this imagined story of teaching was difficult to live out. As I move forward to her present experiences, and her perceived future, I wonder about how counseling may allow Alis to live out this imagined story in a different way, outside of the school classroom.

> So I started at my practicum in our counseling office…the culture is so different, and when you think about it, like in some ways, teaching and counseling aren't that different…but just the way I was treated upon coming in to that office was just worlds apart…it was like, well do you want to start counseling right away? No I think I'd like to observe for a while. OK, that's cool. All right, none of this like OK we've got a list of 15 clients that you got to take on like right now…by the way we're going to give you all the shit clients, you know. And then we're going through files of referrals and stuff and there's one like real hot button client in there. And she was like you're new, I wont give you that one, versus here is subject no one else wants to teach, go for it. (Alis, 3-1-2, 906)

Alis uses the word culture to describe how different her beginning experiences were between teaching and counseling. In teaching she notes, "I walked into a classroom that was a blank slate. There were no teaching resources, nothing on the walls, nothing on the bookshelves. It was an empty room of desks and that was it" (Alis, 3-1-1, 364). With counseling she felt like she was walking into a profession that valued her. The people she was working alongside valued the fact

that she was beginning, that she may not be an expert, and that she was going to need support to be successful.

> And like I didn't feel like I could express weakness in that first year [of teaching]. I didn't feel like I could go to talk to my principal and be like…I'm having a tough time with these three discipline cases. Now, in my current position, like I would feel totally comfortable gong to my supervisor and being like, you know here is a challenge I am running in to. Do you have any good ideas for me? And it wouldn't be seen as like well you're weak. It would be seen as like your reaching out for support. (Alis, 3-1-2, 945)

This feeling of being supported was a piece that came up often with her new counseling career. One of Alis's struggles with teaching, as I spoke to earlier, was being able to be a good teacher, while still balancing a life outside of the school. She spoke to this with passion in the story fragment below. I asked Alis if she felt like she was a healthier person since she left teaching. She responded in this way.

> It's a combination of the teaching profession and the way that I was driving myself to be a good teacher right, but still. Am I healthier? Way more balance, way more balance…But I think it is impossible, I genuinely think it is impossible to be a high school teacher and to be decent at your job, and have a healthy home life. I really do think it's impossible. Either you're kind of a mediocre teacher and really on top of

> your family life, or you're a good teacher, or a great teacher, but your family is suffering in some way. (3-1-5, 353)

As Alis became a wife, and a mother she began to imagine what her future would look like as a teacher. Her words speak to her imagined story of who she would have to be as a high school teacher if she made the decision to go back to teaching. Either her family would suffer, or her teaching would suffer, and from our conversations, I get the sense that neither of these sacrifices would be acceptable for her. Alis's profession is certainly important, as I illustrated throughout out this narrative account, she needs to be making a difference; however, not at the expense of her family. As I think of this compromise that might have to be made with teaching, I am reminded of a conversation Alis had with her current supervisor.

> The only way your going to sustain working here, and he's been doing it for like 20 years so he should know, is he's like you have to take care of yourself…you have to make yourself and your family a priority and if your ever finding that those things are falling apart then go back to that…And I thought that's a message I never heard in the school system. (Alis, 3-1-1, 1309)

This supportive environment was something that Alis greatly valued, and in some ways, it seems as though this supervisor reaffirmed the importance of her career, but more importantly, her family and personal landscape. In some ways maybe this supervisor, and the environment she now works in, allows her

to compose a future imagined story that may enable her compose a career whilst still being a healthy person, a good mother and a good partner.

Along with composing this successful personal life, I see Alis's job as a counselor as aligning more with what she had imagined herself doing as a teacher. For example she noted that

> I'd say 85% of our job and that maybe is not generous enough, but 85% of our job is that part the teaching, the curriculum, the classroom management, all of that, and then this little 15% could be dedicated to relationship building and whatever else. Whereas in counselling 95% of my job is relationship building and 5% is paperwork. So in terms of that piece of me that I was hoping to apply and that thing that's really important to me about being useful, and being, like serving others and social justice, and all of that is just like jumping up and down for joy because it's like oh yay, I finally get to like really do this. (3-1-5, 566)

The story fragment below gives a better understanding of how building these relationships shifts, for her, the importance of what she is doing.

> I think that there's, I said to my dad recently, I said there's nothing else that I'd rather be doing. Like Waways[38], there's nothing else I would rather be doing… And part of it is that I feel like in all the other kind of systems that I've worked in, the thing that makes your life hard, as a professional, is other people's personal turmoil, or personal trauma,

[38] Pseudonym for the community that Alis is currently working on

> right? So in the classroom that plays out as the discipline problems. I was working at a video store, and it played out as people's lives are in too much chaos to return their videos on time…And as a counselor, I get to help people cope with that and heal some of that and fix that, and so I sort of feel like [as a teacher] your main function is to teach while at the same time maybe you can manage a little bit of that personal trauma. Whereas as a counselor, I get to just work with whatever that issues is, and hopefully in the long run, that person can heal some of those hurts and when they go back into those other systems, they return their videos on time and they're not in trouble with the law and they do well in school and all those things that everybody else's job becomes a little bit easier. I feel like where I'm at right now, I get to really make that, my primary function is to heal some of that hurt. (Alis, 3-1-3, 423)

There is much to unpack in the two story fragments above. Thinking in a narrative way I am attentive to Alis's past, present and future experiences. Her imagined story of making a difference is realized. She is able to focus on helping individuals change the way they live their lives. This, making the landscapes on which her clients live, a better place, is what Alis had set out to do as a teacher. It becomes evident from both Alis's' words and her excitement throughout our dialogue, that she feels fulfilled by seeing individuals make progress. And although psychological theories and assessment of progress are important, these things all stem from her being able to build a solid rapport with her clients. Her ability to connect with them on a personal level, to care about the trauma in their

life, and to help the individuals she works with, in some way, have a better life, enables her to have a better life.

Forward Looking Stories

"Every journey is cyclical, and so you always start out here, you know we think, okay, we're going from here to here and linearly it is two different places, but often were coming back to where we started. But we are different" (Alis, 3-1-3, p.7). Alis's words resonate strongly with Dewey's notions of experience. Experiences are continuous and always interacting. Alis, in her earlier experiences, explained how the dominant story of her hometown as a child marginalized, and isolated her. Yet, today Alis lives in a very similar little town. Building upon her own words, although the place may be topographically similar, Alis's experiences have changed her. Therefore, her interaction with the place has shifted. On a similar vein, as Alis moves forward, her imagined stories are continually shifting, interacting with past experiences, present experiences, and future stories.

Yet, as Alis's identity shifts and changes, a resonant thread, that I believe will stay with her, is this notion of making a difference in the landscapes of others. I am attentive to her desire to work in a profession that values changing others' lives, a profession in which one can focus on building relationships, connecting with individuals on a personal level, and see the impact of what they are doing. Although this may sound to some like a definition of the teaching profession, for Alis, the system in which she was teaching did not allow

her to do this. So as she is in the midst of searching for her own story for tomorrow, I wonder if Alis will find her imagined story within her counseling career. Will she be able to be the parent, wife and counselor that she wants to be at the same time? Will time away from the teaching profession allow clarity, and a desire to return? Or, will she continue on with counseling, and see teaching as the stepping stone she needed to enter into a profession in which she can live out her integrity, create environments that promote social justice, and learning?